



Sam
Sampson
Halcyon
Ghosts

history in a nearby tree

isolated sightings (aligned by absence):

huia extinct

Halcyon Ghosts presents thirteen poems, thirteen shapes of knowing – from the cinematic reel ‘The Kid’, splicing stills of the poet’s grandmother and Charlie Chaplin, to the reverse soundings of ‘Six Reels of Joy’, celebrating the birth of the poet’s daughter. The title poem displays a ghostly counterpoint of birds and words in flight; strikethrough poems are threaded through with runes of fact and fiction. Language, Sampson demonstrates, is as particular and transitory as the patterning of the natural world. Poems layer, link and break apart, sampling and echoing other texts – whether the everlasting cataracts of Keats and Dylan Thomas or reportage gleaned from territorial newspapers of the Old West. *Halcyon Ghosts* is a profoundly philosophical and personal collection, an assemblage of unearthed vestiges or, as Sampson’s music insists, *in the present tense . . . a quintessence* – where *names displaced by light, are dark but not lost . . .* Ever-changing, language spills its story.

Sam Sampson was born in Auckland, New Zealand, and grew up in Titirangi. He has an MA in Philosophy from the University of Auckland and has taught in the University’s ethnomusicology programme. Sampson’s poetry has been widely published in journals and chapbooks and his first collection with Auckland University Press, *Everything Talks*, won the NZSA Jessie Mackay Best First Book Award for Poetry at the 2009 book awards.



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The Kid

•

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Unearthed Vestiges | She is Sparrow-like and
Fierce

•

Six Reels of Joy

The Kid

Watch Charlie Chaplin un-
wind
listen in-
tently to that blind
mazy course
running wild

through all forms of mim-
icry, fun-making and clog-dancing

childhood imbroglio

old-school sheet music

where landscapes are raised
used stamps stick

a trio for three bassoons

a lane of horse-chesnut trees

a red bus turns
this city past, passing . . . the Queen's Head

the horse-drawn bakery van
the booby hatch
. . . framed fixtures
streams from some old world mix . . .

tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor . . .

a-shrug-and-a-kick

come-shadow-shadow-come
and cut . . .

(on film)

mirror images . . .

over-
lapping scraps . . .

the evanescent

smile (likeness) chorus

of that unknown

. . . lady, baby, gypsy, queen.

in memory of my grandmother

Six Reels of Joy

1

... as shadow a light and body

in the present tense . . . a quint-
essence

*a paly of six argent and azure
a cinquefoil gules in the centre of a sun*

(names displaced by light
are dark but not lost . . .

) . . . Miss Lucia

2

in my headiness

light against the Earth's axial tilt
against the axes of both bodies

(glass) bodies

of alphabetical bones

one

by one, scattered frames . . . the low off-
shore islands . . . over-

lapping scraps of the water's reflection

3

re-verse soundings :

mirror images
of mother father
da & ma

the nature of divination

between saint and certitude
to within a second . . . scenarios

like the sunrise centred and sunset rendered

(or vice versa)

4

Zeroth——Zohar——Zygote
tracking . . . *shadow this, take and come up*

shadow, come to the present . . . the sur-
face . . . the Lion——the Light——the Luminous

5

August

heart

head

helix

DNA X

tracing

Y

(past Adam's Peak and Zion Track, from swerve of-shore to bend of-bay
to Z of-land . . . Zzzzzzz . . . sunrise . . . a-

wake, Lucia *re-*
sprung in us by carnal equinox) A – Z

6

: dialectical

 the pull and push

 part and parcel . . . the abstract un-

folding lucid

 the birth, the human, the light

THE HUMAN-LIGHT

flowing out and *through us*
this
is flesh

daughter

a likeness (chorus)
of that unknown rushing

(through
us))))))))))))))

the pulse trace
elements
arc-
ing
through
us

luna . . . (lady) leo (baby) . . .
lupus (gypsy) . . . lux-

Lucia.

for my daughter

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