THE SHAPE OF THINGS  
  
'A place is the opposite of empty space. A place   
is where an event has taken or is taking place.'  
 – John Berger, 'Studio Talk'  
  
It is the emptiness in which things happen,  
 the first appearance of snow this year,  
 the closest thing we have to home.  
  
It is the space a work creates within itself,  
 the image of an empty room  
 without any windows or doors.  
  
It is an act of resistance we do not yet understand,  
 a city where people fight each other,  
 refusing to accept someone else's rules.  
  
It is a terrible prophecy of what might happen,  
 an aeroplane without engine or compass,  
 a country or nation insistent upon dying.  
  
It is the angel of death whispering in a writer's ear,  
 the hammer or spanner used as a weapon of persuasion,  
 the lingering presence of the man we have just buried.  
  
It is an old man's book for old men to read,  
 a pinch of wonder and half a dozen excuses,  
 a list of reasons why we should forget.  
  
It is not night and it is not ignorance,  
 it is the interior from which everything comes,  
 trailing distance, full of affection, maybe even love.  
  
  
 © Rupert M Loydell  
  
  
  
SNAKE OIL SONNET  
  
In the shopping mall of madness you need a spiritual guide  
and here he is now, dressed in a shiny suit and awkward smile,  
ready to take your money and take you for a ride. You can,  
he will tell you, buy faith and God will reward you big time,  
if only you say and do the right things, pay for penance  
and prayers to be said on your behalf. Marketplace realities  
are no match for an omniscient creator, and you should  
aim high, embrace the future, sign here on the dotted line.  
Just a formality but it means that someone else is responsible  
for everything, will take the burden of possessions from you  
and manage your assets to accumulate divine rewards, here   
but also in heaven. No, there is no guarantee, and if you   
choose to leave this church, you are on your own. But why  
would God allow you to doubt or learn to think for yourself?  
  
  
 © Rupert M Loydell  
  
A TALE OF DISTRACTION  
  
The corruption of the imagination  
is a tale of distraction, a picnic   
in space to watch the world burn,   
and wait for postcards from God   
to arrive, instructions to help us  
put everything back together.   
  
Stars and comets draw lines  
in the darkness; we wonder   
where we can make a new home,   
how we might get there if   
our ride doesn't turn up soon.   
We desire nothing but truth   
  
but truth is out of reach.  
Everywhere is now somewhere  
else so we have nowhere to live  
as our sense of self implodes  
and we cannot find any shoes   
suitable for walking in the rain.  
  
Belief is a strange companion  
out where everything sparkles  
and shines, and no last minute  
change of heart will help us  
silence the inner waterfall or   
learn to speak for ourselves.  
  
  
 © Rupert M Loydell  
  
  
  
LACKING DEFINITION  
for/from Peter Dent  
  
‘it’s impossible to tell if they are descending or ascending, entering or exiting,   
and whether it makes any difference and why.’  
 – Emuna Elon, *House On Endless Waters*  
  
Words set off at a pace and go where they're asked to, no matter where they might end up. You have to wonder if having a plan is worth the bother, since each sentence has the right to go to where and how far it wants, maybe even beyond.  
  
Between the trees are fragmentary truths, word-arrangements that cannot be put back into original form, the barest of bare bones going for texture over taste. They may be devotional observations but nothing is said.  
  
If you tour the world we inhabit, you will find that shapelessness is the new form. I am never sure what is there when you finally arrive but don't worry about what went missing, it's just collateral damage.  
  
We are bright and penniless, like to try everything out and never stop looking back. If you get used to coming and going you will never be homesick; if you prefer to be broken then go ahead. We are lost and lovely imaginings, simply passing through.  
  
  
 © Rupert M Loydell  
  
  
  
SURFACE DISTORTION  
  
Speculation amid the pandemic and aftermath  
as sales remain steady. Hook, line and sinking.  
  
Language is only a response to requirements,  
everything is possessable, can be lost and found.  
  
What I want to know is why you know nothing  
and insist upon the relativity of all knowledge.  
  
How might we go about necessary negotiations?  
It is far less work to not bother talking to anyone.  
  
Once you've seen obscurity, nothing is ever the same  
but it is always worth reconsidering the future.  
  
We need to make this earth round and whole again;  
like many others, it remains a delightful machine.  
  
  
 © Rupert M Loydell  
  
  
  
Rupert Loydell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University, the editor of *Stride* magazine, and contributing editor to *International Times*. He is a widely published poet whose most recent poetry book is *The Age of Destruction and Lies* (Shearsman, 2023). He has edited anthologies for Salt, Shearsman and KFS, written for academic journals such as *Punk & Post-Punk* (which he is on the editorial board of)*,* and contributed to books about David Lynch, Brian Eno and Industrial music