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Lilith and Eve Discuss Human Origins

Lilith and Eve Discuss Human Origins

by

Joe R. Christopher

Within the rose-lined walks of Eden paced
Two women, talking deeply, not in haste;
Their bare feet on the path were used to soil
From nature's traces, not forced by heavy toil.
The younger gestured with hands quite freely;
The older listened, murmuring a "Really?"
And so it went, by stream, by trees, by field;
They walked and talked. The younger still appealed
For judgment to her elder; the older nodded,
And then replied with query—an answer prodded.

The younger, Eve, then said, "From Adam's rib
Was I betaken—I'm sure it's not a fib;
I think it was a dream that Adam had,
A vision in a dream, which made him glad;
He told me all, and then I dreamed it too.
He said, or else I dreamed, it was a clue
For Adam's and my relationship—a symbol
That we were equals, as we this garden ramble:
Not from his head, that I should rule above;
Not from his foot, that I should lowly serve."

The elder, Lilith, then replied, "That's folly—
The truth has tripped and fallen flat, all sprawlly.
When you and Adam spend some time caressing,
Before the mutual great acquiescing,
Then count his ribs—you'll find each side the same.
I tickled them, and found no sign of maim.
He hasn't lost a rib! The world of dreams
Will fill your life with *isn'ts*, with merely *seems*."

She stopped her walk to touch a deep-red rose—
Then knelt to smell its bloom; perhaps a ruse
To blunt her blunt and strong assertiveness,
To so digress by action, to decompress.
She said, "I wonder why a rose has thorns—
Here in our park, it doesn't need such forms."

Said Eve, "Perhaps it spends its time in dreams,
And visions all tomorrows as extremes."

They both laughed then, at such absurdity—
Lilith got up, they hugged with great esprit,

And chose another direction for their walk,
Continuing their subject in their talk.

Said Eve, "If not from rib, whence came I here?"

Said Lilith, "That rib is but a euphemism, dear,
For I suspect our husband dreamed his phallus—
That he's so proud of, its pleasure should never fail us—
Is for us too the origin of all;
And thus the origin of us befalls—
At least in dreams. The logic there is stirred:
A hippopotamus in mud be-mired."

Asked Eve, persistent, "But what's my origin?
How came I here to walk this garden in?
Am I, like Adam himself, shaped out of dust?
Is that the source of all, when all's discussed?"

Lilith replied, "In ways beyond our ken,
It may be so, for all the Earth is one.
But more immediately, that's just a dream,
Based on a likeness, based on things that seem.
Do you remember when we shaped of clay
Those figurines of animals to stay,
But then they melted poorly in rain's downpour—
We thought reshaping daily too big a chore.
However, in dreams, the figures come alive,
Ourselves included, and through a rain survive.
Daydreams or nightdreams, it does not matter much:
We dream that life comes flowing from our touch.
Or else, our God has changed some statued mud
From inward dirt to nerves and bone and blood:
That's magic—why bother with a statued shape
If all one needs is a finger-snapping cap?
No, no, not you, not Adam, and, no, not I
Were shaped of dust or mud to vivify,
Not literally."

She stopped beside a rose,
Impulsively, for use of eye and nose,
And delicate touch—a pale-hued rose this time;
She brushed aside a bee t' achieve her whim,
But soon allowed it back.

Said Eve, "Its stinger
Is like the rose's thorns, though slightly stronger.
I won't repeat my joke, but it seems odd
That, if the bee's upset, it threatens its prod."

"And sometimes stings," said Lilith, rising up;
"This garden seems, at times, the strangest trope."

But Eve went back to what she'd asked before,
About the source of human life as lore.

Said she, “You were alive when I became—
If neither rib nor dust, what start’s to claim?
You saw my origin, so tell it me—
Forget ‘Not this, not that’; with truth be free.”

Lilith replied, “I’ll tell you what I saw—
The strangest thing, perhaps a thing of awe.
You don’t have to believe its truth I say,
So odd it seems, but I will facts convey.

“You know the lowest bit of our whole park,
Which touches a sea, where we have gone to lark.
And still more, those partly hairless apes
Who dwell there, swimming much and playing japes;
They have the barest bit of webbing stretched
Between their thumbs and index fingers attached,
As if they meant to turn aquatic mammals—
And so escape all land-based, traumatic trammels.”
She suddenly stopped, surprised at what she’d said.
What trauma occurred in Eden? What, indeed?

“That is to say, as if they somehow meant
To turn sea-creatures, and always waves frequent.

“You also know our God, whose coming teems
With fear and awe, although he friendly seems;
We drop to knees and touch our foreheads down,
Although he’s never said we should them ground.
What else can we, at holiness extreme?
How else express the gulf, the gap, supreme?

“Now bring these two together: I saw our God
Down by the apedom; how strange, I thought, how odd.”

Eve nodded sympathetically, unvexed,
With friendship—but quickly asked, “What happened next?”

Said Lilith, “Next, he chose a single ape,
A youngish, female one, out of the troop,
And spoke to her. She paused, to choose her route,
Him saying, ‘Come out of your tribe; right now, come out.’
He breathed on her, and then she straighter stood—
That breath was blown, lips rounded, her to stead.
He touched her forehead, saying, ‘Think deeply now;
With reason and with feelings find the *tao*.’
He put his hands on either side her throat—
‘And be a talking beast, of words not mute.’
He paused, then said—at least he said in part—
‘Seek knowledge and seek wisdom and seek art.
I give you all this world, all lesser beasts—
Be gentle, be gentle, when all to you’s released.
Awake and love: agapē is the prize.
Be happy: since happiness in virtue lies.

Do not return to life as lesser beast:
Your call is fragile, by your decision lost.
Oh, more he said, or less—I am not sure—
But something like these words, if words they were.”

She stopped beside a yellow rose and knelt,
But gazed both long and steady, nor ever smelt.
“Look at the blackish spots,” she said and frowned.
“I asked our God just what they were, here found;
He said that some small critter grows on leaves,
And causes leaf to fall, the plant aggrieves.
He didn’t say what we should do about it.
Should we dig up the plants and burn them, to rout it?
Or should we think the black spots also live,
And so we should encourage them to thrive?
I don’t know what to do, since life is good.”

“But what about the ape?” Eve then renewed,
Ignoring all concern for roses maimed.
“What happened to the ape?” That she exclaimed.

Surprised, said Lilith, “Why, the ape was you.
I thought you understood the aperçu.
Don’t you remember when he called you forth?
It’s not the sort of tale to trust by faith—
It’s too extreme.”

Said Eve, “I *don’t* remember—
Of course, he’s asked me questions, light *or* somber,
Sometimes with irony. I’ve had to speak in answer.
But just to speak? In tongue I’m no advancer—
With you and Adam, yes, but not with him.
But still I can respond—I’m not a mime.
And think? How can one help but think?—
Or fast or slow; with order or with kink;
In memory or in dream; in gard’ning, yes,
In friendship, and in passion’s breathlessness—
And when I meet the Numinous a-walking,
Why then I think—and often end up talking.
These facts you think you give just can’t be facts!
I don’t remember them, there’s nothing fixed.
Oh I went swimming often, in some dreams,
But times like those weren’t *truths*, but merely *seems*.
It’s not from apes I came, called out or not—
A special creation was I—all else is rot!”

“Let’s walk,” said Lilith, “this path will lead us back
To where we started, and it’s a pleasant track.
I’ve told you what I think occurred back then,
But, as I said, you needn’t believe my ken.
The dust and rib were proved by modern dreams,

For inspiration comes asleep, betimes.
But who has ever dreamed of beasts a-changing—
Of gaining voice or mind?—the thought's estranging.
Although my memory is sharp and clear,
Perhaps I'm wrong: my sureness can't cohere."

And so they walked, by roses, trees, and fields,
Seeking for truth, or else what pleasure yields.
The younger gestured with her hands quite freely;
The elder listened, murmuring a "Really?"

Editorial: This Issue

In this issue, we welcome some new writers with a variety of tastes and techniques. Ron Boyer has three poems and a short story with fairy tale settings. Alex B., a youthful writer, presents us with "The Breach," a dark fantasy excerpt introducing one episode in a long conflict in an imperiled world. S. R. Hardy retells an old myth in a story-poem using ancient Norse style with a light heart. John Taylor's story-poem brings us to ancient Babylon in more traditional English rhyme, while Nicolo Santilli offers his fantasy vision without rhyme. Philip Miller and Jeremy Hachey present more introspective and philosophical verse.

We also welcome back some previous authors, namely Dag Rossman, with a new perspective on a well-known work of art, his selection enlivened by a pen-and-ink drawing from his wife, Shannon. Joe Christopher also returns with an intimate view of conversations in the Garden of Eden, and David Sparenberg once more evokes the mythic consciousness and the love of nature. Ryder Miller tries another new direction, this time virtual reality and its power to affect actual reality.

L. C. Atencio once more provides a cover and some highly imaginative illustrations, this time trying out the method of William Blake in linking picture to verse.