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Also by Rupert M Loydell

Poetry

The Fantasy Kid (Salt Publishing, 2010)
Boombox (Shearsman Books, 2009)
Lost in the Slipstream (Original Plus, 2009)
An Experiment in Navigation (Shearsman Books, 2008)
Ex Catalogue (Shadow Train, 2006)
The Smallest Deaths (bluechrome, 2006)
A Conference of Voices (Shearsman Books, 2004)
Familiar Territory (bluechrome, 2004)
The Museum of Light (Arc Publications, 2003)
Home All Along (Chrysalis Poetry, 1999)

Collaborations

A Music Box of Snakes [with Peter Gillies]
(The Knives Forks and Spoons Press, 2010)
Serviceable Librettos for the Deaf [with Nathan Thompson]
(Champagne Troglodyte, 2010)
Memos to Self [with Nathan Thompson] (Underhand Behavior, 2009)
Overgrown Umbrellas [with Peter Dent] (Lost Property, 2008)
Risk Assessment [with Robert Sheppard] (Damaged Goods, 2006)
Make Poetry History [with Luke Kennard]
(Miraculous Breath Books, 2006)
Shaker Room [with Lee Harwood] (Transignum, 2005)
Snowshoes Across the Clouds [with Robert Garlitz] (Stride, 2004)
Eight Excursions [with David Kennedy]
(The Cherry On The Top Press, 2003)
The Temperature of Recall [with Sheila E. Murphy]
(Trombone Press, 2002)
A Hawk into Everywhere [with Roselle Angwin] (Stride, 2001)

Editor

Smartarse (The Knives Forks and Spoons Press, 2011)
From Hepworth's Garden Out (Shearsman Books, 2010)
Troubles Swapped for Something Fresh (Salt, 2009)
Voices for Kosovo (Stride, 1999)
My Kind Of Angel: i.m. William Burroughs
(A Stride Conversation Piece, 1998)

Wildlife

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Author's Note

No animals were harmed
in the making of these poems.

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Wildlife

‘The first principle of transformation is to move so gradually that nothing seems to happen until—without having created any resistance—it’s already happened.’

—John Haskell, *American Purgatorio*

‘When there are no places left for us,
we’ll still talk in order to make things true’

—Anne Michaels, ‘What the Light Teaches’

‘Everyone was trying to be the best
animal they could be.’

—Alex Lemon, ‘Dourine’

Departure

In the beginning was the mirror
then the voodoo wagon arrived
along with experience
and a cryptic email mentioning death.
You said life was like a set of random marks:

spaces, paths and rivers, dance or song
disturbed the landscape,
forest and meadow provided the chaos
that leads to the suicide cliff.
I phoned to see if you were alright,

would like to be the mother of my children
and understand better the closeness
between the present and the past
but with jump cuts, fast forward and reverse
I must now confront my own reflection.

The future is down a little dirt road
in a rainstorm; watercolour is so exciting.
Field stones shaped like heads look
back at me as I arrest things in limbo,
fighting depression and defying gravity.

Animals Are Not Your Friends

You have to get to the point of thinking
with no flux whatsoever, only
thin polythene strips poetically animated
between air currents,
submerged memories and narratives.

Animals are not your friends. You have to go
to the point of thinking like this
then turn your attention to how letters
gather in an ever changing geometry
and begin to build their own nests.

The poem begins to weep. You had
to be there to get the point of thinking
like that. There is no decent way
to say this: it is our moral duty
to try to imagine what was lost.

Animals are not your friends. They lie.
The egret on the river bank turned out
to be a plastic bag trapped in the reeds
and the fox overturned all the bins.
My daughter peels a sticker from the page:

“Look, Daddy, we can stand up in the sky.”

Wildlife

for Jessica

An egret and a fox, a small group of swans,
the tiddler you caught at the beach
and several small spiders are all that we have.

Bill brought along big sheets of paper,
asking if you could draw crows,
but you drew ants in a wood,

misremembering the shapes of trees
and how many legs insects have.
They are beautiful pictures, done

in your enthusiastic first encounter
with chalks and stick charcoal.
Flat out on the studio floor

you talk and tutor yourself
through a tall forest
of animals, dreams and ideas.

Animals Are Not Your Friends

I have got to the point of thinking
without being aware that I am.
I see with my eyes open and listen
with my eyes closed. Previous remarks
have got lost in the fog.

Animals are not your friends. The fox
killed the grass snake, chewed off its head
and left us the rest, which startled me
yesterday morning. Suddenly it's the final day,
almost time to go back to work.

I have got to the point of thinking that
I don't need to think like this. I cannot
formulate the rules or agree to sponsor
a friend. Don't ask me where I am going,
it depends which bus arrives first.

Animals are not your friends. The monster
lives behind the cupboard and something is
under the stairs. You can't pretend not
to have noticed. It's wild and wet out there
and all this writing is making me ill.

"You do know that this can't go on?"

Animals Are Not Your Friends

You have to get to the point of thinking
your way out of the maze. We have
already gone digital and gone on the blink,
all know that metaphor is just a roundabout
way to say the same thing.

Animals are not your friends. They won't
stand still and they have a fear of music,
a distrust of strangers and an inability
to answer back. Scenes come out of nowhere,
only one thing is sure.

If you cannot get the point of thinking like that
then at least make sure of the facts. X is a story
all about grapes and Y is a long winter journey.
I don't believe in synchronicity because it
always happens at the same time.

Animals are not your friends. One is not
supposed to be prepared or be afraid of goats
but it is pleasant feeling scared. And whilst
it might have been wiser to be accompanied
on a night like this it's not half as much fun.

"Whatever you do will be wrong."

Rescue Mission

Vital information flows freely from mind to page
but I see nothing but chaos and disorder,
ideas about the sanctity of private property
and moral panic about youth.

Knitting or buttoning a coat can induce agony,
where writing becomes a scrawl,
teacups rattle against saucers
and sleeping dragons awake.

Panic, though not without reason,
is fundamentally without cause.
This poem still retains traces;
I don't think I've stopped all week.

Write it in magic marker on your bottom:
smudged capitals, with the word (PANIC)
written smaller and in parentheses.
Now run naked through the shopping arcade.

Reborn, I am ready to be my own design.
This morally blank world is still
the home of my random babbling.
I'll take Zen over frantic meltdown any day.

Animals Are Not Your Friends

I'm almost at the point of thinking that
there is no reason to go on. We are
thousands and thousands of pounds in debt
with piles of books and nowhere to live,
neighbours full of urgent wisdom.

Animals are not your friends. Without
the sting it's just a stripe, without meaning
it's random thought. Structure and surprise
are not the same, people on the street
just complicate the shadows.

You get to the point of thinking no, not ever,
no, not ever again. Then move over to
make room for the rest of the poem.
All these moments of nostalgia
could be made to fill an afternoon.

Animals are not your friends. We will
wake up tomorrow to just the same,
remembering yesterday's sun. Vectors
and trajectories muddle in my mind
and I need to find a solution.

“Say what you've got to say and get out.”