

Familia Primordium

Adam

(man, red soil)

I learned to trust
before my days
were numbered

He planted
I ate
He said, *Do not eat
or you will die* I
never asked what
this *die*
could be

I was namer
and here was something
I had not named
something I'd never seen
in the garden

oh, I knew good
but could not name it

now I name
the thorns springing up
among the flowers the
poison growing
on the vines

Eve

(living)

I won't speak of the garden
except to say that
out here
the snakes don't talk

they coil
behind the stones
while my children
babble and cry

each night I pray

they won't fall
silent
that they will live
long enough
to hear
what I have to tell

we are all dying
out here

Abel

(mourning, a breath, a vapor)

Each one I raised
from birth, named--
they came when I called

for days
I sharpened the knife so I
could shear them
without pain,
earn their trust

it had to be
sharper, now

Cain and I spoke often
of giving something
difficult to give:
the harder the giving
I told him
the greater the gift

so I whispered
to the seven I chose--
the seven best
gave them each
a new name of
mourning
while the blood warmed
my hands
rose into vapor

but when their blood
had soaked the altar

I had to turn away
ashamed

So you did it
Cain says, poking the
empty bodies
with the handle
of his hoe

And what's it like to kill?

Adam 2

I was molded of
fertile soil

the fruit
was filled with seeds
of distrust

Cain

(brought forth, acquired)

I shall always be
Firstborn of the Living
and first to test
the curse:
when you eat of it
you shall surely die

I saw the cycles--
Planting, harvest
birth and death
and in death
came, always,
the source of another
planting

flesh and flora
are surely the same

My gift was sweat
and hours breaking dirt
cutting my hands on thorns
while Able lay

beside the stream
napping with his flocks

How impotent those carcasses were!
Butchered, laid open
nothing to do but rot,
no seed

but they were only sheep;
curiosity led me into the field
with Able
to test the work he had done
upon that knife

I half expected him
to spring up
from the red soil,
both of us
to return: *Good news!*
The curse was a lie--
Now we are
Like God!

instead, I am
cursed to wander
barren dirt

But, see this mark
this sign means I will live
to acquire a son
and he will be *Enoch*,
dedicated to a harvest
of offspring
each stamped
with the immortal sign
of Cain

Eve 2

I often look to the east
like he might come home

I would kiss him

I have told and retold
the story of the banished

and of the dead
and how only one might
arrive again
where he began

but I am telling now
the story of the granted--
I know
what I am doing, now

Adam sweats and toils
and remembers
the garden, *the Garden*

My garden is wrought
not with sweat
but blood

Seth
(*granted*)

For years
Able's bones lay
where he fell
and I watched as he
crumbled into nothing
but dust

I buried
what was left: his stone
knife and a handful
of teeth

I have named my son
Enosh, mortal,
one who knows
he is only dust

whatever else we are
is God-breathed