## ANSWERS THAT THEORY DOES NOT ALLOW

Rupert M Loydell

Logical Alignment

The Spell of Concentration

Overlooking an Endless Beach

Narrative Life Forms

Niggling Doubts

An Illustrated Guide

Going on a Hunch

Monitor Interference

Gravitational Pull

The Collapse of Reality

Spectral Refraction

Clandestine Spaces

Some Sort of Truth

Urban Twilight

Multiple Memory Systems

A Figure Gasping for Breath

Thanks to Mike Ferguson and Clark Allison for reading early versions of these poems, Martin Caseley for help sequencing, and to Nick Totton for permission to quote extensively from his long poem.

'Collage makes sense of things in a manner that our brain understands. Because of these   
fragmented parts and the way we assemble information, collage is like the working of the brain.'

– Vicki Bennett, in *The Wire*, May 2021

'It represents the border zone between full and empty; a field of complementary tensions   
where forces of meeting and collision are engaged'

– Germano Celant, 'Mario Merz: the Artist as Nomad'

'Narrative is victorious. We bend time to our will.'

– Zadie Smith, 'Killing Orson Welles at Midnight'

'Was I clever enough? Was I charming?

Did I make at least one good pun?

Was I disconcerting? Disarming?

Was I wise? Was I wan? Was I fun?'

– John Updike, 'Thoughts While Driving Home'

– nothing belongs to anyone for

good, and everything is up for recycling. Cut/copy and paste, *the relentless*

*combination of all things* possible: sampling DJs in the 1970s only made visible

what beneath the glass of originality was always already everywhere going on.

There are some subtleties, however, like a crucial distinction between recycling

and appropriation, use and ownership. Taking and keeping is the business of the

state, as in taxation and copyright […].

Remix is instead

concerned with the temporary, the borrowed: with bricolage, the repurposing of

fragments. Not making the words one’s own, but making one’s own *use* of it.

So language cannot be cleansed, even with poetry as our washing machine, pop

everything in and swirl it round and language comes out gleaming, so quick bright

things come to confusion – language is down and irredeemably dirty, which

helps avoid allergies. Speech, then, is the infinite remix of language: to speak is to incur

debt, and simultaneously pay it forward. Remix is a theory and practice of energy

flow; language, foragers’ territory, 'to be *related to* and *associated with*, not *owned*'.

– Nick Totton, *Remix Theory* (Oystercatcher, 2021)

LOGICAL ALIGNMENT

Having gone through a long phase of awkwardness,

all we can do now is echo and mirror each other,

filter everything through memory and experience

with deliberate double-takes of one kind or another,

dramatic tension brought about by edgy partnerships

between objects and their dislocated reflections.

Placement always affects both ground and space:

one thing converges on another and can be

used to explain the motions of heavenly bodies,

emotional compulsion, the theological implications

of the slippery territory where philosophers are

in two places at once, playing endless games.

Without agreement there is formal separation of state

and church, stories and fact. This will be more than

counterbalanced by magicians, priests and astrologers,

all interested in arcane knowledge and bizarre facts.

Our minds should be firmly closed against syllable,

morpheme, phoneme and letter, all material forms:

uniformity endangers individual development

and experience. Old ideas prevail, are closer to myth

than universal rules; power should only be given

to the ideologically neutral. I have a fascination

with what-ifs and the chance of adverse consequences

whenever I disregard danger and fall off-balance

into a large empty space. But this is the outcome

of speculation and chance, intuitive procedures

and continuing action outside every picture.

At a certain point, everything is lifted out of context,

greatly shortened and placed in a more open field.

Nothing can destroy the overall tension.

OVERLOOKING AN ENDLESS BEACH

There is a painting you might know, as impressive as a superconducting loop, but if you're not into cutting-edge technology there are other options to consider: the poem as moral allegory, the brief nature of the sun's flaming, and the implications of fact. Reality is nowhere to be found, is an argument for itself, not a real thing, but I understand that we prefer a version of stability.

A falcon flies in the parenthetical red sky, the angle of vision shifts as the boat moves further out to sea, where green and blue merge and points of common experience surface. These are acts of beginning and everyone wants to read other people's secrets. We must collapse wave function, dismantle the system, and trick ourselves into believing that all is not lost.

THE SPELL OF CONCENTRATION

I have inspected in person

the only act of originality

which serves as possibility

for thinking which is not

understood as belonging to

someone who already

exists. Love is unattainable

and everything is poetical

in the worst sense of the word.

Do the strange laws of physics

determine how language

works? Nifty computation

is required to combine

different signals from page

and ear and brain, discord

is also a useful tool for

disseminating information.

If we interpret people

through poetry, we must

allow for those who die

unattended on the side

of the road and others

who suffer at the hands

of ironic appropriation.

In other stories we encounter

typically evasive dead ends,

lengthy descriptions of

movements and motives,

scenery and food. No electric

or magnetic fields can get in

where they aren't wanted,

but they mimic interaction.

We must trust in the idea

of substantive exchange,

experiment with allusion

and confront our past.

Months or years may pass

in a short chapter, pages

fade and fox over time,

but the narrative remains,

a spectral refraction

of what has been said. In

the light of artifice and echo,

word frequencies and zero zones,

we must compare like with like

and listen to the roar of detail

as you go back over your final

draft, changing every word.

NARRATIVE LIFE FORMS

We must make arrangements soon,

before the unfamiliar arrives

and descriptions trip over one another.

Structure allows for conflict to be

resolved, the answer presented as

a perfect synergy of motivation and form.

I rarely suffer writer's block

because I don't have any expectations

for my art. Dislocation

and displacement may more often

be associated with collage

but they also replace the emphatic

and encourage a fractured narrative,

allowing underlying likenesses

to emerge. Well may you ask

'Where are the ideograms? What

follows where and why?' but our

preposterously mediated present

has already been replaced. We have all

turned metaphorical detective, must provide

our own answers from the clues provided.

NIGGLING DOUBTS

Has the world gone out of focus

or is it a move towards us being

in two places at once? Poetry

is often studded with arcane

cultural references and literary

code words, ideograms and

abstracts grouped together.

Reading can be a tough ask,

but why should it be an easy ride?

Like the neutrons of a neutron star,

poems act as superconductors,

getting up close and personal

before imposing language games

in a quest to provoke creative play,

producing results that may not

align with narrative vision.

Nonetheless, we can still enjoy

the story, even if we must

keep readers from wandering,

let alone breaking off lines

to use as hope or motivation.

Incomprehension, incoherence,

intertextuality, can all be

useful tools, ones so small

they can be cupped in a hand

before creating an epiphany

to leave us floating and adrift.

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

To the inhabitants of our superfast world

the beat of a human heart is as imperceptibly slow

as the drift of continents or love.

In dreams these systems are personified

and the smile is taken more seriously

than in everyday life; there are difficulties ahead.

It is worth noting the colour of the sky

and the division of action from result.

The transcendental and true are absent,

all is mindless impotence and slavery.

Philosophers need to be free so they can

manage ideas and fleeting phenomena,

photographers document electric moments

from widely varying perspectives but

a red pen has been used to cross this comment out.

GOING ON A HUNCH

Make young minds spring into action

and rub salt in their wounds,

veer inside a proton and fit into the frame.

Day-to-day existence is the problem;

I do not trust myself to make an ending

or let light into the eye, still seem

to generate energy that appears luminous

but turns out to kill ideas and inspiration

with mind-boggling precision. Later,

there are brighter moments and I'm awake,

discovering things for myself. In the big,

wet world, we must discipline emotions,

create credible outcomes for both writer

and reader. The seemingly abstract

turns out to be surprisingly precise,

the repercussions of which zero in

on your target, despite the harm they cause.

It all means something in the end.

MONITOR INTERFERENCE

Certain people experience life very strongly but the dead are also present within and around us. Look not only to the blank pages of your wonderful book but also the negative forces that threaten to undermine your success.

Truth conditions us to let connections go unremarked, preferring to blur distinctions or develop delusions of grandeur. Overthrowing bourgeois structures of power seems such a superficial way to reject genius. Please reconsider the situation.

Freedom is a constant series of swerves and attempted compensation for stories of new worlds and novelistic truth. Outrageous contradictions persist as the memories and actions of each and every character come into play.

None of this has a specific place in the text or has displaced the prescribed modes of today. We should not be impressed by facts or historical events of any kind, nor write an explanation or defence of our work before we make it.

The unexpected is beautiful and it is only after further complications that this chapter ends, suggesting the fun and usefulness of playing with structure. Writers live in houses and make work there before death creeps in early the next morning.

GRAVITATIONAL PULL

The similarities between small and grand

remain tentative and rooted in defiance.

My journeys are both inward and outward,

using fragments, observation and quotation.

When my father was alive we often met

in a field of white space where the text ended,

intensely debating the movement of memories

and the architecture of shared beliefs.

In the junctions between neurons, time

is squeezed and stretched like a sheet of rubber.

People who are normally far apart suddenly

become correspondents, strangers repeatedly visit

and strings of entanglement are produced.

But we are in dire need of communication,

since emotion weakens with distance

and absence destroys information.

Technology helped shape the public view

of the rapidly changing city, but now

life is available online and many buildings

only remain in a vague or ghostly form.

Everyday thought and action tend towards

subterfuge, provisional experience,

the transformation of everyday assumptions.

We remain connected by our understanding

of fragments, subjectivity and misreading.

One senses it might end badly.

THE COLLAPSE OF REALITY

In​ a more just universe, I would be widely celebrated

as the author of one of the most conceited bodies

of work. As it is, part of the power of the poems

in my books is their inauthenticity and dishonesty,

their ability to shift shape and move from love

to death and loneliness. Parallel structures

suggest both a connection despite separation

and a separation when there is shared experience.

I am forever collecting images and things, am

always ready to challenge blind faith and holy texts,

prefer to ignore the menu of linguistic choices.

Does this all seem too artificial or simplistic?

The approach I take is to remember to be absent

during composition and emphasise the strange.

My most complex effects often depend on simple

decisions: unprovoked sarcasm, for example.

However, it is important to note that stars are stars

and you can read about everything in books.

If you think we live in a deterministic world

then explain your desire to leave gifts for the future

and the sudden introduction of erudite and obsolete

language into the text. The process of discovery

provides a pause which represents our absence:

Death's presence is more practical than visionary.

SPECTRAL REFRACTION

A visit to a venue to see a friend

tell deadpan but very funny stories

was a window into past and present.

A vast and complex wave of actions

and a company medical assessment

were required, before an offer of

long hours and poor conditions.

There were only two rooms on site

and one of those was semi-derelict

and prone to flooding. You may have

already formed a mental picture but this

is a peculiarly disciplined paragraph

and it's no wonder algorithms have been

such a money spinner: you'll be dead

and gone before anyone finds an answer.

People cling to established narratives,

self-imposed limits and throwaway phrases,

create strings of ideas and incomprehension.

The meaning of the story lies in language itself,

the relationship between words is everything.

Anything you say could be a song or poem.

CLANDESTINE SPACES

A wistful form of time travel

has become my preferred way

to visit. I am a man on whom

the sun has never gone down,

have woven the fabric of language

from historical and future conflict.

What would I look like on the page?

It would be a traumatic experience,

would undermine this self-made man

and reduce me to black and white

oscillations and electromagnetic hiss,

inscrutable layers of unreality.

Even if we could prove the imprint

of a soul, we know we are constructed

by chance procedures imitating gods

painting their own pictures of reality.

Living systems have never been

so dangerous: we were made to burn.

Freedom-of-chance loopholes

call for mirrors, avoidance techniques,

and an agonisingly slow process

of critical discussion and dark parody.

This spell is called communication;

today we will learn to outlive the past.

Imagine the horrors of a lack of intellect,

no ancient supporting structures below.

Unconscious content has to be looked for:

try memorizing your escape route,

and remember violence and modernism

are everywhere. Failure can be beautiful.

SOME SORT OF TRUTH

I make conceptual collages, pile up

scraps and torn pages, take photos

to post on Instagram as glossy works

of art. They pose the question

'What is staged and what is real?'

and I would not want it any other way.

If you desire a perfect vision of the world

then exploit the principle of randomness:

place your images next to each other,

glue them down, then scrape the layers

back to produce pictures of forever.

I want to live there, become an expert

in impossibility, inhabit jagged streaks

of pure colour. You can't prove beauty

is only in the eye of the beholder,

most likely it is a trick of the light

and the way that language works.

There should be a full stop after stop.

URBAN TWILIGHT

Constructed from various elements

of the story, summary can seem

less engaging than digression

and sidestep. When it comes down

to it, complex ideas and vivid imagery

do not necessarily persuade me,

I prefer to use online resources,

take myself to places I would not

dare to go alone. But we are

more than just voyeurs, we are

the glue that binds all matter

together in the slippery territories

we inhabit. The central problem

has no solution, full implications

are yet to be worked out. Until then

there is a minimum of explanation

and detail available to us. I have

always been and remain ambivalent

about the presence of others,

usually pretend to ignore them

and the way they live their lives,

would ultimately like to become

a quantum computer that exploits

our incoherent states of mind.

It is quite possible to read this

as celebratory propaganda,

but that doesn't mean anything

more than a category error:

we should learn to see that

our brains rely on processes

that simply harvest influences

and use the magic of correlation.

At the moment we have little

more than educated guesses

but colleagues have demonstrated

answers that theory does not allow.

MULTIPLE MEMORY SYSTEMS

We have a long way to go. Let your mind

go on its merry way and touch everything,

be distracted. Behind all these colours

is a heavily annotated world of blots

and scratches, as incomprehensible

and morally bankrupt as the rest.

Interrogate your images. Although

they will say nothing, you might enjoy

the process and see what can be done

with watery veils and unusual shapes.

We have been here before but now

we can crumple and deform the image

before pasting differences together

into a whole. There is a fancy term

for this, but I forget what it is;

just make something from

whatever materials happen

to be available. Connections

will emerge, however eclectic

your thoughts may be. You can

start off in a bad place but wind up

winning everything. It feels like

things are closing down, but what

do we want from endings anyway?

A FIGURE GASPING FOR BREATH

My aspiration is to create a vacuum within the writing machine, to be less factual and more true. Secrets are locked in to my work as a consequence of this landscape of hills and valleys; everyone has their ups and downs.

Current ideas about memories are far from watertight, and evidence is building up that sight and sound often create distinctive patterns, impressions of cold light and tumbling clouds, minor variations which spatialize shifting contexts.

It is astonishing that misdating or mislabelling images is a common occurrence. In the glazed bookcase stand various personal collections which I have only ever seen in reproduction. The product does not correspond to the producing.

It all feels suddenly fragile: we will never return home but future generations will still hold hands with each other and find places and ways to live, will build new staircases on the right of the building as you face the river.

All matter ends up at the centre of the black hole where it forms a singularity, a pinprick of infinite density which viewed close up is woven from tiny, indivisible pieces, a big gamble of chance flung on the painting like a scream.