

Boombox

Also by Rupert M Loydell:

Poetry

An Experiment in Navigation (Shearsman Books, 2008)

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)

Collaborations

Memos to Self [with Nathan Thompson] (Underhand Behavior, 2009)

Overgrown Umbrellas [with Peter Dent] (Lost Property, 2008)

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)

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

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

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for Jessica, Natasha and Sue.
Always.

“I locked up all
of the beautiful things
that might move me.”

—Paige Ackerson-Kiely,
‘The Potential of Rapture’

SAFETY NET

SO FAR AWAY

'Doesn't anybody stay in one place anymore?'

— 'So Far Away', Carole King

Imagine there was a place
seven hours away by plane
with buildings pricking clouds
and jazz music in the park.

A place with bookshops
open till midnight and
books you want to read.

Slow flourish of sunrise
over skyscrapers: soon
we will be in New York.

•

Imagine there was a place
two hours away by train
where a muddy river washes
the edges of history and art.

A place I sing lovesongs for
and lived in as a child,
my half-forgotten city.

I am losing sight of whatever
growing up was, can no longer
say I belong in London.

•

Imagine there was a place
where our children felt safe
and the sunshine and sea
were never far away.

Imagine a place to call home
somewhere I didn't had to leave;
a little white room of my own.

There is. There was. I am
trying to localize the pain.
It hurts to move away.

HUNGER

'My tummy is hungry now' says our daughter,
the morning after she has finished being sick.
Mine's full of curry and ache, indigestion
and worry, as we enter our final few days.
It is impossible to find things already packed,
difficult to relax or feel at ease. Outside
it's the second day of sunshine in a row.
The shed I have used for only one summer
is already warm inside but is piled high
with boxes and chairs. What on earth
are we going to do? This view of trees,
our struggling lawn, is going to haunt me,
this empty room always be filled
with poems and songs, overflowing shelves.
But now I am hungry for a new home,
somewhere where we can belong.

PACKING UP THE PAST

Today, I hurriedly packed up my past
and took it to the dump. Tipped it
neatly out of the car and drove on.
Someone else can have it. I'm done
and dusted, off to somewhere else,
somewhere new. I can't control my
memories any more than the future,
but am doing my best to walk away
and forget the coming storm.
Everything is still to be decided.

On the way home from the doctor's
there are old men everywhere,
walking the pavements and alleys,
taking slow steps towards the future,
all carrying too much. I offer them
cardboard boxes so they can tidy
their secrets and worries away.
They tell me I will be sorry when
I get to their age and cannot recall
when nothing had been decided.

SAFETY NET

I shall look back on these years
as I looked through the pub window
yesterday: at a scene I'm no longer
part of. Who were all those people
I drank with? Why are they still there?
And how come only my life changed?

Now I won't have as much time for letters,
emails and drinks. Friendships that rely
on constant jostle and jibe of voice or text
won't last. Dialogue becomes monologue,
misty breath in the cold. I know it's warm
inside, know there's a safety net of company

I've fallen through, bruising myself on the way.

CUCKOO

'I'll find you one day raiding a brighter silence
or hugging the darker place you left for dead'
— 'Containment', Peter Dent

Each morning the ship leaves harbour;
the past is here again.

In sunshine the village seems different:
acorns and oyster shells after the rain,

wet gardens and windblown leaves,
mudflats and mudlarks,

charred pumpkins and abandoned brooms,
smell of fireworks in the air.

I am on the isle of the dead,
a ghost among the living.

Friends moving too
share worries and wonders,

scars of recent removal.
I really don't want to go,

have lived here as long
as almost anywhere else.

Thank you for sending the image,
it looks like a still from a film.

Cuckoos in my nest delight.
Light ripples on the creek.

OUT OF SYNC

'Summers make their own poems;
sometime you think that they haunt you.'
— 'Summer Reflections', Harry Martinson

Sometimes the tide slips out of sync
with the way we live. Too late
to sail or row in the evenings—
it gets dark before the water arrives
and the pub is tempting and warm.

Sometimes the seasons slip out of sync
with the way we want to live. We end up
in the dark, reading *The Wishing Chair*
out loud and wondering where we could
go if only the world was as magical.

Sometimes our lives slip out of sync
and we are left all alone, looking at
a flattened and vanishing perspective,
nights interrupted by a 4 a.m. fox,
snout buried in the lawn, oblivious,

for sometimes time slips out of sync
with the way we are expected to live
and conduct ourselves in the suburbs:
we make our own poems and paper
over the cracks between granite slabs.

Sometimes everything slips out of sync.
A waxwing flies over the stone wall,
a branch drops from the oak tree,
the shadows hardly move. There is
no wind and no end to the moment.

TAILSPIN

All night in the village pub
the woman having a breakdown
spits out staccato questions

needing no answers.
Answers only lead to more questions.
Drink and questions keep flowing

as a policeman takes her away:
What ifs and *Do you knows* and
Buts and *Whys* suddenly gone . . .

In Em and Malcolm's garden
the birds spin song in the air,
flying from feeder to feeder.

They need nor give no answers
as I have my Full English Breakfast,
wondering at sanity and despair.

MUMBLE AND MUTTER

I am saying goodbye to the mumble and mutter
of Exeter cathedral, watching sunlight stream in
and colour the stone. Icons glow quietly,
carved figures in the wooden altarpiece frown.
Cathedral Yard is full of spring, just as it was
when we first moved here, though now
the High Street's lined with the same shops
you find everywhere else. It could be anywhere,
which is fortunate, because that is where
we are going. Paul and Graham are both
working today, so I get to say goodbye
and tell them our new address. This town
will simply become somewhere I used to live.
In my shed there is no wind, only tins of paint,
charity shop curtains, brushes, tools and rags.

There, I have happily mumbled and muttered
for many afternoons, making shelves or mending toys,
hidden from family and sun. I tried to explain
to my daughter how special places lose their magic,
how things fade and disappear. She's not convinced,
has only known this one town and her set of friends.
Seven years old and we are uprooting her;
even her baby sister knows the neighbours' names
and that we have packed her toys away. Will
our new house ever feel the same? Is there
enough room for our things? I hope spring
really is here, that the sun keeps shining down.
It's been a foggy winter, with hours spent on the road
and nights spent in a B&B. Now we must
rebuild our lives and try to make new friends.