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a portrait of his work

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A note on referencing

References to frequently cited works by Peter Robinson use the abbreviations given below together with the relevant page numbers. All other works cited are referenced in full in the footnotes. Where poems don't appear in the *Collected Poems* or the reference is to an earlier version of a poem which is substantially different to the version in *CP*, the reference is given to its original publication.

TC *The Constitutionals: A Fiction* (Reading: Two Rivers Press, 2019)
RE *Ravishing Europa* (Tonbridge: Worple Press, 2019)
CP *Collected Poems 1976–2016* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2017)
STR *September in the Rain: A Novel* (Newbury: Holland House Books, 2016)
BM *Buried Music* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2015)
TDW *The Draft Will* (Tokyo: Isobar Press, 2015)
FDB *Foreigners, Drunks and Babies* (Reading: Two Rivers Press, 2013)
TRS *The Returning Sky* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012)
STS *Spirits of the Stair: Selected Aphorisms* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2009)
TLG *The Look of Goodbye* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008)
TAP *Talk about Poetry: Conversations on the Art* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2007)
GC *Ghost Characters* (Nottingham: Shoestring Press, 2006)
UD *Untitled Deeds* (Cambridge: Salt, 2004)
SP *Selected Poems 1976–2001* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003)
ATT *About Time Too* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001)
LF *Lost and Found* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1997)
EF *Entertaining Fates* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1992)
TOL *This Other Life* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1988)
OA *Overdrawn Account* (London: Many Press, 1980)

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Introduction:
A Tectonic Biography

Tom Phillips

As Roy Fisher observed, Peter Robinson's work can be likened to 'a listening device, alert to the moments when the tectonic plates of mental experience slide quietly one beneath another to create paradoxes and complexities that call for poems to be made.'[1] This description will be familiar to readers of Robinson's work: it has often been cited by publishers and reviewers alike. The perspective it opens on that work is also a productive one in that it draws attention both to some of the poetry's key themes and the questions Robinson raises and explores with regards to the relationship between writing, reading and other forms of experience and, indeed, to how poems come to be made in the first place.

To some extent, of course, the paradoxes and complexities which call for Robinson to make his poems are evident in the resultant poems. And these poems provide us with as much of the biographical detail as we need to know. We know, for example, that many of the poems in *Lost and Found* relate to Robinson's move to Japan while those in *The Returning Sky* relate to his repatriation to the UK some eighteen years later. More specifically, 'The Passersby' from *Buried Music* evidently refers to a visit – or probably visits – to London (and elsewhere) in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash and Robinson's responses to that particular crisis as an incoming economic returnee who's been back long enough to gauge the shift – tectonic in its own way – that both capital and the capital have undergone.[2]

In saying as much, I'm aware this might also suggest that a biography isn't necessary.

And again to an extent, that's true. Robinson's *Collected Poems* is not a *roman à clef*. The experience of reading, say, 'Graveyard Life' is not necessarily enhanced by knowing that the occasion for this poem – at which I was present, as the dedication indicates – was an afternoon

[1] Adam Piette & Katy Price (eds.), *The Salt Companion to Peter Robinson* (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2007), 22.
[2] *CP*, 424-8.

walk through the cemetery at the eponymous Cemetery Junction in Reading or that, when we spotted the Muntjac deer and photographer amongst the gravestones, we happened to be discussing national identity in the context of a PhD that I was just beginning. My own reading of that poem is inevitably inflected by that knowledge, but it's not necessary for anyone else to know that to find meaning and value there.[3]

At the same time, however, Fisher's reference to the movement of tectonic plates also suggests an approach to a biography which might identify some of the transitions that underlie Robinson's writing – whatever form it might take – and provide an introduction to the more detailed textual and contextual analyses which follow.

1

Born in Salford, Lancashire, on 18 February 1953, Peter Robinson spent his earliest years in Pendlebury and Daveyhulme, where his father was a curate in the Church of England. He then lived in vicarages in Liverpool from 1956 to 1962 and from 1967 to 1971 – that is, from the ages of three to nine and from fourteen to eighteen. The five years between were spent in Wigan. These shifts – tectonic or otherwise – were due to his father's being allotted one parish then another, and Robinson remembers them very clearly as times when he experienced being on his own and repeatedly trying to make sense of and form attachments to new surroundings:

> With the last two moves, in 1962 and 1967, there was also the problem of settling into new schools with classes that were already formed. There was, in the final move too, what now seems a long period (but may not have been) of not having any friends at all. This is one of the things, childhood illnesses the other, that helped make a reader and an artist of me, I imagine – the need to give myself inner direction so as not to be lost in places and days.[4]

[3] *CP*, 355.

[4] Interview with Peter Robinson, conducted via email, early 2017.

In the same interview, Robinson notes that art and music came into the household via his mother's side of the family. His maternal grandfather was a photographer and played the violin, his maternal grandmother was a pianist, while his mother's younger sister went to art school and married a fellow watercolourist. Growing up in vicarages, regularly attending church and joining the church choir at the age of eight also meant that he was more than familiar with church music and was first introduced to English poetry through *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. His own early efforts at music-making – the piano tuition which provides the material for the short story 'Music Lessons'[5] – were not particularly encouraging (he was better at theory than practice), but they did lead to a subsequent return to piano-playing and to his taking up the guitar in his teens. Aside from a foray into writing around the age of ten, when he filled several school exercise books with war stories before abandoning the idea, it was painting and drawing for which Robinson showed the most enthusiasm and in which he seems to have displayed the most talent. Indeed, he was not to try writing again until he moved back to Liverpool in 1967. Here, as he has recounted in the short memoir 'Becoming a Reader',[6] he was encouraged by his English teachers Peter Stott and Alan Hodgkinson and began writing 'some odd attempts at satires about religion and society'.[7] Reading Woolf and Joyce in the sixth form inspired experiments with modernist prose while ballad stanzas written in the style of Blake and Coleridge began to acquire an ironic, more twentieth-century twist after he was introduced to Eliot and Pound. These *Mauberley*-esque stanzas earned him a prize for poetry in the final year at school.

Robinson wasn't in the first generation of his family to go into tertiary education: his mother and father – who were the first in theirs – met at the University of Durham in 1947–48 when she was studying geography and he theology in preparation for taking up his calling to the church. It was expected that their four children would all go to university and Robinson applied to Durham, with York as his second choice. He ended up taking up an offer from the latter, initially to

[5] The story, published in the collection *Foreigners, Drunks & Babies*, is fiction but also autobiographical.

[6] *TDW*, 68-76.

[7] Interview and personal correspondence with Peter Robinson, early 2017. All subsequent quotations are taken from this interview and correspondence unless otherwise stated.

read for a joint English and History degree before switching, during his second term, to a solely English one. He was, though, able to maintain an on-going interest in art, studying a paper on Rubens and Rembrandt with Richard Verdi as well as an introduction to modernist poetry and Ezra Pound led by David Moody. Despite his own somewhat lower expectations, Robinson was awarded a First and the opportunity to do research. On this occasion, the choice was between an MA in the history of art at the Courtauld Institute in London or a PhD on Ezra Pound and the visual arts at Cambridge.

Accepted by both, Robinson opted for Cambridge and moved south for the first time, living in London and working as a porter at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases. With money saved from this job, he and his girlfriend, Rosemary Laxton, were able to make a hitchhiking trip to Italy in the weeks before Robinson was due to start on his PhD. It was during this trip that the sexual assault on his girlfriend which Robinson was forced to witness at gunpoint took place. As the poet has written, this was 'probably the decisive event in my earlier life and the one that has inflected, one way or another, everything else that has happened since.'

Returning to England, Robinson moved to Cambridge to begin work on his PhD and encountered what was – and still is – an educational centre of the 'establishment'. This, too, represented a shift – a social one – which, like the move south to London, placed Robinson even further away from both his 'primal landscape' in the north and his background in the particular stratum of the middle classes reserved for what used to be referred to as the 'genteel poor' (in which the clergy and their families were habitually included). These geographical and social shifts overlapped with the profound psychological and emotional shock of the sexual assault and led to both personal and professional repercussions.

Robinson's work on his PhD was, he says, 'troubled' and he abandoned his original topic of Pound and painting in favour of the contemporary poets Roy Fisher, Donald Davie and Charles Tomlinson. During the first year, he lived in lodgings in Cambridge while Rosemary Laxton continued to work at a children's home in Little Venice, London, and the two only saw each other at weekends and during vacations. The following year brought a little more stability as she was able to join him in Cambridge and they rented an attic flat together.

Robinson was also becoming increasingly involved in the city's poetry scene, co-editing the seven issues of *Perfect Bound* (1976-79),

meeting poets including Roy Fisher, Jeremy Prynne and John Matthias, and writing some of the early 'domestic interior' poems which would surface in his 1979 privately printed pamphlet *A Part of Rosemary Laxton*.

These attempts at stability and forming attachments, however, were interrupted by a series of removals as the couple, who had first met during the summer of 1971, moved from one flat to another, bought a house together and then found themselves living in and out of friends' spare rooms while they waited for it to be renovated. In 1979, the year of their marriage, there was a tectonic shift in the public sphere as well when Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government came to power with clear intentions of dismantling any notion of an existing consensus in favour of neoliberalism and an economy driven by the free market. Amongst its policies was a significant reduction in university funding.

By 1981, with his doctoral funding having run out, but with the PhD still not quite awarded, Robinson was facing another displacement, this time to West Wales where he was offered a temporary lectureship at the University of Aberystwyth. This also meant regular twelve-hour cross-country journeys to visit his wife in south London where she too had taken up a new job – in a hospice in Sydenham – and the couple had taken out a mortgage on a small house in Forest Hill. Even though the poet that he had replaced in the post at Aberystwyth, Jeremy Hooker, seemed unlikely to return, there was little prospect of Robinson's employment there extending beyond two years, let alone becoming permanent – thanks to the funding cuts being introduced by the recently elected Thatcher government – and he left after eighteen months in June 1982, around the time that the Falklands War ended.

A part-time teaching position then took Robinson back to Cambridge where he also reconnected with the city's poetry scene, organising events for the 1983 Cambridge Poetry Festival and chairing the festival committee in 1985. It was in the summer of 1981 and at Easter 1982 that he twice met Vittorio Sereni, not long before the Italian poet's death in 1983. These meetings resulted in work beginning in earnest on the translation project with Marcus Perryman which would culminate, twenty-six years after it was begun, in the publication of *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Vittorio Sereni* in 2006. By the mid-1980s, Robinson's own poetry had appeared in a series of pamphlets and books, beginning with *The Benefit Forms* in 1978, and in 1988 he was awarded the Cheltenham Prize for Literature for his first volume with Carcanet, *This Other Life*. He had also edited a collection of critical

essays about Geoffrey Hill, co-founded the magazine *Numbers* and co-curated the 1988 Poetry International at London's South Bank Centre.

Securing a permanent job in the British academic world, however, was proving difficult and this, combined with difficulties in his marriage, resulted in what would be another decisive tectonic shift. Robinson was offered a year's work at Kyoto University, followed by a one-year research fellowship, and he and his wife decided that he should take up the offer, not only for financial reasons, but also as an opportunity to take stock and, if things went well personally and professionally, to consider starting a family. Robinson describes this period as follows:

> Struggling to get some kind of foothold in the British academic world during the 1980s was the kind of experience I ought to have foreseen, though it proved much more draining and demoralizing than it might have done. At interviews I was – as Eric Griffiths put it – always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Going to live and work in Japan was not predicted at all, and I remember Michael Hofmann expressing surprise that one such as me should do such a thing.

As a further complication, Robinson had met Ornella Trevisan in June 1984 and, in his own words, 'become rather infatuated in a fashion that definitely wouldn't have happened were our situation more secure in terms of my employment, our sentimental life, and habitation'. Although his feelings for her had not diminished, he was at least trying to put them behind him in the hope of saving his marriage and this too fed into his decision to accept the offer from Kyoto.

Robinson flew to Japan for the first time in March 1989. It was to be the start of what would become an eighteen-year stay. The first two of these were spent in Kyoto, where he taught in the English department of the university before moving to Tohoku University in Sendai, some two hundred miles north-east of Tokyo on the island of Honshu:

> The sense of tectonic shifts both public and private began early in my years away. When I left England, the plane flew over Alaska to get to Japan, because Soviet airspace was not open to capitalist airlines. Mrs Thatcher seemed firmly in post. Within a year, she was out of power, the Berlin Wall had fallen, China had experienced public protest on a large scale, and within another

> the Soviet Union had collapsed. In the space of a further year, my marriage had also more or less gone west and I had been diagnosed with what proved to be a benign brain tumour.

Robinson returned to England in November 1992 to consult with specialists at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge. Because the tumour was non-malignant, however, the operation to remove it wasn't deemed urgent and wasn't scheduled until the following May. Now estranged from his first wife, Robinson spent most of the intervening six months in Parma in northern Italy – the hometown of Ornella Trevisan. Whilst there, he received the news that, because he was unable to renew his annual contract with Tohuku University in person, he would lose his job in Japan, and that his wife was filing for divorce on the grounds of abandonment, with Ornella cited as co-respondent.

The eight-hour operation to remove the brain tumour took place at Addenbrookes on 12 May 1993. By then, the intervention of colleagues in Sendai had ensured that Robinson's contract would be renewed for the academic year beginning in September of that same year, and he spent the summer convalescing from surgery before returning to Japan in the autumn. Over the course of the next two years in Sendai, the divorce was finalised – by mutual 'no fault' consent, as it turned out – and he married Ornella as soon as he was free to do so. By then their first daughter Matilde had been born.

He was to stay working at Tohuku University until 2005 before spending his final two years as a professor at the Kyoto Women's University. It was during this time that he continued working on translations of Italian poets, as well as publishing his own poetry in two collections from Carcanet – 1997's *Lost and Found* and 2001's *About Time Too* – as well as the *Selected Poems,* which appeared in 2003. It may have been his witnessing the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, whilst visiting friends at Kobe Women's College, and his writing about it that prompted Roy Fisher to make the oft-quoted observation about 'tectonic shifts' cited at the beginning of this chapter.

Talking about this period, Robinson says:

> It was in Japan that, oddly enough, I really started to make contact with Europe as a reality of familiar people … My familiarity, never more than patchy and passive, with other languages – French, German, Italian, Spanish and Japanese, for

> instance – also grew through reading, translating poetry, and meeting native speakers … The university had provided us with satellite TV on our mountain overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and so we would watch the news on France 2, ZDF, CNN as well as NHK, BBC and others. I've never felt so complexly in touch and able to sense the divergences of view – as in 2003 at the time of the second Iraq War when we could hear what the French thought of it at the same time as American, British and other outlets.

This might also be considered a tectonic shift in the sense that, although he was still publishing poetry in the UK and remained in contact with UK-based poets such as Roy Fisher and Charles Tomlinson, he was no longer directly involved in the country's poetry scene – in the same way that he had been when co-organising the South Bank's Poetry International with Maura Dooley, for example – and this had initiated the change in perspective that Robinson describes above. In turn, this would lead to greater involvement with writers and greater engagement with readers in other countries and Robinson's participation in events across Europe, as well as in Japan and the USA. It would also result in poems of his being translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Romanian, Spanish, Bulgarian and Japanese. Thus, while Todd Swift described him as 'a major English poet' in the autumn 2012 issue of *Poetry Review*, it would perhaps have been more accurate to leave it at 'a major poet': the 'English' might be factually correct, but it rather suggests a variety of Englishness which doesn't at all fit with Robinson's internationalist outlook.

By 2005, however, it was starting to look as if a return to the UK might be possible. Although an application for the A.C. Bradley chair at the University of Glasgow proved unsuccessful, Robinson eventually secured an offer of a professorship at the University of Reading. The Japanese Ministry of Education had also begun to exert pressure on the country's public university system to reduce spending and Robinson had been advised to get a job at a private university instead – which is one of the reasons behind his move back to Kyoto for the last two years of his time in Japan. This renewed uncertainty about employment combined with family circumstances – both his and Ornella's parents were aging, their daughters were moving into secondary education – and a desire to overcome resentments attending his departure from the UK in the 1980s due to the political culture of the country's academic institutions

at the time to make the prospect of returning seem an attractive one.

Robinson arrived in the UK to take up the professorship at Reading just as the financial system was about to crash. While he was in Japan, he had already experienced the after-effects of the land bubble bursting and seen how funds were draining away from towns and villages in northern Japan and how politics had become a matter of cleaning up the banks and re-stimulating the economy (a politics which would become all too familiar after 2008). 'Coming back to Britain,' he says

> was a curious experience in many ways. Returning meant buying a house in the Thames valley in the last days of the boom that wasn't supposed to be one – which plunged me into mortgage debt, from which I won't be free until firmly into my 70s, and the only thing that can be said for the subsequent bust that wasn't supposed to happen either is that it has issued in a period of minimal interest rates similar to those in Japan while we were there, which has made the debt less burdensome than it might otherwise have been, so far at least. We returned to what seemed an unsustainable credit culture.

Indeed, many of the things that those of us who lived in the UK got used to during the 1990s and 2000s seemed odd, if not wholly irresponsible (0% balance transfers on credit cards, cold calls from credit companies) and, when the financial crash finally happened in October 2008, it seemed to Robinson that another tectonic shift had taken place – a shift which would prompt many of the poems published in 2012's *The Returning Sky*, as well as in 2015's *Buried Music* and *For the Small Mercies* (the volume of new poems contained within 2017's *Collected Poems*).

Robinson and his family have now lived in Reading for more than a decade. As well as his work at the university, he has become the poetry editor for the Reading-based publisher Two Rivers Press and has continued to develop connections across Europe and in the USA. In 2016, he was the keynote speaker at a conference in Montenegro on writing and place at which he spoke about how art is one of the means by which we construct our idea of home.

That was on 23 June. The following morning the result of the Brexit referendum was announced and he gave a poetry reading in a restaurant in the Montenegrin city of Niksić at which he read some of the poems that would subsequently appear in *Ravishing Europa* (2019).

Another tectonic shift had taken place. 'In some ways,' Robinson says

> the Brexit moment was simply the consequence of the failure either to respond to the [2008] crash in a more radically constructive way, or to disperse the public pain for private loss more equably. Yet whether *its* consequences will provide the political impetus to address the underlying problems in ways that can have positive results over the mid to longer term is far from clear. Again, I've found myself prompted to write by the ironies and paradoxes of what has been happening. The poems I've been writing over the last year or so, and the two political pieces, 'Balkan Diary' and 'Respecting a Decision', are probably the most overtly engaged things I've ever done. This is, of course, very much an on-going story, so perhaps it's best to leave the narrative of my life here – with the thought that we are not likely to be relieved from living through 'interesting' times for quite some while yet.

2

Many of the subsequent chapters in this volume do, of course, refer to specific events and details from Robinson's biography. Many of them, in fact, focus on work produced in relation to some of the specific 'tectonic shifts' discussed above. Tony Crowley, for example, looks specifically at Robinson's changing poetic response to Liverpool over the course of his lifelong engagement with the city, from early poems reflecting on his upbringing there to those written after he moved away and during his subsequent return visits. Ian Brinton, on the other hand, details Robinson's years in Cambridge, when the poet first arrived in the south of England and a centre of the academic establishment. Andrew Houwen and Miki Iwata both examine the poems written after the economic migration to Japan while Peter Carpenter reflects on some of the first poems Robinson wrote on returning to England in 2007 and published in the collection *English Nettles* (Two Rivers Press, 2010). Anna Saroldi, Martin Dodsworth and Adam Piette, meanwhile, discuss Robinson's ongoing relationship with Italy and with Europe as a whole – a relationship initially traumatised by the sexual assault in northern Italy and now further troubled by the prospect of Brexit, a

socio-political tectonic shift, foreshadowed, at least to some extent, in *For the Small Mercies*, and responded to more fully in *Ravishing Europa*, not to mention the growing number of poems which have followed the latter's 2019 publication by Worple Press.

Again, though, this is not because one needs to know all the details of the life in order to understand the work. As Robinson himself sees it, poetry – or non-exclusionary poetry, poetry which doesn't offer up or attempt to impose a ready-made worldview – comes into being through the relationship between the 'intensely singular' viewpoint of the poet, the lyric 'I', and 'the entire culture of techniques, expectations, assumptions' that arises from and constitutes the social practice of making art.[8] It's no accident that many of the following chapters illuminate the 'intensely singular' elements within the poems whilst, at the same time, drawing attention to how they connect into social practices – be they artistic, philosophical, ethical, political and so on. Matthew Sperling, for example, brings to light 'the hidden injuries of class' which striate many of the poems and aphorisms, while Piers Pennington engages directly with how Robinson's writing negotiates with the problem of perspective – a problem also examined in James Peake's discussion of the prose fiction.

Alison Stone, meanwhile, looks at Robinson's writing as social practice in relation to its responses to and dialogue with Anglo-American poetic traditions, consequently identifying connections which have hitherto been occluded or, at best, distorted and simplified, possibly because Robinson's physical presence in other geo-cultural spheres, namely Italy and Japan, has led to a playing down of his engagement with American poetry and specifically that whose roots might be found in the work of William Carlos Williams.

In addition to examining this fundamental question about the relationship between the 'intensely singular' and the social practice of art, however, this volume will also hopefully help to define Robinson's position within the international practice of art. Even while this book has been in preparation, Robinson's poetry has been translated into a number of languages that it hadn't been rendered in before and he is gaining readers in cultures where – it's possible to speculate – he wasn't expecting to do so. He has also continued to make connections with poets writing in other languages and an internationalism which might be traced to even some of the earliest poems is certainly emerging more

[8] *TAP*, 138

strongly in his latest work – and, indeed, other literary and academic activity.

At the same time, at least part of the stimulus for publishing this volume is the fact that, while Robinson is mostly known as a poet, his poetry is only one – albeit a major – strand of his work. The publication of the novel *September in the Rain* in 2016 and now, in 2019, *The Constitutionals*, together with the books of aphorisms, the 2013 short story collection *Foreigners, Drunks and Babies*, not to mention the series of major academic works beginning with 1992's *In the Circumstances*, indicate the breadth of his work as it has been expanding into other, albeit related territories – and that's something I hope that this collection of essays also reflects.

If anything, in fact, the idea behind this volume began from a wholly different place to where it has reached. The initial idea was to build on the already published critical work in *The Salt Companion*, edited by Adam Piette and Katy Price, which, having been published in 2007, inevitably left open the field of Robinson's work since his return to the UK in 2008.

When discussing possible subject areas with the contributors, however, a number of things became apparent – most notably, this ongoing question regarding the role of the autobiographical, the aesthetic and the 'realist' (for want of a better term) – of the intensely singular and the socially cultural – in the work; the traceable origins to earlier writing of ethical, literary and philosophical concerns that have surfaced more significantly in more recent poetry and prose; and the often-overlooked engagement with both political and financial realities as confronted by, on the one hand, an economic migrant in Japan and, on the other, a returning economic migrant in the UK. At the same time – and as is perhaps inevitable with books of this kind – its preparation has coincided with a range of publications in all genres which perhaps wouldn't have been foreseen when the original idea came about. If the financial crisis in 2008 fed into the work Robinson published immediately after his return to the UK from Japan, the consequences of the Brexit referendum have produced, not only the 2019 Worple collection *Ravishing Europa*, but also further as-yet-uncollected poems, academic papers relating to Europe and internationalism, translations into – amongst other tongues – Spanish, Romanian, Bulgarian and Macedonian, and the psychogeographic fiction *The Constitutionals*. Not to mention studies of the sound-sense of poetry and the poetry of money.

These things being so, as editor, I would very much like to thank all the contributors to this volume who have remained tirelessly patient with the changing scope of the book as a whole and my various insistencies about incorporating the new perspectives which Robinson's most recent work has been offering. Above all, of course, I would like to thank Peter Robinson himself for being such a generous and open 'subject' – both for me, as editor of the book, and for the individual contributors. It should also be noted that Derek Slade's efforts as bibliographer for this book have gone way beyond expectations and that his contribution represents the fullest and most detailed account of Robinson's work in all forms to date.

As Peter Carpenter observes of Robinson's practice in his chapter here, citing Elvis Costello: 'Every day he writes the book'.[9] Having seen this practice in operation on the streets of Sofia (as manifested ultimately in 'Wall-to-Wall' and 'Don Quixote in Sofia' in *Ravishing Europa*), I can safely say that he does. And that, perhaps, is the entry point for all the chapters that follow: chapters about a poet and a writer, for whom things start, not with the mythological or metaphorical, but with what actually happens to ourselves in this life.

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZc9IT7h-3U&list=RDAZc9IT7h-3U&start_radio=1&t=11