Golden Temptresses: The Petrifying Beauty of Pre-Raphaelite Women

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by

Zoë Julienne Claire Manwiller

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Dedicated to all redheads. Your beauty is valuable and more powerful than you know.

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Introduction

Her lute hangs shadowed in the apple-tree,
While flashing fingers weave the sweet-strung spell
Between its chords; and as the wild notes swell,
The sea-bird for those branches leaves the sea.
But to what sound her listening ear stoops she?
What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
In answering echoes form what planisphere,
Along the wind, along the estuary?

She sinks into her spell: and when full soon
Her lips move and she soars into her song,
What creatures of the midmost main shall throng
In furrowed self-clouds to the summoning rune,
Till he, the fated mariner, hears her cry,
And up her rock, bare breasted, comes to die?[1]

The woman described in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem *A Sea-Spell* is a Siren or sea fairy. Huddled over her lute, she is adorned with flowers and lush silks as she plucks the strings of her instrument (fig. 1). Her voice, full of song, catches in the wind, taunting nearby sailors and enticing them towards their deaths. A crown of rosy colored flowers sits upon her head, the petals curl and bend as though swaying to the sound of her music while her fingers delicately strum notes, releasing a lethal lullaby. Apple blossoms caress the sea fairy's knees, dancing on edges of the fabric. The presence of flowers and fruit, which carry the fragrant scent of spring, assist her in bewitching the "fated mariners."

Rossetti not only composes this poem about a sea fairy or siren, but also brings her to life through paint in his work *A Sea-Spell* (fig. 1). In his painting, the sheer and flowing fabric of the sea fairy's dress drapes elegantly along the soft contours of her body. One section of her

[1] Alan Davison, "Woven Songs and Musical Mirrors: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Symbolic Physiognomy' of Music," *The British Art Journal* 13, no. 3 (2012): 92.

gold-spun hair cascades down like a long, sweeping cloak.[2] The other section of her locks rests in a curl against her neck, spreading upwards to coil around the branches of the apple tree. Her hair is its own entity as it twists and moves, catching ribbons from her gown like a butterfly tangled in a web. Her voice echoes across the rocks, armed with the power to kill. The spell she casts encapsulates the wild energy presented in this mythical creature. She lives in a mythical realm of fairies, Sirens, and netherworlds, her wild nature untethered and enhanced by the nature around her. This particular painting shows a sea fairy or Siren who lures men to their deaths. Within the Pre-Raphaelite genre, there are numerous renditions of mystical paintings that depict women with mysterious beauty who mask the creature they are (such as a fairies, nymphs, or otherworldly creatures) using many disguises of appearance. Where there is beauty, there is also danger. There was a clear fascination among the Pre-Raphaelites for crossbred folkloric women such as Sirens or fairies. These fables question what can be contained within the human form. How did the Pre-Raphaelites show the human form while alluding to what lurks beneath? Many of these paintings represent figures in a particular moment, but the figures often reference longer narratives that help us understand the depth of human fear and desire.

In this project I consider works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John William Waterhouse, William Holland Hunt, and Paul Delaroche to emphasize women as masters of patience, who use their beauty in the art of deception. Rossetti's sea fairy is dangerous, wild, tempting, and beautiful; she is free to use her powers as she wishes. These themes are present in many Pre-Raphaelite paintings of women. This project considers the tension between fear and desire, a

[2] Red hair is often characterized as *golden* in the poetry and descriptions of the Pre-Raphaelite women.

tension that makes these paintings, and the women they depict, dangerously powerful and alluring.

In 1848, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.[3] While the movement itself was incredibly short-lived, the influence of the Brotherhood's existence and philosophy in artwork lasted through the rest of the 19th century and into the 20th century.[4] The trio chose to call themselves the Pre-Raphaelites as a way of commemorating Italian painters before Raphael was able to influence their work with the complexities of perspective or shading.[5] They chose to call themselves a Brotherhood because it emulated the message of a group of men working in tandem to create a new genre of art that reflected their values.[6] Their kinship was close and brought to life by Robert Upstone in his pursuit to uncover *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream.* Upstone recounts how, while gathered together in John Everett Millais' childhood home, they enthused about early Italian frescos.[7] The three men admired simple line quality more present in modern academic painting without the complexities of chiaroscuro shading or perspective.[8] The trio wanted to create an artistic movement with a humble nobility that superseded the unnecessary extravagance of High Renaissance artworks.[9]

Dante Gabriel Rossetti is arguably the most famous member of the Brotherhood. Rossetti, a painter and a poet, composed his personal life into his musings of paint and

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[3] Christopher Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (n.p.: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), 9.
[4] Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 9.
[5] Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 10.
[6] Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 10.
[7] Robert Upstone, *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream: Paintings and Drawings from the Tate Collection* (n.p.: Tate Publishing, 2003), 11.
[8] Upstone, *The Pre-Raphaelite*, 11.
[9] Upstone, *The Pre-Raphaelite*, 11.

scholarship.[10] Rossetti "lived in a realm of kings, knights, goats and legends."[11] A great deal of content presented in Pre-Raphaelite paintings derives from folklore and mythology, as can be seen by characters such as Lilith, Kypris, fairies, and Arthurian figures. Who these figures from "legend" are, and what they represent, will be brought to life in Chapter One. Rossetti's fascination with realms of kings and knights informs us that the artists of the movement were aware of the folklore traditions that punctuated the artistic world of Pre-Raphaelite art. The Pre-Raphaelites contributed greatly to the Medieval revival of the romantic tales of Arthurian legends.[12] Focusing on the visual content in the paintings, and the appearance of the figures within them, I analyze the folktales that are brought to life as well as the complexities of the messages held within the art itself.

I believe that the artwork coming out of this movement shaped the visual status of the Victorian era by introducing portrayals of *femme fatales* or *fallen women* captured in the magnificence of natural imagery. The femme fatales were dangerous females who threatened the purity and piety of Victorian society.[13] They were wicked, vile women. The "fallen woman" is one who has fallen from the grace of God, her status as a woman tainted by her sexual nature and promiscuity.[14]

The depiction of femme fatales inspired this project. In them, I felt an undeniable rumble of power. Their representations have a sinister and mysterious quality to them, despite being hidden behind floral and aesthetic designs. I found myself searching for where I could feel this sense of intrigue and why I was so enchanted. I saw it initially in their corporeal bodies,

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[10] J. B. Bullen, *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* (n.p.: Frances Lincoln, 2011), 6.
[11] Bullen, *Rossetti: Painter*, 6.
[12] Iris Fernandez Muniz, "Women in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Arthurian Renditions," *Atlantis* 37, no. 2 (2015): 231.
[13] Paul Almonte, "When My Life Drops 'Twill Be Her,'" *The Thomas Hardy Journal* 25 (2009): 72.
[14] Nina Auerbach, "The Rise of the Fallen Woman," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, no. 1 (1980): 30.

especially their red hair, which drew me in. Each book on the Pre-Raphaelites I perused was filled with golden beauties, and I had never seen so many represented in one artistic space. The femme fatales' expressions demanded attention, further drawing me in to look towards their environments and the nature around them. The preeminent source of power in these paintings is conveyed in the mystery and intrigue of a single still image. With incredible detail, these artists capture the depth of a quiet setting. Though they make reference to longer narratives and histories, the paintings often focus on a single moment, an intimate glimpse of the woman alone. The Pre-Raphaelites create intrigue in their artwork where something unknown lurks beneath the surface; something the viewer must piece together while looking at the lush materiality of these scenes and stories.

The Pre-Raphaelites are masters of articulating stories from the past upon canvas or in prose. Powerful stories of rejection and tragic fates are interwoven into paintings displaying the experiences of women. They draw on mythology, biblical sources, Arthurian legends, the middle ages, and so forth to show a group of women who are all viewed through an antagonistic lens. Are these women truly villainous? Is that darkness attributed to power? While some paintings considered here illustrate women in a group setting, most examine women alone to gauge how, in their solitude, they access the world and what, precisely, about their stories makes them alone. The image created is a woman who is deeply lonely, cut off from the balance of society and placed within the tension of beauty and antagonism. In their isolation and loneliness, however, they are strong, which reveals the complexity of their characters. I explore both individual fate and the loneliness of women who break the mold and find strength outside of what is "normal."

Pre-Raphaelite art has long captured the attention of not only art lovers, but scholars. There is a substantial body of literature focused on specific paintings or collections in a larger group. The three artists of particular importance in this project are Rossetti, Waterhouse, and Hunt. A large body of the scholarship I considered focuses heavily on Rossetti's prolific work, as he is one of the Brotherhood's founding members. Several scholars have considered aspects related to what I explore in this project. Elizabeth Gitter's article, *The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination*, considers the ways in which women's hair is attributed to her power and sexuality in the latter half of the 19th century. Using the story of mythological figure Medusa to drive her piece, she relates the desire to cut off a woman's hair to male castration anxiety, arguing that the impulse to do so is because the hair is the origin of women's agency. Gitter uses Pre-Raphaelite paintings to uncover the multiplicity of meanings of hair, pointing specifically to both Lady Lilith and The Lady of Shalott. These are the two primary figures discussed in this project.

Fear and desire are the most prominent themes I seek to understand; these are themes that have been associated with the Pre-Raphaelites for a long time. J.B. Bullen even titled his book *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism*. Once again there is a correlation established between Medusa and Lilith emphasizing hair as a means to entrap men while acknowledging its snakelike qualities. Much of Bullen's attention centers around the roots of male desire for women who are not aggressive, but more passive, while they look in the mirror. Lilith's hair once again intensifies her sexuality. Bullen argues that Lilith is a fetishized woman who is void of emotion thereby making her body the sole source of sexualization. The works of these two scholars were critical to my thinking, as they inspired my terminology and

deepened my understanding of fear, desire, and sexuality. These works helped me scratch the surface of these themes, but I seek to look far deeper.

This project considers the relationship between fear and desire, and how that combination makes these women so alluring. While building on previous literature, I explore the complex tensions between inner nature and outer environment and between fear and desire. Chapter One focuses in particular on the inner nature of these women using visual signs that suggest complexity beneath the surface. I use the term hybridity to think through the tension of fear and desire. Hybridity, and an attitude of evil, is demonstrated through outer appearance. This chapter focuses on how the visual content and appearance of the woman reflects her inner demon. Through the study of Jewish folklore, nymphology, fairyology, and other femme fatales, these dual female embodiments are revealed. Chapter Two shifts to look at the outer environments and the way in which the danger and fear are mediated by solitude, weaving, reflections, and the expectation of piety. Women are isolated and limited; they are forced into tasks meant to reestablish female identity in the scope of Victorian ideals. The artists were trying to make the women in these paintings safe somehow, by establishing a sense of security by containing their power. I use the term mediated to describe the means in which the power of women is controlled or subdued. This chapter complicates our ideas of power. The hidden message of power begs the question: can you really lock these women away, or do they continue to influence the world outside even under the restrictions of God, men, and Victorian ideals of femininity? Even while their power is checked they still find agency in their hair, weaving, and music. This power dynamic is something the Pre-Raphaelites have not fully answered. Where does the power lie even when women are locked up?

Chapter One:

Fear and Desire—The Hybridity of Demoness Women

Lilith the Demoness

Enthroned before a wall of darkness sits a woman combing her lustrous long red hair (fig. 2). The bower is plunged into darkness with the exception of what appears to be a small window.[15] Tendrils of shadow weave their way through the contours of the painting, bringing particular attention to the depth of the woman's eyes. The paleness of her complexion draws attention to these darker attributes. Deep set amber eyes remain transfixed on her appearance in the mirror while she combs through cascading waves of gold. Her gaze is distant and cold, with no warmth whatsoever shrouding her pupils. A sense of stillness sweeps across the canvas; the flowers once crawling across the dark background look caught in silence as though afraid of being seen. This attractive central figure looks like her movements have stilled. The woman's hair falls downward through the fingers of a comb while her body remains quietly in place, her back flush against the supporting chair. The sharpness of her facial features contradicts the smooth lines of her body. The muscle outlining the back protrudes intensely, acting as a continuous line from the base of her neck, past her shoulders, and across her breast. The snakelike curves of her body and yellow eyes set with the black pupil allude to the serpent monster that lies within. Throughout the painting there is a sense of tension, a danger contained within the beauty of this woman and a threat concealed behind the seeming calm of the scene.

[15] The bower Lilith resides in is a "modern upper-class Victorian boudoir or bedroom" as specified by J.B. Bullen on page 136 of *The Pre Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism.*

The viewer is enticed in through the glorious detail and displays of color, the plays of light, and surface and depth.

The woman who seduces the onlooker with her dangerous beauty in Rossetti's painting is Lilith, who "sits, young while the earth is old, and subtle of herself contemplative, draws men to watch the bright web she can weave."[16] Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (fig. 2) represents the storytelling style and colorful aesthetic of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In addition to his painting of Lilith, Rossetti wrote the poem *Body's Beauty,* which briefly relays her backstory with rich descriptions of her wickedness proving her to be the opposite aesthetic of the typical Victorian woman.[17] The lore behind Lilith presents her as a foil to Eve.[18] Lilith, the demoness who defied the plan of God by rejecting her husband, Adam, prowls the night in exile, preying on the flesh of babies.[19] Lilith is referenced in the post-Biblical period and identified as

> The first Eve…Upon her entrance into the Garden of Eden, Adam and Lilith immediately began to fight. She said, 'I will not lie below,' and he said, 'I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be in the superior one.' Lilith responded, 'We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.'[20]

Lilith is mentioned as a part of the Hebrew tradition in the Book of Isaiah once.[21] She also appears in other Jewish folklore as the wife of Adam who existed before Eve in texts such as the Babylonian Talmud and her image is represented in incantation bowls from ancient Iraq and Iran.

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[16] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Body's Beauty.," in *The House of Life by Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Sonnet-Sequence: A Variorum Edition with Introduction and Notes*, ned - new ed., by Roger C. Lewis (n.p.: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 181.
[17] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty," 181.
[18] Dan Ben-Amos, "Lilith in the Garden," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 42, no. 3 (May 2016): 56.
[19] Allen, "One Strangling," 292.
[20] Ben-Amos, "Lilith in the Garden," 55, 56.
[21] There are many different translations of the Book of Isaiah 34, some where Lilith is mentioned by name and others where she is not. In the AMP translation (See source "Isaiah 34:13-15 Amplified Bible," Bible Gateway.) She is mentioned by name: "The creatures of the desert will encounter jackals and the hairy goat will call to its kind; Indeed, Lilith (night demon) will settle there and find herself a place of rest."

[22] Her story varies slightly among the texts, but, ultimately, is the same. Lilith defies the normative gendered relationship between a man and woman that places her at the bottom because she seeks an equality that she is refused. While rewarded with freedom, Lilith's ability to bear children is taken away from her; God's punishment damns her loins to be hostile towards any child she conceives, killing any child she becomes pregnant with. Banished from the Garden of Eden, "She left [Adam] to consort with demons; because she refused to return to Adam, her own Demon begot infants die daily, and she preys on the babies of others. She also visits men in their dreams and bewitches them."[23] Taking on a half-demon, half-woman state, Lilith represents a fall from grace similar to Satan's.

Lilith is thus a hybrid creature representing a duality of female power.[24] The power of women like Lilith in Pre-Raphaelite paintings stems both from their femininity and from a thinly veiled demonic or animalistic nature. This hybridity is characteristic of several female subjects in Pre-Raphaelite paintings. To explore the implications of this hybridity, I look towards fairies, gods, and nymphs, revealing a tension between desire and fear expressed visually in these women's hair, physical bodies, body language, and the natural elements which surround them. The relationship between fear and desire is one which the Pre-Raphaelites explore and exploit through all of their visual motifs of red hair, bodies, movement, and nature. How is fear inspired and where does it come from? The unknowns are the suspected signs we see but we do not fully understand, evoking a sense of potential. We see only half truths or pieces of a whole as though we peer through a small opening. Or perhaps we see only the reflection, the image flipped or

[22] Rebecca Lesses, "The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women," Jewish Women's Archive.
[23] Allen, "One Strangling," 286.
[24] Hybridity in the context of this chapter is two natures embroiled into one.

contorted therefore harder to make sense of. These suspicions are what hybridity and animality allude to, something anxiety-inducing in the process of concealing and revealing. The scariest moments are ones where you are anticipating the horror to befall you.

The exploration of the hybridity begins with Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* where Lilith, a potent example of the Victorian "fallen woman," opens up the dialogue of this project about the complexities between fear and desire. Fear and desire working simultaneously is remarked upon in the art historical discussion of the Pre-Raphaelites. J.B. Bullen most notably uncovers Rossetti's fascination with red hair. Bullen classifies this fascination with red hair as a fetishization used to depict female sexuality.[25] I do not see Rossetti's prolific use of red hair as a fetishization, but instead as a visual motif meant to portray the villainous woman. It is an immediate signifer of danger which catches the eye of the viewer. Bullen's association of red hair to sexuality or promiscuity comes through in all of these paintings. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* by John William Waterhouse becomes relevant in the discussion about how hair and body language exemplify the fairy's inner nature. Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* has a similar undertone of true intention masked by innocence. The nymphs use nature as the primary means to mask their marauding. These paintings are cloaked with a sense of anticipation, forcing their viewers to be wary. Rossetti, Waterhouse, and Hunt are all playing with what you see and what you suspect, what you know to be true and what you think could be which creates a powerful

[25] Bullen's book *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* describes Dante Gabriel Rossetti's relationship towards women in his personal life looking closely to his wife Lizzie Siddal and the model Jane Morris. Dante's fascination with female sexuality is present in many of his paintings because he often depicts women in sexual or erotic states and doesn't shy away from subjects that might make others uncomfortable. Dante's *Lady Lilith* is one of his most famous examples of this, however, he also focused on figures such as the Arthurian Queen Guinevere. Instead of showing Guinevere in her pious or queenly state he chooses the adulterous moments highlighting her betrayal of her marriage to King Arthur. Bullen believes Rossetti to be fetishizing red hair as a means to portray a woman's sexuality.

image around these women. The unknown or suspected activates the imagination in a way that amplifies feelings of vulnerability or potential for danger. The women in these paintings incite, in particular, male fear at the hidden inner nature of women, their potential for desiring harm, and for going against nature.

All the women are antitheses to the domestic ideologies of Victorian society. These women are presented for the male gaze and act as a warning to women who stray from the path of piousness. Looking at the fallen woman, the external signs of inner nature which seek to draw male characters in present a hybridity of nature being both beautiful and demonic, but also feared and desired. Fear operates in different ways, instigating a moment in which desire or danger are experienced.

Animality: The Serpent in the Garden

At first glance, Rossetti's painting may seem to depict an alluring woman, but a closer look shows the way the artist subtly points to this hybridity and the hidden demonic nature of Lilith. Virginia Allen articulates the dualism present in *Lady Lilith*: "The dichotomy of good and evil, personified as benevolent sinful female idols, forms a pervasive theme in the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti."[26] Good and evil, while difficult to explicitly classify, take shape through the alluring beauty of Lilith which hides the demonic creature.

Rossetti and Waterhouse played with the crossbreeding of mythical creatures in their depiction of female subjects. What implications does this exploration reveal about their understanding of evil, women, and particularly red hair? As we will see, hair acts as a primary

[26] Allen, "One Strangling," 285.

way to express the hybridity of these seductive female figures, building on a long tradition of associating both the power and danger of female characters with sensuous long hair. We will find that hybridization reveals itself through the path and movement of hair and the outward appearance of these women. One question to think about is to what extent does external appearance conceal or reveal the true inner nature of these women? Additionally, hybridization lives in the rich color palette associated with these works of art. Lastly, dual natures are seen in the essence of the female power in the paintings.

The demonic creature that Lilith is often associated with is a snake, and she is presented as a "snake woman" in Talmudic legend.[27] Literature about her acknowledges, but doesn't fully explore, the extent that animal forms characterize Lilith. Lilith is characterized as evil and the corporeal form of evil usually takes its shape as a serpent.[28] Serpents are connected to the Garden of Eden, as well, through the well known story of a snake who appears before Eve in Genesis. The snake draws Eve to pluck fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil like sleeping beauty pricks her finger on the spindle:[29] "And the serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:4-5)."[30] The serpent in the garden of Eden appeals directly to Eve rather than to Adam. From the beginning, evil incarnate takes serpent form, and acts through women onto men. Lilith, like a nymph, siren, or fairy, lures Eve to take a bite of the apple and Adam takes part as well.

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[27] J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 134.
[28] Ross G. Murison, "The Serpent in the Old Testament," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 21, no. 2 (1905): 127.
[29] Brothers Grimm, "Sleeping Beauty," in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, 2.
[30] "Genesis 3: 21st Century King James Version," Bible Gateway.

The curves of her painted body are smooth and continuous like a snake (fig. 2). Lilith's body as being both snakelike and womanlike is not a new idea. During the Renaissance, Michaelangelo painted *The Temptation and Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, therein depicting the Garden of Eden with Lilith as the serpent tempting Eve towards the apple (fig. 3). Her bottom half has disturbingly skin-textured coils which wrap tightly around the tree, utilizing the snake's flexible body and inhuman skeleton. Lilith's hair is free flowing with curls near the roots of her scalp, similar to Rossetti's version of the demoness (fig. 2). In Dante's *Lady Lilith,* her eyes darken, her expression anything but soft, revealing the wickedness of her soul and the malice of her intentions. Akin to a fairytale, Lilith is born as a villain with the idea that beauty disguises what lurks below. A long history of disguise exists in mythology, poetry, and art as seemingly kind, innocent, or beautiful women conceal a darkness that lurks beneath: something wicked and dangerous. What does it mean for Lilith to be the snake tempting Eve in Michaelangelo's depiction of Genesis? Outside the bounds of a holy existence with Adam, Lilith appeals to both men and women: "The devil chose a particular kind of serpent with a woman's face, because like approves of like, and then gave its tongue the power of speech."[31] She is dangerous precisely because she can appeal to women. Men succumb to lust when they fall into her trap, driven by sexual desire, and, perhaps, Eve, or other women, can too fall prey to envy of her beauty and freedom. Eve is drawn by the snake with the promise of wisdom in Genesis.[32] Women are not allowed to experience the gift of wisdom without freedom because traditionally women were barred from reading, in some cases even from reading the Bible.[33] So perhaps what

[31] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* 87.
[32] "Genesis 3: 21st Century King James Version," Bible Gateway.
[33] Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (n.p.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 86.

Eve was really drawn to was freedom. However, there is danger in desiring to be like Lilith, to be free, because it places her in a position not only against God, but on the side of Satan. Lilith has a broad array of targets, tempting both men and women.

Lilith's soft complexion also reveals her snakelike abilities. Just as Lilith "sits young while the earth is still old," she embodies a snake through her youth.[34] Regenerating its outer layer, the snake renews "its youth by sloughing its skin."[35] We have explored the way Lilith embodies a snake, but she is also paired with the imagery of a spider when Rossetti says she "draws men to watch the bright web that she weaves."[36] Embodying different animalistic forms, Lilith is given significant power with supernatural abilities like changing men's fates by capturing them in a web or transforming from a snake into a woman. Both a snake and a spider can silently creep through the night to fulfill their sinister intentions. Her skin carries the connotation of a dual message as well. To have a pale complexion tricks the viewer into believing her to be pure and chaste.

Another aspect of Lilith's appearance, which alludes to her beastly nature in Rossetti's image, is her masculine-presenting features (fig. 2). Armed with a sharply defined jaw, cleft chin, and intense shoulder muscles, Lilith has androgynous appeal. Lilith the "succubus, night demon, [and] baby stealer"[37] is punished by God to never bear children.[38] Stripping her of her

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[34] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty," 181. In addition to a snake, the youthful and pale appearance of her skin connects her to a vampire (a mythological creature known for hunting in the night and draining the blood of its victims). Marta Miquel-Baldellou makes the connection between the Victorian "fallen woman" and different mythological creatures such as vampires, witches, ghosts, etc. (173). Lilith, also being called a night demon, aligns with this comparison as she is known for prowling the night in search of male victims in her exile.

[35] Murison, "The Serpent," 115.

[36] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty," 181.

[37] Allen, "One Strangling," 286.

[38] Lilith being a "baby killer" has inspired disturbing tales for the explanations of contemporary medical misfortunes. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is believed to have originated from Lilith. (See source Rebecca Grimes et al., "Lilith," Kenyon). There is no medical explanation for SIDS as stated by the Mayo Clinic, so Lilith is

fertility strips her of her femininity. The Old Testament comments often on "the pain of child-birth as a type of the greatest suffering. This then, was the woman's curse."[39] What happens when a woman is stripped of these pieces of her womanhood? Lilith is no longer allowed to experience the pain of child-birth, only the pain of losing children: a far worse curse indeed, one which takes away an essential quality that makes her a woman. The sexist implications of God's disciplinary actions are as follows. Lilith's inability to carry children to term implies that in order for a woman to achieve independence, she cannot also be a mother (or rather, a mother who is able to nourish her children properly and breathe life into them). Lilith represents a disruption to God's order because she seizes her own independence as a woman. In not submitting to Adam, she is unable to have children and is thereby demonized as a woman who chooses for herself. God corrects nature effectively to get it right the second time with Eve. Nature in the form of Lilith was too free, too unbridled, too defiant.

"Her Enchanted Hair"

In Rossetti's painting of *Lady Lilith* (fig. 2) Lilith's serpent form emerges through the movement of her hair, the glassiness of her complexion, and the delineation of her body. One of Rossetti's most famous poems was written alongside his painting of *Lady Lilith*:

> 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 subtle of herself contemplative,
> Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
> Till heart and body and life are in its hold
>
> The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where

blamed as the demon who steals the lives of children in the night leaving behind death where there is no source otherwise, like the antithesis to a miracle.

[39] Murison, "The Serpent," 129.

> Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
> And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
> Lo! As that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
> Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
> and round his heart one strangling gold hair.[40]

Hair in *Body's Beauty* represents gold, youth, and allure. The language of the color gold is specific because it makes the hair seem more valuable.[41] When locks are represented as golden it has the temptation of wealth alongside the appeal of a youthful woman. Her hair is like fool's gold, drawing men into her trap with the promise of riches. The façade presented for men to fall for is the representation of youth and gold. However, the "earth is old" because it knows the hidden trick; Lilith's natural self has competed in this game of seducing men for a long time. In the poem, golden hair paired with youthful allure has the power to turn what may seem like a neutral appendage into a dangerous adversary, ultimately leading to the man's mortal demise.

The enchanted hair's power does not stop at its appearance, but also has otherworldly abilities of acting, strangling, and bending. These qualities, brought out in Rossetti's poetry, are also made apparent in his painting, showing how hair is loyal to the woman's body. The power held even in a single strand of hair is visualized by Rossetti in this painting, paying artistic homage to the mythology of Medusa, a woman who has snakes standing in for locks.[42] Medusa is a Greek mythological winged monster called a Gorgon whose hair is made up of snakes with a withering stare that turns observers to stone.[43] Slithering along the bodice of Lilith, like a snake, is a small piece of her mane and its strands (fig. 4). Pulling away from the loose mass of curls,

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[40] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty.," 181.
[41] Elisabeth G. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," *PMLA* 99, no. 5 (1984): 942. Gitter comments on the commodification of golden hair. She discusses how their "Midas Touched" golden hairs attach wealth and sexuality, recognizing that a woman's value and power is held in her hair (942).
[42] Gitter, "The Power," 939.
[43] Hal Foster, "Medusa and the Real," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 44 (2003): 181.

the strands crawl across the trim of her dress, reaching towards her heart. Rossetti acknowledges the lifelike qualities of the hair: "...till heart and body and life are in its hold…thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent and round his heart one strangling gold hair."[44] The "him" to which Rossetti refers to is the man who falls prey to Lilith's tricks and traps. Moving along her body, the hair seems to have a mind separate of her own, yet nevertheless acts as a servant to the woes of Lilith. Strands of hair outstretch across the left side of her body towards her heart as though following orders to wrap around the heart of a captured man whom Lilith in the painting is waiting for. The "one strangling golden hair" bends and moves as a living extension of the self.

In general, hair represents female power in its unruliness. Both Lilith and the other figures that will be explored later on have unbound hair as a symbol of their departure from civil society and into the wildness of nature. Looking at Ovid's *Heroides* as an example, women scorned and cast out of society for sinning wear their hair loosely hanging around their shoulders.[45] The freedom of the hair diminishes the presentation of civility.[46] Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus on an island, cries "See my hair, loose like one in mourning."[47] Reflected through the loose strands on Ariadne's head is her heightened emotional state. Like a woman in mourning, her hair is disheveled in an expression of sadness. This is the same motif used in ancient and medieval art, where loose hair was part of the formula for depicting women in

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[44] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty.," 181.
[45] Publius Ovidius Naso, *Heroides*, trans. Harold Isbell (n.p.: Penguin Group, 1990), 94.
[46] It was not acceptable for women over the age of sixteen to wear their hair down in polite society as stated by Judy Knight, "The Crowning Glory of Victorian Womanhood; Or Was Long Hair a Huge Time-Waster Instead?," Albany County Historical Society.
[47] Publius Ovidius Naso, *Heroides*, trans. Harold Isbell (n.p.: Penguin Group, 1990), 94.

extreme grief associated with mourning.[48] A woman's hair was not meant to be taken out so when it hung loose, it represented a shift in her identity. Hair can go beyond reflecting the unruliness of women, but can instead become an active purveyor of evil. Therefore, it is no surprise that Lilith has been compared to the Greek mythological character Medusa.[49] In place of a head of hair, Medusa has living snakes who move of their own will while still being attached to the head of the Greek monster who bears them.[50] This is similar to the undulating waves of Lilith's locks, which mimic the way snakes can manipulate and bend their bodies with complete autonomy. The shape of the coils creates a notable parallel with the shape of a bunch of tiny serpents on her head, winding upward as her demon form is revealed. Even if Lilith is completely still, staring into her mirror, she could kill a man with just her hair, thus creating a weapon out of an image of femininity and fragility. Lilith is often correlated with Medusa, as both use hair to entrap men and are connected to snakes.[51] The hybrid nature of these females is connected to their hair, furthering the idea that the hair is an extension of the self. Loose hair represents their indepence and free flows to assist them in their destructive motivations.

Fear of the Female Body

Although Lilith is not naked, the top of her loose bodice drapes down in delicate folds, falling gracefully while still covering the breasts (fig. 2). The silky fabric is almost transparent, the shadowed outlines of her arm clearly visible beneath the fibers of cloth, insinuating more.

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[48] Katherine M. Boivin, "The Visual Arts," in *A Cultural History of the Emotions in the Medieval Age (350-1300)* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 86.
[49] J. B. Bullen, *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* (n.p.: Frances Lincoln, 2011), 185.
[50] J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (n.p.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 131.
[51] Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite*, 131.

The foggy color of her gown begins in a thick pure white while covering her lower body, and the farther up it travels, the more that can be seen underneath.[52] She gazes intently into the mirror while combing her hair, like a Siren on land. Lilith toys with fear and desire, coaxing the excitement of the male onlooker with her body and hair.

Pre-Raphaelite paintings were made by men for a presumed majority male audience. They certainly engage what art historians have long termed *the male gaze*. Historians classify the male gaze as when women are placed under male scrutiny and are eroticised and objectified in a way that brings the male pleasure.[53] Whenever male gaze is brought into the discussion to describe visual material, its connotation is resoundingly negative.[54] The relationship between the female subjects in these paintings and their contemporary male consumers was particularly charged because of the socio-political context of the time.

Feminist ideologies began to take deeper root in the 19th century with new waves of social change.[55] Women were starting to fight back and express their desire for equal rights which begged the question of how the "cult of domesticity" or "cult of true womanhood"[56]

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[52] Lilith's off white gown that nearly perfectly matches the tone of her flesh, ties her to the lore of the fallen woman. Often, fallen women were represented wearing white to reinforce the archetype of a ghost: a creature who has fallen from the realm of the living and haunts the corporeal world as stated by Marta Miquel-Baledellou in "'As Soon as Ever She Died, the Hauntings Began': Revisiting the Victorian Fallen Woman as a Gothic Archetype in Susan Hill's the Woman in Black," *Ex-Centric Narratives: Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Media*, 170.

[53] Edward Snow, "Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems," *Representations*, no. 25 (1989): 30.

[54] Snow, "Theorizing the Male," 30. Mary Deveraux looks deeply into feminist theories regarding this topic in her work "Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics." Her argument is that the process of gazing is always conditioned by preconceptions that come from the way both men and women are taught; "both men and women have learned to see the world through male eyes" (1). So not only do men look through male gaze but women are taught to see the world through male eyes as well. Edward Snow in "Theorizing the Male" attempts to step outside, and try to analyze visual material through a revised lens, without the objectifying male gaze.

[55] Sudesh Vaid, "Ideologies on Women in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1850s-70s," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 43 (1985): 1.

[56] As defined by Barbara Welter in *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,* The cult of true womanhood made women hostages in their own homes. The worth of an individual was broken down into the four virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity and those who strayed from the path of virtues were enemies to God and society. The most important virtue for men to look for was a woman who upheld pious or godly ideals. Purity was

would suffer if women were given the benefits of equality through "political and legal privileges, education, and employment?"[57] With a growing sensation of revolutionary change, the pressure of subduing the female sex became the forefront of the male imagination. The ideal of Victorian domesticity was threatened, creating an anxiety amongst men of what this new woman would look like. We know that William Hunt, one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, sought to show how Western civilization was deteriorating when women began to break from traditional female roles in his paintings (which will be explored in Chapter Two).[58] Male fear of the female body was heightened by a new wave of feminism beginning with the idea that a wife would become unattractive and stripped of all qualities which make her a woman if she were to become more equal.[59] This is because the anti-feminist belief at the time was that by nature women were inferior so to equalize the two would go against nature and innate femininity.[60]

Anxieties about the female body became clear with early Greek portrayals of the nude Aphrodite. The fears which began in 5th-century Greek culture have lived on throughout history and continue to have life in Pre-Raphaelite paintings.[61] Historically, prior to the 19th century,

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therefore fundamental to achieving piety. Without piety the woman became none other than a fallen woman such as Lilith represents.

[57] Vaid, "Ideologies on Women," 1. Sudesh Vaid looks at the implications of women gaining more political power and some anti-feminist philosophers who opposed this newfound wave of feminism on the grounds that men and women are too different by nature. John Ruskin, a man whose philosophies greatly influenced the Pre-Raphaelites and with whom they were well acquainted (as noted by Mancoff in *Flora Symbolica*) worked in opposition to the Victorian feminist movement taking root. He believed that a woman's purpose is to fulfill the "mission and rights of Man" (Vaid, "Ideologies of Women," 4). Vaid talks about the feminist approach of the time which believed that women were not by nature so vastly inferior to men, but trained to be so under the male vision of what classifies a woman and her femininity. Family and values of home life were the pedestal for men to stand upon as they claimed that women should not be integrated into society equally.

[58] Udall, "Between Dream," 38.

[59] Vaid, "Ideologies on Women," 2.

[60] Vaid, "Ideologies on Women," 2.

[61] The nude form was conceived of by the Greeks in the 5th-century. As mentioned by Zainab Bahrani in "The Hellenization of Ishtar: Nudity, Fetishism, and the Production of Cultural Differentiation in Ancient Art," 3.

Aphrodite became the paradigm for the female nude in European aesthetics because hers was the first realistic portrayal in Greek sculpture.[62] Predating the Greek celebration of nudity, many cultures saw this exposure as both shameful and degrading.[63] Zainab Bahrani describes male fear of the female body and sexuality through different representations of Aphrodite. Greek sculptures of men in the nude form have been celebrated in many contexts; this celebration was not extended to women until later sculptures of the nude Aphrodite were introduced.[64] While the Knidian and Hellenistic Aphrodites are certainly the first realistic nude sculptures, the genitals are completely nonexistent; where the folds of the vulva should be there is nothing but a void, smooth surface.[65] Bahrani states that the disappearance of the vulva can be attributed to male children's castration anxiety: when they see a female's lack of penis, they fear the removal of their own:

> The fetishistic gaze then, both believes and denies the lack of the (mother)'s penis, and the child focuses on a substitute, such as an article of clothing, or a part of the body, which becomes the fetishized object. Consequently, women's bodies become at the same time objects of fear and of desire for the male viewer.[66]

Elizabeth Gitter brings castration anxiety into the conversation in regards to fear of the female body and hair specifically. Gitter notes that the ritual practices which coerce women to shave their heads are all demonstrations of "genital symbolism;" the substitution for the woman's lack

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[62] Zainab Bahrani, "The Hellenization of Ishtar: Nudity, Fetishism, and the Production of Cultural Differentiation in Ancient Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 19, no. 2 (1996): 3.
[63] Bahrani, "The Hellenization," 3. For more information about the reception of the nude, look towards T.J. Clark, "Olympia's Choice," in *The Painting of Modern Life: Painting in the Heart of Manet and His Followers.* The introduction of nudity was particularly shocking to certain audiences such as with the reception of the nude *Olympia* because it does something different with the male gaze. Where a naked body was at one time synonymous with prostitution, any class can now be found. It speaks a different kind of language.
[64] Looking back at the Greeks, men portrayed their nude bodies as means to assert dominance and prowess whereas for women it was at one time associated with shame and originally it was unusual to depict them in the nude. This has completely shifted today; women are hypersexualized and overly shown in the nude within many forms of media whereas men's nudity is far more scarce.
[65] Bahrani, "The Hellenization," 6.
[66] Bahrani, "The Hellenization," 6.

of penis takes shape in a woman's hair.[67] The fear created by genitals warps the male imagination to view women as less human and more as "objects of fear and desire." The fetishized body becomes easier to treat with disrespect or punishment because it is not fully a human being, but something lesser and incomplete. The dehumanization of women was apparent in our earlier discussion of animality, where men make women less human when they feel that deep desire.[68] Lilith plays with the fear and desire male onlookers feel, waiting with bated breath to capture them. These cautionary tales of the seduction of men through the means of a beautiful woman are central in much of the Pre-Raphaelite art, and hair becomes a dominant motif for expressing the allure and latent danger of these figures. What is most beautiful can also be the most petrifying.

Mythologies and legends of the 13th century attribute the sight of the nude female body as the moment of transformation into her animal form.[69] Within the region of Aix, Lord Raymond of Castle Rousset was galavanting on horseback when he came across a woman of the most exquisite beauty; so taken by her handsome looks and manner of speaking he proposed and the two were married on the one condition that he never was to see her naked (for to do so would be to lose all his good fortunes).[70] Long after their marriage Raymond, overtaken by the desire and "bent on his ruin," seized her bath curtain to view her naked body only to witness her transform into a serpent and disappear forever.[71] This is one version of the story of Melusine.[72]

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[67] Gitter, "The Power," 938.
[68] Marta Miquel-Baledellou, "'As Soon as Ever She Died, the Hauntings Began': Revisiting the Victorian Fallen Woman as a Gothic Archetype in Susan Hill's the Woman in Black," *Ex-Centric Narratives: Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Media*, December 2021, 173.
[69] The 13th Century is when Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* was written.
[70] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* 89.
[71] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* 91.
[72] Although she is not explicitly stated in Tilbury's version as "Melusine" the story is hers as Raymond was Melusine's husband as stated by Barbara Walker in the Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (631). Gervase

When women are in vulnerable states of nudity such as in the bath or exposed in bodies of water, they turn into demons. A strange and mythological deterioration of the female body and its genitals takes place reiterating an anxiety between the sexes. The women in both of these stories do not fully turn into creatures; it is usually the latter half of themselves that devolve into monsters.[73] Sexualization moves from the naked body, becoming implicit in ambiguous parts. J.B. Bullen says that the covering up of the body alludes to sexuality elsewhere, most specifically in the hair. Lilith's gesture of combing while gazing at the mirror is a sexual exhibition because it directly alludes to sirens who comb their hair whilst singing songs to cajole or entice lonely sailors.[74] So, the fear of the female body which began with the nude Aphrodite takes shape in 19th-century Victorian paintings. The Pre-Raphaelites were creating images for the male gaze which hid the female body while still sexualizing it. The way the Pre-Raphaelites manipulate bodies to convey hybridity is attributed to the way women would encounter men and the choices they make of how to appeal to them.

Rossetti often depicts the women in his paintings with intensely androgynous features. Even bathed in light reflecting her luminous skin, Lilith's jaw remains sharply contoured by shadows. Starting from the base of her head, the line drawn down from her neck to her shoulder has a considerable bulge in the middle. This protruding muscle is called trapezius which anatomically tends to be more pronounced in men.[75] Another notably androgynous feature on Lilith is her lips. The lips are plump with gradients of red and a shimmery sheen. The outline of

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of Tilbury wrote the original version of this story with a "nameless" mythical woman that would come to be known later by the name of Melusine as stated by Sidney Hartland in *The Romance of Mélusine* (187,188).

[73] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* 91.

[74] Gitter, "The Power," 938.

[75] As stated by Jared Ourieff, Brent Scheckel, and Amit Agarwal in "Anatomy, Back, Trapezius," National Library of Medicine, the trapezius muscle starts at the base of the neck, extends across the shoulder and down in a trapezoidal shape.

her lips are eminently pouted outwards which is accentuated by the use of a lighter white just on the outskirts of her lip. Lips so pronounced are not usually found in paintings of Victorian women, but in portraiture of men. Sandro Botticelli's self portrait features the same pouty outlined lips with a distinct slope in the cupid's bow (fig. 5). Whereas women are usually seen with softer features, such as almost rounded lips that blend seamlessly into the face, as can be seen in John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (fig. 6). The sculpted definition of her jaw, harshly stuck out lips, and larger muscles are all characteristics which give her features an androgynous appearance.[76] In Egyptian culture, androgynous features were "a way of insuring both kingly identity and feminine gender."[77] Androgyny gives the dual nature of these figures bestowing them with masculine strength while still maintaining a feminine beauty. The duality between masculinity and femininity allows that fear to still exist because of qualities of male strength, however, the feminine nature means that they will still be perceived as weak because of their sex and therefore disregarded.

The "Meekness" of a Woman

Lilith is not the only Pre-Raphaelite demoness. Women's evilness can hide behind an appearance of meekness and naivety. Historically, poison is a woman's weapon as they "do not have" the physicality to wield a sword or knife.[78] Generally women in these historical periods have been dressed in ways that inhibit movement, adding to their inability to display strength over cunning. They are seen as incapable of doing so or possessing the physical capability to

[76] As stated by Jared Ourieff, Brent Scheckel, and Amit Agarwal in "Anatomy, Back, Trapezius," National Library of Medicine, the trapezius muscle starts at the base of the neck, extends across the shoulder and down in a trapezoidal shape.
[77] Catharine H. Roehrig, ed., *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 9.
[78] Cheryl Blake Price, "Poison, Sensation, and Secrets in 'The Lifted Veil,'" *Victorian Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 206.

hold a knife. In order for women to have power, it is often assumed to be tied to a devious or demonic nature. For Lilith, her serpent form offers her a new type of poison, a venom she can use to infect people coyly without being seen. She can slither silently through the night to fulfill her plans. Although there are subtle physicalities of "weakness" she is still incredibly strong. Her presentation of herself as meek is an act of strength because it is deceitful.

In *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (fig. 7) a Pre-Raphaelite painting by John William Waterhouse, the fairy child's (La Belle Dame) hair twists around the neck of her victim, forcing his head down further to meet her gaze, allowing no means of escape. The knight's eyes remain transfixed with a soft expression looking down upon her enchanting face, but his body is seized with terror, tightly grabbing hold of surrounding sticks and plants in the forest's alcove. His physical body is moving to save itself as though caught in the moment of realization that he might be in danger. His face remains fixed in a trance with little expression on her beauty as she drags him downwards. Nonetheless, La Belle Dame is hunched on the ground in a fetal position with her legs curled up and back bent downward she gazes innocently up at the knight. Using her posture of submissiveness to entice him and pull him downward, she captures him despite the position of frailty and innocence. She is merely a woman lost in the forest, hiding the true nature of a fairy within.

Looking at the hierarchical scale between the knight and the faery, La Belle Dame is pushed downwards and in an almost fetal position with her legs bent and her head slightly dropped. The knight towers above La Belle Dame, the size of his body dominating the space above her. She rises from the ground like the flowers as though coming from the world below. The flora in Pre-Raphaelite paintings err on the side of darkness. While deceptively beautiful on

the outside they usually hold sinister meanings. The poppies scattered throughout the painting seem to innocently represent the delicacy of sleeping, as if lulled to sleep by a Siren's song or fairy's melody, the vulnerability of the state can easily be taken advantage of. Despite the presentation of Lilith or La Belle Dame as lesser for her sinful nature, her power is greater than the "physical superiority" of a man. Physical prowess is not needed when the manipulation of the senses overpowers the men they seek to injure. La Belle Dame's power is so great she is able to force the knight to his knees as though bowing before her. In order for this woman to wield such extraordinary power over him she must be a fairy fiend. The message becomes that a woman cannot fully be a woman and be powerful. There must be some underworldly reason for her mind to obtain the power to lure a man or exert her authority. La Belle Dame occupies a natural space, fading into the forest and existing both as a separate entity from the natural scene, but also a part of it. The eye follows her body from the tip of her toe, to the curve of her knee, up to the tilt of her head. Like a flower, she comes from the ground, her body the stem that ties her to the earth and her face the melodious flower that entices a passerby to stop and smell the aroma. She is both fairy and woman, but also both nature and woman.

La Belle Dame fits in nicely with the lore of fairies being associated with Satan's fine workings because, according to Darren Oldridge, "it was conceivable that fairies were sometimes figments of the imagination and sometimes demons in disguise."[79] Fairies are the epitome of beauty wrapped around the heart of a trickster. They are land sirens of sorts, singing lullabies to seduce men. In the John Keats poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci," which this painting is based upon, the faery calls out "O what can ail thee, knight at arms, aso haggard and so woe-begone?"

[79] Darren Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil in Early Modern England," *The Seventeenth Century* 31, no. 1 (March 29, 2016): 2.

[80] Calling out to him, La Belle Dame plays up that coyness as she innocently tries to comfort the knight and ask him what is wrong. Her face reflects a look of love he interprets to be the truth.[81] The fickle nature of easily trusting men is quickly forgotten because the villainy of the woman is what we are meant to recognize. In order for a woman with such strength to entice a man, she must indeed be pulling the strings of magic. The hair of the fairy coils around his neck, dragging his face lower to gaze upon hers. Her hair follows the contours of her back as it arches down. Just as in *Lady Lilith*, the hair of La Belle Dame has a mind of its own, slithering across her lap and the neck of her victim. Hair slithering is such a gentle movement it could be construed as a caress. While it subtly advances upon the knight, it moves delicately with no agitation or illusion to the violent strangulation that might follow. Just as there is a dual nature to the beings who grow the hair, the hair itself can both comfort and ensnare. These two actions are linked together because they both are means to trap the men who these stories are written about.

The fairy blends in with her surroundings as though she is a part of the forest like one of those "wandering fires" who confuse lone men traipsing through the forest.[82] The lore of fairies inspires the vision for the Pre-Raphaelite depiction of a woman who has two forms: a woman and fairy within. The lore of fairies designs them as "adept tricksters. Their ability to change shape meant their appearance could not be trusted."[83] The appearance of a woman in the form of La Belle Dame is a figment or illusion of sorts. The movement of La Belle Dame's hair reveals her ability to transform and take on different guises. Hair drapes down the fairy's back and stands like the log of a tree behind her, mimicking the natural forest scene surrounding the

[80] John Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad," Poetry Foundation.
[81] John Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad," Poetry Foundation.
[82] Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil," 4.
[83] Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil," 2.

couple. Her hair can both slither and stand still like a log indicating her multiple forms. In the moments where the hair takes on the design of a log, it stands still as though lying in wait of instruction, or merely observing. Like her hair is an extension of her body, the forest seems to be an extension of her abilities as well. The forest is loyal to the fairy as can be seen in the way it creates a semicircle, cocooning the two, blocking off the knight from the rest of the world, allowing only spires of light bouncing off the lake to shine through. Satan often "pursued his ends through deceptive appearances—as darkness masquerading as light" (Luke 11:35).[84] Waterhouse blurs the edges of the fairy's face and skin outlined by the darkness. The blurring of the edges gives the illusion of a glow. As though dipped in starlight, the faery's child shines, her supernatural essence made clear through her complexion. She herself might be a will-o-the-wisp. This trick of the light with painting is a commonly used tactic by Waterhouse to make his majestic creatures appear with a glimmer and shine in accompaniment with their bewitching beauty. Through their appearance of glowing light complexions, both Lilith and the faery's child give the false sense of security for the man who sees their soft glow of pale complexion as innocence.

Will-o-the-wisps, also the subject of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, were wandering devils who carried out their deceitful endeavors in the wilderness.[85] The faery in Figure 7 who kneels on the ground was "Full beautiful—a faery's child, her hair was long, her foot was light, and her eyes were wild."[86] The face of La Belle Dame in such close contact with the knight is veiling. She hides her deceit so well that it is easy to forget the story unfolding is anything but romantic.

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[84] Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil," 4.
[85] See Elizabeth Adela Armstrong Forbes' painting *Will-o'-the-Wisp* for reference to Pre-Raphaelite paintings that included these wandering devilish creatures.
[86] Keats, "La Belle," Poetry Foundation.

Her eyebrows are upturned slightly, her eyes are outlined with a faint pink color, her lips pillows of plump redness. Her beautiful face entices him closer, a kiss so close to transpiring between them. Instead of a kiss he receives an infectious song. La Belle Dame acts like a will-o-the-wisp, leading knights astray deeper into the forest she acts as a "false light that beckons the unwary from the true path."[87] She is a trickster with her beauty being the "false light." Fairies are notoriously good at tricking people and evading capture.

The water nymphs of Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* use their beauty and innocent appearance in the art of deception as well. The nymphs await victims in their watery dungeon below the surface of sunlight and godly splendor (fig. 8). John William Waterhouse uses the Greek story of nymphs to contribute to the discussion on the importance of hair.[88] The nymphs run their fingers through their weapons. Their eyes innocently graze over the man whose jug falls limp at his side, attention solely focused on the nymph who touches his arm. The relationship between the man, Hylas, and the central "female water deity," Kypris, is quite similar to La Belle Dame and the knight.[89] Hylas, a member of the Argonauts, found himself at a spring when fetching water near Kios where the nymph Kypris's gaze fell upon him: "She noticed him nearby, flushed with beauty and the sweet graces, for the full moonlight struck him as it shone from the sky."[90] Here, Kypris grips Hylas not with her hair, but her hands in two places, securing his fate to be dragged down perhaps with the promise of a kiss.[91] Similarly to Lilith and La Belle Dame, Kypris grips his wrist quite forcefully, but her right hand is placed

[87] Oldridge, "Fairies and the Devil," 4.
[88] The Pre-Raphaelites of the 19th century took a liking to the rarity of red hair, making women with it the subject of many paintings in the era.
[89] Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21.
[90] Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 67.
[91] Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 67.

rather delicately below his elbow. Above the water the nymph's skin is white, their eyes soft, their demeanor ethereal and beneath the surface are fishy tails whose sovereignty reigns in the water. Once again comfort is tinged with the onslaught of viscous death. Black veins spread like a disease mottling the legs of the women. What does it mean for the nymphs to be women above the surface and demons below? Tails are no match for human legs once Hylas enters the water realm. It is a myth that runs through many tales, crosses the pages of mythology, folklore, and fairy tales.

Flora and Fauna

Natural elements are pervasive within the Pre-Raphaelites' vision, as one of the founding principles of the Brotherhood was a close study of nature that would inform their expression.[92] We will see how the hybrid women use flora to disguise themselves in their environments. The women are the fauna, not fully human and not fully animal; they are creatures who embody hybridity and exist within their natural environments. These artists took an untraditional approach when creating compositions; they would paint the natural background first, adding in the figure later, thereby subverting the expectations of academic painting which constructed compositions hierarchically.[93] John Ruskin, a boon companion and defender of the Brotherhood, articulated the ideal that truth was found in nature.[94] Stemming from the Brotherhood's fascination with early Italian and Flemish Renaissance artwork was an interest in disguised mystic symbolism through the natural elements.[95] They consciously gave deeper meaning to the

[92] Debra Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica: Flowers in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2003), 6.
[93] Allen Staley and Christopher Newall, *The Pre-Raphaelite Vision: Truth to Nature* (n.p.: Tate Publishing, 2004), 14.
[94] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 6.
[95] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 7.

flowers by drawing from their poetry or others such as John Keats or Shakespeare.[96] Therefore, the imperative of otherworldly symbolism forces us to engage with the natural elements. If the Brotherhood was working based on Ruskin's idea of "Truth to Nature" the true constitutions of these women can be found merely by studying the flowers.

Masked and accentuated by the flora and fauna surrounding the nymphs of *Hylas and the Nymphs* is their darkness and strength (fig. 8). Creatures such as Sirens or nymphs are known as dangers of the sea who take the form of half women and half fish, or half woman and half birds, in Greek and Roman art.[97] They are neither fully human nor fully of nature. The Pre-Raphaelites articulated this hybridity not only within the contours of the female figures themselves but also through the symbolism of the surrounding natural elements. The flora present in *Hylas and the Nymphs* are *Nymphaea alba* or water lilies.[98] Emerging from the depths of clouded lake water are petite white blossoms (fig. 9). The middle of the flower takes the shape of tulip with the lips of petals curling in on itself and a few outer petals fall open to display the center. Dark green vines remain hidden beneath the surface, connecting to a webbed structure of the other stems all creeping silently whilst they grow or move with the water. The vines are like veins sprouting throughout the body, all connected to one another and controlled by one source. They are the lifeblood of the lake.

The bodies of the nymphs blend seamlessly with the vines and lily pads, their tails like a trellis. Debra Mancoff believes that the nymphs are like lilies in human form with milky white skin and red hair which mimics the underside of the petals.[99] Water lilies have a dual meaning.

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[96] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 7.
[97] Wilfred P. Mustard, "Siren-Mermaid.," *Modern Language Notes* 23, no. 1 (1908): 21.
[98] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 58.
[99] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 58.

On the one hand they symbolize purity, because of their association to the Virgin Mary in Christian tradition. On the other hand, however, they took on a far more sinister connotation in the 19th century with the depictions of Sirens: innocently beautiful with a strength and power to kill.[100] The ability to blend in with one's surroundings is not only symbolic of their hybridity with flowers, but also animals. Many aquatic species of animals blend in with their surroundings either to protect themselves or prey on others.[101] The nymphs blend into the scenery, appearing as unthreatening as a flower: still, delicate, and gorgeous. Stillness evokes power. It means you are comfortable with silence, waiting, and the art of observation. Those who observe rather than act impulsively understand their prey and therefore are able to predict their success.

Masked as lilies, the nymphs stalk forward towards the unsuspecting Hylas, who fetches water from a spring near Kios.[102] Their tails are like the vines, and their faces and exposed breasts like the blossom of the flower, blending them into their surroundings. Dressed within the nymphs' hair are other flowers as well, hiding them further. The nymphs have complete control over the domain of the water as they powerfully roam in a predatory group. For Hylas to get close enough to kiss a nymph means the promise of death just as if you were to eat a water lily you could die because of the plant's toxicity.[103]

Like Waterhouse, Rossetti also uses nature to accentuate hidden meanings as well as to mask the beastly forms of his figures. Surrounding Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* are many assortments of flowers each with their own sinister intentions (fig. 2). The bower is tranquil, as though the rose bush slowly creeps along the wall, cocooning Lilith in both as an indication of her

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[100] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 58.
[101] Diane Boudreau et al., "Camouflage," National Geographic.
[102] Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67.
[103] "Nymphaea alba - L." [White Water Lily], Plants for a Future.

sensuality, but also an allusion to her past in the Garden of Eden. Forest green stems tinged with brown spread through the dark space in between each blooming and budded rose, every piece smooth and thornless. Theologian Ambrose of Milan asserted that roses which bloomed in the Garden of Eden, releasing the sweet scent of paradise, had stems that were continuous and without thorns; the Virgin Mary embodies the "rose without thorns" as she is the only person born without the stain of original sin.[104] It was Eve's transgression that created the original thorns present on the rose.[105] In *Lady Lilith*, the indication of a rose bush with no thorns in the presence of a sacreligious, demonic figure tricks the male viewer to believe her holy innocence. The rose is also closely connected to the goddess Venus and originally had a moral connotation that the goddess could take her desire and turn it into virtue.[106] However, Rossetti has used the rose as means to portray the dangers of female sensuality when pairing the rose with indications of promiscuity and godly beauty in his painting *Venus Verticordia* (fig. 10).[107] Venus, too, is enclosed within a bush of red roses, one of her breasts sumptuously exposed while the other is hidden behind an orange. Dual meanings in floral imagery are often used by Rossetti to achieve the appearance of the divine, while ultimately evoking a sexual desire.

Lying atop Lilith's dresser and situated beneath her boudoir mirror is foxglove (fig. 11). Although they lie in a bundle, snipped from the ground, the foxgloves appear freshly plucked with no hint of wilting. Similarly the flowers bloom inside of her bower as though they exist as part of the space solely because she is there controlling them. Lilith lives as her own god as she was banished from the heavenly realm and the feeling is that she controls the flowers against the

[104] Laura Lieber, "A Stroll in the Garden: A Brief History of the Rose without Thorns," Duke Performances.
[105] Laura Lieber, "A Stroll in the Garden: A Brief History of the Rose without Thorns," Duke Performances.
[106] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 52.
[107] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 52 The epithet *Venus Verticordia* ["changer of hearts"].

will of God. Her power lies in control of the natural elements.[108] All the flowers exist in the same space yet they are in bloom at different times. There are different varieties of roses, but typically they bloom in early spring (March or April).[109] The poppy takes shape in mid-spring.[110] foxglove flowers in late spring or early summer.[111] Few petals of pink and lilac grow in a bell shape opening up to reveal the white inner tongue of the flower which is coated in black speckles. These thin and beautiful foxglove flowers can be used as a deadly poison.[112] The blossoming red poppy situated in the right hand corner where Lilith sits indicates sleep and dreams; however, they are also a flower laced with poisonous qualities (fig. 12).[113] Rossetti's poem *Body's Beauty* establishes the poppy's association with Lilith's villainous endeavors and sleep:

> The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
> Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
> And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
> Lo! As that youths eyes burned at thine, so went
> Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
> And round his heart one strangling golden hair.[114]

Lilith is known for prowling the night in her exile so the poppy's centrality to this painting is fitting. Lilith, similar to La Belle Dame, coaxes men in with her sickly sweet scent, using her kisses to lull them to sleep where she will snap their necks and ensnare their hearts. The colorless appearance of Lilith's skin and white clothing makes the vibrant rouges stand out. The

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[108] The very inclusion of flowers in the bower accentuates Lilith's sensuality because the disclusion of nature inside in John Everett Millais' *Mariana (1850-1)* diminishes sensuality as mentioned by Jason Rosenfeld in *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Art and Design* (58).
[109] "When Do Roses Bloom?," Venus Et Fleur.
[110] "California Poppy," U.S. Forest Service.
[111] "Digitalis Purpurea" [Common Foxglove], Wisconsin Horticulture.
[112] Virginia M. Allen, "One Strangling Golden Hair: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Lady Lilith," *The Art Bulletin* LXVI, no. 2 (June 1984): 291.
[113] Allen, "One Strangling," 291. Allen also notes that laudanum (which is present in the poppies) was the drug source that resulted in Rossetti's wife, Lizzie Siddal's, death.
[114] Rossetti, "Body's Beauty.," 101.

poppy is the flower of Hypnos and Morpheus.[115] The poppy is bright red which connects to the red of her lips, the tassel on the mirror and the red bracelet on her wrist.[116] The connection between her lips and the poppy is shown through the prose of the poem. With her kisses, they will fall asleep and that vulnerability will cost them their lives. Like the women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings themselves, then, the flora that surround them are beautiful, enticing, yet dangerous. Their outward appearance lures the viewer in; their contents, however, can prove fatal to the unsuspecting.

Conclusion: Chapter One

Rossetti's painting *Lady Lilith* is visually enticing yet charged with perceptible danger and warning. Lilith is capable of great power and with that power comes a threat. From the surrounding flora to the figure of Lilith herself with her dark mythology and snake-like hair the painting speaks of the threat posed by her hybrid nature. She is neither fully human nor fully animal and therefore unpredictable, capable of acting outside the tidy rules and expectations that guide each category.

Women are often viewed as one dimensional and wifely. If they are to step outside the norm, fearful men place them in an antagonistic lens to incite apprehension in those who might have done the same. The characters discussed thus far are all figured as villainous people whom one would not wish to encounter, the threat they pose more overt. The power and capability for destruction drips off of them in their more wild environments. With the potential for danger, the

[115] Allen, "One Strangling," 291. As stated on Britanicas website, Morpheus is the god of sleep and aids sleepers by sending them visual images in the form of dreams. As stated on Theoi, Hypnos, child of Nyx is a sleep spirit who wanders Erebos (the land of darkness).
[116]Allen, "One Strangling," 291.

characters of Chapter One incite fear within the men who come across them, thereby igniting men's desire to discover the unknown: a desire that will prove fatal. The figures of Chapter Two have much more ambiguity as their strength is detained by different forces. Both deal with this tension of attraction and fear. We turn then from expressions of the inner hybrid nature of the female subjects to their environments, the spaces in which they are trapped, and the work they do.

Chapter Two:

Woven Fates—The Solitude of the *Fallen Woman*

We have looked at the ways in which women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings are hybrids, combining Arthurian and Greek mythology and lore. These women have two modes of existence: they are simultaneously both demon and woman. This hybridity is expressed in Pre-Raphaelite paintings through representations of their corporal bodies. Chapter One explores women and their hybrid natures manifested in tandem with the artistic portrayal of demure beauty versus dangerous, seductive allure. The balance between the attraction and fear of women appears off kilter. Desire sits at the forefront, and fear contributes to their desire. The inner identity of the central women in these paintings is represented by a thinly veiled barrier between three unsettled female modes of being which are expressed and caught between human, animal, and temptress. Throughout the tales of these legends, the true forms of these women were concealed. As seen in Waterhouse's painting *Hylas and the Nymphs,* Kypris and the other nymphs appear as women from the waist up, whereas the rest of them remain hidden beneath the reflective surface of the water (fig. 8). Purple threads of light glisten incandescently across murky water, giving the surface an ethereal glow, while obscuring the fishlike tails of the nymphs. A man encounters the demon with no evidence or notion of her inner creature. If Kypris' true physical form was revealed before he was at her mercy, the trance might have broken, allowing him a timely escape. As discussed in Chapter One, the reflection of these figures' bodies can be seen in how they represent duality. We shift towards their environment and work to see how the fear of women is mediated.

While the exploration of the previous chapter concentrated on external signs of inner nature, this chapter shifts to consider the exterior acts of the women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings, paying particular attention to the motif of weaving by looking deeply at Waterhouse's *I Am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott* and William Holland Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott.* Through a look at their activity, work, and social industry, Chapter Two considers how women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings function within their environment in addition to their female-constrained roles, their cultural placement in this period, and their natural environment. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Girlhood of the Virgin Mary* further elaborates on the question: how were these women constrained to traditionally female roles? How do they relate to the outside world, and what role does their work—often of weaving and embroidering—play in negotiating these spaces? Instead of focusing on who the women are through their inner expressions of hybridity, the attention turns to outer expressions, thus adding a dimension and complexity to each individual. Ultimately we find that the Pre-Raphaelites focused on the visualization of the internal versus external tensions within Greek, Biblical, and Arthurian legends and mythologies. Chapter One analyzes ideas of hybridity and the nature of these women through motifs of hair, animality, and meekness. Chapter Two explores questions about the external world and the environments the women exist in by looking into the concept of fate using motifs of weaving, music, and punishment. The paintings in this chapter visualize Victorian ideals of domesticity. Female power is mediated and restrained through the spaces and tasks meant to reestablish a woman's place in the home. Unlike the unfettered female power represented in the paintings of Lilith, La Belle Dame, and Kypris, the paintings in this chapter attempt to domesticate the

women they represent. Although domesticated, the women of this chapter continue to find grains of power to reclaim their agency through their weaving, hair, and music.

Elaine of Astolat

In Waterhouse's painting *I am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott*, a woman reclines against a chair, her arms reaching to the back of her head as she contemplatively looks forward (fig. 14). Just above the crest of her knees sits a loom. Woven fabric with medieval-style circular motifs are stretched across the loom; these motifs resemble the circular mirror to her left which reflects the town of Camelot. Lady Shalott's story is both beautiful and tragic. Lady Shalott is a damsel known in Arthurian legend by the name of Elaine the lily maid of Astolat and is a pivotal character In Lord Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.[117] Elaine's story revolves around her unrequited love of King Arthur's most beloved and esteemed knight, Sir Lancelot.[118] Lancelot's heart was entangled deeply with Queen Guinevere, King Arthur's wife, with whom he had an ardent physical relationship.[119] Driven by lust, the two had a courtly love that established ideals of what a passionate love should look like. Stolen glances and secretive subtle touches added to the illusion of dangerous yet intoxicating love. Lancelot's attachment to Guinevere had no frivolity and made his heart so full that he ultimately had no room for any other kind of romantic love.

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[117] Debra Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica: Flowers in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2003), 38. Elaine is also referred to as the "weaver of fate" as she is known for weaving a red silk sleeve for Lancelot to wear by Barbara Walker.
[118] Alfred Tennyson, Lord, *Idylls of the King*. Lancelot is a gallant knight inspired by the Celtic "phallic lighting god" Lanceor as mentioned by Barbara Walker in *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (528).
[119] Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*.

Nevertheless, Lancelot's honor made him a servant to any dame or lady in need. Elaine of Astolat is a woman who becomes madly infatuated with Lancelot after their meeting, and desperately desires for him to reciprocate her feelings.[120] When Lancelot passes through the castle of Astolat, he leaves his shield with Elaine who treasures it deeply, memorizing "every dint a sword had beaten in it, and every scratch a lance had made upon it."[121] Alas, Elaine loves Lancelot alone for the love he has for her is that of a sister or friend.[122] Upon Lancelot's return, Elaine learns that Lancelot's heart belongs only to Guinevere and she contemplates her existence:

> Went half the night repeating, "Must I die?"
> And now to right she turned, and now to left,
> And found no ease in turning or in rest;
> And "Him or death," she muttered, "death or him,"
> Again and like a burthen, "Him or death."[123]

With mutterings akin to an incantation drawing her nearer to death, Elaine makes a hasty decision. She writes a letter for Lancelot and the Queen, says her goodbyes, and after ten days, she allows herself to fade into the depths of her emotion and die.[124] Although Elaine is not a villain, her character in Arthurian legend is disliked because the gossip about her stirs jealousy within Guinevere, and Elaine attempts to steal the heart of Lancelot away from Guinevere with the promise of her own heart. She is placed in an adversarial position to Guinevere, and, therefore, is seen through an antagonistic lens. Many strong female characters are represented as threats because of the fear that stems from their power. Ultimately, Lancelot had no heart left to be stolen because Guinevere held it completely in her grasp just as he did hers. Hence, Elaine's

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[120] Alfred Tennyson, Lord, "Lancelot and Elaine," in *Idylls of the King*,
[121] Tennyson, "Lancelot and Elaine,"
[122] Tennyson, "Lancelot and Elaine,"
[123] Tennyson, "Lancelot and Elaine,"
[124] Tennyson, "Lancelot and Elaine,"

failure leads to her death. In Tennyson's mystical retelling of the story, he names Elaine of Astolat the Lady of Shalott.[125] In his poem, *The Lady of Shalott,* Lady Shalott (or Elaine) is cursed by her unrequited love; she must weave before a loom the sights she sees in the mirror, never looking out into the actual world.[126]

Weaving as Women's Work: A Social Activity

Within her curse, the Lady of Shalott is lonely and isolated whilst weaving her patterns. Four walls restrict her inside as a means to mediate her power through solitude. Weaving has a long history of being associated with women; spinning, weaving, or embroidering textiles and garments is considered "women's work."[127] In Waterhouse's image, weaving becomes lonely work; although throughout history the practice of weaving was a social activity. In Tamang Nepal, embroidery and woven creations are highly valued. Weaving holds up the social order among kinswomen in Tamang after marriage.[128] Thread crafts were an opportunity to establish solidarity and engage with one another in song. Songfest events took place where women could exchange their creations with one another as a mark of friendship.[129] Similarly, in the early 19th century, it was considered a woman's duty to learn to sew, and to, thereafter, pass on to her children that skill, because the tradition of needlework is associated with a long history of

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[125] Flavia M. Alaya, "Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott': The Triumph of Art," *Victorian Poetry* 8, no. 4 (1970): 288.
[126] Alfred Tennyson, Lord, "The Lady of Shalott (1832)," Poetry Foundation.
[127] Maureen C. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe circa 800-1200* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 142.
Among the average North African Muslim women, the act of weaving was associated with a specific brand of female knowledge that not only did not include men but actively excluded them from the process creating a "subordinate discourse" in weaving for women alone as stated by Brinkley Messick in her work *Subordinate Discourse: Women, Weaving and Gender relations in North Africa* (211).
[128] Kathryn S. March, "Weaving, Writing and Gender," *Man* 18, no. 4 (1983): 731.
[129] March, "Weaving, Writing," 731.

community.[130] In the 19th century, social networks were created through groups gathering together to partake in this integral "womanly duty."[131] What's striking about both Shalott paintings is that they are alone, imbuing a once social activity with loneliness. Although the world continues to move forward outside in Camelot, Lady Shalott is expected to continue her craft, confined in a room by herself.

Weaving being a group activity is reflected through Dante Rossetti's sketch, *The Three Fates* (fig. 13). Emerging from the anarchic scrawlings of Rossetti are three elderly sisters encircled around a man lying on his back, mouth gaping open. The three faces hover above the body with expressions pinched in concentration and mouths downturned. Two of the sisters stare intently at a loose strand of thread. The far-right woman raises her scissor-wielding hand to the thread, about to snip. Weaving has a long symbolic history, most notably in Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, there are three fates responsible for weaving the destinies of mortals: Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos.[132] They act together to create the fabric of human lives from the thread that flows through their fingers. The fates once again point to the tradition of weaving being a collective work; they use this entwined medium as a way of determining the fate and future of an individual. Rossetti was very aware of this myth that attaches the act of weaving and threads to a human soul; he sketched a rendition of the sisters circled around a mortal man, Atropos' scissors ready to snip a soul in two. Clotho is responsible for spinning the thread, Lachesis slides her fingers across, choosing the length of the life, and Atropos severs where the soul is meant to end, the cause of a human's imminent death.[133] Weaving is one of the motifs

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[130]Amy Boyce Osaki, "A 'Truly Feminine Employment': Sewing and the Early Nineteenth-Century Woman," *Winterthur Portfolio* 23, no. 4 (1988): 225.
[131] Osaki, "A 'Truly," 226.
[132] Manfred Lurker, *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons* (n.p., 1984), Moires.
[133] Lurker, *Dictionary of Gods*, Moires.

which the Pre-Raphaelites draw upon as they explore Greek, Arthurian, and Biblical myths. It takes on a double of having both technical and mythical significance.[134]

The Solitary Woman

Given the context of weaving's characterization as a social activity, it is striking how Lady Shalott appears alone. While weaving was historically a social activity and even the fates are together as a trio, the women in many Pre-Raphaelite paintings are alone. The loneliness of the Lady Shalott in *I Am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott* is accentuated by what she can see in her mirror: the city of Camelot and the histories of those who inhabit it (fig. 14). Situated between two towering pillars, a couple sits close to one another, engaged in an intimate moment. Compared to the scale of Lady Shalott who exists in the foreground, the couple persists as visibly small yet clearly in view as though they are an aching reminder of the love Lady Shalott so desperately desires. The couple's presence reminds the viewer of how lonesome Shalott is; robbed of true love and cast out of society, the lone weaver becomes pitiful. Her proximity to the mirror makes clear her engagement with the outside world as she can watch more carefully and in greater detail. The closeness with which she sits is an attempt to connect with the outside world from the inside.[135] While previously the hybrid women of Chapter One were actively stalking, praying, and engaging dangerously in ventures to capture men, Lady Shalott's power is far more ambiguous; hers less defined and hidden in interior environments.

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[134] Brinkley Messick, "Subordinate Discourse: Women, Weaving, and Gender Relations in North Africa," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 2 (1987): 210.

[135] For more information regarding women watching the world through windows from their domestic interior spaces look at Linda Stone-Ferrier's *Glimpses, Glances, and Gossip: Seventeenth-century Dutch Paintings of Domestic Interiors on Their Neighbourghood's Doorstep.* The author explores the importance of background as opposed to foreground in 17th-century Dutch paintings and how open windows or doors were an integral part of neighborhood societies and the ways they interacted with one another.

The tone shifts from the wild nature of the outdoors to the domestic scene of the lone weaver: the wild woman versus the domesticated woman.

Love captures Lady Shalott (Elaine) and the desire consumes her, ultimately setting her on a path to lonely destruction. Although her solitude is in some ways a self-inflicted punishment, Lady Shalott was groomed by the world she grew up in; a world that taught her to place men above herself, thereby creating a cage that stripped her of strength. She is quite alone, left in a sense to have faith in her reality. Lady Shalott has been woven into her lonely atmosphere becoming a product of Victorian domesticity. Nevertheless, the women are powerful in both chapters. Lady Shalott is stuck within the confines of four walls with no nature so her power is seemingly diminished through solitude.[136] Even so, these domestic scenes have subtle connotations of danger or a woman's power. Women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings are often alone because they are examples of the Victorian fallen woman who is expelled from society and punished with solitude, their fall usually resulting in death.[137] Lady Shalott (mirroring Elaine of Astolat) is like a fallen woman because she ardently adores a man who will not return her love, and she kills herself because of this, accepting death and, essentially, committing suicide. Her death not only represents her status as a fallen woman, but also foreshadows the downfall of Camelot.[138] Her fall not only influences her but impacts an entire kingdom. Therefore, her spiral into madness is mediated through weaving alone. Elaine's infatuation spirals her into madness because Lancelot cannot be with her. Weaving was a form of subjugating the madwoman to the

[136] Lilith in (*Lady Lilith,*) although presented in the quiet solitude of her power has the presence of nature to contribute to her power. Elaine on the other hand has nary a flower.
[137] Auerbach, "The Rise," 30.
[138] Auerbach, "The Rise," 31.

home as means to mediate their power.[139] In Elaine's case, her crazed lustful energy is construed as madness, which was seen as a danger in need of abating.

The composition of a solitary woman is prevalent among the Pre-Raphaelites. This solitude is created because the figure stands out from society in some way. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the woman alone engages the male gaze and presents a danger while also conveying a sense of loneliness and isolation from the normative social environment in which women generally lived. There is an undesired consequence for men when they continually punish women in solitude; once men take away women's power in a group, they learn how to adapt. Women's ability to have power in numbers is no longer their only asset. When pushed into loneliness, women learn how to have more power as individuals. Men who fear the power of women are the ones who believe isolating or eliminating them is the only option. When Lilith denied the desires of Adam, he rejoiced in God's decision to exile her.

The lone woman, both explicitly and implicitly represented in paintings during the Pre-Raphaelite period, becomes the villain when she is solitary. There seems to be a need to isolate or eradicate the powerful, free-thinking, individuals so that they are alone in death or exiled from society revoked of any jurisdiction or power. Historically we know that the woman being punished for standing out takes form in Paul Delaroche's *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* (fig. 15).[140] Jane Grey was a ruler of England for only nine days before her execution took place in 1554.[141] She took the throne fighting for the principles of Protestants only to be executed for

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[139] Two Pre-Raphaelite women who were titled as "madwomen" are Lady Shalott and Ophelia. Both of these women met watery deaths potentially as a way for the writers to mediate her madness. For more analysis into the madness of Ophelia look towards Carroll Camden's "On Ophelia's Madness," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1964).

[140] This painting predates the Pre-Raphaelite movement, however Delaroche's style falls under the academic style of art which inspired the Pre-Raphaelites as can be seen in Britannica's "Paul Delaroche."

[141] "The Execution of Lady Jane Grey," The National Gallery.

treason at 17, a man wielding the axe to her throat.[142] Her beheading has gone down in history, labeling her as a Protestant martyr.[143] Lady Jane was punished and executed simply for leading her country, revealing a deep-seated fear men felt for women given the power to lead. Young and idealistic, she was barely there long enough to explain herself, and was executed at the hands of men.

The famous painting *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* by Paul Delaroche (fig. 15) illustrates the patriarchal fear of strong younger women. Lady Jane's red hair is pressed against her head by a fabric blindfold while she pleads "What shall I do? Where is the block?"[144] Although she is being led to her death, the executioners felt the need to blindfold her to remove one of her senses. The man guiding her to the wood block appears to be kind, holding her steady and aiding her to feel the wood where her neck will rest. Yet by taking away her sight, they deprive her power just as the curse does with Lady Shalott. In executions, the blindfold's purpose was to create anonymity between the executioner and the prisoner; the task of the executioner becomes more difficult if some semblance of humanity is shown through the eyes making it harder to fulfill a duty.[145] Lady Jane Grey is stripped of her ability to see the world and is therefore less powerful even minutes before she is beheaded.

Most characteristic of this painting is Delaroche's attention to the contrast between light and dark. Jane kneels in her white undergarments, knee catching as she staggers onto the pillow. The path of her skirt is blocked abruptly by the wooden post which foreshadows the brutality of her death in only moments; her severed head will remain detached and lifeless, and yet the

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[142] "The Execution of Lady Jane Grey," The National Gallery.
[143] "The Execution of Lady Jane Grey," The National Gallery.
[144] "The Execution of Lady Jane Grey," The National Gallery.
[145] "Firing Squad," Crime Museum.

martyrdom of Jane Grey lives on through the Protestants. The milky white of her skin vibrantly stands out in comparison to the dark background. Stripped of her outer clothes, her undergarments stand out pure and white as though to remind the viewer of her youth and innocence. Cloaked in darkness are her ladies-in-waiting bemoaning the death of Jane while the men are silently engaged with their task as though they need this death to take place.[146] A central man wearing a long garment of black and tawny fabric actively controls the movement of Jane as she walks blindly. He is moving for Jane and does not allow her to move herself. She is alone in a room filled with people, with only herself for comfort. This painting is evocative and begs sympathy from the viewer as we are meant to understand Lady Jane Grey's plight. It is a beautiful painting with an eerie message.

The apparent distrust of women who stand out becomes apparent. When a woman steps outside the fold or seems too powerful and could sway the mentality of a group, the woman is removed or ostracized and made into a warning. The distrust accorded to them results in banishment or death. Men's sovereignty is considered a virtue whereas for women it is considered a vice, and therefore associated with wickedness. The lone female figure is made villainous. Women's isolation is meant to suppress power, but also to show how they are a warning to other women who might step out of line. How do these lone women take their circumstances and turn them into power?

[146] "The Execution of Lady Jane Grey," The National Gallery.

Extension of the Body Through Clothing

Although isolated, the women in Pre-Raphaelite paintings are not without the power to engage with the outside world, though this engagement is mediated. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Pre-Raphaelites were particularly fascinated by visual motifs drawn from the European Middle Ages. As Maureen Miller has shown, during the Middle Ages, women of all classes participated universally in the task of weaving. No matter a woman's status, weaving remained deeply ingrained in her duties whether they were royalty, slaves, or saints.[147] Medieval nuns, for example, while restricted to their indoor spaces, were meant to provide liturgical garb for the brothers of monasteries.[148] While these women were cloistered away, confined to specific spaces often with locked doors between them and the outside world, their crafts could circulate. Miller argues that it was through their products—the vestments for clergy such as albs[149] adorned with gold lining and encrusted gems—women entered spaces that were otherwise restricted to them.[150] The women crafted "Garments touch the body. They absorb its fluids, wear and tear with its movements."[151] The weaving, therefore, acted as an extension of themselves, a surrogate product that stood in for the woman herself and opened metaphorical and literal doors. The woven creations themselves stand in the world as a material presence for the women who are locked away. The weavers pass themselves into the clothing which then leaves the space to engage in the world physically.

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[147] Maria C. Pantelia, "Spinning and Weaving: Ideas of Domestic Order in Homer," *The American Journal of Philology* 114, no. 4 (1993): 493.
[148] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 141.
[149] An alb is a priestly garment
[150] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 144.
[151] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 141.

The fabrics and textiles also fill the spaces of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and act as the only tangible piece of the outside world for the women otherwise secluded from society. The argument here is that instead of offering a means by which these women could hold a material presence in the world outside, they invert this relationship. The Lady Shalott "weaves the mirror's magic sights," fabricating Camelot into the bower with her.[152] In the colorful threads woven into pictures, the female subjects of Pre-Raphaelite paintings summon the external world into their spaces, invoking and imagining a world in which they shape their environments and engage freely.

The Piety of Weaving

The act of weaving was often framed in medieval images as an act of innocence. The Virgin Mary, for instance, while anticipating her nuptials to Joseph, was often shown weaving.[153] Miller says that there are many circulations of Mary in reference to this art form, even before she was made a vessel for Christ. Indeed, Rossetti picks up on this medieval tradition quite explicitly. In Rossetti's painting titled *The Girlhood of Virgin Mary*, Mary sits in front of a table, her hands are poised above her embroidery, fingers curling around the needle while her gaze peers steadily forwards (fig. 16). A delicate golden halo drifts peacefully over her languorous auburn hair.

The sense within the scene has a lingering silence that is prayerful in nature. As her mother sits beside her, she watches carefully, clasping hands in meditation across her lap. Everything looks still as though waiting for the message of her incarnation to be delivered. The

[152] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.
[153] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 149.

angel Gabriel props himself against a stack of books which represent "hope, faith and charity."[154] His pink feathered wings fold gently around his body while staring at the lily growing before him, a symbol of Mary's purity.[155] Situated behind the vine covered trellis is Mary's father who prunes the vine.[156] The care associated with pruning is the male equivalent to women's weaving. It shares the careful attention, the repetitive action, the productive nature of the twisting and tying of natural fibers. It differs, however, in that it is conducted outside in the world whereas the weaving happens indoors, confined to a limited space into which light only filters through windows and the bustle of life is only witnessed from afar. The act of pruning is an activity rooted in a rougher physicality that is associated with men. He is outside in nature, feeling the coarse vines rub against his palms with dirt dusting his fingertips. In contrast to this, Mary sits quietly with her needle point, the clean thread and needle working its way into the fabric. Before Mary sits a vase with a lily so tall it directly faces Mary at eye level. The delicacy of flowers is often associated with the femininity present in Pre-Raph paintings.[157] Both of the tasks which Mary and her father engage in reflect the ideals of femininity and masculinity. Mary is the pinnacle in which all women are meant to strive towards as a model of purity and feminine duty. Jesus, one may argue, is not the equivalent for men. There is no real pious icon which men are meant to equate themselves to, at least none so famous as the Virgin Mary. It seems that only women have this ideal thrust upon them. While women are relegated to pious duties such as embroidery or weaving, men are alternatively meant to represent a masculinity associated with

[154] "The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary," Tate, accessed April 19, 2023.
[155] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 30. Mancoff cites a poem written by Rossetti in which "he describes young Mary as 'An angel-watered lily, that near God/Grows it quiet'" (30).
[156] On this motif of trellised vines in Medieval Art see the work of Gregory Bryda, including his upcoming volume, *The Trees of the Cross*.
[157] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 9.

rougher work such as being outdoors, pruning the vine so that women may remain indoors. Placing Mary within this role creates "The association of such work with virtue - eschewing idleness, industriously providing - permeates medieval sources."[158] Miller mentions how "[Mary] spent days weaving and praying."[159] Through sanctity and religion, weaving becomes a way to trap women back into this pure wifely woman role in an attempt to mediate the control they wield outside when they are free.

Mary extends herself into the clothing of Christ, allowing her to access the outside world as well. When Christ was a child, he was "'given the seamless tunic, the garment of his passion by the mother who also gave him the garment of his human form.'"[160] Now it is not only a piece of clothing, but it is also associated with the physical body. The woman does not just create clothing, she helps materialize the adornments that go onto a physical being that wears her clothes, and she lives through it. It is a powerful act of production accessible solely to a being born to confinement and *punishment* for being female, a daughter of Eve and an inheritor of her original sin. A dual meaning of the power of weaving arises: It can give women agency as Miller points out because it allows them into male world through clothing; it can also emphasize their seclusion and confines of the spaces through which they are allowed to physically move. The Pre-Raphaelite painters seem keenly aware of this dual association. They expand the weaving so it not only features as a tidy loom or canvas, neglected at the side of the image, but instead as a web of loose threads and nets in the process of becoming an image. It is a messy, yet creative process with unfulfilled potential to summon and imagine scenes.

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[158] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 145.
[159] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 149.
[160] Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 150.

In Victorian Britain, a woman takes on the crucial roles of wife and mother when she is married; marriage was considered to be the most essential undertaking for a woman as she transitioned from virgin to mother.[161] Women of the Pre-Raphaelites were perhaps aware of weaving's association with docility and wifeliness derived from Mary. This awareness may be an opportunity to restore their own power. Through innocence and the Virgin Mary, the narrative of women being idle, docile, and pure under a patriarchal system comes to fruition again. The Pre-Raphaelites deconstructed these systems through the depictions of the Arthurian woman, Elaine of Astolat also known as the Lady of Shalott.

Elaine's weaving was maybe her way of attempting to integrate herself into the womanly role of wife to make herself seem more suitable to Lancelot. He did not want a wife, he wanted a lover which he found in Guinevere, thus rendering Elaine useless. Using women's work and taking on that role is one means of integrating themselves into the world, a feat that women have been trying to attain for a long time. Elaine could very well be weaving a web in the hopes that Lancelot will fall into the trap, hearkening back to the idea that a woman could be innocent on the exterior and a dangerous temptress with unearthly powers to ensnare men at the same time. Elaine's "trap" could be the trap of her inner mind, forcing herself to do one last thing in the hopes of catching him. The curse becomes a punishment brought upon herself by obsessive foolishness. There is power in grabbing hold of what one wants especially through weaving. She uses weaving as a source of her power under the guise of an innocent task. Entwining threads is associated with innocence because it is a duty performed by the Virgin Mary herself.

[161] Tim Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 143.

Weaving is overlooked as a task of purity instead of something that could give agency and voice to women who yield it thus. "The voice of the shuttle" was a way to express someone's truth.[162] It is a woman's way of speaking out and resisting the confines of the society she exists within. Lady Shalott faces entrapment and her ability to break from that or not. She does have freedom of movement and is confined to the internal walls she is within. Women as such are often seen as entrapping men with their gaze. In other ways these women are ensnared in their spaces and their roles. A loom, like a woman, is an object often thought to be inanimate, yet both are devices that have agency. Weaving, although attached to the negative traditions, allows for a certain resistance to the restrictions placed upon women in the home.

Hair of the Blessed, Hair of the Wicked

> When she was saintly – a wife, nurse, mother or victimized princess – the gold on her head was her aureole, her crown, the outward sign of her inner blessedness and innocence. But when she was dangerous and corrupt, her gleaming hair was a weapon, web, or trap, a glittering symbolic fusion of the sexual lust and the lust for power that she embodied.[163]

Flowing hair becomes a symbol a metaphor for "'metaphor for monstrous female sexual energies.'"[164] Weaving in Pre-Raphaelite paintings share certain qualities with hair; the two mediums of hair and thread are treated similarly. These two media parallel one another in material ways because hair acts as an extension of the body whereas thread and woven garments are the product of a woman's creation. The act of weaving gives hair the most agency and power. Even in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's image of the Virgin Mary, tresses and weaving resonate

[162] Nosch, "Voicing the Loom," 95.
[163] Elisabeth G. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," *PMLA* 99, no. 5 (1984): 943.
[164] Sharyn R. Udall, "Between Dream and Shadow: William Holman Hunt's 'Lady of Shalott,'" *Woman's Art Journal* 11, no. 1 (1990): 36.

as if hair and thread play off similar themes. Rossetti utilizes Mary's hair to show her youth as the fair red fragments loosely stream down her back.[165] Those in Pre-Raphaelite lore depicted with red hair were never ordinary women; they were either monsters or saints. In contrast to Lilith, nymphs, and fairies, Mary's amber locks are lighter. They seem to reflect God's heavenly light through their shine, but also have golden flecks of warm color, nodding towards her inner blessedness. The fairer shade is a reminder of her saintlike femininity as the future mother of Jesus. The tones of crimson red featured on the demonic creatures seen previously are much darker and brighter, with vibrancy meant to appear like *fool's gold* to draw in the easily seduced; this is a complete contradiction to the Virgin's piousness. It is a subtle message yet one where the tonality of color dictates the idea of intended malice or lack thereof. In Mary's case, her golden light amber hair emphasizes goodness, purity, and trust.

In Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*, Lilith weaves a web of beautiful gold, seducing men towards hair cloaked in light to give the appearance of the divine (fig. 2). Here, Lilith's medium is her hair, not yarn or a spider web. She weaves strands of snakelike hair, creating the physical substance of a web, but also seals the fate of any sacrificial lamb who stumbles upon her. Lilith is a hybrid, capable of producing her own artistic medium, as well as working it. The fate of her victims is woven into the fabric, unable to be changed once every thread is set into place. Women possess a magical power through the process of entwining threads. Weaving these

[165] It is not until a young woman comes of age and is suitable for marriage that she is expected to wear her hair in the fanciful updos as opposed to loosely flowing. There is a distinct transition to the meaning of curls which are set free from being associated with youth to being associated with promiscuity. The woman wearing her hair unbound was to be reserved for her husband in their marriage bed. As stated by Charles Cosgrove in *A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with special Reference to the Story of the "Sinful Woman" in Luke 7:36-50* one of the most acknowledged interpretations of unbound hair in public was that the woman was sexually abandoned and likely a prostitute.

patterns of fate and life, the Pre-Raphaelite women are making cosmic decisions, taking on the role of a God.

The Pre-Raphaelite figures are similar to courtesans who take on dual personas of sex workers and intellectual women.[166] In doing so, they weave their histories by using everything they are provided to an advantage, becoming highly educated women.[167] Although courtesans are considered fallen women through their profession, they do not allow themselves to fall. It was in antiquity that loosely flowing hair could implicate a woman as a prostitute and wearing hair in this fashion connoted sensuality and eroticism.[168] Medusa is a mythological example of a fallen woman whose loose hair was used to implicate her in her assault.[169] Medusa's untied hair in her story is what entices Poseidon to rape her causing Athena to transform Medusa's hair into snakes.[170]

The long, sinuous hair of the women in other Pre-Raphaelite paintings contributes to their hybridity. It also plays into a material and symbolic theme explored by the Pre-Raphaelite painters in their work: an exploration of the practice of weaving. Hair flows freely in William Hunt's adaptation of Shalott, *The Lady of Shalott,* untethered by braids, pins, or taught twisted hairstyles (fig. 17). The textures of the locks do not idly lay upon the head like dead follicles;

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[166] The courtesan, as defined by Fiora Bassanese in *Private Lives and Public Lies: Texts by Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* is an "Entertainer, hostess, Siren, substitute lady, and prostitute, she fashioned herself to reflect the characteristics of the dominant group she served" (295). In other words she was an elite, educated prostitute.
[167] Bassanese, "Private Lives," 295.
[168] Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36-50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (2005): 679. Cosgrove opens up a dialogue about the many connotations of untied hair. While it can be closely correlated to sex and prostitution in some cases, there is a long social history connecting loose hair to an act of thankfulness, a sign of mourning, religious customs or devotional practices, to symbolize freedom or naturalness, to signify a time of crisis, or as a weapon to mortify a woman after her transgression in the hopes she will confess.
[169] Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36-50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (2005): 679.
[170] Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36-50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (2005): 679.

instead they *perform* by creating beauty, entwinement, serpents, and menace. Previously looked at in depth is the metaphorical process of weaving hair and how it acts as an extension of the body to allow women to have more agency and power. Through Lilith's demoness hair, she weaves a web to catch men, thereby twisting their fates into her entrancing fibers. We have seen this in a figurative sense with Lady Lilith who creates a net to catch her victims using fibers of golden thread which sprout from the roots of her scalp. The process of weaving her tress is what ultimately gives her perilous magic as well as the godlike ability to decide one's life and when it will end.

The Curse of the Loom

Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott* depicts the curse of unrequited love and the forthcoming omens of death it brings upon its titular character. Sitting in her bower, Lady Shalott or Elaine of Astolat has been cursed to sit alone, weaving a web, only looking at the world through the reflection of a mirror.[171] To look away and towards the world means the curse will fall upon her, the consequences unknown to herself.[172] If Lady Shalott looks away, giving in to the overwhelming desire, the consequence that would befall her is death. This concept is also demonstrated as Elaine dies in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, while set adrift on a raft.[173]

In *I Am Half Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott*, John William Waterhouse depicts the scene of the fairy Lady Shalott who hums an angelic tune while facing her loom, living a plain existence (fig. 14). As Tennyson's poem goes:

She lives with little joy or fear.

[171] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.
[172] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.
[173] John William Waterhouse painted the scene of Elaine facing her watery death in his rendition of The Lady of Shalott (1888).

Over the water and running near,
The sheepbell tinkles in the ear.
Before her hands a mirror clear,
    Reflecting tower'd Camelot.
And as the mazy web she whirls,
She sees the surly village churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls
    Pass onward from Shalott.[174]

Set within the reflection of the circular mirror is the city of Camelot, framed by the architecture of the building she resides in (fig. 14). Romanesque-style arches hinder the complete view of the city, framing only particular pieces of space. A bridge leading into the city overlooks the river of Camelot. The bridge over the moat emphasizes the distance and journey between the foreground space and the distant city. Meanwhile, the lady sits idly in her bower, her hands tossed above her head while her eyes look forward in silent contemplation. Crimson sleeves hug her forearms tightly, flaring out in fanciful fashion where the fabric meets her shoulders. The dress she wears is a deep shade of red, an indication of the love which confines her. It drapes down, bunching and wrinkling in many places to indicate the length of time perhaps she has been sitting, surveying the world through her mirror. A belt of gold wraps around her waist mimicking the color of the loom. The golden belt almost appears to be chaining her to the chair just as the golden loom imprisons her movements. This confinement is all the more pronounced precisely because of the contrast drawn to the vision of the world and freedom of movement outside.

In front of her is the design she weaves. Three circular motifs matching the window stretch across one panel. She weaves the scenes of the world outside she will never be a part of: "But in her web she still delights to weave the mirror's magic sights."[175] Looking closely one can also see that the third circle could depict what looks like a knight kneeling before a woman,

[174] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.
[175] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.

an allusion to her love Lancelot. Similar to Helen weaving on her loom in the *Iliad,* Lady Shalott could be weaving her projected history of what she hopes will come to fruition.[176] Lady Shalott weaves her story and the world she sees while also depicting the object of her desire. This could be a form of manifestation of her dreams, once upon a time, to be loved in return. By weaving her history and dreams and creating a physical manifestation of her hopes, those dreams will live on. She materializes her desires in her woven work. Had she the power of the three fates, she might have indeed summoned this dream into existence. We have the distinct sense that her powers do not suffice, that the woven image will remain forever a picture of the world rather than a conjured reality. There is an innate human quality of wanting to be remembered, and one way to accomplish this desire is through physical objects. Lady Shalott weaves so her story will not be forgotten after she dies.[177] It works also to visualize for the viewer her inner thoughts and desires. Lady Shalott cannot leave her room and engage with the world. Through their work, Lady Shalott and women throughout medieval history have been granted access to these restricted spaces through their work, through the threads that flow through their fingers and through the skill that produces vivid images on the loom.

Although Lady Shalott is confined to her bower weaving this history, we might ask whether the work she creates might ever leave the confines of her prison to circulate in the markets of the distant city or decorate the walls of one of its houses. And if it did so, a part of Shalott might be said to leave with it. In other words, she would be capable, through her work, of projecting herself into the space outside. This possibility is not confirmed in Waterhouse's *I Am Half Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott*. The image conveys through its tone the

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[176] Maria C. Pantelia, "Spinning and Weaving: Ideas of Domestic Order in Homer," *The American Journal of Philology* 114, no. 4 (1993): 495.
[177] Pantelia, "Spinning and Weaving," 495.

overwhelming sense that the tapestries she creates live in her bower, taking fragments from the world outside into her lonely, isolated, room. The woven fabrics of medieval women acted as an extension of the self outside of the body; these tapestries and wall hangings for indoor spaces seem destined to be a small reminder of the outside world inside and an external visualization of the interior longing of the trapped lady. She interlaces her dreams into a reality within her confinement creating an interesting reversal. In this sense, Elaine still crosses physical borders using cloth and representations but rather than letting her out into the world, the fabric surrounds her with her visualized desires inside. Her presence exists in the fabric in the same way the body and blood of Christ are a part of the Eucharist.

Traditionally, women have used textiles to insert themselves into the economic sphere of the world where men are dominant: "'...women used their sewing and quilting skills to assert their agency in a world outside the home, to claim and secure for themselves more public and political space.'"[178] Women use skills such as these to their advantage, skills that men have pushed them into as though tying a leash around their necks so they do not stray too far and accomplish too much without them. Elaine wishes Lancelot will become a reality throughout her world. She makes her dream real like a witch casting a woven spell, using weaving to break free of how her power is mediated.

The loom itself provides an opportunity for the woman to reclaim her femininity and sexual authority. The device offers safety in a space meant to oppress. It is a physical boundary between the men who find the weaver attractive and the woman herself. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope weaves to her own advantage of time, tricking her male suitors to postpone her

[178] Osaki, "A 'Truly," 226.

wedding for three years.[179] The loom provides a physical separation from the world, exemplifying her female authority and power when she chooses to either weave or unweave the fabric.[180] The loom takes on two abilities: in the case of Lilith weaving was an attempt to lure men towards their fate, and it can also act as a physical boundary or warning to men outside. In some cases, a space with a loom is one where men are not lured in, but only allowed in when they are invited; those who transgress will receive wrath or punishment.[181] This connection of the loom to punishment extends from the discussion of hybridity. Melusine presents the perfect example. Melusine is a mermaidian serpent woman modeled after Aphrodite in medieval lore.[182] Her story was recounted by Gervase of Tilbury in Chapter One. She agrees to marry Lord Raymond with the exception that he does not see her naked because to do so would potentially cause his downfall.[183] One day Lord Raymond transgresses because he cannot resist the temptation to settle his eyes upon her and so she punishes him with her disappearance, only returning in the depth of night to see her children.[184] She punishes her husband for trespassing when he was not invited into her space. Even historically, women saying no is sometimes seen as a tempting invitation. Here, Melusine reclaims her authority by shifting forms, whereas Lady Shalott is not so much locked into space or cursed but is asserting her boundaries with the loom.

In the second painting of Lady Shalott, *The Lady of Shalott*, composed by William Holland Hunt, Elaine actively breaks the curse, looking away from the mirror to catch a glimpse

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[179] Reyes Bertolín, "The Mast and the Loom: Signifiers of Separation and Authority," *Phoenix* 62, no. 1/2 (2008): 94.
[180] Bertolín, "The Mast," 94.
[181] Bertolín, "The Mast," 96.
[182] Walker, *The Woman's*, 631.
[183] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia. Recreation for an Emperor*, trans. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (n.p.: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 90.
[184] Gervase Of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* 91.

of Lancelot riding through Camelot (fig. 17). In Tennyson's poem, it is the sight of Lancelot in the mirror that forces her to break her gaze and to look toward the image of him in real life.[185] The image of Lancelot breaks Lady Shalott from this inner cage or punishment she has locked herself in and makes her look toward the real world once again.

> A bow shot from her bower-eaves,
> He rode between the barley-sheaves,
> The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
> And flam'd upon the brazen greaves
> Of bold Sir Lancelot.
> A red-cross knight forever kneel'd
> To a lady in his shield,
> That sparkled on the yellow field
> Beside remote Shalott.[186]

Untangling herself from the threads she was weaving, Lady Shalott attempts to fight back (fig. 17). The threads tangle and snap around her body, tightening around her legs with intense vigor. Fragments of her pink silken dress ride up, wrinkling and contorting to get away just as her body does. It is as though threads are trying to save her from her fate and not allow her to succumb to the death which awaits her if she leaves. No weakness is shown here in succumbing to the curse. Her capitulation exemplifies her inherent strength. Lady Shalott's strength can be seen in her overpowering demeanor. She looms large in the space, her body and hair together swarm the canvas. Lady Shalott wants to finally face her feelings and show her strength. Additionally, the sleeves are on her arms and rolled up giving the sense that she is ready to fight with everything she has. The moment where she faces the curse is when Lady Shalott's transformation of strength takes place within both of Tennyson's versions of the story. In *Idylls of the King* when she is "Starved of love, Elaine turned to death 'like a friend's voice,' and she asked her brothers

[185] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.
[186] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.

to place her in a boat that would carry [her] to Camelot, where, arrayed like a queen with a lily in her hand, she would confront her beloved's rejection."[187] According to Lancelot, her death was a symbol that the innocent and pure should be better protected. Perhaps the most important thing to note here is that despite her strength, Elaine represents the idea that a woman cannot transgress without dying or being severely punished. Independent women or those acting on selfish desires are often punished in Greek, Biblical, or Arthurian lore either by God, by society, or by themselves. Going back into a world without a loving Lancelot ultimately kills the Lady of Shalott. Lady Lilith is expelled from Eden, Lady Jane Grey's beliefs result in her beheading, and when Lady Shalott breaks free from the docility of her weaving, the curse kills her. Her death, a metaphorical suicide in Tennyson's poem of *The Lady Shalott*, ends with her dead on a boat sailing towards Camelot.[188] With her suicide she is truly alone, as it represents God abandoning Lady Shalott, making her parable end with her complete fall from grace as she succumbs to her title of a fallen woman.[189] Her tragic end ignites the melancholy loneliness of Lady Shalott as she has been abandoned not only by Lancelot, but also by her own God as she sails away from shore on the river.

The Lady Shalott is similar to the Greek mythological figure Arachne. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tells the tale of a young Lydian woman named Arachne who challenges the goddess Athena to a competition of weaving.[190] The goddess believes an ordinary human girl to

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[187] Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica*, 38.
[188] There are multiple interpretations of Lady Shalott/Elaine's death in the boat; one interpretation is by Sophie Gengembre Anderson titled *Elaine (The Lily Maid of Astolat)* where Elaine is shown already dead and being pushed by a man lost in his despair. Another version is by John William Waterhouse titled *The Lady of Shalott* where Lady Shalott is fully conscious as she sets sail, her death implicit with the metaphor of the boat as mentioned by Carolyn Hares-stryker in "The Elaine of Astolat and Lancelot Dialogues: A Confusion of Intent," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*39, no. 3 (1997): 206. Elaine's suicide on the boat subverts Christian traditions which cannote a boat with a symbol of hope as in the story of Noah's arc.
[189] Hares-stryker, "The Elaine," 207.
[190] A. S. Byatt, "Arachne," *The Threepenny Review*, no. 78 (1999): 20.

be of no consequence; however, Athena's hubris is short-lived.[191] Arachne wins the competition, sending Athena into a fit of rage. Arachne, unable to handle the reprimand of a goddess, hangs herself.[192] The goddess, seeing the young woman hung, feels pity and turns her then into a spider using the herbs of Hecate; the transition into a spider is a gruesome one as Arachne's hair, nose, and ears all fall off.[193] Arachne lives out her life trapped within the animalistic form of a spider weaving the silk produced by her body to create webs.[194] Athena, threatened by the power of Arachne, but also wanting to grant mercy turns her into a spider so she can still walk the earth, but within the confines of an animal body. In other words, Athena mediates Arachne's power by turning her into a spider. Within this animal form, weaving is made safe because she is relegated to weaving cobwebs as opposed to glorious textiles in her human form. Similarly, Lady Shalott is trapped within a room to weave, isolated from the rest of the world, her power overwhelmingly diminished. Lady Shalott's isolation is meant to contain her; however, she uses weaving as a means to break free from her prison.

The threads in Hunt's painting, *The Lady of Shalott* not only signify the power she grasps through weaving, but also reminds the viewer of the association between weaving and women's duties in the home. The arm of Lady Shalott is twisted backwards as it works to break the thread from underneath while the other hand grasps a different piece from making contact with her body (fig. 17). This snapshot is quite action heavy with the knightly Lancelot raising his sword and pummeling forward in the mirror's reflection. Beside him, stretches the expanse

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[191] Byatt, "Arachne," 20.
[192] Byatt, "Arachne," 22.
[193] Byatt, "Arachne," 22.
[194] Byatt, "Arachne," 22. For more information on the scientific history of spiders in correlation with Ovid's story of Arachne look towards Byatts's "Arachne." She gives detailed descriptions into the process of spider's spinning threads and the complexities of these creatures.

of a natural world filled with trees and rivers. Perhaps the most animated aspect of this painting is Lady Shalott's hair, which spreads like fire erupting from her scalp, flying into the air as her whole body comes alive. Her hair is just as awake as her ligaments, lurching back like a snake ready to strike. Her body is tightly wound in thread, but her hair is free and expresses every bit of her emotional state. Her hair is not only like flames in spirit, but also in color: a deep golden red. Lady Shalott's bodice shimmers with beautiful tones of aqua and a grassy, forest green. The texture is reminiscent of scales, giving Lady Shalott the appearance of a mermaid on land. Her hair spreads upwards, rising towards the surface as though the whole scene takes place underwater. It is the delicate web-like thread that tries to hold her back. She is trapped underwater, like a fish caught on a line, swimming for air, possibly an allusion to the watery death that awaits her. She dies in a boat on the river after the curse overtakes her. She once saw the world in only a partial truth, through the mirror. The story plays with the relationship between image and reality because even though Lady Shalott saw Lancelot in the mirror she was overcome with the desire to see him in the flesh. In this moment of desire and decision she suddenly becomes a strong goddess-like being with incredible power. As though the threads wanted to keep her in the mindless prison they tug and scratch at her hands and wind through her hair to reach and restrain her. It is as if they foresee her fate. Even in their unwoven form they anticipate the dire outcome of her choice. Instead, the threads wish to keep her safely in the confines of her space, idly weaving her days away as opposed to finding strength.

In the framed oval scene to the right of Lady Shalott is Hercules, the head of a lion slouched in the crook of his elbow, his other hand reaching up to grasp an apple from the tree

(fig. 17).[195] His body contorts and twists back as he looks outward away from the tree and towards the oval of the Virgin Mary. Hercules' foot steps as though about to exit the frame. Hercules is crossing boundaries, a reminder that Lady Shalott is unable to. In the other oval, Mary kneels before baby Jesus. Mary is the personification of motherhood and pious ideals. Hercules and Mary sit like a devil and an angel on the shoulders on either side of Lady Shalott. Hercules represents a person who can do whatever he wants, whereas Mary accepts a role put upon her. God becomes man through her body making her vessel of the utmost purity. The Virgin Mary is also an impossible model to follow. She is a married, virgin mother, lily white in her purity therefore every woman is destined to fall short. Hercules' body reaches up, transcending boundaries whereas Mary looks down, accepting her fate, her hands clasped in prayer. In the painting, Lady Shalott is caught between these two models. She is caught between the expectations for women and the desire for the freedom of the heroic man. She turns her body away from the image of Mary, as if rejecting it. Her right arm puts a boundary between herself and the pious Mary, a physical separation from the expectations of women. The Lady Shalott is choosing freedom, ripping away at the threads which try to hold her back.

The semantics of weaving are incredibly complex. One definition of "to weave" means "to piece together in the mind, contrive, devise, and develop."[196] Weaving, semantically defined in this way, once again connects to our dialogue about femininity. A woman's weapon is not brutality or force but coercion, manipulation, and intellect. They scheme rather than brutalize. The meticulousness of female thought is depicted in the loom and act of weaving. Each line of

[195] The story of Hercules and the lion takes form in Euripides' *Herakles* where he hunts a dangerous Lion in Nemea and succeeds in killing it.
[196] Marie-louise Nosch, "Voicing the Loom:," in *KE-RA-ME-JA: Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine*, by Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James (n.p.: INSTAP Academic Press, 2014), 92.

the artistic portrait comes from the careful placement of the thread like a woman cleverly devising a plan. The physical act of weaving (the work of women) connects to the tension between inner and outer nature, interior space and outer world, personal desire and societal expectations, which, as we have seen, was also at work in ideas of hybridity in Pre-Raphaelite paintings explored in the last chapter.

Music: Lethal Melodies of Siren Songs

Weaving can come in many forms and resonates with many other creative disciplines. The weaving of notes and voices together creates music, another theme explored and utilized by the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Women's weaving is related to far more than tangible weaving but is connected to hymns and songs—like Sirens who use music to lure in their victims—they weave together notes. Similarly, the sound and vibrations of the loom orchestrate a symphony of music: "When the heddle bars are pulled back and forth and the shed is changed, rhythmic thumping sounds occur. They are followed by the sound of beating the weft threads into the fabric with the weaving sword."[197] The Lady Shalott or Elaine creates her version of a Siren song by choosing each thread and how she will move the loom to her will, creating beats of music. Additionally, Lady Shalott sings while working on her loom;

> Underneath the bearded barley,
> The reaper, reaping late and early,
> Hears her ever chanting cheerly,
> Like an angel, singing clearly,
> O'er the stream of Camelot.[198]

[197] Nosch, "Voicing the Loom," 95.
[198] Tennyson, "The Lady," Poetry Foundation.

The same removal we observed earlier—in which the usual social activity of weaving in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings becomes lonely—occurs with music. Lady Shalott sings to herself in sorrowfulness and isolation like a Siren song. It is as though she is trying to call people in with her angelic music. Perhaps she tries to lure Lancelot in particular, calling to his heart and mind. Elaine becomes a fairy or nymph of sorts to seduce him. Lady Shalott as a Siren alludes back to the discussion about Sirens from the beginning of this project. The sea fairy in Rossetti's *A Sea-Spell* (fig. 1) uses the lute in the same way that Shalott uses her loom. Both have threads being manipulated by a musician. Both fairies use the lute or the loom as a mode of communication with another world, creating music with both their instruments and voices.[199] Lady Shalott's pose in *I am Half Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott* transforms her into a Siren as well (fig. 14). She strikes a languorous, sexual pose as she stretches to play with her hair. Touching or playing with hair alludes to Sirens as they often did so as a sexual exhibition.[200] The pose is similar to John Everett Millais' *Mariana* who bends back, tilting her head and body to stretch after hours of working on her embroidery, insinuating that she is like a Siren beckoning a man with her beauty.[201]

Sound crosses boundaries that even Lady Shalott cannot cross. Imperceptibly, the voice is carried to those innocent of the knowledge of the woman's story. Instead, she is a mysterious being who can travel the world through the vibrations of her voice, sending them out without the ability to draw them back in. These reverberations bounce against the walls of Camelot, writhing against the ground. The sounds of the world penetrate her space just as she can

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[199] Alan Davison, "Woven Songs and Musical Mirrors: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Symbolic Physiognomy' of Music," *The British Art Journal* 13, no. 3 (2012): 93.
[200] Gitter, "The Power," 938.
[201] Jason Rosenfeld, "John Everett Millais (1829-96): 'Mariana' (1850-1)," in *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Art and Design*, by Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld, and Alison Smith (n.p.: Yale University Press, 2012), 58.

penetrate the walls with hers. The true intangible form of the voices of creatures such as nymphs and Sirens and fairies are all part of the illusionary spell. Once hearing them, one is drawn forth, yet never to see their true form until it is too late. Lady Shalott and other folklore creatures weave with their voices. Unlike the voice, her line of sight is much more specific because she is only allowed to see the world through reflection. She is not trapped in a world where only sight exists, but sound as well. Not only can she likely hear the noise and bustle of Camelot—making it all the more tempting to turn around—her voice can coax the people outside. There is one person who she wants to hear the most: Lancelot.

Reflections

The work of reflections is meant to show the way women adapt to circumstance, in other words how they took something that was meant to subjugate them further and turned it into a device to reclaim authority. Tennyson's poem and the painting by Waterhouse reveal how love has trapped Lady Shalott within her sadness. Through the reflection she is allowed to exist in a fraction of the world, never able to participate completely. She is in the world but also only sees one small part, the rest hindered by the small shape of the mirror. Although Lady Shalott's body and face are forward, her eyes are looking only at the mirror. To look away means to fall into the curse forever. When Lady Shalott begins her voyage to Camelot, singing the melancholy death song, the imagery of her "glassy countenance" and being "some bold seer in a trance" alludes to this notion that she is descending into madness.[202] The once literal mirror she looked upon becomes her own self-reflection as she is now looking within herself instead of being looked at.

[202] Sharyn R. Udall, "Between Dream and Shadow: William Holman Hunt's 'Lady of Shalott,'" *Woman's Art Journal* 11, no. 1 (1990): 3.

[203] Throughout all these paintings mirrors are used to simulate a purposeful meaning showing an intentionality in how they are portrayed.

In Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*, two reflective surfaces are present (fig. 2). Lilith, absorbed so wholly in her appearance, stares at herself in a petite handheld mirror.[204] What is initially perceived as vanity and obsession with appearance for the male gaze changes; she uses the mirror as a weapon for the purpose of seduction. Lilith holds the mirror herself, fingers wrapped around the base, tipping it away from the viewer so she is the only one who can see herself. She wields the mirror and she is the one controlling the looking. Vanity and beauty are vast sources of female power and have always been the greatest weapon. A beautiful face is often associated with trustworthiness through the male gaze. Allure can be used to destroy a fickle man who thinks beauty is the only gift a woman has. Women are often underestimated because of their beauty, but they've "...got minds and souls as well as hearts; ambition and talents as well as beauty and accomplishments; and [they] want to live and learn as well as love and be loved. I'm sick of being told that [love] is all a woman is fit for."[205]

Perhaps the most poignant power of femininity can be found in reflections through the water. Water as a reflective surface is advantageous. The nymphs use water to disguise the source of their power—their tails—to lure men in (fig. 8). It is also their habitat where they drag Hylas under. Rivers are the most natural boundaries. Rivers cannot be crossed in many places because such a feat is difficult and dangerous. Ultimately, Lady Shalott or Elaine's demise takes place when she crosses the dangerous boundary. Lady Shalott returns to the river to cross the

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[203] Udall, "Between Dream," 3.
[204] Women holding mirrors was a common troupe found among the paintings of Rossetti as he was fascinated by this motif and reflections in general. His house was filled with mirrors as commented on by (Painter and poet)
[205] Louisa May Alcott, "Coming Home," in *Rose in Bloom* (1876).

boundary into death, but in a way she is returning to where life began. One of water's most poignant representations of female strength is in the figure of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. From the water she is born the daughter of Zeus and Dione and emerges from the sea.[206] As Sharyn Udall notes, "As a feminine element, water recalls the security of suspension in the womb's amniotic fluid or, more broadly, allows the subject an oceanic merger with the world."[207] Metaphorically the ocean becomes the womb where Aphrodite grows and the water is a form of amniotic fluid.

Conclusion: Chapter Two

This chapter is about the mediated materials and environments through which Waterhouse's and Hunt's portrayal of the Lady of Shalott engage with the world. It is through reflection, textile arts, and music that Lady Shalott gains access into the world that she is barred from. In other words, this chapter looked at how, even when there are attempts to mitigate their power and confine them, women continue to find means to access the world outside. In solitude, they adapt to have agency alone instead of power in a group. Pushing women into the home with the wifely duty of weaving was meant to busy their fingers and occupy them with innocent tasks; weaving was meant to distract women from their discomfort in stature and prevent them from rising to equality or gaining some kind of sovereignty.

Even in their isolation they find modes of expression both in the designs they weave with thread, but also with their voices. When the Pre-Raphaelite women are suppressed they can find agency in almost anything, even the flowers. Yet this is why the dynamics of power are

[206] "Aphrodite and the Gods of Love," The Paul J. Getty Museum.
[207] Udall, "Between Dream," 3.

complicated, because although solitude is an opportunity to grow, it has other implications. Ultimately, there is a deeply tragic loneliness that persists in these paintings and within these characters; particularly in the stories of Lilith and Lady Shalott. The reflections and woven images feed their desires. They are not only alone but alone with those overwhelming desires to sit and watch, weaving without the power to influence the fates of the men outside. There is a stark beauty in the solitude represented in these paintings, and yet a reminder of the tragedy women experienced in their complicated place, real or imagined, in these striking works of art.

Conclusion

"It was the female body which became the most powerfully fetishized, it was the female body upon which anxiety was most strongly projected…"[208]

Male fear and desire is most obviously manifested in Pre-Raphaelite representations of Lilith, La Belle Dame, and Kypris as hybrid creatures. Hybridity expresses itself in the amalgamations of half-woman and half-animal, half-nature, or half-man. Lilith bridges the discussion of the hybrid woman in Chapter One to the later discussion about solitude and environment Chapter Two. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* depicts her not in an overtly wild setting, but within her bower, paralleling the lonely scenes of the Lady Shalott. She also resides in isolation, like Shalott, hidden from not only people, but also the freedom of the outdoors. Lilith has the wildness of nature at her disposal with the meticulous floral arrangements, rose bushes, and greenery entering her space. Further, Lilith directly parallels the Lady of Shalott because she too has a mirror that reflects her exterior space (fig. 2). What initially could be perceived as a window is actually Lilith's boudoir mirror, reflecting an ungroomed, lush, and verdant garden. Finally, Lilith functions as the bridge because she weaves and combs her hair. Although not explicitly weaving with threads, the act of weaving her hair still associates her with both the pious task of weaving, yet also pertains to the animality like that of a spider weaving a web. Lilith shifts from a wifely woman to the wicked woman through her solitude. She does not reside in a wild setting, but instead within her bower; she has the wildness of nature, and also the loneliness of Lady Shalott.

Pre-Raphaelite paintings were made through and for a male gaze, inspiring fear and desire. Mary Devereaux unpacks the male gaze and says that "Both men and women have

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[208] Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite*, 219.

learned to see the world through male eyes."[209] The further back in history you look, the more this statement rings true. In the 19th century, not only were men against women, but women were taught to be against their own sex. Therefore, all these paintings were being looked at through the male gaze as discussed. Women of the 19th century who looked upon the paintings might have viewed them as warning fables to unsatisfied domestic women seeking social change. [210] Pre-Raphaelite women were portrayed as demonic, sexualized, dangerous creatures who were inhuman and in need of suppressing.

From the vantage point of the 21st century, however, the reception of the images has changed. What was once made for men now takes on a new meaning: these paintings feel as though they were made for women. Although the original impulse for their creation may have been different during the Pre-Raphaelite period, now it feels as if they can be read as empowering to women. The message that this genre relays has shifted to represent the incredibly powerful designs of the female psyche. With the natural progression of feminism, it seems that women have begun to unlearn the traits of judging based on internalized misogyny. Women have gained independence and strength far beyond the Victorian ideals and now we look to these women once villainized women as powerful icons. The fact that women are able to pose a threat to men is what makes the paintings exciting. It is exciting to know we can incite that fear in men, because it means that power has always lived in us even in the moments when society stripped it away. Even if we look towards Pre-Raphaelite women for strength it does not mean that their loneliness is non-existent. In the 19th century, to be different or alone was an incredibly lonely feat and they radiate a melancholy energy. Paving a road of feminism in a

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[209] Mary Devereaux, "Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 4 (1990): 1.
[210] Udall, "Between Dream," 38.

world where it did not exist meant that everyone in that society was against you. The task of stepping outside the bounds was incredibly lonely. Women today appreciate the strength of those willing to step out of line.

When I began my research, the golden red hues of Pre-Raphaelite women's hair drew me in. I myself have red hair and was fascinated by this genre because it depicted women like myself who were different and outcasts at times. From my childhood, I have been picked on for being red headed, freckled, with fiery red cheeks associated with a hot temper. Other children chided me for being a carrot, asked me if I had a soul, and told me that I look ghostly and frail. Red has been associated with what is "wrong" "demonic" or "abnormal" my entire life. But the older I got the more power, beauty, and strength I found in it. After encountering the paintings I've analyzed in this project, I felt as though I was a composition of the Pre-Raphaelites: a woman who embodied strength not only in my mind, heart, and soul, but also through her hair. What began with hair became a deeper discussion into the complexity of power in these paintings. I have looked at where that power is stored, how it is accessed, and the ways it overcomes suppression. The fear inspired by this power still still persists today. The complexities of it cannot be fully answered in this project because there is such a vast array of meanings within all of these works.

Although this process has been a yearlong endeavor, my initial excitement has progressed into a deep admiration and love for the Pre-Raphaelites. The richness of their paintings is inexhaustible and I find myself afraid and saddened to let go. I find myself wishing I had many more years or that I could exclude myself from the passage of time in order to continue uncovering the beautiful and complex world of the Pre-Raphaelites. If time had not been so

pressing, I would have included a third chapter studying the intricacies of nature. If I had begun thinking deeply about the flora and fauna sooner I might have broadened it to be a much more integral part of this project. Debra Mancoff's *Flora Symbolica* explores the Pre-Raphaelites' use of the natural world becoming the backbone of my section on nature. Mancoff splits her book into sections in a similar manner looking at flowers which represent fatality, purity, innocence, royalty and so forth. I felt closely connected to her work because we had similar ways of addressing our topics not only from the perspective of a scholar, but as a storyteller or poet as well.

If I had discovered Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *A Sea-Spell* sooner I might have made the topic of Sirens more integral as well. I am glad I was able to nourish that desire I felt for this painting in my introduction. I would have also looked more at reflections and brought in discussions about water more heavily in regards to Waterhouse's depiction of Lady Shalott on the lake or Ophelia. The comparison between Ophelia and Shalott could have been talked about as well. This project was a valuable exploration of which I only just scratched the surface; I could have dedicated many more years to unpacking this material. My only hope is that others who read this work fall in love with Pre-Raphaelite paintings the way that I have, and see how they deserve to be considered. People should continue to tell these stories, paint these pictures, and express value artistically of the women who are considered less than, marginalized, or placed in societal boxes. We will likely find that there are far more valuable lessons to be extrapolated from the artistic framework that highlights women in society.

Figures

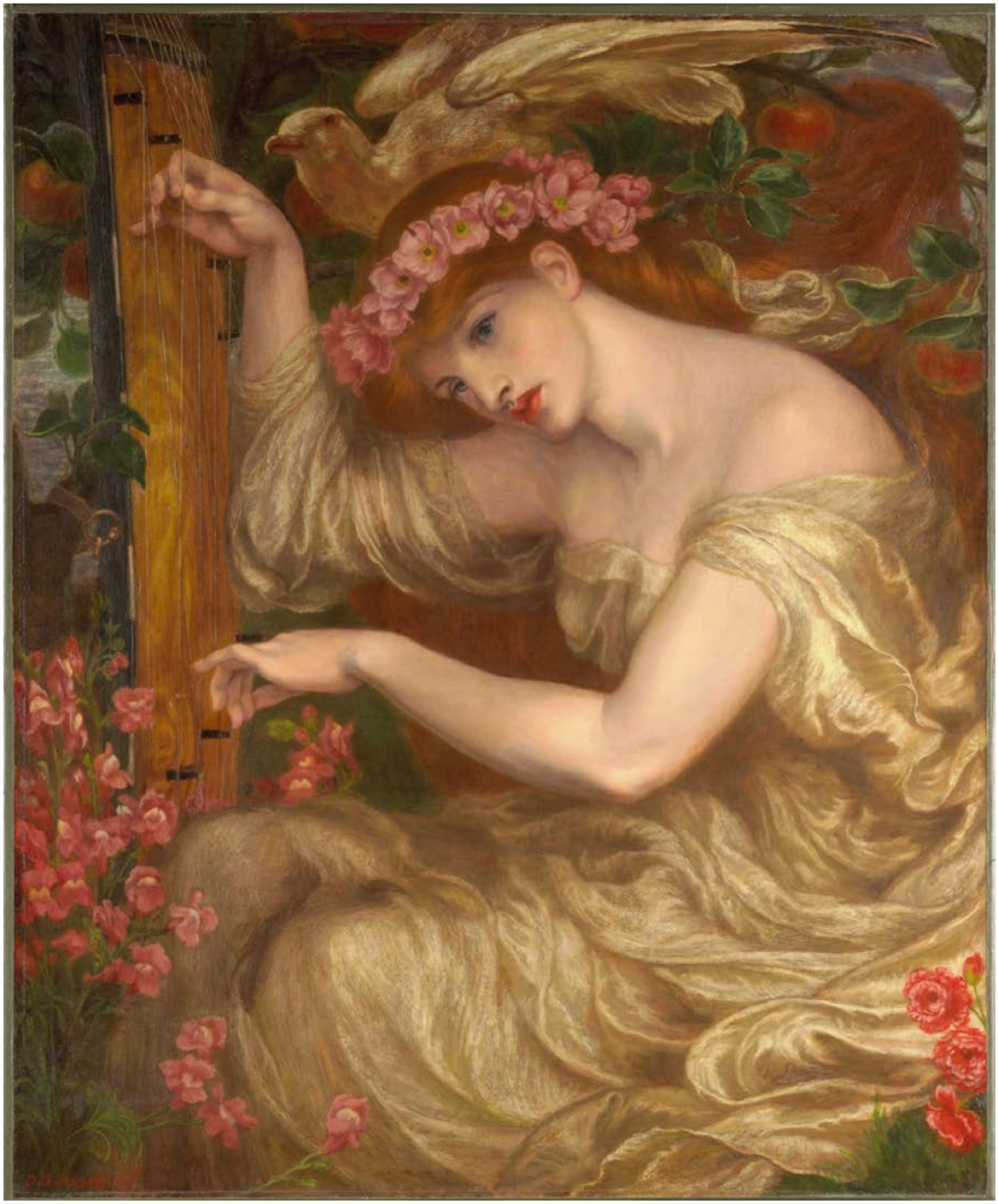

Fig. 1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti *A Sea-Spell,* c. 1875-1877.[211]

[211] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *A Sea-Spell*, 1875-77, oil paint on canvas, Harvard Art Museum, accessed April 29, 2023, https://hvrd.art/o/230614.

Fig. 2 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* c. 1866 (altered 1872-1873).[212]

[212] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1866, oil paint on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Lilith#/media/File:Lady-Lilith.jpg.

Fig. 3, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, *Sistine Chapel: The Temptation and Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* c. 1509-1510.[213]

[213] Michelangelo Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, *Sistine Chapel: The Temptation and Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1509-10, fresco, The Vatican Museum, accessed April 29, 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9e/Michelangelo%2C_Fall_and_Expulsion_from_Garden_of_Eden_00.jpg.

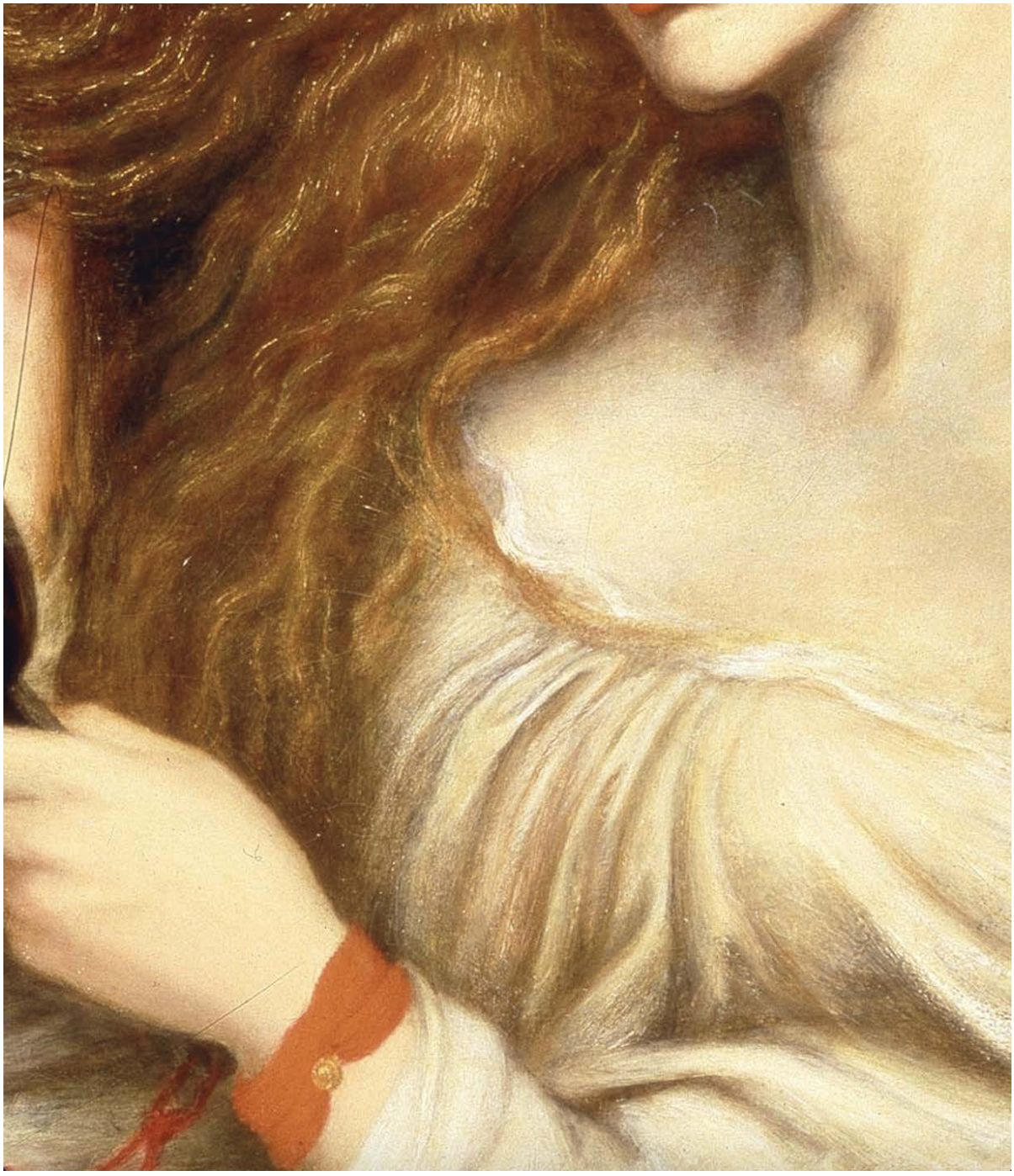

Fig. 4, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* c. 1866 (altered 1872-1873).[214]

[214] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1866, oil paint on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Lilith#/media/File:Lady-Lilith.jpg.

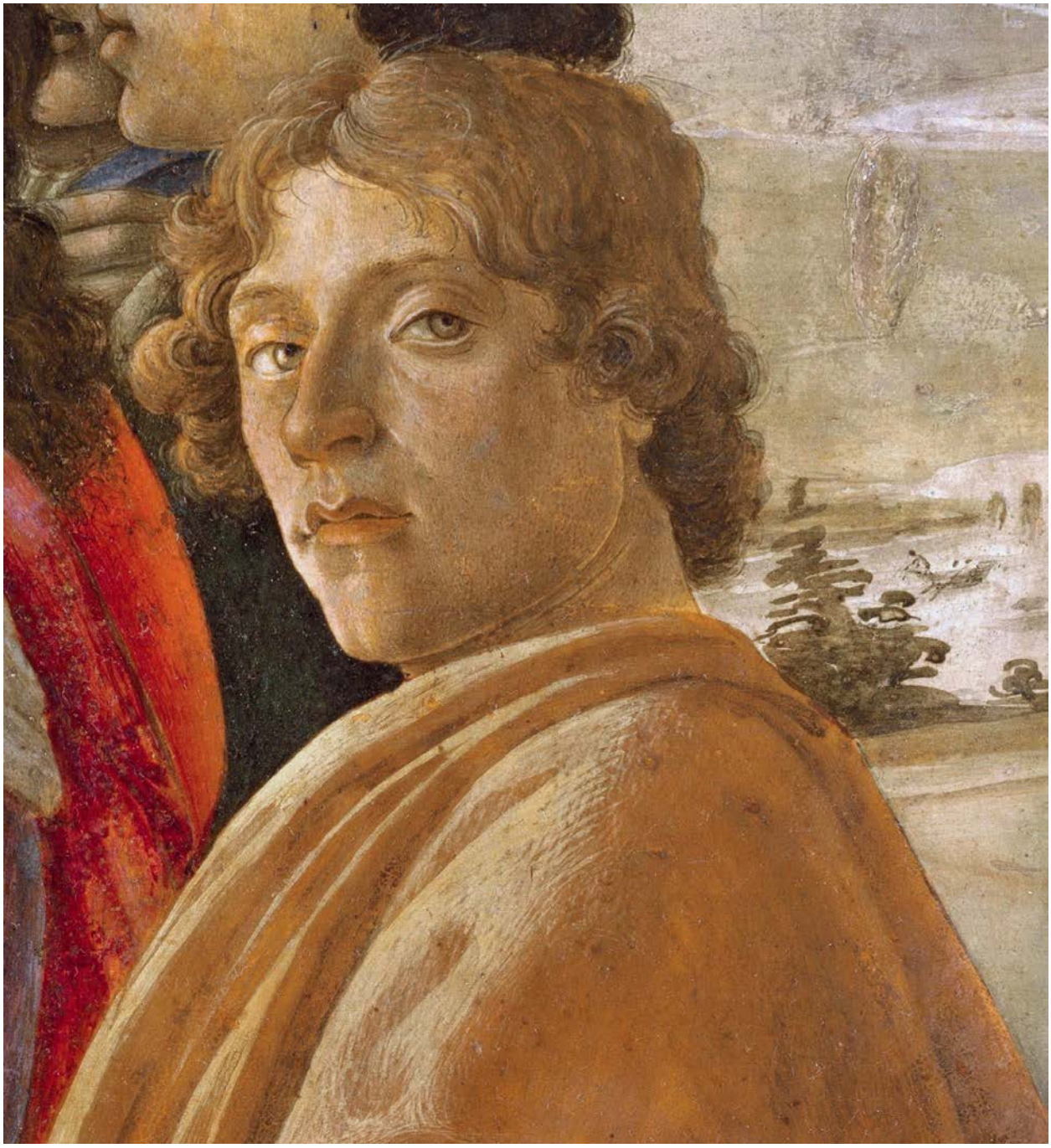

Fig. 5 Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1475.[215]

[215] Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1475, accessed April 29, 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/Sandro_Botticelli_083.jpg.

Fig. 6, John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, c. 1851.[216]

[216] John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851, oil on canvas, Tate Britain, accessed April 29, 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/94/John_Everett_Millais_-_Ophelia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg.

Fig. 7, John William Waterhouse, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, c. 1893.[217]

[217] John William Waterhouse, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, 1893, oil on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b0/John_William_Waterhouse_-_La_Belle_Dame_sans_Merci_%281893%29.jpg.

Fig. 8, John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, c. 1896.[218]

[218] John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 1896, oil on canvas, Manchester Art Gallery, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hylas_and_the_Nymphs_(painting)#/media/File:Waterhouse_Hylas_and_the_Nymphs_Manchester_Art_Gallery_1896.15.jpg.

Fig. 9, John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, c. 1896.[219]

[219] John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 1896, oil on canvas, Manchester Art Gallery, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hylas_and_the_Nymphs_(painting)#/media/File:Waterhouse_Hylas_and_the_Nymphs_Manchester_Art_Gallery_1896.15.jpg.

Fig. 10, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*, c. 1864-1868.[220]

[220] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*, 1864-88, oil on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d9/Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti_-_Venus_Verticordia.jpg.

Fig. 11, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* c. 1866 (altered 1872-1873).[221]

[221] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1866, oil paint on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Lilith#/media/File:Lady-Lilith.jpg.

Fig. 12, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* c. 1866 (altered 1872-1873).[222]

[222] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1866, oil paint on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Lilith#/media/File:Lady-Lilith.jpg.

Fig. 13, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Three Fates*, c. 1828-1882.[223]

[223] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Three Fates*, 1828-82, pen and brown ink on black-edged writing paper, accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/The-Three-Fates/B7F461D72BB22EA7.

Fig. 14, John William Waterhouse, *I Am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott*, c. 1915.

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[224] John William Waterhouse, *I Am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott*, 1915, oil on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023,

Fig. 15, Paul Delaroche, *Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, c. 1833-34.[225]

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/92/John_William_Waterhouse_-_I_am_half-sick_of_shadows%2_said_the_lady_of_shalott.JPG.

[225] Paul Delaroche, *Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, 1833-34, oil on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Execution_of_Lady_Jane_Grey#/media/File:PAUL_DELAROCHE_-_Ejecución_de_Lady_Jane_Grey_(National_Gallery_de_Londres,_1834).jpg.

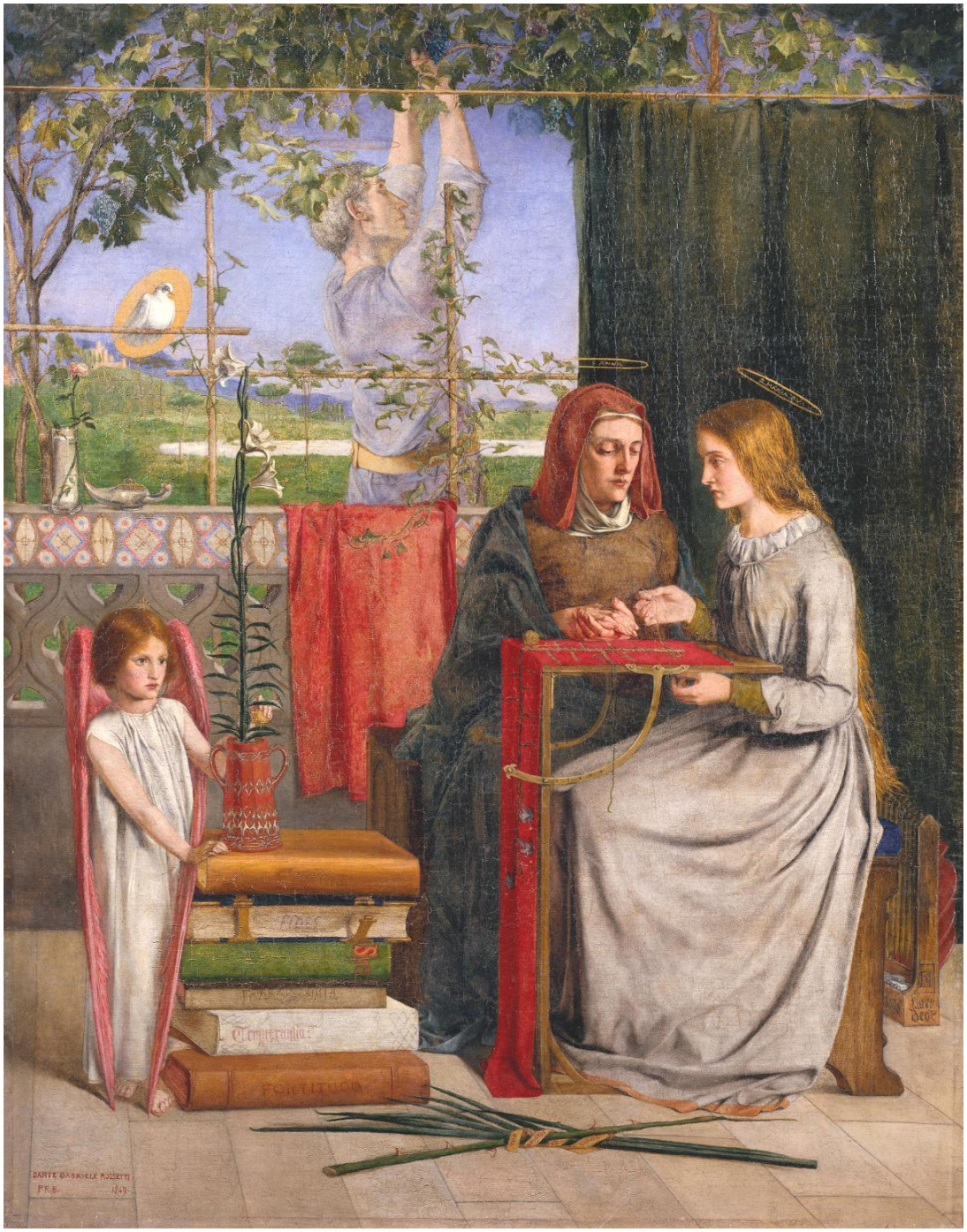

Fig. 16, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary*, c. 1848-1849.[226]

[226] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of Virgin Mary*, 1848-9, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Girlhood_of_Mary_Virgin#/media/File:Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti_-_The_Girlhood_of_Mary_Virgin.jpg.

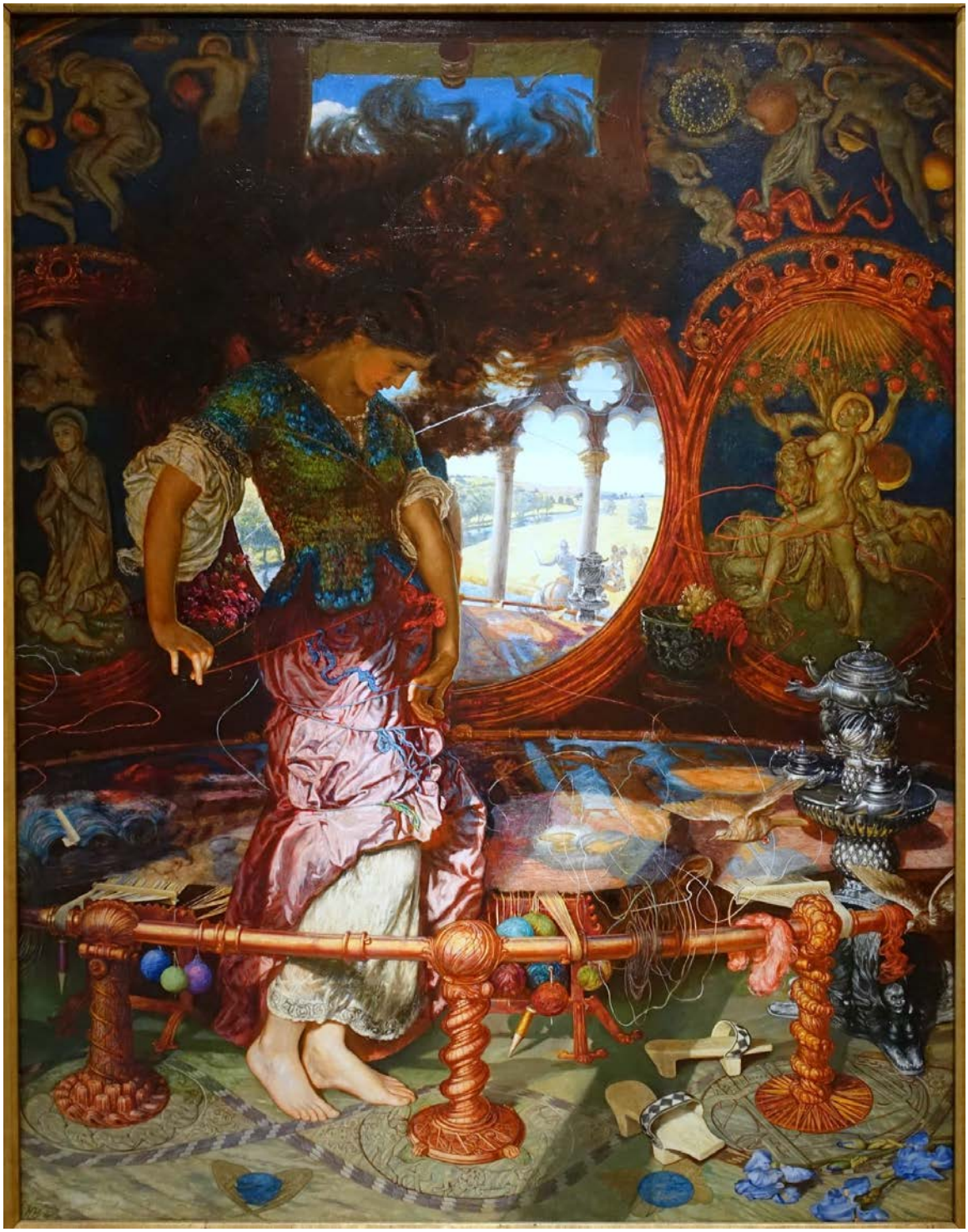

Fig. 17, William Holland Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, c. 1888-1905.[227]

[227] William Holland Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1888-1905, oil on canvas, accessed April 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lady_of_Shalott_(William_Holman_Hunt)#/media/File:The_Lady_of_Shalott_b

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