

# THE NATURAL WORLD

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*HEAVEN AND EARTH,*

followed by

*THE BESTIARY I*

and

*THE BESTIARY II*

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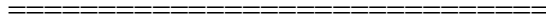
being  
a selection of poems from

*Lines of a Lifetime*

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BRUNO SCARFE

# ***HEAVEN AND EARTH***



# THE NATURAL WORLD: *HEAVEN AND EARTH*

## — A selection

Above and below, I and II  
All a-tumble  
And then there was silence, I and II  
Approaches  
Blues  
Boy and silver smile  
*Castilla*  
Crescendo  
The Juggler  
*Lluvia en la noche*  
Men on the Moon  
Miniature  
The painting  
*Surréalismes*  
Through the railings  
*Viento de Castilla*  
Voices  
... Who on Earth ...

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### Illustrated

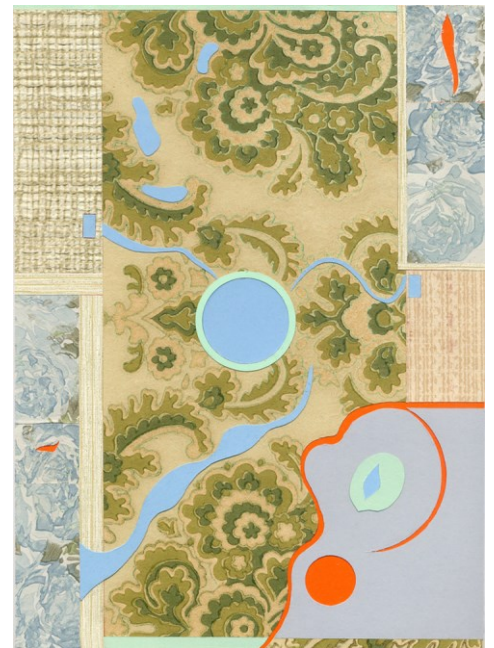
Above and below, I and II  
Approaches  
The Juggler  
Through the railings  
... Who on Earth ...

## Above and below

### I

From a porthole, in the sky, you saw  
the clouds below  
(mounds of wool and pools of fluff)  
float firmly on a level high above  
the quaint and chequered surface of a land  
reorganized by man.

On the shore, before your feet, you saw  
the foam and froth  
(pools of wool and mounds of fluff)  
scud seaward on a film of water, en-  
hancing headland, chasm, delta, river, stream  
shaped in the sand below.



## Above and below

### II

Composed of air and water:  
clouds, and foam.

How they vary! flat and brittle, sometimes,  
– *tortillitas de camarones*,  
and potato pancakes Mother made;  
how light they are! yet all throw shadows, and  
– clouds won't vanish easily in air,  
and foam won't mix at once with water.

Foam and clouds,  
composed of air and water.

## All a-tumble

How safe's the rice  
piled on your fork  
– each grain with its own thoughts?

They're girls and boys  
let out to play  
– just wait, and they'll be off!

## And then there was silence

### I

Year in, year out, it goes – by land and sea –  
without a booking, ticket, or a pass.  
It needs no word or weapon to persuade,  
and doesn't ever have to stop, and ask.  
Not only does it travel far, but fast.

It has its subjects' interests at heart  
and, at no charge, describes them everywhere.  
It represents them all, impartially –  
    the drip-drip of taps,  
    hum of the carnival,  
    bells which chime, or toll for mass,  
    football fans in exaltation,  
    booming oceans breaking on the sand,  
  
the quiet of lightning, before the thunder.

## And then there was silence

### II

More disciplined than smell, or shadow,  
sound follows – and never runs in front.  
You can count on sound, even if there's  
*deus ex machina* in the air,  
when its lord and master proves the rule  
and sends it on to warn – with silence –  
of his lightning bolt to come. Free of  
constraints, the fastest sound is ....silence.

## Approaches

Man-made, level, straight, and decorated  
with catseyes, guide lines, and boundary markers –  
is this the road to follow to the sea?

Full of holes and humps, sharp stones and gravel,  
sometimes deep in dust, and sometimes water –  
is this the track to follow to the sea?

Past swamps where emus frolic, past paper-  
barks and banksias, past flowering grasses –  
is this the path to follow to the sea?

The first cuts corners, wasteful daydreams, time,  
the second concentrates and tries the mind,  
the third engages time, and mind, and eye.

I'll find the sea whichever route I take.  
I'll find the sea whichever day I go.  
The sea I find will never be the same.  
The sea I find will never become known.



## Blues

Dreams of a sloe-eyed Iberian land,  
indigo birds on the glittering sand,  
indigo mountains and skeleton trees,  
star-bobbing sky in a warm-blooded breeze.



## Boy and silver smile

Beaten silver  
twisted into  
wicked crescent  
of the Moon.

Quicksand scales  
of massive pewter  
sheath a deep-eyed  
mountain lake.

To free the smile  
engraved upon the water,  
a boy – electric –  
fishwise, pierced the pewter.

The smile grew longer.  
The boy slept,  
pinioned,  
in the waves.

## Castilla

Polvorienta, polvorienta,  
tus oteros, Castilla, son escamas estériles,  
tu sangre, Castilla, un frenético vórtice  
de arena voraz.

Te quiero, Castilla, tan aristocrática,  
eres la sombra que siempre llamea,  
enigmática sombra con llanto sedño  
que macera los pechos de mi ilusión.

Sorbo tus ríos, con su agua dulce,  
siento tus llanos y quiero tus gentes  
que nacen, y sufren, y rezan, y mueren.

¡Castilla, Castilla, tan polvorienta,  
centellas de ansia y astillas de sangre  
cruzarán la mística cruz de tu muerte!

## Crescendo

Spinnaker –  
your whiteness brilliant  
against

the still and  
silent blackness of  
the night –

you speed her (in-  
visible)  
through seas of sky till  
she can do  
her full moon piece.

## The Juggler

This 'ceiling' sky  
– close but distant  
shifting surface  
inscrutable –  
tricks the searches  
of instrument  
and mind and eye.

To every side,  
above, below  
this 'ceiling' sky  
– no wall or floor –  
eternal space  
a nothingness  
an act of faith.

Picked out with stars,  
pinpoints of fire  
white hot yet cold  
– at times inert  
and painted holes,  
– at times all live  
and sizzling sparks.

Lit endlessly  
across and through  
by furnaces  
– spheres still and vast  
which roar and dance  
without a sound  
or step or glance.

The Juggler smiled  
who thoughtfully  
decked out the sky  
to fascinate  
the thinking eye  
with fiery balls  
so synchronised.



## Lluvia en la noche

Está lloviendo,  
lloviendo en las corazas de los techos,  
en los ojos sin párpados de mi ánimo.  
Es una lluvia guerrera  
que rebota en las tortugas de los guijarros,  
y penetra los pliegues minados de mi alma.  
Es una lluvia  
que pulsa los cristales con retintines acerados,  
y con violencia eléctrica  
martillea las fronteras explosivas de mi existencia.

Sollozan las doce  
y serpientes de lluvia  
con siseos ominosos  
repiquetean el revoque tan frágil  
de mis esperanzas.

Es una lluvia  
que truena,  
estalla,  
y sus lágrimas son cuernos de toro  
que me desentrañan,  
que anulan mi amor  
hacia cada mujer de este mundo.

Penetra la lluvia  
la piedra picada de mi desengaño,  
extiende sus tentáculos de hielo  
para ahogarme.

Desengañado,  
en un país donde mujeres son mujeres  
y crueles,  
bajo los arcos grises de una Plaza  
que sueña en el sol,  
en la alegría:

me lacera la lluvia,  
en mis ojos nada,  
en mi pelo,  
mi ser,  
en mi corazón más muerto que un ataúd.

## Men on the Moon

On summer nights  
I often made deserted streets my home,  
or wandered through grey rustling fields  
avoiding life's unwelcome dreams.

A night owl's song was music in the darkness;  
a lone dog's howl, a cat's surrealistic call –  
struck echoes from the vaulted silence.

All alone, and no man near,  
I shared my secrets with the Moon,  
white faced, white eyed,  
as she paused outside the concave walls of space,  
and cast her virgin's smile upon the Earth.

When man has pierced the riddle of your breast  
and you are dead,  
I shall roam the night-drowned lanes alone,  
relentlessly observed by unseen eyes,  
a thousand soulless, scientific, minds.

## Miniature

It rises  
slowly, silent, from  
its home

in the soil,  
bares its shepherd's crook,  
uncoils,

soars and searches  
– great ship's prow –  
past its own green seas.  
It is ... now ...  
a full fern frond.

## The painting

Nothing to guide us as we view,  
to tell us where they're from  
or going to.  
Perhaps they, too, would gladly have a guide  
to show the way  
as they trudge in single file  
across the plain.

Nothing to tell us who they are,  
the man, the woman –  
focus of the picture which holds our eye  
as they move in silhouette from right to left,  
an endless journey  
where each moment is a day  
and all progress just a dream.  
All this the canvas captures:  
the moving pair who plod along and, stumbling,  
never move ahead.

To the right, a tree  
pointing stark and bare to sky and, yes,  
towards them, as they move away.  
Tree weathered, worn, exhausted, and  
almost falling to the ground –  
it points to them and, yes, echoes their defeat  
past, present, or to come.

To left and right, and overhead, the black of  
storm and cloud,  
rough grass below more brown and gold than green,  
tussocks everywhere, and – no doubt – snares.

From one small area in the clouds  
light falls,  
soft and white with a touch of grey and blue.  
Last light before the storm?  
Or light of peace, restored?  
Who knows.  
It silhouettes the pair who walk,  
lends greater darkness to the black above,



spells a tantalising hope.

At the forefront of the canvas, water –  
caught in the falling light:  
a pool both fresh and cold  
which warns of dangers still ahead.

The ageing couple wear clothes which chafe,  
heavy, brown, and plain;  
one shoulders an enormous load –  
not shopping done,  
– just what was home, undone.

In all the desolation, silence.  
No bird, no beast, no flower.  
Not day, not night,  
and no sun, no moon, no star.  
They walk as doomed, but not perhaps  
through accident or crime:  
they stand for all of us who live,  
and age,  
and die.

## Surréalismes

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

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e n t  
m

parmi

les QU  
C mO eurs  
QU  
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des sE pents  
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nuages (qui sait?)

qui s'é-  
v a n o u i s s e n t

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au crépuscule

## Through the railings

Pink, then white,  
fabrics loosely furled,  
they wave

and wait, they  
dare you to return  
their smile.

Please! Don't assume  
I don't know  
parasols from tarts,  
or poems from  
hibiscus blooms.



## Viento de Castilla

Susurrando, susurrando, susurrando:  
es el ártico viento que lija el yermo,  
    el yermo torvo,  
    el yermo padre.

Místico llano, y solariego,  
matriz majada del Creador,  
coruscante sombra del efímero cielo.

Susurra el viento, siempre susurra,  
    titánico viento,  
    viento frío,  
y sus garras bruñidas azotan la capa  
    de la noche breada.

Y el eterno susurrar del rítmico viento  
    por el yermo yermo,  
es el sueño oscuro de un famélico duende.

Es el hercúleo sueño de un viento que llora,  
    que llora siempre,  
    siempre,  
    siempre.

## Voices

Saint Joan of Arc died at the stake  
in dialogue and flame;  
were she here now, maybe she'd make  
her mobile take the blame.

§§§§§§

I wonder whose those voices were  
she tuned into so hard?  
I hope they weren't just sending her  
some clichés on a card!

Were they English? were they French? or  
Latin? – just to test her.  
If recorded, were they used for  
evidence against her?  
Were they from Earth or Outer Space?  
from Heaven? or from Hell?  
How many light years did they take,  
and did they travel well?

How up-to-date were the reports? –  
were they documentary?  
Were they the Boadicea sorts?  
“Fighting's elementary –  
a chariot's as good as its horse!”  
or calls from the E.U.?  
“We wish to warn you off the course  
you want for Waterloo!”

or messages from Lucifer? –  
(he'd be damned if he would lose her!)  
or teletexts from You Know Who:  
“You're doing fine!”, and “in good time  
we'll make some room for you!”

.....Who on Earth .....

High, high above, the great birds wheel  
and hang there, waiting, in the sky.

In front, the pastel patterns of  
the temple cool the summer sun,  
as pilgrims of all faiths wait cross-  
legged on the warm and dusty ground.

Everywhere, the soothing flow of  
Indian music ..... which slows, and stops.  
The shuffle, fidget, whispers - cease,  
and silence, only, fills the air.

From the temple comes a figure  
clad in orange, unassuming,  
slight. Does it walk? or does it glide?  
Its bearing seems to indicate  
a holy man, but there's a hint  
as well of emperor – or more.

His presence thrills the thousands as  
he passes, reassures, and guides.  
To some he stops and talks, bends low  
to hear their answers; to many  
he speaks in silence, listens long  
to the silent words of others.  
From outstretched hands he gathers notes  
with pleas, and grateful promises.

At a distance, and then nearby,  
I saw the aura, blue and white,  
a halo glowing round his head:  
Sai Baba's ... Who on Earth is That!

High, high above, the great birds wheel,  
and hang there, waiting, in the sky.



## Notes

### THE POEMS

<b>Above and below, I and II</b>	Cadiz	2004
These are set while still airborne over Andalusia prior to landing at Jerez, and on the beach at Cadiz. The second poem started off as a footnote.		
<b>All a-tumble</b>	Cadiz	2010
You'd be forgiven for thinking each grain had a mind of its own.		
<b>And then there was silence, I and II</b>	Cadiz	2001
Is silence just as much a sound as white is a colour? Is silence a neutral or negative factor, or actually a positive one? And what is the speed of silence? The second poem started as a footnote.		
<b>Approaches</b>	Cadiz	2004
This is set at Wilson's Promontory (Victoria, Australia), with references to the main highway, the turn off to Cotters lake, and the sea. It had been a favourite area when I lived in Australia.		
<b>Blues</b>	Oxford	1958
Surreal, colour / nostalgia.		
<b>Boy and silver smile</b>	Oxford	1960
<b>Castilla</b>	Salamanca	1958
(See: PROSE ... notes for an autobiography – Salamanca.) But the sentiments would have had their source in earlier travels to this part of Spain, described in <i>My Ampleforth Years 1</i> : 'Spanish Impressions'. These travel experiences were to be described again in an article published while at Oxford.		
<b>Crescendo</b>	Cadiz	2011
The direction of the sail indicates a waxing moon.		
<b>The Juggler</b>	Cadiz	2004
I had found the sky fascinating as a child, and had a telescope and a book or two on astronomy (of which I could make but little). Here I was inspired, ridiculous though it may seem, by watching the barman at the Café de Levante, c.Rosario as he tried to practise his juggling in a spare moment ... probably with no more than half a dozen balls.		
<b>Lluvia en la noche</b>	Salamanca	1958
(See: PROSE ... notes for an autobiography – Salamanca.)		
<b>Men on the Moon</b>	Oxford	1958
The sky was being opened up ... and I saw it as an invasion.		
<b>Miniature</b>	Cadiz	2010
Fascinating the pace, both fast and slow, the certainty, the nerve.		
<b>The painting</b>	Cadiz	2001
Description, from memory, of a painting after George Morland to which my father used to draw my attention. He said it would come in handy against death duties. It was to disappear (stolen?) from his home in Oxford and has still not been recovered. Maybe this description will help in locating it ...		
<b>Surréalismes</b>	Oxford	1960
... on a typewriter ... !		

<b>Through the railings</b>	Cadiz	2004
The beauty and mystery of the hibiscus. The blooms seem almost to convey a message.		
<b><i>Viento de Castilla</i></b>	Salamanca	1958
(See: PROSE ... notes for an autobiography – Salamanca.)		
<b>Voices</b>	Cadiz	2007
I suppose I should be more patient with the mobile phenomenon.		
<b>... Who on Earth ...</b>	Cadiz	2003
Setting at the ashram of the Indian Avatar Sai Baba, close to Bangalore. I visited on two occasions . (See also PROSE: ‘A strange incident driving’, and ART WORK – a number of the <i>Papegados</i> feature him.)		

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**THE ILLUSTRATIONS** – see ‘ART WORK’ for general information

**POEMS**

**ILLUSTRATIONS – title, and ref.**

**Above and below, I and II**  
**Approaches**  
**The Juggler**  
**Through the railings**  
**... Who on Earth ...**

**Papegados**  
*‘Misterios del agua’* / 2:14  
*Salvamanteles 8 ‘Separadas III’* / 1:24  
*‘El avatar Sai Baba y los devotos III’* / 2:21  
*Fantasía ‘La Revoltosa, protagonista’* / 1:03  
*Retrato ‘El avatar Sai Baba’* / 2:27