

# *Shearsman*



*65 & 66*

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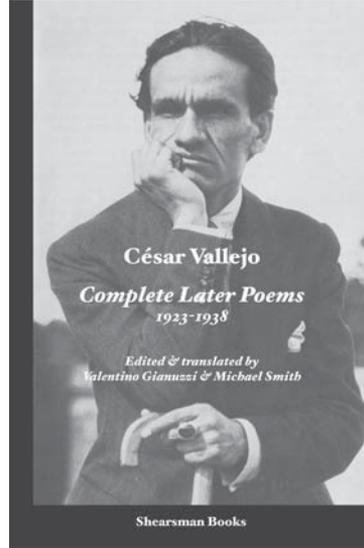
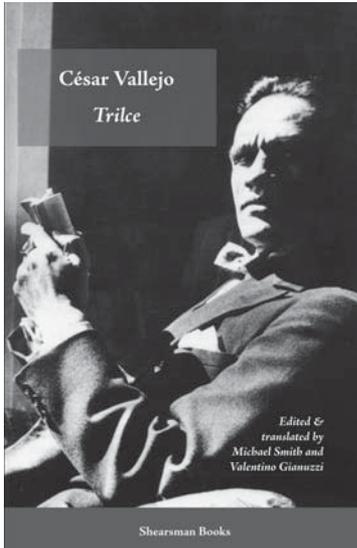


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## New from Shearsman Books



### 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.

## 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

**Inside The Cloud That Scraped The Roof**

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 any-  
one 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

**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.

## 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 leeches  
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.



**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

Slower than the canal water  
gently brushing, tilling, its sed-  
imentary 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.

**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.

## 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  
warily 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.

## 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.

*from Six Nights*

(first)

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'oeil*  
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.



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-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 womens' 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 Edgumbe.  
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  
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.

*from* TRILCE

XXVII

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.

## XXVIII

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.

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## 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.

*Boris Poplavsky*

*translated by Belinda Cooke & Richard McKane*

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## 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 Niedergasse'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*, (Deyler 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 n° 61, and her

own poetry has appeared in a number of magazines.

ANAMARÍA 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 KOZER 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 an 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.

GEORGE MESSO's first collection *From The Pine Observatory* was published by Halfacrown Books in 2000 (revised 2nd edition, Near East Books, Ankara, 2001). His second collection, *Entrances*, will be published by Shearsman Books in 2006. He currently teaches in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

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).

SIMON PERRIL lives in Milton, outside Cambridge. His first full-length book of poems, *Hearing Is Itself A Kind of Singing*, was published by Salt in 2004. Other publications include *Spirit Level* (Equipage, 1996) and *New Tonal Language* (Reality Street 4packs no.3, 1999). He has also written widely on contemporary poetry, and edited *Tending The Vortex: The Works of Brian Catling* (CCCP Books 2001). He is currently working on *The Salt Companion to John James*, and a monograph on contemporary British poetry.

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.

ELIZABETH TREADWELL lives in California, where she is director of Small Press Traffic at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco. Her publications include *Chantry* (Chax Press, 2004), *Lilyfoil + 3* (poetry & drama — O Books, 2004), *Populace* (prose poems — Avec Books, 1999), and *Eleanor Ramsey: the Queen of Cups* (a novel, SFSU, 1997). She also edits SPT's new magazine, *Traffic*.

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 cáliz* (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](http://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 Kozzer*, 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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### New and forthcoming publications include the following:

Colin Simms	<i>The American Poems</i>	(Sept 2005, 93-0, £10.95/\$18)
César Vallejo	<i>Trilce</i> (trans. Smith & Gianuzzi)	(Sept 2005, 72-8, £12.95/\$21)
César Vallejo	<i>Complete Later Poems, 1923-1938</i> (trans. by Gianuzzi & Smith)	(Sept 2005, 73-6, £16.95/\$28)
Tom Lowenstein	<i>Ancestors and Species. Selected Ethnographic Poetry</i>	(Oct 2005, 74-4, £9.95/\$16)

- Yang Lian (ed.) *Sailor's Home* (int'l anthology) (Oct 2005, 86-8, £9.95/\$16)
- Peter Cole *What is Doubled: Poems 1981-1998* (Oct 2005, 79-5, £10.95/\$18)
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& Andrew Winnard) (Nov 2005, 77-9, £9.95/\$16)
- Catherine Walsh *City West* (Nov 2005, 54-X, £8.95/\$14)
- Elaine Randell *New and Selected Poems* (Nov 2005, 71-X, £9.95/\$16)
- Nigel Wheale *Raw Skies. New & Selected Poems* (Nov 2005, 75-2, £9.95/\$16)
- Martin Anderson *The Hoplite Journals* (prose) (Jan 2006, 81-7, £9.95/\$16)
- Christopher Gutkind *Inside to Outside* (Jan 2006, 80-9, £8.95/\$14)
- Sarah Law *Perihelion* (Feb 2006, 82-5, £8.95/\$14)
- Scott Thurston *Hold* (Feb 2006, 83-3, £9.95/\$16)
- Anthony Hawley *The Concerto Form* (Mar 2006, 84-1, £8.95/\$14)
- Peter Finch *The Welsh Poems* (Mar 2006, 91-4, £9.95/\$16)
- Frances Presley *Myne: New & Selected Poems & Prose 1976-2005*  
(Apr 2006, 87-6, £11.95/\$20)
- Janet Sutherland *Burning the Heartwood* (Apr 2006, 88-4, £8.95/\$14)
- Emma Lew *Anything the landlord touches* (May 2006, 95-7, £8.95/\$14)
- George Messo *Entrances* (May 2006, 90-6, £8.95/\$14)
- Gael Turnbull *Collected Poems* (May 2006, 89-2, £18.95/\$30)
- Maurice Scully *Tig* (Jun 2006, 91-4, £8.95/\$15)
- Trevor Joyce *Courts of Air and Earth* (Jun 2006, 95-7, £8.95/\$15)
- César Vallejo *Selected Poems*  
(edited & translated V. Gianuzzi & M. Smith)(Sep 2006, 99-X, £9.95/\$16)

*Distributed in the UK by Shearsman Books and available now, direct from the press:*

- Lutz Seiler: *In the year one. Selected Poems* (translated by Tony Frazer)  
(Giramondo Publishing, Sydney)  
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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