



Spring 1954

Reflections About an American Apple-tree

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Recommended Citation

Samal, Mila (1954) "Reflections About an American Apple-tree," *Calliope*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1/iss1/6>

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Reflections About an American Apple-tree . . .

. . . Mila Samal

It is just about the time to think of some other kind of tree—we are not far from Christmas—but don't blame me if I tell you something about the apple-tree which you can find, when you look carefully, in that sharp curve of the road which comes down from the Administration Building of Western Michigan College. Most of my American friends do not know that tree for the very simple reason that they cannot know it. You see, they all drive cars and in that curve they must watch the road and not my apple-tree. As far as I am concerned, I am a walking, European type of man and therefore have had plenty of time to find out that the mentioned tree exists and also to observe it as much as I wish.

By the way, I said "my apple-tree" but in fact it belongs very probably to the owner of the garden in which it has its roots. So, instead of this name let me call it by the French name *Pommier*. No doubt, it is a better name because it has an apple-formed letter just after the *P*. I don't think you will mind and anyhow—whatever you many think about *Pommier*, I like it. You know, when I came to the United States, from Paris straight to Kalamazoo, Michigan, I felt terribly lost. All was so different. I had scores of papers to fill out in order to be a student at WMC in lieu of that wonderful one-page application for the Strasbourg University last year. I was meeting scores of friendly people who kept on constantly asking me how did I do. The cat on whose tail I stepped nearly excused herself instead of squaling angrily as a European cat would do and the girls smiled differently and had another type of rouge on their lips than I had been used to. Under such circumstances I met, or rather, I saw *Pommier*. And I was happy about it. It was like meeting a countryman.

The first time I saw him, it was in September and he was covered with beautiful leaves among which were disposed and partly hidden the familiar reddish spheres. Then *Pommier* began to do the same thing as his European brethren do. He began to lose his green ornaments and now, in December, he is only a black skeleton—something like a good inverted old-fashioned broom.

At this time I feel uneasy about him. He is still loaded with

beautiful red apples. In this period of the year his likes of the old continent are also in this black inverted broom stage of their cycle but no one has to support such a burden as *Pommier* does. Their fruit was taken away by their proprietors or by some early teen-age youngsters who consider that a nation's air space belongs to everybody and therefore everything in that air space belongs to them if they dare to come to get it. In this rich America *Pommier* has to go on carrying his burden and as he grows more and more weary he loses his apples one by one . . .

Some of the apples fall down on the road in that dangerous curve where no driver can look at the scenery. When I pass by I have to overcome two contradictory drives: both of them are typically European. One, which had been molded back in the hungry war times, is to pick up an apple. The other, and I daresay the most powerful drive is to kick it off as I used to do when I played the left wing in our soccer team. You see, the apples are round, and round is the European soccer ball. The Americans have oval balls; they don't kick off the apples in the curve of the road near the Administration Building of the Western Michigan College; there should be at least a pear-tree for them.

At this place I interrupted my writing and went out to see *Pommier* because a terrible suspicion came to my mind. And I was right. When I picked up some of his apples lying in the mud, I noticed that all of them are of about the same size. You know that Americans like standard things, don't you? *Pommier* is unmistakably American. He is not a *pommier* but a standard American apple-tree.

Words . .

. . . James Keats

I wish words lay undiscovered
And languages never spoken,
Then fallacious thoughts would lie unheard
And mans good will remain unbroken.
But if he had no words for speech,
In what language would his cerebrum teach?