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The Legend of the First Woman in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The House of Life"

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Abstract

Various accounts of the First Woman's story were included in sacred scripts regarding a woman who preceded Eve in the creation and addressed the role of being Adam's wife. Lilith, the first female creature who showcased physical and oral resistance to God's command, had acquired great attention in theological manuscripts and literary reproductions throughout history. This paper explores the enigmatic emergence of Lilith and the subsequent manipulations of her character. Moreover, it traces the chronological evolvement of her tale from the Talmudic Rabbinic tradition to the Victorian era. Also, it tackles the author's religious advocacy related to the examination of Lilith's choices and inspections of different experiences. The significance of the study lies in the literary and cultural perceptions of her story as a 'fable' or 'biblical tale' since it was rendered differently with varying levels of acceptance concerning its origin and employment to cultural and social contexts. The controversial treatment of her personality served multiple purposes through the oral tradition and written texts in different cultures. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was one of the poets who found in Lilith an inevitable means of manifesting trembling thoughts in his world. She offered him a good chance for relieving these thoughts by pouring them into painting and poetry. In this respect, the paper also sheds light on the portrayal of Lilith in two poems from Rossetti's The House of Life with emphasis on his unique way of representing her as a cultural icon that best reflects the prerequisites of femininity.

Keywords: Lilith; D. G. Rossetti; first woman; poetry.

اسطورة المرأة الاولى في قصيدة دانتي غابرييل روزيتي "بيت الحياة"

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ملخّص

تضمنت النصوص المقدسة تعديلات مختلفة لقصة "المرأة الأولى" التي أضيفت الى نصوص مقدسة حول امرأة سبقت حواء في الخلق وأدت دور لزوجة لادم "ليليث"، المخلوق أنثوي الأول، أظهرت مقاومة كلامية وجسدية لأمر الرب، وحظيت بإهتمام كبير في المخطوطات اللاهوتية والمنسوخات الأدبية عبر التاريخ. يستكشف هذا البحث الظهور المهم المفاجئ لليليث والتغييرات اللاحقة بتشخصيها.كذلك، فإنها تبحث في التطور الزمني لها منذ االعصر التلمودي الحاخامي ولغاية العصر الفكتوري. إضافة الى ذلك، تتناول الدراسة مناصرة المؤلف الدينية المرتبطة بعرض خيارات واستكشافات ليليث للخبرات المختلفة. تأتي أهمية الدراسة في التصورات الثقافية والأدبية للقصة بعدّها "خراقة" أم"قصة انجيلية" حيث استخدمت على نحو مختلف بين الأديان مع درجات مختلفة من القبول المتعلق بأصلها وتوظيفها في السياقات الثقافية والاجتماعية. خدمت المعاني المثيرة لشخصيتها أغراضا عديدة في التوظيفات الأدبية لقصتها في ثقافات مختلفة. كان دانتي غابرييل روزيتي أحد الشعراء الذين وجدوا في ليليث الوسيلة الحتمية لإظهار الأفكار المضطربة في عالمه. فهي وفرت له وسيلة جيدة لإراحة هذه الأفكار من خلال إسقاطها في الرسم والشعر. يتقصى هذا البحث تصوير ليليث في قصائد مختارة من سلسلة روزيتي الشعرية "بيت الحياة" وتسلط الضوء على طريقته الفريدة في تقديمها كرمز ثقافي يعبر عن متطلبات الأنوثة بأفضل صورة.

الكلمات الدالة: ليليث، دي جي رزويتي، المرأة الاولى، الشعر.

Introduction:

The mystery of Lilith's origin and the growing interest in the adaptations of her tale recommends an immediate intervention to outline the mass responses to her phenomenon. The writers of each age had inevitability addressed this responsibility since they had found themselves unwillingly sunk in these haunting accounts of her narratives. She had undergone various levels of acceptance which won her a reputation globally and soon acquired cultural, social, and literary attention. The enigmatic manifestations of Lilith in various contexts also imposed a state of urgency for those writers to express their stand in response to her unpredicted intrusion and took part in assist the public to better interpret Lilith. Surrounded by a massive sense of mystery and hesitation, many religious and cultural examinations were dedicated to interrogating the scripts that documented the earliest accounts of Lilith's creation in this woman-like appearance and the consequent confrontations with God and Adam. However, later manipulations of her story revealed personal modes of expression and did not necessarily care about retelling the exact excerpts of past resources.

The earliest references to Lilith's origin may be traced back to the depictions of her first encounter with Adam. According to the tradition of the Rabbins who were responsible for the production of Genesis I, Lilly Rivlin stated, "God made Adam and Lilith from dust at the same time – some say as twins joined back to back" (2004: 7). With no clear evidence for the name, other texts did not care about proper identification for Lilith but rather looked at her as an "atavistic female spirit that had to be assimilated or dealt with in some way" (Ibid). The references to the creation of Lilith in Genesis I, however, reinforced the sense of equality through the synchronicity of time, place, and form to Adam. Nonetheless, the vindication did not survive long as other depictions of Lilith in other resources elaborated more on this act of creating this couple. In *Alphabet Ben Sira*, an eleventh-century commentary of Lilith in Europe completed by the Jewish on the Bible, the author elucidated the clash in these early mentionings of the old Hebrew legends concerning the creation of the first wife of Adam in Genesis I and how the story underwent different modifications in Genesis II (Yassif, 2013: 25-6). Whereas Adam and Lilith were both created simultaneously of dust in Genesis I, Eve was a replacement for Lilith in the second version when God expelled the latter from heaven. The differences between the two versions of Genesis are drawn from a noticeable uncertainty between "an early pre-Exile version and a post-Exile Babylonian account of creation" (Rivlin, 6). However, both accounts stressed the fact that Eve was not Adam's first wife. It was Lilith, who, because of her revolutionary thoughts and actions, was substituted by Eve that later addressed the role of the obedient wife and the proper mother for humanity.

The biblical references to the character of Lilith are very rare. She was mentioned one time only in the Bible (Isa. 34:14), but it did not explain the meaning of the name in the context. However, the name came in a list of animals and birds that "will dwell in the falling ruins of Edom (Idumea)." The descriptions of these creatures in this list were only associated with the context in which they acted. Hence, their name and nature could refer to a bird "Night jar" or "Goat Sucker", the demon of the wind and the tempest, or the spirit of the ruins" (Patai & Bar-Itzhak, 2013: 333). The controversy regarding Lilith's creation and identification in the Bible as an animal or a bird paved the way for the further modifications in later accounts that introduced her with everlasting anguish for the human race. Besides the bestial image that was given to Lilith in the Bible and the consistency of time and material that was proposed in Genesis I, the claim that considered Lilith as completely equivalent to Adam was rejected. On the other side, it asserted the lack of biological conformity that was only guaranteed later with the creation of Eve. One of the reasons that led to an urgent alternative for Lilith could be her poor awareness of the nature of masculinity which made God seek an alternative through adopting a different procedure like creating another female for Adam different nature from the first and that is derived partly from his own. As indicated in The Book of Genesis II:

"Having decided to give Adam a helpmeet lest he should be alone of his kind, God put him into a deep sleep, removed one of his ribs, formed it into a woman, and closed up the wound. Adam awoke and said: 'This being shall be named 'Woman.' because she has been taken *out of man*. A man and woman shall be one flesh.' The title he gave her was Eve, 'the Mother of All Living.' " (Genesis II. 18–25; III. 20) (as cited in Graves & Patai, 2014: 66)

This extract emphasizes the creation of Adam as a social creature for whom the need for companionship is an essential part of his nature. The helpmeet is an extraction of Adam himself sharing to a very great extent most of the attributes that

God had bestowed upon him. Furthermore, God granted Adam the absolute freedom to call this new human creation "Woman". This label suggests her great similarity and uniqueness to Adam that privileged her as "Mother of All Living."

Adam, as well as Eve, was just formed as an image during the creation of the world. Furthermore, God waived to Adam the responsibility of labeling each male and female pair through a live presentation of the creatures before his eyes. However, Adam, "a twenty-year-old man—felt jealous of their loves, and though he tried coupling with each female in turn, found no satisfaction in the act" (Cited in Graves & Patai, 66). This dramatic embodiment indicates that Adam's experience in love is quite new. This is the first time Adam was introduced to the concept of "love" in a practical manifestation. The first human male was exploring at this phase of his existence and trying to respond to his nature's call through experimentation of new feelings. In addition, it was the first time that Adam became aware of love's necessity for coupling that he tried for the first time with the female creatures in turn. It was rejected since nature can only be assured if Adam succeeds to meet a human equivalent.

This rigorous search for a human female was essential to Adam and it was part of his awareness that allocating a mate is complementary to his identity. Having discovered that no proper mate was yet created identical to him, Adam "therefore cried: 'Every creature but I has a proper mate!', and prayed to God would remedy this injustice" (Cited in Graves & Patai, 66). The context in which Adam was interacting revealed the critical necessity for solace that he tried to enjoy with his mate. However, Adam's complaint also implied the plan that God set for the creation on two levels. First, the act of creation was completed when all the pairs of the animals were created along with the process of giving names and titles to each. God postponed creating the human couple after the first attempt of creating Lilith and intended this presentation of the animal pairs to be educational for Adam. This also could propose another possibility that Eve was created and suspended after the incompliance of Lilith to Adam's request to mate. Second, Adam was confident enough to call it "injustice" when he left out without "a proper mate" and, thus, he supplicated to God to interfere. Henceforth, the image was brought into reality at the creation of Eve to assume this role after the failure of Lilith, partly, because of her interpersonal attributes, or because there was something related to the way Lilith was created which does not qualify her to constitute with Adam a human couple.

"God then formed Lilith, the first woman, just as He had formed Adam, except that He used filth and sediment instead of pure dust. From Adam's union with this demoness, and with another like her named Naamah, Tubal Cain's sister, sprang Asmodeus and innumerable demons that still plague mankind. Many generations later, Lilith and Naamah came to Solomon's judgement seat, disguised as harlots of Jerusalem." (as cited in Graves & Patai, 66).

The description of Adam's creation versus Lilith's gives an indication of how the observer would establish a prior perception of the difference God intensified every time as the couple is brought together for comparison. This also presupposes that even though Lilith was created at the same time as Adam, she was not formed of the same material.

Moreover, the use of "filth and sediment" as the core elements for creating Lilith was not well-established as the source for the demonic attributes associated with her personality. It only counts for common sense that filthiness and dirt are commonly related somehow to evil. And, if the idea is clear to Adam about the consequences of seeking union with a demon, regardless of all the warnings and the curse that is brought to all humanity due to this union, some issue is still subversive related to the determination and insistence on mating with a female, if not Lilith, then Naamah. The two were responsible for breeding a huge number of demons haunting men and children in particular.

The claim that Eve was not Adam's first wife was carried over the proceeding times and consequently took further elaborations and discussions in the rendition of cultural and religious manipulations. The Jewish had given special attention to the idea in their folklore which was followed by a commentary in the rabbinic tradition. Again, they had privileged Lilith with this honor and intensified the fact that Lilith was created as Adam's equal in form, but bias in her reluctance to blindly surrendering to Adam's desires. Thus, "when he tried to dominate her, [she] uttered God's secret name and resolutely left Eden" (Wolf, 2004: xv). Further accounts about Lilith's insurgent spirit and vengeful behavior were mentioned in the Talmud and explained more in Midrash and Kabbala. The details were transferred orally from parents to sons in different cultures about a nocturnal woman who visited men in their dreams and took over their sexual visions. The most terrifying aspect

among people who were seeking salvage from Lilith's rage was her special interest in taking the souls of the newborn children. This eminent threat made mothers seek protection for their children through amulets and songs which were transmitted orally as a protective reaction to survive the fatal encounter with Lilith and steer her intentions away from them. Despite the earlier portrayal of Lilith as a human in the creation and defiant for God, she was given demonic capabilities and powers which enabled her to "sleep with a variety of human and mythological creatures" (Ibid) and chose to spend her life in solitude by the Red Sea. Down to Adam's request, God sent angels to convince Lilith to return to Adam but failed as she threatened to reveal the magic name of God. According to the Jewish mystical tradition, Lilith "marries Samael, the Jewish counterpart for the devil, and who even confronts God in the exilic absence of his feminine counterpart, the Shekinah" (Ibid). The recurrent renditions in the Jewish commentaries of the Rabbinic tradition were further transferred into other cultures especially those who are keen on oral folklore and the inheritance of the superstitious powers of spectres and invisible forces. The accusation against Lilith as being the origin of all the demons in life came from the claim that she married Eblis, the prince of devils after she fell from Eden. As a result of their union, demons had acquired the mixed nature of being partly demonical and partly human. "This fable," says Sabine Baring-Gould, "has been transmitted to Arabs from Jewish sources by some converts of Mahomet [Prophet Mohammed] from Cabbalism and Rabbinism, who have transferred all the Jewish fooleries to the Arabs" (1872: 20).

In the preface to her five-book narrative poem about Lilith, the 19th-century American poetess, Ada Langworthy Collier, quoted that the word " "Lullaby" was brought into English from the phrase "Lilla, abi," which means "begone, Lilith" (as cited in Collier, 1885, 5). The mothers found in this phrase the power to keep their children safe from Lilith's demonical purposes. Written as Lilith or Lilis, the Hebrews, through their intensive employments and illustrations over Lilith's character and personality, turned the fancy into fact by giving a physical description for her in addition to the original title of being Adam's first wife who was very hateful for children, whose mothers did not immunize them with amulets. In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton stated that "The Talmudists say that Adam had a wife called Lilis, before he married Eve, and of her he begat nothing but devils" (1863:116). Other versions of the story showed that after the failure of Adam to unite with Lilith, she was married to Eblis and became one of his four wives. Of this marriage, the doubled-nature couple had children who also had mixed qualities of humans and devils. They were known as "Jins" (Baring-Gould, 20). Terrified of the enormous demonical children of Lilith and her devil husband whose ultimate goal is killing children, mothers must not forget reciting the amulet especially when their children are about to sleep. Hence, the lullaby was an effective tool for children to slumber peacefully. The word was originally "derived from two Arabic words which mean "Beware Lilith!" " (as cited in Collier, 5). In Lilith's case, the accumulation of these details altogether reinforces the everlasting conflict between masculine domination on earth and, at the same time, reveals the revengeful preparedness of femininity in search of advocating personal integrity.

The popularity of Lilith's myth grew wider toward the Middle Ages by the Christians and Jews. With the heating interest in supernaturalism, folktales, and superstitions, the ground a new social and religious dilemma was very fertile. Special attention was given to the idea and "the establishments were involved in esoteric disputations, while the helpless mass sought comfort in superstition" (Rivlin, 7). Those establishments found in Lilith a restraining force that could keep the masses' search for the real unleashed. On the other side, they had the self-granted right and privilege to guide the public and direct their responses to the cultural and religious forthcomings.

Whereas Lilith attracted significant attention in the social and cultural development throughout the ages, considerable symbolic importance was dedicated to her personality in literature. She served as an embodiment of women's dilemma in each age that was an essential part of the daily scene of females' struggle to fight marginalization. Her character took two typical manifestations which were originally established in the early Talmudic Rabbinic tradition as Adam's first wife reflected as a wind spirit on earth, or as a nocturnal creature whose is often associated with darkness or night in the Hebrew word "layil" (Brayer, 1986: 28). Both accounts symbolized the search for self-recognition and self-representation through power and determination. Maintaining the biblical reference, the early symbolization of Lilith was as a night creature like an "owl". Taking the form of oral tales at the tongue of terrified mothers about their infants into the extracts of religious and

cultural texts in the Middle Ages, Lilith was recurrently compared to an "owl" in Spenser's "The Ruines of Time" in the Sixteenth Century. In his nine-poem collection, Spenser consistently referred to the fact that after the fall of Verulamium (Roman Britain City), the city was haunted with "Shirche-owle" (Jeffrey, 1992: 455). This nocturnal bird is the symbol of the oppressed creature who, though defeated, does not give up its stand even if the counterpart is far from being quarreled. Lilith's yell of rejection against Adam's request was echoed in this poem as the yell of this owl in search of rebellion after the demolition of its home.

Romantic poets had also shown their interest in Lilith's fame and significance with the increasing interest in the supernatural rendition of divine manifestations through nature. The early mentioning could be found in the work of "Goethe's *Faust* (pt. 1, 1.21.286) and Shelley's translated fragments, *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*" (Masson, 1874: 144). In *Faust*, Goethe directly presented Lilith as a literary character away from the typical religious and mythological dwellings. Although she was fairly identified as Adam's first wife, she was introduced by the devil as an irresistible and tempestuous creature who was fully aware of the destructive seductiveness of her beauty over men. The short, yet tense, mentioning of Lilith in Goethe's *Faust* maintained the same juxtapositions of "beauty" and "dangerous", and "pretty" and "tempting". Although the employment seemed experimental in his text, however, the details brought no adaptations to the original tales regarding the stereotypical attributes which haunted Lilith.

Lilith brought a kind of anxiety in the character she represented to the Victorian age in a form of a conflict for the Victorian women, which was established in the paintings that portrayed Lilith as a woman who was celebrating her feminine charms. In this sense, a new version of Lilith was introduced in artwork as a vindication for women bragging about their beauty through openly exposing their attractions. This image helped Lilith escape the cage of the demonic depictions. One of the clearest examples is Robert Browning's "Adam, Lilith and Eve". This poem was based on the original account of Lilith's creation and confrontation with Adam which ended up in Lilith revealing God's forbidden name and expelled from Eden down to earth. However, it did not maintain all familiar details or the subsequent incidents that led to the destructive powers of Lilith and her fascination in haunting men and taking infants' lives in search of revenge. Instead, the poet constructed his poem by making Adam the love target for both Eve and Lilith at the same time. The pome did not also focus on the legend of Lilith or cared about its historical origin. The use of the name served as "a study of character, and especially of the influence of fear in causing an expression of the true nature of the individual" (Cooke, 1894: 5). The poem further explores women's ways of expressing love under fear and masculine reaction and apprehension of that love which can be affected by the circumstances that ultimately lead to a change in it.

As a poet and artist of the Victorian age, Rossetti was fascinated by Lilith's tales. He was the first who introduced the contemporary version of Lilith in his painting in 1866-1868, which was later elaborated by a poem, "Body's Beauty." In his employment of Lilith, Rossetti disclosed nagging ideas in his mind regarding his personal perception of this legend. On 21st of April, 1870, Rossetti wrote a letter to Thomas Gordon Hake about the painting and the elaborations on it in the poem:

"You ask me about Lilith – I suppose referring to the picture-sonnet. The picture is called Lady Lilith by rights […] and represents a *Modern Lilith* combing out her abundant golden hair and gazing on herself in the glass with complete self-absorption by whose fascination such natures draw others within their circle. The idea which you indicate (viz: of the perilous principle in the world being female from the first) is about the most essential notion of the sonnet." (as cited in Łuczyńska-Hołdys, 2013: 215).

The drawing shed light on the significant change that womanhood witnessed in the Victorian age because Lilith reflected the pride of the feminine charms and beauties that God had founded in women. She presented a new belief that beauty can be seen but yet remain untouched and that women have the right to acknowledge these aspects without necessarily being the subject for foes. The very conservative Lilith and the one who was forcefully requested to bow to Adam's are now combined to produce a woman who could find a compromise between the demands of the age and the burden of protecting her femininity. Rossetti's attempt to alter the typical attributes of Lilith as monstrous, demonic, and resistant to men's domination could be an indication of the way women should not always fit into the corset.

"Body's Beauty" is one of the sonnets in a series called *The House of Life* which was published on different dates. It took

the author thirty-four years to complete and included 103 sonnets. Rossetti accompanied his paint "Lady Lilith" with a sonnet entitled "Body's Beauty" which added to the charm and beauty of Lilith as the strains of her entrapping golden hair are floating to the eyes. Some details in the poem could include strains of the poet's life and reflect biographical incidents during his second marriage to Fanny Cornforth after the death of his first wife Lizzie Siddal since Fanny "exercises more and more control over Rossetti" (Matson, 2010: 71). Hence, the illustrations in the poem served as Rossetti's experimentations of new understandings that were the result of his severe experience of losing his first wife. It also echoed a moment of epiphany and further contemplation about exploring new aspects of love as long as time permits.

The image of the resting young lady who is fully aware of her seductive attractiveness and who is lazy celebrating her beauty is persistent throughout the details of the poem. The title is expressive as it determines the atmosphere for identifying the type of love that is involved in the setting of the poem. The opening puts more emphasis on the original mythological tales about Lilith's being Adam's first wife and the witch that is typically transferred in the religious texts and established in different communities:

"Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold" (Body's Beauty) (Rossetti, 1895: 216)
*(Subsequent quotations from the poems are taken from the same reference)

She is still a powerful woman who can use "the primordial essences of her nature: powerful, brooding, and vengeful" (Donnelly, 2015: 119). However, she possesses both the irresistibility of her beauty and the outmost threatening seduction and appeal. Lilith here is continuously weaving her nets around men making use of a spell that she casts on her victims. Her power of enchantment and all the features surrounding her femininity paves the way ahead and thus no restrictions are made on her capability. As Małgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołdys suggests, "it becomes evident that her desirability is conditioned precisely by the danger she poses" (2013: 216). Therefore, the treatment suggests the one-time attempt that is offered with a free will yet exposing irresistible charm. Thus, instead of fighting the charm of Lilith, man is put in a quarrel with his desires too.

The second part of the poem indicates that Rossetti is dwelling in memories that are quivering inside his painter-poet personality and trying to transfer them from colors into words. As an illustration of the paint, the poet describes all the elements like "the rose and poppy", "scent", the "soft-shed kisses", and the "soft sleep" that reflect his nostalgia and intense emotions. The original image of Lilith casting the spell over men making their neck bending down is maintained here while the setting adds more enchantment with the golden hair. The poem ends with undebatable confidence that Lilith always gets her desires with no toil, as she is sitting resting appreciating her beauty in the reflection of her mirror.

"Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and let his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair." (Body's Beauty) (216)

The observer-narrator in the poem gave the descriptions of Lilith that seem to belong to the poet's adherence to her charm. However, the details recurrently emphasize the feebleness of man's stamina in front of female seduction making use of his inherent attraction to her. This poem is a manifesto of Rossetti's belief about Lilith that he felt unsecured in his paint.

He was very careful to convey the right emotions that he intended to deliver through the paint and the poem.

In "Eden Bower", another poem of *The House of Life* written in 1869, Rossetti preserved the same theme of Lilith with more elaborations on more specific incidents apparently borrowed from various sources about Lilith. The poem dramatically recaptures the scene of the temptation of Adam and Eve and the Fall and Expulsion from Eden. The irresistible seductive power of Lilith's hair is ascertained here in the temptation of Adam the snake. She manipulated the latter to carry out her plan of returning to Eden through mingling its coils in her coiled tresses. This scheme was the only way that would enable Lilith to go back to heaven seeking revenge from Adam and Eve. The opening lines pour more details on the extravagant controversy regarding the difference between Lilith's appearance and reality.

"It was Lilith the wife of Adam:
(Sing Eden Bower!)
Not a drop of her blood was human,
But she was made like a soft sweet woman.
Lilith stood on the skirts of Eden;
(Alas the hour!)" (Eden Bower) (308)

Without recounting the act which led to Lilith being driven out of Eden, the poem prepares for the appearance of Eve as the substitution for her and the one who is going to occupy all the love space in Adam's heart. The struggling issues ahead are built upon the primary image of a minute examination of a revenge plan. With a great sense of nostalgia, Lilith laments her warm past and steers the blame towards Adam who was keen on this change. The accumulation of these regretful emotions leads to the endless search for a compromise that, in Lilith's speculation, must end in the same as her destiny. In search for empathy, she recalls: "By the earth's will, new form and feature/ Made me a wife for the earth's new creature." (Eden Bower) (308). Rossetti relies on more than one aspect to conclude that Lilith's attractions are the deadly bet to subdue Adam and avenge the lost glory, where the coils can grapple the apple tree. "This reflection," said Galia Ofek, "which equates the lost Eden and the golden tresses, suggests that hair, as the figuration of women sexuality, is both the forbidden knowledge of the Tree, and the lost Eden (2009: 79). For this reason, reading the poem discloses, on one side, a sex race over domination, privilege, and progression. On the other side, it foretells an imminent fall as one of them goes against her nature. In other words, this female conflict embodies decline and decadence eventually when the inherent roles are intercrossed. It assumed the early typical religious mentionings about Lilith going against her Creator's will by not surrendering to Adam. However, the decadence could be a change in the attributes of the same scale that results in another change in the common standards or measurements. The idea could be clearer in Małgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołdys' comment on these transformations:

"Rossetti's Lilith embodies the threat of descending to the level of beasts: not only she herself regresses from the human to the animal, but she usurps phallic masculine qualities in the process and, as a result, renders man passive and effeminate. Clear descent down the evolutionary scale is coupled here with the mythical account of the fall of man from paradise, which is degeneration per se." (212)

Lilith, in this scene, legitimates a common reaction against man's authority and search for domination since God left him unleashed. The following lines of the poem illustrate the eagerness for revenge and the search that becomes an obsession for Lilith trying different ways to convince the serpent to comply with her request and let her sneak back into heaven.

"God's strong will our necks are under,
But thou and I may cleave it in sunder.
Help, sweet Snake, sweet lover of Lilith!
(Alas the hour!)
And let God learn how I loved and hated

Man in the image of God created." (Eden Bower) (309)

The insistence of Lilith to pursue this revenge was not apparently to harm the couple but to deliver a message to God that she hated the very concept of "Man" in this image or attributes. Thus, the poem offers Lilith a chance to justify her destructive will and actions. The tone of her voice could be heard with bitterness and darkness especially when she refers to two opposite pictures at the same time. The poem also comments on the stereotypical image of the serpent as an evil creature and a symbol of deception. Through her union with the serpent, Lilith shall be able to prove victory against the manly domination and prepares for femininity to stand out. No doubt, the wide range of Lilith's plea served as raising the awareness toward a foul issue and start advocacy henceforth.

Regardless of all the malevolent attitude of Lilith and her industrious seek for revenge, she is still convinced that God was just in the way He made her equal in power to Eve. This encourages her to carry on her bargain with the snake to acquire her shape. At the same time, the dramatic encounter between God and the serpent was kept intact to serve Lilith reach Eden.

"Nought in heaven or earth may affright Him;
But join thou with me and we will smite Him.
Strong is God, the great God of Eden:
(Sing Eden Bower!)
Over all He made He hath power;
But lend me thou thy shape for an hour!
Lend thy shape for the love of Lilith!
(Alas the hour!)" (Eden Bower) (309)

Repeatedly, Lilith was fully confident that the strength of revenge shall overpower the strength of a defense that God or his creatures would exercise once she sets off her plotting. The question is full of insistence and determination since it springs out of Lilith's longing for the lost hope and joy of love that once she lived with Adam. Hence, she includes God in her complaint when love was permitted to be turned into hate in a woman's heart.

"Is not the foe-God weak as the foeman
When love grows hate in the heart of a woman?
Wouldst thou know the heart's hope of Lilith?
(Sing Eden Bower!)" (Eden Bower) (310)

The image of the snake-woman is persistent in "Body's Beauty" and "Eden Bower" so far deeming the unquestionable effectiveness of women's seduction over men's resistance. The treatment could involve a cultural representation as the poet was trying to impersonate some of the most controversial issues of the Victorian age. For Rossetti, it was hard to come any closer to mingling the two attributes due to the historical symbolism and employments of the snake and the celebration of women as sensitive, elegant, and beautiful icons. Part of the complexity was because he "could not have treated such a theme, combining the erotic and demonological, in any less intense and vivid imagery than is to be found in "Eden Bower" (Łuczyńska-Hołdys, 212). This theme, although originated from the poet's interest in the legendary character of Lilith, also revealed Rossetti's genius to tackle such a sensitive theme that has both personal and cultural manifestations.

"Eden Bower" heads toward striking modification in the lines of its development since it sheds light on various metamorphoses of two main characters, the snake and Lilith. The first one was established even before the writing of the poem but recalled her when Lilith first was dismissed out of heaven losing her angelic form into a human one on earth. The second was in the form of the snake willingly dispatching her God-given shape to Lilith and stayed unshaped or undefined in the poem. The third metamorphosis was of Lilith's becoming "vampiristic or animalistic, which in turn becomes satanic"

(Łuczyńska-Hołdys, 214). Her ambition exceeds the thought of dispossessing joy from Eve into bloodthirst: "O how then shall my heart desire/ All her blood as food to its fire!" (Eden Bower) This act was justified to God deciding to make Adam accountable for his earth's enlivening and inhabitation. Accordingly, Lilith was also a witness when God decided to award Adam the free will to approach and feed on all the trees but one. Feared for her previous knowledge of life in heaven, Lilith here addresses the satanic role of pushing Adam against God's will and therefore to be in His rage.

The charm of Lilith went through her fellow serpent as well recalling another state of how God turned its compassion into hostility. This poem, like "Body's Beauty", encompasses an important identification of demonical feminine powers as "femme fatale" (Łuczyńska-Hołdys, 214). This is a recurrent motif that puts Lilith directly under social criticism when considering her as a representative for the Victorian woman. Regardless of all considerations, the poet shifts the attention to the successful scheme and the cleverness of Lilith to outstand a masculine power. Through Lilith metamorphosis into a snake, she can return to the place of joy where she first experienced the pleasure of being the "queen of Adam":

"In thy sweet folds bind me and bend me,
And let me feel the shape thou shalt lend me.
In thy shape I'll go back to Eden;
(Alas the hour!)" (Eden Bower) (311)

Taking the advantage of the snake's craft of being able to sneak around unnoticed and the sweetness and fatality of her tongue with Lilith's ability to take over the shape of other creatures, Rossetti prepares for the dramatic fall of Eve who has not yet been, unlike Adam, warned about "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" (Eden Bower, 310). What is striking more is the portrayal of the snake, which is symbolically the most cunning creature, as submissive and overwhelmed here by the convincing utterances of Lilith taking all her powers of bargaining away.

The sublimity of the tone of Lilith which is favored with coaxing words magnifies the horrific setting and refers to a war waging ahead. The very keen and fragile pieces of conversation and the lovely phrases of Lilith were juxtaposed with the blazing fire which is only put off with revenge. In Lilith's opinion, the insistence to make Eve pay back for her selfish relinquishing of Adam is a matter of self-esteem and restoring the inherent roles. Though very enthusiastic, Florence S. Boos describes Lilith as "the Rossettian evil/seductive life force – amoral sexuality – both less human and closer to abstraction to Sister Helen" (1976: 154). The fall of Eve, in Lilith's mind, would only remedy the memories which could not be overcome but rather become a source of depression for Lilith. Another striking revelation by Lilith was the description of her heart when it comes to smiting the adversary inside his fortress. Like in a reverie, Lilith shifts in time to the future when she overtakes Eve who is going to willingly bow down to her fulfilling the desire of the fiery heart of Lilith. The sweetness of these words finds its echo in the imagination of Lilith:

"Lo, Eve bends to the breath of Lilith!
(Sing Eden Bower!)
O how then shall my heart desire
All her blood as food to its fire!" (Eden Bower) (311)

Rossetti could have referred to a common Victorian awareness of the overwhelming reality of human maturity. The danger of this maturity is reflected in the act of Lilith and her vicious quest for payback. She is unfortunate in the sense that she did not have her chances or enjoy a wise knowledge away from heaven. Her characterization could be a manifestation of the writers' reluctance and hesitation of dwelling in the unknown. Hence, part of Lilitl's story legitimates a sense of sympathy concerning this aspect. Throughout the gloominess and destructiveness of temptation in the poem, the poet's ultimate objective was not the horrific illustration of this act itself, rather he "concerns himself with the psychology of the temptress, a female who opposes the poem's cosmological order" (Boos, 1976: 154). Lilith, with the devastating feeling of

being maltreated by Adam and betrayed by God, has left any thoughts for reconsideration aside and instead blindly addressed any form of power that would bring her closer to her end.

Reinforced by the idea that she was made of the First Man's flesh and bone, Lilith's primary rejection of Adam's demand was against forcing her into a slave-labor situation. The poem recurrently intensifies the great difference between Lilith's appearance and reality. Recalling the opening of the poem, she speaks of herself as "was made like a soft sweet woman" (Eden Bower, 308), referring to the resemblance of her external formation to the typical beautiful woman. The following illustrations establish a clear identification of her personality by making use of all the potentials which were once given to her by the Creator. The exaggeration of Lilith's lust, which is expressed in her gloomy supplications for the snake, conjures up the image of hell burning the sinful persons as punishment for their unrighteous deeds. As a witness for the oath that God took on Adam at the moment of his creation and granting him all the freedom to wander heaven except the Knowledge Tree, Lilith was completely aware that humans have an inherent hamartia that would be the means toward leading them to sin.

"By the help that in this wise Tree is,
God knows well ye shall be as He is.'
Then Eve shall eat and give unto Adam;
(Alas the hour!)
And then they both shall know they are naked,
And their hearts ache as my heart hath achèd." (Eden Bower, 311)

Reading these lines would also suggest that Lilith is looking for justice through a predetermined sense of equality. By serving knowledge into Eve and then to Adam, the couple is unconsciously driven to feel the pain of disobedience and outcast that Lilith had once experienced. The privilege that she would like to approve against the will of God lies in the justification for her act of denial. Whereas Lilith's primary objective for rejecting the order of God was a rejection for any subordination for manly authority, Adam and Eve fell for the seduction of the snake during their search for immortality.

"As in the cool of the day in the garden
God shall walk without pity or pardon.
Hear, thou Eve, the man's heart in Adam!
(Alas the hour!)
Of his brave words hark to the bravest:—
'This the woman gave that thou gavest.' " (Eden Bower) (311)

The detachment between God and Adam and breaking the entrustment that God granted for Adam was Lilith's objective that proves the bestial essence of masculinity. Excited by the ecstasy of her victory, she brings doom and rage on earth as "the blithe birds sang at thy wedding", now on earth Eve's "tears grew thorns for thy treading" (Eden Bower, 312). This echoes the banishment of Lilith from heaven down to earth by the Red Sea roaming every dark place in exile weaving nets of hatred and malevolence to heaven inhabitants.

The concept of love was changed on both meaning and value. In her dialogues with the snake, Lilith plays the role of the caring and rewarding equalizer lavishing her love for the assistance of the snake. This vengeful love is immediately grasped by the snake as an indication of agreement and unity of goals. On more than one occasion, Lilith addresses the snake with phrases like "O my love, thou Love-snake of Eden!" (Eden Bower, 312). However, this love was easily welcome by the snake to wage the catastrophic enmity between the couple.

The last part of the poem celebrates Lilith's accomplishment and the bitter gloats expressed in the lines following the success of her scheme. Seeking union with her joy-mate snake, she states her eagerness to hear the cries of the mortal creatures as "'Dust he is and to dust returneth!'" (Eden Bower, 313). She feels the gaiety of bringing Adam down to all the

hard work and agonies of survival on earth. On the other side, Eve should assume the task of being the mother of all humanity and their subsequent faults and guilts where she would experience the sense of loss and regret.

The poem is closed with an allusion to one of the most terrifying narratives between the first two brothers in the creation: Cain and Able. As the following line shows, by a further act of Lilith and the snake, one of the brothers shall end the life of the other.

"Two men-children born for their pleasure!
The first is Cain and the second Abel:
(Sing Eden Bower!)
The soul of one shall be made thy brother,
And thy tongue shall lap the blood of the other." (Eden Bower) (314)

This final account prepares for the long ages of regret that humanity shall experience as their parents brought to them the awareness that doomed them and destined their existence as outcasts from heaven.

Generally, the poem represents Rossetti's later perception of feminity in the Victorian age proposing aspects of fatality that accompanied the state of suppression once it is not tamed. "Eden Bower" is of "the four work he would like to be known by". The list includes, in addition to "Eden Bower", other poems which are "Jenny", "A Last Confession", and "The House of Life" " (Boos, 150). This poem serves as chronic reflections of women-phobia for men since it reveals, through this experience, striking incidents of how a woman can express her rage. With the ultimate goal of assaulting mainly men and newborns, Lilith was associated with this loose force in the air in search of a body container to haunt. There is no doubt that this new place is far beyond Lilith's ability to cope and reconcile with it and hence it is quite obvious for her to feel the difference and recognize herself as a descendant outcast.

This poem, as one of Rossetti's later poetry, illustrates his full maturity and experience in the treatment and portrayal of his subject matter. The tone of the poem expresses a lucid attitude toward the sense of satisfaction and the level of empathy that he reached after losing his first wife. Hence, "Eden Bower" brings to the surface a new concept of a woman that is fully aware, careless, determinant, and fully liberated. One way of grasping the situation is through looking at the poem as an age prerequisite that, indicated through Lilith's reaction, all women must seek deep inside the worlds of her interpersonal wonderings.

Conclusion

The first encounter with the character of Lilith would recall common beliefs which were haunting her from the first moment she was introduced to humans outside heaven. Rossetti's manipulation of Lilith could be grasped at two levels: the individual and the social. At the individual level, Lilith alludes to a moment of epiphany for the poet that was not captured when Elizabeth Siddal was alive. The tragic loss of a wife and career partner conjures up the whole incident to his eyes with a special focus on not wasting the joy of celebrating beauty anymore. On the other level, Lilith represents a call for social reform through redefining most of the concepts related to women's vulnerability in front of masculine control.

The self-educated woman did invest a great part of her time and effort toward developing ideas that could bring her closer to her purpose. Thus, little or no interest was shown in the definitions of "mother" or "wife" while Lilith manipulated them for achieving her goal even when the situation demands revolting against God. Her portrayal also sheds light on the struggle between man and woman through rephrasing the women's socially restricted actions along with the abnormalities imposed by the age. Lilith experienced the pride of being the first woman married to the first man in the creation. Yet, she revolted against him when matters came into forcing her to accept the terms that go against her will. The texts dedicated a special emphasis on the struggle of Lilith to abstract Eve from overtaking her feminine love for possession while maintain a sense of superiority regardless of the consequences. These consequences included leaving humanity unequipped to face the fierce of Lilith and seeking comfort in the oral amulets and night rituals.

Being able to address a human shape, haunt men's spirits, take over their dreams, and have the imperishable nature were signs of experimentation which God intended as evidence to Adam that conformity can only be achieved if he succeeds in finding for himself a mate of his nature and tendency. Hence, the creation of Adam and Lilith might not be intended to be partners as the narratives suggested, but rather quarreling opponents foreseeing the catastrophic fate that mankind must fight to escape. The details in the two poems reinforced this idea in compliance with the earlier texts that referred recurrently to the disconformity and lack of harmony between the two.

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