

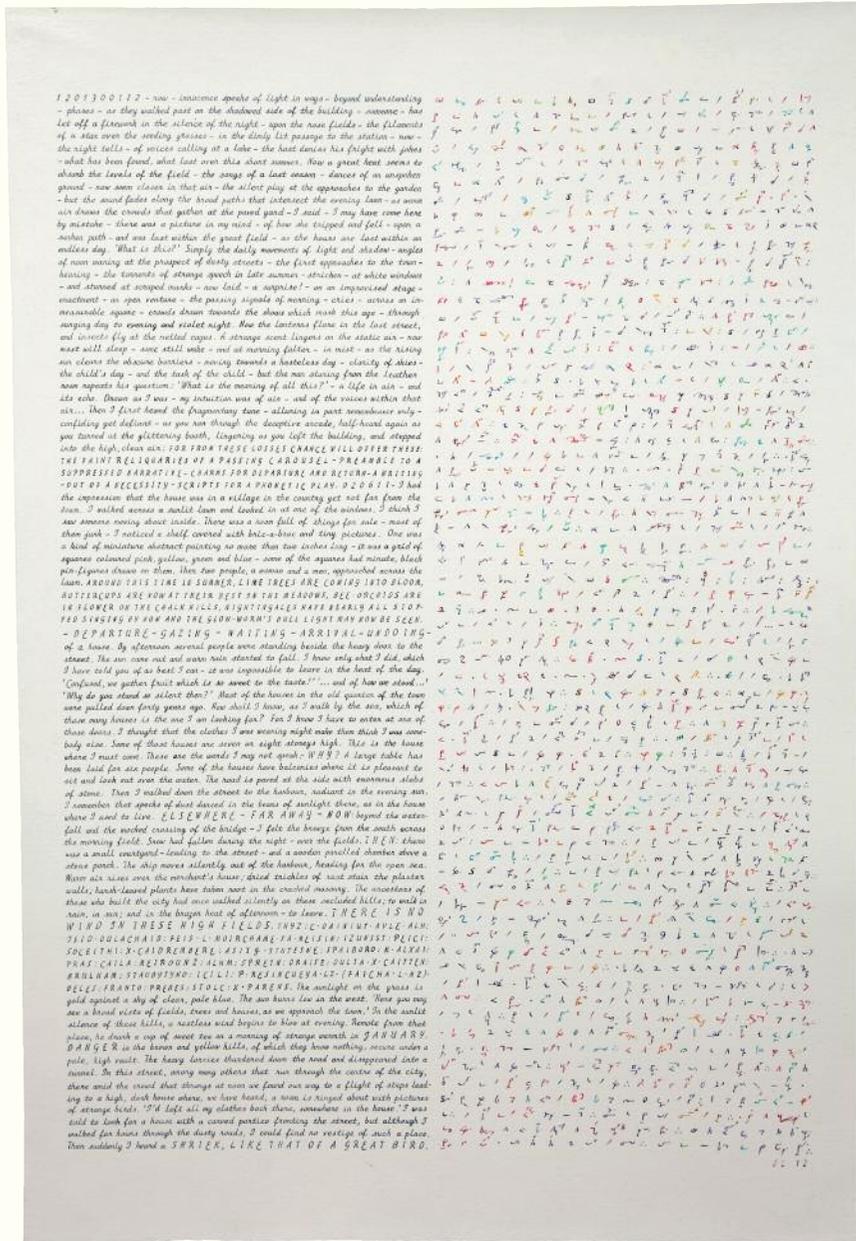


SIMON LEWTY  
VERSIONS OF ONE ANOTHER  
PETER LARKIN



ART FIRST, LONDON  
MMXVI





Simon Lewty, *Innocence Speaks of Light in Ways*, 2012, ink and acrylic on paper, 92.5 x 63 cm. Detail shown on preceding page

## PREFACE

For a number of years now, I have been fascinated by the sheer words, distinctive phrases and poetic narratives which are such a constituent, though problematic, part of Simon Lewty's picture-making. I have always, perhaps a little perversely, relished the often demanding task of following his texts line by line where the picture-space makes this possible. I've not deluded myself, however, that such a literal reading can encounter everything that is being offered by the work of art, but such meditative patience with what often seems like a half-forgotten, half-obliterated text remains a genuine moment of encounter.

At the same time, Simon himself has been among the most distinctive and responsive readers of my own poetry, having a very special 'eye' for the patterns, combinations and textures of my texts, and may often have been the first person to read them. And he reads them as an artist, attending to each contour or configuration before him.

Last autumn (2015), it so happened that we were both feeling rather jaded and stuck with our own output, while at the same time discussing how artworks were always open to further versions of themselves, as condensations or extensions. From there, perhaps from want of anything better to do, we agreed to experiment with new versions of each other's mainly recent work. Simon had been mulling over a set of short poems of mine called *City Trappings* (Veer Books, 2016), poems which evoke the enclosed tracts of countryside within the Birmingham conurbation, and thought that he could draw or extrude something of his own from them. At the same time, I took up with two important published catalogues of his, *The Self as a Stranger* (2010) and *Absorption* (2013), and reworked some of the reproduced images which included a substantial amount of text (sometimes using only a close-up of part of a picture) into short poems, each one of which uses Simon's original title.

So both of us have experimented with new sources and starting-points which were relatively unfamiliar to us, certainly in terms of our usual working methods. We were discovering new ways of tracing and modelling how we collect and sift material and somehow make it our own. We hope our readers will find the results of interest, and that these poems can be enjoyed in their own right, whatever their origins. And perhaps they have further to go. Any ideas, dear reader?

Peter Larkin

SIMON  
LEWTY

## *Spectrum per Dolour*

of foliage, to cross a city  
the hold is shared  
the pull is not  
idyll on a city  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR  
between heath and wood  
abysses  
a green gap  
a gate to walking  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR  
a shared booth of origin  
near/far the city  
tranquillity, closer than its origin  
stasis  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR  
paradisation  
cradling grassheads  
where no harvest was ever planted  
gleanings  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR  
over barrows of heath  
a grove  
a glade to a drift  
a drift's picket planted  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR  
a cry  
between heath and wood  
cry of wildfowl  
faintly requited  
SPECTRUM PER DOLOUR

## *Of Greater Rites*

Of the acts of the town  
Of the fragments of recovery  
Of the tranquillity of a suburb  
Of the old habits of conurbation  
Of the fragments of a heath  
Of the bands of an assent  
Of the passaging of the contained  
Of the residue of green fields  
Of the toll of an immensity  
Of the filaments of a commission  
Of the park of the day's range  
Of the net of future bestowing  
Of the quiets of a rest.

## *Pastoral*

the common scarcity  
park impressed upon it  
nostalgia  
thin bespoke collage  
post-immaculate  
gorse—a filament  
bird stained  
paper-thin  
the bare city  
radiative, a city  
retention to an extinction  
segments with origin  
a city vortex  
as spindle suspends ground  
spun onto the human  
the city's tender perimeter  
their own worlds  
green apex  
para-verdant  
green sleet  
precipitance  
para-extinction  
dismaze  
on tinted surfaces

## *Of Further Rites*

Of the flights of a beautiful song  
Of the monotony of an epoch  
Of the prescience of the immaterial  
Of the figures of the circumspect  
Of the passions of the year  
Of the fullness of late changes  
Of the conversions of an echo  
Of the charms of the unique  
Of the consolations of a passing mist  
Of the periods of the relentless wheel  
Of the mottoes of an astounding index  
Of the shocks of the city's décor  
Of the crisis of the sentimental  
Of the dreams of the indelible  
Of the origins of a rare vision  
Of the happiness of the irresolute  
Of the signs of the child's infinity  
Of the joys of an evening  
Of the witnesses of our destiny  
Of the returns of the indifferent  
Of the restitutions of the hall  
Of the domains of a refuge  
Of the vacancy of the proofs  
Of the origins of the abstract  
Of the doubts of a lost town  
Of the changes and repeats of an exotic dream  
Of the greater maps of the vague

Of the clarities of a rare shop  
Of the fables of an indifference  
Of the ancient theatre of passing time  
Of the purposes of a realisation  
Of the times of a lost language  
Of the diaries of the accidental  
Of the errors and transparencies of a secret archive  
Of the zones of a later origin  
Of the regrets of the irrelative chime  
Of the bright processions of an empty sun  
Of the messages of the feeble unchanged  
Of the exhortations of approaching fields  
Of the rebukes of a lost season  
Of the triumphs of a fragrant wood  
Of the fathomless charge of a summer day  
Of the divinations of the peaceably-born  
Of the coded memoirs of the weeks and months  
Of the missing admonitions of the poised  
Of the ways of a credence dear  
Of the serenity of a departure  
Of the hesitations of an hour  
Of the constancy of the indecipherable  
Of the litany of the forgotten  
Of the vanities of a latent telling  
Of the hymns of lost vicissitudes  
Of the silences of a green cloud  
Of the metamorphosis of an elision

Of the serenades of the late-come  
Of the singing of a silence  
Of the prophecy of centuries  
Of the rising symbols of a present field  
Of the static of an ever-moving ground  
of the membranes of the delusory ephemerides  
Of the lost auguries of a year  
Of the rising surfaces of a noon  
Of the traces of an implacable way  
Of the sudden writings of the calm  
Of the arrival of a fragile diaphany  
Of the unique child of this writing  
Of the strange smell of chemical waters  
Of the dreams of an estate  
Of the secrets of a skin's writing  
Of the rituals of an endless day  
Of the tranced loci of the folded field  
Of the poor imago of a sky  
Of the votive tokens of a hill  
Of the denizens of a matrix  
Of the antecedents of a false sun  
Of the orders of the high corn  
Of the crumbling books of the schematic  
Of the vicinity of their gifts  
Of the great abstracts of morning

PETER  
LARKIN

*Whispers from  
a Mysterious Revolt* 1998

PEACEABLY BORN

the sun unseen till noon

UNECHOING SANDS

a pale message from the darling grounds

THE VOICE OF A LEAF

high tangled trees

WAVING NEW MADE

concurrence of nodding

the blue-changed sky

KEEPING FAITH UPON THIS MISCHIEF

careless of the day

A LOST SEA STEP

A FAINT DYNASTY

the city streets

AMONG THE BROWN TREES

I saved a leaping life

*Rebuke of Light* 1999

FORLORN ENTRANCE UPON A FLOOR

move slowly across the darkening field

reduce his thinking to a stillness

THE SONG OF THE RAIN

look down the trapped field

A FLAUNTED DEPARTURE

AN UNREMARKED RETURN

at the edges of the faded green

THE HARBOUR OF A DREAM

crystal under his rising tread

HIGH GREEN FIELD

the ground of a game

PLANAR FIELDS, VAIN BOARDS

liquescence in the hardening sky

ITS FLUX THE FLOWERS

days of sullen calling

an unexplained symbol

INSISTENT IN THE LIGHT

ESCAPE OF THE LEAF

clouds beyond a distant hedge

each day has its voice

in the glare of the ebbing light

MUTE JESTING, REBUKE OF LIGHT

*Day of Heat,  
Day of Storms* 1999

WHOSE TELLING AN ECHO  
IN URGENT FAITH  
stretched out of twisted skin  
tenuous enclosures  
sunlit tracts of the country

OUR RESPITE: FOR THIS  
IS WHERE WE MAY FAIL  
closely woven branches  
touch a small bundle  
nourishment is a bidding  
told under leaning trees

GIFT OF SCANTY DAY  
nodes and pinnacles  
watchful of the path  
STUNNED ALMANACS  
falling in flames

OUT OF THE GREY WOOD  
SWOON OF THE EMPTY TOWN  
when the treading mounts  
a flight of stone steps  
pink clovers rise from the mist  
A SPENT ACORN, POOR FARING  
amid anxious questioning  
the head of a blade

*Far from the Town  
and Yet not Far* 2001

come from a shaded pathway  
into the dry silence  
SHAKEN DIAGRAMS  
faintly from outside  
half-buried in the ground

RANG WITH SOUND  
burned in the grate  
enter the house  
along a tree-lined road

duration of their short lives  
heavy with sun  
cross the road at that point  
WHERE WE HAD DONE SO  
in spite of this

stood by the fence  
not far from home  
NEVER ENDING SEA  
all you need to tell you

woods green for days  
warm in that building  
markets of the cold city  
built into the wall

now he walks past gain  
this LOW DAY  
THE SINGER less than the others  
IN THE STILL AIR

*To Unexplained Day* 2002

OURS IS EVER AN AFFRONT  
the bird falls to the earth  
this spindle  
dolour of the dancing figures  
NOW CONFRONTS THE STRETCHED

fragments of sun-dried pulp  
pieces of charred gorse  
many days in the strange enclosure  
IN THEIR SPEECH WARM RAIN  
that unspeaking man

THE SIGH OF A GENERATION  
darkening alleys approach  
with drops of rain  
curious and familiar DISPERSAL  
LIKE A SONG  
gesture of BECKONING  
rocks in the crystalline sea

*Whispers from  
a Mysterious Revolt* 1998

SUN OF EMPTY MORNING  
the great field  
gratitude expressed  
TO MARK THEIR WORLD

you must bend LOW  
as they had done before  
in that field

CONCUR THEIR MESSAGES  
shaken lights  
IN FRAGRANT WOOD

blown grass, frayed thorn  
THIS THEN TO LEARN  
faint murmur of acknowledgement  
SECRET REBUKE  
AND A LIFE

*Early Songs* 2010

the negative vision  
AN EARLY SONG  
tells of a fleeing  
I do not know why and walked  
for the first shadow

*The Real  
within the Voice* 2011

SEQUENCE says: ABSENCE says:  
an echo on the sharp air  
the two paths are the same

partial glories  
trying to tell us  
calling my REAL name  
full of voices  
within a state of peace

an infinity to slip and merge  
if I climb the stairs  
twilight path in avid flux  
to find my way home

*The Child's Hand:  
Communities of Mist I 2011*

within an assumption  
NOT KNOW WHY  
now abstract lines tremble  
I had to leave THE INSISTENT  
and wept silently

at a REVOLT  
lost far afield  
though imprinted on the city air  
thin black wire  
where a slumped cottage stands

trace of light, song  
of a DISPERSAL  
ACHE OF UNTHINKING  
late sunshine replaced the house  
dream of a CHORD  
the afternoon squall had passed

*Innocence Speaks  
of Light in Ways 2011*

impression the house was in the village  
OUT OF NECESSITY  
miniature warmth moving about inside

BUTTERCUPS AT THEIR BEST  
GAZING DEPARTURE  
SINGING BY NOW

impossible to leave as best I can  
confused, we gather fruit  
SCRIPTS FOR A PHONETIC PLAY  
why do you stand so silent then?

*This Sleep, this Fair,  
this Finding* 2011

receding tracks  
gnarled guarantors  
LONG OF SCORED  
UNSAYABLE  
ABSORPTION

paths that trace  
before your birth  
the lark's descent  
sound of its onrush

in the end a singing  
muffled in shingle  
fades the unthinkable:  
meagre, my mouth  
has taken here its breath

*Eclipse, Sea,  
Dream, Song* 2012

RHYTHMIC of paths  
SUMMER moves imperceptibly  
colossal tracts absorb  
the sun's heat

bells ringing in the afternoon  
LAPSE OF DAYS  
placed at the onset of worlds

last time and ground nearby:  
why do you assume  
the fields lie drenched in light?  
WHAT SONG IS THIS?  
rain under a tree  
a single ripe apple

*The Child's Hand:  
Communities of Mist II* 2011

wind blew so hard over the house  
some stones in the garden had been caught  
a maze or freshly surprised landing  
schematics of a marginal

it is a scene of waiting  
a dress of violet and green  
a voiceless charm in warm rain

the curling ground turns  
each vista unfolds  
I cannot know that ground  
trees reflected in water  
so FOLLY glances

within the vague suburb  
YEAR OF THE ENDLESS FIELD  
out by the side gate

which blots out his calling  
THE GIFT TO OBLIVION  
incantation and measure  
the next to speak  
his LACK his ABUNDANCE  
across an ancient field

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## SIMON LEWTY

Simon Lewty has exhibited throughout the UK since 1984, including solo exhibitions at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (1984), the Serpentine Gallery, London (1985), the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (1989), the Mead Gallery, University of Warwick (1992) and recently, at the Courtauld Institute Library and South Bank Centre, London. His work is held in museum and private collections including the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Arts Council, Birmingham, Leamington Spa, Leeds, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton, and Worcester Museums & Art Galleries, and in the USA he is well represented in the Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, Miami Beach, Florida. He has been represented by Art First, London since 1991.

An illustrated monograph, *Simon Lewty: The Self as a Stranger* (Black Dog Publishing, 2010) and his inclusion in *The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century* (Hayward Publishing, 2015) encompass publications of previous years. A major survey exhibition, *The SIGNificance of Writing*, at his home town's Leamington Spa Museum & Art Gallery coincides with this publication, and with his two person show with Will Maclean at Art First, *Charting the Second Decade*.

## PETER LARKIN

Peter Larkin was Philosophy & Literature Librarian at Warwick University for many years and is now an Associate Fellow.

As a poet he writes in the area of innovative ecological writing with a special interest in woodlands and plantations. His poetry also attempts to explore the idea of scarcity in its phenomenological aspects. His collections of poetry include *Terrain Seed Scarcity* (2001), *Lessways Least Scarce Among* (2012), and *Give Forest Its Next Portent* (2014). His *Wordsworth & Coleridge: Promising Losses*, a collection of academic essays, was published in 2012. He contributed to *The Ground Aslant: an Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (ed. Harriet Tarlo, 2011).

*City Trappings (Housing Heath or Wood)*, a poetic investigation into the status of countryside within the Birmingham conurbation, is due out in 2016.

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