



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Bubbles (A Child's World)*, 1886,
109.2 × 78.7 cm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight
Bare foot boy, Liverpool, circa 1880s, credit: Liverpool Record
Office/News Dog Media

Welcome to the Art Society Walton July talk. Peter Scott was scheduled to give this talk but is unable to attend so I am standing in for him with a talk on Children in Victorian Art. I am Laurence Shafe and I took a master's degree at the Courtauld Institute on nineteenth century French and British art and then a PhD at Bristol on the interaction between art and science in mid-nineteenth century British art. I am now a Tate Guide and I give a series of lectures on art history every autumn and spring in Hampton although since lockdown all the talks have been on Zoom. So let's get started.

The Development of the Modern Idea of Childhood

- **When we think of 'Children in Victorian Art' we probably think of sentimental images of well-clothed and well-fed children like this painting by John Everett Millais but was this an accurate**

portrayal of what it was like for children?

- The industrial revolution swept the country and we think of the great engineers like George Stephenson (1781-1848) and Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) but 40% of the population were under 15 and children started work as young as 4 or 5 so a large part of the success of the industrial revolution was built using a vast, cheap, expendable resource—children, like this [CLICK].
- The idea we have today of childhood being a special, protected stage of life gradually developed during the Victorian period and it is this that I want to talk about today.
- I start with rich children versus poor, then country versus town, workhouses, health and death and finish with the Victorian family. The talk proceeds roughly chronologically from the terrible conditions at the start of the century to the slightly better at the end.
- Let's begin with a painting that shows what appear to be two relatively well-off children in Newcastle, one of the centres of the industrial revolution.

Notes

- Over just 60 years the **population of Victorian Britain tripled and average wealth doubled, that means total wealth increased sixfold**. One of the little mentioned aspects of this enormous growth was the **exploitation of poor children in Britain**. In the **second half of the century** childhood slowly became recognised as a period of life and the **modern idea of childhood developed**.
- To explain how this happened I will talk about **rich children and poor**, the move from **countryside to towns**, the **Victorian family** and in a lighter mood I end with the invention of the

holiday.

- The Victorian period altered Britain forever, from an agricultural nation to an industrialised nation. This change saw the emergence of a large, very wealthy merchant class and a poor labouring class who moved from working on the land to working in factories.
- Topics
 - Rich v. poor. Between 1810 and 1875 the population tripled and average wealth doubled. This wealth was built on the exploitation of poor children. Deserving poor v. Undeserving
 - Countryside versus town and city. Working children— factories, mines, farms. Children built Victorian Britain. They are seen as victims but it contributed to our modern notions of childhood. They were called the white slaves of England.
 - Death and health.
 - The Victorian Family. Mistresses, orphans and prostitution.
 - (Education, young children to adult education and self-help)
 - Entertainment and holidays
- We see a similar or higher percentage of children today in countries such as Sudan, Liberia, Nigeria and Somalia today. (The UK today is 18%)
- Between 1810 and 1875 the population nearly tripled and average wealth doubled and the total wealth of the nation increased sixfold. The merchant class saw by far the largest increase as average wealth increased 19-fold. The wealth of the top 5% increased from 15% of the total wealth to 31% but

even the poorest labourers saw a 40% increase. All these figures are at 1875 prices.

- **Children built Victorian Britain.** We think of great innovators and inventors and builders like Stephenson, Watt and Brunel but the industrial revolution was built on a vast, cheap, expendable resource — Children.
- Lost testimonies. Their thoughts and experiences were documented in diaries, parish records. Charles Bacon, aged 13, 1871, was actioned as an apprentice, he said he had read Uncle Tom's Cabin and as he stood in the auction he felt it was the same in England.
- Bound apprentices were like slaves. The first wave of factory labour was made up of orphans, the real life Oliver twists. State sponsored slavery. Parish apprenticeships, taken from London aged 7 or 8 to cold, hard factories in the countryside. They slept in dormitories, indentured. They stayed until 21 sometimes 24. Barefoot to avoid clogs and the risk of a spark and fire. Children crawled underneath and crushed by the machines. Work became a substitute of social welfare. Many children went off excited to learn a skill, they had regular meals, education and a meal over their heads but worked 14 or 15 hours a day or more, they were not paid. Machines were designed to be operated by small children. They were locked up out of hours. In 1856 Ester Price was caught escaping and sent to the punishment room and spent a week in solitary confinement, little food and a corpse for company.
- The industrial revolution would not have happened with children.
- During the war with France William Pitt was warned companies could not pay their taxes, his advice was "yoke up

the children".

- 1750 5.7 million shot up to 8.7 million by 1800, why? More people were marrying younger, previously they lived in with a farmer who kept them single. New farming practices meant workers were thrown out so they travelled and married when they wished and started families sooner and the children could earn money so they had more children. Married on average at 27 reduced to 23.5 years old. So Britain had its largest, youngest population.
- We think of children in mines and factories but the biggest employer (one third) was agriculture. Some farms had only children and they were treated worse than those in factories. In testimonies show child sexual abuse. It began aged 6 when children were used as human scarecrows, long hungry days in the field, hours of loneliness, I cried all day and cried "Mother, mother, mother". By 7 I was driving a plough. He carried 40ild of horse halter and part of a plough a mile to a blacksmith.
- They could get on, one was made a stable boy and was paid 8 shillings a week. He wrote he wanted to get on in the world by seizing every opportunity with enthusiasm and courage. My master persuaded me to climb a chimney the first day. The knees and elbows were cut by the bricks and penetrated by the soot that caused sores, me lungs became full of soot the fumes knocked them unconscious and they fell from top to bottom. Some chimneys were 9" by 9" practically impossible. National Association of British Chimneysweeps. Called climbing boys apprenticed at age of 7, stripped naked as pockets filled with soot and they got stuck, they used a hand-brush. The exploitation was seen as a national scandal. When machines were introduced boys and girls were still used as they were cheaper. One boy sent up a chimney to put

out a fire they heard his screams for two miles.

- Scandal of boy soldiers and sailors. It was an old British tradition to use boys, usually 16, one (William Rivers) was 6.5 and wounded in a battle. Lost his leg and wounded in the face. William Rivers Junior (see painting of Nelson's Victory). They all remember their first encounter with death, a person head being blown away but they all say that after that they are numbed to the sight of death.
- Fathers often travelled away to find work or fight in war so children loved their mothers, did not blame her and worked to help her (based on testimonies). After the war a lack of work caused even a strong minded man to break down.
- Henry Mayhew interviewed a girl watercress seller. Minded a baby for her aunt. Helped her mother sewing. I am passed 8 I not a child but Shan't be a women till I am 20. She had been working from the age of 5. You earn for your mother and that gives you self esteem and pride to help the family.
- By the 1830s they talked about children without a children. It was because of the Romantic poets. It is difficult to emphasise the influence of William Wordsworth, he thought children were born without sin so they were innocent and so having the childhood taken away from them. It needed parliament to intervene. The first reports were rose tinted (I never saw a single instance of punishment and children were happy at work and were having fun). The children grew up and demanded change, Dickens started Nicolas Nickleby, he worked in a factory when he was 12. John Hobhouse tried to reduce child labour, under 9. In 1832 Michael Sadler was spokesman for short time committee. He launched an inquirer, published 1833, shocked British society. In 1883 the first factory Act banned children under 9 from working but

only for textile factories. Most shocking was the report on mine working but it was not the children but the fact the women and girls went topless because of the heat. The children worked in the dark, there were rats and cockroaches. Worked for 10 hours a day. 3.5 in the morning out at 5pm. "Sometimes I sing but never in the dark. I don't like being in the pit. I am scared." (Sarah Gooder, aged 8, 1836). Many MPs were mine owners and factory owners so it took a long time.

- 1802, Parish Apprentices Act 1802, largely ineffective.
- 1819 Cotton Factories Act tried to limit to 9
- 1833 limited working day
- 1840 Mines Act
- 1870 Dr Barnardo
- 1880 Elementary Education Act made schooling compulsory until age 10
- 1884 Factory Act, limited working day to children under 13 to 6.5 hours.
- 1891 NSPCC founded by Liverpool businessman Thomas Agnew.
- There were still huge sectors of employment totally unregulated, e.g. construction. Carried several tons a day, started at 6am, 7s a week. Three miles walk there and back. Aged 9 working in a brick kiln. 25 bricks was a child's load. They got round the law by employing the parents but it was the children who did the work. Went on strike by the age of 6 went on to be an MP retired 1846 aged 84. Children grew up and organised trade unions.
- School, by end of nineteenth century school leaving age became a boundary enshrined in law and school became the new rite of passage. Instead of fuel for the future children

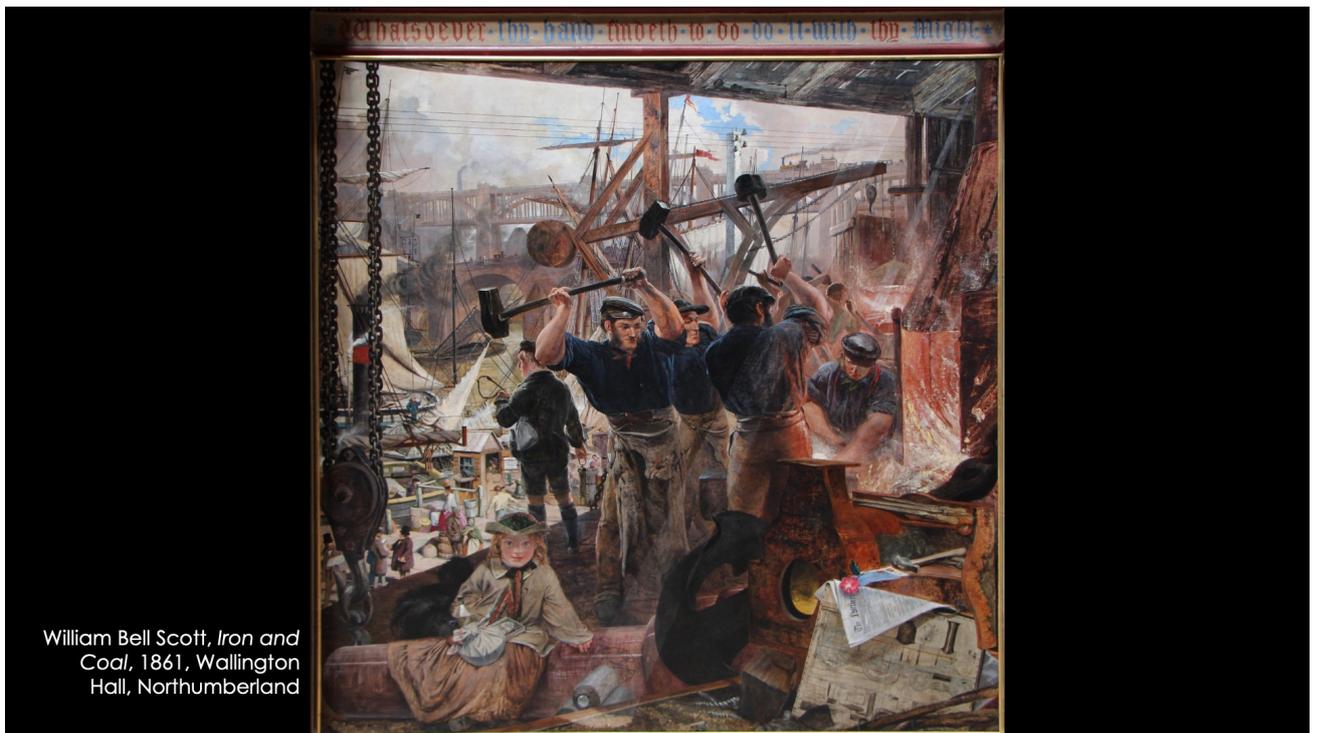
became the future.

- "we've always given these children our pity, but it's our respect they deserve. They were heroes, whether there's a statue to them or not" that part made me choked up! Truer words have never been spoken.
- Rich v. Poor
 - Rich children involved boredom and constant stress on being polite and proper with little parent communication. They were spoiled but sad and lacked affection. Raised by a nanny who taught what was proper, manners, propriety, how to dress and so on. Nannies were often older women who never had children and were often intolerant and strict. Winston Churchill once said that he could "count the times he had been hugged by his mother" as a child.
 - For the poor it was hard work to support the family but a tight knit family. Many parents had 10 or 12 children to earn the family enough to survive. Children had for centuries been expected to start work when they were 4 or 5. They worked for long hours with little job safety. The Factory Act was established in 1833 disallowing children under the age of nine to work in factories. 5 to 9 year old Chimney sweeps would come out of a chimney covered from head to toe with soot. Their arms, legs, elbows and knees would be bleeding, only to be washed off with salt water and sent up another chimney. Many children lived on the streets as they were orphans or there was neglect, alcoholic abuse at home. Many fell prey to prostitution and theft and others became street sellers. Toys were homemade dolls or wooden blocks.
- Exploitation and new laws of child labour

- Education compulsory
- Death rate
- Children's toys and Christmas

References

- *The Children Who Built Victorian Britain*, BBC documentary
- <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/reviews/seenandheard.html>



William Bell Scott, *In the nineteenth century the Northumbrians show the world what can be done with iron and coal*, 1861, 185.4 × 185.4 cm, Wallington Hall, Northumberland, National Trust. The text above the picture reads "**Whatever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might.**" Signed and dated 1861, exhibited French Gallery, Mall Mall 1861

A Vision of the Future for Children

- This picture by William Bell Scott was painted in 1861—about the middle of the period. Its full title is *In the nineteenth century the Northumbrians show the world what can be done with iron and coal*. This shows the white heat of the industrial revolution. It is all noise, heat, smoke and energy. We see muscular blacksmiths pounding a white-hot steel ingot and the painting celebrates the national importance of the iron and coal industries round Newcastle. Behind them is Robert Stephenson's High-Level Bridge opened by Queen Victoria in 1849 and on the bridge is a locomotive whose plans are propped on the floor at the bottom right.

- **But I want to consider the two children. The boy is holding either Stephenson's safety lamp or a Davy's lamp representing the coal mining of Tyneside future. He holds a mine pony's whip in his hand and a light snack for lunch. However, he is too well dressed to go down the pit. I think both children have been smartened up for the painting.**
- **The girl is sitting waiting with her dog holding lunch for her father and sitting on an Armstrong gun barrel. You may have heard of William Armstrong (1810-1900), the armaments manufacturer, if you have visited Cragside, a National Trust property in Northumberland. She is the only one looking at us and I think she represents the future. She is experiencing childhood as an ever lengthening interval between being a toddler and a paid or unpaid member of the workforce. Before this date such an interval scarcely existed for working class children. There is a sunbeam before her implying a bright future.**
- **In front of her on the right are mechanical drawings, in her lap a school arithmetic book, surely she represents the intellectual possibilities of the future? Her new found freedom and education mean she may well threaten the patriarchal society around her when she grows up. The world was changing very quickly, in 1840, 60% of women were illiterate, but by 1860, only 40% were. In another twenty years the 1880 Education Act made education compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten. Though this was often ignored by poorer parents who needed the income from child labour, it did mean that all girls were guaranteed an education in law, if not in fact.**
- **So, in some ways this painting represents a turning point in**

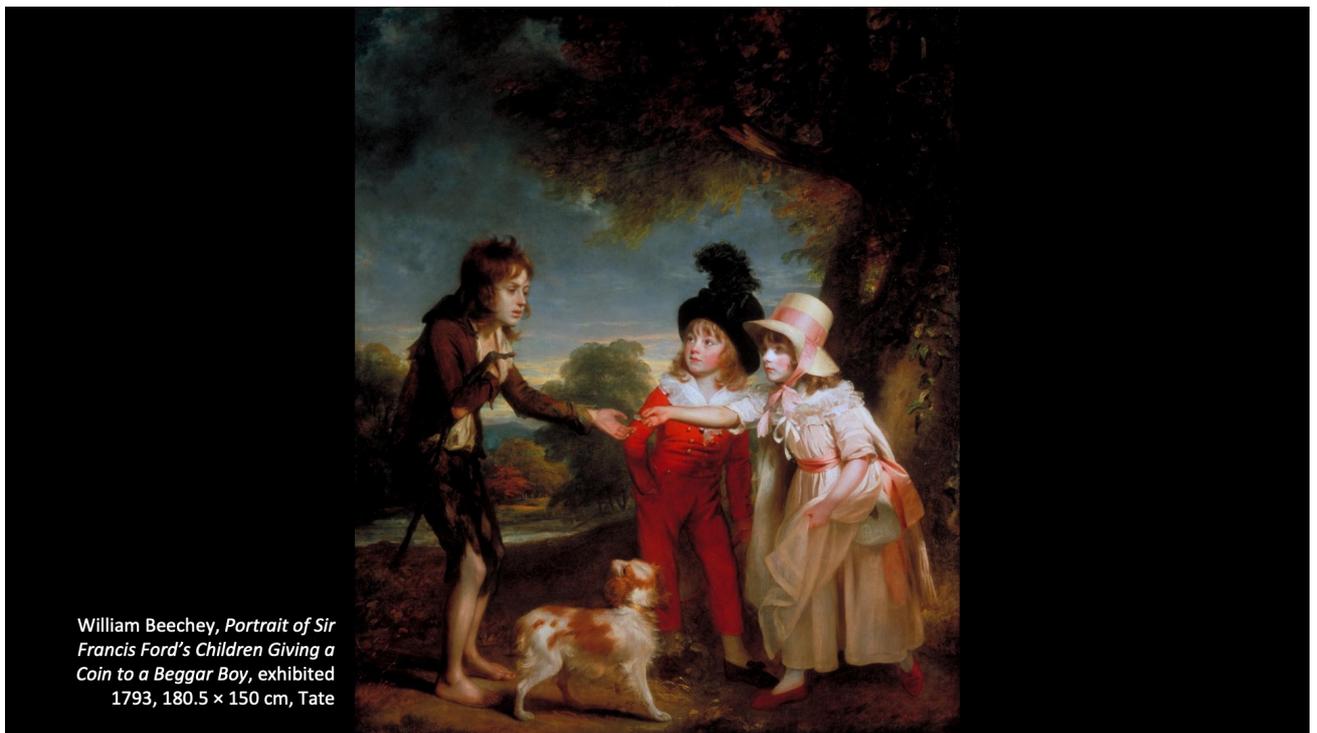
the creation of what we regard as childhood today. But I get ahead of myself, let us go back nearly 70 years and see how children were regarded in 1793...

Notes

- Robert Stephenson (1803-1859, aged 55) was the only son of George Stephenson (1781-1848, aged 67), the "Father of the Railway" as has been described as the greatest engineer of the nineteenth century.
- **William Bell Scott** and Ford Madox Brown were both **good friends** of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and they both helped him following his severe breakdown and attempted suicide in 1872.
- Ford Madox Brown's **12 murals in Manchester Town Hall** repeat the basic structure of William Bell Scott's **murals on the history of Northumbria in Wallington Hall**.
- This is one of eight large canvases painted for Sir Walter and Lady Trevelyan.
- The flower looks like a **dog rose** which stood for 'pleasure and pain' in the language of Victorian flowers.
- In 1856 **Sir Walter Trevelyan**, whose ancestors had founded the family fortune in the lead and mining industry, commissioned William Bell Scott (1811-1890) to decorate the hall of his house, Wallington, in Northumberland. In the painting is a **Stephenson steam engine drawing**, a **locomotive wheel being forged**, an **Armstrong gun barrel**, barges carrying coal, a train crossing **Robert Stephenson's High-Level Bridge** in Newcastle and opened by **Queen Victoria** in **1849**.
- National Trust - "The painting is filled with representations of the industry of Tyneside, in the background are the wires of the telegraph and Stephenson's innovative High Level Bridge

with steam trains on the top level, and carriages on the lower. The river is busy with shipping both steam and sail, under the arch of the old bridge is a Keel loaded with coal, on the quayside are fisher folk, merchants and a photographer. In the foreground are the working drawings of a locomotive, a newspaper (***Northern Daily Express***) dated [11 March] 1861 recording the victory of Garibaldi at Caserta [this has been shown to be mistaken, it is advertising a diorama about Garibaldi], behind is the air-pump of a marine engine, an anchor, the Armstrong shell and great gun on which a girl sits and waits with food for her father. The name Harry Clasper appears as graffiti on the wall. Clasper was a famous professional oarsmen as well as an inventive boat-builder. The figures are portraits of men employed at Hawks, Crawshaw & Co.'s and Stephenson's works, and Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, heir to Wallington wields the sledge-hammer. One of a series of eight oil paintings illustrating the history of the English borders painted between 1856 and 1861.

- Beginning in 1857 the paintings were shown at the Literary Society, Newcastle, in the following order: Saint Cuthbert and King Egfrid; Building the Roman Wall; The Death of Bede; The Descent of the Danes; The Spur in the Dish; Gilpin making Peace; Grace Darling; Iron and Coal. The complete set was exhibited at the French Gallery, Pall Mall, in 1861. A preliminary watercolour version, of around 1861 is in the V&A (362-1891).
- William Bell Scott was commissioned in 1855 by Sir Walter Trevelyan to decorate the courtyard at Wallington; began in 1857 ... and completed in 1861"



William Beechey, *Portrait of Sir Francis Ford's Children Giving a Coin to a Beggar Boy*, exhibited 1793, 180.5 × 150 cm, Tate

William Beechey (1753-1839), *Portrait of Sir Francis Ford's Children Giving a Coin to a Beggar Boy*, exhibited 1793, 180.5 × 150 cm, Tate

Rich Versus Poor

- We are now in 1793 just before the beginning of the nineteenth century. We see two wealthy children and the girl is giving a coin to the poor boy. Now this is a common subject for artists as it appealed to the fashion for 'sentiment', that is a heightened feelings of sympathy and pity that appeared in Romantic poetry, novels and the visual arts. Feelings were seen as a surer guide to truth than reason.
- But in this case there is actually more to this painting than meets the eye. The painting is essentially propaganda in favour of slavery. The father of these wealthy children was Sir Francis Ford of Ember Court, Thames Ditton, a wealthy plantation owner who argued in Parliament in favour of slavery. His argument was that his slaves in Barbados had a better quality of life than the poor living in the slums of England. This painting therefore is a visual form of the argument in favour of

slavery as it shows how he and his family cared for both the poor in England as well as his slaves in Barbados.

- By the way, the artist William Beechey is little known today but at the time he was the leading portrait painter along with the more flamboyant Sir Thomas Lawrence. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788, aged 61) and Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792, aged 68) had both just died.
- Children were starting to be seen differently as early as the late eighteenth century. Previously the religious belief was that we are all born with original sin but the Romantic poets believed that children were born without sin, they were born innocent and were corrupted by society. Nevertheless, it took the whole of the Victorian period for laws to be introduced to actually protect children perhaps because MPs were also the factory owners who exploited cheap, child labour.
- An important distinction made during the Victorian period was between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Let us visit the countryside to find out how that worked...

Notes

- Sir Francis Ford had 3 sons and 5 daughters but based on the apparent ages of the children they can probably be identified as **Francis Ford** (1787–1839), later 2nd Baronet, and (died 1872). If Mary is giving the boy 1 penny then it would have bought 1lb of bread, the staple food. It could be a shilling which would buy enough bread for a week.
- The Romantic poets were very popular during the Victorian period and **they created a new view of children** as they believed that children **were born without sin**, they were born innocent and were corrupted by society. This was

revolutionary as the standard religious belief was that we are all born with original sin. It meant that children were not just small adults but special beings, closer to truth and to God. William Wordsworth probably did more to change the Victorians view of children than anyone else.

- There were two contradictory and competing ideas— children were innocent and needed to be looked after and children were a source of cheap labour. The 1790s brought a succession of bad harvests and the harvest of 1795 was disastrous. The price of wheat doubled and food riots broke out all over the country.
- The painting is unusual for its size and the artist, William Beechey, was a successful portrait painter. His later work is typically on a large-scale and he paints fluently using vivid colours. The children were not identified by the artist but **Horace Walpole identified them as the children of Sir Francis Ford (1758–1801)** a wealthy plantation owner with **property in Ember Court, Thames Ditton, Surrey** and Lears, Barbados. Ford was a **strong pro-slavery MP** in Parliament and the wealth of the children comes directly from the exploitation of slave labour in Barbados. The pro-slavery lobby argued that their slaves enjoyed a better quality of life than the abject poor living in England. **This poor English boy might therefore represent a visual argument in favour of slavery** and show how the Ford family cared for both its slaves in Barbados and the poor in England. After a long campaign for abolition led by William Wilberforce, Parliament prohibited the practice by passing the **Slave Trade Act 1807** which was enforced by the Royal Navy.
- Note that in 1789 Thomas Gainsborough died and by that

time Joshua Reynolds had stopped painting. When the young **Thomas Lawrence** exhibited his sensational full-length portraits of Queen Charlotte and the actress Miss Farren in 1790, Beechey's clientele was not much affected since Lawrence's style was much more flamboyant. The turning point in Beechey's life and career was his patronage by the royal family from about 1793. Beechey was made an Associate Royal Academician in 1793 and a full Academician in 1798. **He was known for his lack of extravagance which appealed to those like the king, who regarded Lawrence as too flamboyant and 'eccentric'.**

- Sir Francis Ford, 1st baronet (an honour between knight and baron), bought Ember (or Imber) Court in 1791 and sold it in c. 1793. Previously it was owned by George Onslow, Lord Onslow, from 1862 to 1768, and then his son Lord Cranley. At the time of Henry VIII all the land was a deer park for royal hunting. After the king's death the village of Thames Ditton petitioned for the land to be set free and the deer were moved to Windsor Park. Ember Court was described as "a large, plain mansion, the old brick front having been covered with stucco, and wings added in the last [eighteenth] century".

Bio:Beechey

- **William Beechey** (1753-1839) was born in Oxfordshire, the son of a solicitor. His parents died when he was young and he was brought up by his uncle who was determined he should become a lawyer. He became a clerk but then rejected his uncle's wishes and **joined the Royal Academy School in 1772 aged 19.** He is thought to have trained under Johan Zoffany and first exhibited at the Academy in 1776. **He moved to**

Norwich and gained several commissions including civic portraits. In 1787 he returned to London and exhibited a portrait of the Bishop of Carlisle. At this time he **painted in the style of Joshua Reynolds**. His style suited the **conservative tastes of the royal family** compared to the flamboyant style of Thomas Lawrence. In 1793 he was commissioned to paint a full-length portrait of Queen Charlotte. He was appointed her official portrait painter and elected an ARA the same year. As a result he received many more commissions, including six royal portraits and in 1798 was made an Academician. An enormous portrait of George III reviewing the troops resulted in him receiving a knighthood. By the turn of the century his style had become much more like that of Lawrence. He fell from royal favour in 1804 but was appointed principal portrait painter to William IV in 1830. In 1836, he retired to Hampstead. He was impetuous and easily angered but was known to be generous and helpful to students including the young John Constable.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beechey-portrait-of-sir-francis-fords-children-giving-a-coin-to-a-beggar-boy-t06734>



William Collins (1788-1847), *Rustic Civility*, 1833, V&A

The Deserving Poor

- Here we see a rural scene by William Collins, father of the novelist Wilkie Collins. A well known artist at the time whose work was more highly valued than that of Turner or Constable.
- We see three children holding open a gate for a gentleman on a horse indicated by his shadow. The boy is touching his forelock out of respect for the gentleman. This painting is not ironic, Collins was a High Tory and opposed to the Reform Bill (Representation of the People Act 1832) that had been passed the previous year and gave more men the vote. What this picture is saying is that the poor don't need the vote as they are well off, have leisure time, these children are shown playing not working, and are naturally subservient to their betters. Collins believed the poor wouldn't know what to do with the vote but they were deserving of our pity and charity.
- So who exactly were the deserving poor? The Victorians' view was that poverty was ordained by God and their view of the poor is best summed up by the hymn "All Things Bright and

Beautiful" (written in 1848 by Cecil Frances Alexander). It includes the lines:

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
And ordered their estate.*

- There was a dilemma here because the Victorians were also great believers in self help. They believed anyone could better themselves through honest hard work yet the poor seemed to be ordained to be that way by God. Their solution to this dilemma was solved by distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving poor. The deserving poor worked hard, were teetotallers, did not complain and tried to better themselves. The undeserving poor were lazy, drank and deserved their poverty but not our charity. The first could help themselves and should be assisted by charity but the underserving poor must accept their fate as determined by God.
- Let us go inside the farmhouse and look at a more jolly occasion...

Child Mortality

- The important thing to realise is that **in 1840, 1 in 6 children died before the age of one and one third before five.** In **slums half** of all children died before the age of five. Surprisingly, if we **remove child mortality** then, despite what you often read, **life expectancy was similar to today.** **Degenerative disease** was **very low** compared to today (e.g. **heart diseases, cancer, dementia, diabetes, arthritis**). The reason was that everyone had a **lot of exercise and a healthy diet.** People did not die of degenerative diseases **but of**

infections that can be cured today.

- The general view was that **children were naturally infidels** and had to be **taught Christian values**. This meant they had to be **rescued from the poor**. Children were treated **very strictly** and subject to **punishments** that historians now class as torture. Children who worked in **factories** were on average **six inches shorter** than those who did not and the average eighteen-year old factory boy was five feet three inches tall.
- One study of the poor in Bolton (1834) found of a total weekly wage of £1 8s 5d over £1 was spent on food, thirty pounds of bread, twenty pounds of potatoes and three pounds of flour. 3s 5d went on rent including coal. Other items included cheese, butter, bacon, meat, sugar, tea, salt, soap, candles and tobacco but all small quantities. Their diet was **deficient in protein, iron and vitamin C**. Note that there were **no green vegetables**, they did not become available until the 1850s.
- As a result the children of the poor were **stunted**, might suffer from vitamin deficiencies such as **rickets** and as a result looked very different from the children of the wealthy. It was not until the twentieth century that children of different social backgrounds began to develop in a similar way.

William John Thomas Collins (1788-1847)

- William Collins was a **genre painter** whose work was **more highly valued than that of Turner or Constable**.
- He trained at the Royal Academy School and went on to become a popular painter of landscapes and rustic genre scenes.
- He travelled extensively in Britain and abroad, particularly in **Italy**, and these journeys are reflected in the subjects of his

pictures.

- He was particularly fond of representing **children**.
- He became an **RA in 1820** (aged 32) and exhibited at the **RA every year from 1807 to 1846 (39 years, 124 pictures)**.
- He married the sister of **Margaret Sarah Carpenter** (1793-1872), a British portrait painter who was very famous in her time but unknown today. She exhibited at the **RA from 1818 to 1866 (48 years)** and was awarded a £100 a year pension by Queen Victoria.
- The eldest of his two sons was **William Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) the novelist** and author of *The Woman in White* (1859) and his other son Charles Allston Collins (1828-1873) the Pre-Raphaelite painter whose *Convent Thoughts* was attacked in *The Times* but defended by Ruskin and who gave up painting in 1857 as it gave him stomach pains (he died of stomach cancer in 1873).



David Wilkie (1785-1841), *The Blind Fiddler*, 1806, 57.8 x 79.4 cm

David Wilkie (1785-1841), *The Blind Fiddler*, 1806, 57.8 x 79.4 cm

A Happier Moment for Some Children

- A happy moment in a farmhouse. This early work by the Scottish artist David Wilkie shows how even a poor family can enjoy themselves and be moved by music. The two young children in the centre show their rapt attention to the music and the boy on the right is having fun pretending to 'play' a pair of bellows.
- As is often the case, there is another level to this picture. When it was exhibited at the Royal Academy some critics thought the bust on the shelf represented a dissenting minister and this mean the family were nonconformists and so were suspicious of pleasure. The paintings therefore shows the power of music to stir the passions of even those suspicious of pleasure which added to its subtlety.
- But things were changing rapidly down on the farm. Britain was at war with France in 1806 and ports were blockaded so farms had to increase their productivity to feed the nation. The agricultural revolution brought enclosures which meant that

common land was fenced in and could no longer be used by the rural poor to grow food so there was more hunger. It also meant increased automation to improve productivity and so fewer farm workers were needed. At the same time factories were opening and workers were moving from the countryside to the towns where they could earn much higher wages.

- So, let us look children at work...

Notes

- “In this **early work by Scottish-born David Wilkie** an itinerant fiddler is playing for a humble country family. Wilkie focuses on the listeners’ different expressions. Only two people seem to respond to the music: the baby and the boy on the right, who is imitating the fiddler by playing the bellows. When this picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy some critics thought the bust on the shelf represented a dissenting minister, and concluded that the family were **nonconformists. The power of music to stir the passions of those supposedly suspicious of pleasure was thought to add to the painting’s subtlety.**” (Tate)

Bio:Wilkie

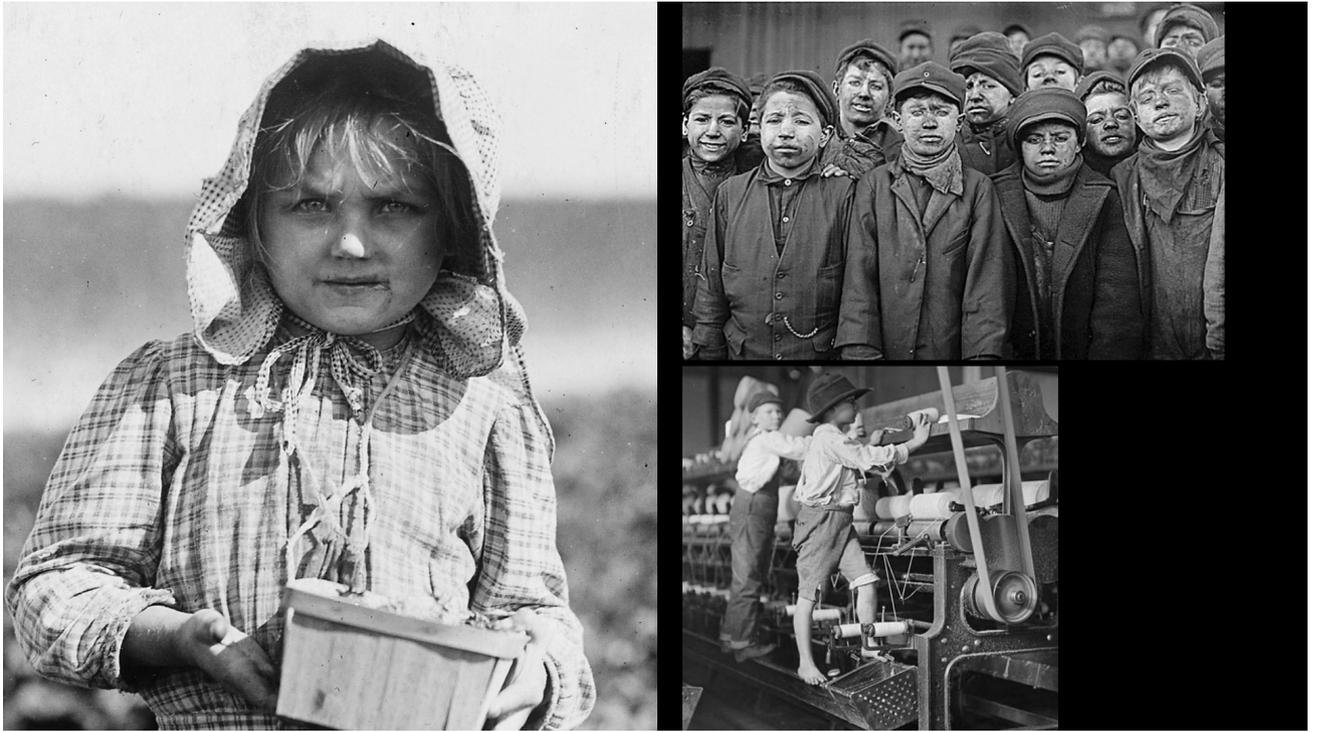
David Wilkie (1785-1841)

- Born in Fife, the son of a Reverend. Trained in **Edinburgh** and painted in the style of **David Teniers the Younger** (Flemish, Antwerp, 900 paintings) stories of common life.
- Went to London in 1805, aged 20, and enrolled in **RA School**. He had no money so he turned to **portraiture** and a genre subject was commissioned and accepted by the RA and hung in prime position.

- **David Wilkie** became a **star** of the London art world. Much admired for his **moralising** and **humorous** narratives of everyday life. He is **virtually unknown today**.
- Patron Sir **George Beaumont**, by 1807 President Benjamin West already considered him a great painter.
- ARA 1809 then **RA 1811 (age 26)**.
- **In 1816** he was commissioned by Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington to paint ***The Chelsea Pensioners reading the Waterloo Dispatch***, originally entitled *Chelsea Pensioners Receiving the London Gazette Extraordinary of Thursday, June 22, 1815, Announcing the Battle of Waterloo*. He was paid 1,200 guineas cash and it was exhibited at the RA Summer Exhibition in 1822. It was the first time the RA had to install a rail to protect a painting from the crowds pushing forward to see it.
- His mother and eldest brother died in 1824 and his other older brother died in 1825. Both brothers left children to be taken care of. He had long been prone to **nervous illness**, brought on by anxiety and by 1825 he had become **too tense paint** and he travelled abroad.
- His **European travels** resulted in a looser less detailed style.
- He was made **Painter in Ordinary** to George IV in 1830 (following the death of Thomas Lawrence) and William IV the same year and then Queen Victoria. He found portraits difficult and failed with Victoria.
- He was knighted in 1836 and made chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in 1841.
- He went to the **Holy Land** in 1840 and made many sketches and his style may have changed again on his return but he **died suddenly** on the **steamer home** and was buried at sea.
- He **never married** and was a private man.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wilkie-the-blind-fiddler-n00099>



Centre photograph, **Alberta McNadd on Chester Truitt's farm. Alberta is 5 years old and has been picking berries since she was 3.** Her mother volunteered the information that she picks from sun-up to sun-down. May 28, 1910. image from Wikimedia Commons

Discovered Testimonies

- **These are children who worked down the mine and in factories. We know how appalling conditions were from Government reports but recently a lot of research has been done to find testimonies written by children and many have been found. Their thoughts and experiences were documented in diaries, parish records.**
- **Let us start with children who worked in the mines from 4 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon. In 1840-42 a Government report described the terrible conditions although pit owners, who were often MPs played down the injuries and deaths.**
- **Mary Davis was described by the Government Inspector as a 'pretty little girl' of six years old. He found her fast asleep**

against a large stone underground in the Plymouth Mines, Merthyr. After being wakened she said: "I went to sleep because my lamp had gone out for want of oil. I was frightened for someone had stolen my bread and cheese. I think it was the rats." Sarah Gooder, aged 8, said "Sometimes I sing but never in the dark. I don't like being in the pit. I am scared." The children worked in the dark and there were rats and cockroaches. The Government report got a lot of publicity although the biggest scandal resulted from the revelation that women and girls worked topless because of the heat. In 1842 an Act was passed that prohibited all underground work for women and girls, and for boys under 10.

- In other trades apprentices were treated like slaves. In fact, Charles Bacon, aged 13 (1871) who was auctioned as an apprentice, wrote later that he had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and as he stood in the auction waiting to be sold he felt slavery existed in England. The first wave of factory labour was made up of orphans, the real life Oliver twists. A child could be in a happy middle-class family one day and, if the parents died, working in a factory the next, like the boys in the lower photograph. A form of State sponsored slavery.
- [CLICK] We have mentioned the farm and you might think children were better off there but testimonies show child sexual abuse and cruelty. Agriculture was the largest employer in the first half of the century and children started work when they were 5 or 6. One job young children were given was as human scarecrows, long hungry days in the field, hours of loneliness, one girl wrote later, 'I cried all day

"Mother, mother, mother" but she could not hear me'.

- **You might be thinking 'hard work never did anyone any harm' but it did, it permanently distorted young bodies and led to an early death. A boy wrote 'By 7, I was driving a plough'. He had to carry a 40 pound horse halter and part of a plough a mile to a blacksmith and it damaged his back for life. When planting a field if a child straightened their back for relief they were beaten. Many children died. Children reached adulthood with knock-knees, humpbacks from carrying heavy loads and damaged pelvises from standing 14 hours a day.**
- **There were also numerous industrial injuries, lost limbs and industrial diseases and death. Girls who worked in match factories suffered from a particularly horrible disease known as phossy jaw.**
- **Let us move from factories and farms to town as I must say something about the workhouses...**

Notes

- **Population increase.** In 1750 5.7 million shot up to 8.7 million by 1800, why? More people were marrying younger, previously they lived on a farm and remained single until their late 20s. New farming practices meant workers were thrown out so they travelled and married when they wished and started families sooner and as the children could earn money so they had more children to increase the family's income. The average age for marriage was 27 but this reduced to 23.5 years old. So Britain had its largest, youngest population at this time. Between 1837 and 1901 the population doubled from 16 million to 32.5 million.

- In 1837 over half the population lived in a rural environment and by 1901 it was only 20% and it has remained at this level to the present day.
- The industrial revolution would not have happened without children. During the war with France William Pitt was warned companies could not pay their taxes, his advice was "yoke up the children".
- They also thought work taught young children the right lessons in life and children of poor families knew they were helping the whole family survive.
- In 1832, Michael Sadler was spokesman for short time committee. He launched an inquirer, published 1833, shocked British society. **In 1883 the first Factory Act banned children under 9** from working but only of textile factories.
- Parish apprenticeships, taken from London aged 7 or 8 to cold, hard factories in the countryside. They slept in dormitories, indentured. They stayed until 21 sometimes 24. Barefoot to avoid clogs and the risk of a spark and fire. Children crawled underneath and crushed by the machines. Work became a substitute of social welfare. Many children went off excited to learn a skill, they had regular meals, education and a meal over their heads but worked 14 or 15 hours a day or more, they were not paid. Machines were designed to be operated by small children. They were locked up out of hours. In 1856 Ester Price was caught escaping and sent to the punishment room and spent a week in solitary confinement, little food and a corpse for company.



Luke Fildes (1844-1927), *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874, Royal Holloway College

Luke Fildes (1844-1927), *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874, Royal Holloway College

The Workhouse Split Families Apart

- This is a very well known painting by Luke Fildes. When it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy a barrier had to be erected to keep back the crowds. Most critics praised the work for its lack of easy sentimentality but others criticised it for the same reasons, condemning its squalor and hopelessness, and rejecting it as a suitable subject for a painting in an art gallery.
- The background to the workhouses is that in 1834, a New Poor Law was introduced. Its aim was not to help the poor but to reduce the cost of looking after them. It introduced the idea of the workhouse which was designed to be worse than the worst forms of employment and we have seen how bad this could be. The poor hated the workhouses as they split up families. Women and men and children were kept in separate parts of the institutions. They might see each other at mealtimes but were not allowed to talk.
- But people were starving and so queued to get in and even that

was not easy. This grim scene shows people queuing outside a police station for a ticket to admit them to the casual ward of the workhouse. This ward gave people temporary accommodation but only for one night. If they wanted to stay longer, they would have to queue up again the following day or enter the actual workhouse. This was a fate many did not wish to submit to as families were split up on admittance and there was little chance of ever getting out again.

- When Fildes exhibited this painting he added a line in the catalogue from Dickens' description of a scene outside the Whitechapel Workhouse in 1855:
 'Dumb, wet, silent horrors! Sphinxes set up against that dead wall, and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the General Overthrow.'
- Dickens described how one queue looked like a pile of old rags but he found it was mostly young girls huddled together. He tried to intervene with the master of the workhouse but it was full so he gave each girl a shilling but they were so exhausted they could not even thank him.
- **There was though an even lower level in the streets of London...**

Notes from Royal Holloway Website

- In 1869 Luke Fildes published the illustration 'Homeless and Hungry' in the newly founded magazine *The Graphic*. Both Vincent van Gogh and Charles Dickens were impressed by the illustration and Fildes used it as the basis for this painting.
- The subject is based on a scene that Fildes saw when he first moved to London as a young man and took to walking through the city's streets. He returned to the same spot when

working on the painting and asked many of the destitute people he met to model for him back at his house in return for a small fee.

- When the painting was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1874 it proved so popular that it required a barrier and a police officer to protect it from the crowds.
- The old poor law was first introduced by Elizabeth I in 1601 and it made the parish responsible for maintaining the poor of that parish.



John Thomson, *Street Life in London, The 'Crawlers'*, 1877. The book consists of 36 photographs by **John Thomson**, each accompanied by a brief essay by the writer and activist **Adolphe Smith**. The essays are based on interviews of cab drivers, flower sellers, sign painters, locksmiths, fishmongers, chimney sweeps, beggars, and street musicians.

Childcare

- This is a photograph by John Thomson from the book *Street Life in London*, which is still in print. You might be wondering how childcare worked for the poor when mothers needed to work to feed their family. This is a so called 'crawler' who often looked after babies all day.
- A 'crawler' is a beggar who is so poor and weak from hunger that he or she can no longer beg but relies of other beggars giving them food. Many crawlers were middle-class people who had fallen on hard times.
- They sat on hard stone steps day and night in wind and rain and got little sleep. This woman looked after the baby from 10 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon for a cup of tea which she did

not always get.

- All the 36 photographs in the book cover trades that operate on the streets and every person was interviewed and it provides a surprising insight into street life. This woman, for example, had her dreams. Her aim was to earn a few shillings in order to travel to the hop fields in order to save about a pound. With this she could rent a room to get an address so she could start work again, her son could get his clothes out of the pawnshop and get a job and they would be reunited as a family.

Notes

- A crawler is someone who **begs from beggars** and literally **crawls** from place to place. The book writes,
 - *Huddled together on the workhouse steps in Short's Gardens, those wrecks of humanity, the Crawlers of St. Giles's, may be seen both day and night seeking mutual warmth and mutual consolation in their extreme misery. As a rule, they are old women reduced by vice and poverty to that degree of wretchedness which destroys even the energy to beg. They have not the strength to struggle for bread, and prefer starvation to the activity which an ordinary mendicant must display. As a natural consequence, they cannot obtain money for a lodging or for food. What little charity they receive is more frequently derived from the lowest orders. They beg from beggars, and the energetic, prosperous mendicant is in his turn called upon to give to those who are his inferiors in the "profession." Stale bread, half-used tea-leaves, and on gala days, the fly-blown bone of a joint, are their principal items of diet.*

- **John Thomson** gradually acquired a clientele of the fashionable rich during the 1880s and eventually a royal warrant in 1881.



Child Mortality

- Let's look more closely at child mortality. One quarter to one half of all children died before the age of five. Partly because of this and also a lack of contraception the average family was large. For poor parents, a large family increased the family income as children could be sent out to work when they were 4 or 5. For more wealthy families having many children was the expected norm.
- Things were changing as the average family got wealthier. Women who married in 1860 bore an average of six children but their grandchildren who married in 1910 had an average of three children. One theory for this this sudden change was in an increasingly wealthy society there was a shift from a child being seen as a useful wage earner to the economically-dependent 'sacred' child. Wealthier families went hand-in-hand with the creation of the modern idea of childhood.
- There is an important point to make about lifespan. You will read that the average lifespan in 1850 was about 40 but this figure was massively skewed by the death of under fives. If a

child lived to the age of five then their average lifespan was similar to today, at about 75 for men. 10% of people born in 1850 lived to over 80.

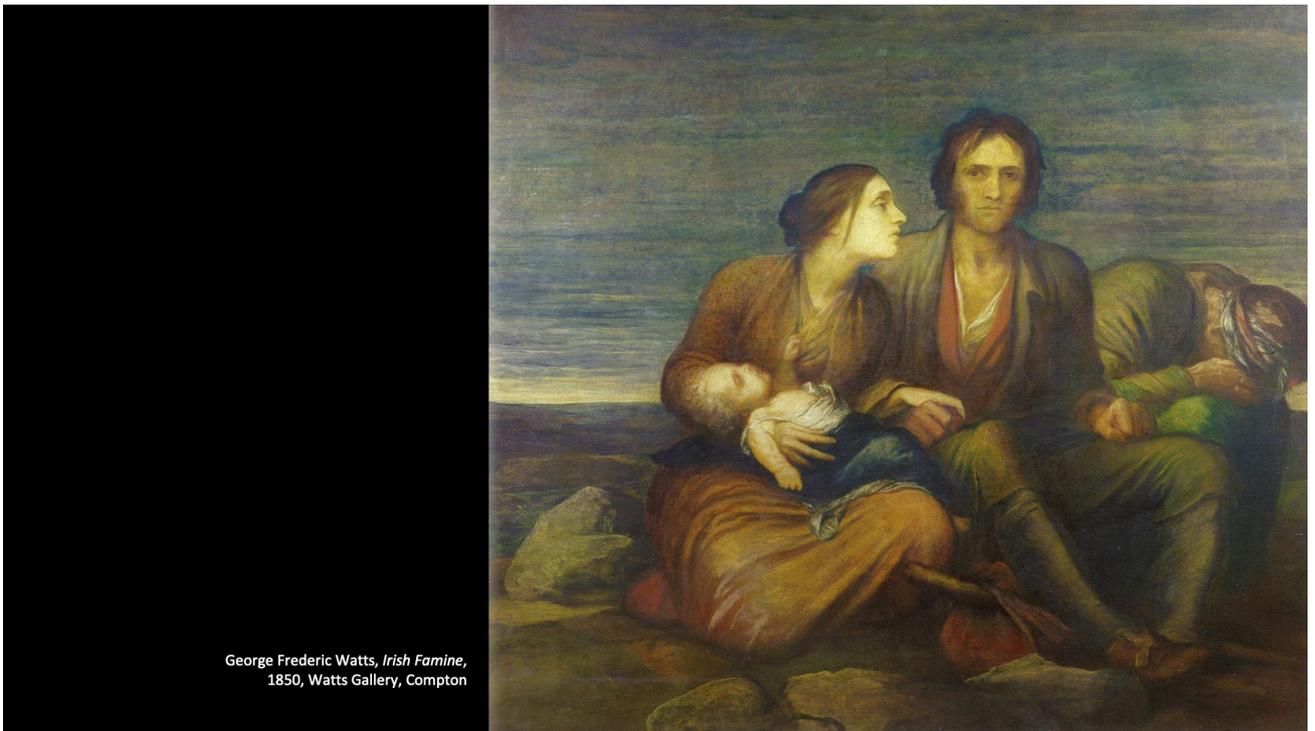
- **In fact, Between 1850 and 1870 an analysis of census data shows there was a 'golden age' in England when, if you reached the age of five, your lifespan was longer than it is today. This was because of diet and exercise. Modern degenerative diseases such as heart attacks, diabetes and lung cancer were rare. But after 1875 the diet changed, salted ('corned') beef arrived from Argentina, sugar-laden condensed milk became available, canned fruit in syrup and white bread were all introduced and by 1900 half the young men who volunteered for the Boer War were rejected as undernourished and their teeth were so poor they could not eat vegetables, fruit and nuts.**
- [CLICK] Although many children died young they loved their children as much as we do today and it was common for families to take a photograph of their dear departed child. In this picture, the youngest is dead. This may seem morbid to us but it helped blunt the sharpness of grief and the loss of much loved children.
- Victorians drew consolation from meeting again in heaven. Without contraception most woman were more or less permanently pregnant. This meant large families and everyone in a state of mourning for the children of family, friends and relatives.
- Victorian life was suffused with death. Epidemics such as diphtheria, typhus and cholera scarred the country, and from 1861 the bereaved Queen made mourning fashionable and there was a complex dress code and mourning etiquette.

Notes

- **Life span.** 'The average life span in 1840, in the Whitechapel district of London, was 45 years for the upper class and 27 years for tradesman. Labourers and servants lived only 22 years on average' (H. Mitchell, *Victorian Britain: A Study*. London: Routledge; 1988). However, once infant mortality is stripped out, life expectancy at age five was 75 for men and 73 for women. The lower figure for women reflecting the risks associated with childbirth.
- **Child mortality.** One in six children, rich and poor died before they were one and fully one third of all children died before they were five. In the slums the average age of death was 13. However, if a child reached the age of 5 life expectancy was similar to today or arguably better as degenerative diseases were extremely rare.
- **Smoking** was widespread but intermittent until 1883 when industrial cigarette production was introduced. So, in 1869 the Physician to Charing Cross Hospital describes **lung cancer** as '... one of the rarer forms of a rare disease. You may probably pass the rest of your students life without seeing another example of it.' Cancers were relatively rare and had none of the stigma associated with it today. Also, cancers were rare, and seemed to develop more slowly, perhaps because of diet.
- **Degenerative diseases** arise from cells deteriorating over time and include Alzheimers, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, coronary heart diseases, COPD (Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) and cancers.

References

- Paul Clayton, Judith Rowbotham. '**How the Mid-Victorians Worked, Ate and Died**', 20 March, 2009, [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672390/>]. The abstract says, "Analysis of the mid-Victorian period in the U.K. reveals that **life expectancy at age 5 was as good or better than exists today**, and the incidence of **degenerative disease was 10%** of ours. Their levels of physical activity and hence calorific intakes were approximately twice ours. They had relatively little access to alcohol and tobacco; and due to their correspondingly high intake of fruits, whole grains, oily fish and vegetables, they consumed levels of micro- and phytonutrients at approximately ten times the levels considered normal today."
- Also from the article, a Victorian navy could shift 20 tonnes of earth a day from below their feet to above their head requiring enormous physical strength and stamina. However, between 1880 and 1900 male health nationally had deteriorated to such an extent that in 1900, five out of 10 young men volunteering for the second Boer War had to be rejected because they were so undernourished. They were not starved, but had been consuming the wrong foods.
- BBC News 5 June 2016, '**Taken from life: The unsettling art of death photography**'.



George Frederic Watts, *Irish Famine*,
1850, Watts Gallery, Compton

George Frederic Watts, *Irish Famine*, 1850, Watts Gallery, Compton

- We are halfway through my talk and halfway through the nineteenth century and this is the lowest point in terms of pain, suffering and death. Around 1850 George Frederic Watts painted four large social realist paintings soon after he had returned to England from an extended period in Italy. This is one of them, called *Irish Famine*. The man staring out still blames us.

Poor Harvests and Starvation

- In the first half of the century the poor were dependent on a good harvest. People starved in a bad year but by far the worst famine was the Great Famine in Ireland from 1846 to 1850 when 1 million people died of starvation, more than all the British soldiers who died in World War I. Millions more emigrated, about 20-25% of the Irish population in total. The cause was potato blight but at the time Ireland was still exporting 30-50 shiploads of food a day to England, more than enough to feed the entire population. Remember, at this time

Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (from 1801 to 1922). Some historians therefore describe it as genocide and it eventually led to Irish independence in the next century (1921, law 1922, David Lloyd George and Michael Collins).

- This contradiction between poverty and starvation where there is wealth and plenty is still with us. 820 million people in the world today are undernourished (less than 1800 calories a day) and around 2 billion adults are overweight (WHO). It is estimated that within four years there will be over 1 billion people who are clinically obese (BMI>30).

Notes

- The four social realist paintings by Watts were *Found Drowned*, *Under the Dry Arch*, *The Irish Famine*, and *Song of the Shirt*.
- In London in the 1830s the number of deaths classified as starvation was under 100 a year but there were 7,000 unclassified deaths and there were reasons not to report death as caused by starvation. There were 72,000 infant deaths and many mothers were too weak to feed their child. (See 'Public Health, Then and Now')
- During the first winter of the Irish famine, 1846-47, perhaps 400,000 Irish peasants starved, landlords exported 17 million pounds sterling worth of grain, cattle, pigs, flour, eggs, and poultry — food that could have prevented those deaths. Throughout the famine there was an abundance of food produced in Ireland, yet the landlords exported it to markets abroad.
- Sinead O'Connor's "Skibbereen," includes the verse:
... Oh it's well I do remember, that bleak

*December day,
The landlord and the sheriff came, to drive
Us all away
They set my roof on fire, with their cursed
English spleen
And that's another reason why I left old
Skibbereen.*

- "Today, when we produce more food than ever before, more than one in ten people on Earth are hungry. The hunger of 800 million happens at the same time as another historical first: that they are outnumbered by the one billion people on this planet who are overweight." (Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*)
- Watts **falling spirits** and **ill health** fed into a series of social realist canvases depicting problems of Victorian society at the time. Watts had fallen in **love** with **Virginia Pattle at this time** but she married Viscount Eastnor and Watts travelled to Ireland with the poet Aubrey de Vere.
- Virginia was one of the eight Pattle sisters (Adeline (eldest), Eliza, Julia, Sara, Maria, Louisa, Virginia and Sophia). Julia Pattle (the 'ugly duckling') married Charles Cameron and took up photography in her later life. Maria married John Jackson and one of their children, born in India, was Julia Prinsep Duckworth Stephen (née Jackson), a renowned beauty, niece of Julia Margaret Cameron and mother of Virginia Woolf. Her parents had both been married previously so she grew up with brothers and sisters from three marriages. Julia had first married Herbert Duckworth and Sir Leslie Stephen had first married Harriet Marian

(Minny) Thackeray, a daughter of William Thackeray
(novelist who wrote *Vanity Fair*).

References

Christopher Hamlin, 'Public Health, Then and Now',

<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.85.6.8>

[56](#)



Luke Fildes (1843-1927),
The Doctor, 1891,
Tate Britain

Luke Fildes (1843-1927), *The Doctor*, 1891, Tate Britain
His name is pronounced to rhyme with 'childs' and is one syllable.

Medical Treatment

- Continuing the theme of health and lifespan let us turn to the improving state of medicine. This is *The Doctor*, another painting by Luke Fildes.
- A doctor has spent the night sitting with a sick child while the father looks on and the mother prays.
- In 1890, Sir Henry Tate (1819-98) commissioned a painting from Luke Fildes, the subject of which was left to his own discretion. Fildes chose to recall a personal tragedy of his own. In 1877 his first son, Philip Luke, had died at the age of one and this painting was inspired by the professional devotion of Dr Gustavus Murray who treated him.

- Fildes' son and biographer wrote,

'The character and bearing of their doctor throughout the time of their anxiety, made a deep impression on my parents. Dr. Murray became a symbol of professional devotion which would one day inspire the painting of The Doctor'.

- Fildes chose a rustic interior with the boy's father resting his hand on the shoulder of his wife whose hands are clasped in prayer. The man is bravely looking into the face of the thoughtful doctor trying to read any sign of recovery. They are poor, there is a scrap of carpet on the floor and their clothes are ragged but the child has been given medicine and the bowl and the jug of water used to try to reduce his temperature. The scraps of paper on the floor could be prescriptions made out by the doctor and now taken. Fildes described the shaft of daylight as signifying the imminent recovery of the child. He wrote,

'At the cottage window the dawn begins to steal in – the dawn that is the critical time of all deadly illnesses – and with it the parents again take hope into their hearts, the mother hiding her face to escape giving vent to her emotion, the father laying his hand on the shoulder of his wife in encouragement of the first glimmerings of the joy which is to follow'.

- Fildes' child died but this work shows the moment when we see the first signs of hope. The redeeming light of dawn is shining on the child and it was generally believed that if a child could survive till dawn it would recover. In order to make the picture convincing Fildes constructed a cottage interior in his studio. He began work at dawn each day to catch the exact light conditions. The image of an ordinary doctor's quiet heroism was a huge success with the late-Victorian public
- It was exhibited in 1892 at the Royal Academy and an engraving was published that sold more than a million copies in America alone. It became one of the most profitable prints Agnews had ever produced. Tate paid

Fildes £3,000 for the painting and he donated it and 56 other pictures as a gift to the nation in 1897 and it became that start of the Tate collection.

Notes

- How medicine changed:
 - 1800 doctors used mercury, arsenic, iron and phosphorus, recommended a 'change of air', used vomiting and laxatives, bleeding, leeches and even suggested prayer.
 - 1840s anaesthetics came into use
 - 1850s Louis Pasteur's germ theory, Joseph Lister and the use of antiseptics.
 - 1854 John Snow associated cholera with dirty water.
 - 1858 the 'Big Stink' of the filthy Thames led to building the embankment a new sewage system and a demand for clean water
 - 1875 Public Health Act, more trained doctors, hygiene
 - 1895 X-rays
- The doctor is sitting in the pose of Michelangelo's statue of Lorenzo de' Medici (1520-1534, tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, containing figures of Dawn and Dusk). The figure has been nicknamed *Il Pensieroso*, '**The Thoughtful One**'. The doctor is a member of the thinking class and the poor people are dependent on him for physical salvation as they depend on their priest for religious salvation.

Is Sentimental Art Unforgiveable?

- Why do many critics and art historians find sentimental Victorian art unforgiveable? It might be that art historians **look down** on art that **appeals to popular taste** or because the

emotional themes – childhood and especially child death, forsaken love, animals, sunsets, heart-rending stories and pathetic scenes – now seem **hackneyed or trivialised**. It is sentimental and so **trivialises deep human emotions**.

Sentiment reduces all emotions to comfort and warmth. In the **18th century sentimentality** was the **reliance on feelings** as a **guide to truth** and was much in vogue among the polite. By the end of the **19th century** it was seen as **false** and in **modern times**, as **Oscar Wilde** said,

'A sentimentalist is one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it'.

- The term 'sentimental' is often associated with Victorian genre painting but I will show that many paintings concerned social issues and morality.
- Alternatively, it could be that we see Victorian subject painting as trying to **manipulate us** by the use of emotion and manipulative images. We are used to being manipulated by **advertising** as so Victorian art could be seen as **debased** by similar motives. In this case not for commercial gain but to **persuade us** that the **religious, social and political systems are in our best interests**. For example, the 'deserving poor' are shown in a way that convinces us that everything is being done to correct the situation.
- Some later critics and art historians even believe that all painting that tries to **tell a story** is **dishonest** because it is **not the job** of the **medium**. Each art should focus on what **best suits the medium** so story telling is the task of writing and painting should be concerned with putting colours on a flat surface.

Sir (Samuel) Luke Fildes (1843–1927)

- Illustrator and genre and portrait painter, was born on 18 October **1843** at 22 Standish Street, **Liverpool**, the fourth of the ten children.
- His **grandmother**, Mary Fildes, was a radical reformer (Manchester Female Reformers Society) who was injured at the **Peterloo massacre**.
- Trained as an **illustrator**. Government Art Training School and RA School.
- Influenced by Millais.
- **Five large social realist paintings**, praised for their realism but criticized as **inappropriate** subject matter for fine art.
 - ***Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*** (exh. RA, 1874; Royal Holloway College, Egham), 23 freezing adults, children and babies waiting for food and a bed.
 - ***The Widower*** (National Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; reduced version, 1902, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), man looking after five children, one sick
 - ***Return of a Penitent*** (1879, City Hall, Cardiff), a young woman returns to find the old cottage deserted
 - ***The Village Wedding*** (ex Christies, 12 June 1992), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1883, young newly marrieds walking down the street followed by wedding guests
 - ***The Doctor*** (exh. RA, 1891; Tate collection)
- Friend **Henry Woods** (1846-1921, painter and illustrator, Neo-Venetian School, RA 1893), married his sister Fanny had six children.
- **Compassionate, caring, loving, affectionate.**
- 1879 associate RA, 1887 RA, knighted 1906.

- Admired by **Van Gogh**, took up portrait painting late in life and his main **rival** was John Singer **Sargent**.
- Fellow social realist painters included **Frank Holl** and **Hubert von Herkomer**, also **David Wilkie** and **Thomas Faed** and later **Richard Redgrave** and **George Frederick Watts**.



Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-73), *The Royal Family in 1846*, signed and dated 1846, 250.5 x 317.3 cm, Royal Collection

Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-73), *The Royal Family in 1846*, signed and dated 1846, 250.5 x 317.3 cm, Royal Collection

The Family

- The key unit in Victorian society was the family and Queen Victoria was the first monarch to use the family unit as a propaganda tool. She presented herself as monarch and mother combined. She had nine children in 14 years and she set family values at the heart of her image. Middle-class parents looked at her as an example.
- Queen Victoria helped develop the modern idea of childhood as she showed, before Albert died in 1861 a close knit and happy family. This was propaganda as Queen Victoria disliked babies. This was at a time when wealthy and middle-class children were often very strictly brought up and distanced from their parents by nursemaids and governesses. Interestingly, we know from testimonies that many working-class families were close knit and loving and in these families children were pleased to work to earn a few pennies to help the family.
- But many children were forced to work in dangerous conditions

on farms and in mines and factories and although this became increasingly unacceptable it still continued to the end of century and beyond.

- In this painting by Franz Winterhalter shows The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) wearing a Russian blouse and looking at his father. Prince Albert is on the left wearing a skirted outfit which wealthy young children did up to the age of three. On the right is Princess Victoria with Princess Alice on the far right both gazing at the infant Princess Helena.
- The painting was hung in the dining room at Osborne House but it was also engraved for public circulation as a form of propaganda.

Queen Victoria

- **Queen Victoria** was born on May 24, 1819. She was the daughter of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, minor son of the reigning King George III. Both her father and grandfather died in 1820, the year her uncle succeeded as King George IV. When George died without issue in 1830, Victoria stood to inherit the throne after the daughter of her second royal uncle, King William IV, died in infancy. William himself died in 1837, and the eighteen-year-old princess became Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland on June twenty that year.
- In the painting Queen Victoria is wearing an emerald and diamond diadem designed by Prince Albert and made at a cost of £1,150. Prince Albert is wearing court dress and both are wearing the ribbon and star of the Garter and Albert is wearing the Garter and the badge of the Golden Fleece.
- Victoria (1819-1901) married her cousin, **Prince Albert (1819-1861, aged 42)** of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, in 1840, and

bore nine children within the next seventeen years, among them the future King Edward VII. The children (those in bold are in the painting) were:

1. **Victoria, German Empress (1840, 9 months and 11 days after the marriage)**
 2. **Edward VII (1841)**
 3. **Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse and by Rhine (1843)**
 4. **Alfred, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1844)**
 5. **Helena, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (25 May 1846)**
 6. Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll (1848)
 7. Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn (1850)
 8. Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany (1853)
 9. Beatrice, Princess Henry of Battenberg (1857)
- Albert was an avid patron of the arts, sciences, and burgeoning industries, and he helped organize the famous Great Exhibition of 1851 at the "Crystal Palace." Victoria doted on her husband, who influenced her greatly and became her most trusted adviser in matters of state. The other major influence early in her reign was her first Prime Minister William Lamb, second Viscount Melbourne, of the liberal Whig party. These early years of Victorian rule saw major reforms in British education, with the Grammar Schools Act of 1840 and the founding of Queen's College for women in London in 1848.
 - Victoria had a very **open attitude to the nude**, both male and female. In 1847, the royal couple commissioned **William Dyce**, the Scottish painter, to produce a large fresco, *Neptune resigning to Britannia the Empire of the Sea*, for the staircase at Osborne House. After showing them a

preparatory sketch for the fresco, Dyce wrote to his friend, **"Prince thought it rather nude; the Queen, however, said not at all."**

- The queen gave Prince Albert paintings incorporating nude figures as birthday presents, including – William Edward Frost's *Una Among the Fauns and Wood Nymphs* and *The Disarming of Cupid*, and **Florinda by the German painter Franz Xaver Winterhalter**. *Florinda* depicts a group of seminude female companions preparing to bathe while spied upon by King Rodrigo of Spain. Rodrigo or Roderic was one of the last Visigoth kings of Spain from 710 to 712. There is a legend that he seduced or raped Florinda, the daughter of one of his counts. As a result the count colluded with the Arabs of north Africa to invade Spain so Florinda was associated with the lose of Spain. Although an obscure legend it is frequently represented in art. The painting, which was hung at Osborne House directly opposite Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's writing desks, was one of the queen's favourites, which she described in her journal as **"a most lovely picture containing a group of beautiful women"**. The Queen was uninhibited and attracted to the sensuous and the physical and enjoyed nudity.
- When Prince Albert died in 1861, the queen was devastated and went into deep mourning. She rarely appeared in public until the end of the 1860s, and during this time Great Britain saw a major movement in favour of republican government and for the abolition of monarchic powers. However, with the help of the Conservative party's Benjamin Disraeli, prime minister in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880, the queen eventually reassumed a more public and influential role in the government.

- Throughout the middle years of her reign, Victoria presided over Britain's involvement in the Crimean War (1854–56), non-intervention in the Prussia-Austria-Denmark war of 1864–1866, and the aversion of a Franco-German war in 1875. She also presided over major domestic reforms in the British government, including the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the Representation of Peoples Act of 1884, both of which greatly expanded the population of her subjects permitted to vote in parliamentary elections. Victorian England also saw great advances in commerce and industry, aided by the spread of railroad lines throughout Great Britain and the laying of the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable in 1866.
- During Victoria's reign, the British overseas Empire achieved its greatest size and power. The queen added the title Empress of India to her crown in 1876. She was a strong supporter of empire, which often pitted her against the Liberal party's William Gladstone, prime minister from 1869–1874, 1880–1885, and again from 1886–1894. She had better relations with her last prime minister, the Marquess of Salisbury, also a strong supporter of empire and opponent of Irish Home Rule, which was one of the most contentious issues of the day.
- Victoria lived to celebrate both her Golden Jubilee in 1887 and her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. These events were celebrated as great public affairs, and by this time the queen had achieved great popularity in Britain and she had come to be seen as the great symbol of the British Empire. The last years of her reign were preoccupied with the Boer War in southern Africa (1899–1902).
- After sixty-three years as queen Victoria died on January 22,

1901. She was eighty-one years old.

References

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/405413/the-royal-family-in-1846>



William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Many Happy Returns of the Day*, 1856, Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate

William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Many Happy Returns of the Day*, 1856, Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate

The Reality of Paternalism

- Here we see the develop of childhood as a special state being created through the celebration of a child's birthday. It is called *Many Happy Returns of the Day* and ceremonies like this were introduced by the Victorians to show the milestones of childhood as important events to be recorded.
- In the place of honour sits the little girl, whose health is about to be drunk and she has a large wreath fixed vertically to the back of her chair. The child was modelled by Frith's daughter and she is celebrating her sixth birthday. Her father is a self-portrait of the artist, and the grandmother is a portrait of his mother. The grandfather was modelled from an old man Frith found in a workhouse. The woman at the far left standing is probably a servant who is holding the girl's presents and the table is waiting for the father to propose a toast to his daughter. The father is correctly waiting for the eldest male present to be given a glass so that he can take part in the toast.

Although the young girl is at the centre of the painting and looks at us the gazes of the women direct our attention to the central pivot point of the social event, and the central person in a Victorian family, the father.

- It appears to be a happy family gathering but the reality was different. Frith led, what shall we call it, an unusual domestic life—he was married to Isabelle and they had 12 children while a mile down the road he had a mistress called Mary Alford (pronounced 'al-fud') who was also his ward and nursemaid to the family who had another 7 of his children. Isabelle did not know about Alford until she caught Frith down the road posting a letter when he was meant to be in Brighton. In marked contrast to the upright Victorian family shown in this scene was the reality of adultery by the husband—we shall see the very different result of adultery by the wife in the next painting.
- This painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy the day Alford's first baby was born. When his wife, Isabelle died he married Mary Alford and the affair became public knowledge.
- This painting leads into an interesting talk about the Victorian concept of manliness but today I am talking about children. Let us next look at what happened to the children following adultery by the wife...

Notes

- Manliness was a virtue and a form of control over **maleness which was regarded as brutish.**
- Manliness **incorporated spiritual belief** and as husband and head of the family had extensive powers over all members of the family. The role has been associated with that of the

Roman *pater familias*. His duty was not only to exert control but **to protect his wife and children.**

- Work was essential to achieve full masculine status and **the aristocracy were regarded by middle-class men as idle and effeminate.**
- **Home and work** were very different spheres and did not mix easily. Men who worked at home, such as writers and artists, therefore had their masculinity threatened.
- **Men reinforced their manliness by engaging in social activities with other men**, including secret societies such as the Freemasons, and clubs.
- In the **second half of the nineteenth century** the concept of masculinity **shifted from a spiritual focus to a commitment to physical fitness.** A healthy man was expected to have an educated mind and be physically fit. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a **mania for sports and game playing.** The athlete became the new hero of society.
- In the second half of the nineteenth century masculinity also became **associated with imperialism** and the need to grow the Empire and subordinate non-western cultures. Military commitment and patriotism became a requirement of manliness and the ideal man was a hunter or explorer, self-sufficient and with a broad scientific knowledge.
- **Toughness, hardiness and endurance** became associated with a **change from richly coloured clothes to dark colours, straight cuts and stiff materials.** British public schools were there to produce the ideal 'son of the Empire'.
- The concept of **masculinity changed** over the Victorian period from **Christian duty to hardiness.** Victorians saw manliness as good as it controlled **maleness** which was **brutish.** Men

increasingly formed **secret societies** to reinforce their manliness by bonding with other men. Manliness was associated with Christian belief. He was **paterfamilias**, head of the household but had a duty to rule and protect those he regarded as weak, his wife and children.

- **John Tosh** (British historian), *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999) argues that of the masculine father's options of being an **absent father, tyrannical father, distant or intimate**, the most common was **distant** because of the **pressures** men faced to be **breadwinner** and **protect the family** from the **harsh realities of a corrupt world** meant the need to create **manly sons**. This meant **strict discipline** and to avoid the personal distress this would cause upper middle class fathers sent boys away to **public school** be **bullied and beaten** with no mother to turn to, in order to **harden them** into men who could also fulfil this function and show no sign of emotion.
- In the second half of the 19th century **manliness shifted** because of changes in society, partly influenced by **Darwin's *Origin of Species*** (1859) and its implications and Friedrich Nietzsche's writing (including the famous saying 'God is dead!', 1882). One consequence was a change from a **spiritual** stance to a **commitment to physical health** and '**Muscular Christianity**' was created. The education of the mind was thought to require the education of the body. A **fascination with health** led to sports and game playing mania. The **athlete** was the **new hero** of society. By the end of the 19th century the **British Empire** was seen to be in danger and athletic public school boys were needed to save the Empire. **Manliness** became defined by **imperialism** and became

military as well as **hunters, adventurers** and pioneers. **Self-sufficiency**, independence and scientific knowledge were important. Hardiness and endurance required dark clothes, straight cuts and stiff materials.

- **Samuel Smiles**'s (1812-1904) ***Self-Help*** (1857) sold 250,000 copies and argued for character, thrift, perseverance, civility, independence and individuality.
- Men were active in the public sphere unlike women. **Work was crucial** to achieve **full masculine status**, particularly for the middle-class.
- **Home and work** were **separate spheres** that never mixed and so men that worked at home, such as artists, feared their masculine status was threatened.
- The **paterfamilias** was the head of the **Roman family**. The oldest living male in the household. Had complete control of all family members. The powers weakened in the late Roman period and the power over life and death abolished. Women often remained part of her birth family and could take legal action on her own behalf.

Notes

- Frith is an artist best known for his large painting such as *Ramsgate Sands* (1851-4) and *Derby Day* (1858). *Many Happy Returns of the Day* is typical of his domestic interiors. He grew up in Harrogate and entered the Royal Academy School when he was 19. Frith was a **member of the Clique** which included **Richard Dadd** and John Phillip. His principal influence was David Wilkie and his domestic interiors. He had already been successful with *Ramsgate Sands* in **1854**. *Derby Day* followed

in **1858**. When Frith's monumental canvas, ***The Railway Station*** went on show, at a gallery in the Haymarket, London, in April **1862**, *The Times* reported that the artist had been paid the astonishing sum of £8,750 for it, while the Athenaeum put the total at 8,000 guineas, or £9,187 10s. He also used a photographer for this painting (Samuel Fry). His **popularity faded** in the 1880s and he **blamed** the new Impressionists and the **Pre-Raphaelites**.

- This painting was acquired in 1951 by the Art Fund for £300 (total £400)

- The Scottish philosopher **Thomas Carlyle** wrote in 'Characteristics', *The Edinburgh Review*, **1831**:

"The old ideal of Manhood has grown obsolete, and the new is still invisible to us, and we grope after it in darkness, one clutching this phantom, another that; Werterism, Byronism, even Brummelism, each has its day." (*The Sorrows of Young Werter* was a loosely autobiographical novel by Goethe, he falls in love with a girl who marries another and Werter shoots himself to resolve the love triangle). ***'Mother Church has, to the most, become a superannuated Step-mother, whose lessons go disregarded'***

- Elaborate children's birthday parties started in Germany as 'kinderfeste', with entertainment and games.

References

Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentlemen*, 2001



Augustus Egg, *Past and Present No. 1 - Misfortune*, 1858, 63.5 x 76.2 cm

Augustus Egg, *Past and Present No. 1 - Misfortune*, 1858, 63.5 x 76.2 cm

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

The Broken Family

- The theme of this painting is the discovery of the woman's infidelity and its consequences. The wife lies prostrate at her husband's feet with her bracelets looking like handcuffs. Her husband sits grimly at the table and their children (the older girl modelled by William Frith's daughter) have constructed a house of cards in the background which is just collapsing. The husband is holding a letter, evidence of his wife's adultery, and simultaneously crushes a miniature of her lover under his foot. The setting is an ordinary middle-class drawing room, but closer observation reveals that the room is full of symbols. The children's cards are supported by a novel by Balzac - a specialist in the theme of adultery. An apple has been cut in two, one worm-eaten half, representing the wife, has fallen to the floor, the other, representing the husband, has been stabbed to the core. The two pictures on the wall depict the expulsion of Adam

and Eve from the Garden of Eden (labelled *The Fall*); and a shipwreck by Clarkson Stanfield (labelled *Abandoned*). The couple's individual portraits hang beneath the appropriate image. In the background of the picture the mirror reflects an open door, denoting the woman's impending departure from the home.

- **In Victorian England a man could safely take a mistress without fear of recrimination, but for a woman to be unfaithful was an unforgivable crime. As one early feminist wrote, 'the faults of women are visited as sins, the sins of men are not even visited as faults' (Caroline Norton, quote in Lambourne, p.374).**
- **This is the first part of three paintings and the other two show scenes five years later when the girls are teenagers, poor and living on their own and the mother lies close to death under an arch next to Waterloo Bridge.**

Notes

- The paintings reflected fears that public morality and family life were imperilled by the recent Matrimonial Causes Act 1857, which made divorce a practical reality for middle class couples.
- Egg was clearly influenced in his approach by Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* of 1853 (Manchester City Art Galleries).
- The set of pictures was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858 with no title, but with the subtitle, "August the 4th - Have just heard that B - has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!"

The title used today was not used in Egg's lifetime and appears to be a mistake in an auction catalogue which took the title from a review by John Ruskin of another work.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/egg-past-and-present-no-1-n03278>



George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Guide of Childhood*, 1863, painting missing



George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood*, 1863, 76.2 x 64.1 cm



George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age*, 1862, 76.2 x 63.8 cm

George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age*, 1862, 76.2 x 63.8 cm

George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood*, 1863, 76.2 x 64.1 cm

George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), *Woman's Mission: Guide of Childhood*, 1863, painting missing

The Role of Women

- This is by George Elgar Hicks, an English painter who became the main imitator of William Powell Frith, the painter of *Many Happy Returns of the Day* which we have just seen.
- This triptych shows the conventional view of the three roles for a respectable woman. The usual view of historians is that Victorian women had few career choices, simplistically the choice was marriage or some form of being kept by a man. I will show on the next slide that there were more opportunities for work than have previously been realised.
- Wives were regarded as pure, unworldly, innocent and in one poem [by Coventry Patmore] as 'The Angel in the House' (1854-62). As wives their role was as shown here 'Guide of

Childhood', 'Companion of Manhood' and 'Comfort of Old Age'. As one critic of the time put it: 'woman in three phases of her duties as ministering angel'.

- **This painting leads into an interesting discussion about the 'New Woman', a feminist ideal that emerged in the second half of the 19th century and which rejected all forms of domination by men.**

Notes

- John Ruskin, the leading Victorian art critic, wrote:
 '... the woman's power is for rule not battle - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. Her function is praise. By her office and place she is protected from all danger and temptation. This is the true nature of home - it is the place of Peace, the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division.'
- This sentiment might explain why Ruskin's marriage to Effie Gray (1828-1897) lasted from 1848 to 1854 and ended in an annulment because of his inability to consummate the marriage. She then married John Everett Millais in 1855.
- 'These two paintings make up two scenes in a **triptych** (three-part picture) called ***Woman's Mission*** which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in **1863**. The missing section is *Guide of Childhood*. The woman in both pictures bears a **striking resemblance to the artist's depictions of his own wife, Maria.**' (Tate display caption)
- Together they echo prevailing views of woman's role in the Victorian home and reinforce the desired image of the '**fairer sex**' as **pure and submissive**, as conveyed by **Coventry Patmore** in his popular poem '**The Angel in the House**'

(1854-63). The picture also anticipates John Ruskin's discussion of the relationships between men and women in his essay '**Of Queens' Gardens**', from *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). **Ruskin** recommends that the education of girls should lead to '**true wifely subjection**' on the part of 'her who was made to be the helpmate of man'.

- In the *Companion of Manhood* the important detail is the discarded black-edged envelope. He has **just received news of the death** of someone close to him and his wife, the 'companion of manhood', comforts him in his grief. She is clearly a dutiful and supportive wife who runs a comfortable home as we see from the **neatly laid table** and the **fresh flowers** on the mantelpiece. She is **attractive** and **well-groomed** but **not frivolous**.

Notes

- **George Elgar Hicks** was an English painter who became the main imitator of William Powell Frith's large genre paintings. He studied as a doctor before deciding to become an artist and became successful later in life with his large genre paintings. When the popularity of these works declined in the late 1860s he focused on historical subjects and society portraits.
- The '**New Woman**' was a **feminist ideal** that emerged in the second half of the 19th century and which **rejected** all forms of **domination by men**. It was popularised by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and Henry James. The 19th-century suffragette movement was one aspect of the New Woman. Education and employment opportunities increased for women. Women won the right to attend university and to become lawyers, doctors and professors. New divorce laws meant a

woman could survive a divorce.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hicks-womans-mission-comfort-of-old-age-t14037>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hicks-womans-mission-companion-of-manhood-t00397>



Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, etc." - Proverbs, x, 15, 1857, 82.5 x 103.8 cm

Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, etc." - Proverbs, x, 15, 1857, 82.5 x 103.8 cm

The Dependence on Working Men

- This was painted by Emily Osborn who made a good living as an artist.
- In *Nameless and Friendless*, we can see a young woman with possibly her younger brother and can imagine they have just been orphaned as she is wearing mourning clothes and she is seeking to make a living from a skill she learnt as a middle-class woman—painting.
- The conventional view was that unless the family had wealth there were few ways a young woman could only earn money apart from prostitution or some form of becoming a kept woman and this possibility is indicated here by the leers of the two men on the left who understand the difficult position she was in.
- However, we now believe that between 1850 and 1870 30-40% of women worked. A higher percentage than at any time until

after WWII but women's jobs were not recorded on the census for a variety of reasons, they were not seen as central to the family and their employment undermined the manliness of the so called 'breadwinner'. Most women helped with the family business, were domestic servants or worked in the local textile industry or pottery. They might also be shop assistants or work in confectionery, brewing and other provisioning, seamstress, laundry work, cleaning and retailing. Another possibility, shown here, was to become a professional artist but that was a difficult profession for a woman to enter although some, like Osborne, became very successful.

- The *Art Journal* wrote:

'A poor girl has painted a picture, which she offers for sale to a dealer, who, from the speaking expression of his features, is disposed to depreciate the work. It is a wet, dismal day, and she has walked far to dispose of it; and now awaits in trembling the decision of a man who is to become rich by the labours of others.'

Emily Mary Osborn

- 'This painting addresses the plight of a single woman trying to make a living in a hostile environment. A young woman in mourning dress offers a picture to a dealer whose expression suggests rejection. Osborn was actively involved in the campaign for women's rights that gathered momentum in the mid-19th century. Her painting was probably intended as a political statement as its exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1857 coincided with the formation of the Society of Female Artists, an organisation aimed at enabling women to exhibit and sell their work in public.' (Tate display caption)

- Osborn began showing her work at the **Royal Academy** when she was **just 17** and continued to do so over a period of **40 years**. She was the eldest of nine and grew up in Tilbury, whose surroundings 'were not such as to develop artistic proclivities' but when she was 14 the family moved to London and she attended the Dickinson Academy and studied under Mr. Mogford and then Mr. Leigh at Maddox Street and then his gallery at Newman Street. He trained her without charge for a year. She sold a portrait at the Royal Academy for 200 guineas when she was 17 and sold another to the Queen.
- This is her **most famous work** which has been called '*The most ingenious of Victorian widow pictures.*' A **recently bereaved woman** is attempting to make a living as an artist by offering a picture to a dealer while **two 'swells'** on the left stare at her distracted from the **bare legged ballet dancer** they have been previously **ogling**. She nervously pulls on a loop of string while the dealer disdainfully judges her work.
- It has been suggested that this painting relates to **Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control*** published in 1810 but **republished in 1850**. This describes the **struggles** of a self-motivated **female artist to sell her pictures** in order to help save her father from **financial ruin**.
- **Mary Brunton (1778-1818)**, Scottish novelist. She was taught languages and music by her parents (Colonel Balfour) and eloped to marry a Scottish minister. They did not have children until she became pregnant at 40 and died after giving birth to a stillborn son. She wrote *Self-Control Discipline* and *Emmeline*. Popular at the time for their strong moral and religious stance combined with sexuality (what

Jane Austen called 'vulgarity').

- **Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon** (1827-1891), leading artist, educationalist, feminist and activist for women's rights. Extra marital child of a milliner and Whig politician Leigh Smith. Met at Langham Place North Regent Street (next to the BBC). Her summary of the laws concerning women (1854) helped with the passing of the Married Women's Property Act in 1882. In 1857 (aged 30) she married an eminent French physician (Bodichon) and from then on wintered in Algiers. She set up the *English Women's Journal* (1858). In 1866 she helped set up a scheme for giving women university education, first at Hitchin and this developed into Girton College, Cambridge. She studied painting under William Holman Hunt and exhibited at the Royal Academy and showed originality and talent and was admired by Corot and Daubigny. She was George Eliot's most intimate friend.

Society of Female Artists

- The **difficulties** experienced by women in exhibiting and selling their works led to the **formation** of the **Society of Female Artists** in **1857**, the year *Nameless and Friendless* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy. Emily Mary Osborn was a member of this group and one of the artists associated with Barbara Bodichon's Langham Place circle and campaign for women's rights.
- Osborn was a member of the Society and a member of **Barbara Bodichon's** Langham Place circle that campaigned for **women's rights**. Despite the problems faced by women artists Osborn went on to develop a successful career.

Reviews of Exhibitions of the Society of Female Artists:

The Illustrated London News, 6 Jun 1857:

Strength of will and power of creation belonging rather to the other sex, we do not of course look for the more daring efforts in an exhibition of female artists: but observation, taste, or the art of selection, and various other qualities adapted to the arts, are to be found in this Oxford-Street display.

The Art Journal, 1 May 1858:

...that which we see at the Egyptian Hall is the result of assiduous self-tuition, for we have no school for the instruction of **ladies** in painting from the **living model**. Labouring under such **disadvantages** as the female student does, we are not disappointed to see here so many **drawings of flowers**, fruit, and still-life objects – we are only surprised into exultation to see so much excellence in the higher departments of art...

References

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

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/osborn-nameless-and-friendless-the-rich-mans-wealth-is-his-strong-city-etc-proverbs-x-15-t12936>



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Bubbles (A Child's World)*, 1886, 109.2 × 78.7 cm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight
A&F Pears Ltd. (publisher), *Bubbles*, Pear's Soap advertisement, c. 1889, chromolithograph, Victoria & Albert museum

Sentimental Art

- In the remaining slides I look at ways in which the modern idea of childhood developed first within more wealthy families.
- This is a painting called *Bubbles* by John Everett Millais of his grandson Willie James. Millais saw him blowing bubbles one day and thought it would make an engaging subject. Shortly after he had finished the painting a friend from the *Illustrated London News* visited and bought the painting. The paper had bought many other paintings by Millais and faithfully reproduced them in the paper. Millais therefore had no concern about its fate. However, in this case the paper sold the rights to the manufacturer of Pears Soap who modified the image [CLICK] and used it for a long running and successful advertising campaign.
- Millais was furious but he had no say in the matter as he had

sold the copyright. Unsympathetic critics saw it as detrimental to both art and artist.

- **It is a vanitas painting, that is a painting about death and the beauty and fragility of life as represented by a bubble. The plant in the background represents life and the broken pot on the left represents death but I imagine most people who saw the soap advertisement saw it as a picture of an attractive child blowing soap bubbles.**
- **The child became Admiral Sir William Milbourne James (1881-1973). He grew up to become a naval commander, politician and author and he died aged 91 in 1973. The painting haunted him most of his life and he was nicknamed 'Bubbles' in the Navy.**

Notes

- Millais's son later explained in the biography he wrote of his father that it was never meant to be used commercially:

"Millais painted it simply and solely for his own pleasure. He was very fond of his little grandson, Willie James — a singularly beautiful and most winning child — and seeing him one day blowing soap-bubbles through a pipe, he thought what a dainty picture he would make, and at once set to work to paint him, bubbles and all. Willie, then about four years of age, was delighted to sit.... Shortly afterwards Sir William Ingram came to the studio, and falling in love with the picture bought it for the *Illustrated London News*. Other pictures, such as *Cinderella*, *Puss in Boots*, *Little Mrs. Gamp*, and *Cherry Ripe*, had been previously disposed of in like manner, and artistically reproduced as supplements to that paper or the *Graphic*; and knowing that the purchasers would do justice to his work, as they had done before, Millais handed it over without any

concern as to its fate, or that of the copyright that, of course, went with it."

- The younger Millais went on to say that his father was furious when the periodical sold his work on to the soap manufacturers, but felt a little better when he saw the designs for the advertisement. Although he seems to have had no choice in the matter, which apparently involved a "legal loophole" (Lionel Lambourne, *Victorian Painting*, London and New York: Phaidon, 1999, p. 180), the result was predictable: unsympathetic critics saw it as detrimental to both art and artist.
- Chromolithography was first patented in France in 1837 and became the most successful of several methods of colour printing developed by the 19th century. However, it was a time consuming and expensive process although later, cheaper methods were introduced for advertisements that involved first printing an image in black and white and then using lithographic stones to overprint a small number of colours.

References

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bubbles_\(painting\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bubbles_(painting))

<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/millais/paintings/37.htm>

!



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *My First Sermon*, 1863



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *My Second Sermon*, 1864

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *My First Sermon*, 1863, Guildhall Art Gallery

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *My Second Sermon*, 1864, Guildhall Art Gallery

The Modern Child

- Another very popular painting by Millais.
- The model was Millais' five-year old daughter Effie and she is sitting in one of the old high-backed pews in All Saints Church, Kingston-on-Thames, which Millais hurried to paint in December 1862 shortly before they were removed. The *Art Journal* wrote, '*One of the happiest works this artist has ever painted*'.
- After the success of *My First Sermon* at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1863, Millais painted a companion showing the same little girl - his daughter Effie - after the novelty has worn off. In his speech at the next Royal Academy Banquet, the Archbishop of Canterbury claimed it as a warning against '*the evil of lengthy sermons and drowsy discourses*'.
- Art historians have analysed Victorian paintings of children and

concluded:

- They show how adults developed a new fascination with childhood.
 - There was a strong cultural desire to idolise children and to turn them into objects of beauty.
 - Artists often identify faith and innocence with childhood.
 - It was seen increasingly as a special period made poignant through its brevity.
 - Children are shown as adorable but also vulnerable requiring vigilant adult concern and protection from a harsh world.
- The overall effect is to treat the child as an object onto which adult fantasies of innocence, morality, faith and nostalgia are projected.

The Creation of the Modern Child in Art

- *My Second Sermon* followed on the phenomenal success of Millais' painting *My First Sermon*. One critic noted: '*Everybody is rejoiced to recognise, sitting in the same place as last year, the little girl, now dear to many a heart, who then was listening...in rapt attention.*' Both images were widely reproduced as **prints**.
- Millais and other artists painted many pictures of children which have caused art historians (Robert Polhemus in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* discussing Millais's *The Woodman's Daughter* based on Coventry Patmore's poem in which Maud gets pregnant by the squire's son and commits suicide) to make a number of general points:
 - They show how adults developed a new **fascination with childhood**.

- There was a strong cultural desire to **idolise children and to turn them into objects of beauty**.
 - Artists often identify **faith and innocence** with childhood.
 - They suggest it is a **special period made poignant through its brevity**.
 - They present children as **adorable** but also **vulnerable** requiring **vigilant adult concern and protection from a harsh world**.
-
- They often **eroticize and sexualize** childhood (although not in these paintings), for example, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Through the Looking-Glass* or Millais's *Cherry Ripe*.
 - They make the **well-being** of children a touchstone of good.
 - They imply a **child's experience** is a **predictor** for later life.
 - They place children in a **narrative** that extends beyond childhood and so conceives it retrospectively implying psychoanalytic insight.
 - They turn ideas about 'proper' social station and class division into problems.
- The overall effect is to treat the child as an object onto which adult fantasies of innocence, morality, faith and nostalgia are projected.



William Powell Frith (1819–1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1851-54, 77 × 155.1 cm, Royal Collection

William Powell Frith (1819–1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1851-54, 77 × 155.1 cm, Royal Collection

- With increasing wealth there was increasing leisure time and this meant more time with the children.
- There is a lot going on in this painting. In fact, my supervisor at the Courtauld, Professor Caroline Arscott wrote some 50 pages in her PhD dissertation about every character in the painting.
- The hustle and bustle and wide range of activities and classes shows the enthusiasm for holidays in the mid-Victorian period. Previously they had only been for the wealthy but the railway enabled the poor from London to take day trips to seaside resorts like Ramsgate.
- I will pick out one amusing incident. The child on the left in the green dress is a small boy looking through a telescope. This mimics the seated old man behind him. And what is the man examining so intently? The clue is the bathing machines on the right. The stare from his wife suggests he is scrutinising the female bathers in some detail.

Notes

- The *Art Journal* said of this painting at the time, "There is much happiness and much discontent, and many subtle shades between the two; gaieties and gravities, love, politics, music and poetry ... That young widow on the right, whose crape is yet unsullied, is proposing to the young man with the apologetic moustache; this is so unexpected that he is somewhat confused, and well he may be so. That family in the centre are remarkable for their exclusiveness; at Peckham, their garden wall is higher than that of anybody else; and here they turn their backs upon everybody, living as it were within a ring-fence. The papa wears his slippers and reads the Times. The mamma, who is yet pretty, shades her complexion with what the boatmen call a "main top-gallant stu'n-sail" of blue silk to her bonnet. The young ladies read *Bulwer* and *Disraeli*, and keep worrying their matter-of-fact father for the newspaper, to look over the list of marriages."
- In Autumn 1835, Princess Victoria stayed at Albion House in Ramsgate for three months, to recuperate after falling ill with typhoid, on a punishing tour of the country. Is that her standing at the window on the left?
- Before *Ramsgate Sands* Frith depicted figures from history or literature but this was the first time the contemporary Victorian crowd had been painted. The idea of **painting modern life was a revolutionary idea** twenty years before the Impressionists took up the idea inspired by the writing of Charles Baudelaire.
- Many of Frith's fellow artists were against the idea of painting modern-life and one called it '**a piece of vulgar Cockney business**' and another '**a tissue of vulgarity**'. However, the public loved it and it was an immediate an enormous success.

It was one of the few paintings at the Royal Academy for which a guard rail had to be installed to keep the public back – the ultimate sign of success. In all, Frith had six guard rails over the years.

- It was bought from the artist by Messrs Lloyd who sold it to **Queen Victoria the same year, 1854, for £1,000**, the same price he paid but he retained reproduction rights and Frith may have earned as much as £3,000 from the sales. Although this was the price they paid they retained engravings and print rights so it was a highly lucrative deal. Victoria had stayed in Albion House (built 1789) in Ramsgate before she became Queen. This is the highest house in the middle of Frith's painting. Victoria stayed in Ramsgate aged 16 she nearly died of typhoid and Sir John Conroy forced a pen into her hand to try to force her to sign authority to him, she resisted.
- Victoria had also entered the sea from a bathing machine in Osborne, Isle of Wight for the first time in 1847. She wrote in her diary:
 - 'drove down to the beach with my maid & went into the bathing machines, where I undressed & bathed in the sea (for the 1st time in my life), a very nice bathing woman attended me. I thought it delightful till I put my head under water, when I thought I should be stifled.'
 - 'Queen Victoria's Journal', 30 July 1847
- It was inspired by a holiday Frith and his family took to Ramsgate in 1851. He always painted from real people and liked to use friends and family as he found professional models often turned up drunk and had no sense of responsibility. The artist included a self-portrait (peeping over

the shoulder of the man on the far right), while the little girl paddling in the centre staring directly at the painter is thought to have been his daughter.

- My professor at the Courtauld devoted a large part of her doctoral thesis to this painting and she examined and analysed every person and their social role within society. Seaside holidays or weekends had become possible with the advent of the railway. Trains first reach Ramsgate in 1846 and although it involved changing at Canterbury the old station was in the centre of the town near the beach.
- The bathing machines had a curtain that could be lowered to sea level but men were allowed to bathe nude until the 1860s. Some resorts employed a dipper whose job was to push people under water and then help them back into the bathing machine. The machine was developed in Margate about 1750 when most people bathed naked. Legal segregation of bathing areas ended in 1901 and the machines became extinct by 1820. Poorer people from London came to the seaside by train and as they could not afford bathing machines they often bathed naked. In 1874 a rector wrote in his diary that he had to adopt the detestable custom of bathing in drawers, he wrote, **'If ladies don't like to see men naked why don't they keep away from the sight?'** Boys and young men would bathe naked even in the Edwardian Era but middle class girls and women always had to be fully covered with clothes that did not expose their shape.
- Frith is showing a world of mixed sexes, ages, classes and occupations but he maintains the important class distinctions and generally the lower classes are shown as deferential and respectful. There is an intellectual air among the

entertainment and seven women are reading books. One man is an idler and another appears to be flirting and two people are potentially voyeurs with telescopes watching women bathing. However, one is an old man and the other a young boy. No bathers are shown in the painting and there are no coarse or vulgar displays.

- Granite Obelisk (known as the Royal Tooth Pick) erected 1822 to commemorate the departure (1820) and safe return of King George IV from Ramsgate Harbour. He was so pleased with his reception he named it a 'Royal Harbour' (the only one). Beyond the obelisk is the Royal Harbour, important during the Napoleonic Wars. The first railway was 1846.
- Augustus Pugin, George du Maurier, James Tissot, Vincent van Gogh, Wilkie Collins and Jane Austen stayed in the town.
- Frith went on to paint many other scenes of everyday life such as *The Derby Day* (1858) and *The Railway Station* (1862) for which Frith was paid an astonishing 8,000 guineas. So 15 years before Claude Monet (1840-1926) was brave enough to paint a modern-life railway station (La gare Saint-Lazare, 1877) Frith was making a fortune from the same daring subject matter.

William Powell Frith (1819-1909)

- Born in Yorkshire to a house steward and cook and his parents took a keen interest in art.
- He was sent to school in Dover where he indulged in drawing.
- His formal training was at the Sass Academy and then the RA School in 1837 (aged 18).
- His father died and his mother moved to London and he made money portrait painting (Lincolnshire farmers at 5-15 guineas).

- Member of the Clique, which included Augustus Egg, Richard Dadd and Henry O'Neil and rapidly established himself as a genre painter.
- His painting was at odds with the RA but his character and incident, sparkling detail and high finish made his work popular and suitable for engraving.
- 1840 travelled abroad and had his first painting exhibited at the RA.
- ARA 1845 and RA 1852 (aged 33).
- He was friends with Charles Dickens and centre of the literary life of London.
- In 1851 he visited Ramsgate and decided to take a commercial risk investing in *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)* and it was a success and sold to Lloyd then Queen Victoria for £1,000.
- His second panorama, *Derby Day* was a stroke of genius, few paintings have ever earned such universal acclaim.
- He had a wife with 12 children and a mistress with 7.
- He was an artist with a well developed business sense and he remained in the news throughout his life.
- Six of his paintings had to be railed off including his three most important works, *Ramsgate Sands*, *Derby Day*, and *The Railway Station*.
- He was criticized for his artistic philistinism by John Ruskin, Whistler and Oscar Wilde, and later Roger Fry and he was a staunch reactionary criticising the Aesthetic Movement, Oscar Wilde and Impressionism.

References

<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/frith/paintings/4.html>



James Clark (1858-1943), *Christmas*, c. 1902, 90 × 120cm, private collection, signed bottom left, *Clark*, sold at Sotheby's 2013 for £25,000. Previously misattributed to Joseph Clark (1834-1926) as *The Christmas Dole*.

- Here we see what could be a modern middle-class family with the mother bringing in the Christmas pudding. The mother is looking at her daughter who is filling her father's glass with beer. The two boys are eagerly waiting for the pudding. The dinner plates have been cleared with no food remaining on them as it has all been eaten and the housekeeper is ready to serve everyone on clean plates. There is a Christmas tree, mistletoe and holly over the mantelpiece. The focus is on the food, as it was in the eighteenth century, but now the children are the centre of attention.
- The Victorians invented many of the present day conventions of Christmas—Christmas trees, Christmas cards and dining on roast turkey but perhaps the biggest change is that Christmas began to revolve around children. Prior to the Victorian era Christmas had no particular association with children, and had

instead been a time for adults to hold parties and feasts. Gradually children became the centre of family festivities and family activities in general.

Notes

- Gifts to each other were given prior to Christmas Day, on 6th December, St Nicholas' Day, the tradition across Christian western Europe. Gifts were also given to servants and tradesmen on St Stephen's Day, what we now call Boxing Day. This is because the gifts were in the form of Christmas 'boxes' and were small handouts of money. The better off would give alms and gifts at Christmas to the poor, usually via the church. Christmas Day itself usually consisted of a visit to church and then home to parlour games, singing, storytelling and plays.
- James Clark was born in northeast England and first trained as an architect before switching to his other love painting. He moved to London in 1877 and practised drawing in the British Museum before travelling to Paris and training at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. On his return he married his childhood sweetheart and they remained for the rest of his life in London. He exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy and became an art examiner. Later he travelled to Palestine to research the landscape for his religious paintings. In 1914 he rose to national fame for a painting of a dead soldier at the foot of the cross, an image that was often reused in war memorials and church windows. It was described as "the most popular painting of the war". When his health deteriorated he moved to Reigate where he died in 1943.

References

<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/clark/index.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Clark_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Clark_(artist))



To bring you back to my initial point I would like to end with a quote from a book on child labour during the Industrial Revolution. "In 1880 the Compulsory Education Act helped reduce the numbers of child labourers, and subsequent laws raised their age and made working conditions safer. But it had come too late for the little white slaves on whose blood, sweat and toil our great railways, bridges and buildings of the Industrial Revolution were built."³

Notes

- The 1870 Education Act was the first piece of legislation to deal specifically with the provision of education in Britain. The Act established a system of 'school boards' to build and manage schools in areas where they were needed. The boards were locally elected bodies which drew their funding from the local rates. Unlike the voluntary schools, religious teaching in the board schools was to be 'non-denominational'.
- The 1870 Act did not make education compulsory. The 1876 Royal Commission on the Factory Acts recommended that education be made compulsory in order to stop child labour. The

1880 Education Act finally made school attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten, though by the early 1890s attendance within this age group was falling short at 82 per cent. Many children worked outside school hours - in 1901 the figure was put at 300,000 - and truancy was a major problem due to the fact that parents could not afford to give up income earned by their children. Fees were also payable until a change in the law in 1891. Further legislation in 1893 extended the age of compulsory attendance to 11, and in 1899 to 12. The 1914 Act raised the age to 14 and made education free for elementary school. The 1944 Act raised the age to 15 (with provision for 16) and made secondary education free.

References

1. *The Children Who Built Victorian Britain*, BBC documentary (not available on iPlayer)
2. <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/reviews/seenandheard.html>
3. *Childhood And Child Labour In The British Industrial Revolution*, Professor Jane Humphries, Cambridge University Press, £60
4. Paul Clayton, Judith Rowbotham. 'How the Mid-Victorians Worked, Ate and Died', 20 March, 2009, [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672390/>]
5. Janet Sacks, *Victorian Childhood*, 2010, Amazon £7.82

GREAT TARTS IN ART: High Culture and the Oldest Profession

By Linda Smith

A Special Interest Event on
Thursday, 16 September, 2021 via Zoom

10.30 – 12.50 (2 one-hour lectures with a 20 minute break)

The cost will be £10 per person. If you would like to attend, please contact Alison Lornie at alison.lornie@btinternet.com or call 01932 845372

Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Diana Kirke, later Countess of Oxford*, c. 1665, Paul Mellon Collection



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Diana Kirke, later Countess of Oxford*, c. 1665, Paul Mellon Collection

- I have a reminder and two announcements to make:
 - There is no August lecture, the next talk is September 9th and it is James Russell exploring the theme of the modern artist-gardener.
 - The second is the Special Interest Day shown here which you should book now. It is on Zoom on 16 September and is two one-hour lectures for £10. Book by contacting Alison Lornie and while you write down the contact details I will read the description of the talk.
- I can recommend this talk as Linda Smith is an excellent speaker and this is a fun event. The two one-hour lectures look at the portraits and careers of some of history's most notorious mistresses and courtesans in order to take a generally light-hearted look at changing attitudes to sexual morality down the ages.

- They also chart the rather complex and ambiguous attitudes of art and society towards the numerous anonymous working girls at the lower end of the scale. Very much a social history it places the art carefully in context, revealing many little nuances and meanings in well-known works which might not otherwise be immediately apparent to the modern eye.
- It is, of course, full of scandalous anecdotes and stories, illustrated by sumptuous portraits by first- rank artists from Sir Joshua Reynolds through the Impressionists, Picasso, etc.
- I have selected one image to show we are prudish as the Victorians as this painting of Diana Kirke was banned by London Underground in 2001 when it was used as an exhibition poster for the National Portrait Gallery. Incidentally, during the Restoration period the exposed breast was not controversial as it simply indicates that she represents the goddess Venus although it did also signal her sexual availability and she did begin her court career as mistress of Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1627-1703), for whom this was almost certainly painted, and she became his wife in 1673 and they had five children. The 19th-century critic and essayist William Hazlitt, was not impressed he said these portraits "**look just what they were ... a set of kept mistresses, painted, tawdry, showing off their theatrical or meretricious airs and graces, without one touch of real elegance or refinement**".



Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846),
Punch or May Day, 1829, 150.5 x 185.1 cm

Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), *Punch or May Day*, 1829, 150.5 x 185.1 cm

- **Finally, it wasn't all death and sorrow so let us end with three happier scenes.**
- This is a painting of May Day in Marylebone ('maa-luh-bn') in 1829, the end of the Regency period.
- It is an exciting painting that captures a moment in the day-to-day life of **Regency London**. Haydon would probably have been appalled to see it displayed in a national gallery as he dedicated his life to raise British art 'to honour and glory' by promoting large-scale history paintings of noble subjects. He was **driven to paint subjects like *Punch or May Day* to pay the bills**. He had hoped the **King would buy the painting** as he asked for it to be sent to Windsor Castle but it was returned, a setback he blamed on the actions of the Keeper of the King's Pictures, William Segurier
- It is set in **New Road, Marylebone** and it is a little past noon as we can see from the clock of Marylebone church. Punch is beating his wife and this has drawn the crowds and blocked the

road resulting in a marriage coach nearly colliding with a hearse. A farmer is so engrossed by the Punch and Judy he does not notice his pocket being picked by a small hand. A child chimney sweep is posing like an actor on stage with his broomstick slung across his shoulder. On the right three figures are Morris May Day dancing. One is dressed as a tree, the other has a blackface and the third is a woman in a red dress holding a spoon or ladle. The Green Man, or, Jack in the Green, is a popular participant in traditional May Day festivals in which a person covers themselves in a tree-like costume, sometime pyramidal or conical in shape. Blackface is an ancient Morris dancing tradition thought to represent miners or north African pirates who settled in England.

- Haydon knew all the great artists and writers of the age but **lived hand-to-mouth** for years. An attempt he made to interest the public in his noble paintings **resulted in debts of £3,000**. Rather than go into debtors prison again and because his sight and mind were deteriorating he **decided to commit suicide**. He **bought a gun** and wrote a will but even this failed. He shot himself in the head but the ball failed to penetrate his brain so with characteristic determination he **slit his throat to kill himself**. He left his diary open at the last entry read *“Stretch me no longer on this rough world’ – Lear”*.
- “Haydon had **ambitions to be a history painter**, but after some early successes **struggled to find patrons** or public support for his **huge canvases of noble themes** from history or scripture. In the late 1820s, after repeatedly **falling into debt and even being imprisoned**, he painted several subjects of contemporary life that he hoped would be **more**

commercial. This richly detailed composition is intended to capture the energy of contemporary London. A crowd mingles with a costumed procession in the Marylebone Road. Haydon thought of calling this picture simply 'Life', suggesting that he retained a sense of ambition even in painting such a lowly subject." (Tate)

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/haydon-punch-or-may-day-n00682>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/great-works/great-works-punch-or-may-day-1830-by-benjamin-robert-haydon-8679006.html>
- http://www.like2do.com/learn?s=Benjamin_Haydon
- http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/jack_gre.htm



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *The Blind Girl*, 1856, Birmingham

Four paintings of orphans.

The Blind Girl

- Two itinerant beggars assumed to be sisters.
- One is a musician with a concertina on her lap and they are resting by the wayside after a rainstorm before travelling to **Winchelsea**, visible in the background.
- It has been interpreted as an **allegory** of the **senses** and the **rainbow** has been interpreted in **Biblical terms** as a sign of God's covenant (Genesis 9:16 'Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth').
- A tortoiseshell butterfly rests on the blind girl's shawl, implying that she is holding herself extremely still. The sheet around her neck is captioned "Pity the Blind".
- Some critics believe this and *Autumn Leaves* (also of 1856) to be Millais's finest works.

Notes

- Note that a **double rainbow** is rare and caused by a double reflection in each rain drop. Because of the double reflection the colours of the secondary rainbow are **inverted** with **red on the inside**. Millais originally painted both rainbows the same and then altered one for scientific accuracy. The area between the two rainbows should be darker than the rest of the sky. This is called **Alexander's band**, after Alexander of Aphrodisias (200 CE, taught in Athens and wrote commentaries on Aristotle's work) who first described it



Thomas Benjamin Kennington, *Orphans*, 1885, Tate

- "Kennington was one of the founder members of the New English Art Club in 1886, and its first Secretary. He was well known for his compelling pictures of the urban poor, although he also painted less emotive scenes from everyday life, and portraits. The rich colouring, smooth handling of paint, and subject were probably inspired by the work of the seventeenth-century Spanish artist [Bartolomé Esteban] Murillo, who also painted poor children." (Tate)
- We see two boys who could be brothers. Their clothes are torn and the older boy is so tired his eyes are closing. In front of them is a dried piece of bread. The painting was purchased by Henry Tate, the founder of the Tate gallery.

References

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kennington-orphans-n01560>



Augustus E. Mulready, *Remembering Joys That Have Passed Away*, 1873, Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London

- These are formerly wealthy children who have fallen on hard times which we can see from the little girl's clothes. The boy is a street sweeper and we can see his broom and the girl is now reduced to selling matches. Perhaps the older sibling is recounting the joy of the pantomime to his sister who would have been too young to remember it. They are now too poor, probably, orphaned, to every visit a pantomime.



Thomas Webster, 1842, *The Frown*, oil on panel, Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London



Thomas Webster (1800-1886), *Late at School*, 1834, exhibited 1835, 45.7 x 37.7 cm

- “Webster was a painter of narrative genre in the tradition of **David Wilkie** and **William Mulready**. Such pictures, generally modest in size and ostensibly representing **scenes of everyday life**, were **popular with the public** and acclaimed by many critics. Although contemporary commentaries tended to focus on their realism and painterly technique, these images also expose a preoccupation with the themes of education and discipline among the lower classes. When this picture was exhibited in 1835 a critic proclaimed it ‘**a charming little composition; characteristic in every object, and painted with a true feeling of the art**’.” (Tate)
- Thomas Webster was an English painter of genial and humorous genre scenes of school and village life, many of which became popular through prints. He lived for many years at the artists' colony at Cranbrook in Kent. He was born in Pimlico and his father was a member of George III's household. Thomas first

became a royal chorister before switching to painting and entering the Royal Academy School in 1821. He became an Academician in 1846. Although his range of subjects was limited he was unrivalled in this popular genre.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/webster-late-at-school-n00426>



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, 1870, 120.6 x 142.2 cm

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, 1870, 120.6 x 142.2 cm

- ‘Sir **Walter Raleigh** was one of the most **celebrated explorers** of the **Elizabethan age**. In Millais’s famous painting he is shown as a **boy listening with rapt attention** to ‘tales of wonder on sea and land’ told by a Genoese sailor. The **toy ship** in the foreground suggests Raleigh’s future adventures, while the sharp edge of an anchor on the right may allude to the final words he uttered at his execution: ‘Strike, man, strike.’ (Tate display caption)
- The painting was **extremely popular** and can be seen as a **celebration of the British Empire** based on **control of the seas** through the power of the **Royal Navy**. An experienced **bare-foot sailor**, who looks younger than one might expect, points out just above the horizon. A model ship lies to one side indicating the boy’s interest in sailing. Its **red flag is not a Red Ensign** as it does not contain the small cross of Saint George used before 1707. It is probably the red flag raised to indicate a ship is about to engage in combat.

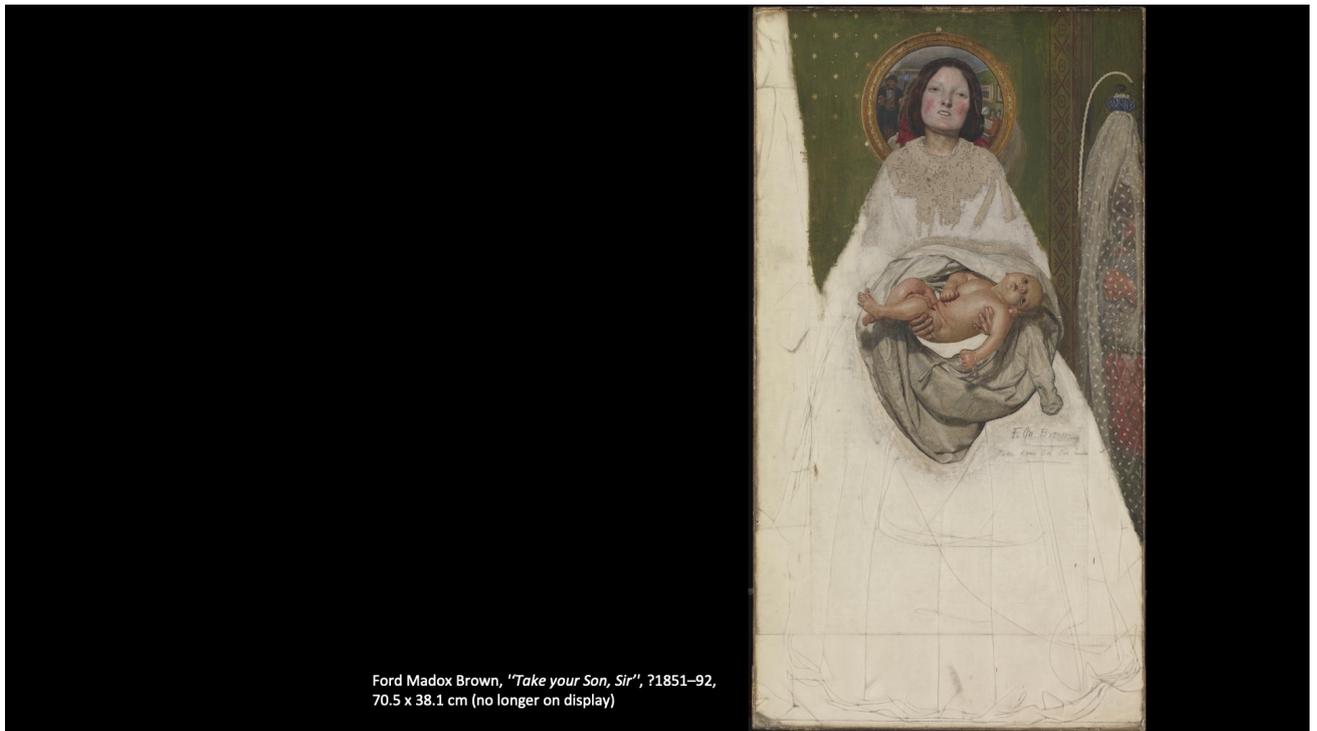
- The boys' expressions show their concentration and we imagine they are thinking of the exotic worlds conjured up by the sailor. These worlds are indicated by the two exotic birds behind the anchor and the bowl covered in feathers. One of the birds appears to be a **toucan from South America**. The title tells us one of the boys is **Walter Raleigh** and he is **probably the boy on the left** wearing green who has a green hat with pheasant feathers in it.

Notes

- Walter Raleigh (c. 1554-1618) was an English landed gentleman, writer, poet, soldier, politician, courtier, spy and explorer. Knighted in 1585, explored Virginia, married one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting without permission and was sent to the tower. In 1594 sailed to South America to find the 'City of Gold', El Dorado. After 1603, when Elizabeth died, he was imprisoned in the Tower for plotting against James I who did not like him. He was released in 1616 to find El Dorado but ransacked a Spanish outpost violating the terms of his pardon and a peace treaty with Spain. On his return he was arrested and executed. He was voted 93 in the BBC poll of the 100 Greatest Britons.
- The earliest citation for 'red flag' in the Oxford English Dictionary is from 1602 and shows that at that time the flag was used by military forces to indicate that they were preparing for battle.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-the-boyhood-of-raleigh-n01691>



Ford Madox Brown, *'Take your Son, Sir'*, ?1851–92, 70.5 x 38.1 cm (no longer on display)

- There are two interpretations of this painting. It is a wife offering their newborn son to her husband to hold. Madox Brown's wife was pregnant at the time he painted this but their son, who they called Arthur, died when he was nine months old and Madox Brown never completed the painting. The other interpretation is that it is an abandoned mistress presenting her baby to the father. One art historian has suggested it is deliberately paradoxical and comments on marriage, birth and death. The fold of cloth seems to mimic the shape of the womb and the woman's white face suggests death.
- 'This enigmatic picture shows the **artist's second wife, Emma**, and their **new-born son, Arthur** Gabriel. The pose is reminiscent of a **traditional Madonna and child** but the mother's strained expression suggests that this is **not a conventional celebration** of marriage and motherhood. The domestic details of the room are indicative of a contemporary-life subject in which the woman holds out the baby to her **husband reflected in the**

mirror. Ford Madox Brown began the composition in 1851 and, although he worked on it over a number of years, abandoned it following the death of Arthur in 1857.' (Tate display caption)

Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893)

- **French born British painter** noted for his **Hogarthian Pre-Raphaelite style.** His mother was Caroline Madox and his father Ford Brown. They had little money and **moved to Calais** to find cheaper lodgings. Ford Madox Brown showed **artistic talent** and the family **moved to Bruges** so he could study art. He also studied in Ghent and then Antwerp and continued to live there until his **mother, then sister and then his father died.**
- He **exhibited at the Royal Academy** and moved to London where the young D. G. Rossetti asked him to become his tutor. He struggled to make his mark but later found patrons in the north of England. **He later designed furniture and stained glass** and was a founding member of **William Morris's design company** Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.
- He **married his first cousin**, Elizabeth Bromley, in 1841 and their first child died but their daughter Emma Lucy was born in 1843 and they moved to England in 1844. His wife suffered from consumption and they travelled to Rome to try to alleviate it but she died in Paris in 1846 on the way back. **Emma Hill became his model** in 1848 and his **mistress** but she was the **illiterate daughter of a bricklayer** and social convention prevented their marriage. Their daughter Catherine Emily was born in 1850 and they **finally married in 1853.** Their **son Oliver** Madox Brown was born in 1855 and showed promise as an artist and poet but he **died** of blood

- poisoning **aged only 19**. This was a crushing blow for Brown who kept his room as a shrine. Another son **Arthur was born** in 1856 but **died** when he was only **ten months old**. His daughters were competent artists and Lucy married William Michael Rossetti. Catherine married the music critic Francis Hueffer and their son was the **novelist Ford Madox Brown** (who changed his name from Hueffer in 1919 as it sounded too German). Their daughter married and exiled Russian revolutionary journalist and their child, Frank Soskice, was a well-known Labour Party politician and Home Secretary.
- Ford Madox Brown was never officially a Pre-Raphaelite yet he was one of the most important and a true pioneer and radical who was **decades ahead of his time**. Brown painted subjects with **unsentimental realism**, showed the **working poor without sentiment** or condescension and designed furniture before the Arts & Crafts Movement had sanctioned as something artists should be doing.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/brown-take-your-son-sir-n04429>



Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), *The Death of Nelson*, 1859-64, 98.5 cm x 353 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), *The Death of Nelson*, 1859-64, 98.5 cm x 353 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

- Scandal of boy soldiers and sailors. It was an old British tradition to use boys, usually 16, one (William Rivers) was 6.5 and wounded in a battle. Lost his leg and wounded in the face. William Rivers Junior (see painting of Nelson's Victory). They all remember their first encounter with death, a person head being blown away but they all say that after that they are numbed to the sight of death.



Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *Boulogne Sands*, 1888–91, 61 x 76.5 cm

Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *Boulogne Sands*, 1888–91, 61 x 76.5 cm

- ‘In the early 1880s Steer studied in Paris, where he encountered the work of the French impressionists. After his return to England in 1884, he painted a series of luminous and brightly coloured coastal views which relate to Monet’s paintings of the same period. The loose brushwork and sparkling colours brilliantly capture the transience and exhilaration of childhood and summer vacations. His use of strongly contrasting colours draws on theories being promoted by the most avant-garde painters in France at this time.’ (Tate display caption)
- **Philip Wilson Steer** (1860–1942) was a British painter of landscapes, seascapes plus portraits and figure studies. He was also an **influential art teacher**. His sea and landscape paintings made him a leading figure in the **Impressionist movement in Britain** but in time he turned to a more traditional English style, clearly influenced by both John **Constable** and J. M. W. **Turner**, and spent more time painting in the countryside rather than on

the coast. As a painting **tutor at the Slade School of Art** for many years he influenced generations of young artists.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/steer-boulogne-sands-n05439>



William Ewart Lockhart (1846-1900), *Old Father Christmas*

- 'Old Father Christmas' painted in the late 19th century by William Ewart Lockhart. The figure of Father Christmas had been in existence in Britain since the late medieval period. Father Christmas was the personification of this time of making merry and was often depicted leading the revelry and surrounded by large amounts of food and drink. When the American Santa Claus (a figure created from several European traditions such as Sinterklaas and Christkind) arrived in Britain in the second half of the 19th century the two figures merged into one character. Father Christmas began to shed his previous partying image and, by the end of the Victorian period, was magically giving gifts to British children.
- Lockhart was a Scottish Victorian painter who trained at the Royal Scottish Academy. His health failed when he was 14 and he was sent to Australia in 1864. On his return he settled in Edinburgh and exhibited at the RSA most years.



Ralph Peacock (1868-1946), *Ethel*, 1897, 132.7 x 74 cm

- This portrait was painted **the year the Tate Gallery was founded**, and proved to be **one of the most popular pictures** at the beginning of the 20th century. Peacock was the darling of art critics at the onset of his career, but he never reached fame. His model, **Ethel Brignall**, was fourteen when he painted her. He married her sister Edith a few years later and they lived with their two sons in Wimbledon. The wooden panelling in the background of this portrait was used as a backdrop in most of Peacock's later portraits of children. Peacock was born in Wood Green and studied at St Johns Wood Art School and then the Royal Academy School. He travelled around Europe and became a **successful portrait painter** mostly of **elegant society ladies** and their children. He was a friend of Holman Hunt and may have been influenced by him when young. In 1902 he painted a portrait of Hunt.
- He was born in London and trained as a civil servant. He took evening classes in art and one picture so impressed one artist

that he was encouraged to take up portrait painting professionally. He joined the Royal Academy School and knew all the famous artists of the day including Leighton, Holman Hunt and Burne-Jones. He won a gold medal and a travelling scholarship. He travelled Europe winning medals. In 1900 he painted the sisters Ethel and Edith Brignall and later married Edith. They had two sons and live in Wimbledon, later moving to Camden. He was also a book and magazine illustrator including *Punch*.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/peacock-ethel-n01672>

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/speel/paint/peacock.htm>

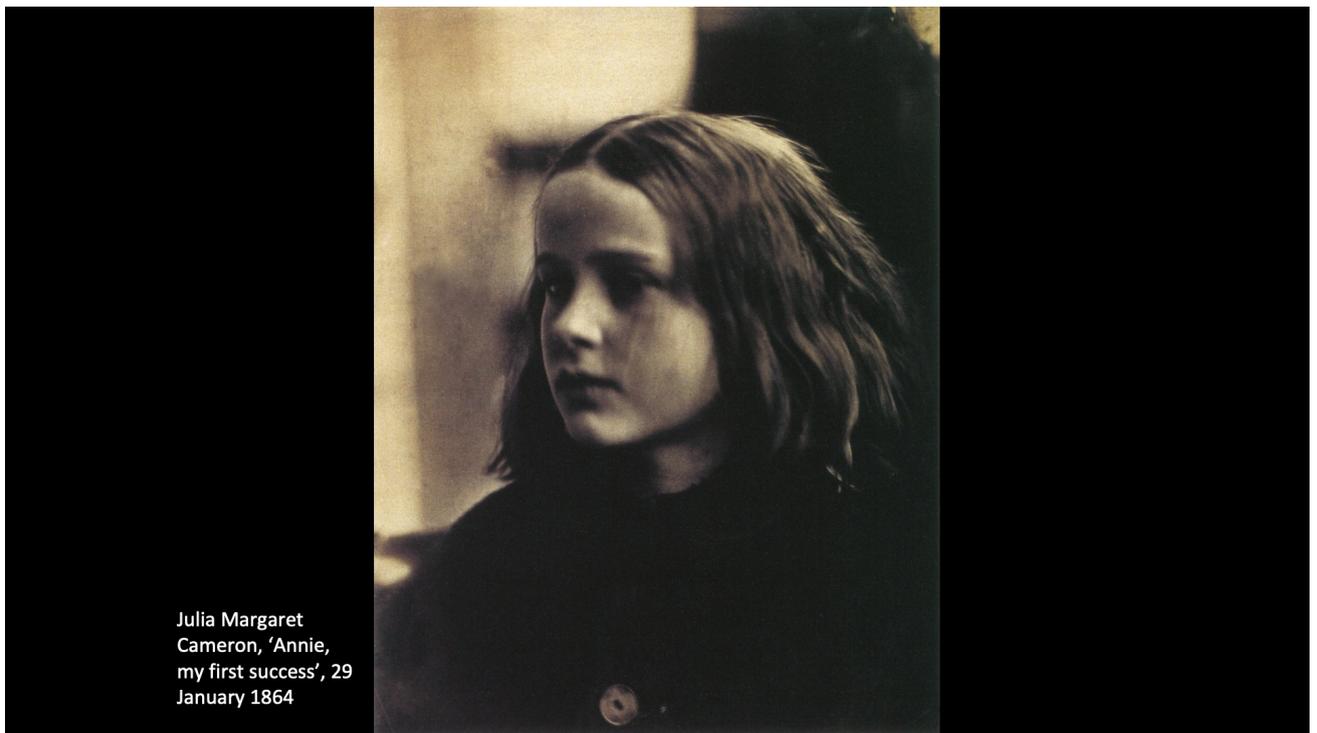


Francis Meadows Sutcliffe, *Three Happy Boys*, 1889. Francis Meadow (Frank) Sutcliffe (1853–1941) was an English photographic artist whose work presents an enduring record of life in the seaside town of Whitby and surrounding areas, in the late Victorian era and early 20th century. He was born in Leeds and had a basic education before becoming a portrait photographer in Tunbridge Wells and then, for the rest of his life, in Whitby, Yorkshire.

- Francis Meadow (Frank) Sutcliffe (1853–1941) was an English photographic artist whose work presents an enduring record of life in the seaside town of Whitby and surrounding areas, in the late Victorian era and early 20th century.
- He was born in Leeds and had a basic education before becoming a portrait photographer in Tunbridge Wells and then, for the rest of his life, in Whitby, Yorkshire. His father was a painter who introduced him to John Ruskin. He resented prostituting his art by taking photographs of holiday makers but in his own time he built up one of the **most complete and revealing collection of photographs of late Victorian England.**



The General Post Office, One Minute to Six by George Hicks. 1860. 108 × 153.7 cm, Oil on canvas. Reproduced by kind permission of the Museum of London,
"In 1840 a universal penny post was introduced in the United Kingdom. This, along with the removal of a stamp tax on newspapers, resulted in a huge increase in the number of items going by mail - so much so that the daily spectacle of people rushing to catch the six o'clock last post became something of a spectator sport." (Museum of London)



Julia Margaret Cameron, 'Annie, my first success', 29 January 1864.
See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Margaret_Cameron

- I have included five photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron as she was such an influential early photographer who pushed the artistic boundaries of photography before that had even been established.
- Cameron left no mark on photography and was **not rediscovered until 1948**. The American photographer Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976) commented '*I'd like to see portrait photography go right back to Julia Margaret Cameron. I don't think there's anyone better.*' And Getty Images commented recently '*Cameron's photographic portraits are considered among the finest in the early history of photography.*'

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879, aged 63)

- In **1863**, her daughter gave Cameron her **first camera** and this is the **first print** with which she was **satisfied**. It already exhibits some of her **trademark** artistic effects. **Strong side lighting**, a slightly **out-of-focus** face (intentional), a background that places

the **dark side** of the face in contrast with a **light background** and the **light side** of the face against a **dark background** (a technique commonly used by portrait artists).

- The technique of **soft-focus** 'fancy portraits' was **taught** her by **David Wilkie Wynfield** (1837-`887) a **British painter and photographer**. Wynfield used the technique of soft focus, close-up, large-format prints of famous people in historical costumes.



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925),
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose, 1885-6

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, 1885-6

- **This was his first major success.**
 - Sargent's **first major success at the Royal Academy came in 1887**, with the enthusiastic response to ***Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose***, a large piece, **painted on site**, of two young girls lighting lanterns in an Farnham House, Broadway in the Cotswolds. Sargent had moved to the Cotswolds to escape the **scandal of the *Portrait of Madame X* (1884)**. The painting received a mixed reception as some reviewers regarded it as **'Frenchified'** but it was immediately purchased by the Tate Gallery's Chantrey Bequest. They are lighting Chinese lanterns as day turns to night. The children Dolly (left, aged 11) and Polly (right, aged 7), the daughters of the illustrator Frederick Barnard, a friend of Sergeants.
- **He painted it outdoors *alla prima*.**
 - **Every day from 6:35pm to 7pm from August to early November 1885 and again in August/September and late October 1886**, he painted in the very few minutes **when**

the light was perfect, giving the picture an **overall purple tint** of evening. He made many preliminary sketches and he would often scrape the paint off the canvas after a day's painting. The flowers in the garden died as summer turned to autumn, and they were replaced with **artificial flowers**. Sargent resumed painting the following summer at the Millet new home nearby in Broadway, and finally **finished** the painting by the end of **October 1886**. In the course of working, Sargent cut down the rectangular canvas, removing approximately 2 feet (61 cm) from the left side, to leave an approximately square shape. Sargent himself described it as a 'fearfully difficult subject ... Paints are not bright enough & then the effect only lasts ten minutes.' The seemingly effortless solution is the result of Sargent being willing to scrape off and redo his efforts again and again. This painting possibly takes *alla prima* (wet-on-wet, Italian for 'first attempt') painting to an extreme level that has rarely even been attempted before or since. Cross-sectional analysis of the paint shows that he even painted wet-on-wet for the final touches on the faces, something few other artists would ever attempt.

- **Using Impressionistic brushwork.**
 - These three enlargements of areas of the painting show Sargent's skill drawing with the brush and invoking an effect with the minimal brushwork. A few rapid strokes of the brush create a lily or a rose or a glowing lantern. This ability suggests he worked rapidly but we know from the length of time he spent that he also worked very carefully.

- **There have been many interpretations.**
 - The painting can be read as a botanical allegory of flower-maidens, with subtle sexual overtones of lighting a lantern (slang in French for vagina), and the taper as a symbolic paintbrush (also used to hand-pollinate flowers) used to illuminate the paper of the lantern in the same way that a painter uses a paintbrush to create an image on a canvas. The larger flowers at the top bring the background forward and flatten the painting.
- **Title.**
 - The unusual title comes from a popular song 'Ye Shepherds Tell Me' (also called 'The Wreath').

Notes

John Singer Sargent

- John Singer Sargent was an American artist who was considered the '**leading portrait painter of his generation**' specialising in Edwardian aristocracy. He was prolific and painted about 900 oil paintings and 2,000 watercolours.
- He was **trained in Paris** before moving to London. His early submission *Portrait of Madame X* caused a scandal rather than the positive publicity he was expecting.
- He was a master of **drawing with the brush** and his portraits were painted in the grand manner but his landscapes were influenced by Impressionism.
- His father was an eye surgeon but when Sargent's older sister died aged two his **mother** (Mary née Singer) **had a breakdown** and they **travelled through Europe** for the rest of their lives. Sargent was born in Florence in 1856. He had no official schooling but grew up speaking **fluent French**,

Italian and German and accomplished in art, music and literature.

- He began his art studies with Carolus-Duran a French portrait painter with bold techniques and modern teaching methods. He taught painting *alla prima* working directly on the canvas with a loaded brush derived from Diego Velázquez. In 1874 he gained entry to the École des Beaux-Arts at his first attempt and won a silver prize.

Chantrey Bequest

- On his death Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey (1781-1841) left £150,000 to the Royal Academy for the purchase of 'works of Fine Art ... executed in Great Britain'. The first purchase was made in 1877 following the death of Lady Chantrey. Although the Trustees of the RA still decide on the selection of the purchases, the exhibition and preservation of the collection has become the responsibility of the Tate Gallery.



Frank Holl (1845-1888), *Newgate, Committed for Trial*, 1878, Royal Holloway

Frank Holl (1845-1888), *Newgate, Committed for Trial*, 1878, Royal Holloway
Frank Holl, *Self-portrait*, 1863 (aged 18)

Key point: Frank Holl painted conditions he observed in prison

Frank Holl

- **Frank Holl's** father and grandfather were Academicians and the family was committed to using art to highlight the problems of the poor.
- Holl worked in Newgate prison and got to know the Governor. In 1869 a new, weekly illustrated newspaper was launched called *The Graphic*. It used leading artists like Frank Holl, Luke Fildes (pronounced to rhyme with 'childs'), Hubert von Herkomer and John Millais and writers such as George Elliot, Thomas Hardy and Anthony Trollope. It explored social subjects, such as the plight of the poor and in 1878 commissioned Frank Holl to illustrate Newgate Prison.
- This scene shows 'the cage' where prisoners could meet visitors after sentencing. There are two lots of bars to the prison and the visitors cannot touch each other and a guard patrols between them.
- The man on the left is a **bank clerk** who has just been sentenced to **five years penal servitude for embezzlement**. Holl characterises him as a **weak man**

from a genteel background, while the wife is **working class**. He has a look of wide-eyed innocence but the look of his wife suggest she may have heard it all before. The **grand lady** on the right in **furs** and jewels may be the young bank clerk's **mother**. It may be that the young bank clerk was **cut-off** by his rich family for **marrying beneath** him and so he may have embezzled the money in order to raise his wife to a level acceptable to his family. We do not know if his mother will now relent and make amends by looking after her grandchildren and daughter-in-law.

- The **second prisoner** looks desperate but his wife seems **resigned** to his fate. He is like a **caged animal** who lunges against the bars that prevent him from attacking the woman who has turned him in. She and the baby are safely protected from his alcoholic abuse as long as he is in prison.
- The painting received **mixed reviews** when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1878 but one critic summed up what we see before us, writing:

'...The characters are so real in this fine work that one feels there is a story to be told of ruined ambitions, of broken home ties, of devotion scorned and trampled underfoot....'

- Wood engravings of Holl's work were admired by **Vincent van Gogh** as he painted the poor as real people. He was **extremely popular** until the end of the 1870s when the **Art for Art's Sake movement** made in **difficult to sell harrowing scenes of poverty** and death. It became difficult for those Academicians who specialized in painting pictures of **dead babies**. Holl abandoned this type of painting in the 1880s and took up portrait painting. He **died** when he was **only 43** and was forgotten within a few years. Holl did not engage in histrionic scenes but in restraint and he often expressed emotion by the look on a woman's face.