

Robert Sheppard

The Ern Malley Suite

he was born in England at Liverpool

Ethel Malley

her hand holds her
letter
above the estuary

the slash of the horizon

sailing yawls
catch the breeze beneath
ecliptic clouds

his hand drips
blood
hoists a fetish

a pepper pot guffaw
snuffles
across flat waters

~

the elephant
stands four square
on the family sedan
levitating

full steam ahead

towards the warehouse
which is fed like a silo
but which fills
with levity

~

erect a statue in heaven as though
god needs another effigy
a Prometheus to lay eggs on his own plinth

as mere man back-flips above
the pools of England

to land on his feet like a real man
with doubly stolen fire in his prosthetic voice

~

her lantern-head and pinafore
announce her sullen
reappearance

on the path to the dunes

her Chinese wheels and chocolate box
ribbons steal the way to the dairy

his face moulded from mud
stirs to shake itself free

of dirt
but he brushes himself away

for good

~

jug too polished to grip

except to pinch the void
looped by its tiny handle

tilt it

full of cream
a thick ribbon
cascades into woodland

bucolic cadence
trills from a darkening branch tip

a malic mould singing

~

he's fallen behind the sofa
to find it alpine crag

crystal crests above sting his eyes
he hauls himself to his knees

to watch the grandfather clock
spelling out Swiss time

in stuttered Cantonese

~

plump stools complement the garish table
iron sea monsters forged menace his toes

and a toilet pedestal for his stools
centres the ornamented chamber

mythological capers plaster the ceiling
sinewy wrestling and grunting

welcome to a shit under golden eagles
like his granddad in the Philharmonic

~

if a placid king penguin
were to waddle here
nudging its egg between
its webs

hands hennaed with Hindu geometries
might punch through the glass domes
of geological clocks
to offer it

a continent of drift

~

clouds printed on his nape
his broad back rises as cloud

shoulders a volcanic island
erupting into fictional cartography

as fresh as the isle of Frisland
its cities of Ocibar and Godmec

his panama tilts into a sun disk
or twitters for a lark

Spectres of Breath

Side A

Wispy digital noodling with woozy laptronica lines over clipped guitar riffs
humming bowls prepared piano Noise quotes

Post-punk guitar-scuzz amid a wash of tone fluctuation psych-garage munge
with soun'tracky form-sloth jiggers over vocaleering dream lounge flair

Serpentine drones with rough camel skin gauze filtered through punchy kook
oriented space-electronic phrases low-bore gush & drool segueing to raw hypnagogic handclaps

A live jack lead plugged into a bass valve amp crackles while yacht rock tropes think
through ring-modulated nasal sustain

Torch songs with Morricone twangs dubbed out by reggae-funk lite for club-
footed clomping along to burps blips dips & clanks

Washed-out melancholia with junkyard jams alternating with palm-muted bleeps &
trickles plangent bird calls & fluttering wings

Side B

Smell the pixels on these ice-cracking fire-spitting loops re-mixing bathysphere pings
amid scorched-earth saxes played by improv avant allstars

Effete acoustic jangle against lacquered finish with FX & channel bravado opens
polished black space for scrying to glimmer until cycling chords crescendo & ring silence

Styluses scraped against spinning bodies an entire spectrum of partials grounded by
synth-puffs & granular pitches

Spectres of breath in arrangements layered up from scratch glossolalia elbowed by
tonal clusters vocal sighs & automobile-shudder basslines

Bitcrunched microtones and pitchbending grinds sunk in a seedbed of screaming

A pop savvy barrage of dense keyboard doodles clenched multiphonics on bassoon
motoric minimalism of ghostly warbling organ clusters bone-rattling brittleness in the voice so
convivial you can taste the retro crazed latency that gives it human tape hiss

(for Philip Jeck at 60)