

SAMPLER

The Age of Destruction and Lies

By the Same Author

A Confusion of Marys [with Sarah Cave] (Shearsman Books 2020)
The Return of Doom-Headed Three [with Daniel Y Harris]
(Knives Forks & Spoons 2018)
The Co-ordinates of Doubt [with Daniel Y Harris] (Knives Forks & Spoons 2017)
Dear Mary (Shearsman Books 2017)
Impossible Songs [with Sarah Cave] (Analogue Flashback 2017)
Love Songs for an Echo (Original Plus 2016)
Reasons (Hesterglock 2015)
The Return of the Man Who Has Everything (Shearsman Books 2015)
Esophagus Writ [with Daniel Y Harris] (Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2014)
Ballads of the Alone (Shearsman Books 2013)
Encouraging Signs. Interviews, essays and conversations (Shearsman Books 2013)
Tower of Babel (Like This Press 2013)
Leading Edge Control Technology (Knives Forks & Spoons Press 2013)
Voiceover (Riverine) [with Paul Sutton] (Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2012)
Wildlife (Shearsman Books 2011)
A Music Box of Snakes [with Peter Gillies] (Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2010)
The Fantasy Kid (Salt Publications 2010)
Boombox (Shearsman Books 2009)
Lost in the Slipstream (Original Plus 2009)
An Experiment in Navigation (Shearsman Books 2008)
Ex Catalogue (Shadow Train 2006)
A Conference of Voices (Shearsman Books 2004)
The Museum of Light (Arc Publications 2003)

AS EDITOR:

Yesterday's Music Today [with Mike Ferguson]
(Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2015)
Smartarse (Knives Forks and Spoons Press 2011)
From Hepworth's Garden Out (Shearsman Books 2010)
Troubles Swapped for Something Fresh: manifestos and unmanifestos
(Salt Publications 2009)

Rupert M Loydell

The Age of
Destruction and Lies

SAMPLE

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
PO Box 4239
Swindon
SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-889-3

Copyright © Rupert M Loydell, 2023
The right of Rupert M Loydell to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the
Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Alice One (Mid Life Crisis Zine Series, 2016), *Amethyst Review*, *Bomb Damage Maps* (The Red Ceilings Press, 2020), *Cholla Needles*, *Duane's Poetree*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Gospel According to Archbishop Makeshift* (Analogue Flashback Books, 2016), *Gravy from the Gazebo*, *I Am Not A Silent Poet*, *International Times*, *Literature Today*, *Local Nomad*, *Long Poem Magazine*, *M58*, *Matthew's House*, *New Writing*, *Noon*, *Otata*, *Queen Mab's Teahouse*, *The Quint*, *Raceme*, *Rockflor* (exhibition, Jam Records, Falmouth), *Ship of Fools*, *Stride*, *Tears in the Fence*, *Third Way*, *Tract* (Recent Works Press, 2017), *Visitant*, *X-Peri*.

Thanks to Mike, Peter, Andy, Jane, Sarah, Harvey, Martin and Paul for ongoing poetic support; to Maria Stadnicka and Martin Caseley for help with editing this book; and Tony Frazer for publishing this and my other collections.

Contents

TAKING THINGS APART

The Age of Destruction and Lies	11
About the Sky	12
The World's Oldest Star Map	13
Before it Starts to Rain	15
At This Moment	16
Counsellor and Confidante	19
Common Ground	21
Contradicting Reality	22
Fake Brain Maps	23
Even That	24
Left Behind	25
Home Run	26
How to Dismantle a Sculpture	27
In the Shadows	28

THE SHAPE OF PARADISE

Off to the Future	33
The Only Known Photograph of God	34
God Thoughts	35
Not Here	36
A Theology of Absence	38
Quiet Prayer	40
Religious Futures	42
A Closer Look	44
The Shape of Paradise	45

MATERIAL FORM

Untitled Abstract	49
Look Through Water as We Look Through Air	50
Modernism Is Not Your Friend	51
Postmodernism Is Not Your Friend	52
Surrealism Is Not Your Friend	53
Dada Is Not Your Friend	54
An Interpretation Beyond Understanding	55
Approximately Inbetween	57
Schrödinger's Cat Is Not Your Friend	59
Either a Snarl or a Smile	60

BOMB DAMAGE MAPS

The Lore of the Land	67
Topographies	69
Westway	71
High Rise	73
Catalogue	76
A Windscreen onto the World	78
Underneath	80

MAXIMUM TWITCH

Lines from the Library	85
Email Body Text Table Button Table	86
Mending a Broken	87
Note to Students	88
Note to Self	89
Note to All	90
The Most People	92
Punctuation to Fix	83

The Now Delusion	95
The Ruin of Here	96
On the Way	97
Utopia	99
The Sadness of Things	101

SAMPLER

Love to Sue, Natasha and Jessica.

SAMPLER

TAKING THINGS APART

SAMPLER

SAMPLER

The Age of Destruction and Lies

So how do we understand and act upon
the doctrine of the separation of powers?

We may be jealous of those who are dead
but a new orthodoxy suggests that

we may *all* be dead before too long, are
acutely susceptible to the coming epidemic.

The best way to understand anything is to use
the science fiction cliché of global consciousness

as a response to unmentionable goings-on
compounded by the decline of social engineering.

Odds are you are happy with how it's all worked out:
creative destruction is the name of the game.

The ultimate consequence of these upheavals
is a predatory intimacy in response to the unmentionable
and badly written puff pieces which are often a pretext
for vivid set pieces and paid trips to the frozen north.

Let's agree that overall goals are often unattainable.
I am understandably sceptical about doppelgängers

and new ideas which circulate among poets too slow
to notice a whole constellation of books and dreams,

but you don't get to choose who reads you
or who does what with music and words.

About the Sky

I have mirrored your accident
and fallen up the stairs, fallen off
the map. I am mostly in hiding
from imagined enemies and critics
of my own devising. You know
how it is: these thoughts arise
and worm their way in, quickly
becoming facts. Everyone is a poet
now and if they are not they borrow
texts and call them their own,
or sing and dance, seek fame
and a public any way they can.
One learns to tire of audiences
and withdraw, preferring to mail
pamphlets to a group of friends,
as though it were still the seventies.
Back then shops were independent
and sometimes sold small books
on sale or return (usually the latter).
We found our feet underground
and watched as business knocked
us over, told us that our poems
would never sell. Then poetry was
the new rock & roll, then it went
online. Everyone's become a critic
and an expert but no-one wants
to read or think about their work.
Everything is in the moment,
everything is now, then gone.
There's dust on all my books
and people don't believe I can
have possibly read them all.
Today I'm flat on my back,
wondering how I might
write about the sky.

The World's Oldest Star Map

sun disk is now
a landmark universe

known green site
travel by magic

oldest surrounded world
known to map lunar use

ground will move sky
set astronomical time

moon tower words
with crescent between

discover our cosmos
in the time of bronze

hypothetical maps
a conceptual clock

axe symbols appeal
as between arrives

site depiction interpreted
stuck where pain's inlaid

patina stones failed
by impact philosophy

these transit travellers
finding having work

chisel star movement
is beautiful and gold

blue diameter full of
temporarily wide night

a great mysterious
time dated device

linking oldest symbols
to surrounding astronomy

the concept of place
history and time

SAMPLER

Before It Starts to Rain

Let me say this, before it starts
to rain: I have a fear of mirrors,
am afloat in a lake of distortion.

I know how strange this sounds
but I am a master of destruction
and music is how I avoid

the cartoon madness I draw
for myself. The flickering images
will not go away, torn pictures

are scattered on the floor until
a time when I will sell tape them
back together, a present for myself,

an aid to regret and self forgiveness.
The elephant in the room
has taken control of the stereo,

and I am inclined now to silence.
We are all in the same boat,
which we are using as an umbrella

because there is no wind. In fact
nothing floats my boat any more
and I have seen this all before.

I know every secret I ever made,
the then and now is gone, inertia
creeps towards the forgotten answer.

At This Moment

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;

It rains, and the wind is never weary

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'The Rainy Day'

1.

Housebound and landlocked, eye to window to rain to leaking gutter and sodden towel in corner of the studio. I would be a sunshine man, sitting in the shade; I would be a fairweather sailor sipping onboard wine and watching others daydream. I would be overgrown and forgotten, knowing she is always right and that there is nothing to be afraid of.

Shallow end, strange cadences, the city of the sun

2.

Owl song, moonrise and low cloud. No more fallen branches but the imprint of the last is still there on the lawn, along with this year's acorns. Even asleep I can hear the rain, can feel the dampness of the air and watch the garden path become a stream and then a waterfall as it descends the concrete steps. I am dreaming summer backwards, afraid to live within these clouds.

Ice of the north, dry sands of the desert, morning still hours away

3.

A rusty future calls, one of decaying metal and rotten, broken boughs, things which this quiet man is not well suited for. This long winter of storms and banter has reduced him to hallucination and frostbite, layers of warm clothing and endless online dreams. Everything happens

to me, nothing feels the same, my heart is a twisted oak. The children remind me and then move away. There will be different days.

Muddy water, happy sad, thunderclaps and late night booze

4.

All roads from this village lead only to the next, the paths I've found circle through mud back to where they began. I am better than I used to be at all of this, can't wait for me to get here or for silence to be declared. I sing rain songs and cast spells to ward off infection and pain, am waiting for the miracle I promised myself would be here soon. There must be a way to expand into the universe, however hard I want to be like me.

Teenage wildlife, yellow flowers, evening sky on fire

5.

For the birds, for the children, for the person in your life. For the sake of the planet, for the silent majority, for an undisclosed sum. For the uninitiated, for the first time, for the foreseeable future. For good reason, for the benefit of us all, for the rest of the year. For the best experience, one for all and all for one. For the last time, head for the hills. Thanks for nothing, thanks for the dance, I am out for the count. This is where everything falls apart, where I don't know how to begin or end.

The sunsets are meant for somebody else

6.

Drystone songs and fairweather tunes, cardboard boxes cut down to size and stacked under the skylight's grey. It is just you, just me, and the storm outside, dreaming ourselves back to then. In the glimpses

between powercuts I imagine phantoms of the sun. Take all the stars
and half-tongue the moon, I have been swallowed by the sea.

Call me Noah, call me Jonah, call me up another time

7.

In and out of the fading light and everywhere I go. A small boat in a
week-long storm, an echo of my own devising, a rather soggy scream.
On the other side of knowing is a hidden future but the forecast is not
good. There are invisible seams in the sky and endless streams on the
ground. It is not just winter rain and all these crooked words cannot turn
things upside down. These are poems for broken birds and stories for
strangers, songs about broken shells and flooded roads. An invocation
to the god of dry.

Fluid dynamics, solemn goodbyes, black cat sleeping on our bed

8.

Out of all this blue and water come invisible connections and email
blessings, messages made of sellotape and glue. Secrets sent from the
white starline bring me back to earth, where it is time to become ocean
and turn my inner landscape grey. What do I do with all the sorrys
owed to my other selves or with the storm within? From nothing to
nowhere, I have found another version of me to inhabit and persuade.
It is raining in my house but I now have a time machine.

Land of doubt, liquefied, secret passage into spring

Counsellor and Confidante

We weren't really at the gardening stage,
didn't talk about how wounded we were,
how sometimes a mood could take us.
We didn't know magic was collapsing
and adopted strategies weren't working.
Good liars are canny with their audience
and that relationship is worth considering.
Discussion generally focuses on intention
rather than the role of the listener
but lying is a social act and can create
what is sometimes called the plausible,
can create passion and distress, laughter
and dismay when truth's revealed later on.

From my books I learnt great sadness,
derogatory names and social vividness.
I adopted the use of an ear trumpet,
assumed a limp and spoke out about
filth oozing from the gutters and
the moral decay all around. It's hard
to live an energetic life but I tried,
although I could no longer compose,
write or undertake rambunctious
holiday activities. Sordidly innocent
and deterministically depressed,
I sought solace in educated women
and conversation with elected rulers.

At this point we need to look beyond
our impoverished political landscape
and compensate, reconcile and buy
another drink. This is a founding moment,
we should be more radiant than gloomy

even if we have been beaten up, are so
damaged we are almost no longer human.
I spend my time driving aimlessly around
the ring road, treating life as a journey,
burning intensely with a new hatred
for all authority and those who continue
to use the word 'normal'. Memory is all
about being able to change the past.

SAMPLER