

An Experiment in Navigation

Also by Rupert M. Loydell

Poetry

Ex Catalogue (Shadow Train 2006)

The Smallest Deaths (Bluechrome, 2006)

A Conference of Voices (Shearsman Books, 2004)

Familiar Territory (Bluechrome, 2004)

The Museum of Light (Arc Publications, 2003)

Home All Along (Chrysalis Poetry, 1999)

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Collaborations

Risk Assessment [with Robert Sheppard] (Damaged Goods, 2006)

Make Poetry History [with Luke Kennard] (Miraculous Breath Books, 2006)

Shaker Room [with Lee Harwood] (Transignum, 2005)

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

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

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A POEM'S NOT FOR PEOPLE

a poem's not for people
who are afraid the sun won't rise tomorrow
who can help themselves but choose not to
who think giving advice is beneath them
who know the what but not the why

a poem's not for people
who are in a hurry to get a job
who want to work from home
who want their entertainment predictable
who hope their hotel room comes with an internet connection

a poem's not for people
who are easily dissuaded or discouraged
who can't follow a running gag
who pick and choose which laws they obey
who need to have simple answers

a poem's not for people
who pay attention to television
who have merely expressed an interest
who are easily offended
who giggle every time they see naked breasts

a poem's not for people who have never contemplated Helen of Troy
and wondered at a face that could launch a thousand ships

a poem's not for people
with queasy stomachs
with memory loss
with no attention span
with plans for the future
with guns in their homes

a poem's not for people
who won't accept their responsibility to analyze and understand

a poem's not for people
who sleep too much
who don't have a social life
who don't know what they want to do
who want to make other people do the same things

a poem's not for people
with nothing better to do

a poem's not for people
who can provide visions to order
who want to know who they were in a past life
who simply want to avoid hell and gain heaven instead
who are looking for special effects and bombs bursting in the ear

a poem's not for people
who don't like subtitles or weirdness
who are tired of spending half their lives in gridlock
who can't have an intelligent conversation
who are a burden and a threat
who are just passing through
who never do anything wrong
who are trying to cooperate
who know there is more to give
who are afraid of the dark

a poem's not for people
who don't like bone-rattlingly loud music
who like their songs to clock in under seven minutes
who aren't in the orchestra
who have two left feet
who dabble in the field
who take such things seriously

a poem's not for people
who are used to seeing somebody die before their eyes
who are mindless drones locked up in an artificial reality
who cannot stand being crowded or uncomfortable
who can't abide the idea of someone sleeping in their bed
who want big families with lots of kids
who are thinking about doing some project but have not yet started it
who think they have everything right and need nothing else
who say they haven't the time to learn

a poem's not for people who can't find their way blindfold

A More Personal Invention

WHITE-OUT

Driving into the grey
with a truckload of worries
and the radio's dull presence,
morning gradually lightens;
wipers smooth the rain away.

I like it when I find me out of context:
the travel news cuts into the music
with a burst of conceited dissonance
one last time before the white-out.
Snow flurries and sleet sticks all over,

the world streaks past at light speed
and I am dizzier than ever, teased
to the point of tottering. How various
we are, looking beyond what is about us
to what might be out there, unseen.

A MORE PERSONAL INVENTION

The poet's year of silence
is by its very nature
a medium of strangeness,

a fuguelike weaving of words
searching for radial innocence,
increased understanding of the world.

BEST TO BE

right at the edge of things, watching them fall apart.
Never arrive early, always leave before the end;
don't let people know your name or where you live.

Question the importance of attendance and make sure
it is understood you are there under sufferance. Say no
to requests for help and to questions of commitment.

Practice being unseen: shadows are to skulk in.
Always wear dark clothes and keep your distance.
Let people know you prefer to think about things,

not do them. It is more important to understand
than to experience, better to stamp on graves
than keep things alive. Your life has been hard.

Remind people of this loudly and often.

THE LIGHTS ARE ON AT THIS POINT

for Martin Duxbury-Hibbert

Another flickering cartoon day dawns,
which I now have to fill for two of us;
penguins and bears won't amuse for long.

On the island of dreams you will not be stirring yet,
though I call to you with memories of green paper
from ten years ago, when poems flew between us,

exchanged in a constant flutter and flurry of mail.
Time and energy then were endless; now, exhausted,
I read aloud in one-sided companionable dialogue.

Another writer bullies me in his dreams, exploring
underground expansions, possibilities he insists
include several volumes of his new work. I decline

to indulge him. We pan out to view the author's photo,
circa 1965, where he and his father look just the same.
This is disturbing, though salutary for our narcissism.

Difference and shadow, pieces of paper for amusement.
Small books and mail art, a pair of UFO sunglasses;
best wishes from the man. I wonder how you are?

THE SCHEME OF THINGS

Italy, July 2006

This is just a pause, time out from stone steps
and a dungeon with no way out, to dial home.
There's decorating to be done and only a few weeks off.

Hands over our sunburnt ears, we hold reddened faces
up in surprise to wooden balconies. How to see everything?
It's the second time for me; at least the pressure's off.

I only hear the bell right above us, can't catch my breath
or balance the thrill of unknown destinations with art & history,
the comfort zone of going back up the castle tower.

We can see the smallest villages as sunset softens the mountains,
navigate where we've been before. How the animals sprawl and loll.
Let's drink Croatian beer and find a place to eat in the shade.

It's over 100° until late when we swim at the nearest bar. It's good
to know particular places and where to park, how to break my habits:
I haven't painted since before the move, places I've been to stay pictured.

Small lizards on the terrace, brown bears on broken concrete, wolves
pacing shadowy cages. Tiny tortoises hundreds of miles from home.
How do I know my way around this zoo? Folded pocket map.

THE POEM I DO NOT WANT TO READ
for David Grubb

This is the poem I do not want to read
but you asked me to. The one that
is more than language, that cuts
through the crap and makes me cry.
I hope you are proud of what you
have done, have made poetry do?
I prefer linguistic puzzles and games,
do not like to be upset or reminded
of what can be said or how to say it.

This is the poem I do not want to read.
It arrived in a book full of angels
and light, orchards and relatives,
ghosts from your past. The wars
you have been to revisited, along
with the madness you've seen.
I would rather not be told about
these things. How dare you
make words so meaningful.

This is the poem I do not want to read
but felt I ought to. Out of the marvellous,
toward epiphany, angels sing and words
are on fire, if you catch my meaning.
Or rather, if I catch *your* meaning, the
drift of where you are going. Where
are you going? The memory room is
no place to live – the past will fade,
the only view is next year's rain.