

BERLIN BURSTS

Also by Robert Sheppard

Poetry

Returns

Daylight Robbery

The Flashlight Sonata

Transit Depots/Empty Diaries

(with John Seed [text] and Patricia Farrell [images])

Empty Diaries

The Lores

The Anti-Orpheus: a notebook

Tin Pan Arcadia

Hymns to the God in which My Typewriter Believes

Complete Twentieth Century Blues

Warrant Error

Edited

Floating Capital: New Poets from London (with Adrian Clarke)

News for the Ear: A Homage to Roy Fisher (with Peter Robinson)

The Salt Companion to Lee Harwood

The Door at Taldir: Selected Poems of Paul Evans

Criticism

Far Language: Poetics and Linguistically Innovative Poetry 1978–1997

The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents 1950–2000

Iain Sinclair

When Bad Times Made for Good Poetry

Berlin Bursts

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THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY

after Michaël Borremans

Rows of red-shuttered windows
Open across the face of the House

Into dark orifices or into
Shaded living spaces

For his fingers or for the figures
Playing themselves

Without purpose he thinks
He places his hands before him

For this private lesson
Without compulsion harbouring music

A white-scarfed woman and perhaps three
Others walk from its shut green door

Away from marble steps as though
They've been expelled to scale

This thing up in its watery solidity
Transport it

To a landscape under veils of cloud
Torn from the pages of art

By a wooded hollow flecked with gulls
In any space it fills the House

Houses itself like a song
While the people who are dwarfed

Or dwarf it like him draw
Toward purpose

Pooled in their own shadows
Or drown waist-deep in discovery

EROTIC ELEGY

after Sigismunds Vidbergs' 'Revolution' (1925)

You thrash open the thick
Curtain interrupted we see

The troops bayonets
Fixed for entry they howl

For your sacks of gold
I moan for your reserves

Of desire both buried
I pillow against you breasts

Plumped in my shift
Brutal daylight

Shafts the length of my smooth
Legs from cool thigh

To bejewelled heel as I
Touch your arm I feel

You're ready to split and
Spill but we tremble as one

Providential storks on
The drapery shake

A pane crashes somewhere
I know they'll crack open

My curves like a shell
They're weak with war my

Enriched lips captive on
Your captured plush will

Offer full account in
The speech of the Phoenix

That now I see is what smoulders
Upon the auspicious drape

A PASSION FOR THE REAL

after Solomon Nikritin's 'The People's Court' (1934)

Both of his fists
locked

over the spread pages
of the stiff book,

sporting a smock
of black smoke

across the stage
upon which I will make

no show, he
is the People playing

its part. His guards
glance aslant

from the table's skirting
shadow. His clerk

is a fog of fingers
fixing his script with prompts.

But his deputy
twists round:

extemporal knocks
on the door

which yet may quicken all
of our exits.

BERLIN BURSTS

Looking Thru' a Hole in the Wall

don't
Destroy history spirited

Into the tainted air remains as
Its remains

Derelict monument to extra-human
Scale on sale as Pirate

Art gritting gritted
Teeth, mood

Recognitions across vacant
Division balancing the hollow

Cusp of the wall a single
Book fans its open pages out

Of range of binoculars
Glass coffin temples &

Ghettos De Luxe—
Film escapades point

To posterity the shell of the
East & its visionary balconies

Out of Range

Sputnik on a stem
A boulevard of saluting

Tanks the unsecret head-
Quarters of the police ranked

Sweet jars
Of sweaty sex-swabs crazed

Dogs randy on the stink snap
At loins squeezed at gun

Point from worm holes a gift
Culture of the *nomenklatura*

The sheathed
Pleasures of ceremonial

Swords trumped up awards
Bookend Lenins &

Honnekers the dark stain
Of Directorate walls a narrow

Bed for the ultimate
Sacrifice squat telephones

Kept in the
Dark a bulky reel

To reel rolls out of an
Empty cocktail cabinet

Guarded gossip swivels
In ersatz

Modernity the
Reels spinning clacking

Spools a worthless archive
Of whispers