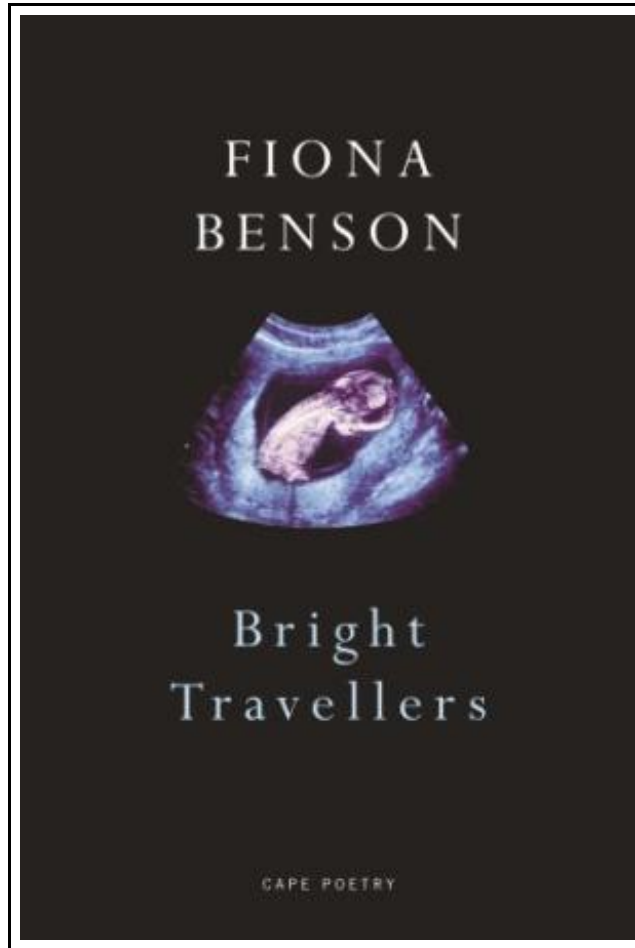


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Reviews

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Vintage Publishing. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Bright Travellers, Fiona Benson, This book is shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection Winner of the 2015. Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry Prize for First Full Collection. In this remarkable, intensely moving, first collection, Fiona Benson shows her fascination with human experience. The poems move on archaeological fast-forward from submerged Devonian forests and a Paleolithic cave-bear skull to the site of decommissioned submarines at HMNB Devonport, where the sea is 'still a torpedo-path, an Armageddon road'. She explores the shared human continuum of bodily longing - from the Prehistoric maker of a wooden fertility fetish, to a modern-day couple wading through summer pollen - and the timeless cycles of conception, birth and child-rearing. A central sequence of dramatic monologues addressed to Van Gogh allows for a focussed exploration of depression, violence, passion and creativity. In these poems, as in all the poems in this impressive debut, we feel keenly the sense of life lived at the edge of threat - catastrophe, even - but also on the cusp of beauty and happiness. Other poems about the bewildering loss of miscarriage are hard to read and impossible to forget, moving with grace and authority through great grief to arrive at a hard-won destination of selfless, unqualified love. 'I remember again the corridor of the labour ward and that woman sitting weeping with her man having given birth to a death - small grey face, no breath, something you cannot help but love - habibi, akushla, I go home alone but carry you, courie you, little slipped thing, to the ends of the earth.'



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