

(RE)DISCOVERING ROSSETTI'S LADY LILITH:  
THE STEVENSON WATERCOLOUR, MANUSCRIPT  
SONNET, AND UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

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Of the two watercolour replicas of *Lady Lilith* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti listed in Virginia Surtees's *Catalogue Raisonné*, one is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (205 R.1) and the other (205 R.2) is recorded as "Present whereabouts unknown." Both replicas are dated 1867 (1:116-18). Unlike the original oil painting in the Delaware Art Museum, with the face of Alexa Wilding substituted for Fanny Cornforth in 1872, these two watercolours preserve Fanny Cornforth's face.<sup>1</sup> The "lost" watercolour replica was recently publicized in Japan and sold at Sotheby's for a hammer price of £560,000 to a private buyer in Britain on 13 July 2017. Curiously enough, this sale marked exactly 150 years since the picture was sold by the artist at his studio in London to its first owner, Alexander Shannan Stevenson, of Tynemouth, on 13 July in 1867.

How this watercolour replica of *Lady Lilith* (fig. 1) made its journey to Japan was unknown when I saw it at the "Natsume Soseki and Arts" exhibition in Tokyo in 2013. The investigation of its provenance and the examination of the picture as well as the materials pasted on the back, including the newly found autograph manuscript of the sonnet, shed new light on a crucial moment in Rossetti's career. In addition to the watercolour replica, six photocopies of unpublished letters from Rossetti to Alexander Stevenson regarding the picture were discovered.

The "Natsume Soseki and Arts" exhibition at the University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, in 2013 focussed on the painters who influenced the novels and criticisms of Soseki Natsume (1867-1916), one of the most popular literary figures in modern Japan, with an attempt to reconstruct the world of his artistic vision. *Lady Lilith* was among the works by the painters who inspired him. After the exhibition, I visited the owner of the picture who informed me of the deceased art-dealer whose relatives drew my attention to