

## Weaving thoughts

I like to tell myself I got as close to thinking like a sheep when I became obsessed by apples, but I don't know if that is true. For weeks I walked with them and no walk was the same. It was the best part of the day, the two best parts of the day, the hours after sunrise and the hours before sunset. I never knew what would happen, where we would go. They didn't know either, but they were in charge, as long as they didn't try to go where they weren't allowed to go, which weren't many places. I counted them now and then, to make sure they were all there, 19 black and 21 white sheep, but they themselves didn't perceive each other as coloured differently. The lambs randomly approached ewes of any colour and appearance until they found the proper scent. I sometimes tried to bleat like them if I wanted their attention and it sometimes worked, but just as often they ignored me. Now and then I wondered what they were thinking, but the only moment I had the feeling I knew was just after I let them out and they started running. "Apples!" While I observed them eating, listened to them chewing, I ate an apple myself. Afterwards, in the wide open fields, I collected their favourite plants of the moment. While they were grazing, I was picking: wild plants, tree leaves, grass, the same things they were eating. Apples were their favourites though and wherever we went, there was always an apple tree close by. At home, a yellow house we kept warm with a wood fire, I turned everything into ink: different kinds of green material, plums, the charcoal from our stove, giving me a whole range of colours.

The best teachers don't tell you what to do. They make you wonder, question yourself and your actions, they don't give you the answers, they just show you a way to move through life. Literally, in this case.

Does spinning thread out of wool from sheep you herded bring you closer to them because your fingers sense something about the specific sheep the wool is from, or does it —even when it is necessary and first of all for their own benefit to shear them— widen the gap because you are turning something that was originally, before they were domesticated, meant to keep them warm and protected only, into a human product? I didn't know what was the right answer, I just knew it was another way to be in the moment, like walking with them was. When I was spinning wool, my mind stopped spinning. I spun for hours at length and even considered spinning a thread as long as the distance between the sheep's grazing grounds and the gallery where the artist-shepherds would present their work, until I realised spinning an 18 kilometre thread would take forever.

Apples were everywhere, it wasn't just the sheep eating them every day. I made apple sauce, apple compote, I dried apple slices and since there was no oven I could only dream of apple pies. When visiting local events, there were baskets of apples to welcome people. The trees around the house carried big yellow apples and smaller pink ones, sturdy green and cute little red crab apples for which the sheep broke through the fence one afternoon because they were irresistible, perfectly sheep bite-sized. Sour apples and deliciously sweet apples, most of them not perfect enough to be able to make it into a supermarket, but even the ones that didn't taste great had the potential to turn into a whole new tree. Sometimes when I thought I was drawing an apple, it turned out to look more like a planet.

If I didn't hide the balls of thread I had spun, the little cat that had entered the house as a wild creature a week after I arrived, stole them and unspun them under my bed. I was delighted the first time I found the result of our collective actions. In my mother tongue, the purring sound of a cat is called spinning because it sounds like a spinning wheel. She sat on my shoulder whenever I was typing on my Apple computer, which wasn't very often because I preferred the apple world I was sharing with the sheep.

My apples are for human consumption only. When you look at them, remember that they contain what the sheep ate and what remained of the wood that kept me and everybody else in the house —my fellow shepherd, our host and our guests— warm. Feast on them with your eyes. They are not perfect but they are not supposed to be, they are the complete harvest —some unripe, some rotten— of the last two days I was in Kabeliai. I didn't draw them to resemble apples but "to accompany something invisible to its incalculable destination", as John Berger wrote so beautifully about the act of making something visible through drawing. I don't know what they are, only that they are just as much sheep and shepherd as they are apple.