OAKS AND HORNBEAMS

When Johnnie Appleseed came down this stream
What he sowed here is not the trees
That grow today, bloom, bear fruit, while sprayers gleam
And belch white fog down through the leaves,
That settles on the ground and on the stream,
Where once grew sycamore, walnut, oak, and hornbeam.

His trees are gone, two offspring still remain,
To blossom, bear fruit that's not the same
As those in orchard rows that are still bearing,
For how long, no one knows. Developers are tearing
Pieces out from the plantation's edges
And houses and paved roads arise from ashes.

An unkept grave lies on a further bank;
The marker shattered, reassembled twice
With wire and plates that do not hold. The ice,
And wind have worn it almost blank.

A new stone can be made with the old name;
The sod will heal; a plant will make it look the same;
But wind and ice will wear it out again;
Like orchards or oak trees, last for awhile,
Then fall to progress never to resile
From malls and homes, with signs to point the way;
Front yards and grounds where children play.

But oaks and hornbeams never will come back;
They do not grow in concrete or tarmac.

Julius J. Fishler