Selected Poems

## Also by Trevor Joyce

Sole Glum Trek
Watches
Pentahedron
The Poems of Sweeny Peregrine: A Working of the Corrupt Irish Text.
stone floods
Syzygy
Hellbox
Without Asylum
with the first dream of fire they hunt the cold
Take Over
Undone, Say
What's in Store: Poems, 2000-2007
Courts of Air and Earth
The Immediate Future
Rome's Wreck

## Trevor Joyce

# Selected Poems <br> 1967-2014 

Shearsman Books

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For Anna

## Capital Accounts

(Worked from the Chinese of Lu Zhaolin [635-84])
Through this long peace
arterial routes
intersect
with narrow lanes.

Beasts of burden,
black and white
drag coaches
of sweet-smelling wood,
and jade-inlaid
sedan chairs
cross recross
the town.

Past celebrity glitz, old money dens, golden accessories circulate.

Dragons gnaw
rich canopies
glinting
in the early sun;
phoenix vomits
glittering lace
under crimson
evening clouds.
One stretch
of gossamer
encompasses
the trees;
assemblies
of magnificent birds
unify the groves
with song.

## Birdsong

unifies the groves, moths flicker
through the thousand gates.

There are emerald trees, silver terraces, colours
you don't have names for.

Forked galleries
with window bays
assume the form
of leaves,
and ridge tiles
linking towers
are phoenix wings
at rest.

The Corporation's
ornamented halls
rival
the sky,
and the Executive's
immortal works
overreach
the clouds.

In front
of the high-rises
not a single face you know.

Imagine!
On the streets
you encounter only strangers.
-

What about her, who puts on airs facing the purple mist?

In the past
she danced,
oh
how she danced!

It's like she's blind now
in one eye;
would another
cure her mind of death?

It's like she's lost
one of her arms;
and she's sick of dying
bit by bit.

She's sick
of the sight
of the hale
and hearty,
those eternal soul-mates,
joined at the lip
never tired
displaying themselves.
It's depressing
to see
a single phoenix
in brocade,
but a pair of lovebirds
glued to the screen
will cheer you up
in no time!

The paired lovebirds
glide and flit
around the decorated
beams,
through the turquoise
hangings,
fumes
of turmeric.
Fashionably permed
and teased,
her hair
is cutting-edge.
Eyebrows
pencilled crescents, next she applies
her war-paint.

War-painted
and powdered up,
she exits
to the chase.
Quite
independent
yet appealingly
vulnerable,
she changes
expression more
than is strictly
necessary.
Boys ride by
on thoroughbreds
as dark as
iron cash.
Hookers do trade;
hair in the dragon style, with bent-knee
golden pins.

At City Hall already birds
are coming home
to roost;
in the gate
of the Supreme Court
sparrows
brawl.

High and mighty
vermilion walls
overlook
the boulevards of jade;
the azure cars
slip down
beyond the golden
barricades.
Joy-riders
on the look-out
roam
the blank estates,
while hit-men
make
their contracts
in full light
and fat cats
in hand-
tooled footware
deal strict cash,
till all are drawn
down the same side-street
to the hookers'
sweet emporium.

The hookers
in the darkening
put on
flash stuff,
and then with purest voices
sing
familiar
sentimental airs;
in the outskirts
night on night
figures visit
like the moon,
at the heart
each morning
traffic gathers
like clouds.

Both the outskirts and the city's heart are conveniently situated just off the freeway,
while major transportation routes provide immediate access
to the financial district.

Supple willows
and green ash bend touching the earth,
through sultry air
the red dust
joins
the sinking sky.
-

Now you arrive, you civil guards of this our state, a thousand strong,
to drink
green wine
from nacre
cups.
Gauze boleros,
jewelled zones
are stripped
for you,
for you,
dance turns exotic,
and the throat
grows deep.

Then there are the big men
go by the name of
"Minister"
or "General":
the sun and sky
revolve
around them
and they yield to none.
Presuming respect, these proud spirits
suffer
no reproach,
such high grasping
can't endure
nor recognize
restraint.

```
These great men unrestrained: their vehicle the storm.
They claim
their music
and their sports will last a thousand years,
offering
their power
and wealth
for our example.
In the cycle
of the seasons
change comes
instantaneous,
or
chard
ocean
switch,
gold steps
and white jade halls
become
green pine.
Silent
in the emptiness
he dwells,
attentive.
```

Nothing
is happening
but flowers
on the mountain:
falling always
falling through
his reach
they fall.
(For Patrick Galvin, 2003)

earlier<br>even than<br>morning<br>yet the<br>hands<br>are hard<br>at work<br>the maid<br>yawns in the<br>straightened<br>room<br>factotum<br>promenades

gun
cools
dust
settles
while the goods
are fenced
loan sharks
with lone
wolves
coevolve
world-up!
(For Owen, 2007)

## Tohu-bohu

I First things first. One time a friend of mine came in for a few empty crates from a Mazda import agency. With a couple of rolls of felt he transformed his poky yard into a well--appointed loft where he kept fantails first and pouters, then tumblers, and finally some serious racing birds. At that juncture the fancy breeds had to go because their freaks disturbed the steady fliers. But he never banded his soft birds for racing, or bothered with the mandatory clock, just released them when he rose and let them settle back at evening to roost reassuringly secure. In the end though he got thoroughly sick of their ceaseless moaning, so he kicked out the lot of them, refitted the wire grilles with glass, sanded, sealed, and papered down the primitive walls, screeded the floor, and later on moved in himself, the family, and all their traps. For a good week after in these novel quarters he picked over an odd volume of Pliny's Natural History, shaken intermittently by the indignant refugees beating like stormy rain against the panes, and on the flat felt roof. This is a true story.

II ...do not look upon me on the dung-heap nor go and leave me cast out and you will find me in the kingdoms.
And do not look upon me when I am cast out among those who are disgraced and in the least places, nor laugh at me.
And do not cast me out among those who are slain in violence.
But I, I am compassionate and I am cruel.
Thunder Perfect Mind
When the shattering
key turns clockwise
the golden tumblers fall
through courts
where suits
are duly packed and paid
the ward turns
from the crooked talon
lofty strut and pinion
down their powers
and dominations
to the striking jack

III And now these carriers
wheel painfully aloft
ringed round with tokens
protocols addresses
codes conventions empty forms
and the streams freeze in their shadow
remorselessly they brood
on every post
spill milk
and thick saltpetre
as they flap
from the twisted pair
to coax
all the news
comes down
so tell me
how would you put down
a lingering infestation
of goddamned angels?
set snares of blood
raise ghosts
and memories
for decoys
bait deadfalls
with true sleep?
or keep by the fire
a niptic cat
to stalk high winds
and pounce
on fallen stars?
they just don't get
the message yet!
suggestions please
so I can get
forever shut
of their close breath
fat with clay
stone floods
the midnight crashing
of their verminous wings
(For Clare and Tom, 1995)

