

THE RING

Also by Lynne Hjelmgaard

Distance Through the Water (I Want Press, France, 2002)

Manhattan Sonnets (Redbeck Press, 2003)

The Ring

LYNNE HJELMGAARD

Shearsman Books
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2011 by
Shearsman Books
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

<http://www.shearsman.com/>

ISBN 978-1-84861-147-4

Copyright © Lynne Hjelmgaard, 2011.

The right of Lynne Hjelmgaard to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyrights,
Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements

Four of the poems in *The Ring* first appeared in my earlier book
Manhattan Sonnets, (Redbeck Press, 2003). Others have appeared or are
forthcoming in *Acumen*, *Leviathan Quarterly*, *Poetry News*, *Poetry Wales*,
The Interpreter's House, *Jacket* and *Shearsman*.

A few lines I have taken from a poem by the Swedish poet
Gunnar Ekelöf (1907–1968). These lines I have placed in italics.

I would also like to thank Alice Notley and Dannie Abse
for their interest and helpful suggestions.

Contents

1. Copenhagen

You've been gone from the harbour almost a year	13
When we first met	14
Where a rose has left you wounded	16
Your dinner spread among the universe	17
Vampiressa	18
Copenhagen Widow	19
An hour and a half from Copenhagen	22
The Burial	23
I give you a sea wind dried	24
Its beautiful fury	25
Tulip Lament	26
Two Songs	27
Your History of Denmark	29

2. London

Things to do in London	33
Pinked at the Tate	35
Dog Dream/ The Sunday Times	37
Weekends Away	
1. The Farm	38
2. Aberystwyth	39
3. Bunny	41

3. Rome

Things to do in Rome	45
Who brought me to this place?	47
Villa Borghese	49
Near Tempio di Esculapio	50

Falling City	51
At Campi d’Fiori	52
Song	54
Mosquito in a Roman Hotel	55
Weekends Away	
1. The Elevator	57
2. Satyrs, churches, monuments & ruins	59

4. Paris

Things to do in Paris	65
Changing Rooms	66
Weekend Away	
Things to do in Berlin	69
The Ring	72

I.M. of Stig

For Stig

How I admire
you who moved
steadfast between countries,
even when there were deserts
to be crossed by foot,
oceans to navigate
by stars,
strangers to trust,
bargains to be made
with the gods.

(I become easily unravelled.)

You could get on a train
going in the wrong direction
and not panic.

And robbed
of everything
(as I am now)
and still
you found your way.

Copenhagen

You have been gone from the harbour almost a year

The howl in the rigging is louder.
Our best friend says you will come for me one day
rejuvenated from weathering your last Atlantic storm.
He still paints the sky and sea.

I stare at a flame and in an instant your body reappears as whole.
Denmark is good that way.
It wins competitions for the world's happiest population.
I can tell by the mentality on the bike paths:
all are equal until one disturbs a real speeder
or suddenly stops without making a hand signal
or rides on the sidewalk or crosses on a red light,
doesn't respect pedestrians or people boarding a bus.

It is important to follow the rules, keep up with traffic or step
aside.
(Remember to keep the green buoys to port as you return.)

Sometimes it is harder now than at the beginning,
but our painter friend says you are busy sailing the waves.

Perhaps you can smell land by now.
(Though you love it best far from shore.)

I hope there is enough wind.
The seas wild and churning
I wait for you.
I see the sails filled and flying.

When we first met

You brought woven saddle bags from Afghanistan
containing: one pair of pants, a toothbrush,
two hard bound diaries with pages coming out and one pair of
underwear.

There was an Afghan coat you sold in the desert
and the dirty pots you threw out of your kitchen window.
(They were too hard to clean.)

There was the return trip from Israel
with stuff taped to your body underneath your clothes;
and Jørgen who dropped a chunk in the airport bathroom
and you had to eat it and there was enough money for a taxi
from Copenhagen to Helsingør to see the sunrise when you
got back.

You told me.

You dazzled me.

You gave me your ring.

Your foreign accent, then very foreign.

Now you call me love and I love to hear you say that.
And it feels like it comes from that space right below the throat
and close to the chest.

I don't want it to end though sometimes it seems
like we're on the way to already finished.

Our belonging, was it stronger at the beginning?

Will it be that at the ending? Is there a middle of the way
in between like the morning yesterday?

It seemed like you wanted me to walk with you to say goodbye.

I didn't know it until after and then I wanted to.

I would be silly to just run after you so I picked up your clothes
instead.

At times I don't know where you're heading
but I wish you (me) were going back.
I'm afraid to look at you (me) going ahead.
Then you say you are a loner, I am your only friend
and you need to get a haircut tomorrow.

Where a rose has left you wounded

spring brings me deep
into the blossoming forest
where your tulips grow

a hawk chases a gull or swallow
shrieks, cries of other birds
behind the shadow
of a yew hedge

a tiny belly pants with breath
its twisted beak and flat wings
crushed on the dusty ground

the night isn't finished
I guide you back to bed

*

the easiest path
to the sea
is through the wild roses
the peeling lounge chairs
on the terrace, lavender
where the deer sleeps
in the morning

headless tulips
a smell of soap
on the body

afterwards, no longer you
alive there——

Your dinner spread among the universe

Your dinner spread among the universe. Can no longer taste.
Afraid of faltering, absorbed in sterile rooms. Drive me the
miles back to your bed.

It roars. Go back, go back the roar, we can't find cures written
on our thinning walls. Tired hands keep calling you down. We
aren't finished. *Wake me to sleep in you.*

Those who have received and been given, we can see it on their
mouth and eyes. I want you to see it on my mouth and eyes.

That was yesterday when dreams walked us around the house.
We spent the day thinking about porcelain instead of disease, if
it will release you.

The doe is lost in the forest. Large brown eyes alert, limbs
ready to jump. "Come with me." The immeasurable distance to
where you stand.