

The Black Moon Lillith

By Frater RIKB

There was a time when astrology was a fairly cut-and-dried affair. One had only to worry about the seven classical planets, including the Sun and Moon, the twelve signs, the houses, and volumes of ancient lore regarding interpretation and prognostication. The occasional comet or supernova would throw a wrench in the works, but the dire meanings associated with these events are testament to the unease with which ancient astrologers contemplated the idea of anything unexpected disturbing the perfect harmony of the “crystal spheres.”

In the modern era, things have gotten considerably more complicated. The discovery of Uranus in 1781 by William Herschel, and of Neptune by Leverrier and Galle in 1846 began an era of new discoveries that challenged the model of the solar system that astrologers had found entirely satisfactory for thousands of years. The first asteroid (Ceres) was discovered in 1801 by Piazzi, and by 1890, over 300 of them were known. The sky fairly swarmed with new heavenly bodies, leaving astrologers at somewhat of a loss to accommodate them. With a few exceptions, the Victorian Era, with its positivistic philosophical emphasis, marked a low point for astrology that only lifted in the late 19th century during the occult renaissance that produced the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, and of course, the OTO and A^A^.

Finally, astrologers began to catch up with a vengeance. They not only incorporated the new planets into astrology, but also began working with the major asteroids. In fact, the enthusiasm of the new breed of astrologers began to over-reach the bounds of common sense. Instead of merely assigning meanings to newly discovered bodies, they began to speculate on the existence of planets that had not yet been discovered, such as Vulcan (a hypothesized inter-Mercurial planet) and Persephone (also called “Transpluto”), and even to make use of planets that were not even *supposed* to exist materially -- hypothetical or “etheric” planets such as the Uranian “planets” used by the Hamburg school.

It is in this historical context that the astrologer W. Gorn Old, who published under the name Sefhrial, announced to astrologers the existence of a newly discovered moon of the Earth that he called Lilith. The announcement appeared in his *The Science of Foreknowledge*, published in 1918, but the discovery itself had been made (and announced in astronomical circles) by the amateur astronomer Dr. Georg Waltenmath in Hamburg, in 1898. Waltenmath had found anomalous observations, scattered throughout records dating from 1618 to his own day that suggested the existence of a body orbiting earth in a very stable and predictable orbit. Astronomers had failed to discover the body, according to Waltenmath, because it was not highly reflective and could only be seen when transiting the disk of the sun, or rarely at its geocentric opposition with the sun when its full face could sometimes be seen as a reddish glow. Waltenmath predicted the dates and times of several more transits of the body across the sun’s disk, and claimed to have confirmed these predictions by his own direct observations and those of witnesses. In fact, on February 4, 1898, he claimed that he and 11 witnesses had seen the newly discovered moon crossing the sun’s disk. Unfortunately for Waltenmath, professional astronomers observing the sun at precisely the time that his witnesses had made their observations saw nothing of the sort.

Waltenmath continued to make bold announcements concerning this and other “new moons,” but astronomers ignored his claims, and he became widely known as a crank.

This, of course, did not stop Sepharial. Although the observations of the new moon were thoroughly discredited by astronomers of the day, he included an ephemeris based on Waltenmath’s research, named it Lilith, and made tentative delineations of the body. He was rather circumspect in his explanation of how he had arrived at the name, although he seems to have been guided by the pseudo-historical musings of Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*. Sepharial was one of Blavatsky’s “inner group” of Theosophical initiates, though he had left the group by the time *The Science of Foreknowledge* was written.

Even though Sepharial’s Lilith quickly passed out of use due to its nonexistence, the archetype of Lilith has continued to find a place in the work of modern astrologers. Some astrologers responded to the nonexistence of a second moon of the Earth by positing that the body observed was actually a dust cloud that varied in density and was therefore difficult to observe (for example, Ivy Goldstein-Jacobson, who was a follower of Sepharial, was of this opinion). There is an asteroid named Lilith (asteroid 1,181) that has been delineated by Zipporah Dobyns and Demetra George, among others. The most common use of the Lilith archetype in the modern practice of astrology concerns the second focus of the Moon’s elliptical orbit around the Earth (since the Moon’s orbit is not circular, it has two foci, one below the surface of the Earth, and one in space). Like the Moon’s nodes, this point is not a body *per se*, but a mathematical point in space around which the Moon orbits. French astrologers have used this point for 100 years or more; one increasingly sees it used in English-speaking countries.

The symbolism of this “black moon,” as Lilith is often called, is taken from a Jewish myth of uncertain origin in which, prior to the creation of Eve, Adam has a first wife named Lilith. This speculation probably emerged from the text of Genesis, in which two creation myths are related concerning the origin of woman. The first, in Genesis 1:27, states only that when God created mankind, he “created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.” This wording suggests that man and woman were created at the same time, yet in Genesis 2:18-25, a second story is related in which Adam is at first alone in the Garden of Eden, and Eve is made from Adam’s rib. One way to reconcile the discrepancy between the two stories (if indeed one sees a discrepancy, which many modern biblical exegetes do not), is to assume that a woman was created with Adam at the same time he was created and in the same manner. At some point, this woman disappears from the narrative, and then Eve is created as Adam’s second companion, this time from his rib (or, more precisely, from his side – the Hebrew text does not specify the rib). The supposed “first wife” of Adam is not named in Genesis, but later commentators on the Book of Genesis named her Lilith and provided a myth to explain her sudden disappearance from the Garden of Eden.

The first known textual source for the myth of Lilith is *The Alphabet of Ben-Sira*, which was probably written in the period between 600 and 1000 EV¹. A parallel myth is

¹ There is one possible reference to Lilith in the Bible itself. In Isaiah, 34:14, Lilith is depicted as a desert dweller, reposing with wildcats, hyenas, goat-demons, and screech-owls. Biblical scholars disagree, however, about whether the word translated as “Lilith” is a proper name, or simply a common term for desert dwelling demons.

found in the Haggadah² (the source for which was probably *The Alphabet of Ben-Sira*), from which the following quotations will be taken. Lilith was, like Adam, “created out of the dust of the ground,” making her his equal in origin. The narrative goes on to state that “she remained with him only a short time, because she insisted upon enjoying full equality with her husband.” The text of *The Alphabet of Ben-Sira* is even more explicit in stating that the source of conflict between Adam and Lilith was sexual in nature. Adam wanted Lilith to lie beneath him during sex, while Lilith, feeling that this position implied that Adam was her superior, refused. Adam and Lilith argue, at which point she pronounces “the Ineffable Name” and flies off into the air. Adam complains to God that the woman God had given him had left, and asks Him to return Lilith. Although God sends three angels to return Lilith to Adam, she refuses to go back.

At this point in the narrative, things become a bit confused. Whereas Lilith is originally clearly a human woman, when the three angels catch up with her at the Red Sea, she has turned into a demoness who spawns hundreds of demon children each day. The myth concludes with Lilith brokering a deal with the angels that she will allow one hundred of her demon children to die each day if they leave her alone, and vowing to seek her revenge by killing the descendents of Adam in their infancy. This is apparently effective, for Lilith is never returned to Adam. God instead creates Eve from Adam’s side so that rather than being Adam’s equal, woman will be subordinate to him. After all, it’s hardly convenient if one’s new bride can pronounce the Ineffable Name of God and fly away every time she wants to be on top.

In later elaborations of the Lilith story, she is depicted as a slayer of children, a demoness who breeds hundreds of demons each day from the semen of wet dreams and masturbation, and a succubus who visits men in the night to steal their precious bodily fluids. Numerous examples of talismans and amulets exist that were intended to protect small infants from the ravages of Lilith. Circumcision eventually provided permanent protection for males, but female children were at risk for a significantly longer period of time.

In modern times, this negative vision of Lilith has been tempered by an appreciation of her positive qualities. In 1868, the Pre-raphaelite painter and poet Dante Rossetti romanticized Lilith’s power, comparing it to the ability of women of all ages to snare the hearts of men³. Modern feminists see in the myth of Lilith an early expression of female power, sexual freedom, and independence from male hegemony.

Sepharial apparently had none of these qualities in mind when he delineated the meaning of the moon Lilith, to which he ascribed a particularly destructive and malicious influence. In *The Science of Foreknowledge*, he describes her nature as “violent, and subversive, destructive and sinister.” Of course, as noted above, astrologers of the past were often made uncomfortable with the discovery of new celestial bodies, and assigned them negative influences more as a knee-jerk reaction than for any other reason. Sepharial gave very negative meanings to almost all of the new outer planets, almost in the same way that one

² The text I have used can be found in *The Other Bible*, Willis Barnstone, ed., HarperSanFrancisco, 1984, p. 31.

³ A copy of Rossetti’s poem about Lilith and the beautiful painting that accompanied it can be viewed online at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Topics/Lilith/rossetti_poems.html

would immediately assume hostile intent if one suddenly discovered a heretofore-unseen lurker in one's backyard.

Modern astrologers have refined the interpretation of Lilith's influence, so that she is now seen more as a signifier of one's hidden nature, the unconscious in which psychic demons breed in the darkness of ignorance. An understanding of Lilith's position in the natal chart is considered to be important to understanding how one can become aware of one's "dark side" and bring unconscious or self-defeating patterns of behavior to light. For some reason, Lilith's particular traits of feminine power and sexual freedom are rarely explored, perhaps simply out of ignorance of the original mythology from which the name of the black moon emerged. It is this author's belief that contemplation of the position of the astrological Lilith in a woman's chart can be instructive in understanding her sexual power and the way that she comes to terms with male influence (and regrettably, too often, institutionalized male chauvanism) in the larger world.

In the interests of further exploring this possibility, I have compiled the astrological data pertaining to the position of Lilith in the charts of 14 women who I judged to display a "Lilith character." This includes women whose powerful sexuality has become a hallmark of their public image, or whose defiance of male hegemony in the personal and public spheres is well known. They are primarily writers, entertainers, feminists, and sex workers. These women were selected from a large database of famous persons for whom reliable birth data were available. Some of the birth data were solicited through the author's own acquaintances, and two of them are sisters of the OTO.⁴ In none of the cases was the position of Lilith known to me before selecting the chart for inclusion in the study.

An effort to find an equivalent number of charts of women without a "Lilith character" for comparison was largely unsuccessful. This may attest to the fact that in order to find success and notoriety, women over the last 200 years have had to "buck the system" in some way. The very fame and notoriety achieved by women in history may be an indication that they do not fit the compliant, dutiful stereotype of Adam's second wife. No one seems to be terribly interested in recording the birth data for Doris Day or June Lockhart, who are two of the few famous women that the author would consider to not have a Lilith character in some sense. This bias, and the failure to find non-Lilith charts should be kept in mind in the following review.

Lilith, as an astrological body, Lilith is rather slow moving, traversing only about 40 degrees of the zodiac per year. Its motion is always direct, so it makes one circuit of the zodiac every 9 years or so, and spends about 9 months in each sign. The number nine is appropriate, considering that the astrological Lilith is one of the foci of the Moon's orbit around the earth.

By tabulating the data relevant to the Lilith positions of the women included in this study (see the chart at the end of this article), we can see where there might be commonalities and patterns that are suggestive of a strong Lilith. One of the factors that emerges that is quite remarkable is that none of the women selected have Lilith in a mutable sign. This alone almost places the sample far enough from the statistical distribution of the

⁴ The set also includes Rose Kelley, due to her status as the first Scarlet Woman. My thanks go out to Content Love Knowles and Magdalene Meretrix for their permission to use their birth data and their names. Thanks are also due to Xaviera Hollander, who was kind enough to provide her birth data through a third party.

general population (where we have every reason to expect that Lilith will be represented in each Quadruplicity with equal frequency over the span of time from which the charts were selected) to achieve statistical significance.⁵ One can see how the bold, proactive energy associated with the Cardinal signs and the persistent, determined energy of the Fixed signs might contribute to a much stronger expression of the revolutionary Lilith attributes than if Lilith were placed in one of the Mutable signs, the energy of which is usually considered to be of a more vacillating, dissipating kind. An analogous situation is seen with Mars in one of the Mutable signs, where there is always a risk of dissipation of Mars's energy in trivialities, fantasies, or emotional turmoil.

Even more remarkable than the lack of Mutable Lilith placements in the charts under consideration is the fact that the placement in Cardinal and Fixed signs is largely linked to whether Lilith is diurnal or nocturnal. In 11 of the 14 cases, when Lilith is below the horizon, she is found in a Fixed sign, and when she is above the horizon, she is found in a Cardinal sign. One problem with looking at a large collection of charts all at once is that it is difficult to interpret the patterns one finds without more detailed analysis of the lives of the people that the charts have been drawn for. I can detect no certain relationship between the Nocturnal/Fixed and Diurnal/Cardinal condition of Lilith and the personalities of the people involved.

It may be significant that in two of the three charts that do not fit the pattern, Lilith does not follow the condition of the sun; that is, she is above the horizon while the sun is below the horizon or vice versa. This is only true in one of the 11 cases that do fit the pattern (Gloria Steinem). Unfortunately, a sample of three is too limited to deduce any generalities. In the other 11 charts, Lilith is found in the same nocturnal or diurnal condition as the sun, which may indicate another condition of her strength. In any case, it seems clear that Lilith is stronger in a Fixed sign when she is also below the horizon and stronger in a Cardinal sign when she is also above the horizon.

Another frequent occurrence in these charts is an aspect between Lilith and Mars. Contacts with Mars, even when they are stress aspects (squares or oppositions), often indicate that a great deal of energy is available to the native for expression of the planet that receives the aspect. Stress aspects between Lilith and Mars, as the planet that most clearly expresses masculine power, may also indicate that a woman's independence and sovereignty will more often meet opposition by men, or by male hegemony. Lilith is also often disposed by Mars, that is, in a sign that Mars rules, or in a sign where Mars is exalted. In the case of George Sand, who also has a square between Mars and Lilith, this can be seen in her adoption of male dress and habits, as well as her adoption of a male name (her given name was Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin). Marlene Dietrich is also famous for occasionally donning men's formal dress, and for kissing a woman while dressed as a man in the film *Morocco* (1930).⁶ It is a little known fact that this scene was suggested by Dietrich herself, and that she artfully managed to keep the scene from being cut by censors. Like

⁵ In the social sciences, a result is considered statistically significant if there is less than a 5% probability that the result could be obtained by chance. The author has not bothered to calculate the precise odds against chance for these observations, primarily because there is no appropriate control group for comparison, and the results could therefore be misleading.

⁶ In one of those deliciously appropriate coincidences that one occasionally comes across, Marlene's middle name was Magdalene.

George Sand, Dietrich's Lilith is disposed by Mars, but she has a sextile between Mars and Lilith rather than a square. Of course, Dietrich garnered much less calumny from her gender-blurring behavior than Sand did. Women have often found it useful to appropriate masculine symbols of power as a provocative gesture of defiance of the status quo (although in Sand's case, it was also initially because it increased her chances of selling her literary works to have a male pen name). As with any "negative" aspect, Mars squares will often serve to facilitate one's growth and progress rather than hinder it.

It is interesting to note that all three women who work in the sex trade in some capacity (the last three listed) have aspects between Lilith and Venus, the planet most clearly linked with sexual passion. This is also true of George Sand, who, although not a sex worker, gained a reputation for her daringly explicit portrayal of women's sexuality in her novels *Valentine* (1832) and *Leila* (1833). Rose Kelley, who was of course instrumental in Crowley's reception of the Book of the Law, has Lilith disposed by Venus, in Libra, conjunct the Ascendant (Rose Kelley's birth time is rather uncertain, but I have cast it for noon on her day of birth). This may be an important indicator of her office as the first Scarlet Woman, since Libra and its associated Tarot Trump, Adjustment or Justice, is very closely linked with the idea of "love under will."⁷ The Lilith archetype can also quite satisfactorily be correlated with Babalon, as demonstrated in an excellent essay by Jeffrey Smith.⁸

The chart of Xaviera Hollander deserves special mention, as it amply illustrates the power of a strongly-placed Lilith. Ms. Hollander is well known as author of the novel *The Happy Hooker*, and star of the movie *Pleasure is My Business* (the running time of which is 93 minutes, oddly enough). Ms. Hollander also writes a widely read sex advice column for *Penthouse* magazine. Ms. Hollander's Lilith is placed in Leo in the first house. Leo is a sign frequently associated with sexuality, as is the corresponding fifth house. Lilith's placement in the first house indicates that Lilith energy is a major component of the native's personality and basic identity. Ms. Hollander's propensity for expressing her Lilith nature in writing is seen in the disposition of Lilith by the Sun, which is placed in Mercury-ruled Gemini, a sign often concerned with communication and teaching. The clearly sexual nature of this Lilith placement is enhanced by Lilith's conjunction with Venus (to which Mars in Aries is in trine, another indication of powerful and energetic sexuality). Furthermore, Lilith is conjunct both Jupiter, giving the native's Lilith qualities an expansive and flamboyant quality, and Pluto, the planet of revolutionary social change. Jupiter rules the 6th and 9th houses, and combined with Lilith indicates a desire to educate the public about sexual health and social issues related to sexuality. Pluto in conjunction with Lilith indicates a desire to cast off and revolutionize outmoded sexual mores, but also a strong sexual presence and a secure command of the power inherent in feminine sexuality. While Lilith is not necessarily always an indicator of sexual qualities (although I hope I have made the case that Lilith is an inherently sexual archetype), its influence on the sexual nature of Xaviera Hollander's works is considerable.

⁷ See *The Book of Thoth*, p. 86-88.

⁸ This erudite essay can be found online at Renee Rosen's excellent "Lilith Shrine" website at <http://www.lilitu.com/lilith/lilit.html>

A detailed analysis of the remainder of the charts in the table is beyond the scope of this essay, and so is left to the ingenuity of the reader. As with any form of astrological delineation, the greatest value will be derived by the native who takes the time to meditate on the archetypes and symbols contained in their own birth chart rather than relying on standard formulations in books. Those who are interested in studying Lilith in their own birth chart should obtain a copy of the astrological calculation program Astrolog. Astrolog, which was written by Walter Pullen is not only one of the most versatile and useful astrology programs available, but it is also free.⁹ Astrolog will calculate the position of Lilith as long as the program is set to use ephemeris files rather than its own calculation algorithm. Those who are interesting in investigating charts earlier in this century or before should therefore also download the additional ephemeris files available at Walter's website.

From ancient Jewish folklore to modern astrological practice, the Lilith archetype, by its very durability, has proven its value in helping us understand our own inner landscapes. One of the lessons that Lilith teaches is that what we reject or see as ugly in ourselves is much less daunting when we have the courage and will to examine it in the light of day. Just as Lilith has been transformed historically from the child-slaughtering demoness of the *Alphabet of Ben-Sira* into an image of affirmation, we have the ability to transform our inner demons into images of power.

⁹ It can be downloaded from the Internet by setting your browser to <http://www.magitech.com/~cruiser1/astrolog.htm>. Kudos to Walter for his generosity and programming expertise.

Astrological Data for 14 Lilith-influenced Women

<i>Native</i>	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Sign</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Dispositor</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Aspects</i>
George Sand	diurnal	Scorpio	Fixed	Mars	9	cadent	opp. Mars sq. Venus con. Nept.
Rose Kelley	diurnal	Libra	Cardinal	Venus (Saturn Exalted)	12	cadent	sq. Mars
Mae West	nocturnal	Scorpio	Fixed	Mars	6	cadent	con. Uran. sq. Mars tr. Moon
Marlene Dietrich	nocturnal	Scorpio	Fixed	Mars	4	angular	sex. Mars sex. Jupiter con. IC
Anais Nin	nocturnal	Capricorn	Cardinal	Saturn (Mars Exalted)	4	angular	sq. Mars
Joan Crawford	diurnal	Capricorn	Cardinal	Saturn (Mars Exalted)	8	succeedent	sex. Merc. sq. Node sq. Mars
Bette Davis	diurnal	Leo	Fixed	Sun	9	cadent	con. Jup. tr. Sun
Gloria Steinem	diurnal	Cancer	Cardinal	Moon (Jupiter Exalted)	9	cadent	con. Pluto sq. Jupiter
Sophia Loren	nocturnal	Leo	Fixed	Sun	3	cadent	con. Mars opp. Node
Germaine Greer	nocturnal	Aquarius	Fixed	Saturn	3	cadent	con. Sun opp. Pluto sex. Mars
Madonna Ciccone	diurnal	Aries	Cardinal	Mars (Sun Exalted)	8	succeedent	tr. Saturn tr. Sun

Content Love Knowles	nocturnal	Taurus	Fixed	Venus (Moon Exalted)	5	succeedent	con. Moon sq. Mars sq. Venus opp. Jup.
Magdalene Meretrix	diurnal	Aries	Cardinal	Mars (Sun Exalted)	11	succeedent	con. Venus
Xaviera Hollander	nocturnal	Leo	Fixed	Sun	1	angular	con. Jup. con. Pluto con. Venus sex. Nept. sex. Uran. sex. Merc.