

ANAMARÍA CROWE SERRANO

one columbus leap, Corrupt Press, €5

LARS PALM

road song for, Corrupt Press, €12

RUFO QUINTAVALLE

Dog, cock, ape and viper, Corrupt Press, €12

GEORGE VANCE

A SHORT CIRCUIT, Corrupt Press, €12

DYLAN HARRIS

The Smoke (The Knives Forks and Spoons Press), £6,

Paris-based Corrupt Press does an interesting line in English-language poetry by poets working across cultures, often living in non-Anglophone countries. Of the writers reviewed here, Serrano lives in Dublin, Palm in Malmö, and Quintavalle, Vance and editor Harris in Paris. Their works offer an insight into attitudes toward place and language in the current transglobal community.

Anamaria Crowe Serrano's *one columbus leap* retells one of globalisation's key narratives: Columbus' discovery of the Americas. Serrano parallels the itch to travel with the imperceptible changes in nature as the year quickens into spring. 'He changed as the days went by. Imperceptible / the lightness of step breaking into restlessness'. The voyage comes to seem inevitable: 'On the deck of the nao, the never awaits. Has been waiting for hundreds of years.'

Corrupt Press engages with place from a nomadic, non-territorial perspective. Freke Råihä has said of Lars Palm's poetry that 'placement is in a sociocultural and sociogeographic sense poetry'. The road trip diaries in Palm's *road song for* flit through Bosnia, Lanzarote, Macedonia, Albania, Stockholm, London and Paris with a tourist's eye for cultural peculiarities. George Vance, meanwhile, traces a

short circuit around Paris from bus to library to café to home to diner to bar, short-circuiting the route's narrative temporality with section-headings like (intramission), (meanwhile) and (just before). Dylan Harris' own recent chapbook returns the Paris-resident to *The Smoke*, as well as to a 'council-town-by-the-sea', 'night in oxfordshire', 'all the flat cambridgeshire' and 'dublin coast'.

Reading these poems, there seems to be some connection between travel and language. Nina Karacosta has commented on the 'insatiable hunger for natural phenomena' in *one columbus leap*. Serrano's Columbus is spellbound by the dazzle of words: 'Now muckle and maravedí are words that orbit his girth'; he arrives in the New World with 'In his mouth a cornucopia of cipango words'. The poems celebrate the diverse and versatile language that results from contact with other cultures. At the same time, this insatiable desire to capture things in language, to attempt to fix nature in words, seems to be called into question. 'Every day the changes are imperceptible,' writes Serrano, 'and words do nothing to hide this fact.'

I read the Corrupt Press books as poetry in the transglobal context of the aftermath of Columbus' 'giant leap'. In full acceptance that words do nothing to fix the shifting movement of nature, there remains an urge to try to capture things in words. In the preface to Harris's previous collection *antwerp* (wurm press, 2009), Kit Fryatt coined the term 'Big Skies Poetry', poetry written 'under the ambiguous and eerie light of a big open sky'. Fryatt was referring to the flatness of the Fenlands, which are the subject of some of Harris' poems, but also to the unflinching glare into emptiness which Harris and I think all these poets display. It might go some way to explaining their sparse presentation, often starkly prosaic language and their attention to the mundane.

Quintavalle's *Dog, cock, ape and viper*

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resembles the old Kwik Save own-brand 'No Frills' with its white design and black font. The poems are often one line or two lines long, sometimes even a single word, isolated in white space empty even of page numbers. In Palm's *road song for*, meanwhile, the poems are either untitled or bracketed-titled and written entirely in lowercase. Harris's *The Smoke* is also lowercase, untitled, unpunctuated, grey sans-serif font.

The language of Palm and Quintavalle is similarly frank in its literalism, as if aghast at the flamboyancy of metaphor. Here's one of Quintavalle's one-liners:

Pont de l'Alma

Yes and no, she said. And mainly no.

And here's one of Palm's:

(metro)

train howling through the tunnels

In motive, however, they seem to differ. Palm's is a collective, public poetry, often drawing on overheard conversations and pop lyrics, with an anarchist sensibility and a humour in bathos derived from non sequiturs. The poetry of Quintavalle, on the other hand, is more existential, at times nihilistic.

The work of George Vance is closer to Quintavalle in this respect, though his long looping sentences are frenziedly baroque in contrast to the restraint displayed by Quintavalle and Palm. Like them, though, his microscopically observational poems obsessively capture the mechanics of the mundane. Here he is on the bus:

Differing rates of vehicular vibration induce sympathetic tremors in various of my body sites: idling, right sinus; 10 km/h, sore tooth; mid-speed turning on worn macadam, peak of skull.

It's a method of accumulation, an encyclopaedic pile-up that enacts the

desperation and reveals the absurdity of trying to describe experience in words: the more detailed it becomes the more difficult it becomes to imagine.

The minimal slant of these works draws attention to the poetry book as product. This is most apparent in Quintavalle's miniature collection, where the single word 'easymoney' is printed gleefully on a blank page. Simply the presence of a single word in the top left hand corner turns an otherwise empty page into a space to be read. It's not the poetry book itself that is important but the idea of it, the aura of desire that surrounds the new or different. It reveals the emptiness that the word as product clothes.

Serrano's Columbus as 'Amorphous man', though half trapped by the belief systems of his culture – 'Convention cloisters his vision / old forms colonnade the new / new colonises old' – scents the squandered potentials: 'But this was not the way it was meant to be. The mind was meant to spread elliptical. Unchart itself.' From the excitement of 'New World, November 1492', the narrative switches abruptly to 'February 2011'. The final pages satirise the system of exchange that reduces natural profusion, of things, words, to a list of products. There are animals, foods, then illnesses, and finally:

- / gold / gold - / gold

STEVEN HITCHINS