Document name: Fleur Adcock, 'A surprise in the Peninsula'

Document date: 1971

Copyright information: Proprietary and used under license
OpenLearn course Creative writing and critical reading

OpenLearn url: https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/creative-

writing-and-critical-reading/content-section-0



'A surprise in the Peninsula'

Fleur Adcock

Adcock, F. (2000 [1971]) Poems 1960-2000, Hexham, Bloodaxe Books, p. 134.

www.open.edu/openlearn Page 1 of 2

Document name: Fleur Adcock, 'A surprise in the Peninsula'

Document date: 1971

Copyright information: Proprietary and used under license
OpenLearn course Creative writing and critical reading

OpenLearn url: https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/creative-

writing-and-critical-reading/content-section-0



Fleur Adcock, 'A surprise in the Peninsula'

When I came in that night I found the skin of a dog stretched flat and nailed upon my wall between the two windows. It seemed freshly killed there was blood at the edges. Not my dog: I have never owned one, I rather dislike them. (Perhaps whoever did it knew that.) It was a light brown dog, with smooth hair; no head, but the tail still remained. On the flat surface of the pelt was branded the outline of the peninsula, singed in thick black strokes into the fur: a coarse map. The position of the town was marked by a bullet-hole; it went right through the wall. I placed my eye to it, and could see the dark trees outside the house, flecked with moonlight. I locked the door then, and sat up all night, drinking small cups of the bitter local coffee. A dog would have been useful, I thought, for protection. But perhaps the one I had been given performed that function; for no one came that night, nor for three more. On the fourth day it was time to leave. The dog-skin still hung on the wall, stiff and dry by now, the flies and the smell gone. Could it, I wondered, have been meant not as a warning, but a gift? And, scarcely shuddering, I drew the nails out and took it with me.

(1971)

www.open.edu/openlearn Page 2 of 2