



Maiden Street

(for Dennis Deere)

Full of stolen autumn apples
we watched the tinkers fight it out,
the cause, a woman or a horse:
Games came in their seasons,
hoes, shoes, bowling, cracking nuts,
Scal, marbles – frozen knuckled,
Bonfire Night, the skipping-rope
and small voices on the golden road
at this infant incantation:

*"There's a lady from the mountains
Who she is I cannot tell,
All she wants is gold and silver
And a fine young gentleman".*

We could make epics with our coloured chalks
traced in simple rainbows on the road,
or hunt the dreaded crawfish in the weeds
sunk in galleons of glass and rust,
or make unknown incursions on a walk
killing tribes of ragwort that were yellow-browed:
we were such golden children, never to be dust
singing in the street alive and loud:

*"There's a lady from the mountains
Who she is I cannot tell,
All she wants in gold and silver
And a fine young gentleman".*

Michael Hartnett 1941 - 1999

