

LINES OF A LIFETIME VII

'THE NATURAL WORLD'

Heaven and earth



poems

BRUNO SCARFE

September (late) 2017

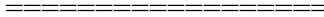
THE NATURAL WORLD 1

Heaven and earth



A selection of poems from the collection

Lines of a Lifetime



BRUNO SCARFE



With
lo sobrenatural
(por supuesto)
in mind



INTRODUCTION 'The Natural world 1: Heaven and earth'

'Heaven and earth' is the first of the three parts of *The Natural world* and volume seven in the overall collection *Lines of a Lifetime*, following *Cadiz*, the *Eros* series of three, *Measuring up* and *Mixed blessings*.

Spiritual themes are alluded to in general, philosophical or abstract terms. Exceptions to this include 'Who on Earth ...' (with a Hindu background) and the light-hearted 'Voices' (Christian) where, in fact, religion is not of the essence. 'The Juggler', an extended metaphor with a religious message, I hope may be thought meaningful to people of most persuasions. Destiny, fate, the magical and supernatural, and the 'scientifically' inexplicable also have their place here.

'Earth', and matters of this world may also be referred to indirectly. An exception - at first glance - comes in the form of the feature series The Flowering roof with 13 poems, 12 accompanied by photographs courtesy Glenwys Albrecht. This section is the result of developing a roof garden on top of our *finca* where, initially, all was bare concrete as is typically the case in Cadiz, a town in which different flat owners share a building and feel inhibited about taking initiatives affecting a communal area. The contrast has been rewarding beyond all proportion as there is no natural countryside round Cadiz. It is a built up 'island', the man-made mitigated only by a handful of attractive parks and squares ... and the sea.

Most of the poems in this selection have been written in Cadiz, though Oxford and Salamanca are also represented. The last two offer poems which were published at the time, two of them in Spanish, one in English.

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, 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 couple in French.

*En agradecimiento
al milagro
que nos insta a emprenderlo todo*

THE NATURAL WORLD 1: 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 Flowering roof 1: 'Best friends'

The Flowering roof 2: 'Botanical'

The Flowering roof 3: 'Call of the sun'

The Flowering roof 4: 'Chives'

The Flowering roof 5: '*Crassula ovata*'

The Flowering roof 6: 'A Fresh reflection'

The Flowering roof 7: 'The Full rose'

The Flowering roof (4 plus): 'Hold-up in a kitchen garden'

The Flowering roof 8: 'Love in a mist - *Nigella damascena*'

The Flowering roof 9: '*Olor que aflora*'

The Flowering roof 10: '*Sansevieria trifasciata* - Dad's "sometime" Army'

The Flowering roof 11: 'Spider, or Purple Queen - *Tradescantia pallida*'

The Flowering roof 12: 'Votive offering - a sprig of parsley'

The Juggler

Lluvia en la noche

Men on the Moon

Miniature

The painting

Still (life)

Surréalismes

Through the railings

Viento de Castilla

Voices

Who on Earth ...

Illustrated

Above and below I & II, Approaches, The Flowering roof 1-12 (photos by Glenwys Albrecht), The Juggler, Still (life), 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 issilence.



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 sedeo
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.

Best friends

To Glen

Jostling, they slip and sway,
bob and bounce, tremble, shake:
all a-flutter, they seem
of a mind to curtsy!
Fresh-faced, innocent and
smiling, in groups and crowds.

They dance in silence, sing
in time to some hyper-
tune (near), gone long ago.
They whisper, their shapely
trumpets mute. Scents, waiting,
lie funneled well inside.

The face they wear- pale blue,
a careful blush of pink -
includes some semitones
of hue, cream and purple,
in profusion; lip-shaped
borders grace the outlines.

Demure, unassuming,
unpretentious, rustic -
they seem the essence of
politeness, patience, trust:
vulnerable as such ...
and of no consequence.

How could gentle beings
like these, survive? No, not
survive ... but prosper! with



(The Flowering roof 1 / photo G.A.)

no apparent effort.
(They stand there tall, their legs
green pennants in the breeze.)

Well, they persevere, they're
positive, show purpose;
a hint of people who,
if pushed, just might insist,
play urgent, be stubborn,
end up most obdurate.

They raise their offspring through
the seasons, everywhere:
among geraniums, herbs
and succulents, below
the spreading cumquat bush,
the wisteria and rose ...

Quiet (and pretty!), gentle,
certain, busy: they run
their lives decorously.

- "Oh yes? but petunias
are promiscuous, aren't they?"

Say 'generous', instead!

Botanical

'Bottlebrush',
'callistemon' ...
... which name's right
and which name's wrong?

Bottlebrushes ...
designed to prod
down clotted necks,
flush shoulders, shift
sedimented
bottoms: they're propped
in grotty sinks
and horrid troughs.

Callistemons ...
designed to hold
the running eye:
red filaments
painstakingly
displayed, each thread
of fire tipped with
a touch of gold.

'Bottlebrush',
'callistemon' ...
... which name's right,
and which name's wrong?



(The Flowering roof 2 / photo G.A.)

Call of the sun

When we were young and reckless
(so cock-a-hoop and hopeful),
when we were young and reckless -
"Shall we dance?" asked Lorenzo,
"shall we dance?" Lorenzo asked,
and did we dance!

Though mother tried to warn us
("Oh darlings, you'll be sorry!"),
though mother tried to warn us -
"We must dance now, we must dance!
don't bother us!" we said, and
"please don't worry!"

She'd just made us skirts
full and voluptuous,
richly woven and red:
Yes, what a daring
and what a deep red!
The skirts she'd made were
voluptuous and full,
richly woven and red:
Yes, such a daring
and such a deep red!

"Oh my gosh !" said Lorenzo
(in an aside that we heard),
"Oh my gosh!" Lorenzo said
as we raised them and opened
them and then spread them out wide:
quite unafraid.

It was the dance of a day
(playing with - praying for? - fire),
one only day for a chance
of a kiss from Lorenzo.

And that's why hibiscus blooms
shrivel and fade.



(The Flowering roof 3 / photo G.A.)

Chives

Slender tubes
raised from fine white flasks
'downstairs',

and capped with
spheres of purple glass-
like air,

when finely chopped -
enhance food,
and echo notes blown
silently
on dark green flutes.



(The Flowering roof 4 / photo G.A.)



(The Flowering roof 5 / photo G.A.)

Crassula ovata

Its structure suggests a time at least one hundred million years ago, outlines the moving vision of a draughtsman, architect and abstract poet.

A stem? it doesn't have a stem; it has a trunk compact, solid, thick, and - more than burly - massive, from which further trunks emerge, each more trunk than branch. Its leaves? they're discs, objects round to oblong which stand out fair and square; they're cool-feeling, plump and fleshy, smooth and shiny; they're grey-green - that's when they're not red. Curious creatures! they choose to bloom in the short-day months, making a haze of flowers, faintly scented, pink and white, star-shaped, set in clusters small and dense.

And yet ... its lateral trunks (branches if you must) come away almost at a touch, as do the discs (leaves if you like); it's delicate, and far from tough. But then ... these broken limbs and their dependent bits (such woeful wreckage!) having disengaged and dropped, send out new roots and grow again; resourceful, what.

Called the 'Chinese rubber plant', 'Cauliflower ears', the 'Lucky plant', 'Dollar plant' and the 'Money tree', these common names - profane, clichéd, crude - are wanting.

The Jade, an ornamental up to six foot high, will grow to fifteen feet or more when in the wild, and outlive most of us, living to a hundred. Its importance, though, lies elsewhere: it's the blueprint of a tree (extinct, or which never came to be), huge as the Boab, grander than the Dragon Tree.

A fresh reflection

Narcissus
papyraceous peers
from white

small-petalled
sprays, past straps of leaves,
and smiles:

"Such a height, this
stem! and what
a scent! ... so much black
seed! I'm free ...
to spread and thrive."



(The Flowering roof 6 / photo G.A.)

The full rose

Edith Piaf's
*"Je ne regrette
rien"*

seems a bluff, as
petals fall, and turn
to dust.

Remember, though
- before all else -
the crimson rose, its
haunting scent!
(... and thorns, below.)



(The Flowering roof 7 / photo G.A.)

Hold-up in a kitchen garden

"Your chife or your life!"

the parsimonious gourmet thief called out.

"My chife? - what ever do you mean by chife?"

I spluttered, surly.

"Never you mind"

he said,

"I want it now!"

he muttered curtly,

"and I'm not mean! so please mind

your words thanks, and watch your talk now!"

"I don't understand! but maybe my wife can help ..."

I blurted -

at which he faced me with a knife

and said (in thoughtful earnest):

*"Why do you want to sell your life so dearly? Why set a price
as high as that on just a single one of your many chives?"*

++++++

(Inspired by a Scots recipe requiring just one chive ...)

Love in a mist - *Nigella damascena*

Green lacework,
a fine filigree
of leaves;

Blue ballet
girls, rings of petalled
flowers;

Gold, the gourds of
heads to crown
the stalks (the flowers
dead), holding
court all winter.



(The Flowering roof 8 / photo G.A.)



(The Flowering roof 8 / photo G.A.)

Olor que aflora

Es planta
esquelética y
cíngara

con pétalos
monótonos y
frescos

y hojas chicas.
Mas, puede
contrarrestarlo
bien ... pues que
es jazmín.



(The Flowering roof 9 / photo G.A.)

Sansevieria trifasciata (Dad's 'sometime' Army)

A properly constituted army
once - smartly rigged in light and dark green stripes
with just a little marbling here and there
(an older type of 'khaki') - its soldiers
were lean and upright men with hostile traits
and leathered skin, each holding high a sharp-
tipped spear which promised to deliver pain.

But, later, they'd been billeted in huts
that leaked, forced to bivouack on windswept heights
and march exposed to hateful cold and sun.
You'd think they'd trudged through snake-infested swamps,
they'd tramped through sand, they'd plodded through thick mud!
"Enough!" they moaned, "the elements have won!"
At which ... the enemy they'd lost, appeared.

"Saint George for merry England!" cried Sir Giles
(praying) ... but silence reigned. Charge? ... there was none.
Movement? ... not one sword drawn. The army, glum,
stopped in its tracks and pondered (a smiling
bed? fresh victuals? safety?). "Back to barracks!
We'll fight tomorrow ... right?" (rumour has it
the sullen soldiers said), "if fight we must!"

As it happens, on hearing George's name
the foe were seized with fear, and fled. Our men,
who could have heard them claim "St. George's here!"
were much relieved the day had ended as
it had (days always do), and filled with wish-
ful thoughts, heard just "St. George for beer!", and drank.
(Some couldn't swim, so some among them sank.)

Not exactly 'sank', but grew discoloured
at the neck; grey, brown then black - they buckled,
crumbled, rotted, fell; a mortifying
way to go, depart, pass away (or 'die'?).

Consternation gripped the ranks as sighs, then
groans, then sobs, then tears made mourning headlines.
In due course they knew: something had happened!

Blame those elements! and blame thinking thoughts
(as people do) of leave accrued and not
allowed, promotion yet again postponed,
their better half in limbo (up to what?).

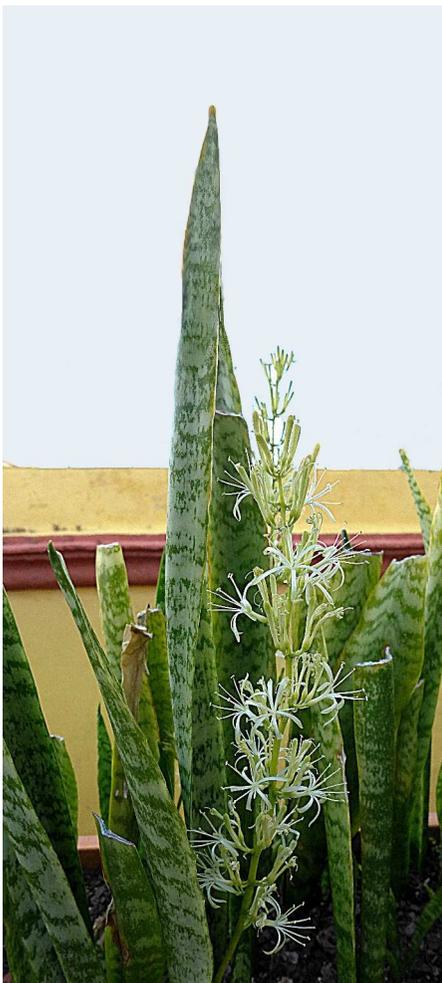
They'd chosen the soft option: they'd chosen
to withdraw (retreat? ... mutiny!) and hide.
They took to drink - drink took them for a ride.

But wives and partners rallied round and cheered
survivors, while mothers-in-law with half
an eye on their tongue managed to ration
reproaches. The time it cost, and the fuss!

Damage limitation took ... months and months.
Court-martials were waived and changes discussed,
drink cut (all agreed) ... to one hour a week.

Sentries now, these calm and much respected
men - who'd seemed so fierce - watch, intent, ears peeled,
all geared to sound the urgent call to arms.

Their ceremonial banner bears a snake-
plant whose tall stiff leaves shield a stalk (rare sight!)
of dainty, sophisticated cream-green
flowers heralding strange orange berries.



(The Flowering roof 10 / photo G.A.)

Spider, or Purple Queen – *Tradescantia pallida*

Imperial
purple, leaves sheathed and
pointed;

succulent
hopefuls, stems zigzag,
hurried;

Schlub! 'Wandering
Jew'? ... a mess!
'*Amor de hombre*'
(restless) plus
blush of flowers!



(The Flowering roof 11 / photo G.A.)

Votive offering – a sprig of parsley

Our parsley in Cadiz - though sparse - survives enough to make its usual fancy fretwork canopies.

Far-sighted, I ask Saint Pancras (his statue's close):

"Please intercede, and have this parsley thrive ... for us".

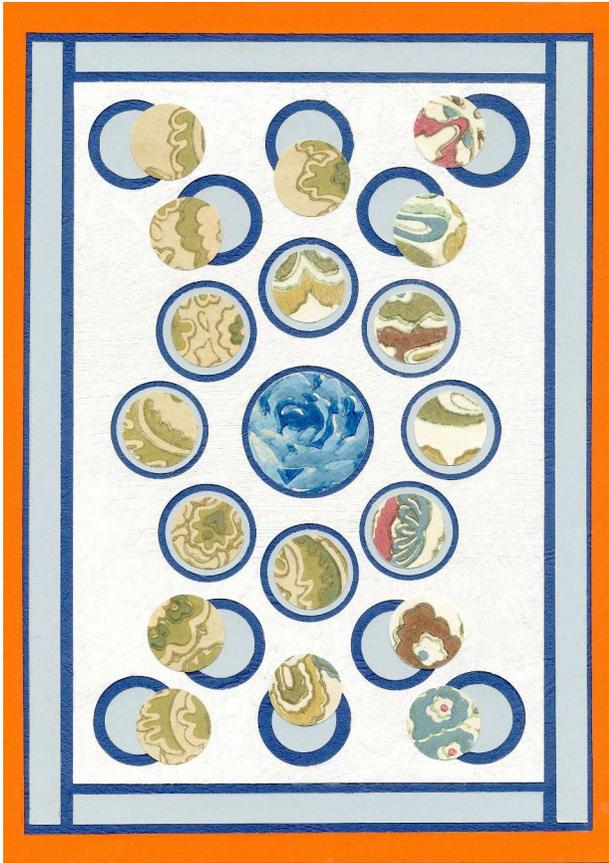
#####

Though different, the Isla Perejil or 'Parsley Island' (Alboran Sea) and Saint Pancras Station (London) are closely bound by three expectations: a saint, your votive offerings, and some parsley.

I don't think there's parsley now on 'Parsley Island' (Perejil could be just a misnomer, mind you, and not refer to 'parsley', but to 'Pero Gil'), nor a likeness of Saint Pancras at his station. Heavens! no saint on display? did Betjeman forget - eight hundred million pounds later, crusade fulfilled - that the station still owes its saint some sort of debt?



(The Flowering roof 12 / photo G.A.)



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.



Still (life)

Eyelashes may stretch and quiver,
designed to win:

ponytails blowing in the breeze
may stream at will:

shooting stars may thread the heavens
with filaments
of light:

but none of these moves me so much
as – in a vase
collected, calm –
ears of wheat, elegant and tall.

Surréalismes

La C est rouge
la D est verte
la C la C
la C 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
s é
m m
o
r u
t f
e
s

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

- Above and below I and II** Cadiz 2004
These are set while still airborne over Andalusia prior to landing at Jerez, and on a beach at Cadiz. The closing lines of the first poem echo b/w close-ups taken while living at Foster, near Wilson's Promontory, Australia (see front cover). The second poem started as a footnote.
- All a-tumble** (also features in *Mixed blessings*) Cadiz 2010
You'd be forgiven for thinking each grain had a mind of its own.
- And then there was silence I and II** 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.
- Approaches** Cadiz 2004
This is set at Wilson's Promontory, 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.
- Blues** Oxford 1958
Surreal, colour / nostalgia.
- Boy and silver smile** Oxford 1960
I was fascinated by the nature and colour of pewter, and its subliminal effects.
- Castilla** (published *Vida Hispánica* London, v.VI n.2, 1958) Salamanca 1958
(Particulars on my website - Salamanca) But the sentiments would have had their source in earlier travels to this part of Spain, described in *My Ampleforth Years 1*: 'Spanish Impressions'. These travel experiences were to be described again in an article published while at Oxford. The rhythms are significant.
- Crescendo** Cadiz 2011
The billowing sail and direction it faces indicate a waxing moon. The darkened, 'following' part always proposes a visual puzzle.

THE FLOWERING ROOF



Best friends 1	Cadiz	2015
Botanical 2	Cadiz	2017
Call of the sun 3 (also features in Eros 1)	Cadiz	2015
'Lorenzo' - synonym for sun (and see 'Through the railings')		
Chives 4 (first)	Cadiz	2015
Crassula ovata 5	Cadiz	2015
A Fresh reflection 6	Cadiz	2015
The Full rose 7	Cadiz	2015
This 'Edith Piaf' rose illustrates the cover of Eros 3		
Hold-up in a kitchen garden 4 (second)	Cadiz	2015
Love in a mist - <i>Nigella damascena</i> 8	Cadiz	2015
The flower in full bloom illustrates the cover of Eros 1		
<i>Olor que aflora</i> 9	Cadiz	2015
<i>Sansevieriana trifasciata</i> - Dad's 'sometime' Army 10	Cadiz	2015
Spider, or Purple Queen - <i>Tradescantia pallida</i> 11 (also features in Eros 2 and on its cover)	Cadiz	2015
Votive offering - a sprig of parsley 12	Cadiz	2015
(See also Eros 3 - <i>In absentia</i> 'Absence 3')		



The Juggler	Cadiz	2004
I had found the sky fascinating as a child, and had a telescope and book on astronomy (of which I could make		

- but little). Here I was inspired by watching the barman at the *Café de Levante*, c.Rosario as he practised his juggling.
- Lluvia en la noche** Salamanca 1958
(Particulars on my website - Salamanca)
- Men on the Moon** (published *Oxford Opinion* v.3 n.7, 1959) Oxford 1958
The sky was being opened up ... and I considered this 'scientific' leap as man's invasion of outer space, including my own personal space. 'My' view was going to be built on and built over, my communion with the sky contaminated.
- Miniature** Cadiz 2010
Fascinating the pace, both fast and slow, the certainty, the nerve. The dozen or more ferns hanging from the first floor *patio* balcony allowed of continuing scrutiny and wonder.
- The painting** 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 ...
- Still (life)** (also features in Cadiz) Cadiz 2003
Bar display at *Veedor 10* (see notes in the collection Cadiz)
- Surréalismes** (also in The Natural world - the Bestiary 1, Oxford 1960
and Words at play)
And all ... on a typewriter ... !
- Through the railings** Cadiz 2004
(See also: The Flowering roof 'Call of the sun') Hibiscus blooms whether full or folded seem to convey messages.
- Viento de Castilla** (published *Vida Hispánica* London, v.VI Salamanca 1958
n.2, 1958)
(Particulars on my website - Salamanca.)
- Voices** Cadiz 2007
Inspired by seeing people walk down the street speaking loudly to nobody around and occasionally listening to somebody invisible, and to involvement in the sale to a North American of a book of my Father's on 'The Maid'.
- Who on Earth ...** Cadiz 2003
Setting at the ashram of an Indian, the Avatar Sai Baba (and see the notes in illustrations - spacers).



Notes

ILLUSTRATIONS from my collection of *Papegados*

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

Above and below I and II

Approaches

The Juggler

Still (life)

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

Fantasia 'Altisidora, protagonista'
/ 1:05

Fantasia 'La Revoltosa, protagonista'
/ 1:03

Retrato 'El Avatar Sai Baba' / 2: 27

There are no Frango adaptations or *Cristaletas* in this selection.

ILLUSTRATIONS – by Glenwys Albrecht

These consist of 13 photographs taken by her to illustrate poems in the series ‘The Flowering roof’. Each carries the name of the series, above, followed by the relevant poem number (only). They are as follow:

- 1 (for ‘Best friends’: on the *petunia*);
- 2 (for ‘Botanical’: on the *callistemon*, also known sadly as ‘bottlebrush’);
- 3 (for ‘Call of the sun’: on the *hibiscus*);
- 4 (for ‘Chives’ and the poem ‘Hold-up in a kitchen garden’: one illustration to serve for both poems);
- 5 (for ‘*Crassula ovata*’: jade);
- 6 (for ‘A Fresh reflection’: *Narcissus papyraceus*);
- 7) for ‘The Full rose’: variety *Edith Piaf*);
- 8 (for ‘Love in a mist – *Nigella damascena*’: two illustrations, one depicting the plant in flower and one with the flowers spent, as in the poem);
- 9 (for ‘*Olor que aflora*’: jasmine);
- 10 (for ‘*Sansevieria trifasciata* – Dad’s sometime army’: on the ‘bow-string hemp’, ‘snake plant’, ‘mother-in-law’s tongue’ etc.);
- 11 (for ‘Spider, or Purple Queen – *Tradescantia pallida*’: also known in English speaking countries as ‘Wandering Jew’, but in Spain as *Amor de hombre*). Ironically, there is whole courtyard and more in Seville’s prestigious hotel *Las Casas de la Judería* (comprising a series of now linked old Jewish houses), where this is the only plant, and is represented by the hundred.
- 12 (for ‘Votive offering – a sprig of parsley’).

ILLUSTRATIONS – spacers and front cover

The spacers which open and close this collection are two (of a set of four) Spanish plates, one representing spring / *primavera* and the other summer / *verano*. Both have a *mayólica craquelada* finish and are by Abad of Puente del Arzobispo. They came from a little shop run by a charming old lady who specialised in traditional Spanish pottery, in c. del Príncipe, Madrid.

At the start of the volume facing the introduction is an African carved dark wooden stool (one of a pair) featuring a primitive human figure on either side. The stools belonged to my father, Francis Scarfe. I seem to recollect that he was involved for a short time in educational work in western Africa. Towards the

end of the volume facing notes on the poems is a traditional Indian bronze statue depicting the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, associated with spiritual and material abundance. I discovered her in Puttaparti on the first of my three visits to the nearby ashram founded by the Avatar Sathya Sai Baba. Curiously, at an early moment during that first visit and while sitting on the ground in one of the ashram's open spaces – down fluttered a circular piece of paper, settling in front. It was a picture of Lakshmi ... said always to travel with her partner Vishnu on his descent to Earth as avatar.

Other illustrations are a traditional Spanish jug with a man harvesting by Antonio Escobar Zaiz, and an oil on board of a radiant sun with a tall stylised tree to the right and bushes or grasses below, by my father.

The three b/w spacers are printers' ornamental blocks (usually general purpose) 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. These are (here – only – in chronological order) as follow:

a) Horizontal decorative arrangement of 34 squares with curved designs, contained asymmetrically by nine brackets above and nine below: title page block from *El Valor de las mujeres* in the collection 'Decimoctava parte de las comedias de Lope de Vega Carpio' ([Juan González, Madrid 1623]). Ref.: BS 767 & BN R 14111.

b) Horizontal arrangement with four entwined circles of leafy branches, a large bird in profile at either end of the whole, and a young boy and girl not quite full face in the middle: end block from Bernardo Joseph de Reynoso y Quiñones *El Sol de la fe en Marsella y conversión de la Francia, Santa María Magdalena – primera parte* (Bernardo Peralta, Madrid 1731). Ref.: BS 717 & BN T 20651.

c) Horizontal arrangement of leafy branches round four small figures, two to either side (are the four of them cherubs ... or just two of them?), the whole dominated by a face with headdress, three flowers issuing from her mouth: end block from Antonio de Zamora *Castigando premia amor* in the collection 'Ameno jardín de comedias de los insignes autores Don Antonio de Zamora, Don Juan Bautista Diamante y Don Álvaro Cubillo de Aragón' ([Madrid 1734]). Ref.: BS 160 & BN T 461.

The front cover has a b/w photo of a beach sand formation taken in the 80's when I lived in Foster, near Wilson's Promontory.



