

1960

Adam

J. W. Miller
St. John Fisher College

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Recommended Citation

Miller, J. W. (1960) "Adam," *The Angle*: Vol. 1960: Iss. 1, Article 15.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1960/iss1/15>

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Cover Page Footnote

Appeared in the issue: Volume 5, Spring, 1960.

ADAM
J. W. MILLER

The salient darkness was not of the soul
That night. Well, Eve, you drew the blanket
Over me and went to view with moody curiosity
The moon drifting lightly through the hills of Eden.
The river had a silver-skinned unity, and the scales
Of the Serpent too scintillated like pearly spores,
Reflecting each a possible world. It was an hour
For imagination to reinterpret the elements of creation,
The eleventh hour of our pristine history,
And the call went out of your restless bosom
For a new arrangement of our many-generationed life.
Decades had passed, and a new attitude was needed.
The subtle insinuation murmured like misty intuition.

And you wanted out of the fool's paradise you had been born into.
Our social status would be higher, you thought,
To eat the apple and become as God.
It pleased you, the good sappy fragrance, like
The satisfaction of munching nuts while playing
Innocently at dinosaur-dice. You were relaxed,
Enjoying a good show: quintessent drama:
The alienation, the recognition, all that:
Both *hubris* and *catharsis* for the actor-spectator.
But look at Cain, our firstborn and now to be
The firstdead. Was it worth it, rescinding
The ordered intensity of infused knowledge
For the challenge of the empirical act,
The tainted adventure of an intellectual epicure,
Feeding the sense for the sake of the mind?
No crescendo of passion moved you onward,
Merely the old demon Experience, the little hells
We all demand to fructify our heaven.
Ah, Eve, you should have let the deer,
Stalking fearlessly in the fields of Paradise,
Eat the apple. For him it was no cosmic act,
Echoing through the loins of unweaned children.
Seeding history with the germ of dissolution,
A flake of oxide rust on the mechanism of existence.
Thinking of what you've done,
Sitting here in misery for the first time,
Agonized even at this new vocabulary of sorrow,
I cannot suffer in silence. My hoy,
Unwombed in sin, can only learn our sorrow
By incarnating endlessly our error.
His infant moan is a wail of doubt, unanswered at hirth,
Unanswerable until the timeless moment after death.
Our little world of light has melted into twilight
And the illumination we now love is darkness.
What words will ever convey to our son the vision
That was real enough to touch and push over?
What will I tell him, Eve, when he listens in silent anguish
To our tale of the lost Paradise?