

Apple Jack

*Our poets have as yet a better right
to sing of apples than of wine.*

- Thoreau

drink the wine
preach men in black
cleanse thy tongue
of apple jack

but fruit of the vine
is not for me
however divine
that mystery

daylight and clay
odd numbers of ribs
Ishtar and Lilith
Old Nick and his nibs

a voice in a cloud
obey if you can
I was twigged
by a woman and man

that which twines
the apple tree
spoke with my mother
sings in me

navels and nipples
the beast with two backs
that tree the steeple
for this steeplejack

to market to market
poor seedless grape
home again home again
sweet cider to make

the taste of apples
pressed to my mouth
warm as the sun
fallen to earth

the one I called dad
a company man
voted for union
when taken in hand

she said he had
an ess in his spine
a radical twist
a left turn of mind

he knew there was something
he wasn't to know
but savored the pippin
as I'm here to show

the choice was his
he made it alone
life without time
or flesh and bone

under her heel
under her thumb
under her sign
till kingdom come

delving and spanning
nibbles and sips
me and my siblings
from generous hips

raised up in the shade
of an old apple tree
never a doubt
between faithful or free

grapes of wrath
original sin
what's the good
in a game you can't win

no fool mother mine
says Apple Jack
tart in the orchard
sweet in the sack

freckled and dimpled
with dumpling cheeks
apples and nipples
more Irish than Greek

to market to market
skip the permit
home again home again
lickety split