

A deceit of lapwings

'the false lapwyng, ful of trecherye' *Geoffrey Chaucer*

Consider the shame of that name
even as they roller-coaster over open skies,
over the secrets of ploughed fields,
keening and whooping to draw the farmhand on
away from their own open secret
nestled in its dark furrow.
See how she drags her uninjured wing
luring him from her little ones
as the boy with his bag counts his eggs,
and hatches in his mind
the money that will nestle in his purse.

Yet all over the down lands the skies are still thick
with the rush of their crossing, the thrum of their passing.

I know them by their secret names,
peewit, pie-wipe, chewit, tuefit,
the language of eggers and washmen and netters,
toppyup, peasiewheep, teewhuppo, thievnick,
telling their stories to tillers and ploughmen,
plivver, ticks-nicket, thievnick, peewit.

And even now when a few come from nowhere
they are the sound of spring,
a pied handful thrown against heaven,
the sky's calligraphy.
They swoop and tumble for the madness of it,
and cry, wheezy and slurred,
soft and wild, joyful and grieving.

I open my heart to their wing music
and watch their looping sky-dance
and how they play with the wind,
and want for nothing.