

KNOCKARIDDERA



GERRY LOOSE

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Gerry Loose

THE GALDRAGON PRESS
1991

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Original Edition
Published & Printed
by
THE GALDRAGON PRESS
Glasgow
Scotland

Cover Image: © Kate Sweeney McGee 1991

January

Snow this month and starlings
But he calls for eagle music.
The hills crash together
like cymbals
his spirits caper to the zenith
scud to the apogee
and the sky constantly changing.

Black ice breaks the bare earth
throb of flesh pausing as the city recedes.

February

Wind singing in the telegraph wire
wind taking the land taking the ground
wind parting hair cleaving medulla
wind freezes my fists
wind skull-cap under the hair.

In the lee of the sunken path
split slots deer hoofs frozen to water
I walk in the head of a stag
his antler my brain-rut
while stars zip past.
Like a thief in the night
I think of my child, unborn.

March

This morning
a low and constant popping
a rally of little Hondas
over the hill
until I discovered the frogs
back to belly breaking air
with that soft noise
on the jelly of their spawn

and the noisy sky pivots
round my hair

the blessing of the throat word
the blessing of the windpipe word
the blessing of lungs word
the blessing of stomach word
the blessing of the abdomen word
the blessing of inspiration word

April

Chaucer's month
a religious month, that is

notes from the crusty hermit, that is

to keep going
he carries his years
with a stoop
dogging other men's cattle
onto the slough

to keep going
we talk of the weather
seventy eight summers
in this townland.

May

Travel, and
something goes before
to your destination
so it was
before you left
the road claimed you
you were already gone
 you sowed something
here.

Now the dogs lie
nose to nose in the sun
the twisted foot hen
scratches in the dirt
Stacks Mountain north-west
Mount Brandon west
Carrauntoohil south-west
above them the sky
(empty).

June

Catharsis, annealing solstice,
the sweet worts of the bog
the words of this bog
smoothing flannin frieze
quern flummery bastable scraw
“raven said ‘help will come
help will come’ ”

(trouble is
hold your tongue
 long enough
forget how to speak
well
start again
ordination, coordination
tongue and brain, tongue and body
learn it new.

 Brain shivved away
 by this and by that
 full of holes
wide open
 whine on the radio
 flak on the stereo
 surprised Uranus
 has anything at all
 to do with me).

July

The incontrovertible law of waves through the
land seen in summer from a distance waves in
grainfields as cleansing as any whitecaps at
sea and indistinguishable when as sometimes
happens you catch a glimpse of deep blue between
higher mounds of flowing hills and closer the
wild oats in a field of barley give the whole
field an air of floating and heat haze and an
extra lightness of colour the fifty shades of
green barley from a distance waving showing a
lighter shade lower down in the troughs wind
exposed wheat a darker shade than the surface
almost ripe almost charlock all gone

whole flights of pigeons
dance in the eye
tilth soil hoe delve
a low bass throbbing
breaking my eyeballs
sundew bog asphodel
hold on for a while

August

Rodent chatter
burning stubble
ash on the air
the month of wasps
 (into the valley
 of sweet tongued birds
 comes the saucy crow
 hopping sidling
 croaking his old song too
 who'll hear who'll hear
 don't even know the words)

and the little world
here transformed
with the sun
back from stirring hay
along the long lanes
 foxgloves in the high banks
 the dogs tongue the tractor
back along the road
Up here,
riding the trailer like a tumbril.

September

The Plough twists.
How do you measure the azimuth
the arc of not doing.

The month of mackerel
yarrow hex

they rest in one place
they stay in one place
they live in one place
they are in one place
it's home.

October

The month of rainbows
the month of the wandering dead
heaped cloud
dead weather
 rain in the east
 sun in the west
 every evening
 when the cows come to the parlour
 backsides swinging, leaking
 fat as snails
 there is a rainbow from
 north to south
 across the glen.

November

Third night of the waning moon
water caught on the dead spikes
of rushes *Juncus effusus*
it's still still strong shadows
(swallowed) air as clear
as a cup of ice-spring water.

December

Back to back days.
The whole dark month glimmers
 to the window
 of the year
 the shortest day
stopping the sun
at crisis breaking free

* * *

Epiphany Nollaig na mBan

and the guests have gone
and the sky's still there
and I've kept ten fingers
 (the knack of chopping wood)

Tonight I watched both
the sun set and the moon set
for the first time ever

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cover by K S McGee

Knockariddera - Gaelic for knight's mountain -
is a place a thousand feet up where the poet
once farmed. It is also a state of mind.

AUTUMN 1991

Edition of 200 ISBN 1 873932 01
50 copies signed by author and artist

£1.95 (12pp)

Available from bookstores or by mail order from:
THE GALDRAGON PRESS
136 Byres Road, Glasgow G12 8TD, Scotland

Please make cheques / POs payable to: The Galdragon Press