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#### ALSO BY LUCY HAMILTON

Sonnets for my Mother (Hearing Eye, 2009) Stalker (Shearsman Books, 2012) Of Heads & Hearts (Shearsman Books, 2018)



## **Lucy Hamilton**



# 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 978-1-84861-887-9

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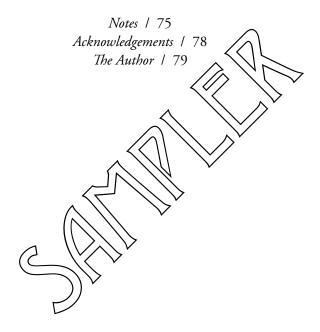
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In memory of my parents John George Plowright & Marguerite Marie Cathala





#### 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 Wiewed 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 flore. 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 blured 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



### Transposing the Photographs





#### 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 a sumutes and is seemingly at odds with Blue's refusal of milk

Maybe the zygotes developing from two different eggs shaped Blue's reluctance to smalle innoceptly undercutting

Pink How their mother toggled her babies detaching Pink during feeding creating a free 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 welve

Only the frayed hem of their fringes suggests a split but to those in the know the rife onceals 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 & exacks

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

broken tooth & freckles| The lear's veined spidermis conjures & echoes fruit & putse| food & flyid & function

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

my highlights in his hand the flexible stalk overhanging the top of his head these'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 ptano-stool to stroke her face My mother had known her in her revered

Tante Lise's apartment in Passyl where Lwould visit at fifteen Now in the early dawn I assemble try prints & cutting tools

The knife is sharp my hand steady as press the blade my heart on hold as if suspended desewhere Leav 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 fulled argan tree envisaging furls of morning dung-smoke aromas of baking bread

as the village stirs the women charting & teasing the scene a strange mix of 18th century Algeria with my trip to Morocco

The sky's deep blue reflects on Lada'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 lov as his small brown hands danced on my iPad