

Apologia

SAMPLE

ALSO BY CRAIG WATSON

A Third Instance (Instance Press, 2014)

(with Rosa Alcalá & Elisabeth Whitehead)

Sleepwalking with Orpheus (Shearsman Books, 2011)

Secret Histories (Burning Deck, 2007)

True News (Instance Press, 2002)

Free Will (Roof Press, 2000)

Reason (Zasterle Press, 1998)

Picture of the Picture of the Image in the Glass (O Books, 1992)

After Calculus (Burning Deck, 1988)

Discipline (Burning Deck, 1987)

0.10 (Awede, 1986)

The Asks (Sun and Moon Press, 1982)

SAMPLE

Apologia

Craig Watson

SAMPLE

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
PO Box 4239
Swindon
SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(*this address not for correspondence*)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-884-8

Copyright © The Estate of Craig Watson, 2023.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Parts of these poems previously appeared in *Pallaksch*, *Pallaksch*.

For Patti

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

Contents

No Rehearsal / 9

Civil Affairs / 31

Testimony / 41

Rhyme Is an Aid to Memory / 49

Apologia / 61

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

No Rehearsal

The gods are happy – they don't exist.

Fernando Pessoa

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

Options for a Day Book

Almost illegible;

No inventory.

Feral, then

amateur.

Here's the metrics:

Father x, son y.

Clemency redacted

by

absence.

Still not

Not extinct.

SAMPLE

Options for Confession

What conditions make autobiography necessary?

Everyone's invited to debilitate.

Happiness embraces futility.

Ignorance celebrates excess.

Or are we stuck with the old-joke-turned-wisdom
that everyone has but one lie?

There's always more to avoid.

That is, "no want left waiting unwanted."

A perfect sheen of public relations.

Then a night of lavish shivering.

SAMPLE

Options for Certainty

I didn't start with all these words.
They are symptoms not currencies.

Self-consciousness is the first exclusion.
Make no sudden moves.

Is this life the sediment of memory
or the memory of sentiment?

"Tenacious," you called it,
"compassion's cruelty will never justify itself."

Now spell me while I make excuses
Yes, I'll pay the damages.

SAMPLE

Options for Forecasting Weather

At last, the impossible age.
Let's make an example of perfection.

We create order
because there's no other choice.

Repetition likes what it sees.
It's the same as passing for precise.

Last thought censures first
thought, The lesser of two never-minds.

In the end we will leave behind
Only images watching images.

SAMPLE

Options for Diplomacy

Don't listen to Mr. Lucky.
When rhetoric disappears, it's all business.

Authority pantomimes liberation,
that astonishment of lies to which the hands consent.

It's very simple: benevolent repression,
indecipherable doctrine, triumphal indifference.

Retain, recite,
Repent, redact.

It's like the old mirror-in-a-mirror trick:
There are so many ways to abolish curiosity.

SAMPLE

Options for Amnesia

There's a scene in your imagination
and another scene around that.

Better to think of the life not lived
than a monopoly of replicas.

Every sentence draws the next one closer.
Each page tells less than the last one.

Evolution bribes redemption,
So disappointment's on its own.

Everywhere possible,
None of it here.

SAMPLER

Options for the Present

This one goes out to victims of the Trojan War;
Thanks for your sacrifice.

The jails are full, people are rich,
Money replaces speech.

Do you think no one sees you
When you're not looking?

Repetition measures success.
No tips, no refunds, no returns.

All that's missing
so effortlessly inadequate.

SAMPLE