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JOHN HOLLANDER

Adam's Task

"And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field . . ."—Gen. 2:20

310

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1667

Thou, paw-paw-paw; thou, glurd; thou, spotted
 Glurd; thou, whitestap, lurching through
 The high-grown brush; thou, pliant-footed,
 Implex; thou, awagabu.

Every burrower, each flier 5
 Came for the name he had to give:
 Gay, first work, ever to be prior,
 Not yet sunk to primitive.

Thou, verdle; thou, McFleery's pomma;
 Thou; thou; thou—three types of grawl; 10
 Thou, fisket; thou, kabasch; thou, comma-
 Eared mashawk; thou, all; thou, all.

Were, in a fire of becoming,
 Laboring to be burned away,
 Then work, half-measuring, half-humming, 15
 Would be as serious as play.

Thou, pambler; thou, rivarn; thou, greater
 Wherret, and thou, lesser one;
 Thou, sproal; thou, zant; thou, lily-eater.
 Naming's over. Day is done. 20

1971

LINDA PASTAN

A Symposium: Apples

Eve: Remember a season
 of apples, the orchard
 full of them, my apron
 full of them. One day
 we wandered from tree 5
 to tree, sharing a basket
 feeling the weight of apples
 increase between us.
 And how your muscles ripened
 with all that lifting. 10
 I felt them round and hard

all mankind
 of seeming pure,
 happiest life,

aned the sight
 no ill.

loveliest pair

met,

nce born

ers Eve.

reen

ountain side

more toil

n sufficed

ade ease

ppetite

s they fell,

ant boughs

recline

with flowers:

the rind

ming stream;

smiles

beseems

league,

played

nd of all chase⁹

;

paw

es,¹ pards,

ly elephant

ght, and wreathed

t sly

ine

ile

e grass

e gazing sat,

e career

ading scale

ing rose.

e lacking.

ts of land.

es. "pards": leopards.

the Gordian knot, a legendary

not, finally cut by Alexander the

Azores; i.e., westward.

under my teeth; white
and sweet the flesh
of men and apples.

Gabriel:⁴ Nameless in Eden,
the apple itself
was innocent—an ordinary
lunchpail fruit.
Still it reddened
for the way it was used. 20
Afterward the apple
chose for itself
names untrusting
on the tongue: stayman,
gravenstein, 25
northern spy.

The Serpent: Ordinary, innocent
yes. But deep
in each center of whiteness
one dark star . . . 30

Adam: In the icebox
an apple
will keep
for weeks.
Then its skin 35
wrinkles up
like the skin of the old man
I have become,
from a single
bite. 40

1975

VASSAR MILLER

Adam's Footprint

Once as a child I loved to hop
On round plump bugs and make them stop
Before they crossed a certain crack.
My bantam brawn could turn them back,
My crooked step wrenched straight to kill
Live pods that then screwed tight and still. 5

Small sinner, stripping boughs of pears,
Shinnied past sweet and wholesome airs,

4. Traditionally, a messenger of God; chief of the angelic guards in Paradise.
in *Paradise Lost*, Milton makes Gabriel the

How could a tr
Nobody knows
He nuzzled pe
And I crunch

No wolf's imp
Does Christ h
In nets of love
Whose feet go
The foot of A
Of some child

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

"While I
Sick to g
Mine ey
For som
As a tre
To dark
Death i

"How h
Withou
How ha
Squanc
Withou
The Tr
Tree tw
Most l
Most d
I chose

"Hads
Ada
I migh
I, b
God m
Safe i

5. In his *Confessions*, Book
gustine agonizes over his th
nearby tree, of pears he di
want and meditates on the hur
to want what is forbidden.

6. I.e., as if they were th
mother-sin (with, of course
one pun on "dam").

7. The tree of life is so