



New Light for the Old Dark

Sam Willetts

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The poems in this remarkable first collection have been hard won: 'Fruits of much grief they are,' as Donne said, 'emblems of more.' Having lost ten years to heroin addiction and recovery, Sam Willetts emerges now - suddenly, and apparently from nowhere - as a fully-fledged and significant English poet.

In a book deeply conscious of history, one series of poems tracks his mother's escape, as a young girl, from the Nazis, in a narrative that moves from a Stuka attack on the Smolensk Road to the Krakow ghetto, the destruction of Warsaw, to Nuremberg and Nagasaki and, finally, his mother's grave. Other poems address Englishness, secular Jewishness, and the childhood pleasures of Oxfordshire - an increasingly deceptive pastoral, stalked and eventually shattered by heroin, which brings a grim new existence among dealers and users. The redemption the poet finds, through detox and rehab, love and writing, is full of regret for the years and lives wasted, but also offers a lyrical rebirth of the senses: 'In a new light, a new moon/ that isn't made of scorched tinfoil/will turn your tide again'.

Deft, economical and wonderfully original, this is work that celebrates the peaks and troughs of a lived life, the poems' vivid clarity feeling both fresh and fully earned. It is rare to find an unknown poet of such mature quality, and *New Light for the Old Dark* represents a brilliant dawning.

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