



HOWARD  
MINGHAM

WATERS OF THE  
NIGHT

COLLECTED  
POEMS 1974~84

Howard  
Mingham

*Waters of  
the Night*



First published in 2010  
by Caparison  
F1, 43, St Aubyns  
Hove BN3 2TJ

Caparison is an e-book imprint of *the Recusant* webzine  
[www.therecusant.org.uk](http://www.therecusant.org.uk)

Typeface Arno Pro

© Howard Mingham 1974-1984/2010  
© Estate of Howard Mingham 2010,  
c/o David Kessel

All rights remain with the author.

Selected by David Kessel  
Edited and arranged by Alan Morrison © 2010  
Cover design © Alan Morrison 2010

Howard Mingham is hereby identified as author of this  
work in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright,  
Designs and Patents Act 1988

*This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way  
of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise  
circulated without the author's prior consent in any form of  
binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without  
a similar condition including this condition being  
imposed on the subsequent purchaser.*

## Contents

Confessional Poem, 1
Sleepless Night, 2
The Cock, 3
The Cat, 4
Fish, 5
Lighthouse, 6
On Molwyn Beach, 7
What the Thunder Meant, 9
Rain, 10
After the Rain, 12
The Garden, 13
Tree, 14
Ode, 15
Thought in Mayola Street, Hackney, 21
To Scholars and Ken Worpole, 22
DHSS Poem, 25
Let Us Leave Our Puzzle Behind Us, 27
Darts, 28
A Cup of Burnt Brazil, 29
Cards for All Occasions, 33
From Ward F5, 34
For She Still On The Ward, 37
Broken Water, 38
Breath, 40
If I Am But My Body, 41

*Waters of  
the Night*

Howard  
Mingham

## *Confessional Poem*

Hearts do not break.  
They are torn and held  
in pitiless fingers,  
they are kneaded.

Now hearts are needed.

But what shock of joy.  
What helpless blood  
gushed happily.

Where now  
from this butcher's shop?  
In the street,  
a puppy pulling.  
There are cold cans  
of cut horse.

There are bones, of course.

Hearts do not break.  
If only hearts could break.

My own hatred dismays me.  
They do not.  
Devil, let us shake.

## *After the Rain*

After the rain a holy,  
Pagan light fell from cloud  
And struck the pavement slab,  
In all the canyoned silence moved no crowd.

But in the stinking mist alone,  
In the incense of the dying rain,  
I stood on the brown-soaked stone  
And I heard the song of the drain.

'I am the hope and the escape.  
I am the tunnel to the drowning sea.  
I am the gay merry and the dismal  
And I am neither the light nor the way.

'Into me rolls the runaway penny;  
To all things I am sanctuary.  
I am their church, their catacomb, their nunnery  
And I am neither the light nor the way.

By the trickling cave on the kerb I sat,  
My head stone-heavy in my helpless hands  
And in the sour valley of the stonefaced flats,  
The drain sang to me and I dreamt.

Of those distant, waiting lands  
Where none made, no promise is broken  
And the streams run clear to the honest sands  
Where no man has stood and thus no lie been spoken.

'Yes, into me rolls the runaway penny  
And longs the hopeless refugee.  
I am catacomb and nunnery  
And I am neither the light nor the way.

'I am merry in song and sing of the sea  
And into me trickles the washed-out day.  
And I drink of the hopeless refugee  
And I am neither the light nor the way.'

*Broken Water*

Dog-black-and-white it flits  
skips in a gutter,  
happy rubbish on the wind,  
jerks in a gust, like traffic,  
ducks and drakes across the city

past halls smelling of polish and parquet,  
past halls smelling of cats and cabbage,  
past tower-blocks and announced cement,  
past dinner-houses of children scattered in play,  
past the troops that do not work,  
past the force that do not work,  
past the idle

It ducks and drakes across the city,  
dumb as rag  
and blind where children are not pretty,  
where roomfuls of family  
do not burst from the curtained crevices,  
where workless people remain unending  
deaf and simple and uncomprehending  
it ducks and drakes  
past the hospitals  
with the azure pictures of threatened lakes.

Beneath your feet an essence is running,  
thick as oil, thick as drumming, an early  
dark madness we had forgotten:  
the sewers are swollen,

boxes and cardboard and cartons of water,  
all that is used, unused, undone  
kept by habits that tremble underground,  
all effort to contain exhausted  
are vomiting sound, vomiting sound.  
All the parts are leaving,  
clocks and daylight,  
shops, factory, obedience, girls;  
a bull of water swells,  
boxes and cardboard and cartons of water,  
wet symbols like bells  
clatter in a flow of water and loss,  
decay itself, removing us.

In these unused canals a flood,  
derelictions that rattle on the light  
and call to the body of your unemployed blood.  
Where are the gifts  
of the chain-department-store  
and further, further there is more.

Behind you the pigeons cooing like pneumonia  
and as always as hunger, unsteady cats.

Your small heart is cracking like bottles.

Not thought nor faith nor objects holds  
in this broken water or arthritic catch.