Sarments

SAMPLER
## Contents

### New & Uncollected Poems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affection</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romsey, Take 1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romsey, Take 2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romsey, Take 3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketches from a Bristol Palette</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickering Encounter</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The River</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un rêve du soir</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouen</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appearances</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Welsh</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Afternoon on the Esplanade</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocalise</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Green Ray</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waza-Ari!</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Night</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphaville ’58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City Manifest</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sonnet</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Elements</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctus</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Reading J.H. Prynne’s <em>Sub Songs</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmare</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selected Poems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem Beginning with a Line of Andrew Crozier</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Visitation</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast at Red Lodge</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Barry &amp; Guillaume in Puisserguier</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
October 67

Recollection Ode: Les Sarments 68

En Sevrage 71

Meet Your Friends at the Still & Sugarloaf 72

At Château Chinon 74

Baudelaire at Cébazan 76

Nocturne with Baudelaire 77

A Touch 78

Pimlico 79

Last Days of the Vulcan 82

6:00 p.m. 83

The Postcard Sonata 84

Letters from Sarah 93

‘for the snow’ 109

‘the day writhes in an immense crater’ 110

27 October 1969 111

Good Old Harry 113

May Day Greetings 1971 115

A Theory of Poetry 116

Inaugural Address 120

Craven Images 123

Karol in Tunisia 133

After Francis Amunatégui 135

Bye Bye Blackbird 136

Shakin All Over 137

Poem for Bruce McLean 139

Local 162

After Eugène Boudin 164

Lines for Richard Long 165

Colonial Medley 172
Author’s Note

‘Affection’ first appeared in Shearsman magazine; my thanks to Kelvin Corcoran & Tony Frazer. ‘Romsey, Take 2’ first appeared in Tears in the Fence; my thanks to David Caddy. ‘Rouen’ & ‘Sketches from a Bristol Palette’ first appeared in Zone; my thanks to Katherine Peddie & Eleanor Perry. ‘Flickering Encounter’ first appeared in The Wolf; my thanks to James Byrne. ‘The Appearances, ‘From the Welsh’, & ‘The Night’ first appeared in Poetry Wales; my thanks to Nia Davies. ‘Vocalise’ first appeared in A Screw in the Shoe; my thanks to Lou Rowan. ‘The Green Ray’ first appeared in No Prizes; my thanks to Ian Heames.

‘The River’ was commissioned by JocJonJosch to mark the launch of their project & exhibition Worstward Ho & read at the Orange Dot Gallery 4 October 2013. It subsequently appeared in Hand In Foot, the catalogue for their exhibition at Musée d’art du Valais, Sion, CH, in celebration of their award of the Prix Manor 2013; my thanks to JocJonJosch, Rye Dag Holmboe & Jo Melvin.

‘On Reading J.H. Prynne’s Sub Songs’ first appeared as the livre d’artiste with lino cuts by Bruce Mclean, designed & produced by Bridget Heal with the support of Ivor Heal at Queen of The Dart Press, Ashburton, 2016; my thanks to Bruce, Bridget & Ivor.

I am grateful to Andrew Taylor for discovering the fugitive poem ‘Nightmare’.

From ‘Poem Beginning with a Line of Andrew Crozier’ to ‘Recollection Ode: Les Sarments’ inclusive are works selected from Cloud Breaking Sun (Old Hunstanton: Oystercatcher Press 2012); my thanks to Peter Hughes. Of these, ‘A Visitation’ first appeared in Tears in the Fence; my thanks again to David Caddy.

From ‘En Sevrage’ to ‘Last Days of The Vulcan’ inclusive are works selected from In Romsey Town (Cambridge: Equipage 2011); my thanks to Rod Mengham.

From ‘6:00 p.m.’ to ‘Colonial Medley’ inclusive are works selected from Collected Poems (Applecross, WA, & Cambridge: Salt Publishing 2002); my thanks to Chris Hamilton-Emery & John Kinsella.

For the present volume I would like to express my grateful thanks to Tony Frazer not least for his support & commitment, his diligence & extraordinary attention to detail.
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New & Uncollected Poems

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Affection

one does not work out of a reaction against but rather out of affection for something

—Barry Flanagan

I

guide my soul to the light from this unwholesome pit where all is sold for an arm & a leg the stirrup pump to no avail against the incendiary hail as countless children hunger for tallow calling from faraway cities while radios drone on masking the salacious trembling hand to fist a sardine can almost fast food who wants it now got no other option the drudgery of minimum wage or listed in the Sunday supplement bought in the family visit to the super store with mum & dad & baby buggy large as life what do they want they do not know until they find the box American breakfast with green top milk & loads of sugar shake so nose to the ground the lengthy strap that pulls the dog so careless like its human chancers show every piercing & tattoo as yomping down the aisle they go no bended knee or supplicant incense how aroma of aftershave will do no blessing now required as nothing told but enter pin code now the 4x4 awaits as shriven by the carwash men as cheap as that a quickie without the smokeless public bar the little town not quite a capital spot to try for pollination a double bed can wait
Fruiting bodies vintage
garment by the carpet pile grandpa full of what he's led to believe
some stinking rubbish from the daily junk adorning flaccid
regular the mat falling on us all as the queen lacks semen
popping drones following the soak of neonicotinoid
what good are they well there's munitions
pull up his joggers crossing the road against the red
two fingers to the horn the camera can only lie in shaky grey
by what stretch can this be called an art house cinema
our visions of grown up film lacking schedule
would you credit it best to buy your olive oil from Aldi
at least in winter bare flesh concealed from blatant view
dot & carry at the ankle loss of pace in sorry state
wrapt in a shiny body warmer Soviet black felt scarf & woolly bonnet
seeking something good to eat to take home to your kitchen
forlorn sell out of the local to the multiple estate
Bite off the
top of the morning on the high road to the bank no froth
or gain to see the pitiful junky lost to the world beside the path
would you believe it yes it is there tension of neck muscle
can’t wait to get back home make fast the door rewind
the dread & disarray of the street to climb the stair
to application love of the creatures seen from the window
at the secrétaire you will continue till you ache the line
will turn & turn again in ascending barometric pressure
before you rest to reconsider what is done a draft
a pattern showing how it’s made
Call-sign freedom
of the kitchen taking the bird in hand & spatchcock for the grill
a little pile of carrot slices layered in the pot for Vichy
mortared pepper bursting aroma of the juniper under your nose
man on a roll a glutton for more throw in a soupçon of garlic
pursued as Norah showed you by the glowing range so long ago
toiling in the back of the house away from traffic noise at the front
she’s standing on the stair again calling your name faithful as ever
in spite of everything hot on the hob a quick sip of red
a drop to ease the perspiration dripping from your brow
another splash of southern red brought in from Carignan
Napoleonic Guards are marching on back Red Steiger at their head
a marvellous recreation but the deadly Prussian cavalry in black
infest the possibility stifle the scenario of the struggle
all was lost but now we have to stay alive to get things done
to wish for calm & certitude resist the pelting rain
that drives us to the lee of the house flicker of
painful surrender denied
land of the free
TV direction what cost dominant intrusion severed our conversation
broken linkage in the aftermath of 1953 soon to be washing whiter
without blue or so she thought American all over as the hotter prospect
spinning like a running dog & working for the Yankee dollar
removal of hedgerow not recorded in the broken archive
never had it so Macmillan said but why should we always tag along behind
as in a chaining with mist shrouding the forgotten garden shelter
corrugated pile encased in turf like a charcoal burner bonfire
arms slung over the swaying washing line you play in your bonnet
sheets of glass breaking your volunteer fall in the blink of an eye
take off your socks to feel the pain of shard extraction from your leg
feathered deep in gore a flowing dream of torture worse to come
in Castlereagh heart beating for the ravining constable any old tale will do
then back to your cell would you believe it take it or leave it in your
own time
one finger one thumb keep talking swear by Almighty God the whole
shebang
still breathing with a bloody mark on anglo conscience
no further questions asked each man & woman spoken for as beast
In the curving surface of the screen the news today a baleful pornographic dance defies your sofa plump up the cushions skip the ads the Devil now assails your weary visage but you say Hail Mary to send him away that's what we do say no to all his works & pomps deny send back his penetrating gaze flick the switch tear up the card & cross your legs before the fire of celebrity eating their way through muck before your faltering hearth listen to what I say or speak your own sequential prayer zap each shadowy intrusion & abide the possibility of better times break off & rearrange your own interior without external guide that deed of stolen thought it's beaten out of you to cut you down to size it's take you over time in substitute Weetabix a catch phrase or two rises in your throat you'd better believe it they want you to swallow it proceed to eat your Horlicks in the darkened room a spark of light in the fallen log ash before the power supply gets too expensive cut down the cost entailed inside the home renew your Senior Railcard drink deep from history ancient story modern pain unheimlich durance but for a moment recall all that was not lost in the guarded outlook of our cherished circle our careful ambience in these four walls en garde my love a hoard of peace & happiness in time abundant though worn out by work & visits to the doctor never cost a penny even when strapped for cash we never lost for thought