

Three Notes

Rupert M Loydell

NOTE TO STUDENTS

When I do not give you straight answers you are confused, when you have to think for yourselves you are cross. We are not in agreement about how to learn or why we are here in this room. You have not done any preparatory reading but are prepared to pretend and give discussion a go. And you would like to blame your phone along with the college computers for not printing out what you need. No-one wants to research a subject, everyone asks what they actually need to know, and do not like it when I say 'depends'. But it does and always will, will always depend on what you want to say, to do, and who you know, how you spend your time and if you asked or are about to ask the right questions, have begun to think for yourself. It is not easy learning how to learn, but if you can life gets easier. There are no exams to revise for, no tick boxes, and no lists of facts, you just need to argue and wonder, to embrace and value confusion. There will always be too much to read.

NOTE TO SELF

Remember there is a narrator in the poem, as well as an author, that stanzas do not have to be even and you can end with a half-line. Resist the urge to tidy up, a little sprawl intrigues the reader and holds their attention as

they navigate the words
laid out on the page. There are
still colours in the darkness,
but they take some searching for.
When I first read Dean Young
I was on a New York hotel bed.
'Listen to these,' I said to Neil
and read several poems out loud.
I did not want, still do not want,
to call it surrealism, there is
more reason and connectivity
than juxtaposition and products
of the subconscious suggest,
but perhaps I am confusing it
with Dada or the idea of chance.
You can see colours in the darkness
but only if you persevere, force
your eyes open and look. I sat
in the Ad Reinhardt retrospective
and stared until his black paintings
went blue, then red: dark squares
with fuzzy edges. And then I sat
and watched other visitors walk
straight through, not choosing
to engage. How I willed them to,
although I must remember there
is an author as well as the self,
a narrator as well as the I.

NOTE TO ALL

Remember it used to be better,
when we were younger, before it began
to get worse, before it got to this point.
I never asked anyone about the meaning
of life, but probably should have, it's
too late now, they're dead, all information
lost. Trace material and knowledge
slowly fade and disappear, books
go out of print and no-one listens
to those records anymore. As we age
we turn nostalgic, as we turn nostalgic
the past becomes a better place,
our future something we must try

to avoid. Time travel is wonderful: everything has a rosy glow, everything we thought was gone comes back, the people we miss say hi, we get another chance to make amends and do things right; well, only in our dreams. Back in the real world it's raining, the roads are flooded, the train tracks under water, and hardly any students made it in.

I'd like to go home and hug the cat, read, watch TV or the rain. Damp shoes and socks, wet hats and coats, make seminar rooms smell funny; and my desktop computer is dead. The beautiful sky will not be back, sunshine belongs to the past; it is time for the seasons to change all over again. How will things evolve? What will the future involve? And how will you navigate our legacy, the rubbish piled high and a world led by leaders who believe in greed? Jessica says she will buy a canal boat or campervan, Natasha a much smaller house abroad, but they may not have enough money or permission to travel, now we have stopped talking to our neighbour states and each other. We hope it will change for the better, become like we wanted it to be, but that seems highly unlikely. Dark energy is two-thirds of everything and we still have no idea what it is.

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