

After the Diagnosis

Christian Wiman

No remembering now
when the apple sapling was blown
almost out of the ground.
No telling how,
with all the other trees around,
it alone was struck.
It must have been luck,
he thought for years, so close
to the house it grew.
It must have been night.
Change is a thing one sleeps through
when young, and he was young.
If there was a weakness in the earth,
a give he went down on his knees
to find and feel the limits of,
there is no longer.
If there was one random blow from above
the way he's come to know
from years in this place,
the roots were stronger.
Whatever the case,
he has watched this tree survive
wind ripping at his roof for nights
on end, heats and blights
that left little else alive.
No remembering now...
A day's changes mean all to him
and all days come down
to one clear pane
through which he sees
among all the other trees
this leaning, clenched, unyielding one
that seems cast
in the form of a blast
that would have killed it,
as if something at the heart of things,
and with the heart of things,
had willed it.

Source: *Every Riven Thing* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010)

Christian Wiman is an American poet and editor born in 1966 and raised in the small west Texas town of Snyder. He graduated from Washington and Lee University and has taught at Northwestern University, Stanford University, Lynchburg College in Virginia, and the Prague School of Economics. From 2003 until 2013, he was editor of *Poetry*, the oldest American magazine of verse. Wiman now teaches Literature and Religion at Yale University and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.