

A shadow departs

Bert Biscoe

(To mark the departure of Clarice Mortensen in January 2014)

A Cossack child rode a black horse
Through Methody streets
Ahead of Truro Parades – her dancing feet
Sought the stage, her mind
Made stories of Viking raids, of rescue
From dark chains of absent priests –

Atlantic wisdoms and knowledge of knots
Turned in her childhood bowl;
Rudiments of navigation and bargains
Struck quayside for carriage of cargo –
Hers the soul he swore-by, hers the palm
He spat and clasped – and hers the hand

In columns, born in copperplate and turned
By ocean's dance and lamplight
To be as much a mark as voices left
In winter's branch and broken walls –
The path un-haunted lies, a metaphor'd
Vein across the hill, drenched again

By tears - our endless storm! We look
Each lengthened morning, each evening,
For a frail ship determined as ever a skipper
Must be to find her port, discharge and turn
To be gone on the tide, to dance as operas
Of gull and gods, of salt and sugar, collide –
How quiet, how undisturbed, this lane.