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***Other publications by Rupert Loydell include:***

**Poetry:**

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*The Museum of Light* (Arc Publications 2003)

*Endlessly Divisible* (Driftwood 2003)

*Home All Along* (Chrysalis Poetry 1999)

*Frosted Light: fourteen sequences, 1978-1988* (University of Salzburg Press 1996)

*The Giving Of Flowers* (Headland 1994)

*Timbers Across The Sun* (University of Salzburg Press 1993)

*Between Dark Dreams* (Acumen Books 1992)

*Pitched At Silence* (The Tenorman Press 1991)

*Fill These Days* (Stride 1990)

**Prose:**

*Stone Angels: Prose 1979-1993* (Magwood/Stride 1995)

**Collaborations:**

*Snowshoes Across the Clouds* [with Robert Garlitz] (Stride 2004)

*Eight Excursions* [with David Kennedy] (The Cherry On The Top Press 2003)

*The Temperature of Recall* [with Sheila E. Murphy] (Trombone Press 2002)

*A Hawk into Everywhere* [with Roselle Angwin] (Stride 2001)

*The Present Where* [with Roselle Angwin] (Spirit\_Level 2001)

**A Conference of Voices**  
+  
**Multiple Exposure**

**Rupert M. Loydell**

*For Natasha Jade, Jessica Rose and Sue*

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Further acknowledgments will be found on pages 8 and 88.

# A CONFERENCE OF VOICES + MULTIPLE EXPOSURE

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## **A Conference of Voices**

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

There is no withdrawal from the world in Rupert Loydell's poems—alternately chilled and invigorated as they are by the contact—though there might well have been. But there is every attempt to simplify it: to have it manageable, to provide the means to navigate the cross-purposes, contradictions and wide-eyed prevarications. The sentences, related and unrelated, undulate along a continuous line of need. What's worth our asking, is the signpost really sound, shall we log the 'certain', give it the once-over, clear the decks and so (courageously) move on, amazed (we can't help that) at whatever's still to do ... to somehow make it to the not so bitter end.

Clarity of question, the most positive of statement and demand, expressive doubt—all of which can be witnessed in this poet's work—do not fail to hide the fact that, despite the poem's clear momentum, its true nature is nothing less than *meditative*. In this it is unusual. The sentences, for all their composure and apparent self-containment, look to turn wide-ranging investigation into a single 'shimmer' of *concern*—where the whole takes over from the parts. It is an ache for answers, for having cold moments transformed into reviving warmth. From time to time, almost as an interlude, there's the use of a soft-pedalled humour which turns gently in upon itself, as if to ease. And, crucially, there is a slow but steady leaking out, of *expectation*—not only across the stanza but across the poem as a whole—of a more authentic and quite deliverable life.

Art philosophy, life revelation and the workaday good-and-ill rub shoulders here, to more than usual effect: to the point where something unpredictable, and the something's unpredictable, is sure to give. This is an architecture that builds and builds: to nothing less than the *elimination* of every last obstacle. It begs that the mind be rid of whatever clutter it has discovered and laid before the reader, phantom or not: the words even, their own careful and maybe wily impatience with the world, and the contrary world that's called our language and this writer out ... Consider, answer, dismiss, reorganise and simplify. And there's the point. For outcome: stillness.

The reader need not feel alone in any of this. It is evident that the writer of these poems is, however strangely, close at hand—a presence albeit understated, minimally described. His solid insistence in the engagement proposed, and which is undertaken in the course

of the poem, is realised at such a pitch it is not possible he or she *could* be excluded. The ‘questions’ he raises, the ‘facts’ he queries, bring us up smart to the world we know or think we know. The enterprise is signally a joint one—its to-and-fro of consideration allowing all parties in and granting them equal status.

There is, seemingly, no end to the race of information and demands on self. All the traditional questions remain. But this world is not to be uncountenanced. Thinking and working on thinking, for all its tediousness, for all its limitation, has to continue. The poetry evidences just how hard the struggle has been and still is to ‘make sense’, but if the answers are, in any meaningful and satisfying fullness, still to come (and no-one will be surprised by that), it’s clear that an arrival at optimism is an important first step. And it is hard-won optimism, however scarred and fragmented, that is achieved in these relentlessly searching poems. Says Morandi ‘Nothing is more abstract than the visible world’ and nothing more real, more valuable, suggests the poet here, than words—words to reconstruct the platform we’re viewed from (such are the material-immaterial foundations of his broad enquiry)—that we may together and in dogged fashion see the whole thing through.

Peter Dent

‘Now he discovered familiar patterns everywhere, only weirdly mingled and combined, and in this way often the strangest objects fell into order in his mind. Soon he looked for analogies in all things, conjunctures, correspondences; till he could no longer see anything in isolation.’

—Novalis, *The Disciples of Saïs*



*Wallflower*  
*(Ballads of the Alone 3)*

*after Ralph Eugene Meatyard*  
*and Deborah Turbeville*

‘my pictures walk a tightrope’

1

painting declared to be dead  
subject almost accidental  
*eggplant consumption almanac duke*  
found to be alive again  
deserving of attention

sidelong or lazy glances  
acts of understatement  
*charlie samba intestine towel*  
red fingernails grown too long  
eroticize the landscape

visible elements of time  
geometric stylization  
*platinum furbish suntan yowl*  
all the people have now gone  
memory of something seen

I don't have a camera  
I want to make a film  
*talisman agate waddle cope*  
in the greenhouse frizz and perm  
peeling paint and ancient stone

crumpled fabric on the floor  
suggests a woman's height  
*anglican distillate cranberry snick*  
absurd game of hide-and-seek  
a kind of invitation

images you want to keep  
vapourized by sunlight  
*airline reversion enzyme blurt*  
pack up and get out of here  
memory of something seen

blue light snow light twins and trees  
recurrent syncopations  
*rectory sickroom sideband talk*  
blaze of bracken pleats and tucks  
autumnal oatmeal clothing

scratchy prints and greasy lens  
drapes on someone's sofa  
*whitlock darkle mustang crop*  
black kohl eyes and hennaed hair  
cardboard boxes tied with string

velvet dresses dragged through dirt  
mannequins and models  
*winter keyhole downgrade prim*  
soft focus view through broken glass  
memory of something seen

striking features drafty halls  
beauty in new clothing  
*avalanche resin cubbyhole boot*  
excuse me I don't want to dance  
desire half understood

bodies in the freezer  
held in contorted poses  
*magpie supine baseline wheel*  
conspiracy may be afoot  
amnesia and neuroses

a kind of moody restlessness  
more fiction than fact  
*buried rowboat buckhorn mate*  
absence to be grateful for  
memory of something seen



chew your fingers suck your hair  
pose against the wall  
*elaborate giddy denizen stale*  
frozen space erotica  
stay hidden in your room

muted understatement  
no image of herself  
*gangster bonnet schoolgirl roof*  
shattered mirrors silver shards  
reflections of contempt

beautiful puppet features  
needing a name or place  
*paperweight invite contaminate book*  
strangers from invented time  
memory of something seen

jump-rope songs and bawdy rhymes  
strange machines and flying saucers  
*feather continuum decorate swing*  
a magic circle drawn in ink  
hush of a dark window

people sent around the world  
their own fantastic spaces  
*spatterdock token mahogany jibe*  
emerging into light too harsh  
clutching the past about them

distant music ringing bells  
a little out of tune  
*mandrake arcade forestry din*  
soundtrack of angelic song  
memory of something seen

monuments and steel towers  
strange idea of a city  
*deadlock participant contingent swarm*  
traffic patterns eyes and ears  
impromptu dance and theatre

apologetic prayer flags  
hung on flimsy sticks  
*utopian addict breastplate rune*  
tomorrow is a one-way trip  
the past another day

dark stripes tyre tracks in the snow  
curved steps in hard-edged shadow  
*candlelight vandal melamine state*  
making it up as you go along  
memory of something seen

isolated mausoleum  
rent always months behind  
*comeback tussle playmate breeze*  
look at the corpse in the cold  
and wonder where you've been

repetition and repeat  
life's low grade mechanics  
*floodlight turtle dreamboat wave*  
half-hearted prayer posture of grace  
belief's elastic creed

hollow-eyed skull in the cupboard  
a template for death when it comes  
*cockroach proscenium confiscate brawl*  
the life you save may be your own  
memory of something seen

fantasy is self-comfort  
waiting outside the door  
*vector departure masquerade fugue*  
one old hand gripping another  
love no longer our home

this is no amusement park  
just the same old skin  
*signpost homeland ambassador squint*  
over the island into the river  
assassination team

out of my mind on photography  
not knowing what to do  
*bakelite tattoo carrion wave*  
the creative action of decay  
memory of something seen

remember the stranger I never met  
his mock-confessional tone  
*fibrosis pigeon undulate clone*  
walking the streets for no good reason  
day unfolding like a dream

flirting with likeable images  
only one passion back then  
*waxwork mouthful headland page*  
the camera a way to hold conversation  
breath and wind the very same thing

further along the spiritual path  
speaking only in your own words  
*toothpaste beachcomb embellishment tang*  
choose one direction or another  
memory of something seen

squinting at the morning sun  
everything in flames  
*soprano bypass petroleum realm*  
phone numbers safe in my pocket  
light floods along the hall

shooting at others to stay alive  
always on the wrong side  
*paradigm centaur lumbar gloat*  
every day the fat guard speaks  
I forget I am never alone

the emotional release of mourning  
the power to make death go away  
*curlicue shoofly cholera drop*  
a chance to tell a great story  
memory of something seen

magical textures of light engross  
firefly showers sparkle and gleam  
*tilt procession acetate spade*  
I am practising improvisation  
breaking all my own rules

the voiceless with drum and banners  
lies and slogans on tv  
*conserve confessor padlock lathe*  
a man alone in a reinforced cage  
collaging quotes and screams

dying here would not be useful  
you're too good-looking for that  
*firepower azimuth hypocrite fact*  
the pain of trying to retrieve the past  
memory of something seen



## Sources

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