

Wassailing the Trees

2016

Old Frog Pond Farm

In Praise of Trees

Clay-colored tines catch the reverberations of the wind,
the sissiling of needle and leaf.

Where else but in the orchard do the branches
draw down the skies, making for us
a space between, sheltered and close, wide
aisles to stroll down, reason to look up, to stretch,
to reach for fruit that dangles from the highest limb?

We thank the trees.

We thank the blessed soils from which they've sprung,
the sun that stirred their xylem and phloem,
the rain that sopped into root, and seeped into flesh,
and washed the taut and blemished skin,
the arc of nature that gives everything to the tree
which then gives everything to us:

food, shelter, the air we breathe. Purpose.

A heavy trill, tinkling bell, pealing cry,
the barely spoken bluebird's chur—
these winged sprites watch over the trees,
set among them in all weathers,
nesting, gleaning, roosting, teaching
how to be at the center. We are the center.
How can we do anything else but raise our glass?

Susan Edwards Richmond

Yuletide

All avid readers
who love an old tale:
celebrate with buttered rum
or tankards of ale

toast with spiced cider
wassailing the trees,
the fairies, the nature sprites,
for all of these

bring us good fortune,
so entice the sprites to play
spread holly and ivy
for the solstice day

hail the horned hunter
and the maiden/mother/crone
who on solstice night bring
rebirth of the sun

build bonfires, flame candles
to welcome back the light
bring oranges, like sunshine
after long wait

feed the bulls mistletoe,
the divine seed
light the great Yule log
from last year's wood

Deborah Melone

apples my people

apples my people on me apple tree
all from last fall are still hanging on me
ancient friends babies remain with me now
slowing my waving and bowing my bough
older I get more I creak as I sway
holding your hands as you all stem strong stay

apple work workaday tarts we put in
sugary dough and taste tart apple skin
some cooked til soft are then mashed into sauce some
are layered in strudel and baked and taste awesome
years after tins are scrubbed clean of the pie
I taste it I smell it hello mom goodbye

never a fruit or a tree has had more
lovely love lore and good strong metaphor

Franny Osman

Apple Cuttings for Wassail

A collage of beautiful lines from Roethke, Hardy, Frost, Berry, and Collins

It was beginning winter, an in-between time
The first icy snow fell like a flock of angry sparrows
Dead leaves blew into my room/and alighted upon my bed
And a tree declared to the gloom/its sorrow that they were shed
Essence of winter sleep is on the night ...
And I am overtired of the great harvest I once desired
One without looks in tonight
Through the curtain-chink from the sheet of glistening white

So the spirit tries for another life
Another way and place in which to continue
Scent of apples to come animate the senses
I hear my song at last, and I sing it.
And now the remnant groves grow bright with praise
They light around me like an old man's days.
So forgive me if I lower my head and listen...
Frog at the edge of a pond—
And my thoughts fly off to a province
Composed of one enormous sky
And about a million empty branches

Assembled by

William Lenderking.

In the Orchard

Laughing with him,
I scramble over the stone wall,
playful among low branches,
eating red skinned apples,
crisp fruit that is wedding dress white.
The bag tips over, leaving many behind.
Walking in line through the gate
I watch bees hum and hover
over the sweet scent
of apples on the ground.
I tire as I climb
the hill of trees,
pausing to marvel at apples
grown from blossoms,
eager for peeled slices and homemade pie.
And I linger, sipping hot cider.
I wait in the car for him,
watching as he walks
to the nearest tree
and picks two. He turns and lurches
over the uneven ground, while
between us, young people
wander everywhere.
I close my eyes
and think of apple blossoms
glowing in the sun

Paula Goodwin

Through the hushed reverence
to this naked winter light
stream our voices lush with longing
we are the lovers of the night
We see a land drenched in color;
Her vintage juicy, tart and sweet,
then falls her pomaceous treasure
in great bushels round our feet!

Hail Aphrodite! Invite the sun
to mingle with each leaf and limb.
We beseech you rain to saturate
the bent and the straight stem!
This is the garden of Hesperides
whose fruit to fungus is forbidden.
Pests, you may not touch these trees!
Apple Queen Shekinah lies hidden
and will pluck you out with ease.

We praise the gifts of her touch
that knows from darkness fruitful
comes the harvesting of much.
Our potency now begs favor
of the heaving early frosts:

“Be gentle on these priceless flowers
Else all her hours of loves labor
shall be lost!”

Linda Fialkoff

A Seasonal Round for the Apple Trees

Hail

Bareskinned apple trees

Morning mist

Drapes her veils o'er

Modest maidens'

Arching thin

Limbs

Lift

Caught in dance

Ritual trance

Dosey doe

Across the rows

In stationary paces.

Bent to sunlit angles

The old grandmothers

Nod

Leaning back on

Crooked elbows

Suspended

Arms akimbo

Comatose.

A leader is taken

in measure

Pruning hook

Gloves

Voles

Cold weather

Crow caws

Jays squawk

Flap off.

Winter

Hail Silent
Silver apples trees
Warming trends
Coax chilled buds from
Velveteen pouches
Damp pewter pellets
Stud splitting bark
Fleshy leaves sprout
Unfurling
Fragile blossoms
Clasp
Nuzzling bees
Take to heart all
Possibilities
Probabilities
Sting!
Awaken!

Spring

Hail
Merry apple trees
Little colony
Rooted in stone
Survivors of
Wild winds in your branches
Lightening
Thunderstorms
Or no rain at all
Cities of creatures throng
About your knees
Myriad species
Circle for meals
Dig crawl fly
Companion plants mystify

Scents of mints
Flowering herbals linger
Native invaders
Vagabond healers
Cycles of lives intermingle
In your green shade
An ant balancing
on a slim blade.

Summer

Hail Self-with-help-Realized apple trees
Clone that you may be
Off shoot of a sturdy stock
Beat the drum loudly
For your harvest
Baskets full
Buckets of praise due
Amazing trees these
Goblets that grow
Antidote and tonic
Benefits beyond logic
A draught of your pressed
Essence defeats all doubt
You are the sweetest trees,
Dear Apple
In all your russet reddened
Rosy yellows
Golden green
Varieties.

Fall

Thank you Apple Trees,
Lynn Horsky

Grammy Lists the Apples

Like water catching then sliding
over rocks in a brook, her laugh—
but her words, which were the point,
have slid away: the list of apples
her father grew in their orchard
high on the shoulder of Mount Blue.

Winesap? Northern Spy, Pippins,
maybe Rhode Island Greening—
starting tart but aging sweet,
to be cellared through March and eaten
in April or May, as a new crop
broke into blossom. Now, years

and more later, apple tune
without words. That day on our way home
Sarah, just five, asked how it feels
to die. And we've heard Grammy since
only in memory: those dark,
sharp seeds laughing in the flesh of loss.

Polly Brown

Apple Orchard

trees in winter still
yield seeds and shelter branches
still hold light and wind

Judith Schutzman