

*Walking on Air.*

Muriel Spark. The Cahiers Series, 2. Sylph Editions and the Center for Writers and Translators, American University of Paris. ISBN 780955296215. £10.00

Coming as the second in a series of *Cahiers* that make available new explorations in writing and translating, *Walking on Air* was published in April 2007 to coincide with the concert given at London's Wigmore Hall to mark the first anniversary of Spark's death.

The nine fragments and finished pieces in *Walking on Air* represent various aspects of the process by which Spark 'translated experience into art'. All except two, possibly three, have been published before, so in a sense this collection can be said to herald the beginning of the appearance of Spark's 'literary remains'. The previously unpublished pieces are: 'The Interpretation of Dreams', a fragment; and an account of a dream, the subject of which gives this collection its title. The 'probably hitherto' unpublished piece is a note on Spark's neat version of Horace.

Used in French as a printing term for a gathering of sheets, and also related to the English 'quire', the word *cahier* can, of course, mean notebook, exercise book, or journal, which may suggest something slight or sketchy, or of a lesser importance. Though ethereal in name, there is nothing light-weight about this publication.

The earliest of the published opuscles here – 'The Ormulu Clock' – dates from 1960, and first appeared in the *New Yorker*; the most recent, the poem 'What?' appeared in the *TLS* in 2002. And in the spirit of the age, one was published online. Spark's diary-entries, commissioned in 1996 by the magazine *Slate*, read as kind of 'blog' in which the author extemporises on the process of writing, giving us a glimpse of her papers and notes and into her 'box of short stories in the making'. In one entry Spark, most atypically, makes a slip of the pen, writing 'remand' for 'remission'. But Homer, too, was known to nod. The diary-entries published here are dated July 1996, though Spark scholars will know that online they are dated June. A detail, but nevertheless the stuff on which bibliographers thrive.

As a physical object too, *Walking on Air* is delightful. Aesthetically very pleasing, it is beautifully made, a sewn paperback with dustjacket and orange and green endpapers. Seven colour photographs complement the texts, including one taken by Spark herself, a surreal study of four pairs of legs and feet, which her companion Penelope Jardine describes most loyally as 'original'.

Michael Lister