

KNOCKARIDDERA



GERRY LOOSE

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Gerry Loose

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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
smooring 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

* *

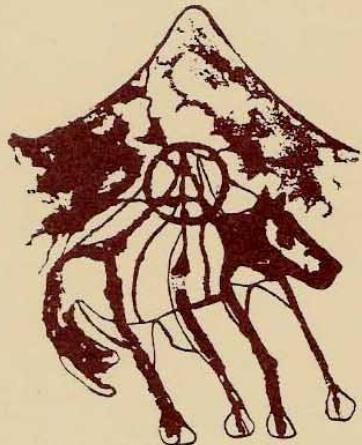
Epiphany Nollaig na mBan

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.

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