ANOTHER DARK TOMORROW

'I am writing to you from depression, from a body

of black cloud through which a bird's shadow passes,

like a knife.'

– Bhanu Kapil, *Humanimal*

Sometimes the lights at the end

of the tunnel are out, the sound

switched off. Reflection is just

a reflection, or something coming.

Every tomorrow is a kind of quiet

as friends I've upset drift away,

tired of my anxiety and worry.

The way out stays elsewhere,

the winner is as distant as ever,

the winter is here. I am clinging

to black thoughts, as dark as

discontent, with no reason to be.

All I can think of is cloud although

it is sunny everywhere around me.

Why anxiety or depression, stress?

Each and every day is just as dark:

I can find the music but tomorrow

the silence hurts. Ask someone else

before filtered grey light or arctic night

surfaces in my panic and finds me

beyond the shadows I have hidden in.

Words and paint bewitched by despair,

I scream at the horizon, am looking for

a moment's calm, blue sky or saxophones.

It could be here but it is hard clinging on

to find release, coming up for air when

fire has gone out and looking drifts away.

The world drones on, unsure of why,

my words cannot express me; there is

no reason for sitting staring into space.

Our garden's overgrown, it is cold winter

everywhere and the stars are coming out.

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OFF TO THE FUTURE

'Take away his camera and he'll draw on   
his eyeballs with a felt-tip pen.'

– Iain Sinclair, *The Last of London*

Compulsion and a flying heart. Nothing

will go away, nothing stays the same.

He is behind the curve or ahead of

the game, never quite where he wants

to be. How very sad, how lovely, how

does he manage to cope? Picture this:

animal tracks and bone, black glass,

Sunday morning childhoods. Gone

or tidied up. Memory fades away,

the past is open to interpretation.

The darkness falls as flowers do,

wilting in the light; although we are

earthbound we can't wait to get away.

Don't make me choose, don't make me

explain or err on the side of caution.

I need to see, to undo the damage

and find out everything for myself.

We can argue about the secrets

of the past but I am looking forward,

ready to go yet full of regrets.

Hold my hand and we are off

to the future, walking sideways

and dodging our own reasons

as well as the camera's flash,

mumbling damaged prayers.

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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.

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I wondered if he had known the copy of the book he'd sent, dedicated and signed, was damaged. Several pages were creased from the printing process, others had bled ink onto the poems opposite. I was still glad to have it, to be able to read the series as a whole. Reading it in the bath, I managed to wrinkle the book's edges in the steam and start to delaminate the cover. Later, I found a bloodstain from my cut finger on page 129.

The book draws on other texts, juxtaposed images, stories and ideas alluding to elsewhere: the reader leaves the written text and thinks herself away, puzzling over the tesserae offered to her. Is it possible to make or intuit a whole or must it always be perceived as fragments and disparate ideas which appear to move towards but never achieve cohesion?

It is a cold night, the heating has turned itself on, the cat is asleep on the end of the bed. A friend did not email me for several weeks, so concerned was he by the word 'theology' in the title of a poem I dedicated to him. He asked me to remove his name and then ceased communication. Recently we resumed our correspondence. 'What is grace?' he asked, and we threw around ideas of states of being, acceptance, living in the moment, being gifted faith.

We might call theology philosophy he suggested, and I concurred. We should not assume theology is to do with organized religion or dogma, I wrote, it may be ontological, social or political (small p). Like everything, it changes and evolves. We touched upon that, also, how to square evolution and belief, science and faith, society and aspiration, writing, art and teaching.

The poems, or letters as the book title suggests, are full of momentary narratives, paraphrase, events observed and enacted. Each has equal weight, each is as carefully constructed and evoked. Themes are written around, a poetry of absence, a theology of absence, that unnerving concept of inversion and the negative, describing what cannot be known by engaging with what it is not.

Skeins of blue and soft black marks. A distant conversation underneath the village streetlight, an owl's call in the garden. Precious words on cheap paper, documenting the holy and unknown.

And now he is in love and has left the city behind.

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Rupert Loydell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University, the editor of *Stride* magazine, and a contributing editor to international times. He has edited several anthologies of poetry and writing, such as *Troubles Swapped for Something Fresh: manifestos and unmanifestos* for Salt; and has many books of poetry and prose poetry in print, including *Dear Mary* (Shearsman, 2017), as well as *Encouraging Signs*, a book of interviews, essays and conversations. His critical writing has been published in *Journal of Visual Arts Culture, Revenant, English, Text, New Writing* and *Punk & Post-Punk*.