

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Joseph A. Cohen

OUR TREE

For decades it bloomed for only one week.
Its pink blossoms always heralding springtime,
Our white house constantly
graced by its dignity.

It shed its blooms
then stood gracefully the remaining
days, weeks, months of the year
Floating branches welcome visitors,
and front our door as if to guard
our home from evil.
Snows tipped its proud boughs,
rain bathed it and winds blow through it
for all the seasons.

Now worn with age,
it sags and droops,
bulges blemish its trunk.
Gone are the gay spirits it spread
to all within sight.
Our weeping cherry tree
sways no more.
In it's place we will plant a gawky upstart,
ignorant of its predecessor.

THE COMING OUT

Over 90 years of age it now signals the end.
Still anchored firmly in my mouth,
it shows signs of aging, weariness and decay.

How many hunks of
meat, fish, celery has it ground down?

How many feasts has
it chewed for the swallowing?

The time has come to end its labor.
Soon, it leaves a comfortable nook
in my gum to dangle in the air.
A long, workman-like life is ending.

It serviced me well but failed to outlive me.

Never, never will
a replacement show such loyalty,
faithfulness, such dogged commitment.

MY CANE

Old men wave wooden canes
at kids who tease them.
Mine serves as my third leg.
It supports my aging frame,
levels my balance as I weave,
bend and step up and down.

While navigating outdoors
I grip a well-worn handle
as the steady tap
heralds my every move.

There are times when I brandish it,
twirl it or lean on it for full support.
Mine is inlaid with a pleasant design
so different from common wood ones.
Worn at the grip and rubber tip
it has creaked for many years.

Despite my gripes, were I to lose it
I would sorely miss it. In fact I
have even grown to like and depend
on my trusty rod.