



7-1-1999

## Adam's Song

James Richards

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Richards, James (1999) "Adam's Song," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 38 : Iss. 3 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol38/iss3/5>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

## Adam's Song

Tommy was the first pet I had in Eden,  
*par'a-keet''* seemed to fit—*small parrot*  
*with long tail, the color of apple, new leaf,*  
*and lemon; harsh, irritating song.*  
 I called it “screaming” at first, but my softer side  
 said, “Song, Adam, song.”

Eve taught me about *mu'sic*—*a medley*  
*of sounds and tones, as of the wind.*  
 Cain taught me that some music is hard  
 to hear: “Father, I have killed Abel  
 and buried myself in a darker earth  
 where frozen stars draw black flowers  
 from my grave.” That was a song.

I clipped Tommy's wings that day,  
 with *scis'sors*—*a cutting instrument, two pivoted blades.*  
 I gathered the yellow, green, and dark  
 red shadows in the valley of my palm.  
 Eve sang a music I could hardly hear.  
 I inserted one by one into the warm earth of Abel's grave  
 the cool *feath'ers*—*lighter than flowers, less afraid*  
*of flying; colorfast and hardened by a harsh song.*

—James Richards

This poem won first place in the *BYU Studies* 1999 Poetry Contest.