

George Venn

The World According to Apples

Two thousand green apples hang on the tree,
enough to break its branches down.
I thin a thousand one May afternoon
to save the tree and bring my harvest home.

June nights, silent gray moths mate
in the limbs, then one female flutters
blossom to blossom in the dark, lays
her tiny eggs in nearly every fruit.

One July afternoon, huge anvil clouds
arise, while hailstones thunder down,
shredding leaves, bruising half the fruit,
bringing down what can't hold on.

August days, the red squirrels walk
the tightrope telephone lines, scamper
through the tree, nibble, taste the green
skins, let fall the sour on their tongues.

September and color coming on, blue
jay, starling, flicker, magpie fill the red
fruit with birdpecks everywhere—
a free feast they keep up for weeks.

October. Windfalls red in the dying grass.
I leave them there for the doe and her
twin fawns sneaking down the mountain
every night, eating every apple up.

Today, I pick the remnant fruit, cut out
bruises, birdpecks, worms, cook one batch
of butter, make one pie to eat, one poem
to make it sweet—à la mode.

My harvest lost, the tree, at least, is whole.
One more year, I gave my life away to hunger.
All winter I will see these apples I let go
fly and feed and pray around me in the snow.

