

Viewer | Viewed

ADLER

*This PDF excludes the images featured in the original  
in order to improve download times.*

ALSO BY LUCY HAMILTON

*Sonnets for my Mother* (Hearing Eye, 2009)

*Stalker* (Shearsman Books, 2012)

*Of Heads & Hearts* (Shearsman Books, 2018)

SAMPLER

Lucy Hamilton

Viewer | Viewed

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](http://www.shearsman.com)

ISBN 978-1-84861-887-9

Copyright © Lucy Plowright Hamilton, 2023

The right of Lucy Plowright Hamilton to be identified as the author  
of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the

Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved.

SAMPLE

# CONTENTS

Preface / 9

## TRANSPOSING THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Refiguring the Picture / 13

Siblings and Fascinator / 14

Gold Leaf Boy / 17

Bequeathing the Bust / 18

The Goat Tree / 21

Mother and Daughter at Twenty / 22

Laying On the Lipstick / 25

## REARRANGING THE ALBUM

Viewer | Viewed / 28

An Old Story / 31

Picture Not Made | Poem Not Housed / 32

Box Brownie & Cameo / 33

Wayang & Facemask / 36

Mitres & Stamps / 39

Farm Boy on the Wirral / 41

Presenting the Family Ring / 43

## UNPACKING THE BACKPACK

*MASHUP* | MONTAGE / 51

Molasses & Snow / 52

Siblings Wearing Geranium / 55

Little Buddha Meets the Giant Buddha / 56

Trapeze Artist / 59

Village of Bamboo Bridge / 60

Seen & Unseen / 62

The Secret Woman / 65

Goat Song / 66

Meeting with the Elders / 67

The Ghosts of Children / 68

*Notes / 75*

*Acknowledgements / 78*

*The Author / 79*

SAMPLE

*In memory of my parents*  
*John George Plowright & Marguerite Marie Cathala*

SAMPLE

SAMPLER



## Preface

When a close friend died suddenly in 2014, I found myself unable to write and began making photomontages by hand as an alternative method of expression. Starting with a photo of my friend on her wedding-day, I began exchanging her veil and dress with medieval images such as gowns and musical instruments. These montages became a basis for the long poem sequence 'Requiem for the Engineer' in my previous collection *Of Heads & Hearts* (2018). Not only did I enjoy using these materials and working with my hands, the experience also suggested a new experimental route into writing ekphrastic poems. *Viewer / Viewed* marks my return to montages using artefacts such as photos, heir-looms and letters as a way of exploring family relationships through myth, religion, history, gender and geography. The poems seek possible connections and the printed images are improvised and provisional. Thus I created the photomontages as a means to an end, either with colour prints or with old black and white prints onto which I superimposed coloured materials, including india ink, tissue, textiles and garden flora. Since it hasn't been possible to publish the final colour-scanned montages, some of the images, particularly those constructed from old black and white prints, appear smudged or blurred in this grayscale conversion. While the poems refer to a montage or abandoned montage, not all of these images are included here. The original colour montages can be viewed on my website. [www.lucyhamiltonpoetry.co.uk](http://www.lucyhamiltonpoetry.co.uk)

SAMPLER

## Transposing the Photographs

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

## Refiguring the Picture

Dividing the six year-old heads is a question of wet pigtails  
tied behind the ears| dripping sea onto tender skin

and of jiggling two half-faces together for optimum fit  
touching up the ribbons with brush & ink| pink for her

and blue for her| Perhaps the discrete sperm cells in two  
separate eggs determined the focus of each twin's eye

Pink's smaller head belies her earlier birth by 4 1/2 minutes  
and is seemingly at odds with Blue's refusal of milk

Maybe the zygotes developing from two different eggs  
shaped Blue's reluctance to suckle| innocently undercutting

Pink| How their mother juggled her babies| detaching  
Pink during feeding| creating a fret of presence & absence

a kind of repetitive stress| before anxiously coaxing Blue  
And they said that Blue rejected the breast| repeatedly

turning away as if sulking at the double separation  
Now she tints the ribbons in the colours they were given

Among the off-cuts| two salty hands that shared the womb  
continue to grasp each other| elated after the swim

## Siblings and Fascinator

The red & white bi-colour bloom echoes their duality  
The yin/yang within each child and the XX/XY

of spliced siblings| If I place my hand over the half-face  
of one I instantly see the whole face of the other

They fit perfectly| chin curving to chin| crown arcing  
to crown| Even their lips smile evenly as the gaze

of their eyes is held on the level| Would a stranger  
perceive the discrepancy| his nine years to her twelve?

Only the frayed hem of their fringes suggests a split  
but to those in the know the rift conceals stitched name tags

inside their collars| His signifies a boarder's voiceless hurt  
hers the tongue-tied day girl parted from her brother

And as if to endorse this thought| three tiny red petals  
from the garden cutting of *Salvia microphylla* in her hair

have detached and| akin to Hans Arp's chance fragments  
are rising like blown speech bubbles over their head

# Gold Leaf Boy

I cut a clean line down the centre of his head & face  
He's split into hemispheres and it's for me to decipher

the logical left eye & the creative right| for me to choose  
Next the leaf| not hammered into a sheet of 22 karat

but picked from a plane tree by the Cam and bleeding red  
green & yellow on my trestle| The leaf curls & cracks

as I fix it to his face| gold against the Fifties Kodak hair  
anthracnose spots & veins juxtaposed with boy-fresh skin

broken tooth & freckles| The leaf's veined epidermis  
conjures & echoes fruit & pulse| food & fluid & function

foreshadows the organ he will lose to a tumour| But now  
framed under the light of my lamp| the boy's leaf-face

my highlights in his hair and the flexible stalk overhanging  
the top of his head| there's a hint of cherub| of golden apple

## Bequeathing the Bust

Last week I photographed my twin in a restaurant| so elegant  
& photogenic| so French in the blue beret| her wool jacket

picking out red tints in her blond hair| And tonight is it Rilke's  
'third person'| the 'ghost' in poetry| Stezaker's implied beholder

summoning this other persona to me in the half-light| urging me  
out of bed to photograph the Bust in the alcove on the stairs

I was told I'd always loved her| would clamber onto the piano-stool  
to stroke her face| My mother had known her in her revered

Tante Lise's apartment in Passy| where I would visit at fifteen  
Now in the early dawn| I assemble my prints & cutting tools

The knife is sharp| my hand steady as I press the blade| my heart  
on hold as if suspended elsewhere| I can hardly believe my eyes

as my twin's head slides between the Bust's shoulders in a new amity  
in spite of the rift when our mother left the Bust to me not to her



## The Goat Tree

In the final years of my mother's life we always greeted the Bust  
'Lalla Maghnia' as we passed her on the stairs| Now as I slide

her photographed head onto an image of my sister's dress  
I balk at the clash & disproportion| the Western restaurant

brash against the Maghreb where Lalla Maghnia was Raj es Salin  
The Bust's sweet face has such an air of meditation & nostalgia

I juxtapose her photo with a picture of a goat-filled Argan tree  
envisaging furls of morning dung-smoke| aromas of baking bread

as the village stirs| the women chatting & teasing| the scene  
a strange mix of 18<sup>th</sup> century Algeria with my trip to Morocco

The sky's deep blue reflects on Lalla's head-dress and on the turban  
worn by a male figure who stands observing under the branches

And now it's not the visual incongruity that jars but the memory  
of a goatherd's joy as his small brown hands danced on my iPad