

## Extracts from *Apple Eye Feat* by Philip Ruthen

The State gave the children's special minPencho to the municipal taxi company  
(Bulgaria 2005 ± UK 2015)

She knows it is a futile call.  
Her child sways gently  
Between four walls  
The phone is answered, the conversation  
Short, the operator  
Slams the hand-piece down, immediately picks up  
For the easier and lucrative —  
Not the family's one free chance that month for respite —  
Directs the people-carrier to collect the EU delegation wanting to survey  
How disabled childhoods' miss the point, become too visible  
In doorways of Apart-hotels where bottles slewing addicts' fumes  
Indicate that where there is a life there is a way  
To separate. When born, her child was dropped by medics' open hands,  
A price too high to pay. She begs her neighbour one more time  
To baby-sit and catch her infant's folding head  
While she goes out to queue for bread,  
The neighbour's 'yes' is fortunate,  
And loathsome.

The UK's circumstances now transcribed  
And officially reported  
Lie on a desk  
In Strasburg.

She did not return with food;  
Her child joins empty bottles by the roadside.

If there is to be a next time  
She will make sure there is  
More money on the table.

## Guard

*for Maggie and Rob*

Lift, and scatter sandgrains.

I retaliate

you kiss my chest  
while corner right-eyed watch

your son  
lounges half transparent

in the new-bought palm-check  
dinghy, lower deck more wild blue

than the universe's floor  
at rest on Tolon's water skein.

We decide that if we push  
landfall will be Crete

soft winds contest,  
let him drift

and trail a hand, I catch you  
in your mind's eye sailing; unsure

we spin

the lick

from salt-tongue fingers  
sheds the bay.

## Tour de grace

i. I am hollows, rugged  
affinity, Pelops

ii. Outlined pure colour  
tone of your eyes  
                                  I wake then  
abandon my thoughts  
this scored mind  
lies with you, highwire of balance

iii. Island verge  
the rock leans on a spar  
above concentration  
inside the wind's blur  
of deception solid  
blatant sea rock  
rises unfixd if you stare  
your soul lent  
to unweight Poseidon  
the high seas'  
standpoint  
has seen you before, precept  
on the clouds'  
summer possible —  
up, and opening the Fulcrum-god's flare  
the Sun makes its own sky  
prizes the hill  
fists day in a ball  
of red  
that carries longer  
description

          it knows, even a mist won't lift mountains,  
the sea has its mass;  
in a Mother's thoughts that separate  
the numbers — it can

iv. At birth

each child shall have a tree planted  
—give your last water to the tree?  
It will remember

v. In soil sought by creation her lullaby

one day you are moisture

become the eye of quartz  
ingrained in the gaudy head-dress  
of a lizard

roots deepen to you, swept from the whispered spray  
of the Meltemi's tail  
dampness in dust following  
and falling on another world —  
Andromeda?  
Somewhere and further than imagined by God  
water from a rusted fuel can  
discarded spatula, lawn hose  
or borehole

elevated to silence

an outcrop on a blanket of foam  
above storm-drain force that topples undersea deities,  
rocks are momentarily above air across the bay and it's the season's  
tonal blues  
that have realised earth was before un-found

respite

the quayside crane  
loads every distant-heard trade

tour — the page shows tourist;  
the law of historical memory  
on the floor of a crate  
lifted to hang over the ship's hold,

the buried are the land of grace  
for grace —  
be still. To water three seeds  
scarce-doused from a bottle.  
Let them pass  
to find more.

vi. This guidebook, a present  
opened before closed  
without a view until  
there is another now  
telling, no name  
on the retina for seven billion colours detected  
all may be blue,  
remembered, invented hills

let the outline last.  
The island rides

soft on the fulcrum  
given watch for Poseidon's cloud-boom

leaves Pelops to brief-dream that  
all isn't one.

We will be back to swim.

## Apple Eye Feat

1.

Vault the gates?  
There is an orchard  
never far away

this cold dream  
climbed over through  
a child

now become a parent  
watching my own  
apple eye feat play

stately home  
boarding school  
two decades apart  
my re-calling wasn't home  
not meant to keep me  
citylights  
carried  
over  
unblinking  
delivered  
asking to be fetched  
if claimed.

2.

Inside out  
was to be  
simplistic as shopping

turn over  
by the freezer cabinets my apple eye feat plays  
and is missed  
the chilled call weighted for exclaim,  
re-opening to become — without gone.

Trust the other-wise  
as well as memory

I gave an apple to put in her  
pocket          save for later

gone                  she is  
   accidentally

misaid

past — before — me  
not precise months when  
egg carefully taken to save  
part exit  
keep later.

3.

How long is memory  
when it searches,  
where does it go  
to look for the priceless?

   exile  
in  
high street  
I

   search — pace — metre — space  
see you          as I'm                  standing there  
by coldtouch iron gates

long walk

the long driveway —  
now a shorter walk from Charing Cross  
miss selfridge  
filofax  
school of language  
next

re-trace

re-order

what were they thinking of  
childhoods; missed.

Precise  
through Covent Garden

measure for metre

poised paced never far an orchard  
miss selfridge  
filofax  
school of language  
next.

4.

Ever — past  
not-always streets  
paved with something with the  
over-delicate bold stomping foot notes  
can't be far, home, how far was the city into country drives  
to here,  
place, reserved;  
not long before doubt, a matter of days  
and into the pockets an egg and an apple  
know the door  
walking out  
after shock  
trees held still in the breeze  
through gates  
stuck at first  
push  
rust falls to ground  
walking  
behind  
red worked walls —  
fall away the boarding — they said a school  
held still  
left or right  
not in-

different  
small change  
enough  
racing — walk — wave  
not enough

light sped past  
never enough  
breath held still  
not enough  
stop

enough  
it's further  
not simpler

closer

was harder

run away  
laughter  
run away  
small

brought back

by teacher  
came back tall  
in a car  
the man who turned down pleading  
said to the city — enough;  
was a kind man  
I dropped the apple in his car  
maybe he has it at present —

— like I have you, apple eye feat —

enough and he took me to the police station  
where I had tea  
when I was s'posed to be in London  
and we waited

until I couldn't believe the smiles  
when I was hungry in that cell.  
Is this a place where people wait  
to look for where they're going?  
There's only a closed window.

The teacher  
of the big house  
by the quiet trees  
said he felt the same as if each time  
you know where you're going  
and have frozen  
because if

closer's harder

further's  
simpler

and I'm taller

and that's enough.

5.

My taught-well

natural narrator

climb into later together.

Here,  
apple eye feat.

Her bond holds.

Re-vive

past stipplefrost panes,  
glass stride through sliding doors, pressface dent surfaces  
— signs to reverse —

                  sparks to the temple  
bar — tone  
clamps to the chest.  
Ambulant; don't turn away when there's hope —

it is amalgam  
she'll make a film, and we'll applaud  
the gentleness of toy soldiers:

sink, Nietzsche.

Her coiffure glides from office to bus stop  
at first you see no more than this  
it must be fashion and you know the clues are French  
at once the State employs her  
while each night her white coat of forensic deliberation is hung  
by the squat's lychee-crate table the quick-change  
takes her to Place d'Italie to throw not the first  
or second Molotov in defence of something-true;  
abroad, here, she leans a little awkwardly  
as if she knows she does so in the ground floor bay  
of a public red bus    her laughter is  
nearly genuine    un-practiced

float

is it cruel to bask?  
Resist being pulled down  
cut open — an empty room billowing curtains  
somehow expected in grief?

Go back, to what isn't seen  
myth in psychology  
on a mattress to rest wounds,  
soak blood — and decades decades will pass  
— is there a limit to blood —  
build the sea  
to occupy, draw, prepare — build the sea

play now,  
forget Superman

faith raise a life beyond self —  
build the sea

so I can die together  
next-to with no new name.