

Tom Wayman

Pressing

October wasps brush us aside
as we roll apples from boxes and baskets
down the wooden chute of the
home-made fruit mangler—a “scratter”
as it’s known locally—apples bouncing
off the mangler’s rotating cylinder
whose revolving teeth propel some fruit debris
and juice droplets upwards to the wasps’ delight
while most of the apple bits fall
into the barrel below.

When it’s nearly full
of mash, we’ll slide it, escorted by wasps,
closer to the circular wooden press:
staves bound together by iron. A shovelful from the barrel
is lifted onto the press’ perforated liner, then
another. Once enough is added, juice begins to run
through gaps between the staves
onto the edged table the device sits on
as the wasps revel in the fluid, frantic with joy:
the weight of the press’ contents
sufficient to start the flow
even before a lid is centered atop the load of mash,
a heavy iron cross-bar placed on the lid,
and the metal handle threaded onto the vertical center post,
then turned, driving the lid to compact
the mash, juice pouring onto the table
and out a spigot aimed at a pail underneath.
An orchard is being transmuted

before the wasps' eyes into
a vision of endless bounty. Molten now
are the pruning, pollination, fertilizing,
a spray to discourage deer, electric fencing
to repel bears—the force applied by the lid
increasing each time the handle's ends are swapped—
the sun stronger each day, weeks of rain,
nights of stars and the expanding
moon, swirl of warm wind
down the ridge each late afternoon,
the first air with autumn in it,
causing a river of mist to form
above the river of water, more circling
of the handle, the wasps delirious
as the year, the Earth is pressed
and pressed
to a liquid sweetness.