

From a collection of hand and typewritten pages of verse
by Elizabeth Durack – loosely assembled into five parts
by padc July 2010.

II These four walls ...

- 1 Song of the travellers returned (about 1954)
- 2 Early summer, Perth (1955)
- 3 **Storm day** (mid 1950s) *refer below*
- 4 Relief (mid 1950s)
- 5 I'm going to a party (summer 1955)
- 6 What could have become of Aunt Maud? (1965)
- 7 Life is like a sink (1954)
- 8 I'd like to be a four-legged table (1959)
- 9 Dept of getting old in the head – (1957)
- 10 Where is the cupboard ...? (1959)
- 11 The nonsense (1954)
- 12 **'These four walls ...'** (about 1955) *refer below*
- 13 'I will marry ...' (1956)
- 14 If you're ever badly smitten – (about 1956)
- 15 I cannot stand ... (1956)
- 16 **Rosemary's playing** (mid 1950s) *refer below*
- 17 Never read a look (about 1960)
- 18 Windy evenings (1957)
- 19 Tomorrow to starvation ... (1957)
- 20 The brown fingers of neglect (1957)
- 21 Leaves ablaze ... (1957)
- 22 Funeral (1959)
- 23 Night (on waking myself up laughing)(1953)
- 24 The days (1941)
- 25 Rendezvous (1954)
- 26 I am the Queen bee (1956)
- 27 Humble pie (about 1958)
- 28 The weather (i), (ii), (iii) (1984)

3 Storm day

It thundered early and
wild wind-torn cloud
forded the morning
entry
through the just
opened doors of night.

Lightning spattered the grey
cloud blankets
with glittering tripods
as though Neptune
threw them in a fit
of the jitters – and the cat
crept under a chair.

Thunder broke right in
our ear drums then
went rumbling off like a
bull waiting the next
chance to charge.
The lights fused and
when the phone rang:
'Lord, what a day,'
said Mary, just
audible above the hail.

And all day long like unwilling
spectators to an ill-timed
quarrel we could not for a
moment forget the wild
discord of the heavens
nor find escape from it
(pity the postman) –

Too sudden, after the long
languor of summer the
season broke –
and,
sitting on the lawn drinking tea
cleaving to shade and brushing
flies became 'last year' –

Yet, even as we sat talking
and dozing through the gold
hours (storing its fierce
energies and shrill dissent)
the heavens, blue and enormous,

boded
not peace,
but
this storm day.

#

Perth, mid 1950s

12 'These four walls ...'

(to WLB)

'These four walls –'
 you said
 'these four walls ...'
 but even as you said it
 in what you hoped
 was disparagement
 and contempt –
 still you couldn't keep
 the love
 back –

For it was these four walls
 that had multiplied –
 into 16 walls
 into

1 6
1 6
 9 6
2 0
 3 5 6
3 5 6
 2 1 3 6
 1 7 8 0
1 0 5 8
 £ 1, 2 5 0, 7 3 6

and that was why
 you couldn't keep the love back
 as you said –
 'These four walls ...'

And I?
 I was somehow
 to magically
 release
 you from
 the prison
 of your contentment(?)
 I?
 I?
 But I live in a house
 without walls
 without
 roof
 without
 floor –

I
live
without walls –

True enough
(to give you credit)
you sensed
my wall-less
roof-less
floor-less
House –
and
– for a moment –
envy stirred.

Perhaps –
(you thought)
all THIS
and
wall-less-ness
too –

But no.
Because
(at the same moment)
I too saw
a vision
of
All this
and *four walls*
plus –

but it didn't
work out
that way.

Never.

Is it possible
that
'four walls'
+
can be
entered into
by
one
who has known
the glory
of
wall-less-ness
floor-less-ness
roof-less-ness –

and a sinking
decimal
of all that is
minus
that is plus -

We never married.

#

undated, probably about 1954 or '55

16 **Rosemary's playing**

John Dent calls tonight with two chairs for us and in the course of conversation (which included the unsolved mystery of Mrs Lubich and the sinking of the *Andrea Doria*) he remarked how nice it was having Rosemary and H staying with him on account of Rosemary's playing

Like a cloud burst
suddenly spraying me on a hot day
out floated
Rosemary's playing.

Into my dark-room
at the end of the garden
where I coated my photographs
with a number
four brush –
I'd pause
And a hush
would fall
on the grape-vine
and the black-hooded
magician
in the corner
froze the smile on the face
of the debutante
and Mrs Sydney-Browne's double chin.

– Brahms –

And quiet as a mouse
I'd listen
afraid that if I
went up to the house
she'd stop
stop the playing
that suddenly
set the whole street
swaying
and swirling
beneath my feet

(Oh what a tide
went
along with it –
mix-masters,
spin-dry,

lawn-mowers
trix
the man
come to fix
the radio –
Watkins' traveller
Dutch biscuits
all the childrens'
winter colds
– wet socks
and pick-a-box
brought to you
at the same time
every Thursday
and Monday –
one on top of
the other
and the wash
on the line
since Sunday.)

And I'd find
myself praying
praying
that Rosemary
would go on
playing ...

This was while she
was staying with me
the time Maria was buying
pottery
in Italy.

#

undated, but Perth, mid 1950s

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