

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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Micro Event Space

Bad Idea

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The Only Life

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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 *

SAMPLER

Robert Sheppard

The English Strain

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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 distempere hert,
To open myn eyen and resoven 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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