

Applesauce

Madeline Silverman

The ancient dignified apple tree
that stands
as the proud guardian
of my home
didn't bear fruit this year
and even though we all knew this was to be expected,
it still shook us to our roots.
The tradition that we love must
hibernate until next fall.

Last year,
after the dirty boots and hands--
soiled from
stacking wood into neat rows
and waking potatoes from their deep slumber--
had been washed,
we would seek refuge
in the fact that
as soon as we tramped in the door,
the roaming scent of apples and cinnamon
and my mother's love
would sweep us up
and we would be nourished.

Sometimes
she and I
would peer into
steaming pots of pink velvet

and we would
stir and adjust.
We wouldn't even have to
talk to understand the thread that bound us tight.
And although I griped and moaned
about the time wasted
picking and
scrubbing
and slicing
every
weekend,
there is something unmistakably absent
amongst the smell of crisp air,
sharp like a pleat,
and the tangy smell of sweat
after the chores.
There will be no applesauce this year.

That tree,
that graceful, venerable tree,
was just too tired.

We'll carry our
tradition and hope
into next year.