EROS

FOIBLES OF THE FLESH,

followed by

HEAVINGS OF THE HEART

and

IN ABSENTIA

being a selection of poems from

Lines of a Lifetime

BRUNO SCARFE

IN ABSENTIA

EROS: IN ABSENTIA - A selection

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Absence 1: "Ground strewn with rubble ..." (to Win)
Absence 2: "Your voice felt close ..." (to Win)
Absence 3: "A fistful of finely fluted chives ..." (to Win)
Absence 4: "The 'you' I know, I'll miss ..." (to Win)
Absence 5: "Ugh! sums it up ..." (to Win)
Absence 6: "Cripples crowd the towns ..." (to Win)
Absence 7: "You were starry-eyed and rainbows ..." (to Win)
Absence 8: "A woman paced the cobbled streets alone ..." (to Win)
Absence 9: "Recognise me? infant, child ..." (to Win)
Absence 10: "Are you the beginning of what you'll be? ... " (to Win)
Absence 11: "At home, when she's around, there's less of me ..." (to Win)
Absence 12: "Are you your 'self' plus make-up, clothes and jewels? ..." (to Win)
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Without you
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Illustrated

Absence 5

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Amor de prostíbulo

Ausencia 1

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El jinete de la Ginebra

Pity Penelope

The shout

Trish 1

Trish 7

Without you

Absence 1

To Win

Ground strewn with rubble – you know the building site, and its grey mesh geometric fence.

Spaced evenly and facing east on its topmost strand, glittering and live ten dragonflies vibrate, readying for take-off.

"Look!" I cried. But your eyes, absent could not reply.

Absence 2

To Win

Your voice felt close and warm and clear as it announced "I'll be there, soon!" "Soon?" I asked it, "by which you mean a day, a week, a month, a year?" "Soon! in an hour, or maybe two". It spoke on the phone, in my dream, from which I woke, alone.

A fistful of finely fluted chives and gay canopies of parsley – some to be left with San Pancracio – (you planted them), olive oil, pepper, salt and butter, water, eggs and bread: a recipe well-tested to raise a smile. But I forgot that when you went my appetite would die.

The 'you' I know, I'll miss when you come back, for you'll be changed. "Now then!" I think you'll say, "I'm gone for less than the last time!" ... But if the Dragon tree, like Morning Glory, must consent to change, to live ... "Well!" you'll say, "when I come back, I may miss 'you' too".

Ugh! sums it up. Has the bed got a bug?
Where's the mug for my coffee? and why's the jug dead?
I trudged to the shops and dug in my pocket,
juggled the bags, lugged everything back —
and was floored by a rug! Vacuum and socket
tugged at the plug, the cleaning up made me see red —
until I thought: "all I need, is a 'hug"".



Absence 6

To Win

Cripples crowd the towns:
they laugh and shout, talk to themselves all day and night,
their dangling left arm counter-balancing their right
arm held up high.
Why aren't they shy,
testing this yoga from the States? or aren't they right?
— chatterholic clowns!

You were starry-eyed and rainbows – gosh, could you flirt! You hugged me close all summer long – what a comfort feeling you around! and I've been true. But now you're worn, all colour drained, deformed. Have I stuck my neck out once too often? been pushy? rough? frayed your love? Someone, jealous, will move to oust you, steal your place dressed in another shirt.



A woman paced her cobbled streets alone, voice raised; at cafés, odd couples – their food now cold – spent time returning calls; whole landscapes came and went while rail passengers dispatched platitudes. Streets, meals and rides were cancelled (lack of interest), their users absent. On the ferry – blue sky, gay waves, salt breeze – I ate hot chestnuts, and addressed you quietly with my mind.

Absence 9

To Win

Recognise me? infant, child and grown up? student and teacher? dealer in books and household goods? artist? poet? recognise in me the one who passed through Britain, Spain, Germany and France, Australia and New Zealand? You can't? What am I? wherever have I been?

Are you the beginning of what you'll be?

- as seeds are to trees, and trees are to woods; are you, already, the beings you'll be?

Are you the conclusion of what you've been?

- as mulch is to leaves, leaves once of the woods; are you all the beings, still, that you've been?

Your karma faces you, hangs on your hand.

Absence 11

To Win

At home, when she's around, there's less of me as I divide myself to dwell on her questions, and share her work and play. That's when she's here. But when she's away, and I can spend both night and day focusing just on me and mine, how come there's even less of me, though she's not home?

Absence 12

To Win

Are you your 'self' plus make-up, clothes and jewels? plus all the books you read, films you see, and music? plus habits, work, address and bank account? In short, are you the total of your attributes? Some would say, 'no'. But if the absent 'you' turned up right now without them, I might wonder who she was, and I could miss you.

Amor de prostíbulo *Al Duende*

Sin dueña ni chicas, ya se queda.

En sedas, copas, disfraces, sueña.

Por la casa se mueve feliz y cálido el duende. Cuida, y calla.



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?
 Recuérdamelo 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!

Ausencia 1

- Ha sido burdel me dicen, y contesto
- en su tiempo. Famosas hembras! agregan;
- lo eran digo pues tuvieron su momento.

Y quitándome la razón, azotea abajo nos llega, cálida y espesa, la fragancia excitante que nos ofrece tu muy poco discreta dama de noche.



Ausencia 2

A Teresa

Se echó de menos al bajar la temperatura, y desde palacio se difundió de inmediato la noticia de que se había dado a la fuga una chispa locuaz de la fragua de Vulcano, saltando de un golpe la franja entre dios y el hombre

hasta detenerse en tu mirada.

Por el pozo risueño de tus pupilas de súbito se extiende una capa fina de azabache reluciente, donde gira y centellea esa chispa bailarina,

incandescente.

Y así mandas, desde el más allá, una mirada interminable y benigna

rebosante de íntimas verdades.

Siendo dioses, no se afligieron nada al pensar en esa pérdida y los vaivenes del azar. Tranquilos, pues, juzgaron que 'ausente' no es 'perdido', y que iban a aprovecharse de lo sucedido al promover el futuro diálogo visual. Con lo cual, bailando, dieron el luto al olvido.



Ausencia 3

A Teresa

Los Tres Pretendientes —

La Obsidiana, el Azabache y el Ébano:

Nosotros somos

el barro

barro negro del Mar Muerto,

la medianoche

noche sin luna,

un pozo de mina

insondable,

los negros más

negros de Nubia,

la tinta

tinta negra en papel blanco,

es lo que somos.

La Obsidiana, el Azabache y el Ébano:

Pero ¡venga, vamos!

Basta ya de tanta propaganda rimbombante y altisonante.

Faltan detalles más probables para distinguir entre nosotros. Nos toca ir al grano.

La Obsidiana:

Soy del volcán

y soy de piedra, puñal de altar y de la guerra;

el Azabache:

Soy de carbón de bajo tierra, vuelto en alhajas para ganar un corazón;

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el Ébano:
     Soy de la selva
             y de madera,
             soy clarinete
             que eleva el alma.
                    A mí se me ve vivo,
                    delicado,
                    bien pulido,
                    con aplomo;
el Azabache:
             a mí resucitado,
             reluciente,
             resistente,
             y ostentoso;
la Obsidiana:
     y se ve a mí - presa,
     la tez vítrea,
     con caprichos
     peligrosos.
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La Obsidiana, el Azabache y el Ébano:

Nosotros somos de pura sangre, de sangre azul, los tres iguales;

de otros entornos con otros rasgos y desiguales; Así, pues, somos.

La Obsidiana, el Azabache y el Ébano: Escoge, señorita de la mirada inolvidable. ¡Que disfrutes! Y sentimos, ya tener que despedirnos.

(¿Cuántas tendrán las pupilas hechas tan a su medida!)

Contigo

A Glenwys

Vente conmigo querida te lo suplico, al chiringuito de Réynold el 'Malibú', a ver la puesta del sol.

Me da igual ~

que no sirvan horchata, chicharones al uso, ni pechuga de pavo ni jamón de Jabugo, cuchifritos ni chícharos, chirimoyas cremosas (pa' chuparse los dedos), leche frita, torrijas, ni cuajada con miel, y no se halle el anís Chinchón dulce (¡sin hielo!) auténtico de 'la Alcoholera'.

~ al estar tú conmigo en el Malibú.

Nos pondrán un gin tónic (un Rives) en balón; más papas aliñadas, pez espada y caballa, acedías y sardinas y más de *un* boquerón, albóndigas, pimientos asados, croquetas y filetes a la plancha; nos pondrán carajillos de brándy, o café y anís la Castellana (en balón).

~ ¡Sin igual, al estar tú conmigo en el Malibú! ~

Entretanto chirigotas, el chapoteo de las olas, la inquietud de este levante, y el paseo de la luna.

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.



Pity Penelope

I saw you on a gleaming rock with eyes that dared and lips that mocked. You lay there, naked, in the sun. You hypnotised me, made me run into the scowling sea to drown.

But I survived, and fought the waves, and crossed that narrow neck of water (that sheer-faced wall of stone and mortar built by people long ago, to keep us far apart and cold – so that no friendship should be born).

And so I scaled that gleaming rock where you lay, naked, in the sun, to clasp you tight, and make you mine.

But that took years, and in the end what did I find? I'll never know. Your breasts of wine and thighs of fire drove me so wild – I cried, and cried. And when I woke, the rock was bare. the sun had long since set, and there was silence treading damp and heavy in the air.

Is that, then, why those narrow necks of water swirl between us? (Would that be why such walls of stone and mortar built by people long ago, still stand, stand still, between us?)

Life is a phial of acid disappointments, a manacle that binds and locks, a cataract that blocks all ways – except the long, dry road to home, and obligations.

And, all the while, a siren lies there naked, in the sun.



The shout

To Glenwys

There was shouting in the parks, in taxis, buses, trains, plus shouting in the cafés, the restaurants and bars.
In all my life I'd never known the like.
But the shouting stopped when 'she' left to go Down Under and silence seemed the sum of all there'd been. But sh! Out and out largesse sends ... echoes from afar.



Torture of memory

To Nanette

"Did you see us, hypnotised? see us rise, and dance? her eyes wide, wide open? her teasing thighs, her breasts, exuding fire? see her lips slide open, open wide, till you sensed the tongue there, welcoming, inside?

Then did you see us, overpowered, pause? and kiss? But there the scent of gum leaves crushed, scent of honey-suckle, feel of silver bark and glasslike spiral of the stalk – were ours; ours to find, to dream, and know."

"Tantalising! and then?"

"We never met again."

"What? after that?"

"I learnt she loves another man, so now the elixir we shared has turned to dust. The body's just a shell. The mind is far away. It stumbles day and night through swamp and slime, to grasp at paths that crumble, while the kookaburras laugh."

There was a smile and it came with a country girl whose name was Trish. Now country girls who're into books may paint away all night and day but they're not famous for their looks!

But this Trish here, she had a smile to melt your heart at half a mile, and though she said she couldn't cook a roast, an egg, a slice of toast, she was a wizard with a book.

"Why cook?" she said, "when I've been taught that books are packed with food for thought? No need to peel and scrape and stir, to scale a fish or wash a dish, and handle pan and colander.

No need, in short, to drip with sweat, to turn youself quite inside out all full of hope (but can't quite cope!), only to hear that dreadful shout ""What! Is there nothing ready yet?"



Beware the lion in her lair! The Show is done, and so is she! She's fast asleep, beyond all care and crossing lands across the sea.

In and out and round about, dunk 'em in and pull 'em out.

The odd thing is, there's just a whiff of ... what on earth? Could it be ... fat? It seems to come ... I wonder if ... it's something from a greasy vat?

Round about and out and in, pull 'em out and dunk 'em in.

And look! Her claws, her nails – I mean are clogged with gunge, both grey and white! For lions, clean, it's quite obscene to treat us all to such a sight!

In and out and round about, dunk 'em in and pull 'em out.

Quiet, you children! Not one more scream! And cut the television blast! — So she can rest and cease to dream and wonder will the batter last.

Out and in and in and out, round and round and round and round about, you'll get slim ... the others stout!

Above the sea, below the snow I know a dish in Omeo, no 'use-by' date to seal its fate, it's in cold storage waiting for a bear to try the freezer door.

Sweet as heaven, oh what a dish! (I wonder if it's known as ...?) Though frozen solid, it has hopes a bear may get to know the ropes.

Some cinnamon would do it proud, and nutmeg too ... (is that a crowd?) Then serve it warmly on a bed of roses, rice, and featherdown and watch the bear go off its head!

She won't be turned, she won't be moved, she's staying put right where she is:

– a rusty nail, a threadless screw, where life's quite flat, where there's no fizz.

The timber's warped and full of holes, the catch and hinges long since gone. It's lying there beside the road not worth a mention in a song.

She won't consider something new, she'd rather die than be pulled out:

– a rusty nail, a threadless screw, where life's a desert, life's a drought.

But wait! That wood's still got a role. Why not tell Ted (and watch his face) it's right for his Benambra home?

– as kindling for the fireplace.

Might she, maybe, reconsider? Why become a fire's dinner? That wood's finished, done for, dead – I've something better, here, instead.

I saw you seated at my desk here in Cadiz all gaily dressed while my computer blinked and whirred you smiled a smile which seemed absurd.

This desk I have in southern Spain, right cheek by jowl with Africa, is more a table – old and plain, fantasising licks of lacquer.

You have the desk in Omeo, above the sea, below the snow wrought of iron, native timber, fossil marble from Benambra.

Far away (it's called 'down under') you got loaded in a laptop blunder, transferred and then dropped off – it's enough to make you wonder.

I saw you seated at my desk here in Cadiz all gaily dressed while my computer blinked and whirred you smiled a smile which seemed absurd.

There was a lady of the hills whose life was filled with endless thrills from Monday through to Sunday night, from crack of dawn to close of light.

Weary comes as weary goes, spare a thought for tired toes.

She had two earrings in her ears (just one in each one it appears) which is where earrings tend to be when not flushed down the lavatory.

Weary goes as weary comes, spare a thought for tired

Earrings, though, all have a penchant (earrings here can be quite trenchant) for kitchen sinks in need of plugs, for rubbish bins and deep pile rugs.

Weary comes as weary goes, spare a thought for tired toes.

Grass clippings can be welcoming, fresh flower beds most promising, bonfire ashes can camouflage, like garden refuse by and large.

Weary goes as weary comes, spare a thought for tired

I wonder if her earrings are deep in a drawer or in a jar? Undamaged still or nearly dead? Or ... in an ear that's on her head?

Weary, weary is this song and the earrings worn and gone.

In the foothills of the ranges where people camp or fish or ride while others settle for a drive, you ... stay home, to dodge the dangers.

Dangers? A snake might share your bed! A cast gone wrong – you'll fall and drown! Your horse might bolt and bring you down! While hairpin bends ... all claim their dead.

Oh home, sweet home! A chair, good cheer! A bag of chips, a pint of beer, TV – or, in your case (and mine) the PC, biscuits and some wine.

What's that sound? The garden growing? Time to run and do some mowing! But gosh, it's cold! You'll have to find more wood to keep the fire alive.

When mowing, mind your back and toes, grit in your eyes, dust up your nose. The wood's wrong for your fireplace? Well chop it then, but turn your face!

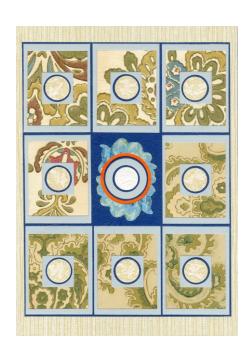
And how's your e-mail getting on? Five paragraphs, my goodness! wow! And more to come, you say, right now, packed tight with news, and things gone wrong.

But God! oh no! oh no! oh no! Was that a flicker of the light, or are you not computer-bright? Your letter, gone! oh what a blow!

Flick your hair from side to side, take a leap and toss your cares, toss a pancake, flick the chairs, take a cartwheel for a ride.

Everything is as it is,

God knows why, 'cos that's his biz.



You say you can't resist me as you listen to your geese, smell the green grass freshly mown, know your beauty hasn't gone.

"I must walk the dogs" you say, "make a drink, file things away, but in Spring I promise you all your wishes will come true."

Sensible? Of course you are! and I'll love you though you're far, check a tear and grit my teeth, drive off thoughts of age and death.

She says she can't resist me as she listens to her geese, and the fountains of the park splash and echo in my heart.

Wanted, missing ...

To Win

The wardrobe's full of shirts she's pressed, the fridge –

butter, milk, home-made bread: he's fed and clothed.

But bed's a grave, and silence attends at table. Where's desire, now she's away?

Without you

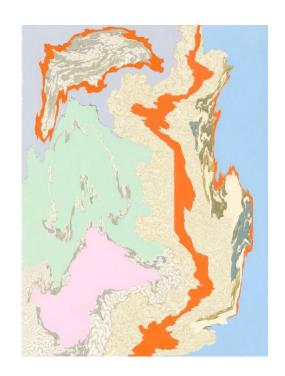
Days, like snails, have crawled across the acres of dishevelled grass that are my garden.
Like snails.
And each has left a track, as though to show beyond a doubt that it has passed.

Grass? Did I say 'grass'? No, not acres of dishevelled grass, for grass is green, and green is hope.

Days, like snails, have crawled across the sandy windswept shores that line my life.
Like snails, they wanted water, and sensed the presence of the sea — which then receded.

Night fell, as they lay there, and gasped – all caked in grit, all dry, all desperate.

And days, like snails, were empty shells that littered the lonely shore.



Notes

THE POEMS

ABSENCES Series of 12 poems to my then wife Winifred Ann (Jodell) or 'Win', absent from Cadiz on respite care work in England. Absence 3	Cadiz	2007
It is a Cadiz custom in small businesses and at home to keep a statuette of San Pancracio handy, with a vase of parsley in front. He stands for prosperity, and employment in particular. When things don't work out he's put in the fridge, <i>castigado</i> .		
Absence 4		
The 'Dragon' tree, from the Canary Islands, can live hundreds of years. There was a magnificent specimen just off the plaza		
de Mina.		
Absence 8		
The ferry was the Adriano III which plied between Cadiz and the		
Puerto de Santa María, a forty-five minute run.		
Amor de prostíbulo	Cadiz	2004
Set in our house (called a <i>finca</i> in this part of the world) in calle		
San Dimas. It used to be a brothel, and more recently was a		
boarding house for students of the nearby Medical Faculty. It		
was the curious welcoming atmosphere which pervaded the run		
down building that prompted my purchase. The house has two addresses, the original one for its entrance on calle San Telmo.		
Apurados	Cadiz	2001
Los otros (veintidós) – los ausentes –	Caulz	2001
son los doce pares, menos él		
aquí padeciendo mal de sed		
y mal de amores, Lanzarote.		
Ausencia 1	Cadiz	2007
The reference is to a flowering bush planted on the <i>azotea</i> (roof		
garden) at San Dimas 10 by Win, absent in England at the time		
of writing.		
Ausencia 2	Cadiz	2007
On a gaze from very close friend Teresa who ran the Q & Q		
bookshop then situated in calle San Francisco, as we shared a		
drink at the nearby Senátor.		
Ausencia 3	Cadiz	2007
(As per previous)	~	
Contigo	Cadiz	2012
While the fare at Reynold's <i>chiringuito</i> was alright and the		
venue fine, on Glen's arrival everything changed and seemed suddenly quite wonderful. It was our first evening together at		
this beach side <i>chiringuito</i> .		
El jinete de la Ginebra	Cadiz	2007
Prompted by a late night conversation and literary duel (over a	Cuuiz	2007
gin tonic?) with my friend at Carina's other premises, the		
'Jambalaya' in calle Sagasta.		
<i>,</i>		

Pity Penelope Auckland 1967

Penelope, off-stage.

The shoutCadiz2012Torture of memoryMelbourne1970TRISHCadiz2010

Series of eight Australian ballad style pieces, inspired by and dedicated to the still far away Patricia Leon who 'inherited' my bookshop in Omeo, Australia. She could turn out a fine ballad herself.

Trish 2

There are lions ... and the Omeo 'lions'.

Trish 4

Ted was an elderly Benambra character ... eccentric, unwell, a bit on the nose, and able to be quite friendly. He was known for his high profile scrap heap of domestic and farming equipment, stuff in general ... and for hitching a ride.

Trish 6

(See also 'Giftshop blues', Eros Heavings of the heart)

Wanted, missing Cadiz 2004

The time Win went sight-seeing to Granada.

Without you Auckland 1967

THE ILLUSTRATIONS – see 'ART WORK' for general information

POEMS ILLUSTRATIONS – title, and ref.

Papegados

Absence 5 Fantasía 'Flor, protagonista' / 1:09 ('twist',

courtesy Frango)

Absence 7 Sobrecubierta 2 'Lomo con ladrillos' / 2:23

Amor de prostíbulo Fantasía 'Gloria se descubre' / 2:01

Ausencia 1 'El burdel de la calle San Telmo 6 a pleno

rendimiento'/2:12

Ausencia 2 Retrato 'Teresa' / 2:08 El jinete de la Ginebra 'El viaje irreal' / 1:16

Pity Penelope Fantasía 'Rosa y Celeste, protagonistas' /

1:02 ('twist', courtesy Frango)

Trish 1 Sobrecubierta 4 'Lomo de tejido basto' /

2.25

Trish 7 *El avatar Sai Baba y los devotos II' /* 2:20

Without you Retrato 'Alaitz' / 2:05 ('twist', courtesy

Frango)

Cristaletas

The shout 'Cristaleta 6'