

What the Bonxie can teach us 2022

It should have been free passage, friendly territory
our goal a quick sweep across the land, a short cut
to where we had taken up residence.

These were high, flat, bird blown moors
defended only by snatch of heather, catch of bramble.
No threat in the drone of wind, the sea's gargle
through broken-toothed cliffs until a high note *skeer*.
We should have heeded that warning, turned back.

They swooped across the moor, skimmed low,
air exploded in a slash of beak and claws *UK, Uk, Uk*,
bulky bombers, focused. We, larger, stronger,
beat a bloodied retreat vulnerable to the maelstrom
of feather, humbled by a primal courage to defend
a future nestling deep in the heart of their land.

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Bird Flu Cull

They came at night
in the quiet of the roost,
filled body bags, swiftly taped and sealed,
tight lipped in the feathery flurry.

Yellow and black plastic gave a waspish warning
stretched tight from railings and trees,
a flimsy barrier held all back –
not this disease winging in.

No raucous geese in noisy formation,
nor the bicker of gulls, soft plash of swans,
nor splash of cormorants after easy pickings,
nor the contemplation of the priestly heron.

Wan sun buffs the still lake to a mirror,
reflecting trees that couldn't raise a whisper.
And a stilled playground, a lone dog-walker
measure the weight of this silence.

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Starlings

Commuters on the glutted lines, the crowded trees
preening a Pollock splatter of colour
into sequined shimmer on satin and silk.
They strut the branches, a Pearly King parade
in black abalone, a spangle of Arctic night,
these sharp-eyed, gypsy rovers fill hedgerows
with the gossipy chatter of a Glasgow street.

Spitfires homing when day is done,
specks that freckle the face of a cloud,
sky art in swirling spray-can trails,
iron filings dragged by the sinking sun
and flowing like the seven veils,
in their hundreds, as one, diving, folding,
roosting when light fades like a closing wing.

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