

David Wheatley

**A NEST
ON THE WAVES**



Gallery Books

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for Aingeal

Sweat

Saline meniscus we secrete
as our limbs wrap, knit and attune,
our rough drafts left behind on the sheet:
sealing by stretching the space between
my flank and your flank, my chest and yours,
the extra space of a liquid pinch
that comes away in our hands and pours
us out of each other, the mingled drench

we tip out through the tips of our tongues
and down the gutters of palms and spine;
the pool of us gathered by shoulders and hips
we each collect, that insists as it clings
I am your outside now and you mine:
the sweat we lick from and leave on our lips.

Semaphore

A ship in a bottle, a ship in a bulb.
My love the lighthouse-keeper sleeps
in a circular bed, his toes almost

touching his head, and I his wife
dance by the shore, a flag in each hand.
He watches me from inside the storm

and knows the code. Red,
yellow, red: I found your toothbrush,
the swallows have fledged. The light

has a god's all-powerful whimsy —
flashing, occulting, isophase —
and he's the man will catch fish with a kite,

and knit me a chough's red beak
on a jumper. Come the worst
of the swells relief is impossible:

where is the light to warn the man
inside the light and under the sea's
own tongue? When they saw

the Flannans lamp dark and no one
to greet them the search party
knew the island unmanned,

its savage tideline notional
henceforth, up in the air.
I too am carried away

who have gone nowhere.
But, oh, he's the man will come
back to me, winched over

the waves with his jigsaws done
to a total absence of potted meat,
to where no spray leeches into our bed.

Little Ones

DEDICATION

It's all yours.

THREAD

Wing-mirror spider
sitting tight
all motorway long

takes my finger,
come journey's end
cuts loose and moves on.

POUND SHOP

That its value for money
not falter or fail

opens for business
with a closing-down sale.

SWIMMING

I ploughed a field forty times
nothing grew
as I gave up
it sprouted
me.

LOUGH DAN UNREACHED

Not that the path was lost
but that after long
hesitation the briars
had found and embraced it at last.

DERELICT HOUSE

Though I bricked myself in
and still nobody came

I'll stand here and wait
for you just the same.

HALL OF MIRRORS

The closer I get to myself the more I shrink.
You loom larger and larger walking away.

Triskets

At the Sign of the Empire that Came and Went,
at the Sign of the Fudge-coloured Cat,
we are well met. There is time
between the waiter's leisurely rounds

for the currency to change and change back.
The Futurist Volunteer Bicycle Brigade.
Caporetto. *M'illumino d'immenso*.
The old Austrian statues going back up

here, now, but under what flag?
The end of war need not be defeat
but obscurity raised to a fine art.

Another empire could come and go
and the beer at this café still be flat.

(Trieste)