

Adam Had an Eden*

Ronald Wilcox

*in mankind is the end of kind
in woman the beginning of woe*

i

So long as I can sing of Eden days
and Eve, presumptuous as an almond blossom,
I shall not shout our age's agonies,
bending between extinction and extinction.

ii

See the apple of Adam's eye,
hung on a rib on a rack in a storm,
bearing her lover's love: pain called
fruit, wrung from wrenching flesh . . .

Weeping Eve hears man in the wind,
his wooing moan her long "Oh no,"
for in mankind is the end of kind
and in woman the beginning of woe.

iii

Once upon a time, Adam had an Eden,
savage with butterflies, roaring with bees.
Days were dreams: windless trees
whispering as a quiet river flows
by its brim of humming sunflowers.
Rock-a-byed in this gentle doze,
half-hidden in verdure for hours,
Eve tastes the tang of the sun

*like melting butter on the tip of her tongue.
She's swimming in goldfish kisses: a fin
winks like an eyelash, tingles her skin:*

a hide-an'-seek lambkin is teasing
 her toy, a purring leopard, sleeping.
 Lying alone, cooled by bluebell dew
 amid limb-born fruit fallen below,
 the languid sun caressing through
 the flex and muscle of vine in slow

*liquid motion, she drowns in rivers of berry
 amid bubbles of grape, clusters of currant,
 apricot-crush and peach, tangerine, cherry.*

iv

So long as I can sing of Eden days
 and Eve, presumptuous as an almond blossom,
 I shall not shout our age's agonies,
 bending between extinction and extinction:

*inexplicable war's raze,
 peace, its cankered interim,
 raging ambivalence of men en masse,*

none of these,
 so long as rosebuds are raw nerves
 in her flesh
 and the spring-wringing robin
twangs, twangs,
 like a broken harp string . . .

*Adam had an Eden = Adam-on-di-Ahman