

# He Imposes the Square

i

Kept under roof all summer  
my hair is darkening, smells of dust.  
My knees and fingers have calloused,  
scraping out the four corners.  
You complain my touch has hardened  
I don't tell you you stoop now  
as though you dragged that plough with you  
everywhere. I see you standing, still,  
at the head of a long, snaking furrow,  
blackened by sun,  
showing our son, Cain, how to mend  
its thinning straps.

You used to come home from the river,  
brown-budded reeds raying from your fist.  
Now you stride in hungry,  
your thick arms darkened by sun and wind.  
Our favorite tree, cut down,  
drags me around the house while you  
sulk, or again obsessed,  
hammer poles in the ground.  
You call it fencing, and Abel drives  
the wild herds in.

I blame it all on your square—  
penning in even the stars and wind.  
North, east, south and west  
you trample the crossroads.

ii

Everything lives in a circle,  
but you build on four straight lines.  
When we were young, we dwelt in the round  
mountain's mouth—a cave—and the wind had  
opened others,  
like eyes in the stone. Gourds of water and wine  
we kept  
in the left eye, and in the right, fresh beddings  
of myrtle and hay to dry, and slept  
like the clifftop birds  
in a circle,  
hooked into one another,  
arms and legs.

In winter, a boar came down from the north  
and slept by the cavemouth,  
her body curled up in a circle. She  
tucked her snout deep in her lap.  
At morning, I watched her snoozing  
when, aroused by some pleasure in her dream,  
a single eye opened, red as the spark  
left burning in our fire.

At night, the wolves came, trotting their rounds  
about us, whining, snatching thin scents  
from the wind. We had heaped our fire and ringed it  
with stones. When the flames burned low,  
the dawnlight caught their tails  
upswept and fleeing south  
toward the empty sand,  
their hunger drawn toward dust.

From Eve's Diary  
by Kathleen Moore