

Who by Water


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Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2016 by Shearsman Books
50 Westons Hill Drive Emersons Green BRISTOL BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office 30-31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB (this address not for correspondence)
www.shearsman.com
ISBN 978-1-84861-480-2

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The poems in this volume frest appeared as follows: 'Home Again from Long Ago'
in Envoi; 'Tide Turn' in We Tyew Writer; 'Waddenzee', a sequence of fourteen poems with photographs by Gerrit Offringa, on the Shearsman web gallery at www. shearsman.com; 'The Mystery of Glass' in Shearsman magazine $83 \& 84$; 'n'bytsje' and 'Half by Half We Sleep' in Shearsman 93 \& 94; 'Tenebrae' in Shadowtrain; 'Gull' and 'Milk Bay' in Northwords Now; 'Who by Water' in the supplement to Agenda, 2016; 'Easter Sunday at Findhorn Bay' in THE SHOp; 'Winter's Child' in Long Poem Magazine. 'She Who Weeps' was published by Lapwing Publications as a pamphlet entitled The Concourse of Virgins (May 2012).

My thanks are always due to Fiona Sampson, who first taught me that I could write a poem, and to another of her 'October Poets', Janet Sutherland, for her fine example and encouragement. I am very grateful to Tony Frazer for his continuing interest in my work.

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> For Colin


## Half by Half We Sleep

On this eve of nativity twined lovers stranded high above tideline on shore of age-stroked stones a gift, a present each to each<br>beneath far rainbow doubly born of brine, cord cast uncut into blue noon like diadem of neonate studded with news to shake the snow-streaked hills

- and half by half we sleep watched over by the same tein nurse and half by half we wake to the becoming of ennerse.



## Tide Turn

April sea running blind
to or from the sun, skirts
filled with light,
to give or take in
their first kiss, to
turn the tide on
double bliss
twice tumbled
twins in ecstasis
strand ruched high
ribbed low by lunar love, no
if and why and when,
first ebb then flow -
only the stone-eyed viking seal, high-prowed, ruddered, rowed

rocked dry and
riding time knows
pinioned
momentum,
vertigo,
rode heave of water
in the womb, moon-
clutched dominion
of neither now nor
then or come or go.

## Home Again from Long Ago

> Home again from long ago to narrow sparrow-romped close, honeysuckle laden lane, to wild white rose and fledgling fluttered lilac.

Home from flatland exile, wind-spun horizon without end, to mountain uttered song deeper and darker than histories, jasmine's night shining stars
falling, caught in the cobweb breath of coming wish conde true, spanning night's secret rendezvous, norther ife calling the tune
of whale locke in some rocky cave beyond the bay where rain veils hamlets humped and grey, remote as memory, lost as the coracle.

Home again from then, when childhood's footstep led away across the rambling railway track, never to climb the flower-fled, the flower-bled embankment back.

## The Mystery of Glass

My sister has gone outside now. I do not know if she feels the rain, sees ragged crow dragging his frayed feet above the field, smells clover mead reigned over by brown kye, crownuddered as queens.

Perhaps she walks the clouded hill with me, watches the firth evaporate, the crags disintegrate, the undulating land whisper its muted antiphon from crypt to misted crypt crouching between cached sunshine -
caught between yes and yes, a russet hind hugging tarnished
 gorse edge -
maybe she stops to thrust her thumb
into the foxglove maw,
eager to silence that mauve throat
for now or evermore,
its prescience, its deadly
digitalis roar, or runs ahead
to meet the many-faced magenta stare
of rose-bay willow-herb stabbing
honeysuckle-crept floor
where mitred felix mas
waves tawny-haired
munificence, broadcasting
dusky spoor where thrush scatters her ashy unsung song, soothsaying robin and slight wren run;
or waits beside harebell-rung verge where dreamy dissemblies spin of thistle's burnt-out stars
to watch the swallows harvesting their dancing wheat-flung fare in leaping pas de chat, unearthly, sown in air -


## wing

as she
sliding
severing
light diving
dividing
shuddering stalk
from flower a-gawp,
lisping
its scented song
of where
colours
come from
or leaf
in bright diatribe
against the wind's
wild cry
of coming rain,

beside itself
with life
in love
with clandestine
flow of time
hunting oblivion
for fragments
of itself

## rain

kissing the street, the
earth, the unforgiving stain,
veil of heaven-sent
remorse, or grief,
missing seen
crystal through
crystal to
crystal bead
upon the ground
a bird
a memory of flight or origin of height higher than soprane shift of tongue, touch alit upp
by notes (nd stine,
into the citrus throat
of toadflax slides
a drop of sky,
parched calyx swallows
wept rebirth
preserving it
until some quaking sun
in passing snaps
and slakes its thirst -
giving and taking
is all we know -
tell me a teardrop from its wild cousin, tell me the truth.
(I waited
and you did not come.
Outside a bird
sang my obliteration, rain fell unendingly
it seemed; night
came and went
and day reconvened
again)
and again I was excluded. Entrances and exits were made, instructions iss!e?
and laws obeyed; I saw the endless anival
repeat itself and all of life was spefade.
Here is the meaning: truth does not come round agair
but is the very constant sustenance.
Do we describe the peril that we do not know
but by hunger and enforced abstinence?
Breaking the bond with fear is agony. All is still in here.
The clock enunciates its mannered order, as pre-planned,
as if shared dream
was waking certainty;
the potent march of minutes manned
against contingency. A web
of terror holds in place
the chair, the wall, the lacquered carapace.
A scream defies the law whereby each atom may flee in sudden preference for east,
yet each door opens
upon a furnished void
declaiming its deficiency; a silent plea for warmth, occupancy to interrupt the rage spanning each mute relationship from ledge to pane.


## pain

Today she is tired, fatigued, she says, and in the mirror above the mantelpiece watches the parade, the busy business of the street: devoid of destination, delayed, foiled by a double act of light obedient to her need for more time. The day
is weeping. She waits, kept in abeyance by the steepness of the stair, the self-absorption of the cat, the sapphire surface of a tile, square sunli
listing jasmine. Her
husband is not there.


She waited. Rain
crept down
the window pane
as wept
across porcelain
cheek of denied
Madonna,
led by light,
sky white
holding
her son
oh
lacryma
sistere.

## then

Back then, great-grandfather built his world of glass (thirteen children and every one survived) a shard for every living joy ('the higher up the mountain, the greener grows the grass') recalcitrant boy sent upstairs to his room ('the more a donkey wags his tail the more he shows his...') Heart pierced, he knem
(the higher up the maid reports to master. what his lad savinfogh. It was his vocpion
The wonder onit, not solid nor quit a-flow, the wealth of it (a bell-pull in every room), slow
vitrification, great
heat, the memory of sea, stealthy, manifold solitudes
coalescing yet
not admitting night,
keeping faith with some forgotten law transmitted by the tide.

Looking up, he saw where it all began: a glittering cascade, a shuddering, dissembling
span of spectra shattered in song not of some wayward child but belonging to everyone.


## face

I was his granddaughter's darling, her coveted one, the one she saw in the mirror each time of day, each way she looked at me I was descended from her truth, the loved, the pirouetting lie they told. I saw it too.
I was the one
who looked away


## to face

and now I am on the street
shuffling like time along
its grey meridian,
my sister somewhere near, and she whose womb we knew
in great old age lets go
a sudden flood of blood
as if reliving maidenhood, and then grows young again, regains vitality, and neither nurse nor doctor can divine
disease or calculate a cause -
it was her memory, tripped by the spotted wally-dog upon her windows
the faded wooden babush
monitoring her decline from 2 top
the tv set, the bed that cantilevers
up and down. Trapped
daughters in her lap,
hiding behind her apron,
trying on her headscarf
in the dark, tap,
tapping to come out.
At last we spoke.
'The atmosphere,' she said, 'of one's mind changes.'
I said, 'Don't look at
what I wear.' She said,
'Do I recall correctly

