

WORDS AT PLAY

plays on words expressed in verse

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A selection of poems from the collection

Lines of a Lifetime

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BRUNO SCARFE

***WORDS AT PLAY* – Plays on words expressed in verse**

Actors for all reasons

Administering

All in a letter

All's not well

Apurados

El bellaco en pelotas

Bonito error (a Carmen y Ramón)

Choice of stroke

Una copa de más

Cumplir

¿De sastres?

Diuretic

Doctor Foster: last known whereabouts

Followers all

Fragment 1: "Scallywags ..."

Fragment 2: "Now to win or lose ..." (*a Don Fernando*)

Fragment 3: "Saffron ..."

Fragment 4: "Juniper berries ..." (to Ann)

Frustra impeditur (to Thompson of Kilburn)

Games: Gobbledygook

'Gay' re-cast

Holus-bolus

El jinete de la Ginebra (a Antonio Núñez)

Loud-mouthed Word

Un lugar para armas tomar (a Olimpio)

Marketing (to Phoebe)

Miércoles (a Carmen y Ramón)

Mover and shaker

No tocar

El optivista

Other people's

Otro tango

Out of its depth, I and II

Padre Nuestro

¿Para sordos?

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La Pérfida

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Poor Idea

Punishing heat

Spellsetter

Strangers in Paradise

Surréalismes

A tail to wag a dog

Té con tomate

Thank God for Sunday

A timely spring

Top dog

Touched
Unbecoming a croupier
Vaivenes del cielo
Wing din
Yours truly, Q.C.

Illustrated

All's not well
Fragment 1
Fragment 2
Fragment 3
Fragment 4
Frustra impeditur
El jinete de la Ginebra
Mover and shaker
Plegaria

Actors for all reasons

“We’re the action”
Verb called, and sneered
“adjectives are idlers”.

“Sloppy talk” cried
Adjective, “we’re
sensitive, ex-acting”.

Administering

Now there is a Minister
 (female) for Equality,
why not add a Minister
 (male this time) for Quality?

All in a letter

Since e-mails are so simply done,
are free, and travel fast,
the mails we knew may soon become
mere relics of the past.

All's not well

They fund research
to redirect
rogue meteorites from Earth,

but feel no need
to disinvest
in oil wells out at sea.



Apurados

Agotado, y con sed estaba
Lanzarote, y no se contaba
con los veintidós ni con su amante
para servir y acompañarle.

El Rey Artús pues, se ofreció
ponerle algo ‘de lo mejó’.

– ¿Cómo, amigo, callas la sed?
Recuérdame ya de una vez.

– ¡Coño! ¿Qué se cree?, le contesta,
¡una ginebra y una siesta!

– ¡Jo’er! le contesta Artús con saña,
¡la Ginebra está ya agotada!

El bellaco en pelotas

‘Sol embotellado de Andalucía’
el anuncio del Tío Pepe decía
según recuerdo, y me gustaba.
Ahora he visto otro, que rezaba
‘Jamón de botella’. Contemplaba
confuso lo que vaticinaba
con respecto a su precio y sabor
hasta darme cuenta ... del error.

Bonito error

A Carmen y Ramón

“¡Qué lasaña más rica! ¡vaya esmero!”
le digo contento a la cocinera.
“ No, ¡que es de atún!” me contesta seca,
“es lo que se emplea, ¡que no es mero!”

Choice of stroke

“Keeping abreast of the news?”
she murmured, bending over
as I thumbed through my paper.

Taking stock, I stared, then said:
“There’s too much news! to keep a-
breast, I need a pair of yours”.

Una copa de más

“¿Qué quiere beber señor?”

“Un tinto ... del Duero, natural.”

Y me pusieron una copa de tinto, mejor
de lo esperado, así que luego les pedí más.
Me pusieron otra copa, algo sin ton ni son.

“Vaya, ¿por qué me han puesto otra copa?”

“¿Y no lo pidió señor?”

“Vino sí; no hacía falta otra copa.”

“¿No lo pidió natural?”

“Sí, pero con respecto a la copa ...”

“Sin copa estaría fatal.”

Cumplir

Por el casco antiguo circulaban
en sus motos
chicas con el pelo que ondulaba
desenfadado y suelto al azar,
y hombres con el cabello alisado,
erizado, o a la moda, calvo.
Corriendo, de prisa todos.

Mientras que iban los demás
a pie, despacio; unos pensaban
en sus compras y recados, otros
en sus faenas, otros en dar
una vuelta, despreocupados.
Caminando,
por el casco antiguo circulaban.

¡Vaya! ¡Qué ejemplar afán de todos
– de motociclistas y peatones –
de cumplir bien con los requisitos
de la señal *Utilice el casco!*

¿De sastres?

Talones tengo, claro,
y aquí traigo pan:
¡Esto es saber vestirse!

... ¿En cueros, *yo*?
... ¿No véis,
son los pantalones a
la moda de mañana?

(Los pienso patentar.)

Diuretic

My ankles, oedematous, repel
in their spongy, sluggish, swollen state –
when this man comes up, cradling a tray.
“Die, you heretic!” he seems to say.
I freeze. There’s a clink, he bends, and then ...
offers me a coffee. “That should help!”

Doctor Foster: last known whereabouts

As Doctor Foster went to Gloucester
he heard his mobile ring.
(But was the call for him
at all? or was he an imposter?)

It came from a plain in far away
Spain, from a firm renowned
for converting the ground
from a desert to marsh: in a day.

“‘Turf!’ – your name out in audiofile space –
got us smartly to think
of peat moors and their link
with rain. We’ve a suggestion that’s ace!”

“‘Doc’, and ‘oster’ with an ‘F’, is how
I should be filed” he spat,
“and Peter Moore, who’s that?
and a shower for Othello! now?”

They never managed to right his name
and found the Moor too much,
while he found it a touch
strange that people should ring him from Spain.

These brains from the plain who master the
rain, decided to fly
him a sample of sky
regardless; he’d be flabbergasted!

But an atmospheric pressure change
downloaded a blunder
of discharge and thunder
on Foster, just out of mobile range

of a local emergency post.
He was swept down a drain
first past Gloucester, then Spain,
till disgorged in the Nile near the coast.

“Gloucester?” he asked the wrong crocodile
who’d failed English but heard
him, and guessed that the word
stood for lunch. But the Doctor used guile

and pretended to dial
for first aid – at which the
crocodile swam out of the picture.

Foster survived and set up a store
and chose to stay there, not
Redmarley D’Abitot
where he’d practiced his medicine before.

Now ‘Crocodile Catch!’ in his window
means a number of deals
in no-fuss burger meals
with the following stealing the show:

‘Dial-a-burgers! we home deliver!’
‘Get mobilised! crocoburger rolls!’
‘Crocoburgers! savour the flavour!’
‘Crocoburgers – clinical controls!’
‘Fosterburgers – predigested!’, plus
‘Buy a burger! the Foster’s on us!’

Fragment 1

Scallywags,
hobgoblins,
tramps:

a troop of monkeys
 cooking up a lark;
they'll put your living
 daylights in a funk;
fumes and flies, ooze and
 squelch, and pools of dust –

scallywags,
hobgoblins,
tramps.



Fragment 2

A Don Fernando

Now to win or lose

a toss, a tussle,
a draw, a raffle,
a bet, a million –

is to lose or win
a trifle.

Love? a heart? a hand?
... stand apart, above:
the only ones alive
long wonderful, once won.



Fragment 3

Saffron, they claim
(from the stigma of the crocus)
gives food flavour,
gives food colour,
lends a delicate aroma.

Some fast-food cooks
– mainly chasing
profits cheaply,
and thoughtless slaves to microwaves –
say such talk is hocus-pocus.

But fragrance left, to smell and taste,
and colour (look!),
gently tell that saffron's claims aren't
gobbledegook:
some stigma's worth its weight in gold.



Fragment 4

To Ann

Juniper berries,
elderberries,
sloes:

exuberant preludes
 to smiles and sighs;
clusters of jet
 set for turning to wine;
sharp eyes in hiding,
 fast among the thorns –

juniper berries,
elderberries,
sloes.



Followers all

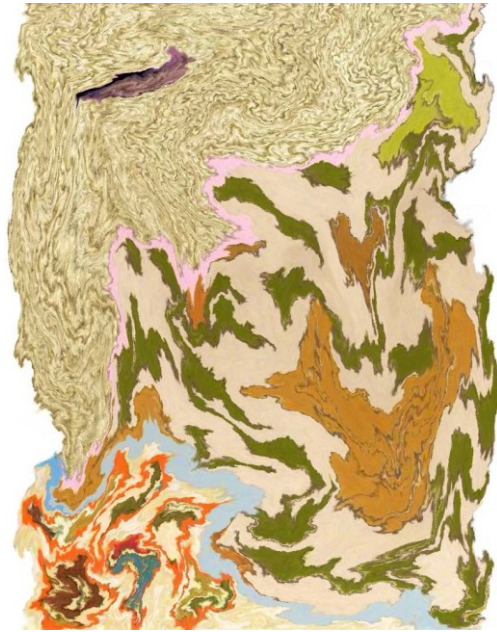
“I want some words”
Idea announced,
“for what I have in mind.”

And in they bounced,
each followed by
.... ideas! all out of turn.

Frustra impeditur

To Thompson of Kilburn

Though clocks, which give the time, expect to die,
we, who spend it, will argue it's not time.



GAMES

Gobbledygook

b o r i n g ■ c l a w s
■ f a r ■ o ■ l o w ■ p
f ■ v e r b i a g e ■ r
r ■ e ■ ■ b ■ s ■ ■ ■ u
o r ■ i ■ l ■ s ■ g ■ i
g o b b l e d y g o o k
s o ■ i ■ d o ■ ■ b ■ ■
■ t a s t y ■ j i b e s
I ■ p ■ a g o ■ ■ l ■ a
■ j a r g o n ■ b e d s
u ■ r ■ ■ o ■ b ■ ■ i s
p ■ t u r k e y s ■ m y

I rave of frogs,
of sassy turkeys,
ibis.

I rave of beds,
do rave of jibes
on boring claws
up root or log;
my awe apart,
my ire low,
I rave of far ago.

I spruik jargon,
spruik tasty verbiage,
gobble.

'By Gobbledygook'
(Is my tag so dim?
– or classy?)

‘Gay’ re-cast

Bandaged again,
Gay groaned in pain –
“Why did I sing and dance?”

“You’re not to blame”
the nurse explained,
“for having been re-cast”.

Holus-bolus

“... holus-bolus? diced?
in your salad bowl,
Dear?” ... “No! Let us ... fry
my boletus, whole!”

El jinete de la Ginebra

A Antonio Núñez

Ebrio iba, cabalgando, y cabalgaba
por tierras que, ondulando, ondulaban
y despertó; soñando pues, soñó que iba
escalando los montes de su querida.



Loud-mouthed Word

The Idea ran the interview
along very seductive lines:
it fooled the Word, which was after
a job, into speaking its mind.

Well! and did the Word blow its own
trumpet, and then rubbish its mates!

When the Idea said “Sorry!”, and
impetuously “‘Mate’, but you’re not on!
You talk too much, so you’re a risk”,

the Word replied, “As for you, you’re
a jumped-up bastard *Idée fixe!*”

Un lugar para armas tomar

A Olimpio

Para comer en el café bar
la Rambla,
no ponen sólo cuchillos, mas
navajas.

Marketing

To Phoebe

Side by side and
separate, so long,
he came to drink again
the nectar on her tongue.
“No! no!” she said,
“why don’t you try
a nectarine, instead?”

Miércoles

A Carmen y Ramón

Era de noche
y en pleno invierno
que me fui al bar
a disfrutar
un plato del tiempo,
el muy casero
‘Potaje de coles’.

Ajetes hubo
y judías, mucho
garbanzo y unos
cachos de carne;
y no obstante
a pesar de una
orden de búsqueda
y de captura,
no acudieron
las coles, ni las
de bruselas, ni
las de las flores.

‘Potaje de coles’
se denomina,
receta más básica
con o sin *brássica*
(ni caracoles),
que siempre invita
a repetir.

(Casa Lazo)

Mover and shaker

I'm Rhythm, quick and
slow, happy, sad,
hysterical and ... mad?

My baton moves
first thoughts then mood,
its tempo stirs the soul.



No tocar

Si el hielo
de su mirada
quema,

por ella
mejor estar ya
ciego –

– o bombero
graduado
en deshacer
carámbanos
y recelos.

El optivista

En el camión
el anuncio rezaba
– DE CORAZÓN –
(lo que faltaba).

Ay ¡tonto de mí!
que me había comido
la ‘i’.

Other people's

Today, a normal-looking man walked past
emitting
music.

“Good heavens!” I thought,
“a Musical Man!”

No luck.
It was just
a radio out for a walk in some pants.

Otro tango

Aquí tienes un amante quilla,
de categoría,
para complacer chocho y barriga.

Out of its depth

I

The silverfish
turned up its toes
when it couldn't have the last word.
It proved too much
of a mouthful.

Out of its depth

II

The world of letters would last far better
if silverfish
gave up their dish
of words, and went
for 'Cocksure'*, the last word in French letters.

*Poet's copyright/patent pending.

Pasatiempos

Sol y Sombra

a b a n i c o s ■ ■ p ■ c ■ ■
■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ h i e l o ■ p
■ t ■ ■ ■ s ■ ■ ■ n ■ r ■ a
c o n ■ c o ñ a c ■ a ■ r ■ s
■ r ■ ■ ■ l ■ y ■ ■ ■ v i n o
■ o ■ p ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ d ■ d
■ s o l ■ Y ■ s o m b r a ■ o
a ■ ■ a ■ ■ ■ a ■ ú ■ ■ s ■ b
■ ■ ■ z ■ s i n ■ s e d ■ ■ l
c o p a ■ o ■ g ■ i ■ e ■ d e
a ■ o ■ a m o r ■ c ■ ■ a ■ s
l ■ l a ■ b ■ e ■ a n í s ■ ■
o ■ v ■ ■ r ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ c ■ ■
r ■ o ■ ■ a g u a ■ o l o r ■

Olor a toros:
la plaza a sol y sombra,
con calor.

Olor a corridas de toros,
a plaza de sangre,
a plaza de polvo,
a plaza de pena:
¡ay, qué asco! y ¡ay, qué calor!
Sol sin sombra
y sin amor.

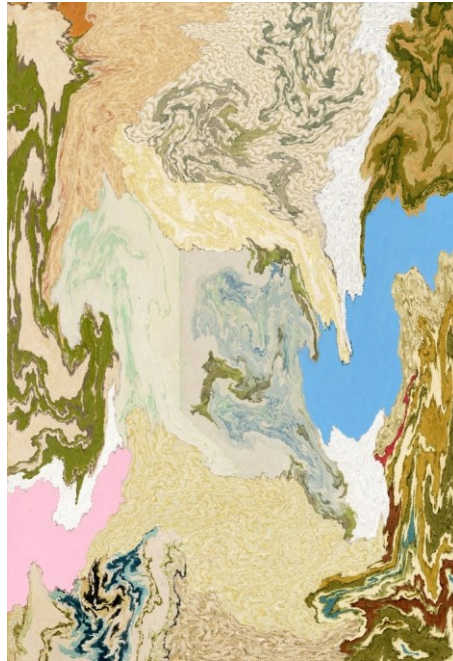
Olor a corridas de toros,
a música y paso-
dobles, con sed de hielo,
de agua, y de vino,
la copa de coñac y anís:
sol y sombra
con abanicos.

Olor a toros:
la plaza a sol y sombra,
con calor.

Plegaria

A María

¡Que Al Liquindói,
de incierta fama,
guardaespaldas
gaditano
y cicerone
de Al Capone,
mire por mí, hoy!



Padre Nuestro

Dios, diosa, madre, padre –
todo:
los hispanglo hablantes
debieran adorar
sólo
a la Universidad.

¿Para sordos?

Vaya son
más monótono,
suplicio infernal:

“Go ... o ... o
o ... o ... ol!”
música del bar.

La Pérfida

En su camiseta se leía *Rock and Roll*.
¿Por qué tanto afán en comunicar
que se iba al Peñón
a tomar un bocadillo de jamón?

Poor Idea

The Idea, quite clear in its head
as to what it wanted to say,
initiated
 a painstaking
 search for the
 Mot juste.

After many
 vicissitudes,
 it found a
 candidate.

On the day, the Word turned up drunk
with its mates, all after the job.

The Idea, its head in a spin,
consulted a mirror, afraid
of detecting
 symptoms
 of mistaken
 identity.

Punishing heat

You're in the stone,
you're in the wood,
my books, my bed, my clothes.

You're hot. Why don't
I flick a switch
and put the heat on *you*?

Spellsetter

I'm Rhyme, sublime
or infantile –
I've a hundred hats here.

My echoes high-
light choice ideas,
o.k.? and ... hypnotise.

Strangers in Paradise

“I’ve changed my name”
said Queer, “to ‘Strange’,
more socially discreet.

Plus, when I die
I may now meet
Stranges in Paradise.”

Surréalismes

La Ɔ est rouge
la Ɔ est verte
la Ɔ la Ɔ
la Ɔ nage

l (e-)
e n t
m

parmi

les QU
C mO eurs
QU
R I s
G R
des sE pents
R

nuages (qui sait?)

qui s'é-
v a n o u i s s e n t

SQU L TT S
f .
e .
u .
i .
l .
l e
e é
s
m m
o
r u
t f
e
s

au crépuscule

A tail to wag a dog

“I’m ‘Procrastinate’”, it said pompously,
and “I’m ‘Delay’”, managed the word behind.
‘Temporize’ and ‘Put off’ turned up duly,
and had a slow, blow-by-blow slanging match
due to different class and ethnic backgrounds.

Idea had advertised for ‘A word, preferably a verb, and single – for a report on government initiatives’.

Idea dismissed Temporize on account of its temper (rising), and Put off because well, you could tell it wasn’t single.
“Now what?”, Idea wondered, unimpressed by the first two words, at odds with each other.

Whereupon, addressing all and sundry and no one in particular, in strode
“Filibuster!”, again “Filibuster!”
“My name’s ‘Filibuster’ – I’m so sorry I’m late! I couldn’t get here earlier it’s just in my nature, I can’t help it.”

He got no further. “My word!” said Idea,
“you’re just what I wanted: a word which knows itself, is true to itself, lives its part”,
adding, “you’re on, I’ll take you, the job’s yours”.

More calmly, “.....and I can’t help it either.
I only wanted a variant on
‘defer’, and you march in and add a whole new perspective! not just slow, but bold! Wow!
But”, sadly “it’s quite confusing. Too bad, I’ll just have to look for another hat.”

Té con tomate

“¿Qué te tomaste? ¿un té, Marta?”

“Pues ¡anda! Tomás, me tomé un té mate.”

“¿Y luego no comiste nada?”

“Comí un mollete y aceite con tomate.”

“¡Té con tomate! ¡disparate!”

“¡Toma! ¡que no me dispires ni mates!”

“¿Marta, estás harta? ¿qué te falta?”

“¿Lo dices por el té o por el tomate?”

“¡¡¡Por lo bueno de un santo más!!!”

“Queda té, ¡tómalo! ¡ja! ¡qué mate!”

Thank God for Sunday

Saturday night,
the Week dived into bed,
done for.

Sunday off! (thank God).

Monday morning,
back on the job, driving
the days.

A timely spring

Though one swallow doesn't make a summer,
it only takes one hare to make a spring.

Top dog

Leading their boss,
they'll make him stop,
start, reconnoitre, run.

They'll sniff, they'll wee,
they'll pooh and see
that master tidies up.

Touched

The sun broke out of the haze,
the wall broke into a smile.

Unbecoming a croupier

William nearly put
a spoke in it, deal-
ing at the wheel of
fate, willy-nilly.

Vaivenes del cielo

O Paco,
en todo cuanto arreglas
ahí vas dejando huellas:
¡qué celo!

No sé si ¡maldito ... !
o ¡bendito ... seas!

Wing din

She makes a racket as though to tell
the world at large this cicada's ... well.

Yours truly, Q.C.

“I love our boss”
sighed Querulous,
“he whinges all the time”.

“Get snuffed, now!” coughed
Cantankerous,
“he’s so like me, he’s mine!”

Notes

THE POEMS – written in Cadiz, except for ‘Marketing’ and ‘Surréalismes’
(for poem particulars, consult the notes accompanying the previous nine collections)

Actors for all reasons		2010
Language and the creative process	“Anything you can do, I can ...”	
Administering		2009
Politics	A place for priorities	
All in a letter		2009
I.T., progress, values	‘e-’ casts its spell	
All’s not well		2010
Outer space, progress, industry	An ecological dilemma	
Apurados		2001
Mediaeval literature, The Round Table	<i>Refresco prohibido</i>	
El bellaco en pelotas		2007
Advertising, gastronomy	<i>Las bellotas se pelean</i>	
Bonito error		2009
Cuisine, fish	<i>El pescado se confiesa</i>	
Choice of stroke		2002
Desire	The booby prize	
Una copa de más		2007
Hospitality business	<i>Al lavavajillas con el detalle</i>	
Cumplir		2007
The law v. custom	<i>La ley sí, pero ¿las ganas?</i>	
¿De sastres?		2004
Fashion, need	<i>El emperador está desnudo</i>	
Diuretic		2011
Medicine, communication	Fear of the unknown	
Doctor Foster: last known whereabouts		2007
I.T., nursery rhymes	Reinvented: mobility man	
Followers all		2010
Language and the creative process	The word, father to the thought	
Fragment 1		2004
Language, word association	Rather doubtful relatives	
Fragment 2		2004
Language – written and spoken; values	Win some, lose some	
Fragment 3		2004
Language, progress, gastronomy	Stigmatised, with honour	
Fragment 4		2004
Language, word association	More meaningful relatives	
Frustra impeditur		2007
Time, mortality	The hand of time	
Games: Gobbledygook		2007
Crosswords, language	Talking turkey	
‘Gay’ re-cast		2010
Language, homosexuality	Hijacked	
Holus-bolus		2004
Language, cuisine	Hot mushroom salad, anyone?	
El jinete de la Ginebra		2007

Mediaeval literature, The Round Table	<i>Lanzarote se sale de su terreno</i>	
Loud-mouthed Word		2001
Language and the creative process	So who's in charge?	
Un lugar para armas tomar		2009
Cuisine, shellfish	<i>¡Ojo!</i>	
Marketing		(Melbourne) 1971
Desire	A fruity kiss	
Miércoles		2009
Cuisine, cabbage and sprouts	<i>En el día indicado</i>	
Mover and shaker		2010
Language and the creative process	Adrenalin and more	
No tocar		2004
Love (dysfunctional)	<i>El amor no correspondido</i>	
El optivista		2008
Advertising	<i>'Trompe l'oeil' e ilusión</i>	
Other people's		2001
Loud music (noise), progress, invasion	Freedom of speech?	
Otro tango		2009
Desire (a cocktail)	<i>Bailarlo ... en Cádiz</i>	
Out of its depth, I and II		2001
Silverfish, language	Of words and letters	
Padre Nuestro		2009
God	<i>La oración se licencia</i>	
¿Para sordos?		2010
Football, entertainment, invasion	<i>La tiranía de la afición</i>	
Pasatiempos: Sol y sombra		2007
Bullfights, crosswords	<i>Traje de luces y pasodoble</i>	
La Pérfida		2009
Politics	<i>Al Peñón sin ton ni son</i>	
Plegaria		2010
Language, Cadiz-speak	<i>¿Peligro en la calle Concepción?</i>	
Poor Idea		2001
Language and the creative process	Not stuck for words	
Punishing heat		2010
Temperatures, progress	A conditioned response	
Spellsetter		2010
Language and the creative process	When an echo's o.k.	
Strangers in Paradise		2010
Language, homosexuality	When they'd queered his pitch ...	
Surréalismes		(Oxford) 1960
Visuals, settings, mood	<i>Des pressentiments</i>	
A tail to wag a dog		2001
Language and the creative process	The word empowered	
Té con tomate		2007
Language, confusion, cuisine	<i>Y por poco ... hubo tomate</i>	
Thank God for Sunday		2001
Time, routine	Godforsaken, almost	
A timely spring		2011
Sayings, language	On seasonal alert	
Top dog		2010

Dogs, social structures	Dogged	
Touched		2002
Cause and effect, language	At breaking point	
Unbecoming a croupier		2004
Gambling, fate	A case for the Bill?	
<i>Vaivenes del cielo</i>		2008
Technology, progress	<i>¿Hay contraindicaciones, sí o no?</i>	
Wing din		2011
Cicadas, language	In full form	
Yours truly, Q.C.		2010
Autobiographical	Barred: a question of concern	

THE ILLUSTRATIONS – see ‘ART WORK’ for general information

POEMS

ILLUSTRATIONS – title, and ref.

All’s not well

Papegados

‘Disfrazadas, entre cuadros y círculos’ /

1:14

Frustra impeditur

‘Aeternitas’ / 3:01 (‘twist’, courtesy Frango)

El jinete de la Ginebra

‘El viaje irreal’ / 1:16

Plegaria

‘A troche y moche I’ / 1:01 (‘twist’, courtesy Frango)

Cristaletas

Fragment 1

‘Cristaleta 11’

Fragment 2

‘Cristaleta 8’

Fragment 3

‘Cristaleta 9’

Fragment 4

‘Cristaleta 10’

Mover and shaker

‘Cristaleta 3’