Penn's Orchard

Michael J. Rosen

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview
Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3896

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.
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,  
ot 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.