



## PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS

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John Everett Millais (1829–1896, aged 67) *Self-portrait* (age 52), 1881, 86 × 65 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910, aged 83), *Self-portrait* (age 48), 1875, 73 x 103.5 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882, aged 53), *Self-portrait* (age 19), 1847, 20.7 x 16.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Effie Gray (Lady Millais)* (1828-1897, here age 33, m. Ruskin 1848-54, Millais 1855-1896), 1851, 81 × 53 cm, National Portrait Gallery

William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *Fanny Waugh Hunt* (1833-1866, here age 33), 1866-68, 104 × 73cm, Toledo Museum of Art

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Regina Cordium* ('Queen of Hearts') (1829-1862, m. 1860, here age 31), 1860, 25.4 × 20.3 cm, Johannesburg Art Gallery

- The talk lasts two hours from 10:30 to 12:30 with a coffee break in the middle of 20 minutes and with 10 minutes at the end for questions. The talk is an hour and a half divided in to two 45 minute sessions.

- Everyone has heard of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and its three principal members—(CLICK) **John Everett Millais** (1829-1896), (CLICK) **William Holman Hunt** (1827-1910) and (CLICK) **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828-1882). However, their wives, models and even other women artists of the period are often forgotten or side-lined. This talk is based on an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in October 2019 (to January 2020) and it brings those women's lives into the foreground. (CLICK) Millais married **Effie Gray**, (CLICK) Holman Hunt married **Fanny Waugh** and (CLICK) Rossetti married **Elizabeth or Lizzie Siddal** and we shall be talking about all three. But first the relationship are complex and to try to simplify the picture I produced this chart ...

## NOTES

- The other four members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were James Collinson (1825-1881, painter, left in 1850), William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919, writer and art critic, edited *The Germ*), Frederic George Stephens (1827-1907, art critic), and Thomas Woolner (1825-1892, sculptor).
- Overall plan for the talk:
  - Effie Gray, model, wife Millias, ex-wife Ruskin and manager
    - Painting of her and Eve of St Agnes.
  - Link: Millais's model for Ophelia
  - Lizzie Siddal, model, artist, poet
    - Self-portrait
    - Pippa Passes
  - Link: Siddal married Rossetti
  - Christina Rossetti, poet, sister of Dante Gabriel artists, model, cared for DGR, two aunts and her mother
    - Portrait by DGR
  - Link: Cornforth was a model for Rossetti

- Fanny Cornforth, model, lover, Sarah Cox, chromolith copy of the painting of Alexa
  - Lady Lilith, 1867
- Link: Another model of Rossetti
- Fanny Eaton, model from Jamaica,
  - The Young Teacher, Rebecca Solomon
- Link: Eaton also modelled for Boyce
- Joanna Boyce Wells,
  - Joanna Wells, *Study of Fanny Eaton* (1861). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
  - Elgiva, Sidney Wells
- Link: Another model used by Rossetti was a model for Holman Hunt
- Annie Miller, model
  - *Il Dolce for Niente*, William Holman Hunt
- Fanny Waugh (1833-1866) married Holman Hunt and died three years later when he married her sister Edith (before 1846-1931). Both sisters were "great aunts" of the writer Evelyn Waugh (*Brideshead Revisited*). The relationship is actually more distant. Fanny and (Marian) Edith's father was George Waugh (1801-1873). His father was Rev. Alexander Waugh (1754-1827), he had another son James Hay Waugh (1797-1885), their uncle, whose son Alexander Waugh MD (1840-1906), their cousin, had a son Arthur Waugh (1866-1943) who was the father of the novelist Arthur Evelyn St. John Waugh (1903-1966). So his great-great-grandfather was the grandfather of Fanny and Edith. Fanny and Edith were first cousins twice removed of Evelyn Waugh.
- Jane Morris model, muse, craft person
  - Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, 1874

- Link: Jane Morris was wife of William Morris, confident of Georgiana
- Georgiana Burne-Jones confident of William Morris
  - Portrait by Edward Burne-Jones before and after the Zambaco affair, portrait 1870 and 1883.
- Link: Burne-Jones had an affair with Zambaco
- Maria Zambaco
  - *Phyllis and Demophon*
- Link: Maria Zambaco and her **cousins Marie Spartali Stillman** and Aglaia Coronio were known collectively among friends as "the Three Graces", after the Charities of Greek mythology.
- Marie Spartali Stillman, model, artist
  - *Love's Messenger*, 1885
- Link: Marie Stillman was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 along with Evelyn de Morgan. The same year Evelyn married the ceramist William De Morgan.
- Evelyn de Morgan, important artist suffered from critical neglect
  - *Flora*
  - *Cadmus and Harmonia*

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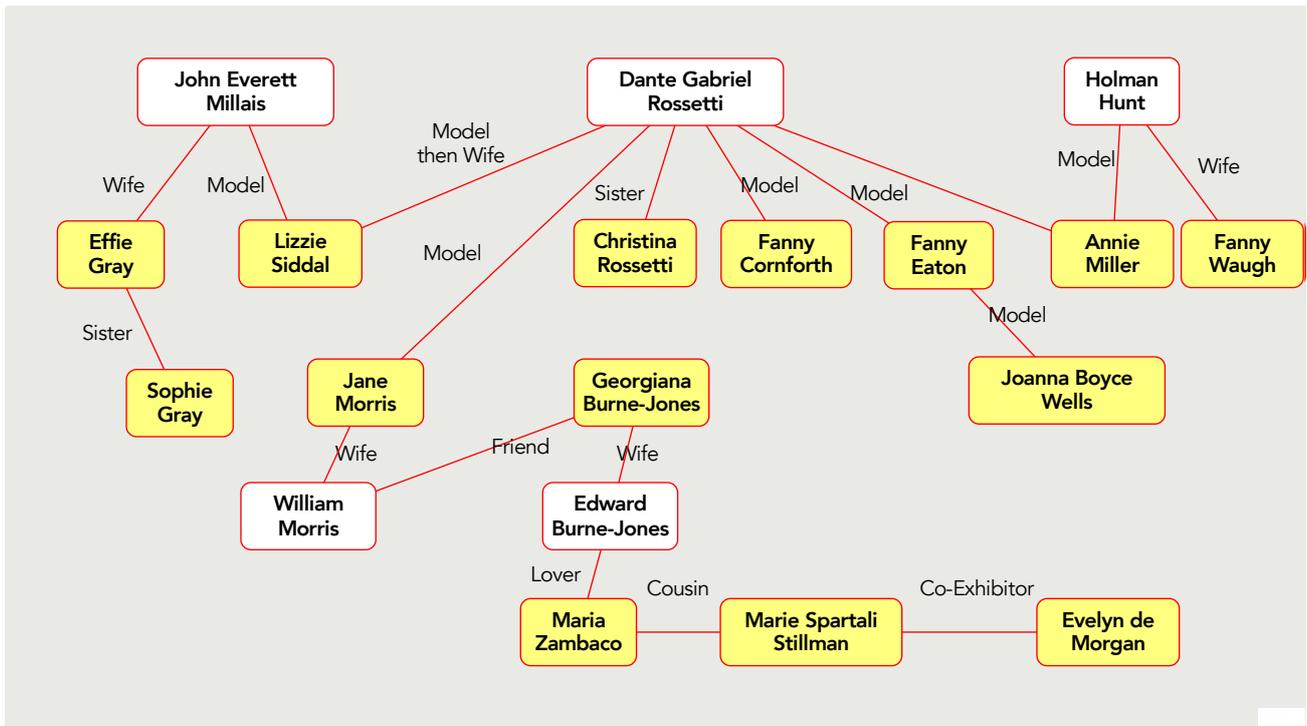
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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth\\_Siddal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Siddal)



- It shows in yellow the fourteen women I am going to be talking about today and their relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood or PRB.
- The PRB was created in 1848 but it only existed as a tight knit group for five years. However, its powerful ideas influenced artists for the rest of the century. Note that I have **added William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones** as they and their partners were closely entwined with the members of the PRB although they were never members.
- Briefly, starting on the left, **Effie Gray** was the former wife of the leading Victorian art critic John Ruskin but the marriage was annulled and she married Millais a year later. Her younger sister **Sophie Gray** also sat for Millais.
- One of Millais's models was **Lizzie Siddal** who modelled for his most famous painting *Ophelia*. She also modelled for and later married Dante Gabriel Rossetti who later painted **Jane Morris**, the wife of William Morris.
- Rossetti's sister was the well known poet **Christina Rossetti** and he used many other models including **Fanny Cornforth, Fanny Eaton,**

who was a model for the artists **Joanna Boyce Wells**, and Annie Miller.

- **Annie Miller** was a model for Rossetti and Holman Hunt and when Hunt was away for two years her relationship with Rossetti caused a rift between Hunt and Rossetti on his return. Later Hunt married **Fanny Waugh**.
- In the centre, **Georgiana Burne-Jones** was a friend of William Morris and wife of Edward Burne-Jones but he fell in love with the artist **Maria Zambaco** (pronounced 'Zam-back-o') who was the cousin of the artist **Marie Spartali Stillman** (pronounced 'mar-ree') who co-exhibited with the artist **Evelyn de Morgan**.
- Confused, don't worry I will take you through person by person. What I am showing here is how close knit their world was.

## NOTES

- Effie Gray, model, wife Millias, ex-wife Ruskin and manager
  - Sketch by her of a garden and sketch of Eve of St Agnes (V&A) modelled on. Effie
- Link: Millais's model for Ophelia
- Lizzie Siddal, model, artist, poet
  - Self-portrait
  - Pippa Passes
- Link: Siddal married Rossetti
- Christina Rossetti, poet, sister of Dante Gabriel artists, model, cared for DGR, two aunts and her mother
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- Marie Spartali Stillman, model, artist
  - *Love's Messenger*, 1885
- Link: Marie ("Maree") Stillman was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 along with Evelyn de

Morgan. The same year Evelyn married the ceramist William De Morgan.

- Evelyn de Morgan, important artist suffered from critical neglect
  - *Flora*
  - *Cadmus and Harmonia*



2 Palace Gate, Kensington from 1878



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of Effie Gray* (1828-1897), c. 1873, Courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland

Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Effie Gray (Lady Millais)*, 1851, 81 x 53 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Effie Gray (Lady Millais, m. Ruskin 1848-54, Millais 1855-1896)*, 1851, 81 x 53 cm, National Portrait Gallery

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of Effie Gray* (1828-1897), c. 1873, Courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland. John Everett Millais's wife Effie Gray in middle age holding a copy of the Cornhill Magazine

2 Palace Gate, Kensington, 1873-1878, architect Philip Hardwick

### EFFIE (EUPHEMIA) GRAY

- This portrait was commissioned by Ruskin's father from Thomas Richmond for £20. "**It is the most lovely piece of oil painting but much prettier than me,**" she told her mother. "**I look like a graceful doll, but John**", that would be Ruskin at this time, "**and his father are delighted with it**".
- A bit of background.
  - Effie Gray was born Euphemia Gray in Perth and first met the John Ruskin when she was 12 and he was 21. They married in 1848 when she was 19. The night of their marriage something happened or didn't happen and she was still a virgin five years

later. Their honeymoon was spent in Venice where he was sketching and writing a book and he encouraged her to attend balls and parties which **he never attended** and where perhaps he hoped she would meet handsome young men hoping for an affair after which she could be blamed for the divorce. In Venice **potential suitors fought over her** and one was actually **killed in a duel** fighting over her. But there was no adultery.

- He went on to become the leading Victorian art critic and the earliest supporter of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which was founded the year they married although Effie didn't meet Millais for another four years.
  - She was regarded as one of the most beautiful women in society at the time. Ruskin wrote, "**It may be thought strange that I could abstain from a woman who to most people was so attractive. But though her face was beautiful, her person was not formed to excite passion. On the contrary, there were certain circumstances in her person which completely checked it.**" This statement has baffled historians ever since and we still have no idea what he meant.
1. **Certain circumstances.** Later Effie wrote to her father explaining that the marriage had not been consummated. She wrote that Ruskin "... alleged various reasons, **hatred to children, religious motives, a desire to preserve my beauty,** and, finally this last year he told me his true reason... that **he had imagined women were quite different to what he saw I was,** and that the reason he did not make me his wife was because **he was disgusted with my person the first evening 10th April.**" Which ties in with what Ruskin wrote but what the "certain circumstances" were we do not know. It has been suggested that he was repelled by her **pubic hair** as he had only seen hairless Greek statues but it is

likely he had seen erotic images at Oxford. He also told a male friend that he had been capable of consummating his marriage, but that he had **not loved Effie sufficiently** to want to do so.

2. **The money.** Another more interesting theory is that it was to do with money. Ruskin discovered that **Effie's father was on the point of bankruptcy** and he brought the marriage forward to get the **£10,000 promised by Ruskin's father**, a sort of reverse dowry. Ruskin realised he had been manipulated and refused to consummate the marriage as he was worried it would lock him in and the Grey family would use it to extort more money. He knew that **annulled marriages were not reported in the press** but a **divorce required adultery and was only granted by Parliament** (a special court was set up in 1853 and the Matrimonial Causes Act was 1857) and was often a **major scandal**.
3. **No love.** Another possibility is that Ruskin felt she did not love him and only married him for the money. Before the marriage he wrote "**she is unfitted to be my wife unless she also loved me exceedingly**" and when he did not consummate the marriage he told her that they should wait **six years to give themselves time to properly fall in love**.
4. **Pedophilia.** Another theory pointed out by Suzanne Fagence Cooper, in *The Passionate Lives of Effie Gray, Ruskin and Millais* (2012): "**John Ruskin loved young girls, innocents on the verge of womanhood. He became enchanted with twelve-year-old Effie** when she visited Herne Hill in the late summer of 1840. The next time he saw her, John Ruskin felt she was '**very graceful but had lost something of her good looks**'. After he had won her hand in 1847 and she was **still only nineteen... Effie was too old to be truly desirable**." In other words the "certain

circumstances" were that she was a grown woman.

- (CLICK) Effie fell in love with Millais when they first met and her father organised for the marriage to be annulled. She married Millais a year later and twenty-two years later Millais painted this portrait when she was in her forties and it was a few months after the stillbirth of their eighth and last child. It hung in the breakfast room of their Kensington mansion (now the High Commission for the Republic of Zambia) (CLICK). Through his art and with Effie's support and management of his affairs, Millais had become one of the wealthiest people in the country. In 1873 they had a house built at 2 Palace Gate, Kensington, about which Thomas Carlyle is said to have remarked, "**Millais, did painting do all that? Well, there must be more fools in this world than I had thought.**"

### **NOTES**

- Effie's children were Everett (1856); George (1857); Effie (1858); Mary (1860); Alice (1862); Geoffroy (1863); John (1865) and Sophie (1868).

### **BIO:EFFIE MILLAIS**

- (Effie Gray Millais 1828–1897). "Born Euphemia (Effie) Gray in Perth, Effie married the art critic John Ruskin in 1848. As a watercolourist, she aimed to contribute to his work as an architectural historian. The Ruskins' support for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood led them to commission John Everett Millais to paint *The Order of Release 1746*. For this, Millais asked Effie Ruskin to act as model for the Highland soldier's wife. Millais and his brother were then invited to accompany the Ruskins to Scotland, when John Everett Millais would work on a portrait of Ruskin. In the course of their stay, Effie Ruskin's marital unhappiness became clear.
- The following year, Effie Ruskin obtained a legal annulment

because the marriage was sexually unconsummated. In 1855 she married John Millais. Thereafter she effectively became his business partner, joining actively in research and production of his artworks, finding locations, sourcing costumes, keeping records and cultivating clients. This was in addition to managing household affairs and giving birth to eight children. She became Lady Millais in 1885 when her husband accepted a baronetcy."

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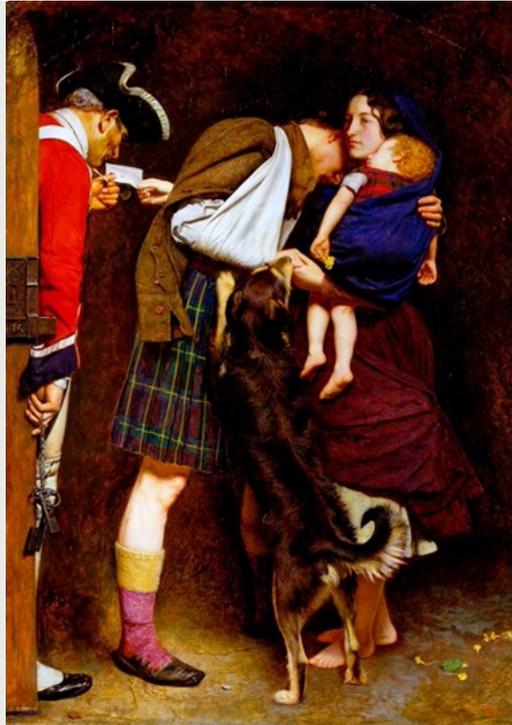
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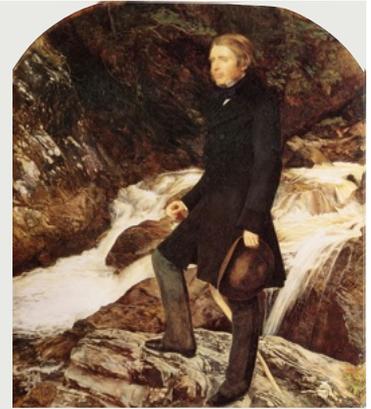
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John Everett Millais (1829–1896),  
*The Order of Release*, 1746, 1853,  
73.7 × 102.9 cm, Tate Britain



John Everett Millais (1829–1896),  
*John Ruskin*, 1853-54, 78.7 × 68 cm,  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

John Everett Millais (1829–1896), *The Order of Release*, 1746, 1853, 73.7 × 102.9 cm, Tate Britain

John Everett Millais (1829–1896), *John Ruskin*, 1853-54, 78.7 × 68 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

- In 1851, *The Times* criticised three members of the PRB (Millais, Hunt and Collins) and Ruskin wrote a letter defending them ending, they may lay "... the foundations of a school of art nobler than has been seen for three hundred years".
- Ruskin, had become close friends with Millais and suggested Effie model for this painting *Order of Release*, a very fitting title in the circumstances. This was five years into their marriage and it was she first met Millais.
- **Ruskin then invited Millais and his brother to go with him and Effie on a holiday in Scotland where Millais painted a full-length portrait of Ruskin.** It was clear that Effie was unhappy and on the holiday **Millais and Effie fell in love.** Millais discovered that the marriage had not been consummated and Millais's family arranged for Effie to run away and the marriage was legally annulled. She

married Millais a year later in 1855 and became his model, wife and manager.

- This painting shows the **wife of a Jacobite** obtaining his release. When Bonnie Prince Charlie (1720-1788) was defeated at **Culloden** (16 April, 1746) many of his Jacobite supporters were imprisoned. The Jacobites were supporters of the exiled Stuart King James II who had been overthrown in the **Glorious Revolution** by William Henry, Prince of Orange, grandson of Charles I.
- In this incident, **invented by Millais** but which may have been inspired by Walter Scott's novels. The Jacobites wife has obtained an order of release which she has just handed to the gaoler to obtain the release of her husband.
- She has a blank expression and it has been suggested that she had to **sacrifice her virtue** to obtain the order which may also explain why her wounded husband has broken down on her shoulder.
- It exhibits the Pre-Raphaelites attention to detail, for example **Millais studied all the appropriate tartans** and chose the Gordon tartan for the husband and the Drummond tartan for the little girl representing her mother's clan. The little girl has dropped a bouquet of primroses intended for her father indicating it is spring.
- Millais used a professional model for the husband and Effie Ruskin (with her hair darkened) for the woman. He sold the painting for £400 to a lawyer. And when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1853 it **proved so successful a policeman had to be called in to move people along**. *The Illustrated London News* reported that Millais had attracted '**a larger crowd of admirers in his little corner than all the Academicians put together**' (7 May 1853)

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John Everett  
Millais  
(1829-1896),  
*The Vale of Rest*, 1858-  
9,  
102.9×172.  
Tate Britain



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *The Vale of Rest* (subtitled "*Where the Weary Find Rest*"), 1858-9, 102.9 × 172.7 cm, Tate.

- The title is from a song by Mendelssohn called *Ruhetal* (Vale of Rest, pronounced 'ru-ah-tal'). The picture is set in October and depicts sunset and death. There is a skull and crossbones on the rosary the woman on the right is wearing. The woman on the left is in a hole she is strenuously digging and there appear to be human bones being excavated.
- Effie had a fine artistic sensibility and a good knowledge of historical scenes and costumes. In addition, she understood Millais, whom **she called Everett** to distinguish him from John Ruskin, and her practical sense is illustrated by the painting of this picture. The idea for the painting first occurred on their honeymoon in 1855.
- He had always wanted to paint a picture of nuns and he started this three years later but **he could not get the nun digging right**. He painted and repainted it for seven days and at the end it was worse than when he started. Taking things in hand she **locked the painting in the cellar** and **Millais was furious**. Eventually he calmed

down, the painting was brought out and he immediately saw what was wrong and finished the work and of all the pictures that Millais created, **this was his favourite**.

### **NOTES**

- It was very cold outside but Millais painted it in the garden Effie's parents in Perth, Scotland. The gravestones were painted in Kinnoull churchyard, Perth. Their son later wrote, "the sunsets were lovely for two or three nights . . . the effect lasted so short a time that he had to paint like lightning."
- Effie Gray was buried in this cemetery, Millais is buried in St Paul's Cathedral.

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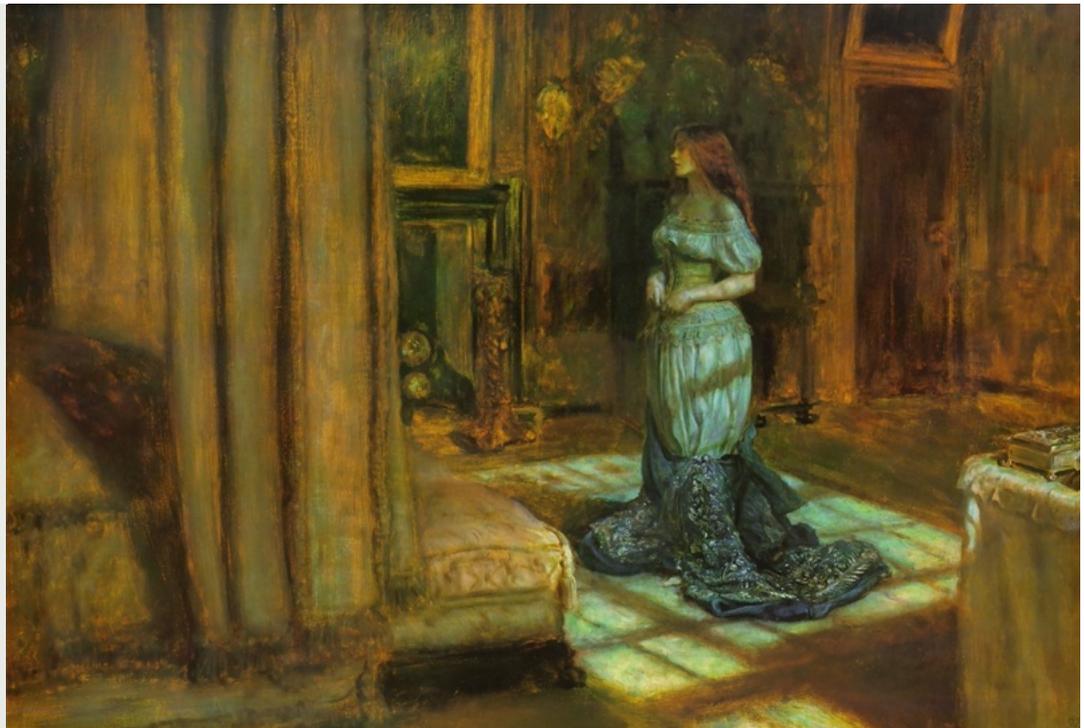
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John Everett Millais  
(1829-1896), *The Eve  
of St. Agnes*, 1863,  
117.8 × 154.3cm,  
Royal Collection



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *The Eve of St. Agnes*, 1863, 117.8 × 154.3cm, Royal Collection

- **After the marriage** to Millais Effie modelled for other paintings such as this one, ***The Eve of St. Agnes***, which was exhibited with stanza 25 of John Keats poem of the same name. The poem is erotically charged and one of his most popular.
- According to folklore, the Eve of St Agnes (21 January) was the night when a woman would **see her future husband in her dreams** if she followed certain rituals. Millais shows the heroine, Madeleine, in the act of undressing for bed, that's her dress around her ankles, suddenly transfixed by a sense of anticipation.
- Millais set up the scene with great care, taking Effie to **Knole Park**, as you might know it's a vast Jacobean mansion in Sevenoaks, Kent. He posed her in a freezing room, standing before the bed in which James I (ruled 1603-25) was said to have slept. Following the Pre-Raphaelite convention of precise representation he posed Effie in the room for three nights in her bodice in the freezing cold while moonbeams fell across her body at the required angle to produce

the lattice shadow effect. She said it was '**the severest task she ever undertook**' as model.

- In Millais's biography he says that when they got back from Knoles the **figure of Madeline had to be altered** which I believe he did to **hide his wife's identity** and avoid any negative social reaction about this erotic image of a woman undressing. He used the model **Miss Ford** to complete the painting.
- **Critics at the time were divided as Millais had broken a well-established convention** that a painting based on a story or a poem must illustrate the text exactly. Instead Millais has painted the room and followed his artistic instincts. For example, Madeline faces the bed but she should be **facing away**, the setting is **Jacobean** but Keats described a medieval castle, **the window is square and mullioned** but Keats' was "triple-arch'd". Millais painted what he saw rather than what Keats described. A final twist is that the poem describes **her lover Porphyro hiding in a closet watching her**. Other artists would show the closet he is hiding in with the door ajar but here we must assume that we are Porphyro spying on her undressing. It puts us in the uncomfortable position of a Peeping Tom.

## NOTES

*Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;  
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:  
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,  
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:  
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.*

John Keats, *The Eve of St.*

Agnes (stanza 25)

- This painting and *The Farmer's Daughter* mark the change from his early Pre-Raphaelite style to this more painterly style. The change provoked Ruskin's anger for what he saw as a 'reversal of principle'.

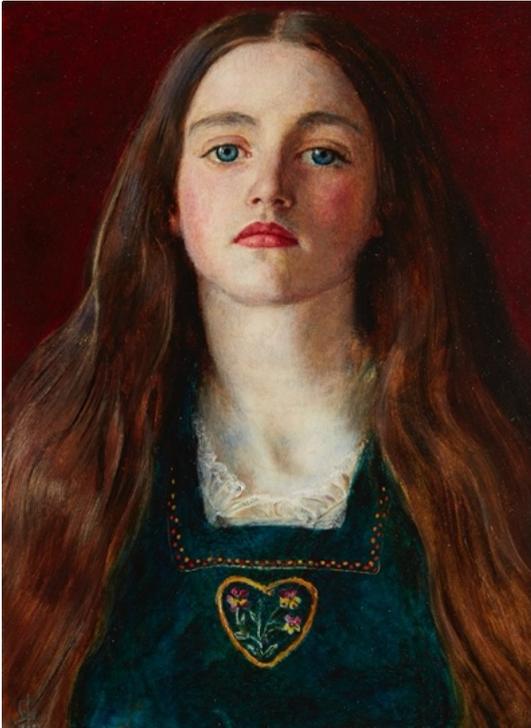
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<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-3827968> describes Miss Ford as the model for this picture and *The Farmer's Daughter*



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of a Girl*, 1857, private collection



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of Alice Gray*, 1858, Getty Center

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of a Girl*, 1857, private collection

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of Alice Gray*, 1858, Getty Center

### SOPHIE AND ALICE GRAY

- This is Effie's **younger sister, Sophie Gray** (1843-1882), aged 13 and the 10th of 15 children.
- One puzzle is whether this was intended as a portrait. It was **called *Portrait of a Girl*** and sold to the artist **George Price Boyce** for 60 guineas (CLICK) along with this portrait of her **younger sister Alice**. It is **puzzling why her parents allowed** these portraits to be sold.
- Historians have described Sophie's **direct gaze as sensual and "knowing"**, which, almost inevitably, has provoked questions about the **nature of Millais' relationship** with his sister-in-law. Women of this period were not portrayed in a looking directly at us in a **confrontational manner as it was unacceptable** to Victorian society. By the way, the **portrait of Alice was perfectly acceptable as she was seen as a child** but Sophie was seen as a young woman. (CLICK).

- It is rumoured that Effie **sent Sophie away** but her parents continued to allow Millais to chaperone her.
- **Sophie suffered later** (1868, aged 25) from anorexia nervosa, she became **obsessed with piano playing, became incoherent**, was placed into care and **died aged 39**.

### SOPHIE GRAY

- Sophie Gray (1843-1882, also known as Sophy) Millais's sister-in-law, was only 13 when this portrait was painted and it was titled *Portrait of a Girl* and sold to George Price Boyce a friend of Rossetti and joint lover of Fanny Cornforth. The painting, or portrait of Fanny Cornforth was hung alongside that of Sophie Gray. It is difficult to understand why her parents did not object to this portrait of Sophie being sold.
- After Millais and his then wife Effie moved to Annat Lodge, close to Bowerswell in Scotland, her family home, she was readily available for sitting, and it seems she was beginning to displace Effie as a favoured subject. Sophie was one of Millais's favourite models in the 1850s, see *Autumn Leaves* (1856). This painting was painted in the summer and autumn of 1857 when Millais and Effie were living with her parents and sisters at Bowerswell, the family home in Perth.
- There is another portrait of Alice, another of his favourite models. Both works were bought by George Pryce Boyce for himself and on behalf of his sister Joanna, also an artist. The portrait of Alice is a straightforward portrait of an immature girl.
- The sensual and 'knowing' look has raised questions about Sophie's relationship with Millais and there is some evidence that Millais wife, Effie, sent her away because they were growing too close. Eleven years later Sophie became unwell and was suffering from what is now called anorexia nervosa. She became obsessed with piano playing and her speech became incoherent.

She married Caird, later made a baronet (like Millais) and had a daughter called Beatrice who Millais painted and who died aged 14 in 1888. She was placed in the care of Dr Thomas Tuke who had treated Edwin Landseer but her mental state continued to be a problem for the rest of her life. She died at the age of 39.

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<http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/portrait-of-a-girl-sophie-gray/10207>

John Everett Millais  
(1829-1896), *Ophelia*,  
1851–2, 76.2 x 111.8  
cm, Tate



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Ophelia*, 1851–2, 76.2 x 111.8 cm, Tate

### ELIZABETH SIDDAL

- This is perhaps Millais's best known painting and a favourite of the public at Tate Britain. The model was Elizabeth Siddal, who was a model, a muse for Rossetti and an artist in her own right.
- One of **Millais's models was Lizzie Siddal** (1829-1862), the daughter of the owner of a **milliner's shop near Leicester Square**. In December 1849, she was spotted by **Walter Deverell** a friend of the Pre-Raphaelites and she posed for William Holman Hunt and John Millais. She was Millais's model for *Ophelia*, before **becoming Rossetti's model, muse and eventually wife**. While modelling **she kept working part-time**, an unusual and powerful position for a woman at the time. Deverell described her as "**like a queen, magnificently tall, with a lovely figure, a stately neck, and a face of the most delicate and finished modelling**".
- The painting was the result of **enormous physical effort** on Millais's part. The river and bushes were painted in the open-air painting on the banks of the Hogsmill River [near Tolworth in Surrey]. Millais was

a fast painter and yet he said that he could only paint an area '**no larger than a five-shilling piece**' each day. He painted for **11 hours a day, six days a week over a five-month** period in 1851 and suggested to a friend that it would be '**a greater punishment to a murderer than hanging**'. In the summer, he was bitten by flies all day and by November it started to snow and Millais had a hut built by the river to enable him to finish the landscape. As the painting took so long to produce, it conflated time, which produced anachronisms in the plants and the painting became an assembly of minutely observed yet disconnected parts.

- He left the painting of Ophelia until he reached his studio. The model was Elizabeth Siddal, who later married Dante Gabriel Rossetti, another of the Pre-Raphaelites. **Millais painted her in a bath heated by candles** but it is said that one day the candles went out and Millais did not notice she was freezing cold. She developed a severe cold and her father sent Millais a letter demanding £50 for medical expenses, about twice the annual salary of a live-in servant. He eventually accepted a lower sum.
- It was a popular subject at the time even though it shows a woman driven out of her mind and drowning herself in a stream. **Millais's treatment of the subject was not liked by many critics**, The Times wrote that '**there must be something strangely perverse in an imagination which souses Ophelia in a weedy ditch, and robs the drowning struggle of that lovelorn maiden of all pathos and beauty**'. In other words, they did not like the realism and the lack of idealization.
- Millais was promoting a new way of looking at the world in precise, scientific detail. He was motivated by the innocent observation of the artists who worked before Raphael and so the style was called Pre-Raphaelitism. He was supported at this time by **Ruskin** who described the principal role of the artist is '**truth**

**to nature'**. The strength of feeling of the Pre-Raphaelites and their **dislike of the Old Masters** is shown by their description of the former President of the Royal Academy Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) as '**Sir Sloshua**'. They wanted to **work directly from nature** but took a different approach to Turner and the Impressionists, who came much later. Rather than their free brushwork they represented what they saw in **photographic detail**. Ophelia demonstrates Millais's commitment to this idea through his sheer hard work. Every inch of the canvas is worked on in minute detail producing a **flat tapestry of colour** that flattens the picture by assigning every object in the foreground, middle ground and background equal prominence. Although controversial **this approach influenced many artists for the remainder of the nineteenth century**.

### NOTES

- Ophelia is a character in Shakespeare's Hamlet who drowns herself after Hamlet denies he loves her and kills her father. The relevant lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act IV, Scene vii are,

*There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element; but long it could not be  
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death.*

- Millais is now thought to have sat in the 'Six Acre Meadow on the west bank at the bottom of the Manor House garden', Church Road, Old Malden', as reported by Richard Savill, 'Mystery of Location of Millais' Ophelia Solved' in The Telegraph, 30 June 2010. Holman Hunt worked on his The Hireling Shepherd nearby. The studio was at 7 Gower Street which still remains and has a blue plaque outside.
- There was a water rat swimming in the river but in December 1851 relatives of Holman Hunt did not recognise what it was so Millais painted it out.
- The flowers are the one's mentioned in Hamlet except for the red poppies which signify sleep and death. The human skull many have seen in the bushes was not intended to be a skull. The roses near Ophelia's cheek and dress, and the field rose on the bank, may allude to her brother Laertes calling her 'rose of May'. The willow, nettle and daisy are associated with forsaken love, pain, and innocence. Pansies refer to love in vain. Violets, which Ophelia wears in a chain around her neck, stand for faithfulness, chastity or death of the young, any of which meanings could apply here. The poppy signifies death. Forget-me-nots float in the water. Millais purchased the dress secondhand for £4.
- Another review in The Times said that 'Mr. Millais's Ophelia in her pool ... makes us think of a dairymaid in a frolic'.
- In 1936 Salvador Dali wrote, 'How could Salvador Dalí fail to be dazzled by the flagrant surrealism of English Pre-Raphaelitism'.
- The painting has a cult following in Japan but when it was exhibited in Tokyo in 2008 the gallery was afraid to show the painting on posters in case its power would cause young women to take their own lives.
- It was bought on 10 December 1851 by Henry Farrer for 300

guineas. It was sold and resold and continued to increase in value, it is now estimated to be worth at least £30 million.

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-ophelia-n01506>

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



Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Self-portrait*, 1853-54, 22.8cm, private collection



Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Pippa Passes or Pippa Passing the Loose Women*, 1854

Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Pippa Passes or Pippa Passing the Loose Women*, 1854

Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Self-portrait*, 1853-54, 22.8cm, private collection

- As well as modelling she was an aspiring artist who was financially supported by John Ruskin. He paid her £150 a year from 1855 for all her work and she was **the only female artist in the 1857 Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that toured the United States**. The exhibition included this work, *Pippa Passes* and one critic (Coventry Patmore) wrote "**Her drawings display an admiring adoption of all the most startling peculiarities of Mr. Rossetti's style, but they have nevertheless qualities which entitle them to high praise.**"
- Following a long engagement she **married Rossetti in 1860**. The following year a daughter was stillborn leading to post-natal depression and then her death from an opiate overdose (in 1862) which we believe was a suicide that was hushed up.
- She was buried with the only copy of Rossetti's poems but **he exhumed the body** seven years later to retrieve them. The

exhumation was approved by the Home Secretary (Henry Bruce), a friend of Rossetti, and was **carried out at night** and kept secret until after Rossetti's death.

- *Pippa Passes* is based on several lines from Robert Browning's poetic drama of the same name, in which the virginal heroine encounters a **group of prostitutes discussing their lovers**. In the poem four poor girls sit on the steps of the cathedral and chatter.

### NOTES

- In *Lizzie Siddal: The Tragedy of a Pre-Raphaelite Supermodel* by Lucinda Hawksley their body language is described:
  - "Pippa holds herself awkwardly, her spine and head held proudly erect with her right arm brought in close to her body as though protecting herself; the "loose women" are more fluid in their movements, at ease with their bodies and openly curious about her."
- The Robert Browning poem includes the lines:

*The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn:  
**God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!***  
— from Act I: Morning

### BIO:SIDDAL

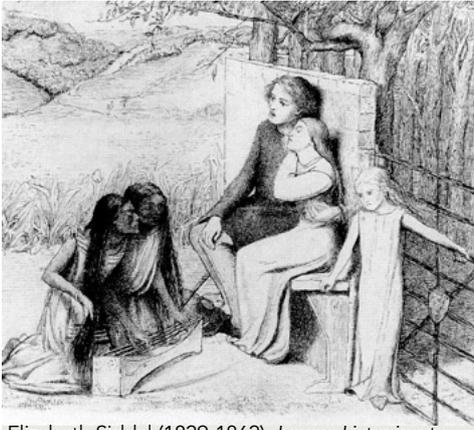
- "Elizabeth Siddal (1829 –1862) was the daughter of a cutler with a shop in Southwark, Elizabeth Siddal, familiarly known as Lizzie,

entered the Pre-Raphaelite world by modelling for Walter Deverell, an associate of the Brotherhood. She posed for William Holman Hunt, John Millais and others before becoming Gabriel Rossetti's model and muse. Tall and pale, with auburn hair and a pronounced overbite, she was not then considered attractive, but images such as Millais's *Ophelia* and Rossetti's delicate drawings fashioned a new concept of beauty.

- As an aspiring artist, Siddal was the sole female exhibitor in the 1857 Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that toured to the United States. Inspired by the poetry of Tennyson and Browning, as well as late medieval Border ballads, her watercolour works were made on a small scale, suitable for illustration.
- After a long engagement, Siddal married Rossetti in 1860, and formed new friendships with Jane Morris, Georgiana Burne-Jones and Joanna Boyce Wells. In 1861, her daughter was stillborn, leading to post-natal depression and death from an opiate overdose. Having laid his manuscript poems in her coffin, Rossetti later retrieved them, offering the justification that 'art was the only thing for which she felt seriously [and] had it been possible, I should have found the book on my pillow the night she was buried.'" [1]

## **REFERENCES**

[1] *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters Access Guide*, National Portrait Gallery



Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Lovers Listening to Music*, c. 1854, pencil, pen and ink on paper, 37.8 × 39.8cm, Wightwick Manor, West Midlands

Dead Love

Oh never weep for love that's dead  
Since love is seldom true  
But changes his fashion from blue to red,  
From brightest red to blue,  
And love was born to an early death  
And is so seldom true.



Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Lady Affixing a Pennant to a Knight's Spear*, c. 1856, watercolour on paper, 13.7 × 13.7cm, Tate

Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Lovers Listening to Music*, c. 1854, pencil, pen and ink on paper, 37.8 × 39.8cm, Wightwick (pronounced 'wittick') Manor, West Midlands

Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Lady Affixing a Pennant to a Knight's Spear*, c. 1856, watercolour on paper, 13.7 × 13.7cm, Tate

- The title of ***Lovers Listening to Music*** is taken from **Rossetti's description** of the drawing. The two women playing are variously described as **Egyptian or Indian and they are playing a santoor** which is a popular Hindustani classical string instrument. The picture may have been inspired by one of her poems or, it has been suggested, it is **Lizzie and Rossetti at a romantic spot called Lovers' Seat near Hastings** that they visited in 1854. **When Rossetti showed this and other drawings to John Ruskin he immediately bought them all for £30 and said they were better than Rossetti's.**
- Siddal began painting in 1852 soon after she met Rossetti. (CLICK) She also wrote poetry but saw none of her verses in print. The first edition of her poetry did not come out until **1978**. There was a

suggestion that Christina Rossetti, her sister-in-law, should include some of Siddal's poetry in her collection of verse but she judged them to be "**almost too hopelessly sad for publication en masse**". John Ruskin was an admirer of Siddal's poetry.

- (CLICK) In *Lady Affixing a Pennant* the woman is helping the knight fix a pennant to his spear knowing she might never see him again.
- Siddal and Rossetti married in 1860 and she was so weak she had to be carried to the church. It is believed she was addicted to laudanum and in 1861 she gave birth to a stillborn daughter. She became pregnant again and died, it is believed, of a laudanum overdose in 1862. It is rumoured she left a suicide note that was destroyed by Rossetti as suicide was illegal and would have brought scandal on the family and prevented a Christian burial.

### Dead Love

Oh never weep for love that's dead  
Since love is seldom true  
But changes his fashion from blue to red,  
From brightest red to blue,  
And love was born to an early death  
And is so seldom true.

Then harbour no smile on your bonny face  
To win the deepest sigh.  
The fairest words on truest lips  
Pass on and surely die,  
And you will stand alone, my dear,  
When wintry winds draw nigh.

Sweet, never weep for what cannot be,  
For this God has not given.  
If the merest dream of love were true  
Then, sweet, we should be in heaven,  
And this is only earth, my dear,  
Where true love is not given.

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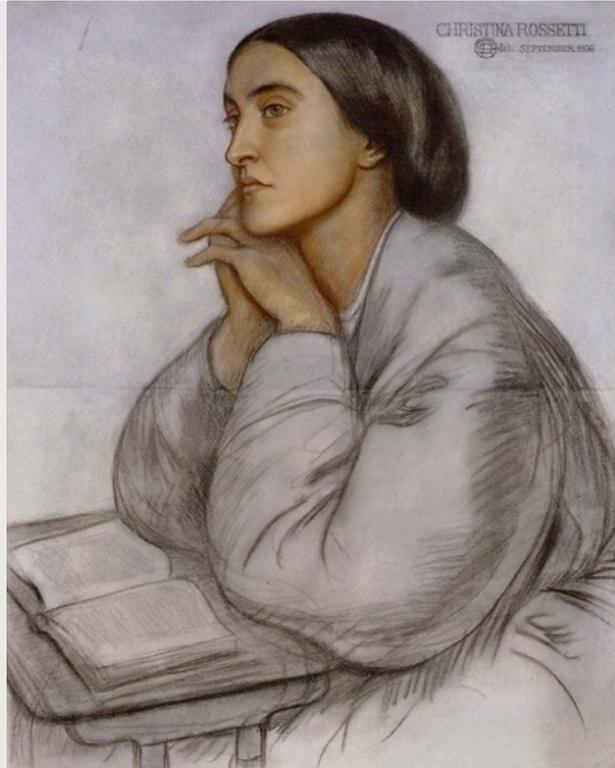
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<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/sep/14/poem-of-the-week-dead-love-by-elizabeth-siddal>



*Christina Georgina Rossetti in a Tantrum and destroying the Contents of a Room*, 1862, pen and wash on paper, 39.2 × 33.4 cm, Wightwick Manor,

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894), September 1866 (age 36), coloured chalk on blue-gray paper, Andrew Lloyd Webber



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894) head and shoulders, turned slightly to left, hair drawn up into a plaited chignon, 1848 (age 18), black chalk touched with white, 28.8 × 21.5 cm, British Museum

*head and shoulders, turned slightly to left, hair drawn up into a plaited chignon*, 1848 (age 18), black chalk touched with white, 28.8 × 21.5 cm, British Museum

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894), September 1866 (age 36), coloured chalk on blue-gray paper, 79 × 63.5 cm, Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Christina Georgina Rossetti* (1830–1894) *in a Tantrum and destroying the Contents of a Room*, 1862, pen and wash on paper, 39.2 × 33.4 cm, Wightwick Manor, West Midlands

'In the Bleak Midwinter', Harold Darke (it was also set to music by Gustav Holst)

## CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

- **The Rossettis were a creative family.** Their father was an **exiled Italian who became Professor of Italian at King's College**, Dante Gabriel was an artist and her other brother William Michael was a writer and critic. She also had a sister who entered an Anglican convent.

- (CLICK) As a child Christina was **given to temper tantrums on one occasion ripping her arm with scissors**. This continued as an adult but we see **no sign of it in her poetry** which is restrained. She published her first work of poetry **when she was 16** and it launched her literary career.
- (CLICK on Audio) Christina **modelled for Dante Gabriel** and later **she cared for him when he became ill** as well as looking after two aunts and her mother.
- She is well known as a poet and she wrote the words of two well known Christmas carols, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, later set by Gustav Holst and by Harold Darke, and *Love Came Down at Christmas*, also set by Harold Darke and by other composers. This is Harold Darke's setting for *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

## NOTES

### BIO:CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

- "Christina Rossetti 1830–1894 was raised in an atmosphere of intense creativity and religious fervour, Christina Rossetti was sister to two members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the artist Dante Gabriel and the writer and critic, William Michael. She posed for the figure of the young Virgin Mary in Gabriel Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1849–50), and contributed the finest poems to the Brotherhood's magazine *The Germ*.
- In 1858, Christina Rossetti started voluntary work at a home for girls thought to be sexually 'at risk', which prompted her masterpiece, the fantasy poem 'Goblin Market'. Its theme is temptation and redemption.
- She also published stories for children and nursery verses, as well as three poetic collections and several devotional works. Robert Browning, Algernon Swinburne and Lewis Carroll were among her literary admirers, together with a younger generation of

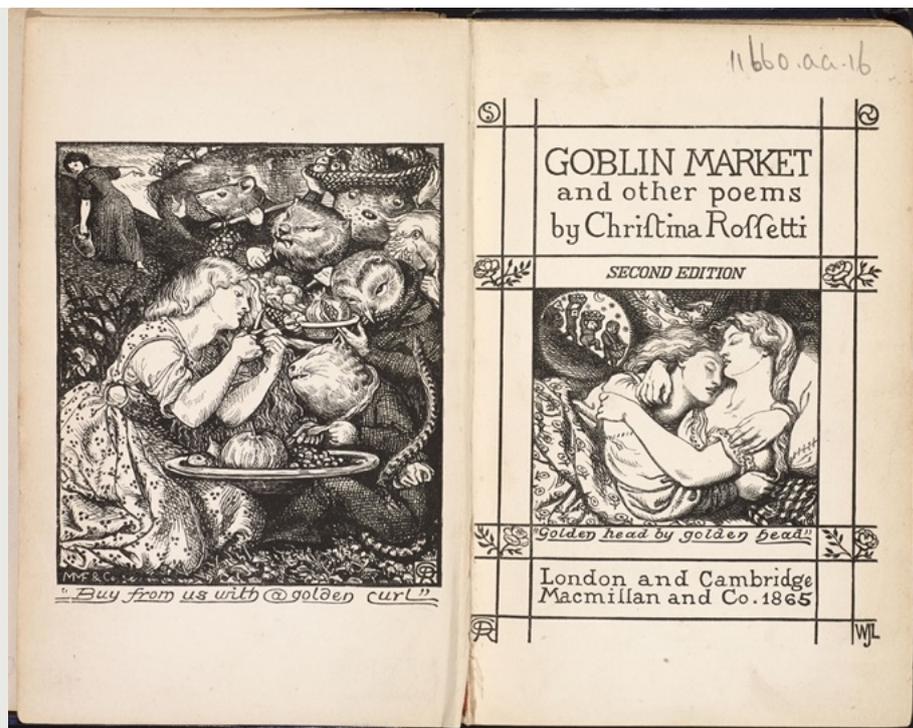
women writers.

- From her thirties, Rossetti's health was impaired by a thyroid disorder. Her last years were spent caring for her brother Gabriel, then two elderly aunts and her mother." [1]

## **REFERENCES**

[1] *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters Access Guide*, National Portrait Gallery

Christina Rossetti,  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
[illustrator], *Goblin  
Market and other  
Poems*, 1865



Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti [illustrator], *Goblin Market and other Poems*, 1865

- This is her most famous poem *Goblin Market and other Poems*. It was her first collection of published poems. Reviewers highly praised the collection for Rossetti's unique voice and poetic talents, although it was not a commercial success.
- In 1858 she started **charity work for girls who were former prostitutes** and this prompted her to write her masterpiece, ***Goblin Market***. The poem is difficult to categorise as it has been described as everything from pornography to a child's fairy tale.
- The poem is about two sisters, **Laura and Lizzie**, shown on the right in Rossetti's woodcut.
- **Christina Rossetti maintained the poem was not a child's fairy tale** although *The Spectator* declared it a 'true children's poem'.
- Literary admirers include Algernon Charles Swinburne, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Lewis Carroll, whose *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (1865) was partially inspired by the poem.
- It has been viewed in many ways over the years, as a moral allegory

about giving in to temptation, as a feminist classic, as unambiguously pornographic, a warning of the dangers of a free market economy, a Christian tale of sacrifice and salvation, a parable of lesbian empowerment, a fable about anorexia and an expression of incestuous yearning all of which can be clearly found in the poem which challenges Christina Rossetti's claim that she '**did not mean anything profound by this fairytale**'.

## NOTES

### GOBLIN MARKET

- The goblin men come to sell their their fruit but Laura bows her head and Lizzie blushes to hear their cries.
- "We must not look at goblin men" said Lizzie, but Laura is curious and Lizzie flees. Laura has no money so she offers a lock of her golden hair in exchange for their fruit. "Then suck'd their fruit globes fair or red ... She suck'd until her lips were sore."
- Laura waits and waits for their return but they do not come back and "Her hair grew thin and grey".
- To try to help Laura Lizzie, who can still hear the goblin men, goes to meet them with a silver coin. She offers the coin but then takes it back making them angry. They attack her, "Tore her gown and soil'd her stocking", pulled out her hair, stamped on her feet and "Held her hands and squeez'd their fruits / Against her mouth to make her eat." She resists but they try to cram the fruit into her mouth and she feels the "... juice that syrapp'd all her face, / And lodg'd in dimples of her chin, / And streak'd her neck which quaked like curd."
- Lizzie runs away back to Laura and she "Kiss'd and kiss'd and kiss'd her." In the final stanza she writes, "For there is no friend like a sister".

- She also published children's stories and three poetry collections. Her poetry was admired by Robert Browning, Algernon Swinburne and Lewis Carroll. Carroll's admiration for *Goblin Market* influenced his *Alice in Wonderland*.

### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/an-introduction-to-goblin-market>



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini! (The Annunciation)*, 1850, 72.4 x 41.9 cm, Tate

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Ecce Ancilla Domini! (The Annunciation)*, Latin: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord", 1850, 72.4 x 41.9 cm, Tate

- 'In this radical reinterpretation of the Annunciation in which the angel announces to Mary that she will give birth to the Christ child, Rossetti sought a supernatural realism. Rejecting the tradition of representing the Virgin passively receiving the news, he shows her **recoiling on her bed as if disturbed from sleep**. Rossetti used **white** as the dominant colour to symbolise **feminine purity**, complemented by **blue**, a colour traditionally associated with Mary, and **red**, for **Christ's blood**. The artist's sister **Christina posed for the Virgin** and his **brother William Michael for the angel**.' (Tate display caption)
- *The Girlhood* had been praised and Rossetti expected this painting to be received equally well and establish his reputation but instead it received a **fierce storm of hostile criticism**. Critics attacked his technical ability and the **weak perspective** and they claimed Rossetti lacked proper training. **Rossetti could not abide the harsh criticism** and never exhibited at the major London exhibitions again.

- It was also at this point that the **anti-Academic intentions** of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were becoming known and **creating a sense of outrage**. Rossetti's approach to the subject is novel by Victorian standards as he rejects idealisation and sticks strictly to the text of **the Bible which describes Mary as fearful and troubled**. Gabriel is also unconventional as he has **no wings** and the **halo is a later (1853) addition**. It was considered to be an image **unworthy** of a sacred subject. At a time when the strict word of the Bible was being undermined by scientific discoveries Christians hung on to customs and conventions which this painting undermined. Finally, it was seen to be '**sadly Romish**' and the most recent example of the spreading influence of Roman Catholicism. The High Church 'Oxford Movement' was based on Tractarianism which sought to relate the roots of Protestantism with the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, the Pope (Pius IX, 1850) had just created an archbishop of Westminster and divided England into twelve Roman Catholic dioceses.

### NOTES

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

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Lady Lilith*, 1866-8, watercolour replica, 51.3 × 44 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, with Fanny Cornforth as model



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Lady Lilith*, 1872-73, 96.5 × 85.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum, with Alexa Wilding as model

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Lady Lilith*, 1866-8, watercolour replica, 51.3 × 44 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, with Fanny Cornforth as model

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Lady Lilith*, 1872-73, 96.5 × 85.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum, with Alexa Wilding as model

### **FANNY CORNFORTH AND ALEXA WILDING**

- *Lady Lilith* is by Rossetti and he first painted it in 1866–1868 using his then mistress **Fanny Cornforth** (1835-1909, died aged 74 of dementia). In 1872–73 he altered the painting to show the face of **Alexa Wilding** (c.1847-1884) at the request of his patron Frederick Leyland. **Wilding sat for more of his finished works** than any other of his more well-known muses, including Elizabeth Siddall, Jane Morris and Fanny Cornforth.
- **In Jewish legend Lilith** was the name of **Adam's first wife** who in western culture became symbolic of the bewitching sexuality of a femme fatale as shown her but the legend goes back to the earliest known cuneiform records of the Mesopotamian city of Sumer. According to the legend, Lilith was created the same time as Adam and refused to be subservient to him. She is not mentioned in most

translations of the Bible or rather, the King James Bible translates her name as 'screech owl' an attempt by the translators to translate a word they didn't know and Lilith is also mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

- **Fanny Cornforth** (1835-1909), on the left, was born **Sarah Cox** and her father was a blacksmith. She was found by Rossetti in the Surrey Pleasure gardens and she modelled for him as well as Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones and others. Her hair was described as 'harvest-yellow' but Rossetti often painted her with red hair. The painting is inspired by Rossetti's poem 'Jenny' about a prostitute which includes the lines '**Lazy laughing languid Jenny / Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea**'.
- After **Lizzie Siddal** died **Cornforth moved in** with Rossetti as his 'housekeeper'. Cornforth claimed that she adopted the name 'Fanny' when she was young because of a sister of that name who died. It has been suggested by art historians that it is a reference to female genitalia and by association to prostitution but although the word did have these associations, as we see with the novel 'Fanny Hill', it didn't become strongly associated until the end of the nineteenth century and many respectable families called their daughters Fanny, as we will see with Fanny Waugh, the wife of Holman Hunt.
- Her last name is also complicated as she was born Sarah Cox and married Timothy Hughes, so she should be Sarah Hughes but his mother had married a man called Timothy Hughes and when he died his mother married George Cornforth and her son, also called Timothy Hughes, adopted Cornforth's name as did Fanny who then became Fanny Cornforth. They soon separated and when Timothy Cornforth died she married John Bernard Schott. There are four last names she could have used and two first names but Fanny Cornforth is the one history remembers.

## NOTES

- In Hebrew lore, Lilith was the name of Adam's first wife, who in western culture became symbolic of the bewitching sexuality of a femme fatale – as replayed in Goethe's 'Faust' and Keats's 'Lamia'.

## BIO:CORNFORTH

- "Fanny Cornforth (1835–1909) was **born Sarah Cox into a blacksmith's family in Sussex**, she adopted the name **Fanny after her sister who had died in infancy**. She met the artists Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones when visiting the **Surrey Pleasure Gardens in London**; Fanny recalled, '**Rossetti gave my hair a flick with his finger as if it were an accident, and it all tumbled down**'. She posed for Rossetti, George Boyce and other artists in roles ranging from a 'fallen woman' to the sorceress Sidonia von Bork.
- Fanny Cornforth had 'the most lovely blonde hair, of a harvest-yellow tint', and inspired Rossetti's poem 'Jenny': 'Lazy laughing languid Jenny / Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea'. In 1860, when Rossetti married Elizabeth Siddal, **Fanny married Timothy Hughes** (also known as Cornforth). After Siddal's death she moved in with Rossetti **as his housekeeper**.
- For over a decade she sat for many of his sensuous 'stunners', and he supported her until 1877. **Fanny Cornforth then married widower John Schott**, and when in the late 1890s she developed dementia, Schott's sister arranged for her care. She died in Sussex, in a Poor Law infirmary." [1]

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Boston Museum of Fine Arts (model Fanny Cornforth)



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Boston Museum of Fine Arts

### FANNY CORNFORTH

- In 1859, **George Boyce**, who, remember, had bought that portrait of Sophie Grey, **commissioned Rossetti to paint Fanny Cornforth** as a companion piece and this is the result—*Bocca Baciata*, which means "**Kissed mouth**". The title is from an Italian proverb which, in full, means "**A kissed mouth does not lose its freshness, but renews itself like the moon**" and it is from Boccaccio's *Decameron* which Rossetti would have known well.
- This painting is usually described as the **first** painting of the **Aesthetic Movement** as it is not a portrait, makes no moral point and represents female beauty. The Aesthetic Movement maintained that the purpose of art was the representation of beauty and nothing else, "**art for art's sake**", as they said.
- Rossetti adds a number of symbols, such as the marigolds and the apple, which suggests we need to interpret the painting like a coded message. Conventionally a **marigold**, in the language of flowers, signified **grief and pain**, the **white rose innocence**. In

Christian symbolism, an **apple represents temptation**. One interpretation reading the symbols from foreground to background is that the temptation of an innocent beauty leads to grief and pain.

- Rossetti broke new ground with *Bocca Baciata* as the painting marked a distinct change in his style, and it does not fall into any established genre. It was generally admired but Holman Hunt was critical describing the painting as advocating '**the animal passion to be the aim of art**'.
- Although the interpretation of the painting in aesthetic terms sees it as a simple representation of beauty it is clear that it has multiple social, cultural, political interpretations.
- In terms of the role of women it raises question about,
  - **Femme fatale** – a popular Victorian shibboleth that is used to describe a dangerous woman who will seduce and ensnare her lovers. It was a common trope or theme in the European Middle Ages inherited from the Biblical Eve. It became more popular during the Romantic period and was used by the Pre-Raphaelites. It became fashionable in the late nineteenth century and was reinvented by Oscar Wilde as Salome who used her 'Dance of the Seven Veils' (invented by Wilde) to demand the head of John the Baptist. It is, of course, a phantasy, the projection of illicit male desires. The term was used in France with this meaning in 1800 or earlier but not in England until the late nineteenth century.
  - **Fallen woman** - In a moral sense, a woman who has lost her purity or innocence; in dictionary terms 'one who has surrendered her chastity' (OED). The idea relates back to Eve and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), Lord Byron and William Blake. It is also often linked to Hunt's *the*

*Awakening Conscience*, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (Peggotty and Emily) and Rossetti's *Found*. The term was used by Josephine Butler when writing about the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864.

- **'Angel in the House'**, wife and mother and carer. The term is a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore first published in 1854. It only became popular in the late nineteenth century. It idealised his wife Emily whom he believed to be the perfect woman. The roles for a respectable woman were wife and then mother or unmarried carer of her ageing father.

### **BOCCA BACIATA**

- Rossetti broke most of the conventions associated with female representation in contemporary 'books of beauty' by painting the woman in *Bocca Baciata* with fuller, more voluptuous lips, a less pinched face, unrestrained hair and exotic jewellery, in a more compressed space so we feel physically closer to the head and body, which are pressed close to the picture plane. Also significant were his use of thick oils and sensual Venetian colours.
- Rossetti had been **commissioned by George Boyce** to paint a portrait of Fanny Cornforth and the heavy, idiosyncratic features reinforce the fact that a particular person was being depicted. Its sensuousness can be judged from Arthur Hughes's comment: **'so awfully lovely. Boyce has bought it, and will I suspect kiss the dear thing's lips away before you can come over to see it.'**
- Rossetti's image has a full face and chin that do not conform to any of the standard types of beauty, and she has a long neck, which, although it was an established attribute of beauty, is so long and wide that it could almost be considered distorted. Rossetti was not painting a conventional 'perfect beauty' but a

particular person. However, the title also refers us to a story by Boccaccio suggesting the woman was being used to represent the central character who was described as the most beautiful woman in the world.

- She does not **meet our eye**, and her pose, though conventional, is made **disturbing** by her expression, which is **vacant** and charged with a slight **sullenness**, like a model who has sat for too long. This suggests volition and agency rather than passivity and so it conflicts with the view of the model as an impassive object. Other aspects of agency and female independence are present in the way Rossetti's has represented his model. For example, compared to women in books of beauty, her nose is not slim and pinched and her forehead is narrow, both signs at the time of a lack of refinement. The shoulders are broad, giving the appearance of **physical strength** rather than of a delicate and over-refined drawing-room beauty. With her flowing red hair, exotic and excessive jewellery and **robust features** she could be seen as **coarse and sexually experienced**. The conventions at the time would therefore label her as a **fallen woman**.
- Although conventional Christian symbolism equates the apple with temptation the term 'apple' was not mentioned in the Bible and the fruit in the Garden of Eden was from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Theologians disagree about whether the term 'knowledge' should be interpreted narrowly or broadly but the Bible goes on to say that Eve decided to eat the fruit to make herself wise. Adam needed no convincing and ate the fruit he was given, which suggests the serpent chose Eve as she was the hardest to convince and her decision could be seen as the first example of female sexual power in the Christian tradition.
- In the Biblical account, God was unaware of Adam and Eve's

transgression as he was elsewhere in the garden, but when he found out he constructed a complex curse, which included women, in future, experiencing pain during childbirth and obeying men. The acquisition of knowledge was concerned with the recognition of each other's nakedness and this implies that it became associated with sexual desire, which sexual selection equates with beauty. This loss of innocence was represented as the expulsion from a perfect garden and this has been interpreted in Darwinian terms as the evolutionary moment that humans developed a sense of right and wrong.

- This image is one of those that would have been criticized by Thomas Maitland when he wrote '**The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr D. G. Rossetti**' in the magazine *Contemporary Review* (October, 1871).

## **REFERENCES**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bocca\\_Baciata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bocca_Baciata)



Fanny Cornforth  
*Bocca Baciata*, 1859



Alexa Wilding  
*Venus Verticordia*, 1864-8



Alexa Wilding  
*Monna Vanna*, 1866



Elizabeth Siddal  
*Beata Beatrix*, c. 1864-70



Marie Ford  
*The Beloved*, 1865-66



Jane Morris  
*Astarte Syriaca*, 1876-77

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Art, Boston

*Beata Beatrix*, c. 1864-70, Tate Britain

*Venus Verticordia*, 1864-8, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery, Bournemouth

*The Beloved* ('*The Bride*'), 1865-66, Tate Britain

*Monna Vanna*, 1866, Tate Britain

*Astarte Syriaca*, 1876-77, Manchester City Art Gallery

- Starting with *Bocca Baciata* Rossetti produced a series of beautiful and sensual women, what he called his '**stunners**'.
- Rossetti was '**self-possessed, articulate, passionate and charismatic**', he attended **King's College School** in the Strand followed by Henry Sass's Drawing Academy (1841-45) when he enrolled at the Royal Academy School. He left and studied under Ford Madox Brown who he maintained a relationship with the rest of his life. He sought out William Holman Hunt after seeing *the Eve of St. Agnes* (1848).
- **He met Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris** through their poetry magazine the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* and they

worked together on the murals in the **Oxford Union** (1857-59) depicting scenes from Arthurian legend. They both admired Rossetti.

- Rossetti painted **dense medieval paintings** during the 1850s but **switched** in the 1860s and 1870s to powerful **close-up images of women** in a flat space and using thick colours.
- Women and models were **Fanny Cornforth, Alexa Wilding, Elizabeth Siddal, Marie Ford and Jane Morris**. Rossetti became a founding partner in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861.

### NOTES

- **Rossetti** met Elizabeth **Siddal** in **1849**, was his exclusive model by 1851 (thousands of paintings including most famously Beata Beatrix), Ruskin sponsored her in 1855, Rossetti married her in **1860** although his family did not approve, in 1861 she became pregnant but the baby was stillborn, she became pregnant again and overdosed on **laudanum in 1862**, there is a rumour that he burned a suicide note. **Rossetti exhumed** her in **1869** by which time he was convinced he was going blind and couldn't paint. He was persuaded by **Charles Augustus Howell**, an art dealer and alleged blackmailer. Howell was **found dead** in Chelsea in 1890 with his **throat slit** and a sovereign in his mouth, a **ritual killing** for those guilty of slander. This was **hushed up** and his death put down to TB.

### BOCCA BACIATA

- Modelled by **Fanny Cornforth**. Sometimes regarded as the first painting of the **Aesthetic Movement**. A painting that emphasizes the visual and sensual qualities of art over the moral or narrative possibilities. It flourished in the 1870s and 80s and is exemplified by J. M. **Whistler**, Albert **Moore** and Frederic **Leighton**. The critic Walter Hamilton was the first to name it in

1882 when he published the book *The Aesthetic Movement in England*. The term Aesthetic was used and satirized in the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Patience* (1881). The term Aesthetic was invented by the German philosopher Baumgarten in 1750.

### **BEATA BEATRIX**

- Modelled by **Elizabeth Siddal** and completed a year after her death.
- It depicts Beatrice Portinari from Dante Alighieri's (pronounced 'Ali-geri') poem *La Vita Nuova* at the moment of her death. Rossetti had translated the poem into English in 1845 when he was 17.
- The white dove represents his love for Siddal and the poppy her death from laudanum.
- There are a number of replicas, one in Chicago, a watercolour, a chalk drawing and another oil painting finished by his lifelong friend Ford Madox Brown after his death in 1882 (Birmingham Art Gallery).

### **VENUS VERTICORDIA**

- It was repainted with **Alexa Wilding's** face in 1868. It was originally modelled by Rossetti's nearly six foot tall cook.

### **THE BELOVED**

- The model for the bride was **Marie Ford** (a professional model), the left virgin bridesmaid was **Ellen Smith** (a laundry girl and model who was disfigured by a slashing attack in 1869-70 and could no longer model), the right Frederick Sandy's gypsy mistress **Keomi**. The young black boy was found outside a hotel and replaced the biracial girl he originally used. Rossetti may have been inspired by the black woman in Manet's *Olympia*, which he saw in Manet's studio in November 1864. The scene is inspired by the Song of Solomon..

- It was commissioned in 1863 by George Rae for £300, but took three years to finish, typical of Rossetti's unreliability. Rossetti letters to Rae are one long saga of excuses.

### MONNA VANNA ('VAIN WOMAN')

- Monna Vanna ('vain woman') is taken from Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (thirteenth century, literally 'the new life') in which the name 'Vanna' appears for the first time.
- Modelled by **Alexa Wilding**
- He considered it one of his **best works**, writing that it was '**probably the most effective as a room decoration that I have ever painted**' reinforcing the view that Rossetti painted for money but his real love was poetry.
- It was originally called *Venus Veneta* and was intended to be the Venetian ideal of female beauty. He later retouched the painting and changed the title to *Belcolore* ('beautiful colour') but it has retained its title *Monna Vanna*.

### ASTARTE SYRIACA

- Modelled by **Jane Morris**, and her daughter May (left attendant). Rossetti was having an adulterous affair with Jane and she stayed with him at Aldwick Lodge from November to March 1875-6, except for Christmas. The two male figures imply that Jane or women have the power to ensnare men. Astarte was a **Semitic goddess** of fertility, sexuality and war. Astarte appears in Assyrian, Babylonian, Syrian, Hebrew and Etruscan legends. The Greeks and Romans sometimes equated Aphrodite (Venus) with Astarte.
- Disraeli took office as head of the first Conservative government since 1846 and published the popular novel *Tancred* in which the beautiful Queen Astarte rules the ancient people living around Antioch in Syria. Astarte was often seen as the Syrian

Venus.

- Asherah or Astarte denounced the Old Testament prophets. Rossetti again invokes the divine power of women which can be seen as a denunciation of patriarchal Victorian Britain.
- It is possible all these paintings represents Rossetti's fear of women and it would be interesting to find out more about his relationship with his mother.



COFFEE BREAK



Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), *Portrait of Fanny Eaton*, 1859, 18 × 17 cm



Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886), *The Young Teacher*, 1861, private collection

Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), *Portrait of Fanny Eaton*, 1859, 18 × 17 cm

Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886), *The Young Teacher*, 1861, private collection

### FANNY EATON

- **Fanny Matilda Eaton** (née Antwistle, 1835-1924, died aged 88 of 'senile decay') was born in Jamaica and travelled to England with her mother. She worked as a servant and married a London cab driver called James Eaton. In 1859–61 she **modelled for Rebecca Solomon as well as her brother Simeon, the artist Albert Moore** and students at the Royal Academy.
- She soon became first choice for artists who wanted to depict an **'exotic' female character in a Biblical, Egyptian or Indian scene**. She had **ten children** several of who featured in paintings. She was later widowed and worked as a cook-housekeeper in Hammersmith and died aged eighty-nine.
- In *The Young Teacher* she is cast as an Indian nanny who were frequently employed by white British families during colonial rule. The artist **Rebecca Solomon** came from an artistic family and was a

**friendly rival to Joanna Boyce Wells.** Her brother Simeon Solomon drew this portrait which is one of the earliest known of Fanny Eaton.

### **BIO:EATON**

- "Fanny Eaton (1835–1924) was born Fanny Matilda Antwistle in Jamaica, she travelled with her mother to Britain where she found work as a servant and in 1857 met Londoner James Eaton, a cart and cab driver. In 1859–60 she modelled for Rebecca and Simeon Solomon and Albert Moore, as well as posing for students at the Royal Academy of Arts.
- Eaton soon became the first choice for artists depicting female characters in Biblical, Egyptian, Indian and other 'exotic' scenes. She sat for Madox Brown, Gabriel Rossetti, John Millais and Joanna Wells, who aimed to cast Eaton as the Libyan Sibyl. Rossetti praised her dark hair, distinct features and 'very fine figure'.
- Several of the Eatons' ten children also featured in paintings: as the baby Moses and infants of an enslaved mother. Widowed in 1881, she later worked as a cook-housekeeper in Hammersmith, and died in west London at the age of eighty-nine. Discovering her existence through family research, her descendant Brian Eaton has traced her life and career through documents and artworks." [1]

### **BIO:SOLOMON, REBECCA**

- Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886) was a 19th-century English Pre-Raphaelite draftsman, illustrator, engraver, and painter of social injustices <sup>1</sup>. She was born in London, in a prominent Jewish family. Both her parents and her brothers **Abraham and Simeon were also artists** <sup>1 3</sup>. She studied under her brother Abraham and later **under John Everett Millais**, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood <sup>1</sup>. She exhibited her work at the

Royal Academy of Arts and other venues, and **became a successful artist in mid-Victorian London**<sup>1 2</sup>. She painted scenes from literature, history, religion and contemporary life, often with a focus on women's roles and experiences<sup>1 2</sup>. One of her paintings, *The Young Teacher* (1861), was recently acquired by Princeton University Art Museum for over \$300,000<sup>2</sup>. **She died in a tragic accident when she was run over by a hansom cab in London**<sup>1</sup>.

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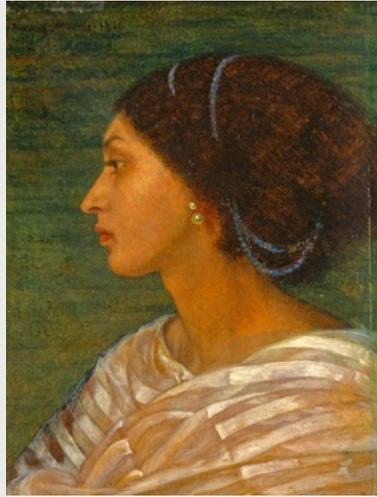
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Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Elgiva*, 1855, private collection



Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Head of a Multiracial Woman*, (1861)



Joanna Mary Boyce Wells, *Self-portrait*, 1852, 41 × 35 cm, private collection

Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Self-portrait* (aged 21), 1852, 41 × 35 cm, private collection

Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Elgiva*, 1855, private collection

Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Head of a Multiracial Woman* (originally called *Head of a Mulatto Woman*), (1861)

### JOANNA BOYCE WELLS

- **Joanna Boyce** (1840-1861, died aged 29), also known by her married name **Joanna Wells**, was one of the **most accomplished** Pre-Raphaelite artists. She was born to a **wealthy pawnbroker** and encouraged to paint by her father and brother. She formally started to **study art at the age of eleven**. She entered Cary's Academy (also called Bloomsbury Art School) when she was 18, a selective art school for the most able, and then travelled to Paris to study. **Her brother is the Pre-Raphaelite watercolourist George Price Boyce** (1826-1897).
- (CLICK) This work, *Elgiva* (pronounced 'ell-jiva' or 'ell-jeeva'), was the first she exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1855 **when she was just 15** and she received **glowing praise** from the critics including John Ruskin. Ford Madox Brown declared it "**the best head in the**

**room**". It is the imagined portrait of an Anglo-Saxon queen who was forcibly divorced, disfigured to destroy her beauty and finally murdered.

- Boyce spent 1857 in Italy, and in December of that year married miniaturist **Henry Tanworth Wells** (later a Royal Academician) in Rome.
- **Boyce's later works include a portrait of Fanny Eaton** who we have just seen, it was originally called *Head of a Mulatto Woman*.

### NOTES

- She married Henry Tanworth Wells (1828–1903) and they had three children:
  - Sidney Boyce Wells 1859–1869
  - Alice Joanna Wells 1860–1945
  - Joanna Margaret Wells 1861–1949
- Joanna Mary Boyce died from complications following the birth of her third child, Joanna Margaret, on 15 July 1861. Cemetery: Kensal Green Cemetery, London.

### BIO:BOYCE WELLS

- "Joanna Boyce Wells (1840–1861) was one of the most accomplished artists in the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Joanna Boyce was encouraged to paint by her businessman father, artist brother, George Boyce, and husband, Henry Wells.
- Her first major success was with the painting *Elgiva*, shown at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1855, followed by studying in Paris at the atelier of Thomas Couture. The meticulous approach of the Pre-Raphaelites was not the style favoured by Couture. Boyce reported: 'He complains of my being slow and says I ought to paint a whole figure in one day! only fancy the horror of a P.R.B. ... I am provoked for though I wish to paint more quickly, I hate slovenly drawing.'

- She married Henry Wells during a visit to Italy in 1857–8, after which the couple created an artistic partnership in Britain. Asserting her ability, she declared: 'I have a talent and with it the constant impulse to employ it.' This was 'God-given proof' of power, 'and no man has a right to say that that warning is to be unheeded.' In Elizabeth Siddal's opinion, Joanna was 'the head of the firm' that was the Wells Partnership. To Gabriel Rossetti she was 'a marvellously gifted artist' who would have reached great heights. She died of obstetric fever after the birth of her third child." [1]

### **REFERENCES**

[1] Pre-Raphaelite Sisters Access Guide, National Portrait Gallery



Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Portrait of Sidney Wells*, 1859, 27.6 × 25.1cm, Tate

Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Gretchen*, 1861, 73 × 43.7cm, Tate



Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Portrait of Sidney Wells*, 1859, 27.6 × 25.1cm, Tate

Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Gretchen*, 1861, 73 × 43.7cm, Tate

- She painted this portrait of her second child, Sidney, while he was still less than a year old. This is a highly personal work and has a small icon-like format. It is made especially poignant as we know that Joanna died when she was 29 and Sidney eight years later when he was 10.
- Gretchen refers to the central scene in *Faust*, the tragic play published by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In the play, Gretchen, confused, seduced and pregnant by Faust, seeks solace in church.
- The sitter for the work was probably **Wells's nursery maid**. Women artists had limited access to models at the time. Wells had established a reputation during the 1850s as a painter of portraits, genre and landscape. She also wrote art reviews for the *Saturday Review*. Wells was pregnant when she began this painting and died

shortly after the birth and the picture was left unfinished. The baby girl lived and was called Joanna, after her, and she lived to be 89.

- At the time of her death, contemporaries remarked on Boyce's talent as an artist: Dante Gabriel **Rossetti described her as "a wonderfully gifted woman"**, and another obituarist **called her a genius**. Her art has been highlighted in exhibitions up until the present day and many critics believe her reputation would be much higher but for her early death.

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William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Il Dolce far Niente*, 1859[?], 1860[?], 1865-66, retouched by the artist 1874-75, 99 × 82.5 cm, The Schaeffer Collection



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, 76.2 × 55.9 cm, Tate

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, 76.2 × 55.9 cm, Tate

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Il Dolce far Niente*, 1859[?], 1860[?], 1865-66, retouched by the artist 1874-75, 99 × 82.5 cm, The Schaeffer Collection

### ANNIE MILLER

- **Annie Miller** (1835-1925) grew up in poverty in Chelsea near to Holman Hunt's studio. When she was 18 she modelled for this painting Hunt's *Awakening Conscience* and **Hunt fell in love with her**. He wanted to marry her but thought she **needed to be educated** so when he travelled to the Middle East the following year (1854-56) he **paid for her education** including how to **behave as a well-bred woman**. However, when he was away **she didn't attend classes** and posed for John Millais, **Gabriel Rossetti**, Arthur Hughes, Charles Collins and others. On his return Hunt was told by Ford Madox Brown that she had **behaved in a 'siren-like' manner** during his absence. Her association with Rossetti in particular created a rift between Hunt and Rossetti.
- Hunt was heavily criticised early in his career and achieved little

success but *The Awakening Conscience* received good reviews but it was the still famous *The Light of the World* (1851-53) made him famous.

- *The Awakening Conscience* appears to depict a disagreement between husband and wife, but the title and many symbols within the painting make it clear that this is a mistress and her lover. The woman's clasped hands provide a focal point and we can see she has no wedding ring. Around the room are dotted reminders of her "kept" status and her wasted life.
- Art historian Elizabeth Prettejohn, who, incidentally was my PhD supervisor, notes that although the interior is now viewed as typically Victorian it would have been seen at the time as having a '**nouveau-riche**' **vulgarity, the bright colours, the clutter of objects, their gaudy appearance and the highly polished furniture would have looked distasteful to contemporary viewers.**
- Despite the break with Rossetti, Hunt continued to use Miller as a model. (CLICK) **This is *Il Dolce far Niente* literally means 'sweet doing nothing'**, a popular Italian activity and the phrase is almost untranslatable. It means living in the moment, just enjoying time going by. Hunt painted her hair reddish-brown rather than blond as it was not intended as a portrait.
- Annie became involved with the seventh Viscount Ranelagh (pronounced 'ran-i-luh') while she was engaged to Hunt and this led to him ending their engagement on the grounds of her frivolity and 'wilfulness'. **However, she married Thomas Thompson a cousin of Lord Ranelagh** and they had a son and a daughter, **moved to Richmond** and then the south coast and **she died aged ninety. Hunt bumped into her** many years after their relationship **on Richmond Hill** and found she was very happily married. An example of how someone could rise from the **very bottom of society to the top** of the social scale.

## NOTES

- There has been much discussion about whether Annie Miller had sexual relations with any of her admirers and there is no evidence either way. There is a lot of indirect evidence, regarding her relationship with Hunt, that she refused to become 'gay'. The word 'gay' started to acquire associations of immorality as early as the 14th century and by the 17th century it meant "addicted to pleasure and dissipations" as well as its usual meaning of "joyful" and "carefree". By extension a gay woman was a prostitute, a gay man a womaniser and a gay house a brothel. The modern meaning was not widely used until the 1960s.
- *The Awakening Conscience* symbols:
  - The lack of a wedding ring.
  - The gaudy furnishings.
  - The cat toying with a bird.
  - The unravelled threads of the tapestry.
  - The print of Frank Stone's *Cross Purposes* on the wall.
  - Edward Lear's musical arrangement of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 1847 poem "Tears, Idle Tears" which lies discarded on the floor.
  - The music on the piano, Thomas Moore's "Oft in the Stilly Night", the words of which speak of missed opportunities and sad memories of a happier past.
  - The discarded glove and top hat thrown on the table top suggest a hurried assignation.
  - The painting's frame is decorated with further symbols: bells (for warning), marigolds (for sorrow), and a star above the girl's head (a sign of spiritual revelation). It also bears a verse from the Book of Proverbs (25:20): "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart".

- The mirror at the back shows a spring garden suggesting the joy of the outside world and God's forgiveness.

### **BIO:MILLER**

- "Annie Miller (1835–1925) was the daughter of a soldier, Annie Miller grew up in poverty, in the back streets of Chelsea, close to Holman Hunt's studio. Aged eighteen, she posed for the figure of a remorseful 'fallen woman' in his *The Awakening Conscience*. He then paid for her to be educated in literacy and manners suitable for a wife.
- During Hunt's travels in Egypt and Syria in 1854–6, she posed for John Millais, Gabriel Rossetti, Arthur Hughes, Charles Collins and others. 'She is a good girl and behaves herself very properly', Millais reported. In 1859, Hunt ended their engagement, on the grounds of her frivolity and 'wilfulness'. Fearing she would 'fall to the lowest', he offered assisted emigration, which she rejected in favour of modelling. 'She looks more beautiful than ever,' remarked George Boyce.
- When she encountered Rossetti and Henry Wells at the International Exhibition in 1862, she was 'looking very handsome'. Her escort was an officer in the Volunteer Reserve Army and cousin of Lord Ranelagh named Thomas Thompson, whom she married the following year. With a daughter and a son, the couple moved to Richmond-on-Thames and then to the south coast, where she died aged ninety, a notable example of having 'risen' in the social scale." [1]

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William Holman Hunt,  
*The Birthday* (Edith  
Waugh Hunt) 1867



William Holman Hunt  
(1827–1910), *Fanny  
Waugh Hunt*, 1866-68,  
104 × 73cm, Toledo  
Museum of Art

William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *Fanny Waugh Hunt*, 1866-68, 104 × 73cm, Toledo Museum of Art

### FANNY AND EDITH WAUGH

- After Hunt broke off his engagement to Annie Miller he later married **Fanny Waugh** (1833-1866, aged 33) in 1865. They left for a trip to Europe and settled in Florence. This painting was begun in Florence, during the late summer of 1866, when Fanny posed for Hunt behind a chair to conceal her pregnancy. Their son was born in October and **Fanny sadly died two months later of complications** from the delivery.
- Hunt completed the portrait in London with the aid of a photograph and Fanny's paisley shawl, purple dress, and cameo brooch that he retrieved from Florence. The rich interior features many objects of upper-class 'artistic' taste: the Chinese porcelain vase and gold mirror frame, Venetian glass bowl and chandelier, Persian pottery dish, and elegantly framed watercolours. Many of these objects are seen through the multiple, receding mirror reflections, which seem to evoke both eternity and the dimming of memory with time.  
(thanks to Toledo Museum of Art)

- Nine years later Hunt caused a major scandal by marrying her sister **Edith Waugh**, as marrying one's dead wife's sister was, in law, defined as incest at that time. They travelled to Switzerland to marry (in November 1875) and this led to a complete break with her family and with his friend, the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor **Thomas Woolner** who had been in love with Fanny but had married the middle sister **Alice Waugh**.
- Incidentally, in case you are wondering about the name, their uncle James Hay Waugh was the father of their cousin, Alexander, who became a country doctor and was known as 'the Brute' as he bullied his wife and children and his eldest son Arthur, was the father of **Evelyn Waugh, the novelist who wrote *Brideshead Revisited***.

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Evelyn de Morgan, *Portrait of Jane Morris and Study for The Hour Glass*, 1904, pastel on paper, 46 × 35.8 cm, The De Morgan Foundation



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Proserpine*, 1874

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Proserpine*, 1874

Evelyn de Morgan, *Portrait of Jane Morris and Study for The Hour Glass*, 1904, pastel on paper, 46 × 35.8 cm, The De Morgan Foundation

### **JANE MORRIS**

- This is *Proserpine* (pronounced 'pro-suh-pine') by Rossetti and modelled by **Jane Morris** (1839-1914, aged 74). According to one myth Proserpine also called Proserpina or Persephone (pronounced 'puh-seh-fuh-nee'), was the daughter of Ceres (pronounced as 'series'), the goddess of fertility and agriculture. One day the god of the Underworld, Pluto, came out of Mount Etna, fell in love with her and took her back to the Underworld. Ceres searched the world and could not find her daughter and so in anger she stopped the growth of fruit and vegetables worldwide and each step she took around the world created a desert. This worried Jupiter and so he ordered Pluto to free Proserpine. Before he released her Pluto made her eat six pomegranate seeds which meant she would have to return to the Underworld for six months a year. On her return her joyful mother reinstated the growth of plants and when she went back to the

underworld for six months she stopped their growth, which is why we have summer and winter.

- **Jane Morris** (née Burden, 1839-1914) was born in Oxford, the **daughter of a stableman**. When she was 18 she attended a performance of the Drury Lane Theatre in Oxford and was **noticed by Rossetti and Burne-Jones** who were in Oxford to paint the Oxford Union murals. Rossetti was struck by her beauty and asked her to model for him. She sat mostly for Rossetti and later for **William Morris who fell in love with her**. They became engaged although by her own admission she **did not love Morris**.
- During their engagement Morris paid for her to be **privately educated to become a gentleman's wife** and her **considerable intelligence** enabled her to recreate herself. She read extensively, became **proficient in French and Italian** and became a **very accomplished pianist**. Her manners and speech became **so refined she was described as 'queenly'**. She could have indirectly been **the model George Bernard Shaw used for Eliza Doolittle** in *Pygmalion* (1914).
- After their marriage in 1859 they moved to the **Red House in Bexleyheath** (well worth a visit) where she had two daughters. They then moved to London and shared a house with the design firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. (1861-1875) which became Morris & Co. Later they bought **Kelmscott House in Hammersmith** as their main residence. Jane became renowned for her embroideries and her knowledge of ancient embroidery techniques but all her design were described as by William Morris, "**in the interests of commercial success**".
- Rossetti and Jane had started to become closely attached in 1865 and in 1871, William and Rossetti took out a joint tenancy on **Kelmscott Manor** (which is between Swindon and Oxford). Then **William went to Iceland leaving Rossetti and Jane** to

furnish the house and spent the summer together there. Their relationship deepened and continued until Rossetti's death in 1882.

- (CLICK) The following year (1883) Jane met the poet Wilfrid Blunt (1840-1922) and they became friends and four years later lovers. Their sexual relationship continued for seven years and they remained friends until her death in 1914. William Morris died in 1896 two years after their sexual relationship had ended.

### **BIO:JANE MORRIS**

- "Jane Morris 1839 –1914
- Jane Burden grew up in poverty in Oxford and was destined for a life of domestic service until she met the Pre-Raphaelite painters who were decorating the University debating chamber in 1857. Gabriel Rossetti drew her as Queen Guinevere and William Morris as Iseult. Tall and slender, she had thick dark hair and striking features that created a new standard of beauty that especially influenced the image of the femme fatale. To novelist Henry James, she was 'a grand synthesis of all the Pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made'.
- In spring 1859 she married Morris, becoming his partner in the decorative arts firm later known as Morris & Co, where she managed the embroidery commissions. She became a close friend of Georgiana and Edward Burne-Jones, whose children knew her as 'Aunt Janey'.
- From 1868 when she resumed modelling for Rossetti, she embarked on a love affair with him, that lasted until Rossetti's irrecoverable breakdown in 1876. She inspired a major sequence of images of her as Pandora, Beatrice, La Pia, Proserpine and other figures.
- A renowned needlewoman, who also experimented with calligraphy and bookbinding, Jane was a leading member of the

Arts and Crafts movement, Close friends in later life included Evelyn and William De Morgan, and Marie Spartali Stillman." [1]

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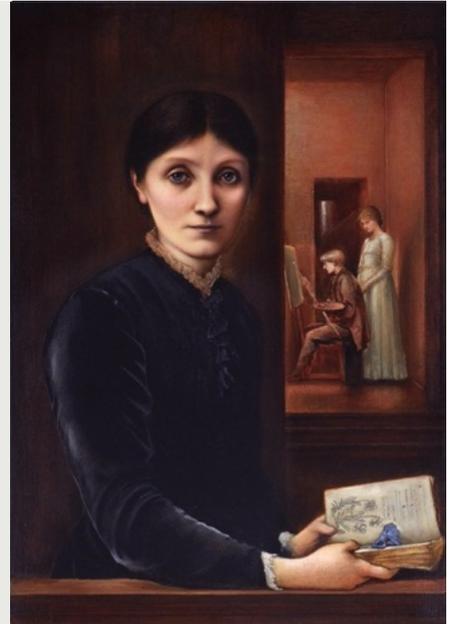
Edward Poynter, *Georgiana Burne-Jones*, c. 1870



Edward Burne-Jones, *Maria Zambaco*, 1871



Georgiana Macdonald (1840-1920), *Dead Bird*, 1857, Tate



Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Georgiana Burne-Jones, their children Margaret and Philip*, 1883

Edward Poynter, *Georgiana Burne-Jones*, c. 1870

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Georgiana Burne-Jones, their children Margaret and Philip*, 1883, private

Georgiana Macdonald (1840-1920, aged 79, later Lady Burne-Jones), *Dead Bird*, 1857, watercolour, 17.8 × 9.8 cm, Tate

### GEORGIANA BURNE-JONES

- This is **Georgiana Burne-Jones** (1840-1920) by Edward Poynter. She was born MacDonald to a Methodist minister in Birmingham. (CLICK) She became a painter and engraver and **painted this dead bird when she was 17** and training at the School of Design, London. The painting reflects a contemporary **interest in natural history**, a common pursuit for educated young women, and her studies with the progressive painter Ford Madox Brown. (The bird, a Green-Headed Tanager, *Tangara seledon*, had been brought from South America.)
- She was one of the **well-known MacDonald sisters** and so was **aunt of both Rudyard Kipling and the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin**. She became a close confidant of George Eliot, William Morris and John Ruskin (and her son Philip became a well known painter).

- **She met Burne-Jones**, then plain or Ned Jones, in Birmingham **when she was 15** and they **became engaged and were married when she was 19** (1860). They had **very little money** but lived an idyllic existence. They spent a **summer at the Red House with William and Jane Morris**. Their **first child Philip caught scarlet fever** when he was two and she caught the disease and miscarried her second child but Philip survived.
- With the birth of Philip she gave up the art studio to become a full-time caregiver. "**I remember the feeling of exile** with which I now heard through its **closed door the well-known voices of friends** together with Edward's familiar laugh, **while I sat with my little son on my knee and dropped selfish tears** on him as 'separator of companions and the terminator of delights'".
- The **1870s was a difficult decade** for the family as **Edward had many poor reviews** (CLICK) and he then began a **passionate affair with the Greek model Maria Zambaco** (pronounced 'zam-back-o'). This became a **public scandal bordering on farce** when she tried to commit suicide by jumping into the Regent's Canal in 1869.
- (CLICK) **This second portrait of Georgiana** when she was 43 shows her reading a herbal with their two children in the background. Margaret was born in 1866 and is about 17 and Philip was by then about 22. Philip (1871-1926) went on to become a well known artist. Burne-Jones never finished with the painting and dabbled with it the rest of his life
- About this time Georgiana developed a close relationship with William Morris whose wife, as we have heard, had fallen in love with Rossetti. The affair lingered on but slowly declined and the Burne-Joneses and the Morrises remained together for another 30 years.

### BIO:GEORGINA BURNE-JONES

- "Georgiana Burne-Jones (1840–1920, née Macdonald) was an aspiring artist and one of five sisters in a Methodist family. At the age of fifteen she was engaged to Edward Burne-Jones, entering the world of art with classes in drawing and wood-engraving. She also studied with Madox Brown, who judged that her designs showed 'real intellect'.
- Following marriage in 1860, **she became friends with Jane Morris and Elizabeth Siddal**, with whom she planned to produce an illustrated volume of original fairy tales. Visiting Italy, she revealed an acute 'eye for a picture'. Small in stature, she was steadfast in affections and judgement.
- The birth of daughter Margaret in 1866 closely preceded her husband's infatuation with Maria Zambaco. Georgiana then devoted her energies to motherhood, managing household and studio, and working in the community. She supported the South London Art Gallery, opposed the Boer War and became a parish councillor in Sussex, promoting rural health care.
- Two of her major contributions to the history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement were assistance with the *Life of William Morris* compiled by her son-in-law (1899), and then her own **biography of Edward Burne-Jones** (1904). This chronicled the movement through his life, work and friends, while **hinting at regret for her own lost art practice.**" [1]

### **EDWARD POYNTER (1836-1919)**

- Edward Poynter was an English painter, designer, and draughtsman, who served as President of the Royal Academy<sup>1 2</sup>  
<sup>3</sup>. He was born in Paris in 1836, but moved to Britain soon after<sup>1</sup>. He studied art in Rome, London, and Paris, and became famous for his historical and classical paintings<sup>1 4</sup>. He also designed mosaics, stained glass, and coins<sup>1</sup>. He died in London in 1919<sup>1</sup>.

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Maria Cassavetti Zambaco (1843-1914), *Marie Stillman*, 1886, alloy metal, 13.4 cm, inscription: Marie Stillman MDCCLXXXVI, British Museum



Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Portrait of Maria Zambaco*

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Phyllis and Demophoon*, 1870, bodycolour and watercolour with gold medium and gum arabic on composite layers of paper on canvas, 93.8 × 47.5 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Phyllis and Demophoon*, 1870, bodycolour and watercolour with gold medium and gum arabic on composite layers of paper on canvas, 93.8 × 47.5 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Maria Cassavetti Zambaco (1843-1914), *Marie Stillman*, 1886, alloy metal, 13.4 cm, inscription: Marie Stillman MDCCLXXXVI, British Museum (ref. 1887,1207.1) Stillman and Zambaco, who modelled for (and became the mistress of) Edward Burne-Jones, were related to each other, and close friends

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Portrait of Maria Zambaco*

### **MARIA ZAMBACO**

- Both faces in *Phyllis and Demophoon* (pronounced 'dema-foon') are modelled by Maria Zambaco, the women with whom Burne-Jones had an affair. The story is from Ovid and tells of how the Queen of Thrace falls in love with Demophoon. He has to leave but promises to return in six months. When he fails to return she hangs herself in an almond tree and the gods turn her into an almond tree. Demophoon returns and Phyllis emerges from the tree to return to her lover and forgive him.

- The **painting was controversial and Burne-Jones was told to remove it** from the Old Watercolour Society exhibition both because of the exposed genitals in the exact centre of the painting but because his scandalous affair with Zambaco and the attempted suicide which had just become public knowledge.
- (CLICK) **Maria Zambaco** (born Marie Cassavetti, 1843-1914) was **extremely wealthy as she inherited her father's vast fortune in 1858 when she was 15**. She was a **talented artist** who studied at the **Slade** and **then in Paris under Auguste Rodin** and she **exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon**. She **worked as a sculptor** in the 1880s and (CLICK) the **British Museum has four of the medallions she donated**. As well as Burne-Jones she also modelled for **James McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti**.
- **As a teenager she was pursued by George du Maurier** but she rejected his advances and when she was 18 she **married Dr Demetrius Zambaco** who was 11 years her senior. They had two children but the **marriage failed and they separated**. In 1866, when **she was 23 she met Edward Burne-Jones** when her mother commissioned a painting from him and started the **tempestuous affair**.

### **BIO:ZAMBACO**

- "Maria Zambaco (1843–1914) was born in London, Maria Cassavetti was the daughter of an Anglo- Greek businessman in the same community as the Spartali family, and granddaughter of patron of Pre-Raphaelite artists, Constantine Ionides. In 1861, she married a Paris-based physician, Demetrius Zambaco. Her unhappiness led to her return to London in 1866 with their son and daughter. Her mother arranged portrait sittings with Edward Burne-Jones, which turned into art instruction and soon into an intense love-affair.

- 'She looked and was primeval' Burne-Jones wrote, as he became obsessed and painted her repeatedly in the guises of Psyche, Phyllis, Circe, Cassandra and Galatea. In the words of his wife, Georgiana Burne-Jones, 'beauty and misfortune' held tremendous power over him. 'She really is extremely beautiful', Gabriel Rossetti told Jane Morris.
- According to William Rossetti, she had great talent and 'remarkable capacities for painting.' After the affair with Burne-Jones ended, Zambaco became a sculptor, studying with Alphonse Legros in London and Auguste Rodin in Paris. She produced figurines and portrait medallions – including one depicting Marie Spartali Stillman – and exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts and Paris Salon. She died in Paris and was buried in the Cassavetti family grave in south London." [1]

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Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni*, 1884, watercolour and bodycolour, Walker Gallery, Liverpool



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Madonna Pietra*, 1874, pastel, Koriyama City Museum of Art



Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *Love's Messenger*, 1885, 81.2 × 66 cm, Delaware Art Museum

Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *Love's Messenger*, 1885, watercolour, tempera and gold colour on paper mounted on wood, 81.2 × 66 cm, Delaware Art Museum

Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni*, 1884, watercolour and bodycolour, Walker Gallery, Liverpool

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Madonna Pietra*, 1874, Koriyama City Museum of Art

## MARIE SPARTALI STILLMAN

- **Marie (Euphrosyne) Spartali Stillman** (1844-1927) was a **cousin of Maria Zambaco** and together with another cousin (Aglaia Coronio) were known as "the Three Graces", after the Charities of Greek mythology. Of all the Pre-Raphaelites she had one of the longest running careers, spanning some sixty years, during which she produced over one hundred and fifty works.
- **She studied with Ford Madox Brown** who became her lifelong mentor. Her pictures were exhibited from 1867 when she was 23 and **she insisted on selling** them despite her father urging her to give them as a gift to **avoid the family shame** of her appearing to have to earn a living. In 1871 she married American-born journalist

**William Stillman** whose career took them to Greece and Italy for extended periods.

- Her closest Pre-Raphaelite **friends were Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Jane Morris**. From 1877 she exhibited at the brand new Grosvenor Gallery, and also sent works to the USA.
- When Stillman was working in Florence (from 1878 to 1883) she was influenced by early Italian art and literature. The picture **illustrates a poem by Dante Alighieri entitled 'Madonna Pietra' (My Lady of Stone)**. It depicts the cold, heartless woman of Dante's poem ("Utterly frozen ... no more moved than is the stone"), and the elements of the picture — the green, stone, shade and hills — reflect the rhyming words of the poem. **Stillman pays homage to Rossetti who translated the poem and who died the year the painting was started.**
- (CLICK) Rossetti also produced a pastel version of *Madonna Pietra* in 1874 (in the Koriyama City Museum of Art). In it the figure is also holding a crystal globe. Rossetti's picture is a cold-hearted femme fatale and Stillman an angelic figure carrying a **globe that reflects a scene of the Annunciation**.
- (CLICK) *Love's Messenger* of 1885 is a watercolour in which a **dove has just carried a love letter** to a woman standing by an open window. She has just put down her embroidery of a **blindfolded Cupid**. The **symbols in the painting suggest a conflict** between the constancy and fidelity of the **love of Venus** symbolised by the rose and the dove and the sensuality and **pain Cupid's arrows** may inflict. It was exhibited in the **Grosvenor Gallery** in 1885 and was **one of her most important works** displayed in the 1880s. It was bought in 1901 for £100 from her daughter Effie Stillman and later donated to the Delaware Art Museum.

## NOTES

- *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni* is an imagined portrait of the daughter of the Paduan moneylender Rinaldo Scrovigni who Rossetti wrongly associated with Dante's poem.
- The pastel by Rossetti was a sketch for a painting that was never produced. The globe was to have reflected a rocky landscape symbolising her pitiless heart.

## BIO:STILLMAN

- "Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927) was born into the Anglo-Greek business community in London, Marie Spartali was a **childhood friend of Maria Zambaco**. Her introduction to the art world came when her sister Christine was painted by James McNeil Whistler and Marie modelled for the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.
- Setting her sights on painting, from 1864 **Spartali studied with Madox Brown**, who became a lifelong mentor. Her pictures were exhibited from 1867, and when her father urged her to make her first sale into a gift, she insisted she was committed to a professional career. **In 1871, she married the American-born journalist William J. Stillman**, whose career took the family to Greece and Italy for extended periods. Spartali Stillman developed a distinctive pictorial style of poetic scenes drawn from late-medieval texts by Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Notable for colour harmony and evocative atmosphere, her works were eloquently praised by Henry James.
- **Her closest Pre-Raphaelite friends were Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Jane Morris**. From 1877 she exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, and also sent works to the USA, where views of the Morrises' house, Kelmscott Manor, sold well. During the 1890s she painted and exhibited landscapes with the In Arte Libertas group in Rome. She aimed with quiet

determination not to paint 'only what one feels sure of', when it 'is so much more interesting to soar above one's strength.'" [1]

- She was statuesque with long dark hair and eyes. She was described by Rossetti as one of his most intellectual models. She modelled for Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Whistler and others, while also painting her own works inspired by Shakespeare, Dante and Italian landscapes. **She was one of the few women artists in the Pre-Raphaelite movement who achieved recognition and success.** Unfortunately, according to art collector and benefactor Charles Fairfax Murray, she "ruined her reputation by running down her own work with characteristic self-denigration."

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Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927), *The First Meeting of Petrarch and Laura*, 1889, watercolour and gouache paint on paper, 56 × 48 cm, private collection (courtesy of Peter and Renate Nahum)



Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927), *The First Meeting of Petrarch and Laura*, 1889, watercolour and gouache paint on paper, 56 × 48 cm, private collection (courtesy of Peter and Renate Nahum)

- **Stillman and her husband lived near Florence** from 1878 to 1884 and **she developed a love for Italian poetry and art history**. She used Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* as a source and like Rossetti used **watercolour and gouache** to give the painting a **medieval look**.
- The scene is when **Francesco Petrarch** (1304-1374) **sees Laura** for the first time giving alms to an old woman. He had **given up his vocation as a priest** and the sight of a woman called "Laura" in the church of Sainte-Claire d'Avignon **awoke in him a lasting passion**. She was probably **Laura de Noves** (1310-1348), the wife of Count Hugues de Sade (an ancestor of the Marquis de Sade 1740-1814). His love for her is hopeless and leads to irreconcilable anguish which he expresses in his poetry as paradoxes,

*I find no peace, and all my war is done;  
I fear and hope; I burn and freeze like ice;  
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;*

...

*I desire to perish, and yet I ask health;*

*I love another, and thus I hate myself; ...* (Rima, Sonnet

134)

### **NOTES**

- After this first encounter Petrarch spent the next three years stalking her, even buying a small estate to be near her. She gave birth to eleven children and died of the plague in 1348 aged 38.

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Beata Beatrix*, 1864-70, 86.4 × 66 cm, Tate Britain



Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927), *Beatrice*, 1895, watercolour, gouache and tempera on paper, 57.6 × 43.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum

Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927), *Beatrice*, 1895, watercolour, gouache and tempera mounted on paper, 57.6 × 43.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum, image source: Wikimedia Commons

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Beata Beatrix* ('Blessed Beatrix'), 1864-70, 86.4 × 66 cm, Tate Britain

- This is **her painting of Beatrice**, the love of Dante Alighieri's (c. 1265-1321) life. Dante claims to have seen her twice in his life. The first time when **he was nine and she was eight** and he claimed to have fallen in love "at first sight". **When he was 12 he was promised in marriage** and married Gemma di Manetto Donati and they had three children. From the age of 18 he claimed to see Beatrice frequently in the street **but only at a distance** and he never knew her well. Then years **later he met her again** and wrote several sonnets and poems to her including *La Vita Nuova* (1294) and included her in his best known work ***The Divine Comedy*** in which he describes his journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise where **she becomes his guide** at one point. The *Divine Comedy* in many ways created the Italian language by combining his Tuscan dialect with Latin. He said his love for Beatrice was his reason for writing

and for living.

- We believe she was Beatrice Portinari (1265-1290), the wife of a banker, Simone dei Bardi and the daughter of another banker Folco Portinari.
- (CLICK) **Beatrice was painted by many artists at the time.** This is an example by Rossetti (1828-1882) that he based on his wife Elizabeth Siddal after her death. It shows Beatrice at **the moment of her death.** The **red dove symbolises love and the white poppy opium**, the cause of his wife's death. In the background Dante looks across at Love shown as an angel holding the flickering flame of Beatrice's life. In the distance is the **Ponte Vecchio**, Florence, the setting of Dante's story. Beatrice **died at 9:00am on 9th June 1290** and the sundial's shadow points to nine.
- Rossetti's name was Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti and his family called him Gabriel but he put Dante first in his publications in honour of Dante Alighieri, Italy's greatest writer, and that is how he is now known.

### NOTES

- Rossetti was commissioned to paint a second version to which he added a predella and it is now in the Art Institute Chicago. As well as various sketches there is another version in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery started in 1877 that Ford Madox brown completed after Rossetti's death and another 1880 oil painting in the national Galleries of Scotland.

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Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), *Marie Stillman (née Spartali)*, 1868, albumen cabinet card, 13.3 × 9.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery



Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *The Long Walk at Kelmscott Manor, Oxfordshire*, undated, watercolour with bodycolour, 34 × 52 cm, private collection

Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), *The Long Walk at Kelmscott Manor, Oxfordshire*, undated, watercolour with bodycolour, 34 × 52 cm, private collection

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), *Marie Stillman (née Spartali)*, 1868, albumen cabinet card, 13.3 × 9.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- She was a successful artist, this is a watercolour painting of the garden at Kelmscott Manor, William Morris's country home.
- She was also regarded as a beauty. (CLICK) When she first met Swinburne he was so overcome that he said, "**She is so beautiful that I want to sit down and cry**". She was an imposing figure, around six foot three inches (1.9 metres) and, in her later years, she dressed in long flowing black garments with a lace hood, attracting much attention throughout her life. She was the most intellectual of his models.
- We can see how artists found and tried to own models from a letter Rossetti wrote to Ford Madox Brown (29 April 1864), "**I just heard that Miss Spartali is to be your pupil, of which I am glad. I hear now too (which I did not know before) that she is one and the**

**same with a marvellous beauty of whom I have heard much talk. So box her up and don't let fellows see her, as I mean to have first shy at her in the way of sitting.**" She first sat for him in 1867 and modelled for *A Vision of Fiammetta*, *Dante's Dream* and *The Bower Meadow*.

- She also modelled for Ford Maddox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones (*The Mill*), Julia Margaret Cameron (as we see here), and her uncle John Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908) who was the **teacher of Evelyn De Morgan...**

### NOTES

- "Marie Euphrosyne Spartali at Tulse Hill, in South London, that Marie and her sister Christine (1846–1884) met Whistler and Swinburne for the first time. They were dressed in white with blue ribbon sashes. Swinburne was so overcome that he said of Spartali: "She is so beautiful that I want to sit down and cry". Marie was an imposing figure, around 1.9 metres (6 ft 3 in) tall and, in her later years, dressed in long flowing black garments with a lace hood, attracting much attention throughout her life.
- Spartali studied under Ford Maddox Brown for several years from 1864, with his children Lucy, Catherine and Oliver. Rossetti, on hearing that she was to become a pupil to Maddox Brown, wrote to him on 29 April 1864, "I just heard that Miss Spartali is to be your pupil, of which I am glad. I hear now too (which I did not know before) that she is one and the same with a marvellous beauty of whom I have heard much talk. So box her up and don't let fellows see her, as I mean to have first shy at her in the way of sitting." She first sat for him in 1867. He wrote to Jane Morris on 14 August 1869, "I find her head the most difficult I ever drew. It depends not so much on real form as on a subtle charm of life which one cannot recreate." She was the most intellectual of his models.

- She modelled for: Brown; Burne-Jones (The Mill); Julia Margaret Cameron; Rossetti (A Vision of Fiammetta, Dante's Dream, The Bower Meadow); and Spencer Stanhope.
- In 1871, against her parents' wishes, she married American journalist and painter William J. Stillman. She was his second wife, his first having committed suicide two years before. The couple had posed for Rossetti in his famous Dante pictures, though it is not certain if that is how they first met. He first worked for the American Art Magazine, *The Crayon*. His later job was a foreign correspondent for *The Times*. This resulted in the couple dividing their time between London and Florence, from 1878 to 1883, and then Rome from 1889 to 1896. She also travelled to America, and was the only Britain-based Pre-Raphaelite artist to work in the United States.
- The couple had three children together and Marie also helped to raise William's three children from his first marriage. William Stillman died in 1901. Marie Spartali died in March 1927 in Ashburn Place in South Kensington, four days shy of her 83rd birthday. Spartali Stillman was cremated at Brookwood Cemetery, near Woking, Surrey, and is interred there with her husband. The grave is marked by a simple lawn headstone.
- Her last will and testament contains a letter where Marie wrote, "It seems rather absurd to make a will when one has neither possessions nor money to leave". She left various personal items, including some mementos from her life as an artist.
- The subjects of her paintings were typical of the Pre-Raphaelites: female figures; scenes from Shakespeare, Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio; also Italian landscapes. She exhibited at the Dudley Gallery, then at the Grosvenor Gallery and its successor, the New Gallery; at the Royal Academy; and at various galleries in the eastern USA, including the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. Stillman exhibited her work at the Palace of Fine Arts at

the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. A retrospective show of her work took place in the United States in 1982, and another one at the Delaware Art Museum in 2015. The latter show transferred to the UK in 2016, opening at the Watts Gallery at Compton near Guildford in Surrey on 1st March 2016 until 5th June 2016."

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Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *Cadmus and Harmonia*, 1877, Wightwick Manor, NT, Wolverhampton



Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *Cadmus and Harmonia*, 1877, 148.5 × 89.5cm, Wightwick Manor, NT, Wolverhampton

### EVELYN DE MORGAN

- **Evelyn de Morgan** (1855-1919) was born **Mary Evelyn Pickering**, the great-granddaughter of the **Earl of Leicester** and she was **born into an aristocratic life**. Her uncle was the painter John Roddam Stanhope Spencer.
- She began drawing lessons **when she was 15** and on her 17th birthday wrote, "**Art is eternal, but life is short ... I have not a moment to lose**". She decided to become a professional painter and was **one of the first women to be admitted to the Slade in 1873** (it opened in 1871) and became a prize-winning student. She was described as "**full of mischief**" but "**all seriousness and absorption where painting was concerned**". She decided to use her **middle name 'Evelyn'** as it was then a name used by **both men and women**.
- She was **influenced by George Frederic Watts** and visited him in Florence. She was also friends with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt. In 1877 she **exhibited alongside Marie**

**Spartali Stillman** at the **Grosvenor Gallery** and in 1887, when she was 32, she **married the ceramicist William De Morgan**. They built a close professional relationship with **her art sales subsidising his pottery production**. They became good friends of William and Jane Morris.

- *Cadmus and Harmonia* is based on a story from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. **Cadmus is changed into a snake by the god Mars** (because he had slain a dragon that was sacred to Mars) **and his wife Harmonia begs for a similar fate so she can be with him**. Her wish is granted and we see her just before she is transformed. De Morgan has changed the story which takes place at the end of their lives when Harmonia is an old woman. (CLICK) Harmonia is reminiscent of Venus in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* which she had copied as a student.

## NOTES

- **Sir Coutts Lindsay** and his wife Blanche opened the **Grosvenor Gallery in 1877**. It was vital in the development of British art as it showed the work of the Aesthetic Movement and artists who were too modern to be selected by the Royal Academy, such as **Evelyn De Morgan**, Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane. **De Morgan boycotted the Royal Academy** and signed the *Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage* in 1889.
- The Slade School of Art is the art school of University College London (UCL) and is based in London, England. It has been ranked as the UK's top art and design educational institution<sup>9</sup>. The school traces its roots back to 1868 when lawyer and philanthropist Felix Slade (1788–1868) bequeathed funds to establish three Chairs in Fine Art, to be based at Oxford University, Cambridge University and University College London, where six studentships were endowed<sup>79</sup>. The Slade School of Art officially opened in 1871 as part of UCL, offering female students

education on equal terms as men from the outset<sup>8</sup>. The first director was Edward Poynter, who was succeeded by Alphonse Legros, Frederick Brown, Henry Tonks and William Coldstream among others<sup>9</sup>.

### **BIO:DE MORGAN**

- "Evelyn De Morgan (1855–1919) was born into an aristocratic life as great-granddaughter of the Earl of Leicester, Evelyn Pickering chose to become a professional painter. A prize-winning student at the Slade School of Fine Art, she was 'full of mischief' but 'all seriousness and absorption where painting was concerned'. Her uncle was the Pre-Raphaelite painter J.R. Spencer Stanhope.
- She exhibited alongside Marie Spartali Stillman and others at the Grosvenor Gallery from 1877 and in 1887 married the ceramicist William De Morgan. Together, they built a close professional-domestic partnership, with her art sales subsidising his pottery production. 'They were both artistic in the highest sense', wrote a friend. 'His capacity as a businessman was probably nil, hers only a little bit more than nil.' Their close friends included William and Jane Morris.
- Always figural and vividly coloured, Evelyn De Morgan's works often included Baroque-style drapery. The pictorial subjects ranged from medieval and classical legends to elaborate allegories presenting her Spiritualist belief in a transcendental afterlife. Increasingly, they also conveyed powerful messages against the greed of excessive wealth and the unrelenting violence of the First World War." [1]

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Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919),  
*Flora*, 1894, 198.1 × 86.4 cm, De  
Morgan Centre, Watts Gallery



Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510),  
*Primavera* (detail of Flora), 1482,  
tempera on panel, 203 × 314cm,  
Uffizi

Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *Flora*, 1894, 198.1 × 86.4 cm, De Morgan Centre, Watts Gallery

Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), *Primavera* (detail of Flora), 1482, tempera on panel, 203 × 314cm, Uffizi

- **Her subjects were medieval and classical legends as well as elaborate allegories of her Spiritualist beliefs.** She **boycotted the Royal Academy** and signed the *Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage* in 1889. She was a **pacifist** and her later works included powerful messages against the violence of the Boar War and First World War.
- **Flora is the Roman goddess of flowers** and the tree behind her is a **Japanese plum or loquat tree which is native to China and fruits in the spring.** In the tree are a chaffinch (top) and a siskin (bottom, a small finch with a long beak and a forked tail).
- (CLICK) It was painted in Florence and was **inspired by Botticelli's *Primavera***. It was bought by one of her regular patrons, William Imrie, a Scottish ship-owner. (CLICK)

## NOTES

- The scroll at the bottom is in Italian and reads, translated:

*I come down from Florence and am Flora,*

*This city takes its name from flower*

*Among the flowers I was born and now by a change of  
home*

*I have my dwelling among the mountains of Scotia*

*Welcome, and let me treasure amid northern mists be  
dear to you.*

- Scotia is the old Latin name for Scotland, although it originally referred to Ireland.

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Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919),  
*Medea*, 148 × 88 cm, Williamson  
Art Gallery, Birkenhead Priory



Medea in a fresco  
from [Herculaneum](#)

Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *Medea*, 148 × 88 cm, Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead Priory

- **The legend of Medea**, who **poisoned her children as a revenge on her philandering husband** Jason, has been represented by many artists since Roman times.
- Medea **helped Jason steal the golden fleece from her father** but Jason betrayed her by **falling for another woman** (Princess Creusa). In revenge Medea **killed her rival with a wedding dress that caught fire** and the **woman's father died** trying to save his daughter.
- One interpretation is that she killed her two sons to **prevent them being tortured** as revenge for her action. In this painting she is holding the bottle of poison she intends to use to kill her sons. The rose madder coloured dress signifies sadness and the white lining her inner purity. The arch behind her creates a halo further signifying the purity of her motives.
- The four dead doves on the floor could signify the two deaths and the two to come. Near her feet is a small red rose that has been

discarded perhaps symbolising her discarded love for Jason.

- (CLICK) Medea inspired many artists going all the way back to the ancient Greeks. This is a fresco from Herculaneum.

## **NOTES**

- The story comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but Evelyn was **inspired by William Morris' poem *The Life and Death of Jason***, which portrays Medea as a **tormented soul rather than a heartless sorceress**. She exhibited this painting with a stanza from Morris's poem as follows,

*"Day by day,  
she saw the happy time fade fast away,  
And as she fell from out that happiness,  
Again she grew to be the sorceress,  
Worker of fearful things, as once she was."*

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Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *The Gilded Cage*, 1919, 78.5 × 105cm, De Morgan Foundation, Watts Gallery



Evelyn de Morgan (1855-1919), *The Gilded Cage*, 1919, 78.5 × 105cm, De Morgan Foundation, Watts Gallery

- **This is the final work before her death in 1919.**
- One interpretation is that it represents the **entrapment of most married women**. The young woman at the window is **yearning to be part of the joyful life outside** but she is trapped like the **bird in the gilded cage**, top right, rather than free like the soaring bird outside. The **old man looks sad** perhaps because **she has rejected the knowledge** (the discarded book on the floor) **and riches** (the discarded jewels on the floor) **that he has to offer**.
- When de Morgan died her remaining works were sold for the benefit of **St. Dunstan's Charity for the Blind**. Her sister purchased a number of the works at the sale, like this one, and these form the basis of the De Morgan Collection today.
- How can you see her work? It used to be displayed in the former **Wandsworth Library** but it closed in 2014 and since the closure her work is now split between **Cannon Hall Yorkshire** (former home of the Spencer-Stanhope family), **Watts Gallery**, and Wightwick

(pronounced '**wittick**') Manor Wolverhampton, a National Trust house in the Arts and Crafts style.

## **NOTES**

- "*The Gilded Cage* (1885-1919) contains a figure dressed in medieval-inspired clothing, entrapped in the domestic sphere and expressing frustration and wistfulness to belong to the outside world. Her entrapment is echoed by the caged bird at the top right of the painting, and the work can be **read as a commentary on De Morgan's support of the suffrage movement**: she and her husband were both signatories of the Declaration of Women's Suffrage in 1889." (Claire Longworth, Curator/Manager The De Morgan Foundation)

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## PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS

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- We have gone full circle round the lives and loves of the women associated with the Pre-Raphaelites.
- **Effie Gray** was the former wife of the leading Victorian art critic John Ruskin but the marriage was annulled and she married Millais a year later. Her younger sister **Sophie Gray** also sat for Millais.
- One of Millais's models was **Lizzie Siddal** who modelled for his most famous painting *Ophelia*. She also modelled for and later married Dante Gabriel Rossetti who later painted **Jane Morris**, the wife of William Morris.
- Rossetti's sister was the well known poet **Christina Rossetti** and he used many other models including **Fanny Cornforth**, **Fanny Eaton**, who was a model for the artists **Joanna Boyce Wells**, and Annie Miller.
- **Annie Miller** was a model for Rossetti and Holman Hunt and when Hunt was away for two years her relationship with Rossetti caused a rift between Hunt and Rossetti on his return. Later Hunt married **Fanny Waugh**.
- **Georgiana Burne-Jones** (portrait by Edward Poynter) was a friend of William Morris and wife of Edward Burne-Jones but he fell in love

with the artist **Maria Zambaco** (1843-1914, pronounced 'Zam-back-o', portrait by Rossetti, 1870, aged 27) who was the cousin of the artist **Marie Spartali Stillman** (1844-1927, pronounced 'mar-ree', portrait by Rossetti, 1869, age 25) who co-exhibited with the artist **Evelyn de Morgan** (1855-1919).

## NOTES

- Effie Gray, model, wife Millais, ex-wife Ruskin and manager
  - Sketch by her of a garden and sketch of Eve of St Agnes (V&A) modelled on. Effie
- Link: Millais's model for Ophelia
- Lizzie Siddal, model, artist, poet
  - Self-portrait
  - Pippa Passes
- Link: Siddal married Rossetti
- Christina Rossetti, poet, sister of Dante Gabriel artists, model, cared for DGR, two aunts and her mother
  - Portrait by DGR
- Link: Cornforth was a model for Rossetti
- Fanny Cornforth, model, lover, Sarah Cox, chromolith copy of the painting of Alexa
  - Lady Lilith, 1867
- Link: Another model of Rossetti
- Fanny Eaton, model from Jamaica,
  - The Young Teacher, Rebecca Solomon
- Link: Eaton also modelled for Boyce
- Joanna Boyce Wells,
  - Joanna Wells, *Study of Fanny Eaton* (1861). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
  - Elgiva, Sidney Wells

- Link: Another model used by Rossetti was a model for Holman Hunt
- Annie Miller, model
  - *Il Dolce for Niente*, William Holman Hunt
- Jane Morris model, muse, craft person
  - Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, 1874
- Link: Jane Morris was wife of William Morris, confident of Georgiana
- Georgiana Burne-Jones confident of William Morris
  - Portrait by Edward Burne-Jones before and after the Zambaco affair, portrait 1870 and 1883.
- Link: Burne-Jones had an affair with Zambaco
- Maria Zambaco
  - *Phyllis and Demophon*
- Link: Maria Zambaco and her **cousins Marie Spartali Stillman** and Aglaia Coronio were known collectively among friends as "the Three Graces", after the Charities of Greek mythology.
- Marie Spartali Stillman, model, artist
  - *Love's Messenger*, 1885
- Link: Marie Stillman was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 along with Evelyn de Morgan. The same year Evelyn married the ceramist William De Morgan.
- Evelyn de Morgan, important artist suffered from critical neglect
  - *Flora*
  - *Cadmus and Harmonia*

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