

Salad and Simile: A Defense of Cultivation ·  
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Before you, spinach green as lucre.  
You dream of opportunity—perhaps a lucky letter.

But hearts of iceberg lettuce yellow  
like junk mail. Disappointment

in early June, a season  
of legumes, new roots and leaves.

Time will pass: the fern of the asparagus  
turn to feathers, as for sweeping woe like dust

that settles, needing re-arrangement.  
Your mind has wandered from the bowl

like a woodchuck from his burrow  
to devour odd weeds. Sitting, my Candide,

conning greens like tea-dregs,  
you conjure bleak perspectives. But why not

a possible beneficence? You are what you eat:  
conversely, though, what you eat is you—

the pear tomato centers in the dish  
not like a jaundiced hope but like the sun

you wished for months ago when deep ice sealed  
the ever-anxious tubers (parsnip, rutabaga, turnip)

and the cover crop of vetch. “Good salads may be prologues  
to bad suppers”: so a proverb has it. Thus your salad

was a simile before it grew. Why not toss it?  
Assume these bitter herbs and shoots you chew

augur opportunity, a break. Fame. Romance. Money.  
Begin again. Your fiddle-faddle with a wooden fork,

like a wizard's gig, may turn up something to your taste.  
Let it be fresh and crisp, the meaning you construe.