

Black Walnut

Fine wood that darkens toward the core
And complex leaves that come late
But bush dark and high to ease the Utah summer,
The taste of desert in our bones.

Last spring we built a tall old house
On the site of an older fallen homestead
But crowding near the luminescent shade
We cut the roots, dropped huge limbs.

By fall the leaves browned branch by branch
Hung without dropping in crippled grasps.
I watched the dying through the lowering sun and knew
That fifty feet of life was mine

To bless. My hands upon the trunk,
I prayed the Holy Spirit rootward,
Called the sap into Christ's fluorescent love,
And left the tree to winter rest.

Now come the leaves in early May,
Springing in sharp green shoots, the high sun
Proving them against retreating death, and I
Will dress the garden with my life.

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