



Fernando Aguiar
Poems Without Words
Timglaset Editions 2019

Reviewed by David Kelly

Very few concrete poets have been the subject of an ABBA song! Fernando Aguiar has that honour. Perhaps not, but it would be utterly deserved for his *Poems Without Words* is a masterly book – a delightful, lively, entrancing but also at times frustrating collection. The current book contains 103 poems created between December 1991 and February 1992. For my taste the most appealing are the simple poems: the plainer ones in the good sense of plain – unadorned, tight, based around a clever concept. They have resonance and reverberation, like stones dropped into a pond sending out ripples of tease.

So, here are some of my reactions.

Take this A for instance. A simple pattern of capital 'A's, diminishing in size, connecting to each other on their angled sides with the displaced 'holes' completing the picture, curls up and away like a shell spiral, like a Fibonacci curve. It has a graceful artistic quality – very easy to look at. My eyes ask to stay on it. While clever and teasing as it is, the damn thing frustrates me into wanting more. Imagine the variations that would come from playing around with this . . .

Then there is the I within the I. The self within the self. The 'perpendicular pronoun'. The outer self on display to the world protecting the secret inner self. The multiple layers of self. The insignificance of my I to the universal I, the concept of I, the overwhelming importance of ME. My little teensy weensy 'me' compared to my fantasized, imagined, magnificent ME. So many ideas and responses ripple out of the page . . . Why not more? Why not a half a dozen 'I's snuggling into each other like a set of Russian Matryoshka dolls? Ah, the frustration born of wanting more!

And what of these 'H's? The scaffolding building a cathedral to the Highest? Is H a composite, an accretion of other 'H's? And why two of them? Prediction of the World Trade Centre attack?

Fernando Aguiar uses these techniques – a letter filled with its own or other letters and the accretion of diminishing sizes of the same letter – to great effect in his 'K' series of poems.

My scanner has reproduced these pieces a little blurry – they are crisp in the book.



