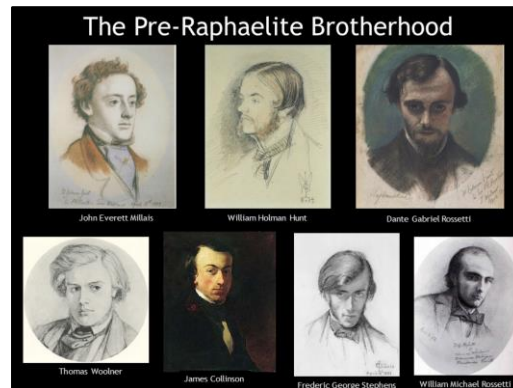


The paintings produced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood or PRB are today regarded as **staid and irrelevant** Victorian pictures. I will show that at the time there were **controversial and even revolutionary**.

The brotherhood was founded in **1848, the year of revolutions** across Europe. There was a very large Chartist meeting on 10th April in Kennington Common but luckily confrontation was avoided and the petition with **six million signatures** was handed in to Downing Street. House of Commons clerks estimated the true figure to be 1.9 million signatures and some joke signatures were publicized to undermine the credibility of the movement.

John Everett Millais and Holman Hunt accompanied the crowd from Russell Square but at the Common they were careful to remain outside the rails. In September of that year they met in Millais's parents house to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The term 'brotherhood' was later of concern to critics as it suggested anarchy and a revolution.



Top row, left to right:

William Holman Hunt, *John Everett **Millais***, (b. 1829 – d. 1896)

John Everett Millais, *William **Holman Hunt***, 1854, (1827-1910)

William Holman Hunt, *Dante Gabriel **Rossetti***, 1853, (1828-1882)

Bottom row, left to right:

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ***Thomas Woolner***, 1852 (1825-1892, sculptor and poet),
National Portrait Gallery

James **Collinson**, *self-portrait*, undated (1825-1881, only 1848-50, a devout Christian who resigned when Millais painted *Christ in the House of His Parents*)

John Everett Millais, ***Frederic George Stephens*** (1828-1907, art critic)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ***William Michael Rossetti*** (1829-1919, writer and art critic)

Seven 'Brothers'

- **The three years 1849-1851 were an exceptional event in the history of art** because rarely do you find a group of artists who set out to radically change the status quo and who take on the leading art establishment – the Royal Academy.
- So **who were they?** The three key members were,
 - Millais was a **child prodigy** of a **wealthy family** from St Ouen (pronounced 'won' as in 'wander'), Jersey, who supported his talents. He went to **Sass's** (a prep school for the Royal Academy) in **1839 aged 10** but only needed one year there and he went to the **Royal Academy** school in **1840 aged 11**. He was **honest, sincere** and other **artists were awed** by his talents and charmed by his personality. He was **committed to art** and according to Hunt he **never wasted a moment** in his dedication to painting.
 - Hunt came from a **poorer family** and his father, a warehouse manager, was against his career as an artist so he worked, trained in the evenings at the **Mechanics Institute** and spent his salary on lessons with a portraitist. He **met Millais** at the British Museum in **1844** and Millais encouraged him to

apply for the **Royal Academy** training, and on the **third attempt** he was accepted at the end of 1844. Hunt was **hard working, religious, unconventional** in his approach to art, much liked and **very jovial** (he was called the '**Maniac**'). He married Fanny Waugh in 1865 after his relationship with Annie Miller ended. They left for the Middle East in 1866 and she died in childbirth in Florence.

- Rossetti was from an **intellectual family** but he was **not a natural painter** and spent **four years at Sass's** (1841-5) from the age of 13 to 17. He went to the **Royal Academy in 1845** but his attendance was erratic. He **admired William Blake and Robert Browning** and was as much a **poet** as an artist. He **dropped out** of the Academy and was accepted (eventually!) by **Ford Maddox Brown** for art lessons in 1848. A few weeks later he saw Hunt's *Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats was a favourite of Rossetti and he approached Hunt and congratulated him.

They were joined by four other members,

- **Thomas Woolner, sculptor and poet** (1825-1892), emigrated to Australia in 1852 and returned to have a successful career as a sculptor. He had some success as a poet and art dealer. Had a 'rough' personality and had to make a supernatural effort to be polite. Became an academician in 1875 and Professor of Sculpture. Married **Alice Gertrude Waugh**, sister of **Fanny** who turned him down and **married Holman Hunt**. She died in childbirth a year later and Hunt married the third sister **Edith** which Woolner considered immoral and was defined as **incest** under British law at the time. They never spoke again.
- **James Collinson (1825-1881)**, only a member for two years as he resigned when Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* was declared blasphemous. Converted to Catholicism but reverted to High Anglicanism to marry Christina Rossetti but his conscience forced him to return to Catholicism and break the engagement. Trained as a Jesuit priest but did not complete his studies. In 1858 he married Eliza Wheeler sister-in-law of the painter John Rogers Herbert (1810-1890) who influenced the Pre-Raphaelites. W. M. Rossetti wrote that the aim of the Pre-Raphaelites was to 'out-Herbert Herbert'. Herbert was a Catholic convert and friend of Pugin, another Catholic convert. Herbert painted *Our Saviour Subject to his Parents at Nazareth* an acceptable version of Millais's painting. Collinson continued to paint genre scenes, moved to Brittany later in life.
- **Frederic George Stephens, art critic** (1828-1907), physically disabled because of an accident when he was 9 he was educated privately. Joined the RA School in 1844 and met Millais and Holman Hunt. Disappointed with his artistic talent he stopped painting and took up art criticism. Three uncompleted paintings survive and one shows a lot of promise. He became a well known and leading art critic who supported the Pre-Raphaelites. He allowed Rossetti to write reviews of his own work under Stephen's name. He sometimes wrote under the pseudonym Laura

Stephens (that name 'Laura' again). Wrote 100 articles on British art collecting to encourage middle-class art patronage. Keeper of prints and Drawings at the British Museum. He married the artist Rebecca Clara Dalton in 1866. He was a great **supporter of Holman Hunt** but they **fell out** over Hunt's painting *The Triumph of the Innocents* (1885) which Stephen's boxed but it was damaged in transit. Stephens criticized the painting for its hyper-realism and fantasy. He disliked Impressionism and saw the Pre-Raphaelites as part of the evolution of British art rather than revolutionary.

- **William Michael Rossetti, writer and art critic**, (1829-1919), outlived them all including Holman Hunt. He worked full time as a civil servant but wrote extensively on art and biographies of artists. In 1874 he married Lucy Madox Brown and they had five children who were schooled at home and brought up in a non-Christian household.
- Other artists were considered such as **Charles Allston Collins** and **Walter Howell Deverell** but no decision was made. **Ford Madox Brown** was older but an obvious candidate as he was Rossetti tutor but he **turned it down**.
- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was influenced by John Ruskin although they did not meet until after their formation and after they had made their early plans. We know Holman Hunt spent a night reading Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, and found it supported their views but we do not know to what extent it influenced their views.
- They published their views in a magazine they produced called **The Germ**. It only survived for four issues in 1850.

Timeline

- **1843** John Ruskin in *Modern Painters* encouraged artists to "**go to Nature in all singleness of heart rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing.**"
- 1848 Hunt, *Eve of St. Agnes*. D.G.R. asks to study under Ford Madox Brown. In **September**, Holman Hunt, John Millais, and Rossetti form the **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**. Thomas Woolner, John Collinson, W. M. Rossetti, F. G. Stephens also joined. Ford Madox Brown was close to the group but did not join.
- 1849 Millais, *Isabella*. Hunt, *Rienzi*, D.G. Rossetti, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*.
- 1850 Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, *The Return of the Dove to the Ark* (exhibited 1851), *The Woodman's Daughter* (exhibited 1851) and *Mariana* (exhibited 1851). Millais painted *Eliza Wyatt and her Daughter, Sarah*. The P.R.B. publishes **The Germ** (4 issues, Jan.-April), W.M. Rossetti editor.
- 1850-60 D.G. Rossetti paints most of his greatest watercolours during this decade, plus major oils including *Dante's Dream*; **D.G.R. meets Elizabeth Siddal**.
- 1851 D.G.R. and Elizabeth Siddal become engaged. In May, **John Ruskin defends the Pre-Raphaelites** in two letters to *The Times*, and agrees to subsidize D.G. Rossetti by buying a certain number of paintings from him every year. George Meredith writes *Poems*; favourably reviewed by W.M. Rossetti. Hunt, *Hireling*

Shepherd.

- 1852 Millais, ***Ophelia*** and *A Huguenot*.
- 1853 **William Morris enters Exeter College**, Oxford, and meets Edward (Burne-)Jones. **John Millais elected to the Royal Academy**. Lizzie Siddall, *The Lady of Shalott*.
- 1854 Millais, John Ruskin. Hunt, *The Light of the World* and *The Awakening Conscience*; Thomas Seddon, *Jerusalem from the Valley of Jehosophat* (first influential PRB landscape). **Holman Hunt travels to the Middle East**. Professor Rossetti dies April 26.
- 1855 **Millais marries** Ruskin's ex-wife.
- 1856 Millais, *The Blind Girl*, *Autumn Leaves*. **Morris and Burne-Jones take rooms together**. Their magazine, *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (12 issues, Jan.-Dec.), starts the **second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism**. Swinburne **enters Balliol College**, Oxford. D.G.R. meets Fanny Cornforth. Hunt, [The Scapegoat](#). Hughes, [April Love](#). Henry Wallis, [The Death of Chatterton](#) (for which George Meredith models). F. M. Brown, [Jesus Washing Peter's Feet](#).
- 1857 William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones join D.G. Rossetti in painting Arthurian frescoes on the walls of the **Oxford Debating Union**. Hunt, Rossetti, Millais, and others illustrate a volume of [Tennyson](#)'s poems for the publisher Edward Moxon. Rossetti meets Jane Burden, an artist's model, and introduces her to the others, including Morris. Swinburne, "Ode to Mazzini"; meets Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Morris. Meredith and his wife separate.
- 1858 Morris, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*. August Egg, [Past and Present](#), three paintings on theme of fallen woman.
- 1859 **Morris and Jane Burden married**. Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*; meets Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites. Millais, *Apple Blossoms* and *The Vale of Rest*.
- 1860 **D.G. Rossetti marries Elizabeth Siddal**. Hunt, [The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple](#) (Hunt's first major picture using biblical typology and religious realism).
- 1861 D.G. Rossetti, *Early Italian Poets*. Foundation of [Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, & Co.](#); includes Burne-Jones and Ford Madox Brown.
- 1862 **Lizzie (Siddal) Rossetti dies** from a self-administered overdose of laudanum. Death ruled an accident. D.G.R. moves to Tudor House, 16 Cheyne Walk, with A.C. Swinburne. W.M. Rossetti and George Meredith also live there part of the time and Fanny Cornforth is the housekeeper. Meredith writes *Modern Love*. Whistler paints *The White Girl*.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Michael_Rossetti

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Collinson

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_George_Stephens

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Woolner



- Of course, their patrons, largely the middle-class themselves form different groups and each member of the PRB appealed to different types of buyers but **together they created a stronger brand**. In fact, they were less like a pop group as they created works and were **bought independently**. Each created an **individual brand** that convinced the buyer they were making a wise investment.
 - Millais could be trusted as he was a born artist, an **honest Englishman** and made an ARA in 1853 and later **RA** (and President just before he died).
 - Hunt could be trusted as an investment as he was **serious, had religious convictions** and worked hard at everything he did.
 - Rossetti was a typical **unreliable Romantic image** of the artist so buying one of his paintings was a wise investment as you were buying the work of a **'real artist'**. The Della Guardia family was nicknamed Rossetti five generations before Rossetti because of their red hair.



Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Portrait of Mrs Abington (1737-1815)*, 74 x 61.5, Berger Collection, Denver Art Museum

- **What were the Pre-Raphaelites rejecting?**
- Millais criticized Sir Joshua Reynolds by describing him as '*Sir Sloshua*'. This may have meant simple 'conventional' but many of Reynolds paintings focus on the face and he quickly filled in the clothes. I have selected one of his portraits to illustrate their criticism. More generally, they felt that since Raphael art had become **stylized and rigid** and rather than **go to nature** artists had learnt to paint in a way that followed **established traditions**.
- I am not saying their criticism was fair. Reynolds also painted the startling *Mrs Abington as Miss Prue* but a certain conventional style had developed that was acceptable to the Royal Academy. The Pre-Raphaelites were rejecting their teachers, elders and the artistic establishment and their revolt against authority and convention gave rise to a sudden change in approach that influenced later artists throughout the nineteenth century.

Mrs Abington

- Mrs Abington was a flower girl ('Nosegay Fan'), the daughter of a private soldier (or cobbler, or both), who went on to become a great actress. She worked as a servant to a French milliner and learned about costume, fashion and acquired a knowledge of French. She married her music master James Abington but her success and her relationships with other men caused her to be separated from her husband. Dr. Samuel Johnson was one of her staunchest admirers. The painter James Northcote (a pupil of Reynolds who painted about 2,000 works and made £40,000 in the 18th century) said about Mrs Abington's acting, '*I never saw a part done so excellent in all my life, for in her acting she has all the simplicity of nature and not the least tincture of the theatrical*'.



British School, *Castle by a Lake*, late 18th century, Tate Britain

- An example of the type of landscape the Pre-Raphaelites might have been thinking of when they talked about Sir Sloshua. It follows the Claude conventions but it does not appear the artist went anywhere near an actual landscape. The trees could be of any species and the sky bears little resemblance to a sky.



John Everett Millais, *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru*, 1846, V&A

- Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1846, it won a gold medal in 1847.
- It has the appearance of a conventional academic painting by a mature artist trained in the Royal Academy methods.
- The unusual subject of this painting is the capture of the **Inca emperor Atahualpa** by the **Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro in 1532**. As a model for Pizarro, Millais used an actor who had recently appeared in a play of the same name.
- **Millais was only 16** when he painted this work. It belonged to his half-brother Henry Hodgkinson and was bequeathed to the V&A in 1897.
- Millais's studio was at his parents' house at 83 Gower Street, which is where the Pre-Raphaelites were founded two years later.

Background

- The composition must have been planned by early in the year; Millais received in payment for a sketch a £5 cheque - his first - dated 28 February 1846, and he drew on the back of the cheque a small sketch of himself at work on a painting which is clearly identifiable as the present picture (J G Millais, I, p34, repr p35).
- The painting was exhibited in the West Room of the Royal Academy, with the following appended to the title in the catalogue: 'Pizarro himself advanced towards the emperor, whom he took prisoner; while his soldiers, incited by Vincent de Valverde, massacred all that surrounded the Monarch. Vide Luffman's chronology'. (The source is presumably John Luffman's *The Pocket Chronologist, or Authentic register of recent events both foreign and domestic* published in 1806.)
- The priest Vicente de Valverde holds **aloft a crucifix** against a **setting sun**, symbolising the **triumph of Catholicism** and the **end of Inca religion and power**; Warner also links the group of mother and children on the right with the traditional, and appropriate, subject of the **Massacre of the Innocents**.
- The most likely source, as Warner claims, is **Sheridan's play Pizarro** (first

performed in 1799, and itself an adaptation of von Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru*). The play was performed at the **Princess's Theatre** early in 1846. Millais frequently attended that theatre, and knew the leading **actor James Wallack** (whose son Lester later married Millais's sister Emily) who appeared in Sheridan's play there as the Indian hero Rolla. Wallack was the model for Pizarro in Millais's painting. J G Millais records that the artist's **father** sat for the **priest Valverde** and for **other figures**, and Hunt notes that Millais borrowed native costume and jewellery that the artist Edward Goodall had brought back from an expedition he had accompanied in South America. Warner also thinks it likely that Millais borrowed costumes and props from the Princess's Theatre, and that he may have looked at original Inca artefacts in the British Museum.



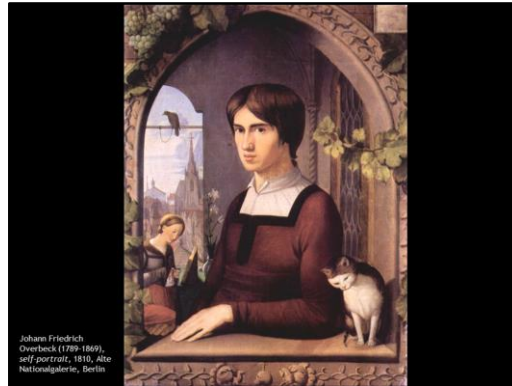
John Everett Millais, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1848, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool

- **How did their art change?**
- This was started in 1847 when **Millais was 18** and before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded. I show it briefly as it demonstrates the enormous change in style Millais went through over the next few years.
- It is a **complex and mature composition** in the style of **William Etty** and the sensual mood is appropriate to the romantic subject.
- Before showing the work of the Pre-Raphaelites I will show **three influences** – the Nazarenes, John Ruskin and the so-called ‘primitive’ artists before Raphael.

From Lady Lever Art Gallery:

“The story of Cimon (or Cymon) and Iphigenia was originally told in **The Decameron of Boccaccio**. Millais’s source, though, was the version by the 17th century English poet **John Dryden**. The poem described the love of the **aristocratic but boorish Cymon**, who had been **banished** by his family to live in the country as a **rustic**, for the distant and **refined Iphigenia**.

Millais was only 18 when he began the painting, and it was the last major canvas he worked on before he embraced Pre-Raphaelitism with his friends Holman Hunt and Rossetti. Hunt assisted him with Iphigenia’s dress but Millais was already dissatisfied with the picture and vowing he could do something much better. The outcome was 'Isabella', now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.”



Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869), *self-portrait*, 1810, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin

Influences/Precursors

1. The Nazarenes

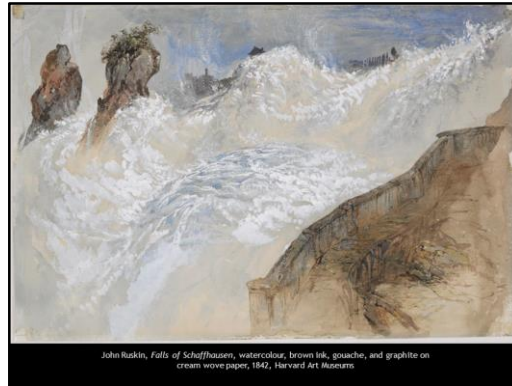
- Overbeck painted this self-portrait when he was 21 and had just arrived in Rome after being expelled from the German Academy because of his views about art.
- Overbeck and his companions thought that art before Raphael (before 1500), which was called 'primitive', was uncorrupted, Christian and honest.
- In 1809 Overbeck formed 'The German Brotherhood of St. Luke'.
- The PRB is a primitivist movement like the **Nazarenes** who predate them by forty years. Like the PRB they were **inspired by the work of Giotto** and other artists of the period.
- The Pre-Raphaelites also saw the work of artists influenced by the Nazarenes such as the engravings of Moritz **Retsch**, *Macbeth*, 1833.
- They were not looking to emulate but to work in a similar naïve style inspired by the 'primitive'.

Johann Friedrich Overbeck

- Overbeck was a German painter and one of the **Nazarenes**. He painted mostly religious paintings in the style of artists before Raphael. **He believed European art had become corrupted** as Christianity had been slowly discarded and he took as a guide early Italian artists up to and including Raphael. He and his friends were expelled from the German Academy and went to **Rome in 1810** where he worked for **59 years**. He was joined by **Peter von Cornelius**, Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow and Philip Veit. Their motto was **hard and honest work and holy living**. The **Classical** antique was **pagan** and the **Renaissance false**.
- Overbeck came from a long line of Protestant pastors. His father was a doctor of law and his uncle a doctor of theology. Overbeck became a classics scholar and

received art instruction. He left Lübeck in March 1806 and studied in Vienna. He sought to express Christian art before the corrupting influence of the late Renaissance. He was guided by the artist up to and **including Raphael**. He was expelled from Vienna and travelled to Rome.

- **Overbeck influenced William Dyce and Ford Madox Brown.**



2. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*

- The other influence was **John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*** (1843) which was read by Holman Hunt in 1847. Hunt wrote that he skim read through the book one evening and was excited by it but it was not read by Millais and Rossetti and appears to be a secondary influence but one Hunt believed supported their ideas.
- Ruskin wrote,
 - “go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remembering her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing . . . and rejoicing always in the truth”
- However, this did not mean a photographic likeness. He was defending late Turner and dealing with the critics head on. The critics thought Turner was not like nature, Ruskin thought otherwise. However, he wrote of the student,
 - “from young artists nothing ought to be tolerated but simple bona fide imitation of nature . They have no business to ape the execution of masters . . . Their duty is neither to choose, nor compose, nor imagine, nor experimentalize; but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature, and tracing the finger of God”
- But of the master painter, he wrote,
 - "we will follow them wherever they choose to lead . . . They are then our masters, and fit to be so"



Carlo Lasinio, engraving of 'Curse of Ham', based on a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-97) in the *Campo Santo di Pisa*

3. Lasinio's Engravings of Gozzoli's Frescoes

- According to Hunt, both John Everett Millais and Gabriel Dante Rossetti were **searching through the book of engravings**, they found in them, **freedom from corruption, pride and disease**" (Faxon, 46). **"There was no trace of decline, no conventionality, no arrogance and whatever the imperfections, the whole spirit of the art was simple and sincere"** (Lisa Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*). These engravings are considered to be an important trigger for setting up the movement but the actual name, according to Hunt "originated when he and a fellow student Millais, were criticizing Raphael's *Transfiguration* and other students proclaimed that they must then be the Pre-Raphaelites". (Lona Mosk Packer, *Christina Rossetti*, p. 30).
- This designation was officially accepted in **September, 1848** at the Millais family house. The founding members include William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Gabriel Dante Rossetti, James Collinson, W. M. Rossetti, F. G. Stephens, and Thomas Woolner. They founded the Brotherhood on the following principles:
 1. To have genuine ideas to express.
 2. To study nature attentively, so as to know how to express them.
 3. To sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote.
 4. And most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues. (Andrew Graham-Dixon, *A History of British Art*, p. 175)
- Their thoughts were published in the year of **1850** in a magazine called ***The Germ***.


The Pre-Raphaelites aim was to avoid producing 'slosh' their ultimate condemnation. What they did produce was art and literature covering three areas of subject matter that include, "First, **Christian doctrine and medieval life**; Second, **scenes from contemporary life**, often expressing **moral values** founded on **religious belief**; and lastly, scenes from literature, particularly Shakespeare and other nineteenth century poets as Keats, Tennyson, Coventry Patmore, and Sir Henry Taylor". In 1856, a poetic Pre-Raphaelite movement included Christina Rossetti, William Morris, and Algernon Swinburne.

- Carlo Lasinio's book of engravings of the fifteenth century Italian frescoes at the Campo Santo at Pisa, painted by Francesco Traini

These were a set of engravings done of the fresco at the Campo Santo in Pisa. The cloister at Pisa was begun in 1277 and not completed until around 1350. The first group of frescoes was done by Francesco Traini (*The Triumph of Death* of c. 1350 on the south wall), Taddeo Gaddi (c. 1300-1366), Andrea da Firenze. who painted the story of a local saint, Beato Raineri, for which he was paid on 13 October 1477, Antonio Veneziano and Spinello Aretino (1328-1400), finished in 1391. A second group of 23 scenes of the Old Testament was done on the north wall from 1468-85 by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-97). Both Carlo Lasinio (1759-1838) and his son Giovanni Paolo Lasinio worked on engravings of the scenes so it is difficult to know which one the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood saw, but Rossetti, in a letter of 20 August 1848 to Brother William, refers to Richard Monckton Milne, *The Life and Letters of Keats*, volume I, published in August 1848 says the Keats "having just looked over a folio of the first and second schools of Italina painting, he has to the conclusion that the early men surpassed even Raphael himself!" (Doughty and Wahl, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 40). As Keats in 1820, it would seem that the engravings seen were mainly by Carlo, whose engravings of the Campo Santo were as early as 1808. Rossetti owned a 1828 edition of Lasinio's *Campo Santo di Pisa* labeled "the celebrated volume of Engravings," #595 in the auction of his effects July 5-7, 1882. (from *Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts*, ed. Liana Cheney, p.57)

- Lasinio moved to Pisa in 1807 as the conservator of the Camp Santo and produced a book of etchings to try to preserve them.
- The 'Curse of Ham' concerns a section of the Bible that describes how Noah got drunk and his son Ham saw him naked. His other two son's covered his nakedness while averting their eyes. Noah cursed Ham and his future offspring which has been linked to the enslavement of black races. The sin of looking at his father's nakedness seems slight so scholars have debated whether this is a euphemism for

Ham mocking his father in the streets, or committing sodomy or having sex with his mother, Noah's wife but all explanations seem unsatisfactory.



The Revolutionary Years



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Isabella*, 1848-9, Walker Art Gallery

- Millais first work in the Pre-Raphaelite style. It was completed in 1849 when Millais was only 19 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1849.
- **In 1850 they showed five paintings (three by Millais) and in 1951 eight works at London exhibitions.**
- The Pre-Raphaelites are startlingly innovative although their work must have looked gauche. It does not follow the practices of the artists working before Raphael but seeks inspiration from them for a thoroughly modern set of techniques.
- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood did not have a formal prospectus but their views are clearly put forward in *The Germ*, an unsuccessful magazine they published as four issues in 1850.
- They believed that art had gone astray after Raphael as artists started to copy other artists and use agreed painting conventions rather than looking at nature. They found the classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name 'Pre-Raphaelite'. In particular, the group objected to the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds whom they called 'Sir Sloshua'. To the Pre-Raphaelites, according to William Michael Rossetti, 'sloshy' meant 'anything lax or scamped in the process of painting ... and hence ... any thing or person of a commonplace or conventional kind'. In contrast, the brotherhood wanted a return to the abundant detail, intense colours and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art.
- In summary, **their style involved:**
 - The **bright colours** of nature, painted on bright white to increase their brilliance.

- **Detail** painted from nature rather than 'sloshy' conventions. This was very slow.
- **Distorted perspective**, such as the elongated right side of table with crowded flattened figures like playing cards.
- **Elimination of chiaroscuro** and the exaggeration of the intensity of colours, note the black and white servant whose yellow legs merge into the background. Chiaroscuro is the contrast between light and dark that is used by artists to create sense of volume and if exaggerated to create a dramatic theatrical effect. Now usually only commented upon when the artists uses extreme contrasts, such as Caravaggio. A **lack** of chiaroscuro introduces **subtlety and flatness** that draws attention to the work as simply colours applied to a **flat surface**, a **modern theme** in art that rejects 'dishonest' art that tries to create the **illusion of three-dimensionality**.
- **Natural angular poses** are characteristic of medieval art not classical or Renaissance.
- **Medieval setting** and based on a Keats's poem.
- They painted their **friends** rather than use professional models in order to achieve a natural look
- They **did not idealise** their models or subjects.
- Elaborate motifs and symbols.
- The humour of the kick suggests genre paintings and Hogarth's *Marriage a-la-mode* (the marriage settlement includes sitting around a table arguing about a marriage, one difference is the 'young lovers' look in opposite directions in Hogarth).
- History subjects were painted using real models and **authentic objects** when possible.
- They often painted historical subjects, biblical subjects or medieval tales.

Isabella

- The painting illustrates an episode from John Keats's poem, *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil*, which describes the relationship between Isabella, the sister of wealthy medieval merchants, and Lorenzo, an employee of Isabella's brothers. It depicts the moment at which Isabella's brothers realise that there is a romance between the two young people, and they plot to murder Lorenzo so they can marry Isabella to a wealthy nobleman. Isabella, wearing grey at the right, is being handed a blood orange on a plate by the doomed Lorenzo. A cut blood orange is symbolic of the neck of someone who has just been decapitated. This refers to Isabella cutting off Lorenzo's head to take it with her after finding him buried. One of her brothers violently kicks a frightened dog while cracking a nut. Keat's poem was in turn based on one of the tales from Giovanni's Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1352).
- Millais and his colleague William Holman Hunt had both produced drawings illustrating episodes from the poem, but only Millais worked his up into a full

painting. Both drawings used distorted perspective and angular poses characteristic of medieval art, by which the Pre-Raphaelites were influenced.

- The painting is structured with deliberately distorted perspective, elongating the right hand side of the table and flattening the figures ranged along it. Following Pre-Raphaelite theory, Millais almost eliminates chiaroscuro (light and dark) and exaggerates the intensity of juxtaposed colours and tones - as evidenced in the flat black tunic set against the sharply modelled white cloth of the servant at the right, whose lower body virtually disappears as his yellow stockings semi-merge with the background.
- Millais also carefully characterises each figure with equal precision. Another distinctive Pre-Raphaelite feature is the inclusion of images and patterns within the image as a whole. Each of the plates has a distorted picture glazed into its surface. The base of the bench on which Isabella sits contains a carving depicting a kneeling figure under which appear the letters PRB (standing for Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood).
- The central motif of the thuggish brother's kicking leg and upturned chair further disturbs the equilibrium of the composition, as does the deliberately confusing 'crowding' of the figures on the table and elaboration of motifs.
- The figures are based on friends of Millais. Rossetti is drinking on the right side of the table. His brother William Rossetti is Lorenzo passing the cut blood orange. The wife of Millais's half-brother is Isabella and his father, John William Millais, is the elderly man dabbing his mouth. The artist Walter Deverell and F. G. Stephens are the two brothers on the left and the brother kicking the dog is John Harris, a man who had bullied Millais at the Royal Academy School and who he painted from memory. Millais certainly got his own back by showing him as a bully of poor dumb animals for all time to millions of people. The shadow of the arm on the table alongside the spilt salt signifies that he will carry out the murder as salt symbolises life and spilt salt death. I think the shadow of the arm could also signify something else which is reinforced by the salt signifying spilt or wasted life.
- The white rose and the passion flower symbolise their love and the dog with its head in Isabella's lap symbolizes Lorenzo's devotion to her. The pot of basil on the balustrade on the right may be the one she puts his head in. The majolica plates all have different designs and one has David beheading Goliath and another shows Prometheus having his entrails pecked out by an eagle, both a reminder of the violence to follow.
- There are three brothers and we can tell which one hatched the plot to kill Lorenzo. The other two look smug knowing the plot and one looks at Lorenzo and Isabella while pretending to examine his wine.
- Somewhere in the picture are the initials PRB, can you find them?
- The painting was sold to a tailor for £150 and a new suit.

(Research thanks to mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com)

References

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Raphaelite>

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Everett_Millais

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isabella_\(Millais_painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isabella_(Millais_painting))

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Germ_\(periodical\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Germ_(periodical))



Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Rienzi vowing to obtain justice for the death of his young brother, slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and the Orsini factions, 1849*, private collection Mrs E. M. Clarke

- The subject was taken from **Bulwer Lytton's *Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes*** of 1835.
- It was exhibited with the following excerpt from the novel,

But for that event, the future liberator of Rome might have been but a dreamer, a scholar, a poet, - the peaceful rival of Petrarch - a man of thoughts, not deeds. But from that time, all his faculties, energies, fancies, genius, became concentrated to a single point and patriotism, before a vision, leaped into the life and vigour of a passion.
- He sometimes had **problems** with **natural poses**, see the **soldier on the left**.
- By the end of 1850 their meetings were already obsolete and the artists were still close friends but started to go in their own directions.
- Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, 1st Baron Lytton PC (25 May 1803 – 18 January 1873), was an English novelist, poet, playwright, and politician. He was immensely popular with the reading public and wrote a stream of bestselling novels which earned him a considerable fortune. He coined the phrases "*the great unwashed*" (novel *Paul Clifford*), "*pursuit of the almighty dollar*" (novel *The Coming Race*), "*the pen is mightier than the sword*" (play *Richelieu*), "*dweller on the threshold*", as well as the infamous opening line "*It was a dark and stormy night*".
- The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest is for the most terrible opening for an imaginary novel inspired by "It was a dark and stormy night". In the comic strip *Peanuts* Snoopy usually began with this same line.
- The novel was made into an opera by Richard Wagner.
- The novel is about the feud between the Orsini and Colonna. Set in Rome in the 14th century it is a biography of Rienzi, a poor classical scholar who achieved glory.

When young he vowed to avenge the death of his younger brother. The papacy were in Avignon at this period (1309 to 1377, seven French popes who all refused to move to Rome). In 1347 Rienzi rallied a mob and declared the Roman Republic re-established. For a year his word was law, he cleared the woods of bandits, imposed the death penalty on all murderers and beat the aristocracy's re-invasion. He went into exile, was captured by the papacy, but when the pope changed he was sent back to Rome as a representative but again made himself master of the city but the following year, in 1354, Rienzi was slain by a miserly Roman mob. **Petrarch** was his contemporary.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 1849, Tate Britain

- Painted in Hunt's studio, begun 20 August 1848.
- **Not exhibited at the Royal Academy as he was worried about being rejected.**
- Symbolism is so complex he wrote two sonnets to explain it. It includes objects such as the dove, the lamp, the rose, the flower, the vine and colours such as **gold for charity, blue for faith, green for hope and white for temperance.**
- There is no evidence Rossetti had any religious beliefs, **he was a Victorian agnostic.** His **deepest belief was that women enshrine the meaning of existence.** His mother and sister, Christina were High Anglicans.
- He wrote in 1852 to F. G. Stephens, '*that picture of mine was a symbol of female excellence. The Virgin being taken as its highest type.*'
- Millais *Carpenter's Shop* followed on from Rossetti's *Girlhood*.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

- The third key member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This is his first oil painting and although Rossetti was not a believer the sonnet he wrote describes human events that are surrounded by the sacred and give it meaning. He grew up in a High Anglican household and this gave him a sense of order such beliefs provide.
- St. Anne, her mother, is assisting Mary embroider a lily which is held before by an angel. The embroidery also appears in his painting of the Annunciation. He chose embroidery as something more likely to be done at the time and as less commonplace. Mary and Anne are typically shown reading a book. In front of them is a pile of volumes symbolising spiritual virtue and the top one is Charity. In front of Mary the lily symbolizes purity. Near Mary's feet are the seven-leaved palm and the briar twig with seven thorns. They symbolise Mary's sorrows and Christ's Passion but they are not integral to the painting but placed by the artist. The vine, the lantern and the dove are typical symbols of the Annunciation with

the dove representing the Holy Spirit ('Until the end be full, the Holy One abides without'). In the background **St Joachim** (Mary's father, **not mentioned in the Bible**, patron saint of fathers and grandfathers) is pruning a vine.

- Rossetti used an unusual technique. He first **primed the canvas with white** until it was as smooth as cardboard and then used **thinned oil paints** that he applied using watercolour brushes. The result is that every tint is transparent and it looks like a watercolour.
- There were two sonnets inscribed on the frame.
- The painting was not exhibited at the Royal Academy but at the **Free Exhibition** at Hyde Park Corner. The Free Exhibition was held by a short-lived organisation called Institution for the Free Exhibition of Modern Art (later the **National Institution for Fine Arts**) that provided alternative exhibition space to the Royal Academy to make it more **accessible to women** artists who suffered discrimination. The exhibition was 'free' in the sense that the artist was **free to exhibit** as long as he or she **paid**.
- Rossetti Archive: 'Linguistic forms populate the canvas (and the integral frame). DGR often incorporated such verbal elements in his pictures—a device he borrowed from medieval styles—in order to increase the conceptual and abstract character of his work. Here the names of the virtues appear on the book spines (Fortitudo (strength), Temperentia (restraint), Prudentia (prudence), Spes (hope), Fides (faith), and Caritas (charity), the cardinal virtues); the gilt haloes are inscribed S. Ioachim, S. Anna, S. Maria S.V.); a scroll binding the palms and briars bears the legend "Tot dolores tot gaudia" ('So many sorrows, so many joys'); and the portable organ near the hassock is carved with the initial M and has the inscription "O sis, Laus Deo" ('Oh, praise be to God').'

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain

Christ in the House of His Parents

- Millais, untitled, *'And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends'* (Zechariah, 8:6). Described in the *Art Journal* as *'The improprieties are manifold ... the coarsest representation of humanity ... even more revolting than the flayed Marsyas.'* The work of Overbeck is mentioned as precursor of *'some of the worst followers of the Giotteschi'*.
- The reaction to Millais's painting was unprecedented. The term 'ugly' was rarely used by critics to describe fine art yet this painting was described not only as ugly but as hideous, loathsome and disgusting. The most unfavourable was the satirical piece by Dickens in his *Household Words*. Dickens described Mary as 'horrible in her ugliness' and clarified what he meant by ugly:
Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.
- **Saint Giles** was an area that was well known for its crime and had 'the worst living conditions in all of London's history'. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* wrote that the painting contained **'Ricketty children, emaciation and deformity'** and **'we can hardly imagine anything more ugly, graceless, and unpleasant'**. Dickens also described Christ as **'hideous, wry-necked, blubbering'** and the whole painting with its **'ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude'** expressing **'what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting'**. In the painting, Christ has red hair, which was traditionally associated with Judas Iscariot and red hair regarded as both 'ugly' and a 'sign of degeneration'. Mary's eyes are almost closed and ringed in black and her

brow is heavily lined, which combined with the twist of her neck, gives her a distorted appearance and Joseph's arms are veined and muscular, his nails are dirty, his left knee is damaged and his toenails are broken.

- In the *Art Journal* Ralph Wornum wrote: '**the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body**' indicating that the moral worth of a character, in this case the Holy Family, must be signified by a beautiful body. *The Times* critic wrote that the picture 'is, to speak plainly, revolting' and there was 'no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, and even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness'. *The Athenaeum* also wrote that 'we recoil with loathing and disgust' at the 'pictorial blasphemy'. What is morally shocking to the reviewer is the minute detail, which suggests we are looking at something that is forbidden and so it must be seen only in some generalised or modified form.
- The room is **unnaturally bright** and evenly lit and the source of the light is on the left. In Millais's preparatory sketches, there is a **window on the left**, which is cut off in the final painting and is the notional source of the light. The figures have the **idiosyncratic features** associated with particular people and we know that they were modelled by Millais's family and friends. Millais went to a carpenter's shop in Oxford Street to sketch its interior in order to represent a carpenter's tools and method of working accurately. The tools are those of a nineteenth-century carpenter and the clothes are a mixture of Middle Eastern, conventional religious symbolism, such as Mary's blue dress and St. John's animal fur, with nineteenth-century additions, such as Christ's smock. Clearly, Millais was not trying to reproduce a historically accurate carpenter's shop but an accurately observed contemporary carpenter's shop with figures that were modelled on friends and family. The critics pointed out that the painting is full of anachronisms such as the mixture of costumes from different periods and the Victorian carpenter's tools. However, the art historian Michaela Giebelhausen believes that Millais carefully constructed these anachronisms in order to create an ahistorical setting. In the eighteenth century, she points out that such an ahistorical setting was associated with religious devotion as it prevented a painting from being seen as a genre painting set in a particular time and period.
- Christ's small stature compared with the height of the table also suggests that Millais was representing an accident resulting from **childish enthusiasm** rather than a stage-managed event. This is also suggested by the assistant at the left ignoring the interruption to his work, Joseph's perfunctory examination and the look of 'I told you not to meddle' on St. John's face. Mary is holding her head back for a kiss suggesting she is the injured party and St. Anne offers practical assistance rather than comfort. Through the open entrance, a group of sheep stare over a fence inquisitively suggesting there could have just been a noisy scene. Millais linked the highest spiritual subject, the Holy Family, with the lowest rung of society, the urban poor, and turned a spiritual prefiguration into an everyday accident.

- By associating themselves with artists that pre-dated the formation of Protestantism the Pre-Raphaelites linked themselves with Puseyism, the Oxford Movement, and the widely resisted move towards Catholicism. This was reinforced by their unconventional approach to religious symbolism. The painting was therefore seen to be subversive and an attempt to undermine Protestant beliefs. This aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite movement is spelled out in Max Nordau's *Degeneration*.
- It is clear from the critical reaction that this painting was **revolutionary** and was seen as an extreme attack on the conventions used to represent religious subjects. Fourteen years later, in Paris, Manet caused a similar reaction by undermining bourgeois notions of respectability with *Olympia* (1863, exhibited 1865).
- The critical response changed over the years and **by 1898** the painting was '***passionately admired, and even loved***'. By the end of the century, the painting was no longer regarded as ugly and 'blasphemous'. This might be because Millais had become accepted as a member of elite society but the painting had also lost its ability to shock as the changes it brought about in the way we see the world had become established.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_in_the_House_of_His_Parents



John Everett Millais, *Eliza Wyatt and her Daughter, Sarah*, c. 1850, Tate Britain

- This painting is like a cold shower in comparison, with its lack of eye contact, rigid pose and angular lines.
- In the background are, left to right, a Raphael *Madonna della Sedia* ('Madonna of the Chair', 1518), Leonardo's *Last Supper* and Raphael's *Alba Madonna* (it belonged to the Spanish house of Alba, 1509).
- The *Madonna della Sedia* was incorporated in the background of many paintings by Ingres and by Zoffany in the *Tribuna of the Uffizi*. It is in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence and has the warm colours of a Titian.
- The stiff pose, outstretched hand suggest Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Giotto.



1850

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, 1850, Tate Britain

Holman Hunt, *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary*, 1850, Ashmolean Museum

John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain

John Everett Millais, *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, 1850, private collection

- **1 January 1850 published *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art***
- Overall in-focus is like the harshness of HD film. Alison Smith (Tate) calls it a '*discordant quality of focus – rather like a high definition film, where the whole depth of field is sharp*'.
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* Was the most audacious of all Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It is about female purity, innocence and virginity. It is white and the primaries – red, blue and yellow.



1850

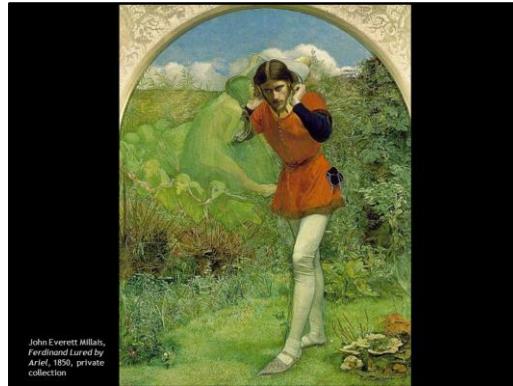
Holman Hunt, *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary*, 1850, Ashmolean Museum

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- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* Was the most audacious of all Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It is about female purity, innocence and virginity. It is white and the primaries – red, blue and yellow.
- Hunt's *A Converted British Family*, Art Journal '*The drawing and manner of the figures show all the objectionable peculiarities of the infancy of the Art*'. It was heavily criticized for its distorted poses and odd composition.
- Hunt continued to believe it was one of his finest works and felt ashamed he had done nothing better 22 years later but put it down to the enthusiasm of youth.
- The painting shows a converted family hiding a missionary from the pagan British Celts. Celts were centred on what is now Austria and the earliest graves are from 800-450BCE. The Celtic identity was created by the nineteenth century Romantic Celtic revival. A druid (left) is directing the mob to seize another missionary (right). Notice the stone circle and the thorns on the feet of the missionary.



1850

John Everett Millais, *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, 1850, private collection

John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain

Holman Hunt, *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary*, 1850, Ashmolean Museum

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, 1850, Tate Britain

- Millais, ***Ferdinand Lured by Ariel***, critical reception was initially mixed. The Athenaeum stated that it was "*better in the painting*" than Millais' controversial previous exhibit *Christ in the House of His Parents*, but "*more senseless in the conception*". The *Art Journal* identified "*a considerable vein of eccentricity*" in the portrayal of Ariel as "*a hideous green gnome*". The Times condemned it as a "*deplorable example of perverted taste*".



1851

William Holman Hunt, *Valentine Rescuing Silvia from Proteus*, 1851, 33.5 x 25.7cm, Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery

John Ruskin wrote to the Times on 26 May, '**there is not a single study of drapery in the whole Academy, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truth, power, and finish, could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and the chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture;**'

- The subject is taken from Shakespeare's 'Two Gentlemen of Verona', Act V, Scene IV. From left to right: Julia disguised as the page Sebastian, Silvia, Valentine and Proteus. Julia is in love with Proteus and travelled in disguise. Valentine and Proteus are friends and are both in love with the Duke of Milan's daughter Silvia. Proteus is already sworn to Julia back home in Verona. When Valentine plans to elope Proteus tells the Duke and gets Valentine banished. The Duke wants Silvia to marry Thurio but when Silvia and Thurio are travelling through the woods they get attacked by bandits and Thurio runs away. Proteus rescues Silvia but as a reward he wants her to promise to favour him and when she refuses he tries to rape her. Valentine arrives and stops him, Proteus apologises, Valentine offers Silvia as a token of friendship, Sebastian (Julia) faints and her identity is revealed, Proteus realises he really loves her, the Duke arrives and realises Thurio is a coward and agrees Valentine should marry her.
- Hunt began to paint this landscape in Knole Park, Sevenoaks, after which he began to work on the figures in his studio. Silvia was modelled by Elizabeth Siddal, Proteus by James Aspinall a lawyer and friend of Hunt, Valentine by James Lennox Hannay, a young barrister. The related oil sketch is in the Makins Collection.

Two poems

- On the left spandrel are lines from Act V, Scene iv of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*,
*Valentine. Now I dare not say
 I have one friend alive; thou would'st disprove me
 Who should be trusted now, when one's right hand
 I've [sic] perjured to the bosom? Proteus.
 I am sorry I must never trust thee more
 But count the world a stranger for thy sake.*
- On the right spandrel lines from Act V, Scene iv of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
*Proteus. My shame and guilt confound me
 Forgive me Valentine if hearty sorrow
 Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
 I tender it here; I do as truly suffer
 As e'er I did commit.*



1851

The Woodman's Daughter, *Mariana* and *The Return of the Dove to the Ark* exhibited at the RA, poorly received. Ruskin (English critic and art theorist) asked to support Pre-Raphaelites by Mrs Coventry Patmore (wife of poet) in letters to *The Times* in May; Millais then meets Ruskin and his wife, Effie, in June (Millais and Effie met once before seven years earlier). Leaves London with Hunt for Ewell to paint landscapes for *Ophelia* and *The Huguenot*.

- Paintings represent a return to morality and spirituality.

The Woodman's Daughter, Guildhall Art Gallery

- Based on a poem by **Coventry Patmore**.
- Maud as a child befriends the son of the local lord, culminating in love as they get older. Maud gives birth to an **illegitimate child** but cannot marry because of their different class which results in Maud becoming desperate and ultimately insane. She drowns the baby in a local pool. The boy's startling red tunic emphasises the class difference.
- Impossible love is a common theme for Millais - *Isabella* (1849), *Mariana* (1851), *Ophelia* (1852) and *A Huguenot* (1852).

Mariana

- The image is based on the solitary Mariana from William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, written between 1601 and 1606. In the play, Mariana was to be married, but was rejected when her dowry was lost in a shipwreck. She was still in love with Angelo, Deputy to the duke of Vienna. The stained glass window shows the Annunciation in contrast to her frustration. The motto 'In coelo quies' means 'In Heaven there is rest' and clearly refers to Mariana's desire to be dead. The snowdrop symbolises 'consolation' and is also the birthday flower for 20 January, St Agnes' Eve, when young girls put herbs in their shoes and pray to St Agnes to

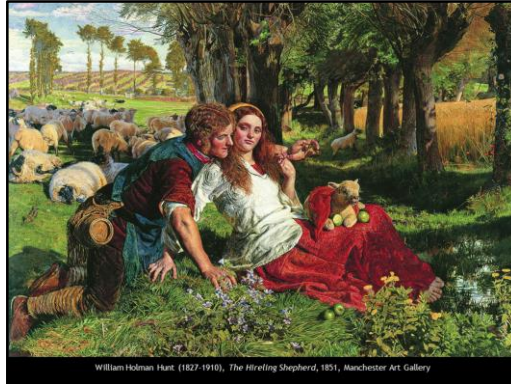
send them a vision of their future husband.

- The painting is regarded as an example of Millais' "precision, attention to detail, and stellar ability as a colorist".
- When it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1851, the display caption contained lines from **Tennyson's "Mariana"** (1830). It was a topical painting as **Tennyson** had been made **Poet Laureate** in November 1850. It was inspired by Shakespeare:

*She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,'
I would that I were dead!'*

Return of the Dove to the Ark, Ashmolean Museum

- Ruskin was so taken by it he wanted to purchase it as soon as he saw it but it had already been bought by Thomas Combe (pronounced 'coomb'), a Pre-Raphaelite patron.
- Two of Noah's daughters nurse a dove that has returned to the ark with an olive branch. This was the second time Noah had sent it out and the third time it did not return (Genesis 8:6-12). The dove signifies the Holy Spirit and the olive branch Jesus.
- The French thought the Pre-Raphaelite work bizarre, *Le Journal pour Rire* ('The Journal of Laughs') suggested the title should be changed to 'The Joy of the Straw on the Return of the Dove' as Millais appears to have lavished more attention to the straw than the dove.



1851

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Hireling Shepherd*, 1851, Manchester Art Gallery

William Holman Hunt

- The painting shows a shepherd neglecting his flock in favour of an attractive country girl to whom he shows a death's-head hawk moth. The meaning of the image has been much debated.
- A local girl called Emma Watkins is the model, known as 'the Coptic' by the Pre-Raphaelites because of her exotic features. The male model is not known. It was accompanied when displayed at the Royal Academy by an excerpt from King Lear:

*Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
Thy sheep shall take no harm.*

- It was condemned for its vulgarity, showing red-faced and sexually uninhibited country people. Hunt had a much more esoteric meaning. He wrote that he intended the couple to symbolise the pointless theological debates which occupied Christian churchmen while their 'flock' went astray due to a lack of proper moral guidance. The title is therefore a Biblical allusion; in the story of the Good Shepherd (in the King James Version), the Good Shepherd is explicitly contrasted with a hireling shepherd, who has no care for the sheep [John 10:11-15].
- Hunt explained in a letter that the unprotected sheep will die from eating grain by becoming what farmers call 'blown'. The lamb fed sour apples symbolize the effects of such pastoral neglect, while the death's-head moth, is a symbol of human mortality. The themes are temptation and fall leading to neglect and death

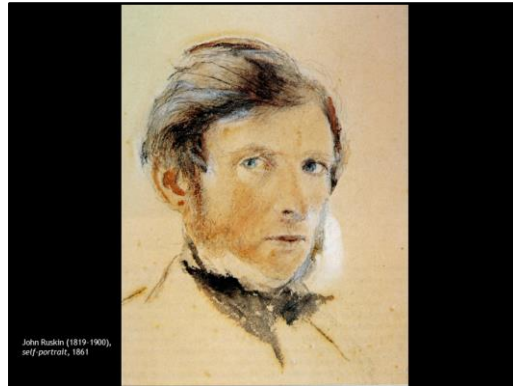
rather than hard work and redemption. The apples are unripe and poisonous to the lamb, symbol of Redemption, and they remind us of the Temptation and Fall. The lamb is a sickly and late-born and covered with a cloth despite the heat. The field is swampy which is bad for sheep as it causes sheep-rot.

- Ruskin wrote an article call ***Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*** (1851) with a similar theme. The overall message of his article is that internal disputes in the church, which was **splitting** between **High Church and the Evangelical**, had led to the **neglect of the flock**. We do not know if Hunt read the article but the theme of the painting is similar.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Holman_Hunt

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hireling_Shepherd



John Ruskin (1819-1900), *self-portrait*, 1861

John Ruskin

- Ruskin was very influential up to WWI and his reputation then declined but has been improving since the 1960s. He was **the leading English art critic of the Victorian era** and art patron, watercolourist, prominent social thinker and philanthropist. He wrote on subjects ranging from geology to architecture, myth to ornithology, literature to education, and botany to political economy. Ruskin penned essays and treatises, poetry and lectures, travel guides and manuals, letters and even a fairy tale. He emphasised the connections between nature, art and society. He also made detailed sketches and paintings of rocks, plants, birds, landscapes, and architectural structures and ornamentation.
- John Ruskin did not know the Pre-Raphaelites but he wrote two letters to ***The Times*** defending them and this helped a great deal in getting them accepted.
- He wrote the first volume of ***Modern Painters*** in **1843** based on an essay in which he defended of Turner's 'truth to nature' against his critics. He championed the Pre-Raphaelites by writing a letter to, ***The Times*** on 13th May **1851** in which he wrote they exhibited 'fidelity to a certain order of truth'. He added that Millais and Hunt 'may sink into nothingness or rise to very real greatness'. He thought the name was ill-conceived and that they knew little of ancient paintings and their aim of returning to the early days of art was in one point only – 'they will draw what they see or what they suppose might have been the actual facts'.
- He added, 'there is not a single study of drapery in the whole Academy, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truth, power, and finish, could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and the chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture; or with the white draperies on the table in Mr. Millais' 'Mariana, ' and of the right hand figure in the same painter's 'Dove returning to the Ark. And further: that as studies both of drapery and of every minor detail, there has been nothing in art so earnest or so

complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Durer.'

- He also wrote a second letter to The Times on 26 May in which he wrote, 'they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of art nobler than **the world has seen for 300 years.**'

John Ruskin

- Ruskin output was enormous and has been collected by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn in 39 volumes which occupy two shelves of most university libraries. From 1871 to 1884 he wrote a series of letters to the workmen of Great Britain in a periodical called ***Fors Clavigera***. It forms part of what Ruskin considered his duty to intervene in the moral issues of the day following his mentor Thomas Carlyle.
- The title is complex and an analysis of the name tells us a lot about how Ruskin thought. It consists of three *fors* (great powers) *Force* symbolised by the club (*clava*) of Hercules and the power to do good work, *Fortitude* symbolised by the key (*clavis*) of Ulysses the power to bear pain and trial as one does good work (the key symbolising patience, the key to his store house, the authority to open and close) and *Fortune* symbolised by the nail (*clavus*) of Lycurgus meaning a person's unchangeable fate which is nailed down and fastened forever (based on Ruskin's reading of Horace. Lycurgus symbolised law as he was the legendary law-maker of Sparta in Ancient Greece). They represent human talent, the ability to choose the right moment and then strike with energy. The name is derived from Shakespeare's 'There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune'.
- In the 1877 issue of ***Fors Clavigera*** he **attacked Whistler's paintings** that were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery that year. He found particular fault with *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, and accused Whistler of "ask[ing] two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face". Whistler filed a libel suit against Ruskin hoping to be awarded £1,000 to pay for his new house. Although Whistler won the case the jury awarded damages of only one farthing. The trial went on in Ruskin's absence in 1878 as he was ill and court costs were split between both parties. Ruskin's were paid by public subscription, but Whistler was bankrupted within six months. The episode tarnished Ruskin's reputation, however, and may have accelerated his mental decline.
- Ruskin is also well known for his personal life. His marriage to Effie Gray was never consummated and was later annulled. The reasons for this are shrouded in innuendo but it seems he found something objectionable about her person. There has been speculation that it was her pubic hair but this is now thought unlikely.
- The other controversial and personal aspect of Ruskin's life was his relationship with **Rose La Touche**. Her mother, Maria La Touche asked Ruskin to teach her daughter to draw and paint in 1858 when she was 10 and Ruskin 39. Ruskin gradually fell in love with her. Ruskin had religious doubts and this caused difficulties with the La Touche family. Ruskin proposed to her on her **eighteenth**

birthday but she asked him to wait three years for an answer. She finally rejected him in 1872 when he was 53 and she was 24 but they still occasionally met. After a long **illness she died** in 1875, at the age of 27. This plunged Ruskin into **despair** and led to severe bouts of **mental illness** involving delirious visions. Ruskin turned to **spiritualism** and was alternately comforted and disturbed by what he thought were conversations with the dead Rose.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ruskin



1852

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Ophelia*, **1852**, Tate Gallery

- In 1852 Millais painted *Ophelia* and *A Huguenot on St Bartholomew's Day*

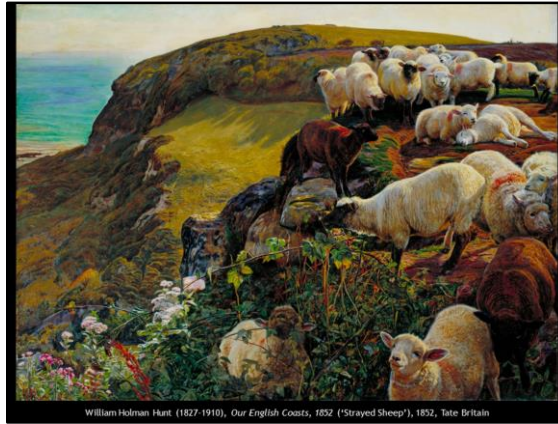
Ophelia

- Ophelia is a character in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* who drowns herself in a river after Hamlet denies he loves her and accidentally kills her father.
- The idea of seeing the world in new ways was part of the motivation of the Pre-Raphaelites, who described Joshua Reynolds as 'Sloshua' and looked back to before Raphael to find an innocent way of looking at the natural world, uncontaminated by technique. Pre-Raphaelite paintings, such as Millais's *Ophelia* (1851-52), demonstrated a commitment to this idea through the sheer hard work obvious in the detail of the brushwork. They were worked over in minute detail on every inch of the canvas, producing a flat tapestry of colour that assigned every object in the foreground, middle ground and background equal prominence.
- *Ophelia* was the result of **months of painstaking painting** on the banks of the Hogsmill River, near Tolworth. Millais was a fast painter and yet he said that he could only paint an area 'no larger than a five shilling piece'. Millais painted for 11 hours a day, six days a week over a five month period in 1851. By November it started to snow and Millais had a hut built by the river to enable him to finish the landscape. As the painting took so long to produce, it conflated time, which for scenes of nature produced anachronisms. The painting consists of an assembly of minutely observed yet disconnected parts.
- Millais is now thought to have sat in the 'Six Acre Meadow on the west bank at the bottom of the Manor House garden in Old Malden', as reported by Richard Savill, 'Mystery of Location of Millais' *Ophelia* Solved' in *The Telegraph*, 30 June 2010. Holman Hunt worked on his *The Hireling Shepherd* nearby.
- There was a water rat swimming in the river but in December 1851 relatives of Holman Hunt did not recognise what it was so Millais painted it out.

- The flowers are the one's mentioned in *Hamlet* except for the red poppies which signify sleep and death. The human skull many have seen in the bushes was not intended to be a skull.
- The model was Elizabeth Siddal and Millais painted her in a bath heated by candles back in the studio. The most famous story associated with this picture is how she developed a severe cold when Millais did not notice the candles had gone out. Her father sent Millais a letter demanding £50 for medical expenses, about twice the annual salary of a live-in servant. He eventually accepted a lower sum. The studio was at 7 Gower Street which still remains and has a blue plaque outside.
- At the time the painting was not acclaimed. A critic in *The Times* wrote that '***there must be something strangely perverse in an imagination which souses Ophelia in a weedy ditch, and robs the drowning struggle of that lovelorn maiden of all pathos and beauty***', while a further review in the same newspaper said that '***Mr. Millais's Ophelia in her pool ... makes us think of a dairymaid in a frolic***'.
- In 1936 **Salvador Dali** wrote, 'How could Salvador Dalí fail to be dazzled by the flagrant surrealism of English Pre-Raphaelitism'.
- It has a cult following in **Japan** but when it was exhibited in Tokyo in 2008 the gallery was afraid to show the painting on posters in case its power would cause young women to **take their own lives**.
- It was bought on December 10 1851 by Henry Farrer for **300 guineas**. It was sold and resold and continued to increase in value, it is now estimated to be worth at least **£30 million**.

References

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ophelia_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ophelia_(painting))



1852

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Our English Coasts, 1852* ('Strayed Sheep'), 1852, Tate Britain


Key point: the Pre-Raphaelites demanded the faithful reproduction of detail and colour

William Holman Hunt

- John Ruskin (1819-1900) in *Modern Painters* (1847) urged young artists to *...go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instructions; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.*
- Following this advice William Holman created this painting, his greatest and most Pre-Raphaelite landscape. It is the **Lover's seat**, a beauty spot on the cliffs overlooking **Covehurst Bay**, near Hastings. Hunt paid attention to natural detail, although the cliffs, sheep and parts of the foreground were all painted from different viewpoints. The **butterflies** in the left foreground were painted **indoors** from a live specimen.
- F.G. Stephens, a critic and member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, suggested it '***might be taken as a satire on the reported defenseless state of the country against foreign invasion***'. In 1852 the press had created fears of an invasion because of Napoleon III's dictatorial régime.
- The original frame bore the inscription '*The Lost Sheep*', and when Hunt **sent** the painting to the **Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855** he changed the title to *Strayed Sheep*, thus underlining the picture's religious

symbolism.

- Critics noticed the treatment of light and Ruskin wrote in 1883 that
*It showed to us, for the **first time in the history of art**, the absolutely faithful balances of colour and shade by which actual sunshine might be transposed into a key in which the harmonies possible with material pigments should yet produce the same impressions upon the mind which were caused by the light itself.*



Next Week:

The Brotherhood Splits

Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Nineteenth-Century British Art
by Laurence Shafe
Class 7: Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood - Early Days

1. John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Isabella*, 1848-9, Walker Art Gallery
2. William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Hireling Shepherd*, 1851, Manchester Art Gallery
3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, 1849, Tate Britain
4. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *William Michael Rossetti* (1829-1919, writer and art critic)
5. James Collinson, *self-portrait*, undated
6. John Everett Millais, *Frederic George Stephens*, 1853
7. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Thomas Woolner*, 1852, National Portrait Gallery
8. John Ruskin (1819-1900), *self-portrait*, 1861
9. John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1850, Tate Britain
10. John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Ophelia*, 1852, Tate Gallery
11. William Holman Hunt, *Our English Coasts*, 1852, Tate Britain