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From Here [with Simonetta Moro] (Dusie, 2008)

Dark Wires [with Ian Davidson] (West House Books, 2007)

The Mirror Trade (Seren, 2004)

Tide Table (Gwasg Pantycelyn, 1998)

Zoë Skoulding

A
*Revolutionary
Calendar*

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29. *Frêne* ASH

fissured bark looks old – does it
sound as old as poetry
or the greying remnants of a fire
where helicopter seeds
are circling to the rescue

30. *Plantoir* DIBBER

hit me with your dibber stick – a little
spring rhythm in the broken ground
where what comes up is nothing
but a mirage of stockpiled rations
and longed-for disaster

Germinal

1. *Primevère* PRIMROSE

first yellow yes
but the very first
rose of the first
spring firsting
(a honeyed fist)

2. *Platane* PLANE

bark peels off in patches
leaving a mottled trunk
(inside spring pushes
out new skins) or
thickens and cracks

3. *Asperge* ASPARAGUS

sparrow grass marks you
greenscented
leaving its tang in your water
all this hurry into life
(a lily stem)

4. *Tulipe* TULIP

still life never
motionless but fragile
in wind a turban
unwound (how
far a flower)

5. *Poule* HEN

women are fragile
on dating apps
and difficult to monetise
(he said) their golden
eggs in a basket

6. *Bette* CHARD

your stem a streak
of golden red on green
(with this resilience
you're holding on) holds out
against the cuts

7. *Bouleau* BIRCH

here's a silver skin
that peels away in layers
against the pull of work
(hold tomorrow still while I
rip yesterday from your back)

8. *Jonquille* DAFFODIL

in the rushes (running late
on screens of inward eyes)
this is yellow still
trumpeting its own face
multiplied

9. *Aulne* ALDER

roundish leaves
waved and toothed
in late green days
(your underwater wood
keeps the city afloat)

10. *Couvoir* HATCHERY

counting the days
or counting the chickens
there you go hatching tomorrows
(where profit is nothing but
your own broken shell)

11. *Pervenche* PERIWINKLE

blue fetters blue
in ground cover
inching over nothing but
its own shadow (inside shell
a broken sky)

12. *Charme* HORNBEAM

iron wood blunts every
blade that works it
while the slightest wind
turns up the hidden moonside
(charms your leaves to silver)

13. *Morille* MOREL

filigree holds air in the hollows
pushed out of earth
still hidden
but easy as breathing
(never work)

14. *Hêtre* BEECH

everything seems to be
hollowed out and falling
apart or is it
falling together
(tenderly encased)

15. *Abeille* BEE

reduced to function
workers suck sugar from brioche
how to speak of hive
together without queen
(this is what stung you)

16. *Laitue* LETTUCE

why oh why are we sleeping
suck this leaf with its milky juice
and sleep is an arrow
(falling more slowly)
shot into the future

17. *Mélèze* LARCH

first you don't see it
larch leaning
into wind
(a necessary lie)
then you do

18. *Ciguë* HEMLOCK

a drowsy numbness
(clustered umbels hollow
stem streaked red)
laces the spring's
inaudible nightingales

19. *Radis* RADISH

the day was red
to its swollen root
(is that what you mean
by radical) I tried to speak
in this colour

20. *Ruche* HIVE

whose mind is whose
(that was my idea you
stole it) original
honey pours over
your profile

21. *Gainier* JUDAS TREE

for profile read
outright lie
or hidden seed
(for blossom
read treason)

22. *Romaine* ROMAINE LETTUCE

in the snap of a leaf
one system
(who said your time
was your own)
becomes another

23. *Marronnier* HORSE CHESTNUT

an opening not
yet an opening
still varnished brown
(spring in your fingers)
stuck days

24. *Roquette* ROCKET

the bitter leaves
turn over (as days
turn into debts)
cutting one loss
after another

25. *Pigeon* PIGEON

strutting your losses
in grey sky feathered over
this feeling of tarmac
(your agreement
is taken as read)

26. *Lilas* LILAC

an agreement of
tense and colour
blooms
(in the time
it takes to read this)

27. *Anémone* ANEMONE

any money's
made of blood or
terminal bloom
gone with a change of wind
(branching inflorescence)

28. *Pensée* PANSY

thought flickers
behind a terminal
like the cost of your attention
gone branching
(blood flow)

29. *Myrtille* BILBERRY

the promise of so much spilled
ink staining fingers tongue
hands when a flickering
thought would have been
(almost) enough

30. *Greffoir* GRAFTING KNIFE

enough that the blade
lifts bark from pith
levers the split
trims the scion (if it takes
this is what it takes)

Floréal

Notes

After an early prototype devised by Sylvain Maréchal in 1788, Gilbert Romme led a commission to develop the French Republican Calendar that was in use from 1793 and dated from the birth of the Republic on September 22nd 1792. This sequence of poems draws particularly on the contribution of Fabre d'Églantine, who composed the names of the months and suggested naming the days after plants, animals and objects that were significant to the rural economy. The metric organisation of ten-day weeks, *décades*, is not reproduced here, although it can be seen in the pattern of dedications of every tenth day to an agricultural implement and every fifth day to an animal. For historical and political context see Sanja Perovic, *The Calendar in Revolutionary France: Perceptions of Time in Literature, Culture, Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

The Republican Calendar for Year II, 22nd September 1793, can be found at BnF Gallica: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10547000p>

p. 12 'POTIRON Squash' and 'BELLE DE NUIT Marvel of Peru' refer to the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, translated by Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, 1951, from which Pink Floyd's 'Chapter 24' on *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, 1967, is derived. See also Arthur Lee's 'She Comes in Colors' by Love, 1966.

p. 14 'Navet TURNIP' refers to John Ashbery's 'Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape', 1966.

p. 15 'Endless Summer' was a genetically engineered tomato introduced and withdrawn in the 1990s.

p. 23 'Dentelaire LEADWORT' refers to Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852.

p. 40 'Fumier MANURE' refers to the title of Half Man Half Biscuit's song 'National Shite Day' from *CSI: Ambleside*, 2008.

p. 55 'Lièvre HARE' quotes Charles F. Partington, editor, *The British Cyclopaedia of the Arts, Sciences, History, Geography, Literature, Natural History, and Biography*, 1838.

— 'Guède WOAD' includes phrases from William Hope-Jones, 'National Anthem of the Ancient Britons' in *The Hackney Scout Song Book*, 1921.

p. 56 'Chélidoine CELANDINE' quotes John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, 1597.

p. 61 'Bêche SPADE' refers to Ian Hamilton Finlay's 'Ventose' and 'Osez', bronze and stone (with Jamie Sargeant), 1991, Tate Collection.

p. 64 'Mandragore MANDRAKE' mentions practices noted by Pierre le Brun and Jean-Baptiste Thiers in *Superstitions Anciennes et Modernes, préjugés vulgaires qui ont induit les peuples à des usages & à des pratiques contraires à la religion*, 1733.

— 'Persil PARSLEY' has in mind Caroline Bergvall's series of installations, *Say: Parsley*, 2001 onwards.

p. 79 'Rose ROSE' quotes Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

p. 94 'Caille-lait BEDSTRAW' draws on Nicholas Culpeper, *The Complete Herbal*, 1653.

p. 101 'Absinthe WORMWOOD' quotes John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1689.

p. 103 'Cerise CHERRY' references Jean-Baptiste Clément's song, 'Le temps des cerises', 1866.

— 'Parc PARK' quotes Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

p. 112 'Abricot APRICOT' refers to the Arabic word for this fruit. It figures in a dismissive colloquial response to wishful thinking about the future, *filmishmish*, which is roughly equivalent to 'dream on'.