

LINES OF A LIFETIME IV

'EROS 3'
In absentia



poems

Bruno Scarfe

July 2017

EROS 3

In absentia



A selection of poems from the collection

Lines of a Lifetime



BRUNO SCARFE



With
El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra
in mind



INTRODUCTION ‘Eros 3: *In absentia*’

‘*In absentia*’ is the third of the three *Eros* parts (all within *Lines of a Lifetime*), the others being ‘Foibles of the flesh’ and ‘Heavings of the heart’. While this division into parts has not been easy and may prompt disagreement, I trust that the subtitle ‘*In absentia*’ will convey something of the characteristics of separation where time and place exercise such strange effects - poignant melancholy, dreamlike illusion and even hallucination. Ultimately, the umbrella title *Eros* should be held in mind as the name generally applicable to all three selections – though the word ‘Eros’ itself has nuances which may be said to reach further afield.

The poems contained in this particular selection were written in Auckland, Melbourne and Cadiz, though the majority are Cadiz. The only poem in this selection to have been published, ‘Without you’, was written in Melbourne and published in Western Australia soon after. The pieces here fall mainly into two groups: a series of twelve called ‘Absences’ and another of eight called ‘Trish’. The former series was moved by thoughts during one of the several absences of my wife Winifred Ann working in England, and ranges from poems specifically on absence and communication to questions of identity and destiny. The latter series, more verse than poetry, form part of a substantial correspondence with Patricia Leon, the person who had inherited my bookshop in Omeo and whom I was fortunate enough to meet again albeit briefly in Cadiz in 2010.

INTRODUCTION General: *Lines of a Lifetime*

I am told I wrote my first poem ‘Summer’, when I was eight.

It strikes me now as embarrassingly flawed. I seemed to think that

swallows landed on the ground and, a little while later and at another place I seemed to think I could recognize a particular swallow ... well, I ask you! Not to mention the matter of describing a cat I claimed to be unable to see ... Yet my father was delighted at this effort. Why? I suppose he considered these ingenuous aspects as secondary, reflecting a child's psychology where reality may come second to the wish and where time sequences are not of the essence. I can feel though that the poem has a sense of rhythm ... actually rhythms, and all over the place, but rhythms nevertheless. I believe he used the poem when lecturing on poetry, possibly making some of these points.

All so embarrassing. And yet there can be no doubting the positive effect his pleasure had on me. Later, during the rest of my school years, I continued to receive his encouragement, and from his mother a little reward which helped supplement my meagre pocket money. Yes, truth will out. So that's how my poetry began ... and continued ... and continues, for even now there can be errors of fact, and controversy regarding suitability of subject and taste, not to mention techniques and presentation.

When, a few years ago, I decided it might be worthwhile at last to bring together and present my poetry, I decided to call it *Lines of a lifetime*, and organised the poems alphabetically by title. This would make for a random reading which would avoid pedantic chronological sequencing and the limitations imposed by an artificial grouping of subjects. But this was objected to, and I was urged to arrange the poems by subject: not at all easy ... as many poems fall into a number of subject categories, leading either to perceived misrepresentation or to obvious duplication. Tough. The total collection now appears under the original title, above, but with these 11 subtitles: 1) 'Cadiz', people, places and situations, 2)

'Eros – foibles of the flesh', 3) 'Eros – heavings of the heart', 4) 'Eros – in absentia', 5) 'Measuring up' and some of the inside story, 6) 'Mixed blessings' food, drink and quirks of the table, 7) 'The Natural World – heaven and earth', 8) 'The Natural World – the bestiary I', 9) 'The Natural World – the bestiary II', being cattributes A-Z, and others, 10) 'Words at play' games with words expressed in verse, 11) 'Wrestling at dawn' or, Juvenilia.

Hopefully, these subtitles and the accompanying comments will provide some insight into the range and nature of experiences I thought fit to express in verse. The poems, covering the period 1947 to the present, include ones written or conceived in the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, France, Spain, Germany and India. The majority are in English, many are in Spanish and there is a handful in other languages dead and alive.

Al don divino de la
añoranza

EROS 3: *In absentia* – a selection

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 ...?” (to Win)

Amor de prostíbulo (al Duende)

Apurados

Ausencia 1

Ausencia 2 (a Teresa)

Ausencia 3 (a Teresa)

Contigo (a Glenwys)

El jinete de la Ginebra (a Antonio Núñez)

Pity Penelope

The shout (to Glenwys)

Torture of memory (to Nanette)

Trish 1: “There was a smile ...”

Trish 2: “Beware the lion ...”

Trish 3: “Above the sea ...”

Trish 4: “She won’t be turned ...”

Trish 5: “I saw you seated ...”

Trish 6: “There was a lady ...”

Trish 7: “In the foothills ...”

Trish 8: “You say you can’t ...”

Wanted, missing (to Win)

Without you

Illustrated

Absences 5 and 7, *Amor de prostíbulo*, *Ausencias 1 y 2*, *El jinete de la Ginebra*, Pity Penelope, The shout, Trish 1 and 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 top-
most 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.

Absence 3

To Win

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.

Absence 4

To Win

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".





Absence 5

To Win

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!





Absence 7

To Win

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, may move
to oust you, and want me dressed in another shirt.

Absence 8

To Win

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?

Absence 10

To Win

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

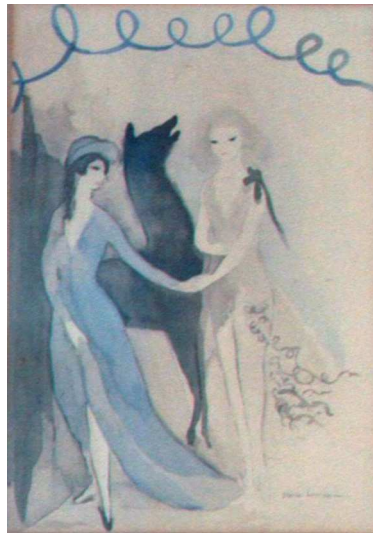
To Win

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.

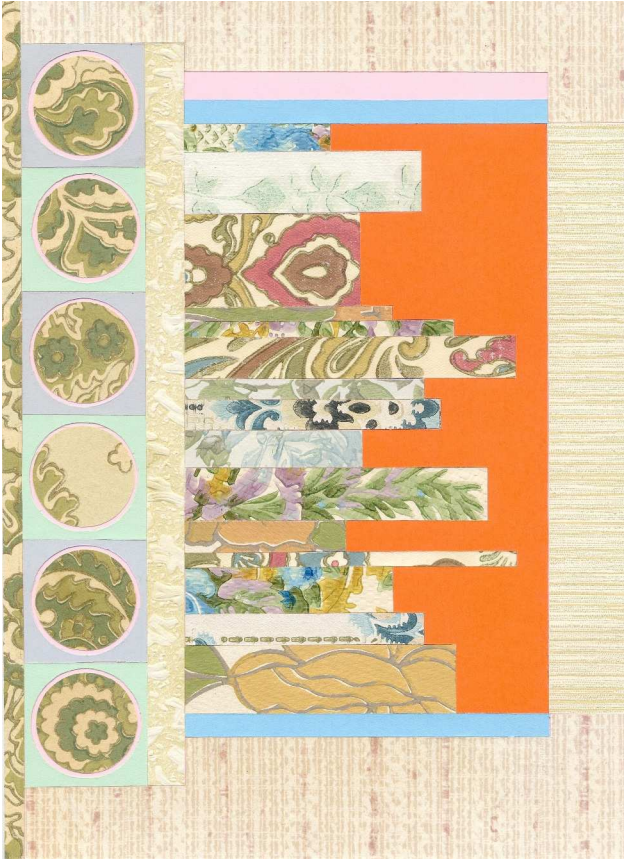
El Rey Artús pues, se ofreció
ponerle algo ‘de lo mejó’.

– ¿Cómo, amigo, callas la sed?
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!





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

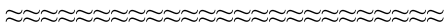
hasta detenerse en tu mirada.



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;

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.

=====

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 chicharos,
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 tónico
(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.”





Trish 1

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 yourself quite inside out
all full of hope (but can't quite cope!),
only to hear that dreadful shout
“What! Is there nothing ready yet?””

Trish 2

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 about,
you'll get slim ... the others stout!

Trish 3

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!

Trish 4

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.

Trish 5

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.

Trish 6

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.

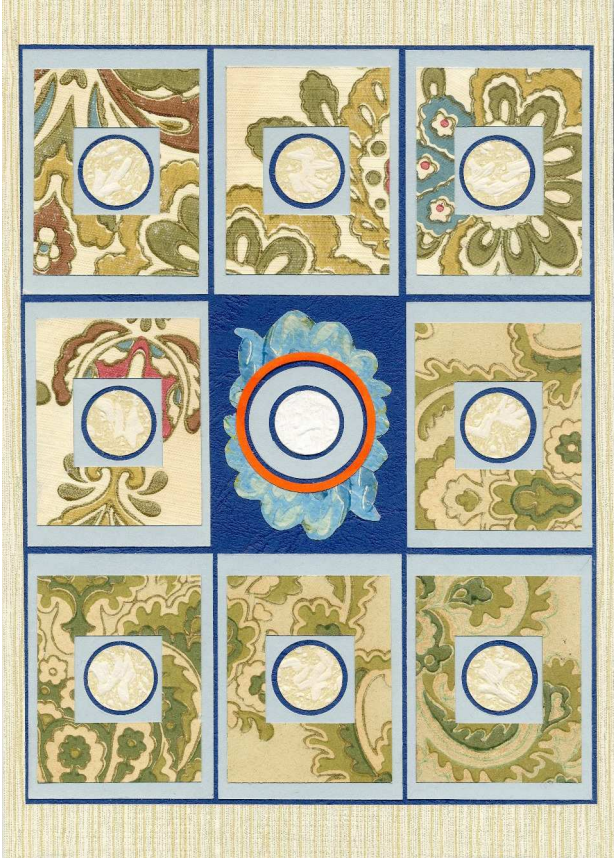
Weary comes as weary goes,
spare a thought for tired toes.

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.



Trish 7

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.

Trish 8

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.

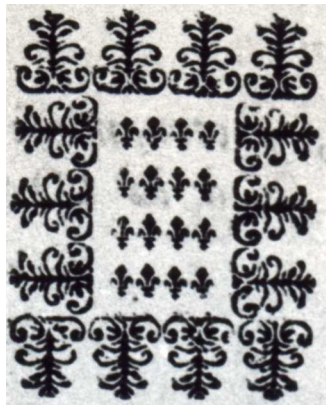
Wanted, missing ...

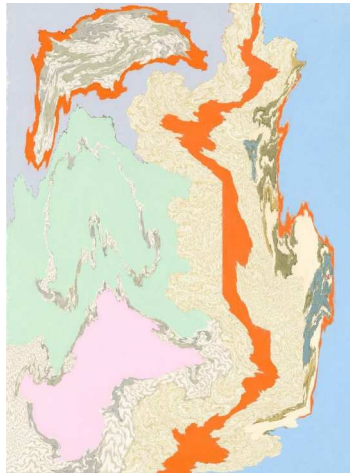
To Win

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

Cadiz

2007

Series of twelve poems to Winifred Ann (Jodell, née Woods) or 'Win', my partner since about 1990 and then wife, absent from Cadiz on respite care work in England.

Absence 1 (also in The Natural world - the Bestiary 1)

The building site was next door in calle San Telmo, and took up half the street. As with all such sites it was a deathly wilderness ... with exceptions such as here.

Absence 2

(A secondary consideration) While you take news from a dream with a pinch of salt, you tend to believe the message on a phone.

Absence 3 (also features in Mixed blessings)

We grew a lot of parsley on our *azotea* (roof garden). It is a Cadiz custom in small businesses and at home to keep a little statue of San Pancracio handy, with a vase of parsley in front. He stands for prosperity, especially employment. When things don't work out he's put in the fridge, *castigado*. (See also 'Votive offering - a sprig of parsley' in The Natural world - Heaven and earth)

Absence 4

The 'Dragon' tree, from the Canary Islands, can live for hundreds of years. There was a magnificent specimen just off the plaza de Mina.

Absence 5

(A secondary consideration) To the trials of old, you can add new ones that come with labour saving electrical gadgets.

Absence 6

This craze ... a social / anti-social addiction called 'progress'.

Absence 7

Win would have approved of the demise of a series of

shirts I wore ... but then what?

Absence 8

(As for 6, above) The ferry was the (ill-fated) *Adriano III* which plied between Cadiz and the Puerto de Santa María, a forty-five minute run. It was the joy of this ferry trip which kept me visiting the Puerto for years.

Absence 9

(Particulars on my website)

Amor de prostíbulo (also features in Cadiz) Cadiz 2004

Set in our house at 10, calle San Dimas. The building (a '*finca*' in this part of Spain) was once a brothel, and more recently a boarding house for students of the University's nearby Medical Faculty. The welcoming atmosphere which seemed to pervade the run down building together with the curious feeling of some benign presence were instrumental in prompting me to buy it. The house has two entrances, the original one on the side street at 6, calle San Telmo.

Apurados (also features in Words at play) Cadiz 2001

Los otros (veintidós) – los ausentes –
son los doce pares, menos él
aquí padeciendo mal de sed
y mal de amores, Lanzarote.

Ausencia 1 (also features in Cadiz) Cadiz 2007

The reference is to the *dama de noche* (*cestrum nocturnum*), planted on the *azotea* by Win, absent in England at the time of my writing.

Ausencia 2 (also features in Cadiz) Cadiz 2007

On a gaze from Teresa, a friend who ran the bookshop *Q & Q* (then in calle San Francisco), as we shared a drink at the nearby *Senátor* (pronounced thus).

Ausencia 3 (also features in Cadiz) Cadiz 2007

Though not about absences, it is a continuation of *Ausencia 2*. Teresa's gaze and vitality are well matched.

Contigo (also features in Cadiz, and in Mixed blessings) Cadiz 2012

While fare and setting at the *Malibú*, Réynold's beach bar etc. (*chiringuito*) off the paseo Marítimo, had usually been good, both were transformed on that memorable evening.

Chirigotas are Cadiz carnival songs, rhythmical, slightly Caribbean and usually satirical, played anywhere, anytime. The *Levante* is a tiresome wind from the east, or more often the south, reaching at times galeforce intensity. This beach, the *Victoria*, makes for excellent sunset watching.

El jinete de la Ginebra (also features in Words at play) Cadiz 2007
 Prompted by a late night conversation and literary duel (over a gin tonic?) with my friend at Carina's other premises, the *Jambalaya* in calle Sagasta.

Pity Penelope Auckland 1967
 A combination of myths ... Hero, Leander, Ulysses

The shout Cadiz 2012
 ... And there was no shouting back.

Torture of memory Melbourne 1970

TRISH Cadiz 2010

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

Trish 1 (also features in Mixed blessings)

Trish 2 (also features in Mixed blessings)

There are lions and lions ... and the Omeo Annual Show and part played by the Omeo Lions and their supporters.

Trish 3 (also features in Mixed blessings)

Trish 4

Ted was an elderly character from nearby Benambra, eccentric, unwell, unkempt and friendly. He was known for his high profile outdoor scrap heap of domestic and farming equipment, stuff in general ... and for hitching a ride.

Trish 5

Speak of teleporting ... and there she seemed to be, as large as life (and not). I greatly miss my personally designed marble (and fossils) desk, still at the *Octagon*.

Trish 6

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

Trish 7

A multiplicity of themes, principally that of the

(perceived) notoriously dangerous outdoors versus the 'safe' indoors. But dangers lurk at home ... as in the world of IT, which Patricia and I used exhaustively prior to her visiting me in Cadiz.

Trish 8

Patricia often wrote of hearing a flight of geese ... I have no clear idea of their significance. The park is the botanically interesting, ornamental *Parque Genovés*, a hundred yards from my home in Cadiz.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|
| Wanted, missing (also features in <i>Mixed blessings</i>)
The time Win went sight-seeing to Granada. | Cadiz | 2004 |
| Without you (also features in <i>The Natural world - the Bestiary 1</i> . Published <i>Westerly</i> University of Western Australia Press n.2, 1973) | Auckland | 1973 |



Notes

ILLUSTRATIONS from my collections of *Papegados* and *Cristaletas*

My background as an artist is almost nil. As a schoolboy at Ampleforth in the '50s I managed to exhibit clay models of a cat and elephant, and also an interpretation of a woman of Ancient Crete in poster colours, at the annual 'Exhibition'. At that time I also did some pencilled sketches (I'd forgotten my camera!) to illustrate my travel diary 'Spanish Impressions', excerpts of which were soon to be published. Apart from that I had some success with photographs taken while running my first bookshop in Foster, Australia in the '80s, with close-ups of beach sand formations (b/w), landscapes and studies on reflections (b/w and colour). Generally speaking, though, there was nothing to indicate that anything special might happen as the second millenium got under way.

Having bought a 150 year old house (a *finca*) in Cadiz, Spain, I set about its repair. The 24 room brothel-turned-lodging house was home for six months to a building gang whose foreman caused me grief. He didn't want me around. In the end I thought of salvaging bits and pieces of the peeling wallpapers (spiders, flies and even lizards lurked behind), saying I wanted the papers as a record. This was partly to keep an eye on things (unbeknownst?) and partly to satisfy my pleasure at the designs and colours of the wallpapers ... and the just exposed pastel paint schemes underneath.

It was with time on my hands as I awaited completion of the house renovations at c. San Dimas 10 (known in its brothel days as c. San Telmo 6), seated at my then home in nearby c. Beato Diego, and surrounded by bags bulging with wallpaper remains – that I gradually became aware of growing discontent. This art work, for all that it had been created by small time artists, had now been freed from the walls to which it had been assigned, and was hoping for a chance to make a bit of a show. And there was I, conscious of this find, remembering it *in situ*, and dwelling on its curious designs and stimulating colours – frustrated: all because it lay there at my feet bagged up, invisible.

So I hit on a plan. I would stick samples of the wallpapers onto card and so bring them easily to mind. Days later, having scraped old plaster off the back

of some papers, and washed and dried others (watching in dismay as papers tore and colours ran) I set to work. I assembled my first wallpaper composite, incorporating strips of new card to match the paint underlay which had been so long lost to sight. I liked the result.

But my task was barely completed when I became aware that most of the designs and colour schemes remained unrepresented. So I set about creating another picture, and another and ... another. Which made 30, soon to be followed by a further 30 when two new papers came to light (and much later by six more when I incorporated Roman coins retrieved at Jimena de la Frontera). There were elements of every design and colour. Meanwhile, my pictures developed from basic arrangements of scraps, to considered abstracts and works with a theme. From a picture shape serving to display aspects of functional wallpaper art, I had gone to using wallpaper to create pictures.

What I had made are 'collages'. Dissatisfied at the lack of a Spanish word, I named my collage a *papegado*, from the Spanish for paper (*papel*) and pasted (*pegado*). After all, here we were in Spain, the wallpapers were Spanish, and the transmutation had occurred in Spain ... and Spaniards are open to neologisms. My *papegados* gave rise to exhibitions at the Cadiz *Casino* (reviews *Diario de Cádiz* and *La Voz*), the Cadiz *Ateneo* (intr. Marisa de las Cuevas, profesora de Historia del Arte), *Quilla*, and online through *La Rampa* Gallery. They have also appeared at several commercial establishments, and were made especially welcome at *Casa Lazo*. Recycled art, what?

POEMS

Absence 7

Amor de prostíbulo

Ausencia 1

Ausencia 2

El jinete de la Ginebra

Trish 1

Trish 7

POEMS

Absence 5

Papegados

Sobrecubierta 2 'Lomo con ladrillos' / 2:23

Fantasia 'Gloria se descubre' / 2:01

'El burdel de la calle San Telmo 6 a pleno rendimiento' / 2:12

Retrato 'Teresa' / 2:08

'El viaje irreal' / 1:16

Sobrecubierta 4 'Lomo de tejido basto' / 2:25

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

Papegados converted to Frangos

Frango twist, from my Fantasia 'Flor, protagonista' / 1:09

Pity Penelope

Frango twist, from my *Fantasia 'Rosa y Celeste, protagonistas'* / 1:02

Without you

Frango twist, from my *Retrato 'Alaitz'* / 2:05

But recycling did not end there. While walking along my local beach at La Caleta, I used to be bothered by the amount of broken glass lying around on the surface of the sand. It struck me as a hazard. Eventually I collected some and dumped it in a heap for all to see, hoping someone would get the hint and initiate a tidy up. No luck. But I had noticed two things in doing so: neither my feet nor my hands got cut, and many of the pieces of glass were attractive for both their colours and shapes.

So I started collecting the pieces, some small and some substantial. They seemed to come in three colours: green, brown and clear. A rather limited range, you might think, were it not for the fact that each of these three was represented in a multitude of shades, from deepest green to a quite delicate green (almost blue), from brown verging on black to a delicate shade of amber, from a crazed and milky whiteness to completely clear. As for the shapes, these bits of glass seemed to represent the remains of a million and one bottles (and accompanying glasses?). Many of the pieces were mere shards, no more than splinters, but others could be whole bottle bases or whole bottle necks and openings.

You may guess what happened next. I had moved on from collages to montages, or from *Papegados* to *Cristaletas*, the latter being my neologism (another one) which incorporates glass (*crystal*) and an allusion to La Caleta, my beach of supply.

The beach continued to reveal fresh glass with each passing tide, and I continued to find that none of the millions of pieces, whatever their size or shape, seemed to cause injury.

POEM

The shout

Cristaleta

'*Cristaleta 6*'

ILLUSTRATIONS – spacers and front cover

Mermaid spacers which featured in *Eros 1* and *2* continue, but have been

reduced to one at the start and end of the book ... reflecting the different mood of the *In absentia* collection. The model used shows a seated and pensive figure in terracotta commissioned from the Galería de Arte Nando, Cadiz.

The main group of spacers, consisting of printers' ornamental blocks (usually general purpose) were made of wood and, later, metal. These were copied in the 1970s from the end or title page of plays now in the Scarfe – La Trobe collection (part sale, one third donation), Glasgow University Library. Arranged here (only) by date, these are as follow:

- a) Squared, rustic presentation of five flowers gathered in a fabric collar, stalks splayed out below: end block from Antonio Fajardo y Acevedo *Origen de N. Señora de las Angustias, y rebelión de los moriscos* in 'Parte cuarenta de comedias nuevas, de diversos autores' [also known as 'Escogidas 40'], (Iulián de Paredes, [Madrid] 1675). Ref.: BS 564 & BN T-i 16 v.40.
- b) Square of 16 like ornamental tiles making two whole and four half circles: title page cast-divider block from *El Tesoro escondido* (fragment following *El Gran mercado del mundo*) in part 4 of Pedro de Pando y Mier's collection 'Autos sacramentales, alegóricos e historiales del insigne poeta español don Pedro Calderón de la Barca' ([Manuel Ruiz de Murga, Madrid 1717]). Ref.: BS 329 & BN T 497.
- c) Oblong rectangular ornamental frame enclosing four Maltese crosses and a plainer inner frame with hands pointing two up and two down: title page cast-divider block from *Más vale el hombre que el nombre* in v.2 of the collection 'Poesías cómicas, obras póstumas de D. Francisco Banzes Candamo' ([Lorenzo Francisco Mojados, Madrid 1722]). Ref.: BS 464 & BN T 9810.
- d) Squared presentation of eight flowers over a squat two-handled vase: end block from *No hay amor donde hay agravio* in the collection 'Obras líricas y cómicas, divinas y humanas ... de don Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza' (2nd. imp.), ([Juan de Zúñiga, Madrid 1728]). Ref.: BS 534:iii & BN R 30806.
- e) Squared presentation of four flowers, a bud and conjectural elements around a wide and low standing vase, all suggestive of Giuseppe Arcimboldo: end block from *Duendes son alcahuetes, y el Espíritu Foletto* in v.2 of the collection 'Comedias de don Antonio de Zamora' ([Joaquín Sánchez, Madrid 1744]). Ref.: BS 265 & BN R 12591.
- f) Oblong octagonal frame of 12 like designs enclosing two more and six new like designs, plus eight 'S' figures overall: title page cast-divider block from *El Lirio y la azucena*, in v.5 of Fernández de Apontes collection 'Autos sacramentales, alegóricos e historiales del Fénix de los Poetas, el español don

Pedro Calderón de la Barca' ([Viuda de Manuel Fernández, Imprenta Supremo Consejo de la Inquisición, Madrid 1760]). Ref.: BS 404 & BN T 3161.

g) Rectangular frame of 14 like designs enclosing 16 new like designs divided in fours: title page cast-divider block from *El Pastor Fido* (and as for 'f', above). Ref.: BS 579 & BN T 3161.

h) Downcast head, circled, in loosely shaped rectangular swag of foliage etc. ('Green Man' effect): Santiago Garro *Músicos, amo y criado, y el amor por el retrato* in v.22 of the collection 'Comedias de varios autores' (no colophon [late 18th c.]). Ref.: BS 520:i & BN T 14839.

The four remaining spacers are: a late 18th / early 19th c. Italian maiolica alborelli, waisted form, polichrome with a face suggestive of a Picasso; a Marie Laurencin watercolour with (left) a young woman, (centre) a doe and (right) the faint outlines of another woman; two Cantagali printed pottery busts in the Della Robbia style; a French mantle clock, with green painted and gilt heightened waisted case, gilt metal mounts and the date 1779, the 8-day movement with silk suspension and striking on a bell.

The rose of the front cover accompanies the poem 'The Full rose' (The Natural world - heaven and earth) with its opening quote "*Je ne regrette rien*" (photo courtesy Glen Albrecht).



