**Contributor: Nicholas Meihuizen**

**Entry: Watson, Stephen (1954-2011)**

Born in Cape Town, Stephen Watson taught in the English Department and the Centre for Creative Writing at the University of Cape Town. He was the author of six collections of poetry, notably *In this City* (1986), centred in Cape Town, as is most of his poetry, and *Return of the Moon: Versions from the /Xam* (1991), based on the Bleek and Lloyd translations of Bushmen folk-lore. His non-fictional works include the acclaimed collection of finely crafted essays, *The Music in the Ice* (2010). Watson was a perfectionist, who so valued formal craft over the explicit statement that his works (like those of J.M. Coetzee) were sometimes considered peripheral to the political situation in South Africa. This is to ignore the strength of the perceptions and experiences gathered in his poetry, their inevitably being enfolded within, and being the tightly wrought product of, their socio-historical context. His ‘versions’ of /Xam folk-lore, for instance, evoke the vanished world of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Cape, their oneness with nature, their rich imaginations, and the consequences of the coming of the Europeans, which resulted in their being confined to the prison settlement of Robben Island, much later the jail of Nelson Mandela.

**List of works**

*In this City* (1986)

*Return of the Moon: Versions from the /Xam* (1991)

*Presence of the Earth* (1995)

*The Light Echo and Other Poems* (2007)

*The Music in the Ice* (2010)