Busking it in Birmingham

*Birmingham Jazz Incarnation*, Simon Turner (30pp, £5.00, The Emma Press)

Simon Turner's new pamphlet is an energetic and lively romp through Oulipian restraints. These highly entertaining re-versionings and re-imaginings of what is essentially the same text – the original (?) poem of the title – remind me how fun Oulipou can be. It's easy to get po-faced about such process-based approaches to writing, but this work has the charm, simplicity and readability of Calvino's work rather than the dense inscrutability of Perec.

So a gorgeous, smoky poem about a chance encounter with a street musician is redacted, rewritten as limericks, alphabeticised, reduced to a summarised novel, elaborated upon, and also turned into a Quennette, a list of letters and punctuation, a sonnet, an album's tracklist. All with a witty aplomb and lightness of touch, with the additional bonus of a sprinkling of Mark Andrew Webber's lively illustrations.

The blurb tells us that Turner decomposes and recomposes one of his own poems, which is a good summary, as is Turner's own subtitle, 'Playing the Changes' (geddit?). I'd urge readers to run their fingers through this fine word compost and marvel at Turner's take on music, sunshine and the city. 'There's not anything wasn't born of his music'.

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