

Lilith and Eve

We were mothers giving birth
to each other, or we were sisters,
our home the world's first womb.
We orbited inside its silky
black cocoon. If Galileo had been
there to see with his telescope
and blasphemy, he would have named
our double brightness in the sky
and I wouldn't have been
so lost.

My hand reached out
and to prove I was the first
the midwife tied it with a strong
red string--the origin of scarlet
as a curse. My eyes were open,
the one born to see, inside and out,
it's a burden I've carried since
but then it seemed a gift to me.

I watched her grow, felt
her spirit curve around my bones
like cream inside a spoon.
We were one creature then,
four-legged, a fawn perhaps
whose hooves had not grown hard,
a calf so strange we would be put
inside a jar. Then I counted
fingers, counted toes
and she looked back at me
with eyes so ingenuous and new
suddenly I saw what would become of us.

I, not Eve, brought pain
into the birthing room.
I didn't want to leave her.
I clung to the walls of the womb
with my nails, with teeth,
ripped the sky in two, split night
from day, eternity from now.

Banned from paradise
not for this but not long after,

I wouldn't pretend I couldn't see
my nakedness in Eden. I wouldn't lie
placid as a hooked and fatty fish
under Adam. That was my first
argument with God. The second,
that he turned my sister into bone
for his own and Adam's sake
honed away everything she'd been
when we lay together among stars.

Some nights I wait at the edge of the garden--
how lush it is, how full of anguish.
I can hear the blossoms breaking,
roots of rushes wringing out the earth.
Light and docile, she walks
to the hawthorn hedge, always
a trail of creatures at her side,
lynx, coyote, prong-horned antelope.
Does she know I'm here?

If she looked in the eyes of the cat
she would see me. My footsteps
barely traceable, my voice thin
whisp across her cheek. She's forgotten
my name, forgotten our one smell
as we wound around each other,
her fingers in my mouth, my hand holding
her heartbeat, little wounded wren
I could not save from grief.

The Fall of Eve

When the animals used to talk to me--
lisp of snail, click of grasshopper's
exact consonants, dolphin's diphthong
slipping through the waves--there were rumours
a woman, perhaps with wings, roamed
the wasteland. They said she was furred,
sleek and shimmering as weasel,
eyes wells of deepest water
where you'd surely drown.

Something stirred in me, a ripple