

## **The Tree That Was and Is and Yet May Be**

Fifty-two years ago I planted a chestnut crab apple tree outside our kitchen window. It was one of a big collection of trees and shrubs I planted in the naked yard of our brand new house. Many of those early plantings, my poplars, my plumb trees a jack pine and a hybrid Siberian elm have gone bye bye, but our window tree has stayed in the spotlight offering each trip to the kitchen sink a free ticket to its daily show.

April brings blossoms and many returning birds, happy to pluck up my bird seed, and some, like robins, chipping sparrows and hummingbirds even build their nests in that fragrant tree, giving us the enjoyment of seeing nestlings brought up by amazingly efficient, faithful and protective adults.

In mid to late July the apples are perfect for eating if gotten to before the worms begin to show up. Of course late summer brings on the hornets and raiding squirrels who lurk among the reddening leaves.

Truly, having a window tree with all its changing seasons and moods creates a link to one of the greatest sources of inspiration God ever created, and the tree is a central player in the greatest story ever told. It is also a stage to countless poems, songs and stories. Of course, wood is used for everything from cooking fires to grand pianos. Columns are made by dudes like me, “but only God could make a tree.”

Let’s just discuss here what a tree has offered in the realm of poetry. Often when I’ve looked out at that apple tree, Robert Frost’s timeless poem, “Tree at My Window,” came to mind. Let me just replant it here for convenience, as fruit for arboreal ideas:

“Tree at my window, window tree/  
My sash is lowered when night comes  
on,/ But let there never be curtain drawn/  
Between you and me.// Vague dream

head lifted out of the ground,/ And thing most defuse to cloud,/ Not all your light  
tongues talking aloud/ Could be profound.// But tree I have seen you taken and  
tossed,/ And if you have seen me when I slept,/ You have seen me when I was  
taken and swept/ And all but lost.” //That day she put our heads together, Fate had  
her imagination about her,/Your head so much concerned with outer,/ Mine with  
inner weather.”

America has entered a season of late, where many of us have been “taken  
and tossed,” trying to sleep with so many gales of national confusion and storms  
of strife rattling our window panes. Too many of the old verities and traditions are  
being uprooted daily, and now with Thanksgiving only three weeks away, many,  
with shrinking pay checks and vaulting daily expenses think they have little to be  
thankful for. Worse than that, the land from which our faith was born, Israel, is  
under attack, encompassed by many enemies, far too many right here in the once  
blessed USA with whom she has a covenant of peace.

Perhaps, in keeping with all this, I have just had our window tree pruned  
back to look more like a saguaro cactus than its old self. But I had each of its four  
uplifted arms leveled flat by the artist at Carr’s tree service so I can put bird  
feeders on them and hang more from them. I had to do it because our friendly  
apple tree had turned hostile, literally attacking our house with some branches  
even crawling up the roof causing ice dams. And its fruit has never been so wormy  
nor the wasps it attracts so ornery.

Lit students might see that this is unnatural, like the ominous events:  
eclipses, earth quakes and tempests, that preceded the murder of Julius Caesar.  
Tragically, many younger Americans have turned to drugs rioting, weird make up  
and “diffused attire.” Can we blame them?“Surely some revelation is at hand.”  
Could it be “the second coming is at hand,”as W. B. Yeats once thought?

Pastor Joseph Prince of Singapore's New Creation Church thinks the rapture, the catching away of the righteous to save them from the coming "great tribulation," could happen at any time. I would hope not: too many fine young people have dreams they would like to follow, but certainly we're living in a time when earnest prayer and intercession truly seem to be in order.

As for me, I still read Don Kinzler's column on gardening every Sunday for help planting next year's flowers and veggies. Why? "You gotta have hope." By the way, the small mouth bass and walleyes are biting well, as they always are just before ice-up. I've even got a notion to plant another apple tree; in 5 years they should be ripe and ready for harvest. I know I am. The worst thing we can do is talk fear, flood, drought, and famine. That might be just the thing that would bring those curses on, and "I've got promises to keep."

Gene Pinkney/ 23-11-05- for The Daily News