

CATHLEEN CALBERT



Lilith

It was the first marriage for both of us,
so all that came easily was bickering.

Having had enough, I called the name of our Lord
and flew into the air of the Word, landing alone

on the beach, where I laced sea shells into necklaces,
letting the sea dissolve within until the waves

became my body, waves washing out of me.
Adam complained. God listened to him patiently,

then sent three angels to warn me: I must return
or lose one hundred of my sons each morning,

but my sons had become grains of sand, the drops
of water all around me. Each day my children die,

my children come alive. I am not unhappy.
Some say I return restless from the Red Sea,

visit men in their sleep and give them wet dreams.
This is their own fancy. I cannot help men

thinking of me. I hear they wear amulets bearing
my likeness bound in fetters, wings hanging limply,

as though Lilith were a captured bird,
as though men could ever overcome me,

I who came from no man's rib, created from
the soil the same as he, yet even more lovely:

my hair dressed with oils, flame red or blackly
streaming down my back, breasts exposed, the rest

adorned in coral, sand dollars, starfish, pearls,
rubies. Can a woman help her own beauty?

Her desire to be free? As for the rest, I threaten
only the impure or the weak. I have told anyone

who will listen that I shall stop all evil-doing
if someone will call me any one of my names.

Listen to me. I only want to hear my names
on the lips of the children of Adam and Eve.