



POETRY FOUNDATION

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## The Land of Nod

BY JAMES ARTHUR

Growing up, I barely knew the Bible, but read  
and reread the part when Cain drifted east  
or was drawn that way, into a place of desolation,  
the land of Nod, there to begin, with a wife

of unknown origin, another race of men,  
under the mark of God. As a boy, I thought Nod  
would be a place where the blue scillas  
would bloom gray, a country of the rack and screw,

the serrated sword, where the very serving cups  
were bone. As a grown man, I've heard that Nod  
never was a nation—of Cain's offspring, or anyone—  
but a mistranslation of “wander,” so Cain

could go wherever, and be in Nod. Far more  
than in God, I believe in Cain, who destroyed  
his own brother, and therefore in any city  
could have his wish, and be alone.

Source: *Poetry* (May 2011)