

A Free Course on the History of Western Art

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25-02 PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD - LATER

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

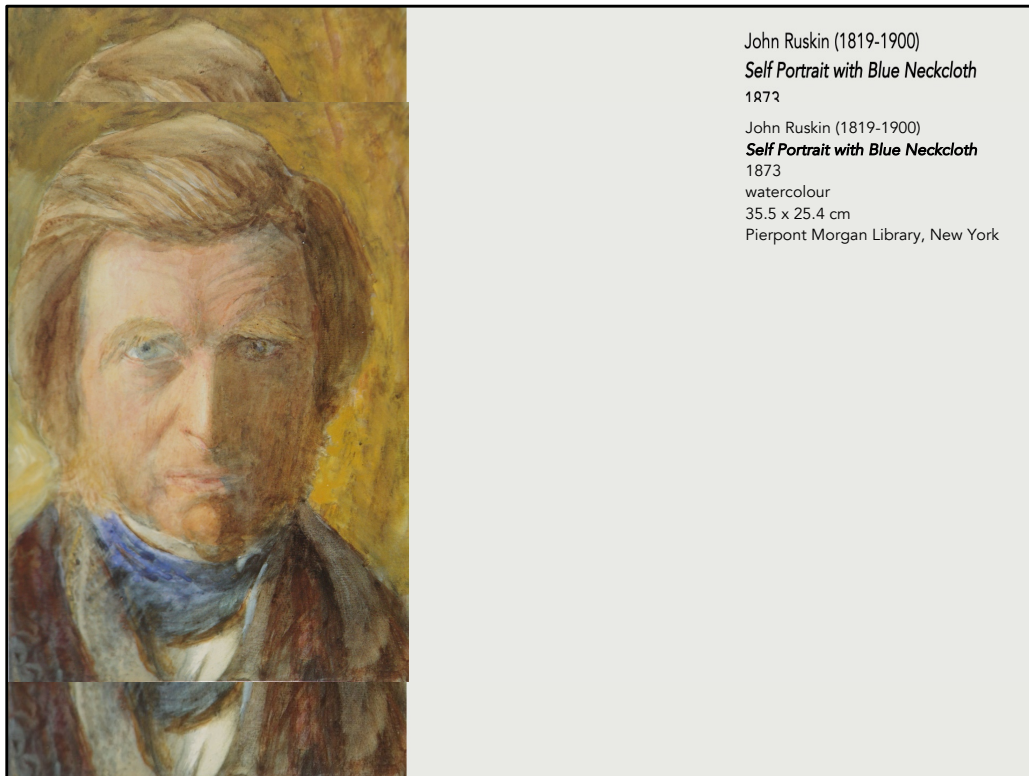
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John Ruskin (1819-1900)
Self Portrait with Blue
Neckcloth
1873



This lecture traces the later decades of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, following its founding members as they developed distinct individual careers while their shared ideals fragmented and evolved. We examine key figures — Millais, Hunt, Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, and their associates — alongside the critics, patrons, and controversies that shaped their work. From Ruskin's championing and his spectacular fall, through the Aesthetic Movement, to the Brotherhood's last inheritors, this is Pre-Raphaelitism's long aftermath.



John Ruskin (1819-1900), *Self Portrait with Blue Neckcloth*, 1873, 35.5 x 25.4 cm, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

Those competing controversies over morality and artistic freedom find their sharpest focus in the career of **John Ruskin**, the Victorian era's dominant art critic, social thinker, and philanthropist. Ruskin's influence peaked before the First World War, declined sharply, then recovered steadily from the 1960s onward. His output was extraordinary in range — geology, architecture, political economy, botany, poetry — and **E. T. Cook** and **Alexander Wedderburn** collected it across 39 volumes. From 1871 to 1884 he addressed working people directly through his periodical **Fors Clavigera**, intervening in moral debates he considered a duty inherited from his mentor **Thomas Carlyle**. Though Ruskin did not initially know the **Pre-Raphaelites**, two letters he wrote to **The Times** in May 1851 proved decisive for their acceptance. He credited them with fidelity to truth in observation, and declared that **Millais** and **Hunt** might rise to very real greatness. His 1877 attack on **Whistler's Nocturne in Black and Gold**, accusing Whistler of flinging a pot of paint in the public's face,

provoked a libel trial. Whistler won but received damages of one farthing and was bankrupted within six months. The episode damaged Ruskin's standing and coincided with the onset of severe mental illness that shadowed the remainder of his life.

Notes

Ruskin was very influential up to WWI and his reputation then declined but has been improving since the 1960s. He was the leading English art critic of the Victorian era and art patron, watercolourist, prominent social thinker and philanthropist. He wrote on subjects ranging from geology to architecture, myth to ornithology, literature to education, and botany to political economy. Ruskin penned essays and treatises, poetry and lectures, travel guides and manuals, letters and even a fairy tale. He emphasised the connections between nature, art and society. He also made detailed sketches and paintings of rocks, plants, birds, landscapes, and architectural structures and ornamentation.

The Times Letters

John Ruskin did not know the Pre-Raphaelites but he wrote two letters to The Times defending them and this helped a great deal in getting them accepted. He wrote the first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843 based on an essay in which he defended of Turner's 'truth to nature' against his critics. He championed the Pre-Raphaelites by writing a letter to, The Times on 13th May 1851 in which he wrote they exhibited 'fidelity to a certain order of truth'. He added that Millais and Hunt 'may sink into nothingness or rise to very real greatness'. He thought the name was ill-conceived and that they knew little of ancient paintings and their aim of returning to the early days of art was in one point only – 'they will draw what they see or what they suppose might have been the actual facts'. He also wrote a second letter to The Times on 26 May in which he wrote, 'they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of art nobler than the world has seen for 300 years.'

Notes

'It is almost universally agreed that *Self-Portrait in Blue Neckcloth*, 1873 is not only the most striking and accomplished picture Ruskin ever made of himself, but the most honest, a portrait of a soul divided, with one side of his face

imaging a face full of light and purpose, while the other side shows a countenance almost monstrous, a half-visage peering out of a terrifying dark, a dark which terrifies the artist himself ... a portrait of melancholy resident and abiding, of a life already failed without hope of redemption, a portrait painted a half decade before Ruskin would go insane for the first time, a portrait of tortured, mourning soul that knows perfectly well what horrors lie ahead.' (James Spates, 'Ruskin's Dark night of the Soul')

Ruskin output was enormous and has been collected by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn in 39 volumes which occupy two shelves of most university libraries. From 1871 to 1884 he wrote a series of letters to the workmen of Great Britain in a periodical called *Fors Clavigera*. It forms part of what Ruskin considered his duty to intervene in the moral issues of the day following his mentor Thomas Carlyle.

The title is complex and an analysis of the name tells us a lot about how Ruskin thought. It consists of three fors (great powers) Force symbolised by the club (clava) of Hercules and the power to do good work, Fortitude symbolised by the key (clavis) of Ulysses the power to bear pain and trial as one does good work (the key symbolising patience, the key to his store house, the authority to open and close) and Fortune symbolised by the nail (clavus) of Lycurgus meaning a person's unchangeable fate which is nailed down and fastened forever (based on Ruskin's reading of Horace. Lycurgus symbolised law as he was the legendary law-maker of Sparta in Ancient Greece). They represent human talent, the ability to choose the right moment and then strike with energy. The name is derived from Shakespeare's 'There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune'.

In the 1877 issue of *Fors Clavigera* he attacked Whistler's paintings that were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery that year. He found particular fault with *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, and accused Whistler of "ask[ing] two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face". Whistler filed a libel suit against Ruskin hoping to be awarded £1,000 to pay for his new house. Although Whistler won the case the jury awarded damages of only one farthing. The trial went on in Ruskin's absence in 1878 as he was ill and court costs were split between both parties. Ruskin's were paid by public subscription, but Whistler was bankrupted within six months. The episode tarnished Ruskin's reputation, however, and may have accelerated his mental decline.

Ruskin is also well known for his personal life. His marriage to Effie Gray was

never consummated and was later annulled. The reasons for this are shrouded in innuendo but it seems he found something objectionable about the person. There has been speculation that it was her pubic hair but this is now thought unlikely.

The other controversial and personal aspect of Ruskin's life was his relationship with Rose La Touche. Her mother, Maria La Touche asked Ruskin to teach her daughter to draw and paint in 1858 when she was 10 and Ruskin 39. Ruskin gradually fell in love with her. Ruskin had religious doubts and this caused difficulties with the La Touche family. Ruskin proposed to her on her eighteenth birthday but she asked him to wait three years for an answer. She finally rejected him in 1872 when he was 53 and she was 24 but they still occasionally met. After a long illness she died in 1875, at the age of 27. This plunged Ruskin into despair and led to severe bouts of mental illness involving delirious visions. Ruskin turned to spiritualism and was alternately comforted and disturbed by what he thought were conversations with the dead Rose.

References

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



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910)
Valentine Rescuing Silvia from Proteus

1851

33.5 x 25.7 cm

Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), Valentine Rescuing Silvia from Proteus, 1851, 33.5 x 25.7 cm, Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

Ruskin wrote to the Times in May 1851 defending **Holman Hunt** against his critics, declaring that nothing in art had been so earnest or complete in its detail since the days of **Albrecht Dürer**. He singled out the black sleeve and the chain mail in Hunt's picture as unmatched by anything else in the Academy that year. The painting illustrates Act Five, Scene Four of **Shakespeare's** 'Two Gentlemen of Verona'. From left to right stand Julia, Silvia, Valentine, and Proteus — a scene of betrayal, assault, and reconciliation compressed into a single suspended moment. Proteus has betrayed his friend Valentine, pursued Silvia to the point of violence, and is now confronted with the consequences. The inscribed spandrels frame the image with Valentine's accusation of broken trust and Proteus's plea for forgiveness, giving the picture an almost theatrical structure. Hunt began the landscape in **Knole Park**, Sevenoaks, before completing the figures in his studio. **Elizabeth Siddal** modelled Silvia, while James

Aspinal and James Lennox Hannay sat for Proteus and Valentine respectively. The figures are not decorative additions to the setting — each posture and textile carries the emotional and moral charge that Ruskin recognised, and praised, so precisely.

Notes

John Ruskin wrote to the Times on 26 May, 'there is not a single study of drapery in the whole Academy, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truth, power, and finish, could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and the chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture; And further: that as studies both of drapery and of every minor detail, there has been nothing in art so earnest or so complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Durer.'

The subject is taken from Shakespeare's 'Two Gentlemen of Verona', Act V, Scene IV. From left to right: Julia disguised as the page Sebastian, Silvia, Valentine and Proteus. Julia is in love with Proteus and travelled in disguise. Valentine and Proteus are friends and are both in love with the Duke of Milan's daughter Silvia. Proteus is already sworn to Julia back home in Verona. When Valentine plans to elope Proteus tells the Duke and gets Valentine banished. The Duke wants Silvia to marry Thurio but when Silvia and Thurio are travelling through the woods they get attacked by bandits and Thurio runs away. Proteus rescues Silvia but as a reward he wants her to promise to favour him and when she refuses he tries to rape her. Valentine arrives and stops him, Proteus apologises, Valentine offers Silvia as a token of friendship, Sebastian (Julia) faints and her identity is revealed, Proteus realises he really loves her, the Duke arrives and realises Thurio is a coward and agrees Valentine should marry her.

Hunt began to paint this landscape in Knole Park, Sevenoaks, after which he began to work on the figures in his studio. Silvia was modelled by Elizabeth Siddal, Proteus by James Aspinal a lawyer and friend of Hunt, Valentine by James Lennox Hannay, a young barrister. The related oil sketch is in the Makins Collection.

Two poems

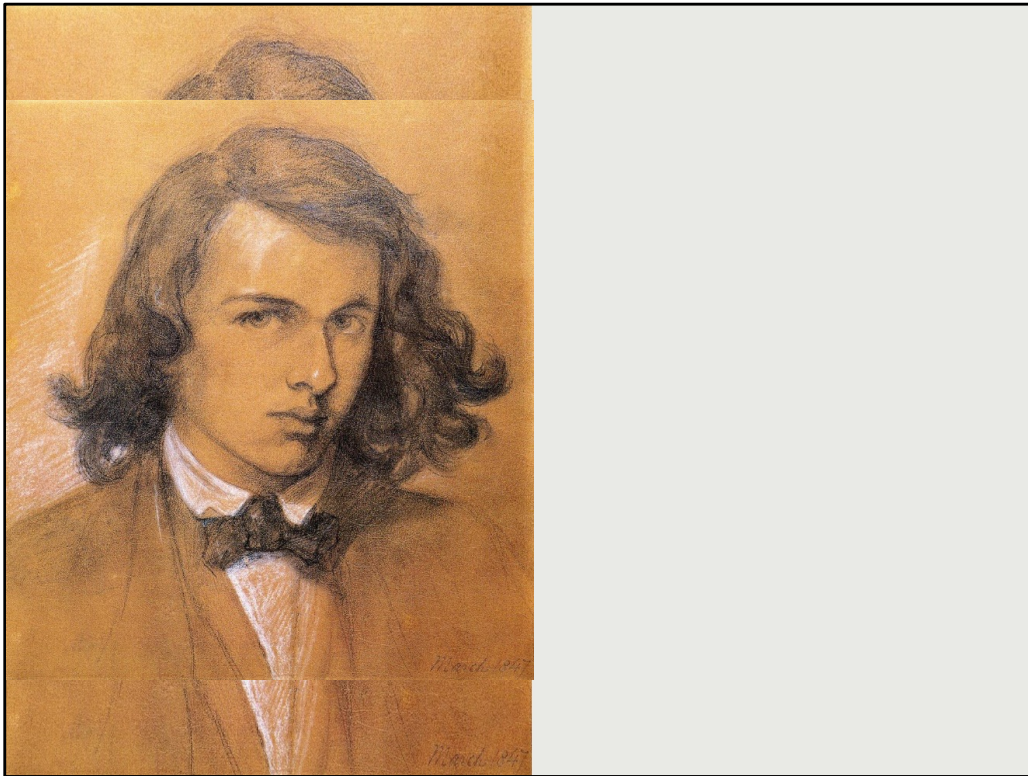
On the left spandrel are lines from Act V, Scene iv of The Two Gentlemen of

Verona,

Valentine. Now I dare not say I have one friend alive; thou would'st disprove me Who should be trusted now, when one's right hand I've [sic] perjured to the bosom? Proteus. I am sorry I must never trust thee more But count the world a stranger for thy sake.

On the right spandrel lines from Act V, Scene iv of The Two Gentlemen of Verona

Proteus. My shame and guilt confound me Forgive me Valentine if hearty sorrow Be a sufficient ransom for offence, I tender it here; I do as truly suffer As e'er I did commit.



Building on the PRB's collective identity, each brother cultivated a distinct personal brand that reassured middle-class buyers they were making a sound investment. **John Everett Millais** projected trustworthiness: elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in **1853**, he embodied the respectable English professional. His marriage to Effie Gray, whose union with **John Ruskin** had been annulled, cemented his social standing, and the couple raised eight children together. **William Holman Hunt** offered seriousness and moral conviction. His journeys to the Holy Land in the **mid-1850s** supplied works with documented authenticity, reinforcing his reputation for disciplined labour and religious integrity. **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** sold something different entirely: the allure of the genuine bohemian. His obsessive portrayals of **Elizabeth Siddal**, his later devotion to **Jane Morris**, and his chaotic personal life mapped perfectly onto Romantic expectations of artistic genius, making buyers feel they owned a piece of that myth. The three critics and the sculptor — **Thomas Woolner**, **James Collinson**, **Frederic George Stephens**, and **William Michael Rossetti** — each contributed to

the Brotherhood's infrastructure through public advocacy, institutional access, and written promotion, particularly in **The Germ**, the journal that broadcast PRB ideas to a receptive public.

Notes

Of course, their patrons, largely the middle-class themselves form different groups and each member of the PRB appealed to different types of buyers but together they created a stronger brand. In fact, they differed from a boy band as they created works that were bought independently. As well as their overall PRB brand each created an individual brand (sub-cognitive branding) that convinced the buyer they were making a wise investment.

John Everett Millais (1829-1896) could be trusted as he was a born artist, an honest Englishman and made an ARA in 1853 and later RA (and President just before he died). In 1855, after her marriage to Ruskin was annulled, Effie and Millais married. He and Effie eventually had eight children: Everett, born in 1856; George, born in 1857; Effie, born in 1858; Mary, born in 1860; Alice, born in 1862; Geoffroy, born in 1863; John in 1865; and Sophie in 1868. Their youngest son, John Guille Millais, became a notable naturalist, wildlife artist, and Millais's posthumous biographer. Effie's younger sister Sophy Gray sat for several pictures by Millais, prompting some speculation about the nature of their apparently fond relationship.

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) could be trusted as an investment as he was serious, had religious convictions and worked hard at everything he did. In the mid-1850s Hunt travelled to the Holy Land in search of accurate topographical and ethnographical material for further religious works, and to 'use my powers to make more tangible Jesus Christ's history and teaching'. In 1865 at the age of thirty-eight, Holman Hunt married Fanny Waugh, the daughter of a prosperous London chemist. In August the following year, when Fanny was seven months pregnant, they set out for Hunt's second visit to the East, and on 20 December 1866 she died at Florence after giving birth to a son. He was named Cyril Benoni (Hebrew for 'child of sorrow'). Nine years later Hunt married Fanny's younger sister Edith, flouting the Table of Affinities, outraging her family, and causing a permanent rift with his fellow PRB Thomas Woolner, who had married another Waugh daughter. Of this second marriage there were two children, Gladys, born in 1878, and Hilary Lushington, born on 6 May 1879.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882, baptised Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti)

was a typical unreliable Romantic image of the artist so buying one of his paintings was a wise investment as you were buying the work of a 'real artist'. His work also influenced the European Symbolists and was a major precursor of the Aesthetic movement which we hear about next week. Rossetti's personal life was closely linked to his work, especially his relationships with his models and muses Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862, married 1860), Fanny Cornforth (1835-1909, born Sarah Cox, met Rossetti's in 1858 and became his housekeeper and mistress after Siddal's death) and Jane Morris (1839-1914, wife and muse to William Morris, 1834-1896). By 1851 Rossetti was painting Elizabeth Siddal almost to the exclusion of all other models and he stopped her from modelling for the other Pre-Raphaelites. It is thought he painted thousands of pictures of her.

The other members were:

Thomas Woolner, sculptor and poet (1825-1892), emigrated to Australia in 1852 and returned to have a successful career as a sculptor. He had some success as a poet and art dealer. Had a 'rough' personality and had to make a supernatural effort to be polite. Became an academician in 1875 and Professor of Sculpture. Married Alice Gertrude Waugh, sister of Fanny who turned him down and married Holman Hunt. She died in childbirth a year later and Hunt married the third sister Edith which Woolner considered immoral and was defined as incest under British law at the time. They never spoke again.

James Collinson (1825-1881), only a member for two years as he resigned in 1851 when Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* was declared blasphemous. Converted to Catholicism but reverted to High Anglicanism to marry Christina Rossetti but his conscience forced him to return to Catholicism and break the engagement. Trained as a Jesuit priest but did not complete his studies. In 1858 he married Eliza Wheeler sister-in-law of the painter John Rogers Herbert (1810-1890) who influenced the Pre-Raphaelites. W. M. Rossetti wrote that the aim of the Pre-Raphaelites was to 'out-Herbert Herbert'. Herbert was a Catholic convert and friend of Pugin, another Catholic convert. Herbert painted *Our Saviour Subject to his Parents at Nazareth* a slightly more acceptable version of Millais's painting although even Herbert was criticized. Collinson continued to paint genre scenes and moved to Brittany later in life.

Frederic George Stephens, art critic (1828-1907), physically disabled because

of an accident when he was nine he was educated privately. Joined the RA School in 1844 and met Millais and Holman Hunt. Disappointed with his artistic talent he stopped painting and took up art criticism. Three uncompleted paintings survive and one shows a lot of promise. He became a well known and leading art critic who supported the Pre-Raphaelites. He allowed Rossetti to write reviews of his own work under Stephen's name. He sometimes wrote under the pseudonym Laura Stephens (in *The Germ*) and John Seward. He wrote 100 articles on British art collecting to encourage middle-class art patronage. He became Keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum. He married the artist Rebecca Clara Dalton in 1866. He was a great supporter of Holman Hunt but they fell out over Hunt's painting *The Triumph of the Innocents* (1885) which was damaged in transit after being crated by Stephens. He also criticized the painting for its hyper-realism and fantasy. He disliked Impressionism and saw the Pre-Raphaelites as part of the evolution of British art rather than revolutionary.

William Michael Rossetti, writer and art critic, (1829-1919), outlived them all including Holman Hunt. He worked full time as a civil servant but wrote extensively on art and biographies of artists. In 1874 he married Lucy Madox Brown and they had five children who were schooled at home and brought up in a non-Christian household.

Other artists were considered such as Charles Allston Collins and Walter Howell Deverell but no decision was made. Ford Madox Brown was older but an obvious candidate as he was Rossetti tutor but he turned it down.



John Everett Millais (1829-1896)
Autumn Leaves
1856
Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Autumn Leaves*, 1856, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester

That wider circle of influence begins here with one of the Brotherhood's founders working at a pivotal moment of personal and artistic change. **John Everett Millais** painted **Autumn Leaves** in **1856** while living in Perth, where he had moved after marrying **Effie Gray**, whose marriage to **John Ruskin** had been annulled amid considerable public scandal. Despite their bitter falling-out, Ruskin declared it the finest representation of twilight he had ever seen. The painting shows four girls burning dead leaves at dusk, a scythe-bearing figure barely visible in the fading light. Millais drew on two of Effie's sisters, **Alice and Sophie Gray**, alongside two working-class local girls, **Matilda Proudfoot** and **Isabella Nicol**, and the tension between those who meet the viewer's gaze and those absorbed in their own world charges the image with unresolved social and psychological energy. Millais stated his aim was to paint a picture full of beauty and without subject, placing him close to what **Théophile Gautier** had crystallised as **l'art pour l'art**. Suppressing narrative in favour of mood, he distanced

himself from Ruskin's demand that art serve moral instruction. The painting's documented influence on **Whistler** confirms that this shift carried well beyond Millais himself.

Notes

Autumn Leaves

Autumn Leaves was painted when Millais lived in Perth, where he moved following his marriage to Effie Gray in order to escape the bitterness and gossip surrounding the annulment of her marriage to Ruskin. Despite their personal animosity Ruskin described it as the best representation of twilight he had seen.

It was painted after The Blind Girl.

Millais believed that 'The only head you could paint to be considered beautiful by everybody would be the face of a little girl about eight years old.' Perhaps to distance himself from the aesthetics of tight observation so closely associated with Ruskin, he experimented with paintings in which specific detail and narrative are suppressed in the interests of a general mood. This painting is generally seen to convey the bittersweet mood of a long-lost childhood when everything seems possible, but death in the form of a faint figure with a scythe is glimpsed in the fading twilight among the dead leaves. The painting had some poor reviews; for example, the Art Journal commented that it contained 'a significant vulgarity,' because 'the principal figure looks out of the picture at the spectator', but it was generally well received and is said to have influenced Whistler.

The painting is set in the evening and shows four children standing around a pile of smouldering leaves. The sun is below the horizon and is reflected from the clouds, and mist rises from the woods in the background. In the middle ground, there is an indistinct figure holding what looks like a scythe. The other figures are standing on a lawn from which the leaves may have been gathered. A simple feeling of nostalgia is disrupted by the unfamiliar and particular arrangement of the figures, particularly those on the right who are distracted. The overall feeling is one of melancholy but this is contradicted by the inclusion of four girls whom Millais knew, suggesting it could be a group portrait. The two girls on the left were modelled on Millais's sisters-in-law Alice and Sophie Gray and the two on the right were local working-class children called Matilda Proudfoot (helpful, quiet, shy, found at a local School

of Industry, also the older girl in *The Blind Girl*) and Isabella Nicol (old-fashioned and thoughtful, younger girl in *The Blind Girl*, daughter of a local cleaner who worked in exchange for reading lessons for Isabella). The sisters-in-law on their own might suggest the painting was a portrait but the local girls refuse to be involved and they provide a counterpoint that rejects classification. The two central girls stare out at us, as if their work had suddenly been interrupted so that they could interact with us but the girls on the right are tied up in a world of their own. This may be a class distinction, the middle class girls are not afraid to exert their personality, the working class girls on the right look down avoiding confronting the artist. The youngest girl is not involved in the tidying of the leaves and is singled out by the brilliant red of her scarf while she stares distractedly holding a half-eaten apple. The central figure actively offers a handful of dead leaves, dutifully gathered by her companion, to the altar of nature while her acolytes look on distractedly.

Art for Art's Sake

Millais described the painting as recreated from his memory of similar evenings and intended to invoke 'the deepest religious reflection'. The fallen leaves remind us of death and the mood of the painting is one of nostalgia but the precise narrative details take us away from Millais's intention, which he said was to paint 'a picture full of beauty and without subject'. Millais's scene of the setting sun, a figure with a scythe and the beautiful young girls burning leaves suggests death and renewal; the old must be disposed of and replaced by the new.

Was Millais aware of the French 'art for art's sake' writers? He did once say 'I have never read a book in my life'.

Autotelic paintings, i.e. complete in itself, containing its own meaning. An autotelic person is one that is internally driven and exhibits a sense of purpose and curiosity. An autotelic person is one that knows that he or she has chosen a goal, makes choices without fuss and those choices define a system of action and the required skills. An autotelic person becomes deeply involved with whatever he or she is doing. The key skill is concentration which leads to involvement.

Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), who was the first to adopt the phrase 'art for art's sake' as a slogan. Gautier was not, however, the first to write those words: they appear in the works of Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant, and

Edgar Allan Poe.

It was in defiance of John Ruskin and later socialist realism painters who thought the value of art was to serve a moral or didactic purpose.

Whistler wrote, Art should be independent of all claptrap —should stand alone [...] and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like.

It is distanced from sentimentalism and Romanticism only remains in terms of the sensibility of the painter.

It first appeared in two works of 1868 - Pater's review of William Morris's poetry in the Westminster Review and in William Blake by Algernon Charles Swinburne.

George Sand in 1872 thought *L'art pour l'art* was an empty phrase as the artist had a duty to find a message and convey it to as many people as possible.

Walter Benjamin discusses the slogan in his seminal 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and describes it as part of the 'theology of art'. The final realisation of 'art for art's sake' he thinks is the gratification of the sense of perception changed by technology and he uses the link with fascism and Futurism (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti) as an example.

References

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

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>

John Everett Millais (1829-1896)
Bubbles
1886
Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port
Sunlight



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), Bubbles, 1886, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight

John Everett Millais painted what became one of the most contested images in Victorian commercial culture. Originally titled *A Child's World* and completed around 1886, the work depicts his five-year-old grandson **William Milbourne James** gazing at a soap bubble on the verge of bursting. The composition draws directly from the **vanitas** tradition of early seventeenth-century Dutch painting, where a broken pot and a young plant flank the boy, signalling life's fragility. **Thomas Barratt**, managing director of **A&F Pears** and the driving force behind modern advertising through slogans, testimonials, and striking visuals, acquired the rights to the image and renamed it **Bubbles**. Millais accepted the arrangement and expressed satisfaction with the campaign, though the novelist Marie Corelli attacked him in *The Sorrows of Satan* for prostituting his talent. Millais countered that he had sold the copyright and retained no control over subsequent use. The art world's outrage persisted for decades, until **Andy Warhol** finally dissolved the boundary between fine art and mass marketing in the

1960s. The campaign also carried an explicit racial ideology, promoting soap as the first step in lightening what it called the white man's burden — a dimension that makes Bubbles as troubling as it is historically significant.

Notes

In about 1807 Andrew Pears (1770-1845) developed the first transparent yet foaming soap that was a cosmetic aid and kind to the complexion. In the early nineteenth century his company became famous among the wealthy and the soap was endorsed by artists such as Lillie Langtry. Their marketing was always clever and appealed to the masses. Thomas Barratt (who married the granddaughter of Andrew) convinced Millais to give up rights to his painting Bubbles. Millais, who was wealthy and successful, was worried about being exploited and 'selling out' but he agreed and was very happy with the campaign. He was later attacked (by Marie Corelli in *The Sorrows of Satan*) for prostituting his talent and defended himself by saying he had sold the copyright so could not control the use.

The art world was scandalised about this use of fine art and the argument continued into the twentieth century until Andy Warhol united fine art and mass marketing. Barratt Pears said he spent £30,000 on the campaign and millions of reproductions would hang in homes around the world.

The campaign was part of a racist message 'The first step towards lightening the white man's burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness'.

Bubbles was originally called *A Child's World* and the model was his five-year old grandson William Milbourne James. James (1881-1973) became an Admiral, politician and author. His mother was Effie, daughter of Millais. The painting dogged his life and he was often called 'Bubbles'.

Bubbles was based on early 17th-century Dutch paintings in the vanitas tradition. Vanitas painting remind the viewer of the transience of life. There is a young plant on one side and a broken pot on the other and the boy stares at a large bubble that is about to burst. It was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery and bought by Sir William Ingram of the *Illustrated London News*. It was seen in the paper by Thomas Barratt the managing director of A&F Pears, who had married Mary Pears, the eldest daughter of Francis Pears, the head of the company. Barratt was the father of modern advertising with his slogans, use of visual impact, testimonials and children and then the *Pears Annual* (first edition 1891) and *Pears Cyclopedia* (1897).



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910)
The Scapegoat
1854-1856
Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Scapegoat*, 1854-1856, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight

William Holman Hunt painted *The Scapegoat* between 1854 and 1856, grounding it in the Levitical ritual of **Yom Kippur**, the Day of Atonement, during which a goat bearing a red cloth symbolising communal sin was driven into the wilderness. Hunt began work on the actual shore of the **Dead Sea**, hauling back a live goat along with mud and stones when bad weather forced his return to Jerusalem — the goat died en route, requiring a replacement. He completed the canvas in London, exhibiting it at the **Royal Academy** in 1856. Two versions exist: a smaller, brighter work with a dark-haired goat and a rainbow, held by **Manchester Art Gallery**, and a larger, more muted version at the **Lady Lever Art Gallery** in Port Sunlight. The critical response was divided. **Ford Madox Brown** called it one of the most tragic works in the annals of art. **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** praised it as a grand thing, but not for the public. The dealer **Ernest Gambart** put it bluntly: he had wanted a nice religious picture and Hunt had painted him a great goat. The *Art Journal* later judged it to have disappointed even Hunt's

warmest admirers.

Notes

The Scapegoat (1854–56) is a painting by William Holman Hunt which depicts the "scapegoat" described in the Book of Leviticus. On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a goat would have its horns wrapped with a red cloth – representing the sins of the community – and be driven off.

He started painting on the shore of the Dead Sea, and continued in his studio in London. The work exists in two versions, a small version in brighter colours with a dark-haired goat and a rainbow, held by Manchester Art Gallery, and a larger version in more muted tones with a light-haired goat held by the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight.

In the Royal Academy exhibition catalogue Hunt wrote that "the scene was painted at Oosdoom, on the margin of the salt-encrusted shallows of the Dead Sea. The mountains beyond are those of Edom." Edom is the region south of the Dead Sea and the fabled site of Sodom. It is not clear that Oosdoom exists and it may be Hunt's version of Sodom. He painted most of the work on location in 1854, but completed the work in London in the following year, adding some touches in 1856 before it was exhibited at the academy in that year." Bad weather forced Hunt back to Jerusalem so he took the goat and some Dead Sea mud and stones. Unfortunately, the goat died on the way and he had to buy another.

There are two versions, one with a rainbow signifying forgiveness in Birmingham Art Gallery and the other larger one is shown above.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in a letter to William Allingham in 1856, called the painting "a grand thing, but not for the public". Ford Madox Brown wrote in his diary: "Hunt's Scapegoat requires to be seen to be believed in. Only then can it be understood how, by the might of genius, out of an old goat, and some saline encrustations, can be made one of the most tragic and impressive works in the annals of art.". Ernest Gambart, as related by Hunt, was less enthusiastic, and was later to remark: "I wanted a nice religious picture and he painted me a great goat." The Art Journal in 1860, at the time of the exhibition of Hunt's later work The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple, was to characterise the painting as "having disappointed even his warmest admirers".

During Yom Kippur there are a number of rituals conducted by the High

priest including a 'Goat for Azazel' when the sins of all the people of Israel are confessed and the goat is sent into the wilderness. In practice, to prevent its return, it was taken to a cliff outside Jerusalem and pushed off.

The reaction to the painting was not as Hunt expected. In his autobiography *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, Hunt relates the first reaction to the painting by art dealer Ernest Gambart:

Gambart, the picture-dealer, was ever shrewd and entertaining. He came in his turn to my studio, and I led him to *The Scapegoat*. "What do you call that?" "The Scapegoat." "Yes; but what is it doing?" "You will understand by the title, *Le bouc expiatoire* [the sacrificial goat]." "But why expiatoire?" he asked. "Well, there is a book called the Bible, which gives an account of the animal. You will remember." "No," he replied, "I never heard of it." "Ah, I forgot, the book is not known in France, but English people read it more or less," I said, "and they would all understand the story of the beast being driven into the wilderness." "You are mistaken. No one would know anything about it, and if I bought the picture it would be left on my hands. Now, we will see," replied the dealer. "My wife is an English lady, there is a friend of hers, an English girl, in the carriage with her, we will ask them up, you shall tell them the title; we will see. Do not say more." The ladies were conducted into the room. "Oh how pretty! what is it?" they asked. "It is *The Scapegoat*." I said. There was a pause. "Oh yes," they commented to one another, "it is a peculiar goat, you can see by the ears, they droop so." The dealer then, nodding with a smile towards me, said to them, "It is in the wilderness." The ladies: "Is that the wilderness now? Are you intending to introduce any others of the flock?" And so the dealer was proved to be right, and I had over-counted on the picture's intelligibility.

Hunt did not make the same mistake again, Gambart spent £5,500 (over £2 million in modern money) on *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854-60). The most expensive painting by a living artist in history up to that time. Hunt took the risk of not exhibiting it at the Royal Academy and so saved their 30% cut. Gambart showed it in solitary splendour in an exhibition attended by hundreds of thousands for one shilling a time. Hunt's next painting, *The Shadow of Death* (1873), Gambart was outbid by Agnews who bid £20,000. 1866 was a terrible summer and the year of the last bank run (Overend, Gurney and Co.) before Northern Rock in 2007, in which Hunt and Gambart lost money. Gambart's house exploded because of the numerous

gas lights he used during a fancy dress ball to show he was unaffected by the crisis. Gambart's young wife, Annie Baines, was so upset she was sent away and the following year she died from liver disease aged only 35 after it was discovered Gambart had several mistresses.



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910)
The Triumph of the Innocents
 1883-4
 Tate Britain, London

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Triumph of the Innocents*, 1883-4, Tate Britain, London

William Holman Hunt conceived 'The Triumph of the Innocents' in 1865, began it during his second Holy Land visit in 1870, and laboured over it across his third trip from 1875 to 1878. The painting's long gestation ran in parallel with extraordinary personal upheaval. Hunt married **Fanny Waugh** in 1865; she died in Florence the following year after giving birth to their son. He then married her sister **Edith Waugh** in 1875, a union illegal under canon law in Britain and condemned by the Waugh family — the same family from which the novelist Evelyn Waugh descended. The subject is the **Flight into Egypt**, with Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus accompanied by a vision of the **martyred innocents** from Herod's massacre described in **Matthew 2:16-18**. Jesus points towards the child-spirits, and Mary sees them too — Hunt confirmed this reading in an 1880 letter to **William Bell Scott**. The translucent, jelly-like surface beneath the figures represents the stream of eternal life, and bubbles rising through it carry the visions of pious souls. The canvas buckled repeatedly; Hunt suspected demonic

interference. He painted a replica in 1884, now in the **Tate**, while the original went to the **Walker Art Gallery** in 1891.

Notes

Hunt had the idea as early as 1865, he worked on it on his second trip to the Holy Land in 1870 and it occupied most of his 1875-8 trip. Hunt married Fanny Waugh (1833-) in 1865. She doted on Hunt who was generally regarded as rather disagreeable and died of complications after giving birth to Cyril Benoni (meaning 'Son of my sorrow') in Florence in 1866. Hunt then married her sister Edith Waugh in 1875 in Switzerland as the marriage was contrary to canon law (overturned by the Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act of 1907). They were both shunned by the Waugh family and travelled to the Middle East together in 1875. Edith died following a road accident in 1931. The writer Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) descended from the same family (his paternal great-great-grandfather Revd Alexander Waugh was grandfather to Fanny and Edith Waugh, i.e. third cousins, twice-removed).

Mary, Joseph and Jesus are escaping Egypt when Herod has ordered the killing of all first-born males in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18).

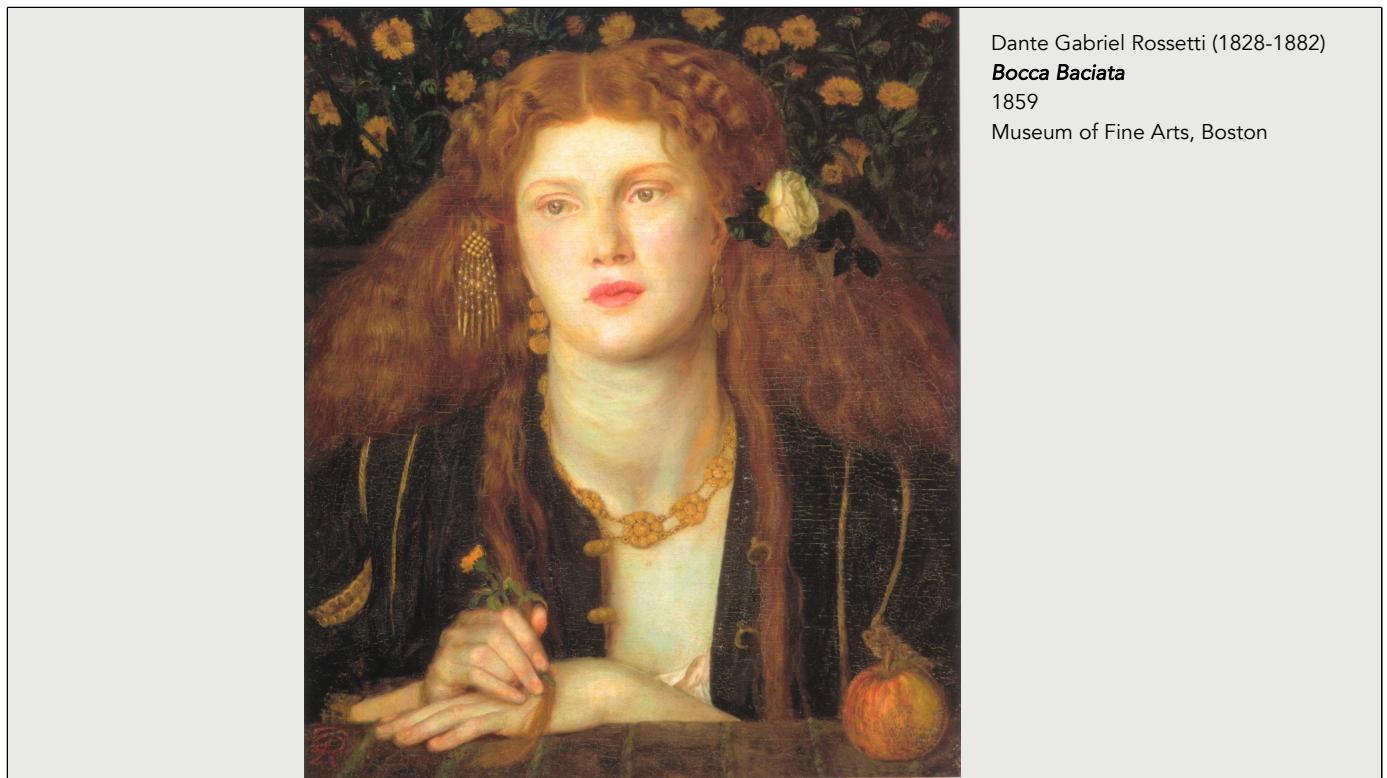
Like *The Scapegoat* this work is eccentric and almost a parody of itself. The jelly-like surface on which they stand and the bubbles are Hunt's rendition of 'the stream of eternal life'. The bubbles contain the thoughts of pious Jews such as a tree, a naked figure and a lamb. Hunt intended the painting to accurately reproduce exactly what happened at the time.

He intended it to be by moonlight but added a supernatural glow. He had many problems and had to build a new house to hold the painting. The linen he used stretched and buckled in the middle. On his return to London he backed it with canvas but it still buckled and he wondered if demonic forces were preventing its completion. He then painted a replica in 1884 which is in the Tate and repaired the original which is in Liverpool.

Hunt decided to add the martyred innocent children later.

They are a vision seen by Mary and seen by Jesus who points to them (letter from Hunt to William Bell Scott, 1880).

The critical reaction was positive, Ruskin thought it was 'the greatest religious painting of our time' and Millais and Watts thought it was one of his greatest works. It was sold to the Walker Art Gallery for £3,519 in 1891 (less than the 5,500 guineas Hunt wanted).



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

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

Bocca Baciata, painted in 1859, marks a decisive shift in Rossetti's practice: dense medieval narratives give way to monumental close-up images of women rendered in flat space and saturated colour. The model was **Fanny Cornforth**, born Sarah Cox, the daughter of a blacksmith, who became Rossetti's mistress and housekeeper until family pressure removed her in 1877. The painting is widely regarded as the founding work of the **Aesthetic Movement**, which Walter Hamilton named in his 1882 book, though its roots go back to the German philosopher **Baumgarten**, who coined the term "aesthetic" in 1750. The movement, exemplified by Whistler, Moore, and Leighton, privileged visual and sensual qualities over moral or narrative content. Rossetti's principal models — Cornforth, **Elizabeth Siddal**, **Jane Morris**, and **Alexa Wilding** — were not interchangeable muses but women with distinct social positions and complex relationships to his work. Wilding, a dressmaker who sat for more finished works than any other model, replaced Cornforth's face in **Lady Lilith** at patron Frederick Leyland's

request. Siddal, discovered in a milliner's shop by Walter Deverell in 1849, became Rossetti's exclusive model, then his wife, and died of a laudanum overdose in 1862. These women shaped the work as much as Rossetti directed it.

Notes

Starting with Bocca Baciata Rossetti produced a series of beautiful and sensual women, his 'stunners'.

'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. He met Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris through their poetry magazine the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. 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, Elizabeth Siddal, Jane Burden (Morris), Alexa Wilding. He became a founding partner in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861.

Siddal modelled for Walter Deverell (who found her working in a milliners shop in 1849), Holman Hunt, Millais (including Ophelia) and Rossetti. When modelling she kept working part-time, an unusual and powerful position for a woman at the time.

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 (born Sarah Cox, daughter of a blacksmith). Rossetti met Cornforth in 1858 and she became his mistress and model. When Siddal died in 1862 Cornforth moved in as his housekeeper and lived with him until pressure from his family moved her out in 1877. Rossetti said, 'You are the only person whom it is my duty to provide for, and you may be sure I should do my utmost as long as there was a breath in my body or a penny in my purse.' Cornforth appears to have taken her name from the stepfather of her first husband. Her first husband died and she married a publican in 1879 and they ran the Rose tavern in Jermyn Street, returning to Rossetti to nurse him. She was beautiful but had a coarse accent and no education so was not approved of by Rossetti's friends. Rossetti and Cornforth had a close relationship and as they both gained weight as they got older called each other 'Mr Dear Elephant' (Cornforth) and 'Rhino' (Rossetti).

Bocca Baciata is 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.

Lady Lilith

First painted using Fanny Cornforth, repainted using Alexa Wilding (c. 1845/48-1884). Wilding sat for more Rossetti finished works than Siddal, Morris or Cornforth. She had a working class background and, as far as we know, Rossetti did not have a sexual relationship with her. She could read and write and worked as a dressmaker when Rossetti met her. In 1881 she was looking after two children but was unmarried. They may have been the children of her dead uncle. She was a landlady and property owner but Rossetti still seems to have been called upon to lend her money. She died aged only 37 of either peritonitis or a tumour of the spleen. Lady Lilith was originally modelled by Cornforth but the face was repainted using Wilding at the request of Rossetti's patron Frederick Leyland.

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 a girl. Rossetti said the jet black provided a colour contrast but he may have been inspired by the black woman in Manet's *Olympia*, which he saw in Manet's studio in November 1864. It was inspired by the Song of Solomon. It was commissioned but took three years to finish, typical of Rossetti's unreliability.

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. It was modelled by Alexa Wilding and 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.

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 love for and yet fear of women and it would be interesting to fin out more about his relationship with his mother.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)
Lady Lilith
 1866-68
 watercolour
 Metropolitan Museum of Art

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Lady Lilith, 1866-68, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Lady Lilith', painted between **1864 and 1868**, draws on one of the oldest and most unsettling figures in Judaic tradition. Lilith, formed from the same dust as Adam rather than his rib, refused subordination and abandoned Eden entirely. Folk tradition cast her as a predator of infants and a bewitcher of sleeping men — a myth that gave Rossetti rich material. Rossetti began the work using **Fanny Cornforth** as his model, her golden hair central to the image. After visiting Paris and seeing **Titian's** 'Woman with a Mirror' of **1515** — which Rossetti himself called his "Toilette picture" — that influence became explicit in Lilith's languid self-absorption before her glass. At patron **Frederick Leyland's** request, Cornforth's face was later replaced with that of **Alexa Wilding**. The painting is dense with symbolic threat. Roses invoke Venus and erotic love; poppies signal opium-induced sleep and recall the **laudanum** that killed **Elizabeth Siddal**; foxglove, visible near the boudoir mirror, yields the deadly poison digitalis. Two flanking candles suggest an altar — to love, vanity, or death. **Carol**

Christ identified this archetype as the **femme fatale**, the Victorian projection of male anxiety onto female autonomy.

Notes

Lady Lilith

Lilith, the subject of this painting, is described in Judaic literature as the first wife of Adam. She is associated with the seduction of men and the murder of children. The depiction of women as powerful and evil temptresses was prevalent in 19th-century painting, particularly among the Pre-Raphaelites. The artist depicts Lilith as an iconic, Amazon-like female with long, flowing hair. Her languid nature is reiterated in the inclusion of the poppy in the lower right corner—the flower of opium-induced slumber.

Lilith is a type of woman known as a *femme fatale*, another Victorian stereotype. She combs her sensuous red hair, long hair was a sexual symbol in Victorian times and looks in a mirror, a sign of self-absorption. The power of women was regarded by Victorian men as 'perilous' and she represents the New Women, free of male control, scourge of the patriarchal Victorian family. The legend is that Lilith was created at the same time as Adam not from his rib but from the same handful of dust, she was his equal. She refused to be subordinate and left and folk law says that she preys on babies and visits men in their dreams to bewitch them.

Lilith is an unusual subject for Rossetti to choose as she does not figure highly in serious literature and Rossetti could have chosen Salome or Judith. Her first appearance is in Goethe's *Faust* when Faust catches a glimpse of a golden-haired beauty in the distance. We know that Rossetti visited Paris at this time and saw Titian's *Lady at her Toilette* (1515, also called *Woman with a Mirror*) which is clearly an influence. In fact, in one letter Rossetti refers to it as his 'Toilette picture'.

The painting was begun in 1864 with Fanny Cornforth as the model with her golden hair, and this was completed in 1868. At the request of his patron Leyland he removed Cornforth's face and replaced it with that of Alexa Wilding and her red-gold hair.

The roses are the flowers of Venus and love, the poppy sleep and dreams and a source of laudanum, the drug that killed Rossetti's wife Elizabeth Siddal. Foxglove lying under the boudoir mirror at the rear produces digitalis a deadly poison. Two candles flank the mirror suggesting an altar to Love, to

Lilith, to Vanity or even to Death.

References

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



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)
Study for the head of the girl
1858
ink on paper
Birmingham Museum and Art
Gallery, Birmingham

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Study for the head of the girl*, 1858, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

Rossetti's only oil painting on a contemporary moral subject, 'Found' was begun in the mid-1850s and occupied him until a year before his death in **1882**, yet it remained unfinished. The work depicts a London street at dawn: a drover, recognising a former sweetheart now fallen into prostitution, seizes her hands as she sinks in shame against a churchyard wall. A white calf, bound for market in the cart behind, carries deliberate symbolic weight — innocence led to slaughter. In **1855**, Rossetti described the composition in detail to **Holman Hunt**, acknowledging its kinship with Hunt's 'Awakened Conscience', while insisting the subject had been his own idea independently. The moral terrain was shared, but the handling was Rossetti's alone. The face of the fallen woman went through more than one model. **Alexander Munro**, the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor best known for 'Paolo and Francesca' of **1852**, employed a maid named Ellen Frazer who likely sat for an early head study. The face visible in the surviving painting, however, derives from a study of **Fanny Cornforth** made in **1858**.

Rossetti's sister Maria supplied a motto from Jeremiah, grounding this urban scene in scripture and deepening its atmosphere of lost and recoverable grace.

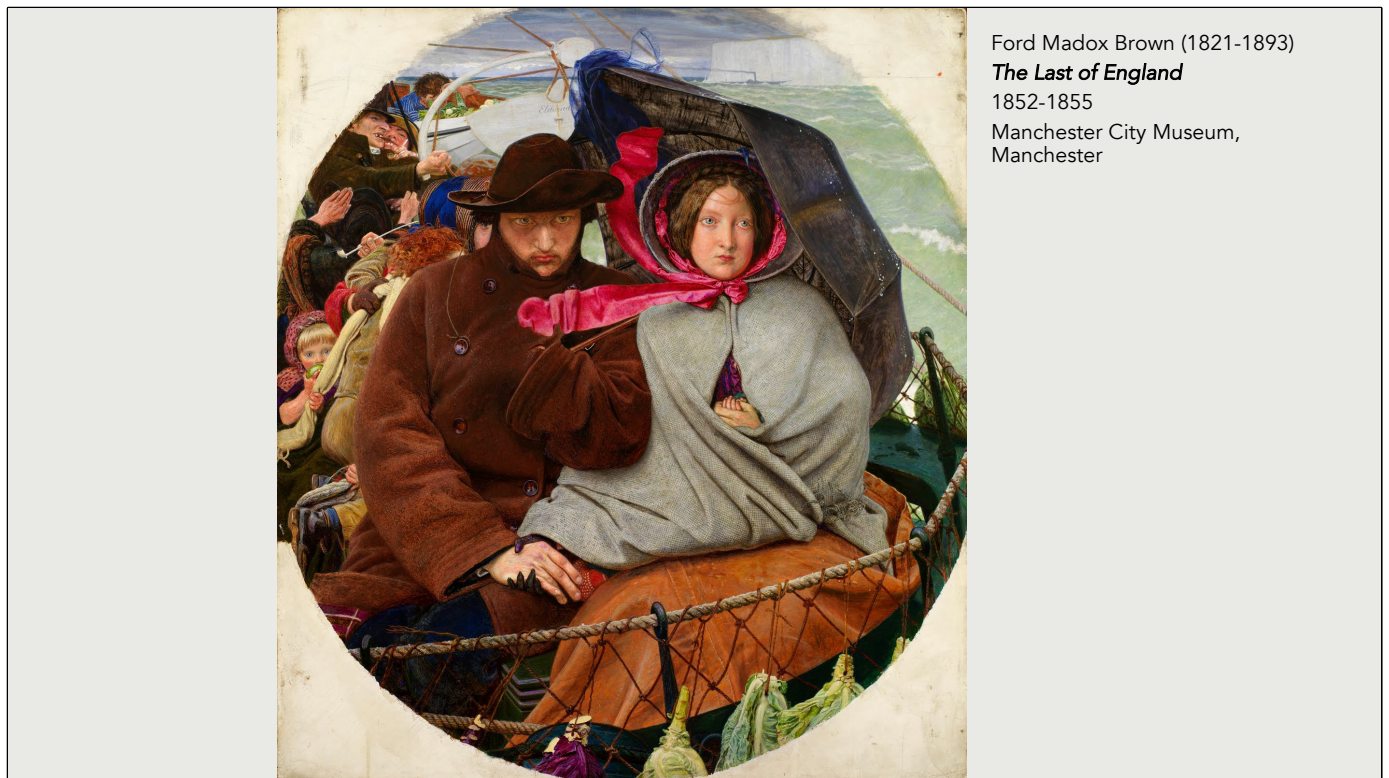
Notes

Found is an unfinished oil painting by Rossetti and is his only treatment in oil of a contemporary moral subject, urban prostitution, and although the work remained incomplete at Rossetti's death in 1882, he always considered it one of his most important works, returning to it many times from the mid-1850s until the year before his death.

The artist Alexander Munro's (1825-1871) maid Ellen Frazer may have posed for an early head-study for the fallen country girl of Found. Munro was a Pre-Raphaelite sculptor best known for Paolo and Francesca, 1852, Birmingham Museum, plaster version in Wallington House, Northumberland. The face we see in this version is Fanny Cornforth based on a study he made in 1858.

In 1855 Rossetti wrote to Holman Hunt:

I can tell you, on my own side, of only one picture fairly begun—indeed, I may say, all things considered, rather advanced; but it is only a small one. The subject had been sometime designed before you left England and will be thought, by any one who sees it when (and if) finished, to follow in the wake of your "Awakened Conscience," but not by yourself, as you know I had long had in view subjects taking the same direction as my present one. The picture represents a London street at dawn, with the lamps still lighted along a bridge which forms the distant background. A drover has left his cart standing in the middle of the road (in which, i. e. the cart, stands baa-ing a calf tied on its way to market), and has run a little way after a girl who has passed him, wandering in the streets. He has just come up with her and she, recognising him, has sunk under her shame upon her knees, against the wall of a raised churchyard in the foreground, while he stands holding her hands as he seized them, half in bewilderment and half guarding her from doing herself a hurt. These are the chief things in the picture which is to be called "Found," and for which my sister Maria has found me a most lovely motto from Jeremiah ... The calf, a white one, will be a beautiful and suggestive part of the thing, though I am far from having painted him as well as I hoped to do.



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893)
The Last of England
 1852-1855
 Manchester City Museum,
 Manchester

Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *The Last of England*, 1852-1855,
 Manchester City Museum, Manchester

That fragmentation of the Brotherhood gives us the emotional backdrop to **Ford Madox Brown's** most celebrated social image, 'The Last of England'. Brown began the painting in **1852**, directly inspired by watching his friend **Thomas Woolner**, the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor, depart for Australia. The work is unflinching in its emotional precision. Brown painted outdoors in bitter cold, deliberately so — he was pleased when his hands turned blue, believing the discomfort would sharpen his observation of light and flesh. His wife **Emma** modelled the woman, also made to sit outside. The fair-haired child is their daughter Catherine, and the tiny hand visible beneath the shawl belongs to their infant son Oliver. Two finished versions exist: one in **Manchester**, where the woman wears a grey shawl, and one in the **Fitzwilliam Museum**, completed in 1860, where the shawl is red. A watercolour replica and a fully worked study also survive. In 1859, the Manchester version sold to the dealer **Ernest Gambart**, owner of the French Gallery on Pall Mall, for **325 guineas**. The accompanying verse Brown chose

ends with the line 'she cannot see a void where he will be' — grief rendered not through gesture, but through what remains just beyond the frame.

Notes

Pre-Raphaelite Split

Brown began the painting in 1852 inspired by the departure of his friend Thomas Woolner, a Pre-Raphaelite sculptor who had left for Australia in July (source: Wikipedia).

This followed James Collinson leaving the group in 1850, Millais becoming an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1853 and William Holman Hunt leaving for the Holy Land in January 1854.

By 1853 or 1854 the original close knit brotherhood had split up as each artist pursued their own interests. Except for Collinson who trained as a priest they remained close over the years.

Our knowledge of the early days of the Brotherhood is gained from the press reaction and from Holman Hunt's autobiography *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (2 vols., 1905-1906). Interesting facets of his character are provided by Diana Holman-Hunt in *My Grandmothers and I* (1960). Holman Hunt's autobiography presents himself as the key member and inspiration for the group but the credibility of the book is undermined by Holman Hunt including long passages of what purport to be verbatim conversations that had taken place fifty years previously. Other contemporary sources are M.H. Spielmann, *Millais and His Works* (1898), Millais's son, the artist and naturalist John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* (2 vols., 1899) and William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters with a Memoir* (1895).

Last of England

The following verse accompanied the painting,

...She grips his listless hand and clasps her child, Through rainbow tears she sees a sunnier gleam, She cannot see a void where he will be.

He painted outside and was pleased when his hands turned blue with the cold. His wife, Emma, modelled the woman and she was also made to sit outside in the cold. The fair-haired child is their five-year old daughter Catherine and the tiny hand is their baby son Oliver. His neighbours thought

they were mad. It took him four weeks just to paint the ribbons of the bonnet. There are two finished version – one in Manchester with the woman wearing a grey shawl and one in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Oxford (1860, red shawl). There is also a watercolour replica in the Tate and a fully worked study. In 1859 this version was sold to Ernest Gambart (1814-1902), owner of the French Gallery, Pall Mall, for 325 guineas.

The audio clip is by Julian Treuherz curator of Manchester Museum.



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Pretty Baa-Lambs*, 1851-1859, Birmingham Art Gallery, Birmingham

Building on the Pre-Raphaelites' place within Victorian avant-garde culture, **Ford Madox Brown** stands as one of the movement's most radical figures, despite never holding official membership. Brown painted subjects with unsentimental realism decades before such an approach gained critical acceptance. He depicted the working poor without condescension, and designed furniture before the **Arts and Crafts Movement** had sanctioned such work as a legitimate artistic pursuit. His personal life fed directly into his practice: his wife **Emma** and their daughter **Catherine**, whose birth preceded the couple's marriage in **1853**, almost certainly posed outdoors to achieve the precise rendering of shadow and skin tone in strong sunlight. The painting shocked contemporary viewers, described at the time as an insult to public intelligence. Its woman is unidealised — flushed, unremarkable, plainly dressed — and Brown insisted the subject was simply a woman and a baby looking at lambs. That refusal of symbolic elevation infuriated audiences expecting deeper meaning. The critic **R.**

A. M. Stevenson, a leading champion of Impressionism, later told Brown's son-in-law: "By God! the whole history of modern art begins with that picture. Corot, Manet, the Impressionists never did anything but imitate that picture." Whether or not one accepts that claim wholesale, Brown's handling of outdoor light unquestionably anticipates **Impressionist colour theory**.

Notes

Artists continued to paint in the Pre-Raphaelite style and new, young artists chose the style and it became an indicator of the 'avant garde' in London. The term 'avant garde' is derived from a small group of troops that leads the main army and it has become used to describe the French artists that created new styles of painting in France. The exhibition at the Tate 2012-13 used the title Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant Garde to emphasize the new view that the Pre-Raphaelites were innovative and revolutionary and created a style that led to change.

The debate is whether it led to 'modern art' which depends how you define the term. At the beginning of the twentieth century art historians rejected all Victorian art as reactionary, sentimental, representational and old-fashioned and their view was that modern art started with Manet and French Impressionism (although it is not clear that Manet was an Impressionist).

In the last quarter of the twentieth century views have changed again and a more inclusive art historical analysis has seen the work of the Pre-Raphaelites as revolutionary in their time with symbolic references that predate Symbolism. This painting and other, such as Hunt's *Our English Coast*, show a clear recognition of the effects of light and the colours of shadows that is found, later, in the works of the Impressionists. The Impressionists were capturing a fleeting view of a scene and as the light is changing all the time Monet often worked on multiple canvases. Brown captured the same moment but with the detail representing a photographic snapshot of the scene in high definition.

Ford Madox Brown

Ford Madox Brown was never officially a Pre-Raphaelite yet he was one of the most important and a true pioneer and radical who was decades ahead of his time. Brown painted subjects with unsentimental realism, showed the working poor without sentiment or condescension and designed furniture before the

Arts & Crafts Movement had sanctioned as something artists should be doing.

This painting shows the colours in shadows, something usually credited to the Impressionists and he painted entirely in the open air. This work was very shocking and was described as 'an insult on the public intelligence'. The woman is not an ideal beauty, she has flushed cheeks and is looking down and there is no grace about the picture, it is very stark. People who came to see it thought it must mean something, such as a Madonna and child but Brown said it was just a lady and a baby looking at lambs, which infuriated people even more.

Emma and Brown were not married when she conceived Catherine and so they kept the pregnancy secret and baptised her with her parents names shown as 'Ford and Mathilda Hill'. Mathilda was her middle name and Hill was her surname. They married in 1853 and had another child Oliver and then a second son Arthur Gabriel in 1856 and who died a year later. Emma was given to bouts of drinking and they often quarrelled. However, she was very kind and got on well with Elizabeth Siddal and Georgiana Burne-Jones. She was also generous and on one occasion set up a soup kitchen in their living room even though they were very poor themselves.

Every day over a five month period Brown posed a lay figure dressed in his wife, Emma's clothes on the lawn of his Stockwell garden. It is thought that Emma and their daughter Catherine did pose outside to capture the shadows and skin tones in bright sunlight. Forty years later the critic R. A. M. Stevenson (1847-1900), a Scottish art critic who championed Impressionism, said to the artists son-in-law:

By God! the whole history of modern art begins with that picture. Corot, Manet, the Marises, all the Fontainebleau school, all the Impressionists never did anything but imitate that picture'.

References

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



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893)

Work

1852-1865

137 x 198 cm

Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester

Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Work*, 1852-1865, 137 x 198 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester

Following our look at the formal composition of **Ford Madox Brown's** 'Work', we turn now to what **Gerard Curtis** identified as its semiotic richness. Brown laboured on this painting for **eleven years**, beginning around **1852**, and wrote a five-page catalogue entry because the work demands it. Curtis argues that Brown's semiotic detailing reflects a core Victorian conviction: the desire to conflate social realism with social idealism. Every detail carries weight. The intellectual framework comes from **Thomas Carlyle**, whose 'Past and Present' supplies the painting's central theme — the ennobling nature of labour. Carlyle and the Christian reformer **F. D. Maurice** appear at the right as so-called brainworkers, flanking the Irish navvies who dominate the centre. The navvies are laying a new water main approved by Parliament in **1852**, and the subject was urgent: a cholera outbreak in **1853 to 1854** killed eleven thousand Londoners. Brown, living in Hampstead in near poverty while painting this scene, bathed daily out of genuine fear. Floral symbolism runs throughout. The central labourer holds an apple

— Original Sin redeemed through honest toil. The tract distributor's hepatica signals confidence; the potman's fuchsia signals departed taste. Even the clothing codes class and character. Brown, following **Hogarth**, whom he admired deeply, embeds a detective narrative in the wanted poster half-hidden by the chickweed seller — the very man most likely guilty.

Notes

Iconographic Analysis (based on an article by Gerard Curtis)

Brown wrote a five-page catalogue entry to describe what was happening in *Work* and the symbolism used. The painting was not popular, perhaps because of the five pages text that is required to understand it. It was exhibited in 1865 in a one-man show with other paintings but was never produced as an engraving. It is a visual and literary game he worked on for eleven years as it grew in complexity.

The painting was commissioned by Thomas Plint, a well-known collector of Pre-Raphaelite art, who died before its completion. A second version, smaller at 68.4 x 99 cm, was commissioned in 1859 and completed in 1863. This is now in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. It is closely similar, though for the lady with a blue parasol the face of Maria Leathart, the commissioner's wife, replaces that of Mrs Brown in the Manchester version.

'Browns semiotic detailing relates to a fundamental Victorian tenet: the desire to conflate social realism with social idealism'. Every tiny detail was subject to deep study and is pregnant with meaning.

The main theme is the ennobling nature of work which is taken from Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present*. One of Carlyle's extended metaphors likens work to digging an ever widening river that drains a pestilent swamp of ignorance.

The workers are laying a new water main which was approved by Parliament in 1852. The reservoir is behind the buildings on the left.

The scene is The Mount in Hampstead and Brown was living nearby in conditions of 'extreme poverty'.

Brown shows the range of workers including, on the right, the 'brainworkers' Thomas Carlyle and F. D. Maurice holding a bible. There are unemployed, street sellers and the idle rich who live off others' work.

F. D. Maurice the Christian reformer gave lectures on the 'Great Unwashed'

and the relationship between cleanliness and godliness.

Sanitation and water reform was the central reform issue at this time and it was a dominant theme of Dickens's *Bleak House* which was published in 1852-3. The noted scientist Michael Faraday wrote a letter to *The Times* calling for water reform and for the Thames to be cleaned. The 'Great Stink' which closed the Houses of Parliament was not until summer 1858. The related issue was cholera. When Brown was designing this work in 1853-4 11,000 people died in London alone in a major cholera outbreak. Dr John Snow was advocating a germ theory where the prevention was clean water but the miasmatic theory also suggested prevention based on cleanliness.

The 'ragged dirty brats' in the painting are orphans from the cholera epidemic. Their orphan status is indicated by the black band on the baby. The father, Brown wrote, has forsaken them for alcohol. The Hampstead Water Company was notorious for supplying dirty water unlike the New Water Company that was digging this hole to lay new pipes. Brown was very worried about his family catching cholera and, unusually, had a bath every day.

In the middle of the road two young girls are obtaining water. Women and children would walk a quarter of a mile a day to get clean water from a public standpipe. In Hampstead the water had to be bought and it cost more than the price of strong beer.

There is a potman with *The Times* under his arm crying 'Beer!'. The potman sold beer and Brown notes that he is stunted from the effects of gin as a child. The man next to him is drinking a pint of ale. Some families drunk only beer as it was safer and cheaper than water. Brown's wife, Emma, was an alcoholic and Brown had to bring up the children largely without her help.

The woman distributing temperance tracts was requested by Brown's demanding patron Thomas Plint. Ironically the tract floats down into the very stream of water that was believed to alleviate drunkenness. Charles Kingsley wrote 'A man's sobriety is in direct proportion to his cleanliness', a sentiment that many believed as people drank to avoid drinking dirty water. Clean water meant sobriety.

There are four quotations from the Bible around the frame which is shaped like a proscenium arch like a stage. Top left is 'Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day' (Thessalonians 3:8). The pastry boy's tray represents superfluity of excess and waste and the rich couple do not need work for bread.

Top right is the quotation 'See'st thou a man diligent in his business. He shall stand before kings' which is from a passage that earlier concerns the equality of all men. Brown gives the working men nobility and a central position while the idle rich are stopped in their tracks.

The Victorians and in particular the Pre-Raphaelites were consumed by floral mania and the meaning of flowers. Brown, a keen gardener painted with botanical accuracy. However, because of the number of floral dictionaries published there were often conflicting meanings. Along the bottom of the frame is a quotation from Genesis (3:19), 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'. This refers to Adam and Eve's labour as punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In the centre of the painting a young red-headed labourer carries a pail of water and in his right hand is an apple held up to be seen. This is the symbol of temptation and is a reminder that labour leads from Original Sin to redemption and so the apple represents the dignity of labour.

The young orphan child was modelled by Brown's son Arthur who died while he was painting the picture and he carries daisies, the symbol of childhood and innocence. Beside him, carrot in hand, is a red-haired sibling. Red hair represents the Irish (men escaping the Irish Famine) and many navies were Irish. Here four of the workers have red-hair and so are Irish. Brown called one of them 'Paddy' and we know he went looking for Irish immigrants to paint.

To the right he shows a bare foot Irishman and his wife shaded by the bank of the road. The Irish were believed to be dirty and to catch and spread cholera. Brown tells us the couple are 'reduced in strength' and may have a fever.

The elm trees in the background are a symbol for dignity and reinforce the dignity of the manual labour. The potman wears a small buttonhole of fuschias meaning 'taste' and sweet peas that mean 'departure'. In other words taste has departed and Brown tells us he has 'vulgar taste'.

Brown describes the man to the left shovelling as the 'pride of manly health and beauty'. He chews upon a flower which can just be recognised as a china or species rose, a symbol of beauty that reinforces Brown's description.

The tract distributor wears a spray of Hepatica flowers in her bonnet, symbol of confidence, which reinforces her imperial nature. In front of her, a woman modelled by Brown's wife Emma has a leaf-shaped parasol and Brown notes that this example of female beauty should be seen as a flower that feeds upon the sun. Brown warns that beauty fades, health may fail and pleasures through repetition pall.

In front of the beautiful woman is a 'Botany Ben' or chickweed seller. The man sells flowers, ferns, weeds and grasses for medicinal, culinary and decorative purposes. In his hat is a spray of wild grain, straw and plantain. The chickweed means 'ingenious simplicity' which matches his character of 'effeminate gentleness'. Brown notes that Botany Ben suffers from paranoia and those on the bottom rung of society often feigned madness to get sympathy and achieve greater sales. His hat may be a reference to the crown of straw in Hogarth's *Bedlam Hospital*. Brown admired Hogarth greatly.

All the hats and the clothing in the painting also has a meaning. The upper class on their horses wear a top hat and a silk bonnet. The workers wear hats and kerchiefs although none wear the disposable paper hat that many labourers wore at the time. The two women wear middle-class millinery and Carlyle wears a soft felt hat, an alternative to the top hat worn by artists and intellectuals.

A poster on the wall bears the name of an estate agent William (Bill) Poster and in the background there is a bill poster going about his business.

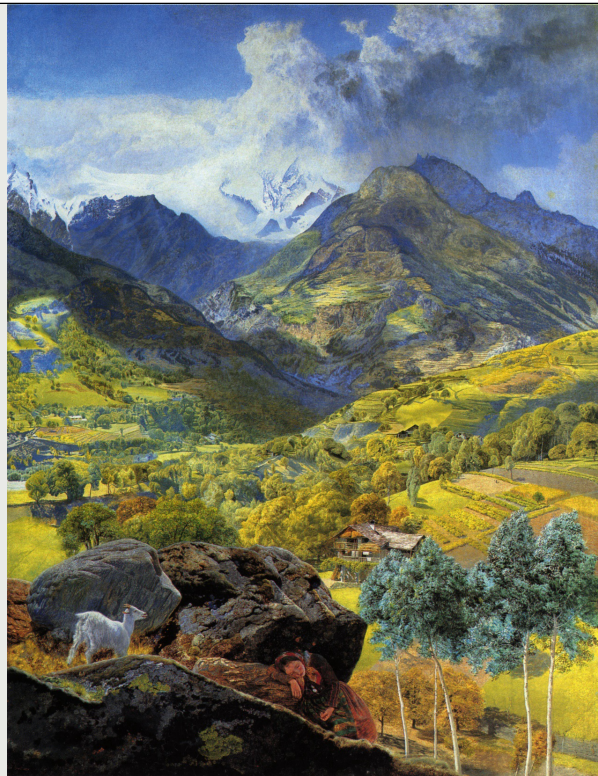
The painting is full of puns, 'Flamstead' for Hamstead and a real coach and horses next to the Coach and Horses pub.

One of the posters is for a Boy's Home and the lady with the tract may soon place the boy playing with the wheelbarrow in the home. Another is for a Working Men's College referring to F. D. Maurice's founding of that institute in 1854 for the education of working men. Brown worked there as an art tutor.

The most complex clues in the painting lead to a crime. It starts with the bills and advertisements on the wall at the left. The bill is partly obscured by the chickweed seller and is fragmentary. Like a detective novel it identifies a criminal wanted for robbery through a series of clues. The thief has been sighted with a bull terrier pup. The dog is in the front. The form was changed during the 1850s and 60s to a bullet shaped heads but at this time it looked like a today's pit-bull terrier. The poster refers to 'fustian' meaning working men's clothes of velveteen, brocade or corduroy weave, olive green to burnt umber in colour. It is linked to criminals, Dickens wrote 'the thief in fustian is a vulgar character' (*Nicholas Nickleby*). In the background a likely suspects loiters against a tree. His stoic appearance is highly suspect according to Victorian physiognomy and he looks across the street to a policeman hustling an orange seller, a scene of excessive police force that was galling to Brown. The poster also refers to 'Billy-cock' which is a type of hat worn by the lower classes (a 'wide awake' hat). The culprit is the one that obscures the poster,

hiding beneath his punched out billy-cock hat and wearing fustian – it is the chickweed seller. He lives, Brown tells us, among the worst thieves and cut-throats in London. He has sold the bull pup to one of the labourers and is worried about being caught with the pup as evidence as there is a policeman opposite and one coming down the road on a horse. Of course, this conflicts with what Brown told us about the chickweed seller earlier and it could be the man under the tree but Carlyle also 'reversed men's notions upon criminals'. So Brown can slap us on the wrist for making assumptions about 'type'.

John Brett (1831-1902)
The Val d'Aosta
1858



John Brett (1831-1902), *The Val d'Aosta*, 1858

John Brett, born near Reigate, trained under **Richard Redgrave** and at the **Royal Academy Schools** before encountering the ideas that would define his career. Through the poet Coventry Patmore he met **William Holman Hunt**, and the writings of **John Ruskin** shaped his commitment to meticulous natural observation. A visit to Switzerland brought him under the influence of **John William Inchbold**, sharpening his eye for geological precision. His painting ***The Stonebreaker*** announced him to the London art world, its botanical and geological detail drawing Ruskin's admiration. Ruskin then urged Brett to visit **Val d'Aosta** in northern Italy, partly funding the trip himself. The resulting painting, exhibited in **1859**, earned Ruskin's praise — and his purchase — yet also his most searching critique. While other critics dismissed the work as a gravestone for Post-Ruskinism, Ruskin's own verdict cut deeper: he praised Brett's keenness of eye and fineness of hand, but condemned the painting as wholly emotionless. In Ruskin's words, he never saw the mirror so held up to Nature — but it is Mirror's work, not Man's. For Ruskin, technical brilliance without felt emotion was not enough, and

Brett's career never quite escaped that judgement.

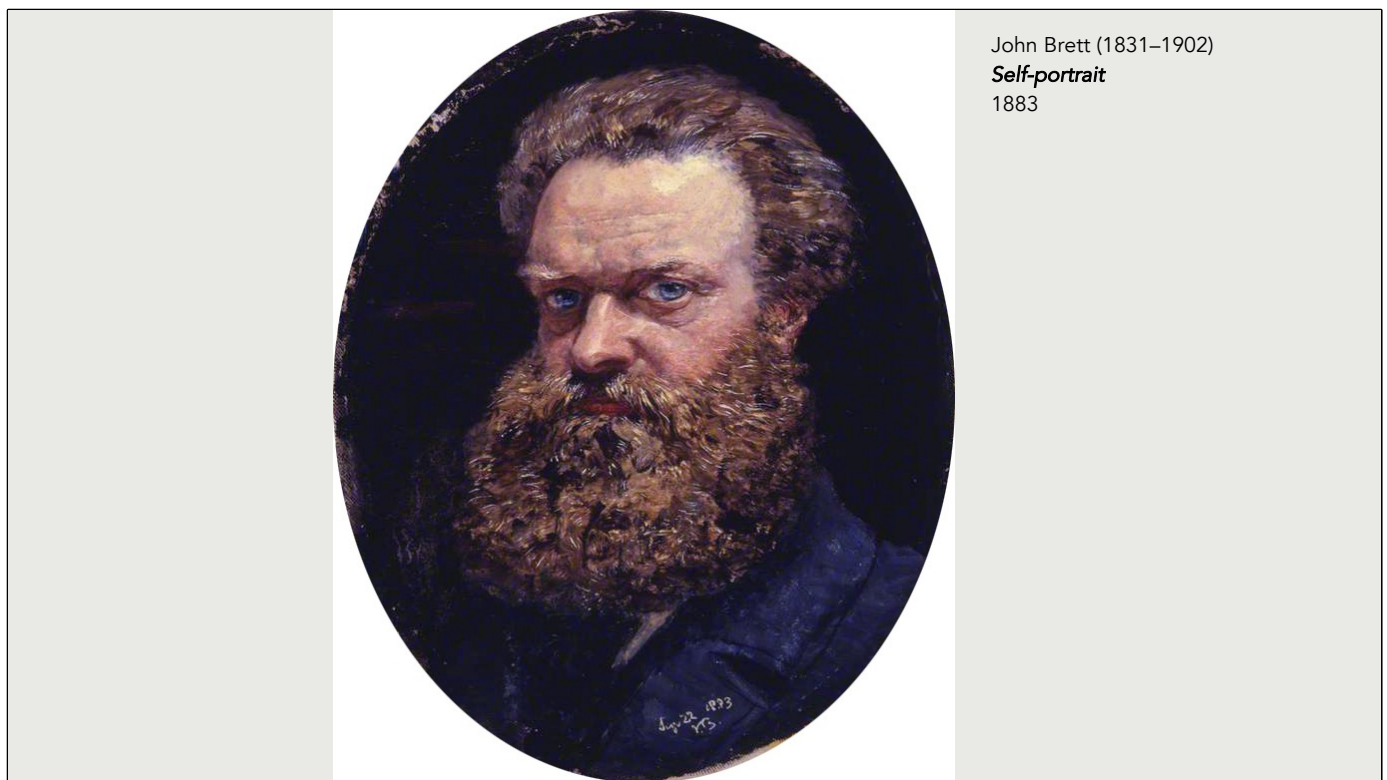
Notes

John Brett was born near Reigate and studied with Richard Redgrave and at the Royal Academy School. He was interested in the ideas of John Ruskin and William Holman Hunt whom he met through a friend Coventry Patmore.

He visited Switzerland and came under the influence of John William Inchbold. His name was made when he exhibited *The Stonebreaker* and the geological and botanical detail impressed Ruskin predicting he would paint a masterpiece if he visited Val d'Aosta in Italy. He went there partly funded by Ruskin and exhibited it in 1859 to high praise from Ruskin who bought the painting. Other critics called it a 'gravestone for Post-Ruskinism'. Even Ruskin had his criticisms and wrote:

A notable picture truly; a possession of much within a few feet square.

Yet not, in the strong, essential meaning of the word, a noble picture. It has a strange fault, considering the school to which it belongs—it seems to me wholly emotionless. I cannot find from it that the painter loved, or feared, anything in all that wonderful piece of the world. There seems to me no awe of the mountains there—no real love of the chestnuts or the vines. Keeness of eye and fineness of hand as much as you choose; but of emotion, or of intention, nothing traceable. Not but that I believe the painter to be capable of the highest emotion: anyone who can paint thus must have passion within him; but the passion here is assuredly not out of him. He has cared for nothing, except as it was more or less pretty in colour and form. I never saw the mirror so held up to Nature; but it is Mirror's work, not Man's.



John Brett (1831–1902), Self-portrait, 1883

Brett's scientific rigour extended well beyond the canvas. Elected a Fellow of the **Royal Astronomical Society** in **1871**, he approached both astronomy and painting as parallel disciplines of precise observation — the same eye that tracked celestial movement also measured the behaviour of light on water. This dual commitment shaped the final decades of his career decisively. Abandoning the Pre-Raphaelite geological close-ups that made his early reputation, Brett turned to coastal subjects and seascapes, finding in the open sea a subject that rewarded the same exacting attention to natural phenomena. To pursue that subject on his own terms, he purchased a **210-ton schooner** crewed by twelve sailors, and used it to voyage across the **Mediterranean**, painting its shifting light and shorelines directly from the water. John Gage, writing on colour and the sea in British Victorian painting, identifies Brett as one of the few artists of his generation who genuinely understood oceanic light rather than merely representing it pictorially. The schooner was not an affectation but a working instrument, placing Brett among those rare figures whose biography

and methodology are inseparable — the life organised entirely around the demands of seeing clearly.

Notes

John Brett was a keen astronomer and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1871. In later years he painted coastal subjects and seascapes and he bought a 210 ton schooner with a crew of 12, in which he travelled the Mediterranean.



Arthur Hughes (1832–1915)
April Love
1856
Tate Britain, London

Arthur Hughes (1832–1915), *April Love*, 1856, Tate Britain, London

Arthur Hughes, born in 1832, encountered **Holman Hunt** and **Millais** at the Royal Academy Schools, and that circle shaped everything that followed. His painting **April Love**, completed in 1856, drew direct inspiration from Millais's celebrated couple paintings, particularly *A Huguenot* of 1852. Hughes exhibited it with a quotation from Tennyson's *The Miller's Daughter*, not to illustrate the poem but to signal the same subject: the fragility of young love. The ivy winding through the composition signifies everlasting life, while rose petals scattered on the ground suggest love already lost. The rich blues, greens, and purples became his signature palette. His wife **Tryphena Foord**, whom he married in 1855, was his final model for the figure, replacing a country girl who objected to his rendering of her face. **John Ruskin** urged his father to acquire the work, praising its quivering expression and tender colour. Instead, **William Morris** bought it for thirty pounds, writing urgently to **Burne-Jones** to secure it before anyone else could. Morris, newly receiving an annual income of up to nine hundred pounds from a Devon copper mine, had a declared

desire to produce beautiful things. Hughes's daughter Emily destroyed his sketches and private papers in 1921, leaving his prolific career frustratingly underdocumented.

Notes

Arthur Hughes (1832-1915), English painter and illustrator who met Holman Hunt and Millais at the Royal Academy School. His first painting was accepted by the Academy when he was 17 and he exhibited almost annually, including, later, the Grosvenor Gallery. Left 700 paintings and drawings and over 750 book illustrations.

April Love was inspired by Millais's success with his 'couple' paintings such as *A Huguenot* (1852). It is one of the most popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It was exhibited with a quotation from Tennyson's 'The Miller's Daughter' although it does not illustrate the poem but is about a similar theme, the fragility of young love.

The ivy signifies everlasting life, the rose petals love but as they are on the floor perhaps love has ended.

The rich blues, greens and purples became Hughes trademark.

His wife Tryphena Foord (m. 1855) was his 'first and only love' and the final model for April Love. The original model was a country girl who did not like the way he painted her face and walked out. Her father worked for Robert Cutbush and his brother owned the garden in which this was painted in Maidstone. Most of it was painted in his studio in 6 Upper Belgrave Place and the male model was the sculptor Alexander Munro.

The painting was provisionally called *Lovers' Quarrel and Hide and Seek*.

Ruskin tried to get his father to buy the painting and wrote, 'Exquisite in every way; lovely in colour, most subtle in the quivering expression of the lips, and sweetness of the tender face'.

The painting was bought by William Morris who wrote to Burne-Jones, 'do me a great favour, viz. go and nobble that picture called "April Love" as soon as possible lest anybody else should buy it'. At the end of his life Hughes remembered Burne-Jones arriving with the cheque for £30 and his surprise at it being bought by an Oxford student. Morris had just bought five Rossetti paintings for £200. Morris's income from March 1855 (his twenty-first birthday) was £700 to £900 a year from a Devon copper mine. Morris had a 'desire to produce beautiful things' and a 'hatred of modern civilization'.

Arthur Hughes daughter Emily destroyed all his sketches and private papers in 1921 when she moved to a smaller house so we know little about the details of this prolific artist's life.



Henry Wallis (1830-1916)
The Death of Chatterton
1856
Tate Britain, London

Henry Wallis (1830-1916), *The Death of Chatterton*, 1856, Tate Britain, London

Henry Wallis painted 'The Death of Chatterton' in **1856** in the very attic where the poet had died, the space barely wide enough to accommodate his easel. That biographical act of witness shapes everything about the painting. Wallis trained at the **Royal Academy Schools** from 1848 and later in Paris, and he absorbed the **Pre-Raphaelite** commitment to vivid colour and symbolic detail — the torn manuscripts, the extinguished candle, the dawn light breaking cold through the skyline. What distinguishes the work from much Pre-Raphaelite painting is its **chiaroscuro**, the dramatic opposition of light and dark that carves three-dimensional volume from the figure and charges the scene with theatrical grief. For his model Wallis chose **George Meredith**, then a struggling young writer and his close friend — a personal entanglement that deepened when Wallis later conducted an affair with Meredith's wife. **Thomas Chatterton** died by arsenic poisoning in **1770**, aged seventeen, after London's literary market paid him almost nothing. His forged medieval verse, composed

under the invented persona of the monk **Thomas Rowley**, had dazzled Bristol but failed to sustain him. **Nick Groom** now challenges both the poverty narrative and the suicide verdict, urging us to treat Chatterton's death as an open historical question rather than a settled Romantic myth.

Notes

Henry Wallis was born in London but his father is unknown. When his mother married a successful architect he took his name. He enrolled at the RA School in 1848 and studied in Paris.

This is his best known work. He used the Pre-Raphaelite bright colours and symbolic detail although unlike some Pre-Raphaelite work this shows a strong chiaroscuro (Italian for light-dark). Art historians use the term to describe the use of strong contrast between light and dark areas in order to create a strong sense of three-dimensional volume and evoke emotion through its theatrical effect. It was painted in the attic where Chatterton died which as barely big enough for his easel.

His next major work was *The Stonebreaker* (1857, exhibited 1858). He exhibited 35 paintings at the RA and later took up watercolour painting and was elected to the Royal Watercolour Society.

Wallis used his friend George Meredith (1828-1909), a struggling writer, as model. Wallis would later have an affair with Meredith's wife.

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)

An unsuccessful poet who committed suicide using arsenic in 1770.

His father was sexton of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol. He was a lonely child who sat for hours as if in a trance. At eight he would read day and night and by eleven he was a contributor to the Bristol Journal. His first mystery was written when he was 12 which he pretended was the work of a 15th century poet. In his mind he lived in the ideal world of Edward IV when St. Mary Redcliffe was rebuilt. He adopted the persona of a 15th century monk called Thomas Rowley although he could write in the style of any medieval poet. He left for London after breaking his apprenticeship by writing a satirical 'Last Will and Testament'.

He was paid very little for his work and would write all night in a garret in Shoreditch. He committed suicide on 24 August 1770 aged 17 years nine months. The following day Dr Thomas Fry arrived in London to provide

financial support. Chatterton had torn up all his work which Fry gathered together to try to reassemble.

His death influenced the Romantic movement. Chatterton has been commemorated in poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Keats.

Recent research by Nick Groom questions whether he lived in poverty and whether he committed suicide or it was an accident.



Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)
Sidonia von Bork
1860
Tate Britain, London

Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), *Sidonia von Bork*, 1860, Tate Britain, London

Edward Burne-Jones painted '*Sidonia von Bork*' in **1860**, drawing on **Wilhelm Meinhold's** gothic novel of 1847, in which Sidonia's beauty becomes a weapon — she bewitches the ruling house of Pomerania, rendering men impotent or killing them outright, before she is burned as a witch at eighty. The costume, however, comes not from the novel's Pomeranian setting but from a portrait by **Giulio Romano**, Raphael's pupil and a defining figure of **Mannerism**, showing Margherita Paleologo at her marriage in 1531. That portrait hung at Hampton Court, and Burne-Jones saw it alongside **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** during a joint visit. The connection matters: Rossetti was simultaneously painting *Lucretia Borgia*, and both figures share the blatant sensuality of their model **Fanny Cornforth**. The **femme fatale** absorbed both artists at this moment, sharpened by the esoteric enthusiasms of **Algernon Swinburne** and **Simeon Solomon**. This work belongs to a group of three watercolours that stand as Burne-Jones's earliest completed figure studies. Younger than the founding **Pre-**

Raphaelites, he shaped the movement's later development and, through his friendship with William Morris, helped establish the **Arts and Crafts Movement**.

Notes

Edward Burne-Jones

Sidonia von Bork is the main character in Wilhelm Meinhold's gothic romance *Sidonia von Bork* (1847) and translated as 'Sidonia the Sorceress' by Oscar Wilde's mother Lady Jane Wilde and published in 1849. The novel tells of the evil crimes of Sidonia whose beauty entraps everyone she sees. She bewitches the whole of the ruling house of Pomerania either killing her victims or rendering them impotent and the story ends when she is burned as a witch at the age of 80.

The details in this painting are taken from the novel but the costume is based on that of Isabella d'Este daughter-in-law in 1531 (her daughter-in-law Margherita Paleologo at the time of her marriage to Federico Gonzaga, 1st Duke of Mantua). It is by Giulio Romano and is in the Royal Collection. Romano was a painter and architect and pupil of Raphael who helped define Mannerism. The painting was on view at Hampton Court and was seen by Burne-Joneses and Rossettis when they visited together.

The painting is part of their interest in the femme fatale and both Burne-Jones and Rossetti were interested in witches and the shocking encouraged by the esoteric tastes of their friends Swinburne and Simeon Solomon. Rossetti was working on his painting of Lucretia Borgia at the same time and both figures resemble Fanny Cornforth in their blatant sensuality.

This is one of three figure studies, which were the earliest watercolours Burne-Jones completed. He was a few years younger than the other Pre-Raphaelites and is associated with the later stages of the movement. He was a friend of William Morris and they founded the Arts & Crafts Movement but Burne-Jones was a painter who became famous internationally. His medieval scenes went out of fashion after his death and he dropped into obscurity but his reputation has grown since a major exhibition was held at the Barbican in 1989. He is now seen to have been very influential on later artists including the Symbolists on the Continent.



Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898)
King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid
1884
Tate Britain, London

Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, 1884, Tate Britain, London

King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid draws on two literary sources Burne-Jones knew well: an Elizabethan ballad preserved in **Bishop Thomas Percy's** 1765 collection 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry', and **Alfred Tennyson's** sixteen-line poem 'The Beggar Maid'. Together they recount the legend of the prince **Cophetua**, who abandons worldly power for love of the beggar girl **Penelophon** — a theme of wealth and status overborne by beauty and simplicity that runs through Burne-Jones's work at large. Exhibited at the **Grosvenor Gallery** in **1884**, the painting became his greatest public success of the decade. 'The Art Journal' declared it picture of the year; 'The Times' went further, calling it not only the finest work Burne-Jones had ever painted, but one of the finest pictures painted by an Englishman. Five years later, shown in France in **1889**, it earned him the **Légion d'Honneur** and ignited a vogue for his work across the Continent. His wife **Georgiana Burne-Jones** offered the most intimate verdict of all, writing that this picture contained more of Edward's own qualities than

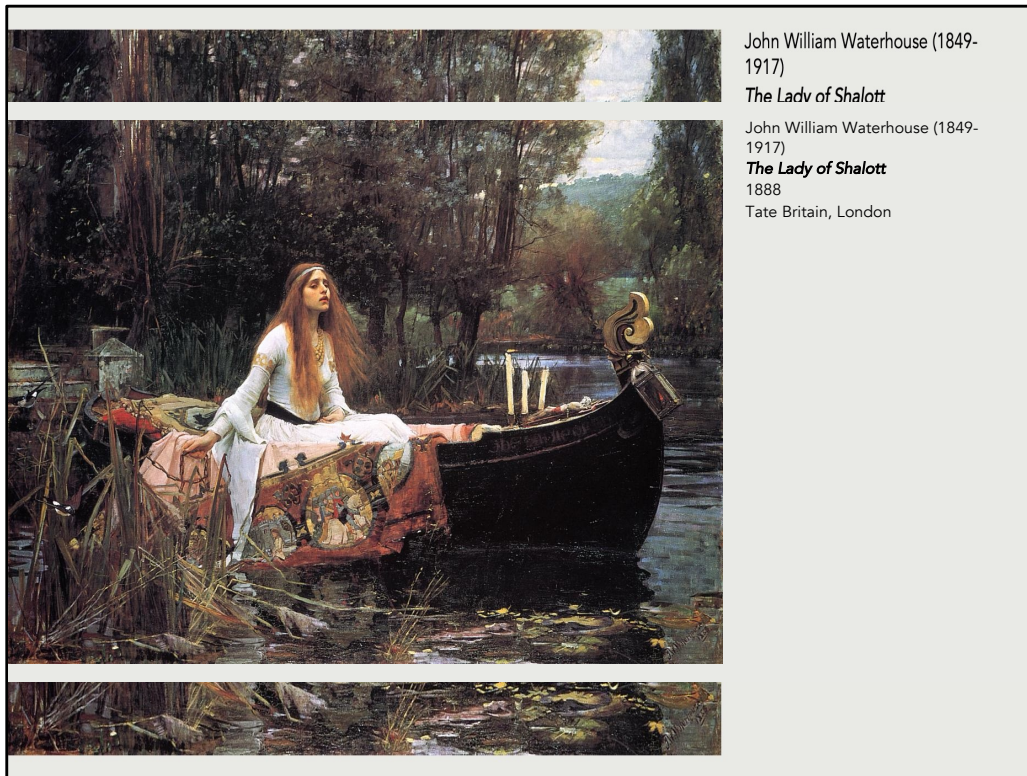
any other he did.

Notes

Edward Burne-Jones: Picture of the Year

The painting illustrates the story of 'The King and the Beggar-maid', which tells the legend of the prince Cophetua (pronounced coe-FET-you-ah) and his love for the beggar Penelophon. The tale was familiar to Burne-Jones through an Elizabethan ballad published in Bishop Thomas Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and the sixteen-line poem *The Beggar Maid* by Alfred Tennyson.

King Cophetua was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1884 and became Burne-Jones's greatest success of the 1880s for its technical execution and its themes of power and wealth overborne by beauty and simplicity. It was heralded as the 'picture of the year' by *The Art Journal* and 'not only the finest work Mr Burne-Jones has ever painted, but one of the finest pictures ever painted by an Englishman' by *The Times*. The painting was exhibited in France in 1889, where its popularity earned Burne-Jones the Legion of Honour and began a vogue for his work. The artist's wife Georgiana Burne-Jones felt 'this picture contained more of Edward's own qualities than any other he did.'



John William Waterhouse (1849-1917), *The Lady of Shalott*, 1888, Tate Britain, London

John William Waterhouse worked in the Pre-Raphaelite style several decades after the Brotherhood's mid-nineteenth-century heyday, earning him the title "the modern Pre-Raphaelite." Born in Rome to English painter-parents, he moved to London and enrolled at the **Royal Academy**, where he began exhibiting large canvases of ancient Greek daily life and mythology. Over time he turned decisively toward Pre-Raphaelite painting, an approach long out of fashion in British art, making his commitment to it all the more striking. His subjects returned repeatedly to women from **Arthurian legend** and Greek myth, and two figures dominated his imagination above all others. He painted ***The Lady of Shalott*** three times — in **1888**, in 1894 showing her bound in the threads of her loom, and in 1916 placing her before a round window in a red dress. **Ophelia** absorbed him equally; his best-known treatment shows her weaving flowers into her hair on a branch above still water, moments before her death. That image connects directly to Waterhouse's broader preoccupation with women dying in

or near water, and owes a clear debt to earlier treatments of Ophelia by **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** and **John Everett Millais**.

Notes

Waterhouse was born the year after the Pre-Raphaelites were founded but he is known for working in the Pre-Raphaelite style. He worked several decades after the breakup of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which had seen its heyday in the mid-nineteenth century, leading him to have gained the title of "the modern Pre-Raphaelite". His artworks were known for their depictions of women from both ancient Greek mythology and Arthurian legend.

Born in Rome to English parents who were both painters, he later moved to London, where he enrolled in the Royal Academy of Art. He soon began exhibiting at their annual summer exhibitions, focusing on the creation of large canvas works depicting scenes from the daily life and mythology of ancient Greece. Later on in his career he came to embrace the Pre-Raphaelite style of painting despite the fact that it had gone out of fashion in the British art scene several decades before.

Waterhouse painted three different versions of *The Lady of Shalott*, in 1888, 1894 (tied up in the threads of her loom), and 1916 (wearing a red dress in front of a round window and her unbroken loom). Another of Waterhouse's favourite subjects was Ophelia; the most famous of his paintings of Ophelia depicts her just before her death, putting flowers in her hair as she sits on a tree branch leaning over a lake. Like *The Lady of Shalott* and other Waterhouse paintings, it deals with a woman dying in or near water. He also may have been inspired by paintings of Ophelia by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais.



William Holman Hunt (1827-1905)
The Lady of Shalott
 c. 1890-1905
 The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

William Holman Hunt (1827-1905), *The Lady of Shalott*, c. 1890-1905, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Tennyson's 1842 ballad gives us a heroine cursed to weave her record of **Arthurian Britain** by viewing only mirror reflections, never the world directly. **William Holman Hunt** spent over a decade on his painted response to this poem, finishing it with studio assistance before losing his sight. Hunt's conception is extraordinarily dense. The Lady's chamber holds roundels depicting the Virgin and Child alongside Hercules, her tapestry renders **Sir Galahad** presenting the **Holy Grail** to King Arthur, and the ceiling relief shows female spirits guiding the planets. When the handsome Sir Lancelot rides past, she yields to temptation and looks out directly. The mirror shatters, doves flee, the lamp is extinguished, her hair billows upward, and the tapestry unravels to ensnare her. Hunt called it "the failure of a human soul towards its accepted responsibility," and read the whole scene as a warning to artists against abandoning reflective distance for raw experience. The allegory resonates with **Plato's cave**, where shadows on a wall substitute for reality, and only the philosopher escapes to see

the world as it truly is. For Hunt, though, the escape carries a fatal cost — echoing the **Christian Fall**, where breaking God's rule brings the curse of mortality down upon us all.

Notes

In his 1842 ballad, *The Lady of Shalott*, the English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) fashioned a tragic heroine who records scenes and events during King Arthur's reign in a woven tapestry, but who must do so only by viewing reflections in a mirror, because of an unnamed curse. Hunt reworked the painting over a decade, finishing it with studio assistance before going blind.

'Hunt explained that the Lady of Shalott was to "weave her record, not as one mixing in the world...but a being sitting alone; in her isolation she is charged to see life with a mind supreme and elevated in judgment." In his extraordinarily complex conception, the Lady's chamber is decorated with emblems of devotion—with the Virgin and Child in one of the roundels and Hercules in the other. Her weaving represents Sir Galahad presenting the Holy Grail to King Arthur, while the bas-relief of the ceiling depicts female spirits guiding and protecting the planets. As the handsome Sir Lancelot passes on horseback, the Lady yields to temptation and stares out her window. Having looked at the real world rather than its reflection in a mirror, she unleashes the curse that ultimately destroys her. The violence wrought by her recognition of passion—her gazing directly upon Lancelot as he rides toward Camelot—animates the composition. The mirror shatters, the doves flee, the lamp is extinguished, her hair billows upward, and her tapestry unravels explosively to ensnare her. According to the deeply religious artist, his painting represented 'the failure of a human soul towards its accepted responsibility.' Hunt also understood *The Lady of Shalott* as a metaphor for the duty of an artist to maintain some distance from reality, so as to protect his or her vocation.'

From the poem:

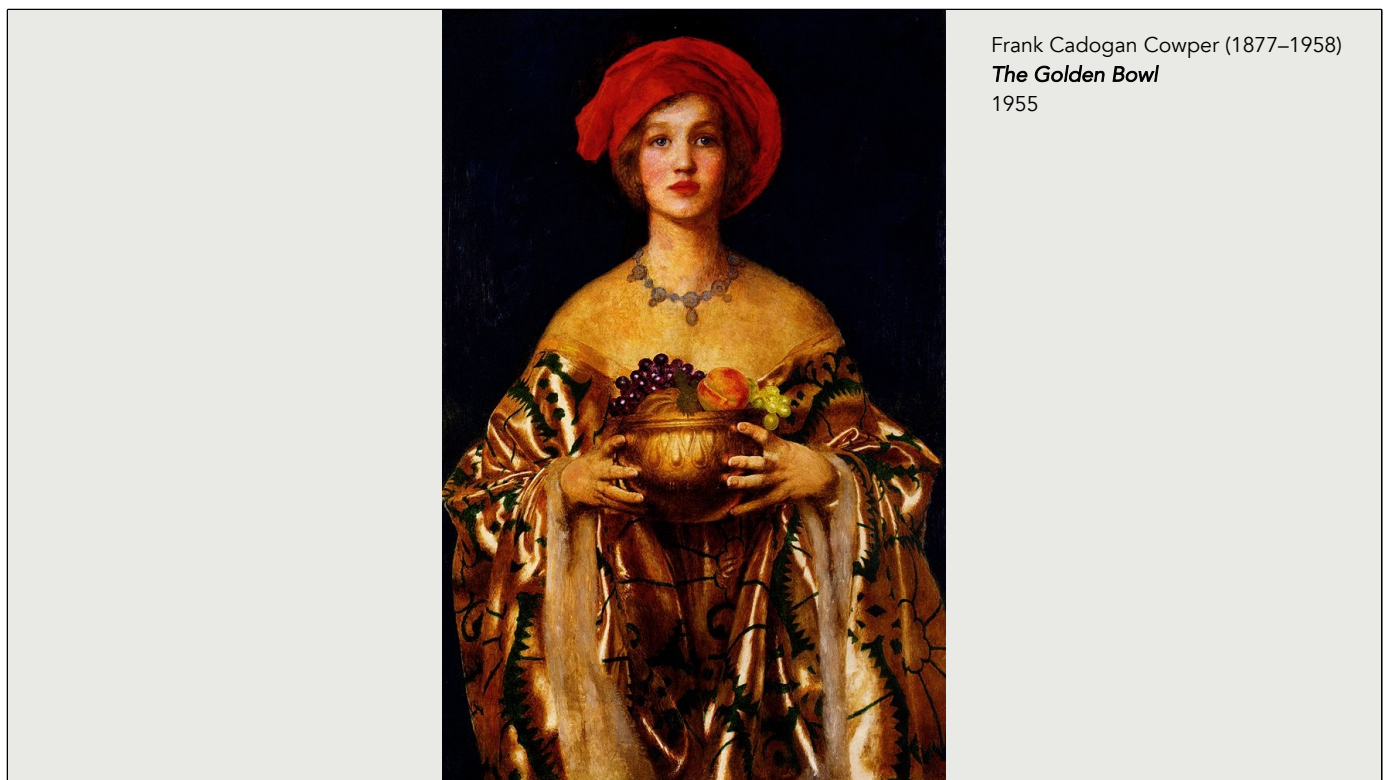
She left the web, she left the loom, She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom, She saw the helmet and the plume, She
look'd down to Camelot. Out flew the web and floated wide; The mirror
crack'd from side to side; 'The curse is come upon me,' cried The Lady of
Shalott."

Alfred Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott* (1842)

The symbolism reminds us of the allegory of Plato's cave where mankind is entranced by the shadows playing on the wall of a cave and it is only the true philosopher that can go outside and so the real world as it is. The shattering of the loom therefore represents enlightenment and an escape from mere representation. The curse may be the realisation we must all die, which, in the Christian tradition, is God's curse on mankind following Adam breaking one of God's rules.

References

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Frank Cadogan Cowper (1877–1958), *The Golden Bowl*, 1955

Frank Cadogan Cowper earned the label 'the last of the Pre-Raphaelites' not as a compliment but as a verdict of irrelevance. Trained at the **Royal Academy between 1897 and 1902**, he co-founded a brotherhood with four other artists that deliberately revived Pre-Raphaelite methods, including transparent glazes applied over a white ground — a technique he sustained across a celebrated portrait career well into the twentieth century. The cost of that loyalty was severe. Critic **Frank Rutter**, writing in 1919, declared that Cowper, **Byam Shaw**, and **Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale** belonged by temperament and taste to the Pre-Raphaelite period, effectively exiling them from modernity. Rutter's judgement stuck, and for decades it did. **Tim Barringer** challenges that exile directly. He draws a pointed parallel between modernism and imperialism: both colonise a territory, rewrite its history, and relegate everything prior to a static, finished past. Barringer's counter-argument is not to install a new hierarchy but to read these artists within their own complex culture. That culture was specifically **London's**, not Paris's. Between **1880 and 1920**, London

modernity centred on the rise of professional society — human capital, skilled labour, differentiated expertise — a framework that makes Cowper's world entirely legible on its own terms.

Notes

'The last of the Pre-Raphaelites'.

Studied at the Royal Academy 1897-1902. He and four other artists founded a brotherhood emulating the Pre-Raphaelites.

He became a famous portrait painter and continued to paint in the Pre-Raphaelite style with transparent glazes on a white ground.

This was painted over 100 years after the Pre-Raphaelites were founded.

In the Edwardian period Burne-Jones and many others were assigned to a 'dreamland' separated from modernism. Fatally, they were not 'modern' as the word is understood but 'belonged by temperament and taste to the Pre-Raphaelite period' (Frank Rutter, 1919, critic and espouser of modernism).

Frank Cadogan Cowper, Byam Shaw(1872-1919) and Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale (1872-1945) were accused of insincerity, illusionism and deception. They promoted an anti-modernist utopia, a dreamland. Tim Barringer argues that there are parallels between modernism and imperialism in that both colonise a region and rewrite history to exclude all the native subjects who are a static past era, out of touch with the new march of progress. Barringer's aim is not to introduce a new hegemony but to respect their work within its own complex and vital culture.

The key issue is the artist's relationship with modernity which has been defined largely in relation to Paris. The modernity of London has been less fully explored partly because of the sudden rejection of Victorian ideas by the Edwardians. The modernity of London concerns the 'rise of professional society' between 1880 and 1920 which emphasized human capital and a skilled, differentiated labour force rather than labour as a cog in the wheel of production.



25-02 PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD - LATER

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Frank Cadogan
Cowper (1877–1958)
The Golden Bowl
1955

This talk has traced the later Pre-Raphaelite world from Ruskin's decisive advocacy and catastrophic legal battle with Whistler, through the diverging careers of Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti, to the movement's outer edges — Brett's oceanic exactitude, Brown's social realism, Burne-Jones's Aesthetic ambition, and Waterhouse's deliberate archaism. We closed with Cowper, whose fidelity to Pre-Raphaelite methods outlasted critical fashion, prompting us to question whether modernity's judgements are ever quite as final as they seem. Goodbye for now and thank you for your time and attention.



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