

Stand of Crab Apple

Once, deep in the Rabbi's tomb, the father must have seen the ointments and amulets for the afterlife, though he'd kept none for himself. What had he been thinking?

Through the window, crows pick at something fresh in the snow.

We are as Franklin said, tool makers. Therefore, we are never at peace. We are too busy being tool makers.

And if not that, we are the worksongs in the field where always the cavalry's trampling the grain again and swapping their wretched nags for work horses.

No one's to blame. Without horses there's no army. Yet we peasants are unmoved.

Behind the wooden house on the hillside --- a patch of wild apple trees. We made piles of small, sour apples and threw them one-by-one and then two-by-two into the creek, where they floated, then settled. After a time.

Who is to say what is strange but that winter, after a dawn that broke like shards of ice over the quarter acre, in the next room, the father with the axe, chopping down the bedroom wall, we his teens and tweens crouching low in the corner.

*The world will burst like an intestine in the sun,
The dark turn to granite and the granite to a name . . .* says Denis Johnson, and next time the fire promises Baldwin

When the wind picks up, ripe fruit patters down onto the roof above our heads, and when the thwacking of the axe ceases and the father's Plymouth climbs up and over the gravel road, we drink creek water, taste what we've been given,

and as if reading from a Venusian script, the faces turning, sparkling like emery, before opening to the rind of grace, the tart sweetness enters the marrow of our bones.