

Sheffield Hallam University

Batable ground

JEFFREY, Andrew

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Name: Andrew Jeffrey

Affiliations: Sheffield Hallam University Humanities Research Institute

Address: 9 Haughton Road, Woodseats, Sheffield, S8 8QH

Tel: 01142749840

E-mail: andrewgordon.jeffrey@gmail.com

Bio note

I am a Phd Student in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University. My PhD is entitled 'Encounter before Imagination: towards a poetics for nonhuman animal encounter'. My blog is: cowyidentity.wordpress.com.

Title

A Pedestrian Way Around the Ramparts

Abstract

The poems that follow were written during and after a series of walks around the border town of Berwick-Upon-Tweed which has an architectural heritage marked by tension between England and Scotland. There is a medieval castle which changed hands fifteen times before falling into dis-use, Elizabethan Ramparts encircle the town and the Old Bridge was commissioned by James VI of Scotland whilst on the way to be crowned James I of England. These heritage features suddenly took on new significance during the Scottish Independence Referendum debate as submerged histories returned to the surface; I was in Berwick on the day voting took place, it was a quiet and misty day, the town seemed to be holding its breath. The poems are open form, composed by grid and field, making use of found texts and historical documents. They explore the entangled history of England and Scotland for those who dwell in the border.

Keywords

Open form

Found text

Grid poem

Scottish Independence

Berwick-Upon-Tweed

Batable Ground

All Englishmen and Scottishmen

after this	to rob	persons
are and shall be free	burn	bodies
these are the laws	spoils	buildings
to be avoided	slay	goods
that cannot be said	murder	cattle
without any redress	destroy	remains

any part of said

proclamation made

Old Bridge

cross
sixth
which

a stony couch

fair
divine
wrong

fat lolling tongue

carnal
fecund
dog

horrible Stygian smoke

wise
pen
drunk

peace of God they pass

bishop
plot
crossed

preposterous and strange

here
first
witch

a deep feather bed

foul
right
flesh

for the mouth

chaste
queen
master

that is bottomless

fool
sword
puritan

all understanding

king
double
saltire

procedure

Breakyneck Steps

'in manner circular, but much dilapidated'

curtain wall with drawn passion forgotten
runs river red red runs river runs river ruins rue in reiver raids
ringing rolling hanging
cattle eggs cage
in away swing
David
Edward
Richard Lionheart
Gloucester
had a great tumble
jumped where your uncle jumped where your uncle banquet hall
unclear
runs down steps trips tips
sold out
Elizabeth
a sharp break
bricks for station forgotten whatever
passion
superceded feast
do
something here
draw curtains

A pedestrian way along the ramparts

"All I wanted to do was remember my mother"

- Mrs Middlemass, local businesswoman, Berwick Advertiser. October 2013

of her dismay

WANTED

daffodils

lonely

wished for

mute swans

bow to water

wandered

cloud scud dark

lap

keep

secrets

dissipated motivation

out marauding Scots

Italian style

let's meet

last bastion

begin to peer

town as cell

dividing

startes at itself

ditches

worked tirelessly

earth

set up

dug up

striking masons

WARNING

sheer unprotected

drop

let

drop

let

drop

let

preserved English Heritage grassed
 neglected over
 love affection
 flag of my disposition
 worried that flowers would attract children
 caw drift across
 whose side are you on
 in
 what's mine is yours
 dangerous to proceed beyond this point
 certainly not against flowers a more suitable
 spot fight to get daffodils
 threat subsided
 who's there
 who's there
 is there
 there
 here

Running

to
ward

sea

looks for watch

horizon

lost down sofa

herself morning after

morning pounds

un certain

labour

repeat her

here

morning

steps

push

walled

reap

on

either

heat

side

there

narrow

hurt

ankle

old trees

reach

in over

daren't say a word
one passing remark

and what *did*
you mean
by that

something
to pass
the time

everything slippery

frozen

bites lip

clatter

iron slides
over

under

wear

ground

up

deposit at

estuary

spit

deposit at

estuary

spit

enlarged tongue clogs

the mouth
stretch shadow ahead
morning silhouette sea - glint splendour
railway bridge body remembers
with mother to see
sighing steam *point say daddy*
engine thunders under
through
away
tut too
say sanatorium pungent steam
stains running on to morning

Cowy

panni ma teash
they've chured

Our oorness

right oot me fams

and wit fae
a couple o bar

they wis bary wee chavas
that came roond me keah

which wis a right tip

And clean'd up

coosty eh chi

but mind to mang mair closely

if they knock on you
dinnie habbin them

get yer castie chase em

before the mooli

call the muskie
get yer yag on

by my castin sheerie
i've told ye

dinae nash
mang is me mooty moy

all ye

me jogle on a string now I

peery roond the toon

A peevy paggered old gadgy
that cannie talk the bary
talk like them chi

Thing

The rain falls painfully upon my head [possibly colloquial metaphor]. They have stolen – from out of my hands – our distinctive collective identity. Why have they done this, for a few pounds sterling [possibly rhetorical]? Friendly young men came round to visit and cleaned up my house, which was very untidy. Doesn't that sound great [possibly sarcastic]? But remember to look more closely if they knock on your door. Don't feed them, get a stick and chase them. Before you get hurt, call the police. Perhaps light a fire to warn others they are within the area. I've warned you [note my hair standing on end] – don't run away – all you see is my dirty mouth and my dog on a string now that I wander round town like a drunk, exhausted old man that can't talk nicely like they could (Note: this extract ends with an interjection impossible to translate accurately).

As Da

taken for freezer push through heat	wave
at the lady why weren't you there last	week
hurling two for ten pound	disposables
as recovered energy in world's greenest	city
seven hills seven nappies one	day
we'll ghetto where we're	going
on a bear hunt under the	sofa
loose change dunked in queue scowl self	scan
for signs of any	cancer
causing sausages wrapped in carcinogenic	package
and send by first class or miss special	event
baby and toddler yoghurt half	price
per kilogram per gram per	banana
republic per lick per tuck	perishable
past sell by date still	edible
paper full of	George
DreamSkin polymer for dry and	troubled
by lack of any unsugared own brand	sweetcorn
left clinging to the	sink
or swim by reaching out for	ducky
let ne help you its quite easy	really

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Batable Ground

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A pedestrian way along the ramparts

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