A Ghost in Waterloo Station


Whenever I open a new collection of poems by Bert Almon I look at the back of the book first—a habit that goes back to the 1980 Edmonton launch of Blue Sunrise, his first Canadian publication after he moved from Texas in 1968 to teach at the University of Alberta. We discovered the title page at the back: the printer had bound the pages in reverse order! With characteristic quickness, he seized the moment and signed his name "nomla treb." A mirror moment, a moment of delight.

Almon ends his ninth collection, A Ghost in Waterloo Station, by paying tribute to hospitable friends. As he sips gin and tonic with them on their patio, his poetic antennae stay on full alert. He ends the poem with "benign chanterelles / in a golden heap on yesterday's toxic headlines / and the toy shark safe in the sheepdog's mouth." It's a peaceful ending for a book that starts edgily, in a surgical theatre, where Almon finds his muse watching a kidney transplant. The medical diction made me wince at first; but the poem shifts from a "golden drop of urine" to "the first drops of water / formed in the Hippocrene Spring"—classical source of poetic inspiration. Almon's muse "doesn't flinch or turn away" from the toxic, difficult or fearful in human experience, but she also inspires him to write about moments of grace, hope, humour and deep feeling. Andrew Motion observed that "Whereas Larkin's poems relied on his saying 'no' or 'perhaps' to life, Keats liked to say 'yes'

( Guardian, 9 September 2006). Bert Almon is clearly with Keats in saying 'yes' to life.

Peripatetic as always, Almon travels in Ghost from Texas to Melbourne, Greece to Heptonstall, London to Montreal, Salzburg to Stettler. Usually someone is with him—his wife, daughter, son, or one of a cast of strangers from butchers to security guards, waiters to taxi drivers. He is content to be solitary and look within, but his poems more often connect with people through time and space, imagination and chance, kinship or choice. Almon also looks outward to the world, enriching his poems with specific details drawn from the sciences, art, philosophy, history, literature, myth, religion, music, popular culture, and nature. But his poetry doesn't sink under the weight of allusion, for his aim is to communicate with his readers rather than confuse or impress or trick them.

We could be seduced into enjoying Almon's poems for content alone; indeed, his informal, conversational style encourages and allows such a reading. His preferred form is free verse, his grammar and syntax standard, his sentences complete. We can look right through these poems and perhaps not even notice their technical skill. For example, at the word level Ghost is filled with the bliss of etymology from "abbatoir" to "spanghew." At the grammatical level, Almon uses the possessive in surprising ways: "My First..."
A member of Waterloo station staff also suggests travellers with time on their hands go on a lion hunt. They told us: “The station had the South Bank Lion guarding the entrance during the Festival of Britain, and although that one’s no longer here there are still lots of them around the station. I could tell you where they all are but that would spoil the fun…” 2. Leake Street. Photo: Sean Batten. 5. Hunt for ghost signs. Lower Marsh ‘Ghost Sign’ in Lambeth. Photo: Faded London. (2008). Find a quiet corner of the station and complete this Gibsons puzzle of Waterloo station, created by Gibsons Games to mark the station’s centenary. Painted by Helen McKie, the puzzle depicts Waterloo station, in peacetime and wartime, the first in 1848 and the second in 1948. No, Waterloo Station was gorgeous in its grandeur. The large room rose high above her head, made of glass, and at dusk everything was lit with a golden hue, giving her the illusion of warmth even though she stood in her scarf and winter jacket. “Wow,” she mouthed, watching as people bustled to their platforms, waiting around screens to check the arrival and departure times. There was a massive clock, with a face similar to Big Ben suspended in the air. “Welcome to Konohagakure Prefecture. Thank you for traveling with The Ghost in Waterloo Station, where the everyday world’s your point of departure, but the place of arrival is never the shore you started from!” She blinked, checking her wrist watch whose hands stopped moving, frozen on the nine and four. "What?" Waterloo station, also known as London Waterloo, is a major railway terminus in central London, owned and operated by Network Rail. It is in the London Borough of Lambeth, near the South Bank, and in Travelcard Zone 1. With some 88 million passengers a year, Waterloo is easily Britain’s busiest railway station in terms of passenger throughput. The total number of people passing through the station is considerably greater, as this figure is based on ticket sales for London Waterloo alone and does Waterloo Station in 1925. The London and South Western Railway (L) opened the station on 11 July 1848 when its mainline was extended from Nine Elms. The name on opening was ‘Waterloo Bridge Station’, from the nearby Waterloo Bridge across the Thames. In 1886 it officially became ‘Waterloo Station’. Looking for Viewfinder? | Historic England. I am a dreamer. “Sleeping in Waterloo Station c.1930 “. ViewFinder - Image Details. Results of conducting a search of the ViewFinder database of historic photographs of England. Waterloo station (ˈwɔːtərloʊ), also known as London Waterloo, is a central London terminus on the National Rail network in the United Kingdom, in the Waterloo area of the London Borough of Lambeth. It is connected to a London Underground station of the same name and is adjacent to Waterloo East station on the South Eastern main line. The station is the terminus of the South Western main line to Weymouth via Southampton, the West of England main line to Exeter via Salisbury, the Portsmouth Direct