

*Four Winters*, Jem Southam (Stanley/Barker)

*Four Winters* is a book of mornings and mourning, of dawns and dusks, a collection of reflective colour photographs on the River Exe initiated by photographer Jem Southam's need for a time and place to grieve for his brother, and the recognition that in finding this space he had also found the subject for his next body of work.

Southam's images have always been quiet and intense, requiring viewers to spend time looking, just as he does with his camera. In *Four Rivers*' often misty riverscapes we see light arriving or departing, swans and other birds awakening or settling down, the water bright or muddy, rippled, still or in flood. Sometimes dark and trees enclose us, at other times silver, pink or orange light illuminates a scene only just coming into being, hills, streams and vistas which are hardly there yet.

Soft tones of indescribable blues and greys contrast with the occasional autumnal yellow or brown, pale greens. Birds in formation fly by or cluster in protective groups, swans haul their weight in to the sky, avian ghosts against mist or icy dew. This is primal stuff, wild and uncontrollable. Even a sometimes tamed and often inhabited and developed river, still shapes itself, changes the land it inhabits, ebbing and flowing through the seasons. I feel lucky to be shown the evidence of all this unknown world.

What *Four Winters* evidences is an ability to look and wonder, to provoke us to seeing and engaging, to look up from the page and begin to notice what is happening around us, however slowly or calmly, and celebrate that which is often hidden or ignored but remains around or beside us.

Rupert Loydell