

Draft 53: Eclogue

1. "The children of your children
will gather up these pears"

Bitty pears petites poires.
But what about beginnings,
girl, where
knots of knotted self
entangle greeny
labyrinths?

Flicker
word
here
liking butter (cups)
streaks of pee-pee dandelion
on the arms
"Paint you"
Such a present participle
such turbulence
along the mixèd weave of grass.

Green ribbon
green light
pulse of the green Granny apple
rusty bite, little mite,
outside green leather
inside green linen
velvet bosky dress-up
into the basket with you.

2. Crystal tree in wine
edged by light
who gave the dog
dying
under the hedge
in a foreign land
WATER
water from your little bottle
and your little hand,
two bowls of just-milked milk.

3. “a little girl in the phallic phase”
 En garde!
 Flex those extra l’s, those l’s and elle’s
 of electricity
 wielding foil, mask, and vest.
 Impossible to argue against the detail.
 And lunge!

Since these were actual typos
 in Freud’s essay on female sexuality
 the resistance to his theory
 from the wounded acolyte
 or witty typesetter
 all this excess and wrongness
 thinking about gender
 is (finally, so to speak) very funny.
 Though, as Woolf said, remember
 the gender cockadoodledum
 that once brought tears to their eyes.

4. Watermelon
 mottled black-brown seeds to spit
 pink baby juice
 of “acqua melone”
 please yourself
 “no” rarely stops you
 the accidents buoyant
 neither does “nix.”

Make One poem easy?
 This one could
 either be easiest
 or hardest
 given complicated
 differential love
 and hypnogogic
 sliding words.

Sprinkles in hand,
 frosting to squeeze,
 electric mix, you make
 your own birthday cake.

5. I saw a salamander poop! quietly and satisfied
 a little twist up of its delicate tail and one leg.
 Something I’d never caught before
 in Virgilian discussions of singing and song.
 Notational the rain that falls
 bright silver drops

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because a little cloud was prised and primed
with sweetness
and fierce streaky brightness.

Some drew ballerinas, twinkly ladies,
others drew missiles and fighter bombers,
you used to draw apples
bright red apples round and snug
within a brighter tree.

I've heard of a place where they offer bread
to the apple tree, carrying loaves out
in procession to hang up in the leaves.
Giving something back.
Thank you, trees.

6. First born bugs of a temperate spring
pin-small with pointed tails
have fallen over, twisting their grey wing-veils, an
impossible struggle to turn
over, get up, go
where they list fly, or find
out what the world enormous
is, even within the tiny spot-
shine of this limit, life-span.
They struggle
to balance themselves
in it.

The flowering pear's a bit too shaded where we put it
yet finding its way between an old oak
and a grand grey beech, arking out
already an allegory—
like little mouse space under the cow arch
cuckoo clocking in the bosco, counting mournfully.

The whirlwind is lonely. "She wants her mommy."

7. Special cup, special bowl
not vulnerable to colds
but to bad social policies
a way of reflecting.
The hand goes out
for every texture
touching walls
stroking stone
fingering fur
flicking stucco
in order to find out how it all feels.
By 5 had been in 22 states

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whittling sticks and running
and at least 7 countries
maybe more—
global girl
living amid selfishness
and post-cold war comforts
we fail the children of our species.

Ours have 30 kinds of toothpaste
others their skin, their eyes are cracked
they learn to cry
in silence.

8. Zero is a dead one
two will equal one plus nought
Inside one is two,
too. Inside one was
nothing more.
“Where is she hiding?
O where is she
hiding?”

9. Bird is pecking seed worm bark
leaf is blown repeatedly against the branch

and then children's noise
giggles and bright cries
puncture the shaky mother
a holstein floating in a moony sky.

Mothering
a pulsing passage of light
across a light-sensitive surface
inside the black cup of night
inside the sweetish brackish day
rushing, but to no end
infrared, infrablue
infra true.

10. Puella
endowed with the gesture
punctuate virgule:
vir-girl.
inside the terrible skin of
our own time.
lines up fluffy animals
sets flocks around the bed
to shepherd.
nuzzle amuse-guele
amuse-girl
kissing and kissing

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the silk skin of one's young
and the soft skin of one's old

redbird greybird
through the window
chunky the pink flush underside
like the dawn of a world
without pesticide.

11. She moves the binding thru her fingers
from a dirty "toy koise" blanket
such small stakes within the endless.
Given what's real of the dream
the terrible dream
bad people inside the house,
she has murder on her mind
bloodied raped and strangled
girl a-bled
smallish non-adult
a small girl-mouse
deed and dead.
What can be said?
Nothing can be said.

12. These euphonies that croon us
spoon us, good fortune us
take our children into changelings
replacing them by fleshy pockets
sutured tight to TM Disney,
shod by other children,
captive stitchers making sneakers.

13. Negatives fitted
stereoptic no, no, no
infinitely suggestive on the field you run
trying boxed erasures, code words
bid goodbye to anything, and leave,
1984 will one day look so odd
Shepherds drift in and out;
songs are heard and lost

Like a check-off list
a trunk for camp, no hugs,
sign up for
materialist trademarks
disobedient engorgements
verbal anorexia
bubble-gum rock
and endless school projects
about drugs.

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14. bright gusts dark gusts streak gusts
 and purple line
 of unreadable waste
 in the phases of bitterness
 monosyllabic, semi-courteous—
 o why so angry youngish one
 pulling long lithe
 length of where to go to get
 away, to which I had
 to pull one wobbled bow across the strings
 sounding yes the coruscating tremble of
 unpersuasive melody of stay.

big sagebrush, yeah
 mule's ears, yeah

forgive.

15. The butterflies of morning are not
 the butterflies of afternoon.

The butterflies of morning are black, lustrous,
 with white marks round their wing, White Admirals
 black, blue-brown, with brushstrokes white:
 “the adults are greatly attracted”
 to blossoms of bramble
 or Marbled white like
 checkered black writing on a page.

The butterflies later are nymphies, orange
 with dusky mottled spots and squiggled confusion.
 Silver-washed Fritillaries—
 sometimes backed
 by “extensive silvery-golden suffusion.”

16. Of joy, always joy
 of disturbed, always disturbed
 and of can't find, cover-laden paths
 and of no justice, and of Koré

as Koré

in an English movie, adolescence spongy on greensward

in Etruscan fresco, light gauze over strong thighs

as Persipnei the locus and passion of liminal leaping

proserpine porcupine
 round spiny needles shoot out.
 The dignity of the Koré, deep smile inside ironies,
 wrapped in crimson.

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17. I wanted my poetry to be simple
apple simple; I wanted to state
flat things straight,
which you won't believe.

Indeed, "Shepherd's devise
she hateth as the snake"
which remindeth me of your thinking
on the poem,

as well as on the snake:
"I'm so not running down that road again!"

Yet an apple is complex.
For round one tree there are a dozen more
Their names are Lightning Rod, Strawberry, Axis,
and Levels of Departure. Are Granny, Fiji.
Their names are StoneWood
Unico
Coolness,
Doctor of Germantown,
and Targa Card.
And any poem is only as simple as these.
Which means,
bluntly, it's not.

18. So therefore, I've got riddles:
Where is the place from which one sees
the tiniest inch or itch of sky?
Where is the field
whose flowers folded letters inside,
regal messages?
These answers might be
"at the bottom of a well"
and "crocus saffron mark."
or "buddilea O of red"
that butterflies aim into with their snouts
drinking. Nectar as regal in its uses
as any alphabet, to help
brush powdery colors through the world.

Say the answer's "poem" to both riddles.
Can this trailing talus spell
tell anything, given
its detritus and vertigo in lines,
its uneven velocity of signs?
Where is recto, maybe easy to tell?
Where is the verso, toll of the turn re-rounded?

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What sits under or beside the verse
with lucid foreknowledge of effective tasks?
Who speaks for the feather door?
Are the riddles now solved,
or more confounded?

19. Thyrsis versus
(verse, you'd say)
Corydon, a sporting event in song.
And Thyrsis talks about the ugly more:
garden uneven, dead things, scruff,
the sooty, the cold, the herb sour
the ginestra scratchy, prickly stuff
not praising the grass for softness,
but says straight that it's hay hard
filled with ants and wrack
undoing human work,
biting spiders from cottony egg sacs
needling casings of some nasty thistle,
fake oat, false strawberry, cheats,
nothing of clear and limpid sweets.
Thyrsis sings it dry: dry land, dry brush,
thorns on sweet unreachable berries of *more*
brilliant fig tree covered with brambles
invasion of spoilers,
wolvish allusions to danger,
and itchy conditions.

Thyrsis is the realist
not to decorate his age
but to resist a certain kind of
pretty poetry picture.
It's said he tried too hard.
Therefore Thyrsis loses.
The victor:
flopsie mopsus Corydon.

But still there are those
who watch the fruiting pear
on the border,
and early into ripeness
sneak through their
neighbor's property
secretly at dawn to strip the tree
and leave no piece of fruit for her.
Can poetry not speak of that?
Wrongs of the world, ruthlessness,
servitudes and injustices?

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But why only of that;
can one not hope
for more than what is here?
So poetry is mesh and weave
of C & T, the contenders;
their flocks merge in one shop
("greges Corydon et Thyrsis in unum"
maybe "drove their flocks together"
or perhaps the shepherds
together were tending their flocks
before contending).

I mean,
inside the poet C & T debate,
and never stop.

20. On the edge of the edge.
Pilgrim how and what I be
I had been on a long brooding journey with seedlings
and then there was you,
mid-line as if we were both dreaming
a dream of fairy-tale sufficiency and pleasure,
the coat of the lamb gone red
its scarlet wool, already dyed a-leap
amid rainbows of sheep,
colored especially violet and saffron
never before seen, except here in the poem.
And in the fallow that really is
soft shoots hard shoots browse and bristle
milky-fine hair seedy clouds
sail out free from extra-purple thistle.

21. Five varieties of buzzing—
the beige the brown the black the gold the sphinx
choirs of lavender paint sticks to orchestrate
hear the waving hum of work
the back and forth of shade and light.
Four stories on a quartered screen
short oaks and small foxes
eclogues are about
political resentment in
the shadow
of power;
they are taking
my little plot of green.

Who works for whom,
sharecropping or freehold,
what kind of work

does “the mother,”
and does poetry
save the land?

Lycidas says he
“was told” it did—
conservancy
from these hills
to over there, that line of trees
the ladder of relationships
tending a little plot
when really everything must change
but still must tend it right and well,
or not.

The questions remain
and remain riddles.
What does this do?
If anything.
Without a solution.
The speaking of what is?
of what you hope may be?
Being happy in the world
and loving rivers
ivy green and overmuch
bright as healthy water
weaving through the laurel
unsorted wildness of hope
launched in the hopeless world as such.
Incipe, parva puella.

To Koré Simone DuPlessis
July-August 2001

Notes to Draft 53: Eclogue. I used David Ferry, trans. *The Eclogues of Virgil*, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999; C. Day Lewis, trans., *The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil*. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1964. Section 1. “the children of your children will gather up these pears,” Virgil, Eclogue IX (David Ferry translation, modified slightly, 75). Section 2. two bowls of just-milked milk, modifying Eclogue V. Section 3. The typographical errors “the little girl” reproaches that the mother gave her no penis (p. 332) and “the phallic phase,” p. 335 of *Freud on Women: A Reader*, ed. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. NY: W. W. Norton, 1990. Section 5 “vulnerable to colds and bad social policies” was said by Michael Berubé in a lecture, referring to one of his children; “cold war comforts” was said by Jonathan Arac in a lecture. Section 13: “Shepherds drift in and out; songs are heard and lost” said by Dick Newton, lecture, February 1984. Section 15, “the adults are greatly attracted” to blossoms of bramble referring to Limenitis camilla or White Admiral. Remarks about the “Silver-washed Fritillary” occur as well. Tom Tolman, *Collins Field Guide Butterflies of Britain and Europe*, Harper Collins, 1997, 146 and 155. Section 16: Etruscan frescoes in Tarquinia. Section 17. “Shepherds devise she hateth as the snake/ And laughs the songs, that Colin Clout doth make,” Edmund Spenser, Eclogue 1: January, *Shepherd’s Calendar*. Names of apple trees from the Medieval Garden of the University of Perugia, Department of Botany, the nearest supermarket, and local Pennsylvania farms. Section 18. Virgil’s unsolved riddles, Eclogue III. Section 19, Thyrsis v. Corydon, Eclogue VII. Actually “fake oat” and the thistle are mentioned by Mospus in Eclogue V in the context of the land’s mourning for the dead Daphnis. Rendering the line “greges Corydon et Thyrsis in unum” C. Day Lewis translated “drove their flocks together,” 51, and David Ferry translated “Corydon/ And Thyrsis, both nearby, were tending their flocks...,” 53. Also section 19. “Wrongs of the world, ruthlessness, servitudes and injustices” modified from Elio Vittorini, *Conversations in Sicily*, trans. Alane Salierno Mason, New York: New Directions, 2000, 122. Section 20. Already dyed sheep, Eclogue VI. Section 21. Lycidas says he “was told” poetry saved the land, Eclogue IX (David Ferry translation, 71). Ivy green and laurel, Eclogue VIII. What an eclogue might be is discussed in Eclogue VI. Final line modified from the famous penultimate line of Eclogue IV, “incipe, parve puer,” “Begin, dear babe” (C. Day Lewis translation, 35).