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César Vallejo

Trilce  (paperback, 256pp, £12.95 / $21)

Complete Later Poems 1923-1938  (paperback, 420pp, £16.95 / $28)

Edited and translated by Valentino Gianuzzi and Michael Smith

César Vallejo was born in 1892 in the small town of Santiago de Chuco in northern Peru. He was able to attend Trujillo University and the University of San Marcos in Lima, although his parents were poor. In 1920 he was arrested while in his home town and accused of being involved in some political disturbances. Although he appears to have been innocent, he was imprisoned for several months and many of the poems in “Trilce”, his second book (1922), refer to this period, which was to have a decisive impact upon both his life and his poetry. In 1923 Vallejo went to Paris and in 1928 and 1929 he made two short trips to the USSR, which were to have a profound effect upon him. In the 1930s he became a militant communist, and was expelled from France, whereupon he moved to Spain. In 1933 he returned to Paris but again left for Spain at the outbreak of the Civil War, first to visit Republican territory and later to attend the International Writers’ Congress. He died in 1938. His poetry written after “Trilce” only appeared in book form after his death.

Vallejo is regarded as the most important poet of Peru, one of the great figures of Latin American literature, and a titan of the pre-war avant-garde.
Harry Guest

As Far As Angkor Wat

counts comma it might seem one writing life
is done with once we’ve reached the place where what
astounds anew dash old complexities
arising from a blurred reaction to
some given scene resembling cloudlight on
a ruin or four buffaloes getting rinsed
in a brown river dash had after all
its origin in humid aerodromes
at midnight in southeastern portions of
the atlas waiting with the children for
the next Dakota colon where with stars
gone soft above or noon trampling on shadows
can data be unearthed to rectify
a theme gone suspect question mark what if
the in inverted commas schedule planned
to test interpretations of the lost
finds references on from then to now
and later shaken down to only one
conclusion question mark dreams have their own
vocabulary comma designate
another truth each time pointing the gaze
in cycles to a stale experience
full stop close survey may provide distilled
interrogation of the motive like
a sandstone avatar or mango branch
the way a moat now grazed by oxen rings
a site arrived at after years of longing
dash journals pored over tired in twilight since
the artist armed with bias saunters out
plundering what communities of faith
built for to forge subjective patterns which
convey all the same elegies full stop
bird cries now echo into silence round
grey basreliefs and sunsplit courtyards till
eventual proportions start to curdle
about the involving I making the new
unknown a newer memory full stop
what’s been derived from yellowed pamphlets helps
only in part dash even photographs
must cheat because you have to pace the thing
out for yourselves and sense uneven steps
comma a mediaeval play of sun
down far symmetric cloisters comma see
firsthand the blackening waste of rain along
those crumbling arcades full stop at first
not even pillagers full stop the splendour
went unremembered if at times huntsmen
intent on shooting monkeys down from trees
rooted in towers stumbled across paved floors
laid in oblivion and failed to find
some boles too angular dash otherwise
between haphazard expeditions only
the scrape of cobras over brickwork comma
a leopard’s cough and the perpetual shove
of vegetation through the cracks full stop
ah may the ashes of forgotten sculptors
windswept arrange a spectral advocate
to arraign the gods they chiselled and produce
the battered finery as proof although
each statue hides a secret with its smile
because the done is still the thing which counts
comma response to problems of technique
which argues setting up against the murk
a witness to the self though self is doomed
full stop peripheries of anguish where
a limited hand cuts one crisp lintel full
of dancers comma legends comma flowers
may well exclude the stellar order or
conceal the desolation comma fear
of failure comma nothing rounded off
full stop lianas of the passing night
scrawl commentaries on what has been achieved
but cannot mask a proven impetus
nor punctuate an unspelt myth full stop
over there far off tired from searching or
not searching—the great moments
are all over, boats pass beneath the bridge
fitted-out with red letters. read across
from left to right they spell
only a circular argument, turning
the reinvented wheel on a blind axis.
here, their unsatisfied selves
are a placebo to the notion of past-time
constantly spoken of—deep in something
like thought or happiness in the
absolute & everlasting—each time the hour
strikes, punching its way drunk
through fog the eyes never grow used to
Without Further Prospects

the message has been sent. branches
drooping heavily against a window
where the scratched white resembles
hair blanketing a winter vagina

first the right hand stuck out above
the underwater head. imagine
describing such a thing—a throat
behind a screen of its own noise

the clock hands swim under clear glass
one stroke at a time—regular as crystal
iodine or bone ash or ammonia. ritual
& sacrifice are nightly performed here

bare hips pressed to the wall—is anyone
listening? you do not know. a code
tapped-out on the steaming body
to be satisfied by as little as a word

in one corner a viennese piano lies in
wait with all of its keys removed. jaws
flex soundlessly in the dark. trust no-one.
the shoes are in the box beside the door
Elizabeth Treadwell

The imported ghost deer of Inverness, California

as if part of the fog they are steamy &
part of the fog
skimming the bulky peninsula
the dark grass & rock

sea-sandy, grass, root of tall thing;
sea-sandy, grass, earth, dark as the sea

in cabbage-rose;
or the mercy & glorie of Halcy.

After Myles Coverdale

Yes us will mix a lot, in palace glare, next quiet
pool. Next a pond by Halcyon us low & crie; flung us
upon the trees, required a songe. Next us recall did
ye, o fancy one, as for our chords. Now us will mix a
lot, the Lordes sweet songe, forgotten here, in an odd
spot. Now us will mix a lot, if to no more, let no
roof mouth.
Remember, yes, in the day us say. Oh daughter thou
shalt grounde & playe, in these sweet days, happy
happy shall you be, dressed like the sea, in
cabbage-rose. In cabbage-rose.
Arlene Ang

Seven Years of Bad Luck

The crevice is a scenery
of black birds
& the hands that broke
their wings.

Winter wires
the glass with trees,
their branches
a drip of cobwebs:

the fly figure
spills the gurgle of
throats in the last ward
down the hall.

Objects are often
broken in anger,
or by the scissored
thread of fate.

Old wives paint
their obsession with
pain, the childbirth
gone wrong

in shades of milk
& fire elements,
the arrow that leched
Christ’s rib.

Then, the inability
to hold a fountain pen
upright over
a laid billet doux.
Here is the thirst
known only to dying men:
a tunnel of mirrors
cracked from side to side.
Scott Thurston

from Singing Sensation

how to hang a
  split to pit that
wretched bulb
  bulging in one’s eye
line head height
  bespoke addictions a simple worm
in the architecture
  love me love my hate dog
a sullen sip of
  disciplined testing
of a vintage
  vintage better bettered only the next
time around

toughen things
  into their special
apportioned proportion
  a speck of timeless
dated innocent angst
  guides in dissolves to
a hair in the gate
  what are your bounds
your grounds so solid
  to run your duty on
batch it hawk it
  quick
over the border
Simon Perril

possessive apostrophe

at a performance of Dr Caligari the other day a shadow
shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of
the screen . . . The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed
to be fear itself, and not the statement “I am afraid.”

Virginia Woolf

in the moving past
something tastes of mint
printing of matter and coin.

Beginning in the lab
patently the pain is a case for the pay-off
a cabinet even

for the debris on the cutting room floor
doubles as a sea bed
and it’s swelling there bottom right:

tumoresque tadpole in amphibian night.
It phosphors; this fostered child
foetal, fatal

comma or colon
our submarinal appetites swell.
The drives at varied speeds

will soon settle
a light granular crust
forms on the silvered surface
Chris Brownsword

Countenance

Slower than the canal water
gently brushing, tilling, its sedimentary bed

I watched the curve of mouth begin to move and knew
that words had formed, then fallen mute, upon their sheets; it wasn’t

the gentle sparks which flanked
the air between the clank of factories’
grinding machines

but rather something

else entirely that caught my eye; it could
have been the bleaching shore of cloud

nestling infant-like amongst the
crimson nipples of window-pane-esque
rays (this sun that neither rises nor sets

this sun that homes a world which turns
upon an axis both mysterious and caged)
that brought the thought right back to roost:

this recollected body, turned downward
into the snow, and then, the paramedics
lifting its foetal shape, exposing that face-

like a womb recently emptied of child–
the molasses of neodymium slush, a perfect contour

geometric with the angled twitch of siren lights

somewhat akin to flaming bracts
of bougainvillea wrapped around
the handle
of a stonewashed door.
Isobel Armstrong

To See a Look: Belonging

‘Perception belongs to the world it perceives’
(Merleau Ponty)

a rose
and glass
fused by accidental sibilants

glass and
water’s lustre
rhymed by light

water cleaves to glass
as one congealed liquid
hollows the curves of another

crystal-steeped stem distils
the colours of transparency concealed
in its soft vermilion folds

redness flares
in longing for
the eye’s passion

whose seeing runs in the veins
of each translucent petal
the root of light deep in glass

the red core opens an eyelid
a flutter of skinflash
reflection

the rose seeing a look
the seer become seen
glass and water hold the look and the stem of the rose
1. last world lost first
   all promises promise themselves
   [what nature doesn’t want]
   nothing lives for its own sake

2. war makes culture
   [empire begins at defense]
   your money [and] your life

3. heaven’s curse [scorched by water on water]
   steal to own [that uncompensated distance]
   ashes for ashes [Prester John at the gates of Qaraqorum]

4. then swam into the tall grass
   singing memories alone together
   as if the dead would not mind
   this wind of loving immolation
5. is to kill
   [without being]
   killed
   [each footstep]
   [breath]
   mistaken for all

6. a bluish wolf
   fell in love with
   a fallow deer
   [the Great Khan]
   [a womb unavenged]

9. to be human [the lying animal]
   to believe a soul [made of mud]
   to whisper [“I belong to no-body”]

9. “You must have committed the worst of sins
   for God to have sent a punishment like me”
9. now that we know each other
   [said the joker to the thief]
   let us consummate
   [this marriage of convenience]
   divine fiction and earthly consequence
Hearth

a dove cote
holes in the house wall
doves fly into bedrooms
settle on a bed
peck at the air they own
find grain

The Arrival

They came to a valley hidden in the belly of a fat full-uddered cow. Day forgotten the fields over-ridden by weeds deserters of a smoky city driven by love of wheat its solid gold kernels. Came to a valley hidden in the cow’s full belly from which bidden over hills an oil fuelled row. The day forgotten the fields over-ridden their neighbours in this valley they find misshapen want tractors replaced by horse and plough. A valley hidden built themselves new lives on a stone age midden this valley all ours an unspoken vow. Cow’s bladder echo in my ears watch sullen from an oak tree bough how they came over-ridden to day’s forgotten fields.
James Bell

Long Distance

Chinese myth says
wild geese and fish are messengers.

He learns this from Wang Wei
as he reads this poet of rivers
beside his own river
close to where anglers sit

though
he never sees any fish caught.

Today there are plenty of gulls –
no wild geese –
someone has sent an important message
long distance.

Must have been delivered,
for geese now paddle
wearily up river
and one of the flock plods onto the mud flat.

Still no sign of fish.

More geese leave the water.

A cormorant appears
dives
surfaces with a flapping messenger
that he swallows whole.
Edward Mycue

Washed and Separated From Radiance

for Martin Booth, 1944-2004, in memoriam

Usak a western town in Anatolia, Turkey, famed for carpets goldyellows, orangereds, greens commanded by medallion and star motifs—is known while Kars in the northeast nearer to Tiflis (Tbilisi) in Georgia is the city of Snow in Orhan Pamuk’s seventh novel translated into English by Maureen Freely his friend since childhood. In one country there are hives of voices soaring and dwindling into insanity. Fortitude is a sword. Perseverance a death rattle. People are like flowers losing their high coloring and shrink, stink still alive writhing spreading an export of simple words: gas piss shit shout. The earth is dying and its peoples are ravening themselves for prey. Somethings once we believe were once done right. Tomorrow no longer wise adventure becomes pursuit. Separation, sacrifice, revenge raddled mystic, prophet. Usak a town in western Anatolia, Turkey, famed for carpets has a hive of voices soaring, falling as a sword, a death rattle. Flowers and people fester because an epidemic is sweeping over the earth ravening the rich who are rich because the poor are poor seeing a revenge for wrongs and death rattle for all. Washed in blood of lambs, saturated in pollutions Politicians, priests are the bright colored dying leaves.
It is hard to sleep with his body
in the way, atemporally

bloated with past easy sleep
and his bones, cloister arcs

with their visible chill
shields for tender beginnings

and his skin, wormy and underwatered
like a dead person’s skin.

Maybe skin dies first and obvious
as a kind of reminder

a visit to the Winter
Garden in July
(second)

His brain I think is breaking over there
his, yours

Light comes later and violent
planted among the hollyhocks

adjectives pruned
clipped conjunctions

We followed the rules
of cultivation

A sentence grows into the shape
of the thought that contains it

or breaks it
or is broken
In Sabina

. . . cast adrift
by a faint rippling
of wings, the sudden birth
of bird-speak flutters
across dips and hills

I know a language lost to me
lies out there
clitoral as the orange
pomegranate flower
open

to the thrill of thunder
clattering
and the lightning
in my soul.
(Untitled 2)

mid-afternoon
mid-life
mid-dream.
Exactly where it’s at.

The tempo of clouds
like ice flows
drifting off the window frame.
A slow clearance
of winter stock
to be replaced with fresh
organic afternoons
sky sheets the colours
of coral seas.

A curious customer
stops on the window ledge
magpie beady eyes
poking in at mountains
of paper work, the stale grey
landscape of last year’s
wasteland
and instantly flies away.

Beyond the west wall
the sun is sinking
faintly gold
into the fault-lines and rubble
of other people’s lives
on the shaken side
of the world
curiosity no more daring here
than boredom
a clear sky.
Today
exactly nothing
has changed
exactly nothing
has stayed the same.

Crush

amidst all the woulds and would nots
a stomach churned in knots. To be the centre
of the hunt, the one sought-after: who would
not? One the tender stalk of asparagus in a wood
hiding by the dry bed of a river. To be plucked
and savoured and sit in a sated gut. The end
an end in itself.

One the tender child
on the far bank of childhood. She turns
coyly on a breath, a clin d’œil
the kind that would easily spot asparagus,
a lingering smile that bids farewell to innocence
while holding everything close to her chest.
To be embraced, in the end, by the earth
that feeds the roots – a simple need, a practiced kiss
a stalk that stretches to the sky.
Three Poems from a Longer Sequence

2

Relationships (all possibilities from one self
journeys all the ways out to each of us)
we run for the red bus not knowing its number
it is fun how your body’s contortions pulls faces
    beneath your clothes,
we watch the sound of the siren to recognize the service
is this ours, I mean, can we be injured by what we feel?
The cup of the city spills, shatters – it is called perspective
    it is everywhere –
the way the tip of a cigarette in the dark could be a light on a ship
I found you, the only one to keep my fact file warm amidst the bricks
no cop, I should say, could police our language in any crowd
two cogs bit in to the code called love, in a system
    only we could log onto

3

The Rapies

which was what I read, looking quick
in the physical self-help section
at every cure-all under the Sunday Sun,
his dark materials sold as a loss leader
like underwater swimming reaching coloured
plastic fish for air, it occurred
at the dada chequerboard game
of the checkout how strange it was
that we took everything out, put it back
– then paid – rain cracked the taxi windscreen
like Pollock’s frozen thought of bankruptcy,
in the rearview a darkened microfiche of my face
beginning to transfer to the other side
like a spent, fuggy hologram
they will be there with the same accent as me
I heard them where my body was, as I set up the balls
they monogroaned three pints through a tannoy on a ride
called Descartes’ Bumber Cars
then played three straight frames (I smiled towards them)
thirty-five red-green repetitions of aphorisms
the dull ivory click of balls – a stonehenge of the moment –
local words like poker in the fingers
being a veneer, a potential bluff, a set of rules
it’s all available said the radio in “L-L-L-L-L-Liverpool”
I thought of how the most vibrant boy at school
lived in the oldest house, mock-Tudor
& for the first time in years the big-L city, maytime metropolis, that
life-belt to me
did not diminish this city to what they meant it to be: circuit-training
in a cemetery
The Fever Box

I keep my fevers in a shoebox in the closet. Central Illinois’ last blizzard. San Antonio, grifting, ninety-five or ninety-six. But this is not a diary. The box holds the colours of bedside walls, one a muted orange reminiscent of sherbet, and the taste of the air, in that room the vaguely sweet, slightly sickly flavour of erratic central heating and months without sunlight. From time to time I take them out, my fevers; I shake them into the sunlight to get a better look.

The National Muse

I misread museum as muse and bowed my head before the brick temple. Tourists scurried across the plaza with backpacks and maps; they had reached the end of a pilgrimage yet did not look suitably dehydrated or fatigued. I myself had pushed the same large yellow leaf eight blocks, switching between the inner and outer, right and left foot. Before long I needed to know the name of the foot’s inside curve, and on arriving at the national muse, cringed with guilt over my unpreparedness. I was still standing, shifting my weight from side to side, when a toddler emerged from the building. His face was probably no more awake than when he entered, but he beamed with innocent sincerity. I brushed the dirt from a lower step and sat. It was going to be a long wait.
Always Nice

Always nice to see men here, in this room where the fates of women’s bodies are decided upon. Man and woman enter, woman enters, two women enter, man and woman leave, a different set this time. He offered to come with her. And no, this isn’t an abortion clinic. Think higher up. Think love. Think pillow. A woman asks how much longer it’s going to be, already an hour late. She brought a book but doesn’t dare open it. She wants to savor this part. A woman in a wig comes out of the inner sanctum, a man helps another woman on with her coat. He offered to come with her. The husband of the wig woman rings and enters. She immediately sized him up by his hat and knows that wig’s not for chemo, after all. She always assumes the worst. He offered, she refused. But maybe he should have come.

Permanent

For Ethel

A little woman. Every time she sees you she reaches up to run her fingers through your hair. Such beautiful hair. Thick and curly, unlike hers. And in intensive care last summer, your father out of it, beyond the pain, she ran her fingers through his hair. Look at those curls. He’d planned to get it cut this week. But he would live to get it cut later. She would drive him home. They would drive each other to doctor after doctor. They would drive to the supermarket, together, once a week. He would drive her to play cards. He would drive her to the beauty parlor, two days before she went in the hospital. She would get a permanent. Her hair has no body. No, that’s not right. Body’s all that’s left now.
Lane/ways

Back on the track of ancestors at Millthorpe railway station
I long to wait for the carriage to take me to the Grand Western,
my parasol pointed into the skirted breadth of crinoline
dug out of the costume department
at Channel Nine. Or was it the ABC? More likely
my Victorian imagination ploughed across
the latest drought, land dried to dust.

Then to Orange to pick up on the missed focus,
maybe the stunned look of plants burnt by frost
at Cotehele, the first magistrate’s house,
up and running as a stylish B&B.
William Lane was the magistrate.

Smoke curls from burning stumps and
tree roots. The blackened edge of road
sifts into dust. At La Colinne
pappardelle with rabbit ragoût,
the wine a heavy pinot noir,
layers fresh memory
into the history of conquest.

And headstones at the cemetery fall sideways
telling the story of infant deaths,
five in one Kelly grave never reaching three
years. Many adults not quite thirty
died of influenza, falls off horses
and misadventure. Did they fail to cross
flooded creeks, survive snake bite, find
companionship? Did love elude them?
Who knows?

Under stone standing at ramshackle angles
lie the Lanes Esther, Hazel, Lillian,
Elsie, Leslie and Cleland,
shut-eyed in the underearth where there is no passageway to the rock-faced quoits and carns riven with age in the slurry fields of Edgecumbe. Do their ghosts seek the house Cotehele in Cornwall? Or, arms stretched, do ghouls lunge to dunk me in the river winkless with their forgetting selves?

History creeps through the page stitched into the spine of eternal life, the tome shut where the birdbath, damp with autumn leaves, is sky wrinkling poetry across dry earth.

The Chinese, buried in unhallowed ground, leave spare trace, jars of ashes bearing characters crumbled under eucalypts.
from I I I

First person singular? Adam? But he lost it. Eve? She swam the channel

*

Yr movements telegraph ‘Liberty’ to space. The Great Wall

*

Interference: the difference between two candles and one candle

*

Foundations eye the apex

*

Looking to himself as looked at

*

‘Take it back,’ he said, meaning to the source
Like
tattered bits
coursing off a fire
Anima

In Ecbatana the rainbow is only visible in a state of holiness.

The grove to the right among the ruins is clogged with corn flowers.

Within each flower is lost another star another blue corpuscle of God.

Antares (white) Alpha Centauri (black) Regulus (purple) Aldebaran (blue) (its blue even now not true-blue): orange (Arcturus) silver (Altair) gold (Vega).

There’s a power latent in Vega’s blue: its corpuscle now scores the gold reshapes to the right a last clump of corn flowers in the grove.

The name of the star still darkens one of the family names of Beatrice, still darkens (lapis lazuli, remembered) Guadalupe’s pregnant body: it doesn’t know (at bottom) the statue of salt. The blue intensity of the corpuscle in Guadalupe’s gaze (guide) to the right in the grove.

To the left (at bottom) the salt is crumbling (the statue recognized): a dark green pool reflects beneath the midday sun the intensity of a myrtle.

Lead me, myrtle, to fields of corn flowers (lead me) past the pillar of salt to Guadalupe’s lapis lazuli eye to the imperishable lazuli sphere (Beatrice) of the star in ruins now overhead to the left (Guadalupe) to the right (at bottom) lead me from jasper to amethyst to the foot of the hill of splendor.
It gives me fear, that surge, 
good remembrance, strong sir, implacable 
cruel sweetness. It gives me fear. 
This house gives me a whole well-being, a whole place for this not knowing where to be. 

Let’s not go in. It gives me fear, this favour of returning by the minute, through blown-up bridges. 
I won’t go on, sweet sir, valiant memory, sad singing skeleton. 

What content, that of this enchanted house, gives me deaths of quicksilver, and plugs my spurts with lead at the dried-up here-and-now. 

The surge that knows not how’s it going, gives me fear, terror. 
Valiant memory, I won’t go on. Fair and sad skeleton, hiss, hiss.
I've had lunch alone now, and without mother, or request, or serve-yourself, or water, or father who, in the fluent offertory of tender corn, might ask, through his belated image, for the older clasps of sound.

How was I to have lunch. How was I to serve those things from such distant dishes, when one's own home might be broken up, when no mother shows up at the lips. How was I to eat the slightest thing.

I've had lunch at the table of a good friend with his father just back from the world, with his white-haired aunts who speak in mottled tinges of porcelain, muttering through all their widowed cavities; and with generous settings of happy wheezes because they are at home. Sure, what a feat! And the knives of this table have hurt me all over my palate.

Dining on such tables as these, in which one tastes another love instead of one's own, turns into earth the mouthful not offered by the MOTHER, turns the hard swallow into a blow; the sweet, bile; funereal oil, the coffee.

When your own home is already broken up, and the motherly serve-yourself comes no more from the grave, the kitchen in darkness, the wretchedness of love.
XXIX

Tedium buzzes bottled-up
under the unperformed moment and cane.

A parallel passes through
an ungrateful line broken with joy.
Every firmness amazes me, next to that water
that moves away, that laughs steel, cane.

Retightened thread, thread, binomial thread,
where will you snap, knot of war?

Armour this equator, Moon.
There Have Been Trees I Have Made Friends With

“I filled silence with names.” Codified things. I have known the sky’s and the trees’ infancy. There have been trees I have made friends with. There still are. I didn’t understand the Milky Way. Nor numbers. (They behaved as if they had yet to be discovered.) Except for eight (5+3) with whom I became intimate friends. (Who hasn’t?) A little with zero too. (It’s not been so easy to find zero.) I’ve heard terrible things about three. Why? I don’t know. To know is a number. And I’ve also met one. You can’t think with one. Some numbers are born guilty. One of them is one. I loved stones without asking why. The relation between the pebble’s name and its shape has not been proved. I couldn’t find a thing on the history of black amber. Fine. Mystery is everything. There are some consonants I couldn’t read. (The letter’s spirit abounds in consonants. American Indians knew this well.) I accompanied birds. Except for the turtledove, birds know nothing of numbers. Horses, I understood, don’t dream in the East. (In Homer horses weep.) I have seen mountains walking. And thinking as they walked. Recognition impedes reason. The World is ours! Said the snails, talking among themselves. I can’t say I understand that. Nor that I don’t understand it. One should read snails.

As you talk about rivers the rivers themselves are talking, grasses are in your eyes. Time is an illusion. Write this down somewhere. It’s not true that spirit has no outward facing view. Jesus’ ghost still roams the earth. (I only ask. It’s only to question that one writes.) Those who forget their youth stagger in the morning. The rose exists because it is named. Stone got its name when its face was found. (Which is why masons turn stones around and around in their hands.)

I want to return to your eyes. And then... There’s no such thing as “then.” “Then” is outside history.
Yesterday I Wasn’t At Home, I Took To The Hills

The sun fathers a cloud in my pocket. I wrote: the stone is blind. Death has no future. Things have only names. And: “A name is a home.” (Who was it said that?) Yesterday I wasn’t at home, I took to the hills. A gorge looked at us, what it said still lingers in my mind. It was this: we sensed infinity within it. Objects are held in time. The tailors’ lamplighter Hermusul Heramise’s goatskin rose to its feet every spring. Rain cannot not rain. Stone, not fall.

What was I saying, the world has no thoughts. Grasses don’t get bored. A pencil thinks it is a tree. The horizon, a hoopoe. I don’t know about you, the world is here to be mythologized. It has, therefore, no other end. Transformed into a myth, to be a myth! That’s what we call eternity.

Wherever I start, that’s where I return. So I’m going. I have work to do on that grand statement, death.
Transformation Into Stone

We went out. But the scales inexorably sank.
Such cold scales of twilight,
the snowy hours slipped past,
circled on the stones and disappeared.

On the island houses did not move
and cold drifted solemnly over the waves.
It was winter. Doubting Thomas
placed his fingers in its scarlet sunset.

The tracks of heels in the snow
pierced like an umbrella spike, a stiletto.
My purple and frozen hand
lay like stone on the bench.

Winter drifted over the city there
where sadly we no longer waited,
just like the sky over its many towns
moves ever further into the distance.

(Belinda Cooke)

(untitled)

‘How cold the public baths are,’
you said, and looked below.
The mist flew beyond the stone ledge
where the frozen carts were rumbling along.

Over the roofs four o’clock showed blue,
we went down to the iced up road,
and I thought to myself: I shall raise a cry now
like these boat sirens.
But I walked on further and made you laugh, just like the condemned joke with their executioners: the tram horse after rushing up, neighing suddenly became silent and calm behind us.

We parted: well we don’t always need to be ashamed of the closeness that is already long past, autumn that’s passed along the embankment never to return on their tracks.

(Belinda Cooke)

(untitled)

Ancient history is full of blue and pink stars, of towers from which the dawn is visible, of butterflies dreamily flying on the bridge.

Morning rises quietly above Rome, and the shivering soldier walks along. The polar ice glitters in the sea, while high above the earth the nightingale sings.

So high, so deep, so far from the earth, the white boat floats slowly in the mourning sky; it carries the dead sun--we hear its spectre sing:

‘The ice has warmed the air, and spring has arrived. Anyone who dies on earth will be happy today not to see how there in the park the lilac blooms.’

How penetrating, deep, and far from the earth, black pipes sing on the bridge, white flags are raised high as The Roman forces walk.
The butterflies fly quietly above them,
and above every iron rain cloud.
The sun rises quietly above the statues:
New days will come.

—‘Praise to him, who doesn’t wait for the spring,
to the rose who doesn’t want to live’, the snake-nightingale
dressed in the moon, whistles in the pink park.

—‘Sleep and wait, tsar-children:
midnight, leave us, morning return.
Everything will be just as we dreamed in the sea.
Everything will be just as we asked in grief.’

Eternity sings at dawn,
Nazareth prays in the roses.

(Belinda Cooke)

To Yuri Felzen

The sun was low, low in the sky
in the black world among black clouds.
The dead rays returned to the hills
in their gold grandeur.

Under the lilac in a muddy lane
a blue-eyed angel was dying,
and over him, returning home from a walk
a tender, drunk boy was guffawing.

What brings you, angelic children,
to cry on the earth among the lilacs?
You should have flown off
on a small wing early at dawn.
I remember, a voice called through
the pink twigs, which I’d often heard in dreams:
‘It’s late youth, return late, child,
the day is coming from the heavens like blue snow.’

The reflections of the stars freeze in the mirror
over the park – flowers in ice.
Smiling, the mirror lays out
the park in spring in hell.

The pink stars of indifference
carry you into the sky on the white day.
Only the angel did not listen to the boy,
he was looking at the lilac falling.

Each little blossom cross, flying past,
sang to him: ‘Take me with you’.
Then it melted like snow.
It was the devil who took the boy home to the café.

(Richard McKane)
Notes on contributors

ARLENE ANG lives in Venice, Italy and edits Poetry Niederngasse’s Italian edition.

LOUIS ARMAND is an artist and writer who has lived and worked in Prague since 1994. He is currently director of Intercultural Studies at the Philosophy Faculty of Charles University, and Director of the Prague James Joyce Centre. He is editor of the cultural monthly PLR (Prague Literary Review), and his literary publications include Strange Attractors (Cambridge: Salt, 2003), and Inexorable Weather (Todmorden: Arc, 2001).

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG has published poetry periodically in little magazines throughout her working life as an academic and teacher of poetry. Some of her work has appeared in Navis, New Writing 6, and Tears in the Fence. She has also written recently on Maggie O’Sullivan’s work in Women: a Cultural Review. She has written an ongoing sequence of poems on glass, which she thinks of as sensuous riddles of glass, aiming to make language transparent and to catch the puzzles of perception, reflection and vision that glass creates.

JAMES BELL was born in Edinburgh. After publishing some early work he left poetry, or poetry left him, for seventeen years and re-emerged in 1997. Since then he has been widely represented in small press magazines, issued a CD of poetry and his own original guitar music in 2003 called O’Grady and Mount Fuji, based on a journey round Japan. Now living in Devon, he co-presents “Uncut Poets” at a regular poetry venue in Exeter.

ILHAN BERK was born in Manisa, Turkey, in 1918. Considered by many to be Turkey’s most influential avant-garde poet, his early poems and books of the 1940’s owed much to the realist aesthetics of the Birinci Yeni, the First New Wave. From the 1950’s onwards, however, his voice grew increasingly more idiosyncratic and experimental. His Collected Poems, including over half a century of poetry, runs to more than three volumes. The publication of his monumental Book of Things, (Þeyler Kitabý) in 2002 confirmed Berk’s reputation as Turkey’s greatest living poet. He lives in the Aegean town of Bodrum.

DAVID BERRIDGE lives in Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire. Recent poems and sequences can be found in Fire, Island, Noon and online at Word For/Word and Fascicle. He writes reviews for Verse and his ongoing exploration of connections between ecology, natural history and poetry takes various forms including talks, workshops, field trips, and readings.

CHRIS BROWNSWORD was born in Sheffield in December 1981. He is currently working toward a first collection of his poetry.

BELINDA COOKE lives in the north of Scotland and specialises in the translation of Russian poets. Her versions of Marina Tsvetaeva appeared in issue nº 61, and her
own poetry has appeared in a number of magazines.

**Anamaria Crowe Serrano** lives in Dublin and translates Italian and Spanish poetry. Her poems and short stories have appeared in a number of magazines, including *Jacket*.

**Carrie Etter** teaches at Bath Spa University in the UK. She is a frequent contributor to *Shearsman*.

**Valentino Gianuzzi** lives in Lima, Perú. He graduated in Hispanic Literature from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and has worked as a journalist, translator and assistant editor. He is currently editing the complete fiction of the Peruvian writer José Díez Canseco (1904-1949). Shearsman Books published his translations, with Michael Smith, of Vallejo’s *Trilce* and the *Complete Later Poems 1923-1938* in September 2005.

**Harry Guest** was born in Wales in 1932 and lives in Exeter with his wife, Lynn Guest, a historical novelist. His *Collected Poems 1955-2000, A Puzzling Harvest*, appeared from Anvil in 2002.

**José Kozier** was born in Havana in 1940, one of the leading lights of the neobarroco movement in Latin American poetry, is the son of parents who migrated to Cuba from Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 1920s, and the grandson of a founder of Cuba’s first Ashkenazi synagogue. He studied law at the University of Havana, left Cuba in 1960, and received a BA from New York University in 1965. He taught for many years at Queens College, City University of New York, retiring as a full professor in 1997, after which he lived for two years in Spain before settling in South Florida. He is the author of over 15 collections of verse. His most recent, *No buscan reflejarse* (2002), a selection from past volumes, is the first poetry collection by a living Cuban exile to be published in Havana. Two small bilingual collections of his poems, *The Ark Upon the Number* (1982) and *Prójimos / Intimates* (Barcelona, 1990), both translated by Amiel Alcalay, have been published. *Stet*, his own far more comprehensive selection of poems, will appear in a bilingual edition, with translations by Mark Weiss, from Junction Press in 2005. A selected poems will appear from Vizor in Spain in 2006.

**Chris McCabe** was born in Liverpool in 1977. He has published poems in a number of places including *Poetry Salzburg Review, Angel Exhaust, Great Works* and issue 62 of *Shearsman*. He currently works as Assistant Librarian at the Poetry Library, London. His first book, *The Hutton Inquiry*, has just been published by Salt Publishing, Cambridge.

**Richard McKane** works as a interpreter at the Medical Foundation, and has translated a number of major Russian poets, including Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Gumilyov. His recent publications include *Ten Russian Poets – Surviving the 20th Century* (Anvil); Mandelstam’s *Moscow and Voronezh Notebooks*; and his own
collection of poetry, *Coffeehouse Poems*. He also translates from, and interprets, Turkish, recent books including work by Oktay Rifat and Nazim Hikmet.


**Anna Moschovakis** works with the Ugly Duckling Presse collective as an editor, book and web designer, and letterpress printer. She also translates from French, and has published translations of Gautier, Michaux and Cendrars, among others. She has a pamphlet, *The Blue Book* from Phylum Press (2005), and a first full-length collection due in 2006. A doctoral student in Comparative Literature at City University New York, she teaches at Queens College.

**Edward Mycue** lives in California. He was born in Niagara Falls, New York, raised in Texas from age 11, and attended Arlington State University and North Texas State University. Subsequent activities include: peace corps teacher in Ghana, and teacher of American Literature at International People’s College (Elsinore, Denmark). He now lives on the West Coast of the USA. His books include *Because We Speak the Same Language* (Spectacular Diseases, Peterborough, 1994), and *The San Francisco Poems* (Spectacular Diseases, forthcoming).


**Boris Poplavsky** was an exiled Russian poet who died a suicide in Paris in 1930. The poems translated here are all from his first collection, *Flags*.

**Rochelle Ratner** grew up in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and has been writing poetry since her high-school years. Her first collection, *A Birthday of Waters*, was published in 1971, since when she has published over 15 poetry books, chapbooks, and e-books, most recently *House and Home* from Marsh Hawk Press (2003) and *Going Up Together* from Ikon Press (2005).

**Michael Smith** lives in Dublin. Shearsman Books publish his collections, *The Purpose of the Gift. Selected Poems* and *Maldon & Other Translations* as well as his translations, with Valentino Gianuzzi, of César Vallejo, which appeared in September 2005.

**Rob Stanton** is based in Pickering, North Yorkshire. He teaches, on and off, at
Leeds University. His work has appeared in *Great Works* and *can we have our ball back?* and his blogpoem, *Copy*, exists at http://sonofissue.blogspot.com/

**Scott Thurston** lives in Liverpool and teaches at the University of Salford. His first major collection, *Hold*, was published by Shearsman in February 2006.


**César Vallejo** was born in 1892 in Santiago de Chuco, a small town in north central Peru, and died in Paris in 1938. In his short life he was to become one of the greatest Hispanic poets and one of the most significant figures in the pre-war Hispanic literary avant-garde. During his life he published two books of poetry: *Los heraldos negros* (The Black Heralds, 1918) and *Trilce* (1922). His posthumous poems comprise three books: *Nómina de huesos* (written 1923-36), *Sermón de la barbarie* (1936-38) and *España, aparte de mí este cáliiz* (1937-38). Shearsman Books published the complete translation of *Trilce* in September 2005, along with a companion volume of Vallejo’s *Complete Later Poems 1923-1938*, both edited and translated by Valentino Gianuzzi and Michael Smith.

**Carolyn van Langenberg**’s latest novel, *blue moon*, is the final novel in the *fish lips* trilogy. In 2000, *fish lips* was short-listed for the David T K Wong Fellowship, East Anglia University, UK, and sections from *blue moon* when it was a work-in-progress were highly commended for the Marion Eldridge Award. Set in the hinterland of Byron Bay in Australia and Penang in Malaysia, *fish lips*, the teetotaller’s wake and *blue moon* embrace Australia’s negotiation with the word ‘colonialism’. Carolyn lives in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales.

**Craig Watson** lives in Rhode Island, where he co-edits Qua Press with Michael Gizzi, a publishing house devoted to fine productions of work by contemporary poets. His own collections include *Free Will* (Roof Books, New York, 2000) and *True News* (Instance Press, Santa Cruz, 2002).

**Mark Weiss** is the author of *Fieldnotes* (Junction Press, 1995) and *Figures* (Chax Press, Tucson, 2001), amongst other volumes, and of *Different Birds* — a Shearsman e-book (available at www.shearsman.com). He runs Junction Press in New York and is particularly active as a translator from Spanish. In 2003 he co-edited with Harry Polkinhorn the volume *Across the Line / Al otro lado*, a bilingual anthology of poetry from Baja California. Forthcoming are *Stories as Equipment for Living: Late Talks and Tales of Barbara Myerhoff*, as editor with Marc Kaminsky (University of Michigan Press); *Stet: Selected Poems of José Kozer*, as translator and editor (Junction Press); and *The Whole Island / La isla en peso: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*, as editor.
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Isbn 1-920882-11-1, 93pp, p’back, £8.50/Australia: A$20.00)

Where no dollar price is listed, the title in question is not available in North America, for contractual reasons.

Further books to look out for in 2006-7 include collections by Peter Riley; a new edition of the *Collected Poems* of Veronica Forrest-Thomson; a volume of interviews by Kent Johnson, and a further one with Peter Robinson; the journals of R.F. Langley. Several translations of Spanish and Latin American poets are in the planning stages for publication over the next two years, including — subject to the necessary permissions being obtained — a *Selected Works* of Vicente Huidobro. In a departure from our usual focus, there will also be some volumes of classic poets, the majority of them being figures who lived, or were born in, the south-west of England. A list will appear in the next issue. In many cases the Shearsman edition will be the only affordable — or in some cases, available — version of their works. It is hoped that the series will begin with an anthology of poets from Devon and Cornwall, and a *Selected Poems* by Robert Herrick.
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