

FORTUNA

# Fortuna



LORD GAWAIN DOUGLAS

HERLA

*For Nicolette*

Published by  
HERLA PUBLISHING, an imprint of

ALMA BOOKS LTD  
London House  
243–253 Lower Mortlake Road  
Richmond  
Surrey TW9 2LL  
United Kingdom  
[www.almabooks.com](http://www.almabooks.com)

*Fortuna* first published by Herla, an imprint of Alma Books Ltd, in 2009  
Copyright © Lord Gawain Douglas, 2009

Lord Gawain Douglas asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of  
this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988  
Printed in Jordan by the National Press

ISBN: 978-1-84688-XXX-X

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored  
in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by  
any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise),  
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be resold, lent,  
hired out or otherwise circulated without the express prior consent of the  
publisher.

## Contents

<i>The Place of Poetry</i>	13
<i>On the Beach, 1972–1996</i>	15
Six Moments, Osea Island, Essex	17
On a Street Corner	20
Window Dresser	21
Explain Yourself	22
Dover Harbour	23
Daffodils	24
Nicolette	25
A Mother Comes and Goes	26
Lines Inspired by the Fowey River, Bodmin Moor	27
An Italian's Funeral in the Isle of Man	28
Love's Long Since Cancelled Woe	30
Visitors at Supper Time	31
Solstice at 45	32
A Portrait	33
Lines to My Father	35
Twelve Three	36
In Praise of the Skull	37
Removal of Parts	38
Love's Fancy	40
The Treacherous Month	42
Billy	43
A Father's Goodbye	44
Depression	45
Walmer Beach	46
The Art of Creation	47
<i>The Seasons, 1993–2002</i>	49
Circle	51
Winter	52
January	53

A Married Man's First Poem for a Year, Written at the Age of Forty-Six, in a Period of Personal Decline	54	December	90
Stars	55	A to Z and a Bit French	91
February Fool	56	<i>Gin, 2002–2005</i>	93
The Colourist	57	Again	95
Spirit	58	Sound and Fury	96
Dianna	59	Happiness	97
Hope	60	Deal Beach	98
My Best Friend Who Reaps	61	Philosophy	99
The Sculptor	62	Primroses	100
The Room	63	Washing Line	101
Driving On	64	To Be Free	102
Etymology	65	Words	103
Spring	66	Education	105
The Loss of Yellow	67	The Other Place	106
The End of the Tale	68	Sound Sense	107
Turning Point	69	The Two Gifts	108
Summer	70	The Bend	109
It Was Late June	71	An Old Man Waits His Time	110
Borders...	72	Change	112
Home	73	Things To Do	113
Canterbury	74	Notice	114
The Lady	75	The Reason Most People Have Traffic Accidents Is...	115
The Lost Kids	77	Children's Addresses	116
August the Defendant	79	Shrine	117
Adult	80	The Huntress	118
Afterwards	81	Rain	119
September Song	82	The First Day of Spring	120
Autumn	83	Queer	121
October	84	Omens	122
Waiting Room	85	The Solution	123
Because You Were There	86	Bird Strike	124
Sad	87	This Be the Month	125
Counterpoint	88	Steps	126
November	89	Heart	127
		December	129

January	130	The Turn	172
February	131	Letting Go	173
Daffs	132	The Painter	174
Change	133	The Gates	175
Solstice	134	Fold	176
Horses	135	Unexpected	177
Downs Road, Walmer	136	River	178
Waiting Room 17.56	137	Petrol Pump	179
Journeys	139	Moondream	180
Metamorphosis	140	Later Years	181
The Use of Memory	141	Two Daughters...	182
Streets	142	And One Wife	184
Behind	144	Landscape	185
?	145	Back to the Drawing Board	187
Home Town – Deal	147	Synthesis	188
Deal High Street	149	Four Moments, Walmer, Kent, 2008	189
In Memory of... Who Enjoyed This View	150	Walkout	191
Spirit	151		
Photography	153		
Fortuna	154		
<i>Tonic, 2006–2008</i>	155		
The Poet Utters	157		
Mirror, Mirror	158		
Attic	159		
First Day of School	160		
The Farm	161		
A Retired General plays The Pathétique Sonata	162		
Big Brother	163		
Spaces	164		
Response to Patterson's Clarinet Concerto, 2nd Movement	165		
The Path	167		
Upwards	168		
Roof	169		
Passage	170		
Tide Out	171		

## *The Place of Poetry*

I live in a big white town house, in an Edwardian square by the sea in Kent. It has pleasant gardens with tennis courts and croquet lawns and a nice clubhouse. I often go there and play tennis in the summer, and every day winter and summer I go to the pebbled shore and gaze across the waters. Mostly they are grey and dull and one could be anywhere; sometimes they are blue and sunstruck and then I'm in the best place in the world. I have a kind wife, and children who've all left home, and I go to work every day and come back late and eat and drink rather a lot. And that's my life really.

But oh! I nearly forgot: at the top of my house there's a further floor, a sort of attic which is always locked and which has a hidden key. Most of the time this key is very difficult to find. Sometimes I even forget it exists. Then one day, puzzled, walking up the stairs perhaps, or in a brown study, looking out into the rain, I'll see it shining somewhere, beckoning me. Then I'll pick it up quite naturally as though it's been there all the time, and climb the stairs and unlock the door to that other place; the place where poetry is.

I cannot tell you any more about it or what it means, or how it came about. Your guess is quite as good as mine.

*On the Beach*

*Six Moments, Osea Island, Essex*

1

The winter sun touches the chair.  
My guest speaks on  
But my thoughts  
Are poised  
On the edge of the unknown.

2

The wind today  
Blowing troubles  
Away.

A giant hand  
Empties  
My mind.

3

He touched my arm  
An old friend  
From the past  
To warm my heart  
Unfold my faculties  
Like marvellous flowers  
That slept.

Dear old sun  
Every spring you  
Remind me  
Every winter  
I forget.

4

Alfred A longed to be free  
As he made love.

FORTUNA

Bucking and tossing  
He heard the rain  
Against  
The window.  
He thought  
“One day I shall ride in  
From the North Sea  
Utterly alone  
On the back of the wind.  
My wild cry  
Will pierce the night  
And disturb the embrace  
Of dejected lovers.”

5

The moon is after me tonight  
He caught sight of me  
Just now  
And marked me  
For a moonman.  
I feel him everywhere,  
Behind my back  
Above my head.  
Soon I must go  
To our bay window  
And have it out  
With him.  
My blood will be  
Liquid silver,  
My heart a  
Silver stone  
And my soul  
A moonbeam.

6

Jabber jabber goes the moon  
To me,

ON THE BEACH

Her words dance the water  
To my heart.  
Quick, quick they run and leap  
To me  
Who turns chilled, away from  
Such black art.

The Blackwater Estuary, 1.00 a.m.

*On a Street Corner*

Don't go down to the shops just now,  
There is infinite chance, just here,  
On this square of pavement.  
Look how the wind has tossed your hair  
And quickened your wit,  
The sun warmed your blood.  
See the rush-hour people as they pass,  
Even they are touched by spring  
And smile, as if almost remembering.  
Look! Just before leaving, the day  
Has thrown her loveliest colours  
Across the street.  
Don't go, don't go,  
Now can last for ever if you stay.

Blackheath, London, one evening in May 1972

*Window Dresser*

Lady in the shop window with  
Your hips indefinitely poised  
I join your infinite (sartorial)  
Contemplation.  
In this rush hour river  
You are an imperturbable lily,  
In this desert, a green palm  
Which gives a moment's shade.

Kings Road, London, 22nd November 74

*Explain Yourself*

If you ask me what I mean  
 I cannot say.  
 I only know  
 At odd moments of  
 Strange encounter  
 With myself  
 And sunlight  
 Sometimes,  
 Looking down a  
 Canterbury street  
 As though it were  
 A telescope  
 Fixed on eternity.  
 Then,  
 I could tell you,  
 Maybe,  
 If you didn't ask me,  
 What I mean.

6th May 1978

*Dover Harbour*

Who could have thought  
 One could be free  
 In Dover Harbour?  
 A strange place,  
 Full of blocks of flats  
 And "pay and display" signs.  
 However, the beach in front  
 And certain faded gleams  
 Of sunlight on blue water  
 Led me back.  
 A boy again  
 On Cornish sands  
 I played the length of  
 Lazy summer days and  
 Lived a brilliant shining dream  
 Without beginning, and  
 No fall of night to come.

13th July 1990