

*The Return*  
*of the Man Who Has*  
*Everything*

*Also by Rupert M Loydell*

- Esophagus Writ* [with Daniel Y Harris]  
(The Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2014)
- Ballads of the Alone* (Shearsman Books 2013)
- Encouraging Signs. Interviews, essays and conversations.*  
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Rupert M Loydell

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'I reached that odd point when you are no longer young, and yet you're still not old. You become a kind of centaur: half the person you used to be, half somebody else; that point when there is more you do not care about and less and less you do – you are in no man's land; you keep moving but not because you will get anywhere.'

– Benjamin Prado, *Not Only Fire*

'Everything that ever happened to me  
is just hanging – crusted  
and sparkling – in the air,  
waiting to happen to you.  
Everything that ever happened to me  
happened to somebody else first.'

– Mary Ruefle, 'Saga'



## 1. The Other Side of Nowhere

'I heard some rumours about me'  
– Larry Norman



## Catching Up

The voices in the distance turned out to be  
the radio left on so the cat wouldn't feel alone.  
I coughed my way through the night  
and the first hour of this morning's seminar  
then called it a day. We've talked before  
about how a new voice emerges on the page  
among the plethora of personal and quotation,  
part of the ghost society that inhabits  
our subconscious when we forget to think,  
which we often do. And when we do  
I have to remember to think for myself  
and not expect much from the others.  
If you do, you're bound to be brought up  
short, or find yourself diverted away  
from the main route through. Are there  
ways to say all this without references?  
Earlier we decided so although there is  
a lot of catching up implied for the reader,  
who has to work on trust, hoping for  
truth amongst the form, the author's  
apparent involvement with text  
upon the page. If you draw circular lines  
in the air then you might get an idea  
of the kind of thing we were discussing.  
Were they letters, opinions, an interview,  
an argument or an essay in disguise?  
Certain questions are not worth asking,  
certain answers not worth waiting for.  
How can we combine these points  
of view without losing emotional impact?  
Or is a tree of smoke sent up by an author  
enough to convince us of what we know?

## Waiting for Luke

I am waiting for Luke in a pub he doesn't know how to get to. It is probably my fault but the beer is quite good and I have never seen it so busy. We are both visitors, both due somewhere else quite soon. Here he is now, larger than I remember and panting, worried he is late and in the wrong place. Later, Oliver may cycle over if he has time and I might even get to the book launch I have put my name down for. Tim and Sarah and others I know will probably be there. Earlier, I bumped into Bernard but now I'm not so sure which Bernard it was, Plymouth or London? The former would make more sense, given the warmth of greeting, the latter because of where we are. Meanwhile, Luke has come and gone, and a hundred students also. Where is the man on the bike, my friend of 40 years? How scary is that? How old am I? And why does the depression that so many of us share break up marriages and tear our world apart? I would like to visit the bookstore on this woman's bag: Housing Work, New York. And I would like to know her name; there are far too many good looking women out in London today. How different this 6 o'clock pub is from our local early evening: the whole world is present and everyone knows everyone. Neil is jealous and wants to be here but has urgent housing matters to deal with, namely where to live. I can't help him relocate from a distance, only raise a mental glass, an actual glass, and think of friends I haven't seen for years. The man who bursts through the door is Oliver for a second, then clearly not. Let's hope he turns up soon, before this poem gets too drunk.

## Under the Radar

Although it seemed right at the time,  
we later decided it would have been  
more tactful if we hadn't. Meanwhile  
the door lock became a swipe card  
and the whole marking system changed.  
The journey toward summer is more  
convoluted and confused, no slipping  
out under the radar this time it seems.

The voice of the book brings rapture  
if you can keep away the sound  
of the main road since they moved it  
to build the new roundabout. Today,  
our seminar is in a different room  
and I must ascertain if the blackout  
curtains work, along with the projector.  
It has to be said it's a struggle sometimes,

is tempting to set fire to the forest,  
burn bridges and retire before the job  
gets under way. There is an undertow  
of malice and contempt, a hole in my heart  
where feeling should be but only the river  
flows through. Mixed metaphors are like  
scar tissue which never heals. I've been  
here before but it wasn't that much fun.

# The Burden of Proof

The burden of proof falls  
on each and every one of us  
as we sift through the ashes  
that are all that's left  
of what we used to know.

I am still unused to  
the way the days bump  
and knock into each other,  
how every time I clear  
a space it fills up right  
away, every tabletop  
and surface commandeered  
for play, every moment  
something else to do.

The sand glimmers like snow,  
the unlit path leads into night;  
gridded signs and arrows,  
patterns of coloured lights,  
do not make the approach  
or touchdown any easier.

Certainty is hidden from us,  
the gravel has been raked  
to give the appearance of calm;  
in its natural state the beach  
is full of litter, a broken umbrella  
collects seaweed and refuse,  
bins overflow. Dogs are allowed  
to roam until April the first.

Back home, black and white  
papers wait to be folded,  
words to be rearranged



into better shapes.  
At least one book  
is finished, possibly two  
or three. We've been busy,  
my friends and I, and  
the results await publication.  
Can't seem to stop the flow  
but wonder where the river goes,  
who reads this stuff or understands  
and does it matter anyway?  
She died in her sleep and that  
seems the best way to go  
if you have to go at all.  
I'd rather show you the sky.  
My daughter's young face  
stares back at me from the shelf;  
did we really dress the kids  
like that? What will it be like  
to never wake up, never write  
another word? I go back to  
my mother's story, but she must  
feel the same: doubt around  
the edge of foolish belief.  
I should write a book about it  
when I've ascertained the facts.

## The Taller You Are The Shorter You Get

Gravity was everywhere back then  
but I didn't let it get me down.  
You were so sure you could just steal  
her sentence that you did. I didn't  
think it was right. At weekends  
I am 35, with a bright white smile,  
a tight t-shirt across my chest.  
It does not help you understand  
if you do not turn up to class;  
the idea of realism can be undermined  
by cutting away all visible support  
and gathering up discarded toys.  
You did not understand the new book,  
were waiting for UFOs to land  
with medication that would work.  
The paper said it was 'uproariously jolly  
& splendidly inventive' but I did not  
find it so, have started taking coffee  
black with two sugars. Any glitches  
are deliberate, designed to accentuate  
the beat; any mistakes are mine.  
I was listening to my past and  
thinking how good it was in retrospect,  
was wishing I'd kept a diary or record  
of some sort. Then we hung the exhibition  
and waited for our audience to come.  
Which half did I paint? That would be  
telling. Why do I do this kind of thing?  
I couldn't say. In the soundpool  
everything is looping and is plural,  
the echoes wave and beckon, memory

lives in the dark. This is not the end  
of the concert but it should be,  
it is only feedback keeping the signal  
alive and pulsing through the air.