

1990

Penn's Orchard

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Recommended Citation

Rosen, Michael J.. "Penn's Orchard." *The Iowa Review* 20.2 (1990): 122-123. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3896>

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Penn's Orchard · *Michael J. Rosen*

Every now and then
(those "nows" so bent on looking back at "then")
Penn wonders of the trees
that he himself had planted in another yard,
another city, another
life where a mother, a father, and three children
stood beside child-
sized peach, apple, and damson plum trees—
offshoots and offspring paired
at birth by the new father, the new gardener.
Penn's family had moved
before the trees bore fruit, before his children
sensed the trees were different,
as they themselves were, from one another,
even before the first
rewards of shade, something to swing from or climb.
"The fruit tree is a wish
a gardener grants another generation,"
Penn reads in *Greener Thoughts*,
how the care and tending never hear
the thanksgiving of those
who come, at last, to inherit the fruits of love.
Under the regular feature
Don't Forget This Week, among the chores
like "snip all winterkill,
pinch back . . . , inspect . . . , and feed . . . ," Penn contributes:
"visit the trees of a house
you haven't seen since you were thirty and married."
Not for thanks or for fruit,
not for a token jar of homemade jam,
no, not even to mention
that Penn had had a firm but generous hand
in their shaping (along with God
and God-knows-who-else in the intervening years),

but only to sit beneath
the laden, intersecting canopies—
that's all he'd like to do,
and to steal something—no more than a glance—
that he might humbly claim
from the wilderness of grown-up things.