

## THE NAMINGS

Long starless nights when she couldn't sleep  
or violent dreams of fiery swords awakened her,  
the thought persisted: Why? Sweaty noons when sun  
broiled skin, and blistered soles were more painful  
than insect-bitten legs and arms scraped on thorns,  
she wondered why. Why hadn't the serpent approached Adam?

The fruit proposition, first phrased as a question,  
psychologically packaged, was more than a mere exercise  
in temptation. The serpent needed knowledge. Each time  
he tried to sample the coveted tree's prize for himself,  
he was blown to the ground by ferocious winds.  
Already well-versed in evil, he needed facts about good.  
One can't conquer what one can't comprehend:  
a basic principle. He watched the human pair for days,  
knew when they ate and slept, knew when she left  
his hand to stroll with the canine he named "wolf,"  
or fill the flowered air with her lyrical laughter  
at the bouncing creature he named "hare."

The serpent was amused when Adam named him "dragon."  
He was convinced that Adam, made of common clay,  
could be easily mastered. What he didn't know was  
how soon the taster would die as God declared. If one bite  
killed the man quickly, his mate he called "woman"  
would be left. Alive, untainted, Eden hers alone.

She was the one the serpent feared most, the unpredictable,  
the more complicated half of a superior life form.  
God spent extra time making her, used bone not dust,  
added nuances He hadn't used with Adam. If "woman" fell  
after one taboo taste, her riddance would be welcome,  
and Adam could be overcome at leisure. But if, as suspected,  
the punishment were protracted, "woman" would then have time  
to offer the fruit to her mate, and both would be doomed.  
Yet possibly not before useful information was revealed.

The perfect solution. How interesting to learn how long  
God would let them stand. How fascinating to observe  
the thing God planned called "death."

Thus the serpent's leading question to "woman"  
as she stepped out of a cool blue stream: "So the Lord  
said you could not eat from all the garden's trees?"  
She replied that they could eat from any except  
the centerpiece tree. She repeated God's grave warning  
not even to touch it.