Lilith and Adam Redux *

Barbara Hantman, Whitestone, N.Y

After irritation of dogged male nomenclature tendency
whereby all animals had to be dutifully dubbed,
After strife over above-under position symbolism leading
to nights of sleepless struggle with shroud-like sheets
in disarray,
Lilith of charcoal eyes and double lashes -- raven tresses flying
in desert khamsin --
Retreated to succor of Red Sea coral, susurrating sand,
  womb-craddling waves, siren-sustaining boulders.
There she dwelled as nymph to every Levantine sailor seeking
  a Semitic Andromeda
With mermaid wiles used to captivate her Poseidon protector-oppressors.

A generation passed.
Lilith’s menses no longer meshed with moon’s mellow cycle
  and tumultous tides.
Streaks of gray nestled between her ebony locks.
Watching over or snatching young children was no longer
  an impish game of good fairy-bad fairy power politics –
It was a poor substitute for Adam’s by now hoary mien,
Strong as Egyptian cobras hirsute arms,
Bronzed, muscular Euphrates-fording, Eden-exiting legs.

Meanwhile, Eve-Chava had long since outlived her serpent-apple-tree-temptation, fig leaf-frolicking days.
Breast feeding, weaving of swaddling cloths, mashing of
  pomegranate kernels to swab on emerging teeth,
  roasting of apples for first solid food sauce of
delight:
These mothering activities, chores of ecstasy, were her sole
  concerns after birthing of Cain and Abel --
As Adam languished, losing himself in barley field, at olive
  press, atop date palms.
Then, a calamity!
Grown farmer Cain extinguished his shepherd brother Abel.
Eve-Chava once again spoke to Adam, mate of her youth:
A ziggurut must be constructed to help Abel’s soul reach
  heavenly heights of God the Father.
New fields must be cleared for Cain’s rehabilitation,
With a high place altar for blessing of forgiveness
from Astarte, Great Mother of Fertility.

On her deathbed, Eve-Chava, ever the matriarch,
Whispered only the names of her tragic fratricidal son Cain
and his animal caretaker victim Abel.
She never found the tender wherewithal to add a wistful
two-syllable litany for Adam –
Her fellow Lord’s wrath-invoking outcast from Eden.

Lilith saw Adam’s daylight labor and starlight solitude.
She flew from the Red Sea to the breadbasket Adam’s industry
had created beyond the Tigris and Euphrates.
Her henna cheeks and dusky femininity glowed with anticipation
of love to be shared in later years –
When wisdom is greater, and blood bubbles in a gentle
crucible that knows neither conquest nor subjugation.
Adam and his chastened enchantress Lilith clapsed each other
with gratitude in the tent beside the threshing floor.
Her wounded soul was balm for Cain when he heard his
brother’s blood cry out from the earth.
Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel rejoiced
in a healing circle
As the patchwork First Family of Mankind forged onward,
Anticipating the divergent roles of David, Bathsheba and
Abishag.

* Inspired by Genesis II, III and IV, I Kings I, 1-4 and Lilly
Rivin’s essay “LILITH”.

** Lilith – In Hebrew folklore, the first wife of Adam, believed
to have been in existence before the creation of Eve. In ancient
Semitic legend, an evil female spirit, or demon alleged to haunt
lonely, deserted places and attack children. (American Heritage
Dictionary)