

SAMPLER

*The English Strain*

ALSO BY ROBERT SHEPPARD (\* published by Shearsman Books)

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* \*

*Berlin Bursts* \*

*The Given*

*A Translated Man* \*

*Words Out of Time*

*Unfinish*

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Iain Sinclair

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*The Meaning of Form in Contemporary Innovative Poetry*

ON ROBERT SHEPPARD

*The Robert Sheppard Companion*, ed. Byrne & Madden \*

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Robert Sheppard

*The English Strain*

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SAMPLER

## Contents

<i>Petrarch 3 – a derivative dérive</i>	7
<i>Overdubs</i>	27
Mayan Thoughts at Brighton	34
New Ghost	35
<i>It's Nothing</i>	37
<i>Breakout</i>	53
<i>Hap: Understudies of Thomas Wyatt's Petrarch</i>	
Perhaps a Mishap	63
Hap 1–15	64
Hap Hazard	79
<i>Surrey with the Fringe on Top</i>	
The Unfortunate Fellow Traveller	83
Direct Ride	90
<i>Elegaic Sonnets</i>	
Petrarch of Petworth: the Earl of Sussex	97
The South Downs Way	103
<i>Non-Disclosure Agreement</i>	
Brazilian Sonnets	117
Cake and Eat it Britain	124
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	132
<i>Note</i>	133
<i>Selected Resources</i>	134

My verse is the true image of my Mind,  
Ever in motion, still desiring change;  
And as thus to varietie inclin'd,  
So in all Humors sportively I range:  
My muse is rightly of the English straine,  
That cannot long one fashion intertaine.  
—Michael Drayton

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# *Petrarch 3*

*a derivative dérive*

for the Petrarch Boys  
Tim Atkins and Peter Hughes

and in homage to  
Nicholas Moore and Harry Mathews

*Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro  
per la pietà del suo factore i rai,  
quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai,  
ché i be' vostr'occhi, donna, mi legaro.*

*Tempo non mi pareva da far riparo  
contra colpi d'Amor: però m'andai  
secur, senza sospetto; onde i miei guai  
nel commune dolor s'incominciaro.*

*Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato  
et aperta la via per gli occhi al core,  
che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco:*

*però al mio parer, non li fu honore  
ferir me de saetta in quello stato,  
a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco.*

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*Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro*

That pitiful morning when the light of Heaven  
Was hidden for our mourning maker's sake,  
I saw you first that day, My Lady, but  
Was captured, disarmed, then bound to your stake.

It didn't seem the time for shields and armour  
Against Love's arrows, his batters and blows;  
So, unsuspecting, I wept with the world,  
But that day my heartbreaks began, my woes.

Love stalked me, found me, unarmed and weak,  
And opened my eyes, portals of tears, through which  
Sorrow flowed from the passage of my heart.

But feeble was Love's triumph to triumph  
With his arrow over one so enfeebled,  
And to not even dare to flash you his dart.

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## *Iron Maiden*

Latex skies. Low cloud obscuring celestial domination. I clapped my fuck-eye on you, which you then pierced on a glance, that day, and dragged me naked to your torture chamber.

The funeral of Thatcher seemed the right time for your whip and irons. Posties brushed up their *MaggieMaggieMaggie* chants and I cried *onions-onions-onions*, stinging eyes fixed on your heels.

You stalked me in your lace-up stockings, striding tight, and took my tears for real pain, yet can't you see desire burning under the dildo mask you've clamped on my kisser?

Easy prey for your domination, bitch! Slap! I crumple to the floor. Would rubbery love through his pouch dare to flash you his horn?

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*Pet*

Up at dawn (though it was the Shortest Day),  
He was nursing a Mad Friday hangover,  
But took me on walkies to Seffie. He took a selfie  
By the Palm House. Tied to the gate I first saw you.

It was Brass Monkeys, believe me. Licking my bollocks  
Was like snuffling dropped ice cream dollops;  
The men in their flashing Santa hats looked lugubrious  
But the depth of my despair exceeded their Christmas Blues!

Your wet nose sniffled my arse and I growled and howled  
Like a stud-dog. I slobbered and chafed at my chains.  
He kicked me and my jaws locked on my bilious yelp.

You lifted your tail like a poodle, fluffy tart,  
Tripping past my flailing mass of muscle and lust.  
He didn't even notice, phone in hand, boot in my nuts.

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*Petrak: the first English sonnet, Good Friday 1401*

The morwe biganne when hevne its bemes  
In routhe of our Lord hid al the lighte.  
My Lady I espyde, she rent al my dremes,  
This wight bounden to wommens tendre myghte.

It was nat the tyme for speres sharp and stronge  
Agan arwes of Love and his strook and smoot.  
Withouten sheeldes or defence I wep ful longe  
swich a love-longyne's desperaunce, as I woot.

Love cam russhyng to smerte my peynes sorwe  
Fro the breething prisoun of my distempre hert,  
To open myn eyen and resolgen the flo.

Love's dominacion is yet deedly narwe  
Yif I am so wrecche, wounden bi a dart  
Whil you, unbuxomnesse Lady, escap his bow.

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*A Florentine Vampire in Paris*

Amid the rush of All Souls' Eve, the majesty of sadness  
(I'd waited 530 years for this translation, this transfusion)  
a woman mourned, passing slowly, lifted by the liquefaction  
of her clothes; holding fast the stake to my bloated heart.

Like a wobbling lush, not feeling blows or blood,  
Under a livid sky of germs I fed off her grace,  
statuesque. I wept, drank deep from her softening eyes.  
Fascination weakens. Pain kills: pleasure bites.

I've paid in blood but not my own, nor my words.  
Love flashed and she flooded, ensanguined and weak:  
bleak eternity escaped into the void vessel of her heart.

Ever! There's no living beat in this unloving verse:  
O you whom I might have loved if I'd dared not to  
flash you my fangs! O you who'd read it all before!

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## *Semantic Poetry Translation*

*to the memory of Stefan Themerson*

In that first part of the day  
holding all that can be contained  
having copious feeling for the sufferings  
and misfortunes of others  
when the agency by which objects are rendered visible  
by electromagnetic radiation  
capable of producing visual sensation  
in the vault of sky overhanging the earth  
the dwelling place of God  
or the gods and the blessed  
was concealed  
on account  
of the one who makes  
namely the Creator  
who murmured in a sorrowful manner  
as in grief  
I perceived by the sense seated in the eyes  
you  
for the foremost occasion regarded as  
one of a number of multiplied instances in a recurring series  
on that particular holy time  
the anniversary of the death of the son of God  
that the earth takes to revolve on its axis  
O woman of refined manners and instincts  
of chivalric devotion  
belonging to me  
but I was taken by force as a prize  
stripped of armour  
rendered defenceless  
deprived of the power of hurt  
before being  
restrained  
then  
fastened with a band  
to your post to which one condemned to be burned is tied



who was wanting strength  
or mental  
or moral  
or artistic

force  
and he exposed the interior of my organ of sight  
or vision  
its great gate or magnificent  
egress  
for  
drops of liquid secreted by the lachrymal gland  
from end to end  
as abundant pain of mind  
seeped  
from the  
transitional tubes  
of the imagined seat of my affections

But  
the exultation at the success  
of the deity of the devoted affection  
or sexual love for someone  
(else) was

forceless  
vacillating  
faint  
in its celebration of victory with pomp  
not even bold enough to venture  
to make show in a blaze of brilliant sparkles  
of his pointed weapon  
or toy  
for throwing with the hand  
or of a calcareous needle supposed to be used  
as a sexual stimulus  
by snails

*twittersonnet*

*after René Van Valckenborch*

dark morn  
sad god/sa  
w you/stak  
ed me/bad

time for l  
ove's blow  
/wept woe/  
stalked my

heart pou  
rs/weak l  
os struck

weak-me/no  
guts to s  
how a dart

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