

Poems by Rupert Loydell

from FOOL'S PARADISE

SUBURBAN FOOL

I am leaving my jester's house behind,
abandoning this joke of a home
where the walls slope in, the crockery's smashed
and it always seems to be night.

I am leaving this collage of chaos
where the wallpaper is simply torn blue.
I'm tired of the window's painted moon
and of always acting the fool.

I'm going to where the houses are grand,
where gardens are ordered and tidy,
daylight presides over quietness
and the streets are laid out in straight lines.

I'm going to move to the suburbs,
where there's always a space for my car,
and everyone's polite and smiles in the street.
A paradise at the edge of the world.

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RELIGIOUS FOOL

Have faith in this icon.
I am the centre of all things.

Bronzed and bedazzled
I make a sign of peace.

My halo shines bright
through the cage bars.

Believe in me
and I am absolved –

precious metals and attitude
are all you need here to be holy.

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FOOL'S QUESTIONS

Could songs be sung
in deepest hell,
or death-bells rung
in heaven?

Could you be more
than a way to spend the day?
Could silence be more
than nothing to say?

Could you be crazy,
me madder still?
Could spaces inside us
be vessels to fill?

Could love be forever,
hate be confined?
Songs in the heart
be the fact in the mind?

Could angels wait forever
while we play out our love,
holy voices at the ready
to celebrate above?

The gift goes on,
mirrors the true.
The world goes on,
we await you.

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ALL FOOLS DAY

I suspect you
are not really reading this.
I suspect you
think you know more than me.
I suspect you
of not loving me
when you're abrupt, uncaring.
I suspect rich poets
of having ill-gotten gains.
I suspect the days
are always getting shorter.
I suspect the world
is tired, run-down, losing.
I suspect life
is waiting to butt in
and dare to show her face.
I suspect reality may be unreachable
like film star's flesh.

I may be a fool
but
I know
secrets are made to be shared
and
I know
there is another world
where fools are wise
and none are guilty.

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[end of excerpts from Fool's Paradise]

SPIRITS AWAKE

I have the handprints of spirits on my face;
I feel their presence in this place,

calling me to an unseen world,
where we dance to music almost heard,

but never quite there if you listen too much.
You have to simply respond to the magic's touch...

When the spirits move the feather falls.
The owl awakes. I act the fool.

I dance in the woods, I walk round stone.
Spirits steal my flesh, spirits steal my bones.

The gods have been and claimed this place.
Their burning touch scars my face.

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SHAMAN

My father does not like the dreams
of splintered flesh, of fur and skin.
Coloured dream cloak aswirl,
immersed in the fabric of time,
he bleeds strings of memory.

Sometimes he makes a rain charm:
a figure with a wound in its mouth
chipped from castaway wood
into the simple shape of man.
Its songs are the sounds of the spirits.

In the clutches of this magic
my father strikes a nail in hard
for every promise that he makes.
I have been crucified many times,
I scream of fire and burnt black bone.

In the clearing, corded wood,
neatly stacked. In the shadows
visitors wait to enter dreams.
In the house of the priest king
our ancestors' voices are heard:

Hold still and rest in the sacred spaces.
Mouth, stay silent. Feathers, fly no more.
I jump through the hoop, leave the sacred circle.
The cloak hangs around me, frayed and torn.
I clutch at the memory. How time lies.

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VISITATION

Angels will remain
misprints that can't be deleted
 'Down There', Eugenio Montale

Beyond the parted curtain,
in the chalk light of morning,
an angel enters the garden.

He is a misprint, a smudged
kiss of light and shadow
in the angles of distance;

a religious device
used to talk about heaven;
a metaphorical messenger.

He is an impossibility
caught in the wind
that blows belief away,

driving angels into empty yards,
seeking sanctuary (I glimpsed
his wings in the moonlight).

I saw an angel. He will
not be dismissed, stays
hidden, as a doubt, a fiction:

one that simply cannot be.

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Angels chase night around
churches covered in stars.

The velvet cloth hangs heavy and still.
Dark shapes cross the moon's face.

These silent days are long,
belief's slender threads so fine.

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ASSISI

We drove over to see the angel. Made our pilgrimage across the plain, leaving the fast dual carriageway intent on going somewhere else for the Roman road which heads directly to the hill town.

From a distance the monastery monumental at the village's end; the fortress at the top of another hill; the cathedral dwarfing its surround.

At the back of the museum, a small annunciation (artist unknown) and a wooden madonna & child, weathered into abstraction since the 12th century.

Why are these things hidden away, waiting to be seen? We were the only visitors to the museum that afternoon.

Ice cream in the square. One afternoon the temperature 41°C outside the car. The air-conditioning struggling, our child sleeps fitfully.

We put you on the train to go home; later, we will drive ourselves to the airport.

There is a small wasps' nest in a clumsy stone sculpture at the end of the track near where we stayed.

We are hoping to take the room on tour, might one day learn to swim in the presence of the Other.

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HIDDEN

I am wondering if
the annunciation angel
will speak to me today,
or be silent in the museum;
silenced even.

How does paint speak
down the centuries,
flaking from a forgotten wall
or crumbling in a shadowed chapel,
overlooked by tourists and guides?

There are hidden angels
everywhere in Tuscany.
If you find one keep quiet
and speak of it only to yourself,
let meaning turn to whisper.

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