

THE NATURAL WORLD

HEAVEN AND EARTH,

followed by

THE BESTIARY I

and

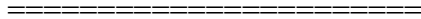
THE BESTIARY II

being
a selection of poems from

Lines of a Lifetime

BRUNO SCARFE

THE BESTIARY I



THE NATURAL WORLD: *THE BESTIARY, I* – A selection

Absence 1	Dragonflies
<i>Acierto de peregrino</i>	<i>Pájaros, peces</i>
<i>Bonito error</i>	<i>Atún, bonito, mero</i>
<i>Desde el Puente romano</i>	<i>Cabras, buitres</i>
<i>Elegir su elixir, 1 & 2</i>	<i>Monos</i>
Focus of attraction	Fish
Free, to choose	Ants, crickets, flies, frogs, lizards, sparrows
<i>Un lugar para armas tomar</i>	<i>Navajas</i>
Metric feats in S minor, 1,2 & 3	Snails
The Moon, three images	Vultures
Naturally	Seagulls
Out of its depth, 1 & 2	Silverfish
<i>Pasatiempos: 'Sol y sombra'</i>	<i>Toros</i>
<i>Perro destino</i>	<i>Perros</i>
Pigeon	Pigeons
Royalty, almost	Pigeons
Still life plus	Swallows
Summer busyness	Swallows
<i>Surréalismes</i>	<i>Serpents</i>
Swallow holes	Swallows
A timely spring	Hares, swallows
Top dog	Dogs
Up and away	Starlings
Wing din	Cicadas
Without you	Snails

Illustrated

Acierto de peregrino
Free, to choose
Royalty, almost
Up and away
Without you

Absence 1

Ground strewn with rubble – you know the building site,
and its grey mesh geometric fence.
Spaced evenly and facing east on its top-
most strand, glittering and live ten
dragonflies vibrate, readying for take-off.
“Look!” I cried. But your eyes, absent,
could not reply.

Acierto de peregrino

Estoy de paso –
pájaro fugaz,
pez escurridizo
y no me paro.

No queda pista
ni en el aire
ni en el agua
de mi visita.

No queda polvo
en las plumas,
las escamas
no llevan lodo.

Estoy contento.
Pues consta por todas
partes el encuentro,
y voy ligero.



Pilgrim's achievement // I'm just passing – / bird on the wing, / a darting fish / – and I'll not
pause. / No trace remains / in the air or / in the water / of my visit. / No dust remains / on my
feathers, / and on my scales / you'll find no clay. / I'm satisfied, / for it's quite clear / we've
met. And, yes, / I travel light.

Bonito error

“¡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!”

Desde el Puente Romano

Manadas delirantes de espectros efímeros
valsando van
con la silueta
de la Catedral.
Y sus capas de seda besan las cañas,
y al cielo sube un suave susurrar.

El estático brujo del río Tormes
abraza las piedras del Puente Romano;
y el murmullo de los besos por el aire tibio
es el lírico canto de un día que muere.

Tras flamígeras torres agoniza el sol,
y en la sima de su ansia caen gotas de sangre,
oscuras,
volcánicas.

¿Por qué me asfixiáis, duendes fugaces
de las entreluces?
¿Por qué me claváis con carámbanos incitantes
de esperanza funesta?
Es la hora de la madre
que espera al hijo
que ya está muerto.
Es la noche satánica
cuando llama tres veces la aldaba de bronce
sobre la puerta dormida.

El eco lejano de legiones errantes
atormenta el sueño del Puente Romano.
Susurra el crujir de miles de cuerpos,
resuenan pies, cascos, garras.
Se aproxima el estruendo de cincuenta mil buitres
del cruel infierno.
Sigue acercándose, me hipnotiza,
se abalanza hacia mí, brincando, chillando,
siempre, siempre

Y ha pasado. Ya se ha ido. Entre las tinieblas se esfuma,
huye, calla, desaparece.
Y ahora, nada: sólo silencio.

Me acaricia el pecho un ardor muy grato:
está pensando en un sinnúmero de cuernos de cabra
que le hubieran traspasado de lado a lado
si no existiera el cabrero
que ahora, solitario, pasa:
dueño aburrido de unos mil demonios.

Elegir su elíxir

I

Yo, cuando me encuentro gris,
me animo con un anís.

Pero algo en los bares odio:
se trata de 'El Mono' polio.
Tiene fama este licor
de ser (dicen) 'el mejor'.

Excluir por eso a otros buenos,
limita, y me pone negro.

Elegir su elíxir

II

Le veo en sueños a 'El Mono'
nada manso, sin cadena:
alza en alto su botella
para pegarme en el coco.

¡Ay de mí! que soy culpable.
¡Ay de mí! pues él lo sabe.

Siendo joven, me pusieron
a estudiar lo que más vale:
en lenguas clásicas, griego
y latín – el culto viejo
venerado por la flor
y la nata intelectual;
luego, francés y alemán,
inglés y, claro – 'español'.

¡Pobres padres que me guiaron!
¡Escuela, universidad
y academia, que otorgaron
mis estudios incompletos!
Ni en Oxford, ni en Salamanca
insistieron en lo bueno
que me perdía, y venganza

catalana que habría.

Y ahora, otra vez, la huída
de El Mono aterrador.

Una gota del licor
en la lengua filistea
que ignora la contraseña
catalana, daría con
toda mi digestión hecha
polvo inútil, en el suelo.

Focus of attraction

In this river, fishes groped an isolated life,
each one alone,
deep down in densely waving weeds –
so green and gloomy,
and under stones, and in the cold clay banks.

Each one alone.

And see them now! They've sprung to life,
streak up and down,
score the surface,
leap from wave to wave –
gold and silver gleaming in the sun.

Hear them laugh, and sing!

Though the weight of water flows on as before,
new life inside will make it change its course.

Free, to choose

Sparrows chat, listen, hop and swoop,
a lizard hugs the sun clad wall
and crickets sing maracas notes;
ants shift a crumb across a stone,
a frog lost in the cellar, bawls
and flies drift, stilly, round a room.

Creatures, some large, some small: and though
they all have needs, and wants (a role),
– we were told a long time ago
they lack free will, and lack a soul.

So many ways to live a life,
so many lives with little say!
We, choose the way we live our lives,
we, choose the way ... we end our days.



Un lugar para armas tomar

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

Metric feats in S minor

I

Inch by inch they've always moved, and
move today: centred, steadfast, slow.

2.54cms.

– is all the talk now, as they glide
concerned, but gallant, through the grass.

2.54cms.

– seems quite absurd to snails, who ease
their way imperially along.

2.54cms.

Round it down, to 2.5? or
2? round it up, to heavens, what?

2.54cms.

Come what may, life will never be
the same for you, or snails, or me.

2.54cms.

Might there be marches? chaos and
clashes? as the law concerning

2.54cms.

looms, and bites? Will snails soldier on
regardless? They'll be spared, at least

– under the sway of metric rule –
all temptation, when running late,
of putting their best foot forward.

Metric feats in S minor

II

When the heat's on, will snails convert
(at sixty seconds a minute)
from our Fahrenheit to Celsius?

Metric feats in S minor

III

“A pint of milk, a pound of flour!”

– “These measurements, Sir, aren’t used now.

.568 of a litre,

.454 of a kilo

is what you mean, but – we regret,
such quantities aren’t practical.

Half a litre, half a kilo,

that’s how we sell them now, you know.”

“That’s not much drink, and too much dough!”

– “Just relax, Sir, and face the facts:

you’ll have to change, and start again,

unlearning all you’ve learned before.”

The Moon: three images

Night, a cave wall
curving wavewise
round the whirlpool
of the Earth.
In the shadows
of the cliff face
ring a siren's
moss-sad footfalls.

Night, a black gown
wrapped uneasy
round the dark dreams
of the Earth.
In the deep folds
of the mantle
gleams a brittle
silver brooch.

Night, a vulture
whirling closely
past the cornfields
of the Earth.
In the wide-winged
circling vulture
burns a bitter
lustful eye.

Naturally

Long figures, black, and fragile specks of heads
wait, go forward, and dare the waves;
most are swallowed up – just one or two ride
home in momentary triumph.

Triangles, white, incongruous against
the even blue, seem not to move –
but the sails, taut, tell of yachts manoeuvring
as crews compete to rule the wind.

Facing the weather, at rest on the sea,
every wing folded, watchful, still –
look at them, gathered there! all of one mind,
gulls unruffled, where they belong.

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.

Perro destino

En las esquinas de las calles
de Cádiz capital,
abundan monumentos
de la gloria nacional:
defensores de antaño
que alejaban a invasores
de ultramar.

¡Que perduren en sus puestos
los cañones!
¡que recuerden, que proclamen
los cañones
tanta gloria nacional!

Inocente, preguntaba
si servían
los cañones
de apoyo a las casas
demacradas del lugar.

Inocente, preguntaba
si servían
los cañones
para inspirar respeto
a los coches circulando
sin parar.

Y con sonrisa me decían:
– Los ojos y las narices
cuentan su destino actual:
para los perros les sirven
de molde para mear,
mear, mear.

En las esquinas de las calles
de Cádiz capital,
abundan monumentos
de la gloria nacional:
defensores de antaño
que alejaban a invasores
de ultramar.

Pigeon

Ruffled, huddled, still,
against the wall
feet away
from the happy tavern door –
it lies,
displays no feeling
and makes no sound:
it simply –
dies.

Royalty, almost

Such decorum!
See? no need to talk.
It's so natural, that silence
as they proceed at a measured
pace along the street keeping perfect time.
Unfussed, they come close
bestowing a nod
to left and to right
systematically
(although there's nobody about ...how odd!),
always watching where they're going.
And past my window, now, they've walked
– the two pigeons – and
quite out of sight.



Still life plus

White walls dazzle,
brilliant,
beneath a sun
high out of sight
from where I lie;
the whiteness underpins, and clasps, the sky.

Here – note a patch
of ochre red,
there – gold and brown,
fine lines of black,
a sea of blue
beyond
and overhead;
the view, devoid of life, seems fixed and still.

Then I hear them:
shadows – sideways,
up and down,
round and round,
tiny, darting, dark;
whirls of joy, swallows on the wing, they fill
the light with sound, bring everything to life.

Summer busy ness

Swallows swoop from
Rosalía,
up San Dimas
and then back.

Their shadows run
across the walls
in wild pursuit,
gain, catch up
and overtake.

Their calls, their cries,
their squeals precede,
accompany
and follow.

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
mO eurs
C 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

Swallow holes

I've just been told
there's lots more sky –
most of the swallows flown.

But – what a sight!
it's full of holes
each swallow's left behind!

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.

Up and away

Seen on the ground, nearby, they always looked
a greasy lot, furtive, scruffy, squat, al-
most vulgar, their gait impatient, jerky.

But then, unbidden,
innumerable,
they filled the sky, hung
an undulating
belt of black against
the blue; contracting,
then, they made a square
which stretched and shrank, and
shrank and stretched; and then
a moment later
they curled and rolled, spun
into a breakneck
spiral, plummeted
headlong for the ground;
but then the vortex
split, regrouped, and formed
a cloud, circular,
tremulous and dense;
off they drifted, then
swinging suddenly
they soared and slipped, slipped
and soared, blurs which zig-
zagged, wavered, grew, drew
close; then, dropping low,
they passed, followed by
a rush, a 'whoosh' of
wings and they were gone.

Now, maybe, you'll term them 'iridescent',
'alert', 'carefree', 'sturdy', 'different'; and self-
respecting starlings do find *walking* dull.



Wing din

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

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'?

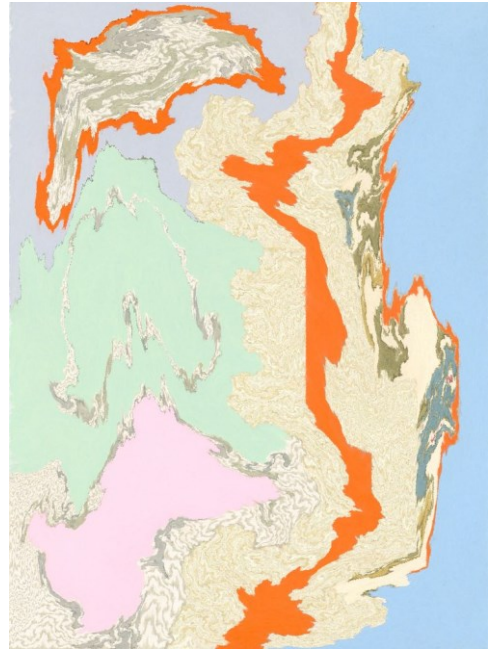
No, not acres of dishevelled grass,
for grass is green,
and green is hope.

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

Absence 1	Cadiz	2007
The first of a series of 12 poems written during Win's absence, working in England. The two buildings next door had just been demolished, and the site was a mess, dead: except for ...		
<i>Acierto de peregrino</i>	Cadiz	2004
Inspired by a chance meeting with the son of Australian artist Deirde Jack, of Swift's Creek, Omeo, whom I had known and with whose paintings I was reasonably familiar. I bumped into her gaunt, fit, cheerful and totally luggage-free Duncan in a crowded supermarket in ... Cadiz. He had just completed the <i>Camino de Santiago</i> , and there was about him something of its atmosphere.		
<i>Bonito error</i>	Cadiz	2009
Set at the <i>Casa Lazo</i> café restaurant. Tuna can be <i>atún</i> or <i>bonito</i> (the latter also an adjective). And then we have (the fish) grouper or groper, <i>mero</i> (and quite unrelated, <i>esmero</i>).		
<i>Desde el Puente romano</i>	Salamanca	1958
(See: PROSE ... notes for an autobiography – Salamanca.) There were aspects of Salamanca to remind one of El Greco's famous painting of Toledo ... topography, colours, atmosphere.		
<i>Elegir su elixir, I y II</i>	Cadiz	2001
The second poem started as a footnote. Catalan did not feature in Spanish studies at school level, and while some Catalan courses (mainly literary) were available within Spanish studies at Oxford, they were not compulsory.		
Focus of attraction	Melbourne	1970
Though the fish are just metaphors here, and part of an allegory, they merit a note. They reflect not a little personal background, based on fishing clear Oxford streams as a child to designing and constructing my elaborate fishponds in Perth (Western Australia) and Melbourne: ponds which I then stocked with plants drawn from nearby rivers, creeks and swamps (some with yabbis – and problems – concealed in their accompanying clay).		
Free, to choose	Cadiz	2004
Set at my home in calle San Dimas. The 'cellar' used to be the <i>aljibe</i> , and the frog was for real, rescued and set free later in the nearby Parque Genovés.		
<i>Un lugar para armas tomar</i>	Cadiz	2009
Set in the Galician café bar <i>La Rambla</i> (calle Sopranis) with its vast array of <i>tapas</i> which includes many seafood dishes. One of the ingredients features here. The owner, Olimpio, retired in 2014 but business continues much as usual.		
Metric feats in S minor, I, II and III	Cadiz	2001
The second and third poems began as footnotes. Remembered here are the large snails which abounded in our garden in Perth, Western Australia: impressive creatures, which alas I had to		

collect by the bucket every morning and dispatch ... to protect our plants.		
The Moon, three images	England	1959
Naturally Does the sequence denote – inverted paradox – gullible, less so, not?	Cadiz	2003
Out of its depth The second poem began as a footnote. Not a useful sort of fish, and its silver anything but sterling.	Cadiz	2001
Pasatiempos ‘Sol y sombra’ Towards a crossword. My views are mixed on the subject of <i>los toros</i> , but were further confused by Roberta’s insistence that I sign a petition banning bullfights ... or she would not speak to me again. Her three businesses went bust ... but I don’t suppose there’s a connection.	Cadiz	2007
Perro destino I still fancy this as material for a Cadiz <i>chirigota</i> .	Cadiz	2002
Pigeon Set in little calle Zorrilla, off the plaza de Mina, with its many well patronised bars. After the rose- buds, and the hay, it’s good to know (when all else fails) – Seneca’s there, in the wings.	Cadiz	2001
Royalty, almost Such bourgeois, bordering on aristocratic, protagonists.	Cadiz	2007
Still life plus Set in my first flat in calle Beato Diego – the bedroom view: Motionless and hot, all light and colour, then add a touch of sound – that’s ‘Still life plus’. It’s ‘abstract’, to you? or ‘impressionist’? In terms of the effect, well yes, that’s true. And were these my aims? Not quite, no. I just ‘forgot’ the buildings, so engrossed in what I saw ... and heard. ‘Omissionist’ says more.	Cadiz	2001
Summer busyness A morning and evening close-up sight from our study giving on to calle San Dimas. The speed of manoeuvre is incredible, mishaps rare. Flights: over a period of about four months from April to August, give or take a fortnight.	Cadiz	2007
Surréalismes In search of representational techniques ... with a typewriter!	England	1960
Swallow holes There’s sadness at this time ... but also acute awareness of the changed aspect of the distant overhead sky ... so frequented as it had been by the large numbers of speeding birds.	Cadiz	2010
A timely spring	Cadiz	2011

Language is thick with sayings, some more right than others.
 Why not suggest one more, and let hares have a word? After all,
 what's sauce for the goose ...

Top dog	Cadiz	2010
It's a scene to be believed ... this view is far from being biased. But Jesus – a neighbour – and his dog, who pass my window every day between nine-thirty and ten, have a nicer relationship.		
Up and away	Cadiz	2004
Murmurations in the skies over Cadiz, a phenomenon which I noticed in the weeks before my Mother's death in Cadiz and then prior to that of my son Patrick, in New Zealand. Like ballet, vibrant, in winter skies, and about appearances, and truth – inside. The sulphur-crested cockatoos in Omeo, Australia share some of these behavioural characteristics.		
Wing din	Cadiz	2011
Such a shame that most people – including my cat – feel a need to kill them ... when all they're trying to do is communicate.		
Without you	Auckland	1967
How time can drag its feet, and hurt be prolonged, inexorably.		

THE ILLUSTRATIONS – see 'ART WORK' for general information

POEMS

ILLUSTRATIONS – title, and ref.

Acierto de peregrino
Free, to choose

Royalty, almost
Up and away

Without you

Papegados

'Viaje del alma por el espacio' / 2:18

'Las cuatro Delicias I' / 1:06 ('twist',
 courtesy Frango)

Retrato 'Amparo' / 2:07

Salvamanteles 2 'Oriana y Flor' / 1:18
 ('twist', courtesy Frango)

Retrato 'Alaitz' / 2:05 ('twist', courtesy
 Frango)