



## PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS

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John Everett Millais (1829–1896, aged 67) *Self-portrait*, 86 × 65 cm, 1881, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy  
William Holman Hunt (1827-1910, aged 83), *Self-portrait*, 1875, 73 × 103.5 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882, aged 53), *Self-portrait*, 1847, 20.7 × 16.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery  
Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Effie Gray (Lady Millais)*, 1851, 81 × 53 cm, National Portrait Gallery  
William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *Fanny Waugh Hunt*, 1866-68, 104 × 73cm, Toledo Museum of Art  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Regina Cordium*, 1860, 25.4 × 20.3 cm, Johannesburg Art Gallery

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

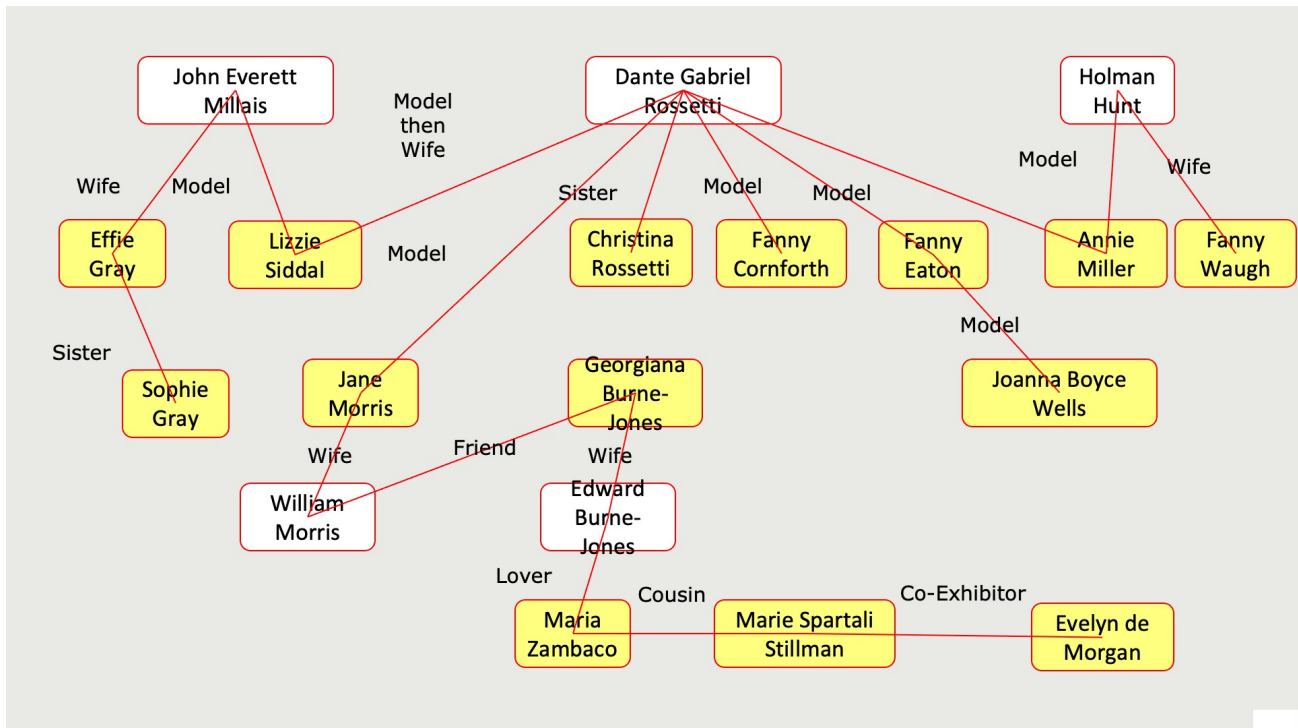
## NOTES

- Effie Gray, model, wife Millais, ex-wife Ruskin and manager
  - Sketch by her of a garden and sketch of Eve of St Agnes (V&A) modelled on. Effie
- Link: Millais's model for Ophelia
- Lizzie Siddal, model, artist, poet
  - Self-portrait
  - Pippa Passes
- Link: Siddal married Rossetti
- Christina Rossetti, poet, sister of Dante Gabriel artists, model, cared for DGR, two aunts and her mother
  - Portrait by DGR
- Link: Cornforth was a model for Rossetti
- Fanny Cornforth, model, lover, Sarah Cox, chromolith copy of the painting of Alexa
  - Lady Lilith, 1867
- Link: Another model of Rossetti
- Fanny Eaton, model from Jamaica,
  - The Young Teacher, Rebecca Solomon
- Link: Eaton also modelled for Boyce
- Joanna Boyce Wells,
  - Joanna Wells, *Study of Fanny Eaton* (1861). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
  - Elgiva, Sidney Wells
- Link: Another model used by Rossetti was a model for Holman Hunt
- Annie Miller, model
  - *Il Dolce for Niente*, William Holman Hunt
- Jane Morris model, muse, craft person
  - Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, 1874
- Link: Jane Morris was wife of William Morris, confidant of Georgiana
- Georgiana Burne-Jones confidant of William Morris

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

## **REFERENCES**

*National Portrait Gallery: Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Access Guide*



- It shows in yellow the fourteen women I am going to be talking about today and their relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood or PRB. The PRB was created in 1848 but it only existed as a tight knit group for five years. However, its powerful ideas influenced artists for the rest of the century. Note that I have added William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones as they and their partners were closely entwined with the members of the PRB although they were never members.
- Briefly, starting on the left, **Effie Gray** was the former wife of the leading Victorian art critic John Ruskin but the marriage was annulled and she married Millais a year later. Her younger sister **Sophie Gray** also sat for Millais.
- One of Millais's models was **Lizzie Siddal** who modelled for his most famous painting *Ophelia*. She also modelled for and later married Dante Gabriel Rossetti who later painted **Jane Morris**, the wife of William Morris.
- Rossetti's sister was the well known poet **Christina Rossetti** and he used many other models including **Fanny Cornforth** and **Fanny Eaton**, who was a model for the artists **Joanna Boyce Wells**.
- **Annie Miller** was a model for Rossetti and Holman Hunt and when Hunt was away for two years her relationship with Rossetti caused a rift between Hunt and Rossetti on his return. Later Hunt married **Fanny Waugh**.
- In the centre, **Georgiana Burne-Jones** was a friend of William Morris and wife of Edward Burne-Jones but he fell in love with the artist **Maria Zambaco** (pronounced 'Zam-back-o') who was the cousin of the artist **Marie Spartali Stillman** (pronounced 'mar-ree') who co-exhibited with the artist **Evelyn de Morgan**.
- Confused, don't worry I will take you through person by person. What I am showing here is how close knit their world was.

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- Link: Marie ("Maree") Stillman was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 along with Evelyn de Morgan. The same year Evelyn married the ceramist William De Morgan.
- Evelyn de Morgan, important artist suffered from critical neglect
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  - *Cadmus and Harmonia*





2 Palace Gate, Kensington from 1878



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

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

Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Effie Gray (Lady Millais)*, 1851, 81 × 53 cm, National Portrait Gallery  
 John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of Effie Gray* (1828-1897), c. 1873, Courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland. John Everett Millais's wife Effie Gray in middle age holding a copy of the Cornhill Magazine

- This portrait was commissioned by Ruskin's father from Thomas Richmond for £20. **"It is the most lovely piece of oil painting but much prettier than me,"** she told her mother. **"I look like a graceful doll, but John"**, that would be Ruskin at this time, **"and his father are delighted with it".**
- (CLICK) Twenty-two years later Millais painted this portrait of his wife when she was in her forties and it was a few months after the stillbirth of their eighth and last child. It hung in the breakfast room of their Kensington mansion (CLICK). Through his art and with Effie's support and management of his affairs, Millais had become one of the wealthiest people in the country. In 1873 they had a house built at 2 Palace Gate, Kensington, about which Thomas Carlyle is said to have remarked, **"Millais, did painting do all that? Well, there must be more fools in this world than I had thought."**
- A bit of background—Effie Gray was born Euphemia Gray in Perth and married the art critic John Ruskin in 1848 when she was 19. Ruskin was a distinguished critic and the earliest supporter of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which was founded the year they married although Effie didn't meet Millais for another four years.
- We now know the marriage was never consummated which may seem strange as she was regarded as one of the most beautiful women in society at the time. Ruskin wrote, **"It may be thought strange that I could abstain from a woman who to most people was so attractive. But though her face was beautiful, her person was not formed to excite passion. On the contrary, there were certain circumstances in her person which completely checked it."** This statement has baffled historians ever since and we still have no idea what he meant. I am sure you have heard that many have speculated that he was repelled by her pubic hair as he had only seen hairless Greek statues but I find this unlikely.
- Another more interesting theory is that it was to do with money. Ruskin discovered that Effie's father was on the point of bankruptcy and brought the marriage forward to get the £10,000 promised by Ruskin's father, a sort of reverse dowry. Ruskin realised he had been manipulated and refused to consummate the marriage as he was worried it would lock him in and the Grey family would use it to extort more money. He knew that **annulled marriages were not reported in the press** but a **divorce required adultery and was only granted by Parliament** (a special court was set up in 1853 and the Matrimonial Causes Act was 1857) and was often a **major scandal**.
- I related possibility is that Ruskin felt she did not love him and only married him for the money. Before the marriage he wrote **"she is unfitted to be my wife unless she also loved me exceedingly"** and when he did not consummate the marriage he told her that they should wait six years to give themselves time to properly fall in love.
- When they travelled abroad Ruskin went out of his way to **push Effie into attending events**, such as balls, which he never attended and where perhaps he hoped she would meet handsome young men hoping for an affair after which she could be blamed for the divorce. In Venice potential suitors fought over her and one was actually killed in a duel fought over her. But there was no adultery.
- In the meantime, Ruskin, had become close friends with Millais and suggested Effie model for his painting *Order of Release*, a very fitting title in the circumstances. **Ruskin then invited Millais and his brother to go with him and Effie on a holiday in Scotland where Millais painted a full-length portrait of Ruskin.** It was clear that Effie was unhappy and on the holiday **Millais and Effie fell in love.** Millais discovered that the marriage had not been consummated and Millais's family arranged for Effie to run away and the marriage was

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

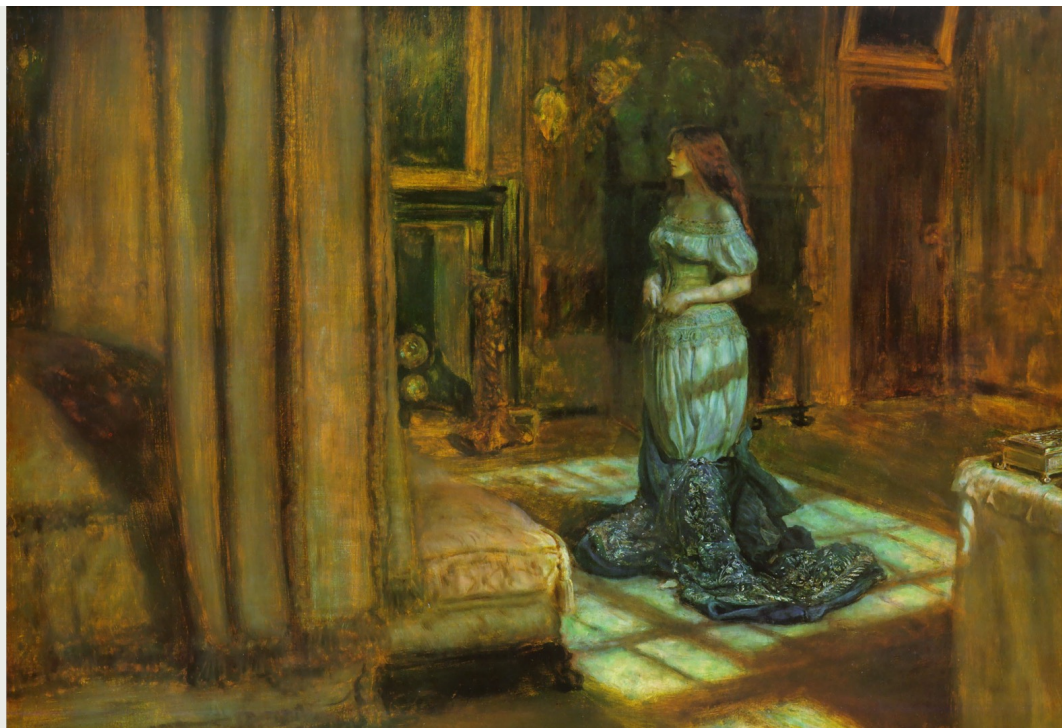
## **NOTES**

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

## **REFERENCES**

- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, s.v. "Millais, Sir John Everett,"

John Everett Millais, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, 1863, 117.8 × 154.3cm, Royal Collection



John Everett Millais, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, 1863, 117.8 × 154.3cm, Royal Collection

- **After the marriage** to Millais Effie modelled for other paintings such as this one, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which was exhibited with stanza 25 of John Keats poem of the same name.
- According to folklore, the Eve of St Agnes (21 January) was the night when a woman would **see her future husband in her dreams** if she followed certain rituals. Millais shows the heroine, Madeleine, in the act of undressing for bed, that's her dress around her ankles, suddenly transfixed by a sense of anticipation.
- Millais set up the scene with great care, taking Effie to **Knole Park**, as you might know it's a vast Jacobean mansion in Sevenoaks, Kent. He posed her in a freezing room, standing before the bed in which James I (ruled 1603-25) was said to have slept. Following the Pre-Raphaelite convention of precise representation he posed Effie in the room for three nights in her bodice in the freezing cold while moonbeams fell across her body at the required angle to produce the lattice shadow effect.
- In Millais's biography he says that when they got back from Knole the **figure of Madeline had to be altered** which I believe he did to **hide his wife's identity** and avoid any negative social reaction about this erotic image of a woman undressing. He used the model **Miss Ford** to complete the painting.
- **Critics at the time were divided as Millais had broken a well-established convention** that a painting based on a story or a poem must illustrate the text exactly. Instead Millais has painted the room and followed his artistic instincts. For example, Madeline faces the bed but she should be **facing away**, the setting is **Jacobean** but Keats described a medieval castle, **the window is square and mullioned** but Keats' was "triple-arch'd". Millais painted what he saw rather than what Keats described. A final twist is that the poem describes **her lover Porphyro hiding in a closet watching her**. Other artists would show the closet he is hiding in with the door ajar but here we must assume that we are Porphyro spying on her undressing. It puts us in the uncomfortable position of a Peeping Tom.

## NOTES

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

John Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes* (stanza 25)

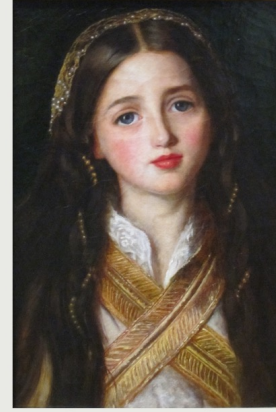
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John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Portrait of a Girl*, 1857, private collection



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

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- This is Effie's **younger sister, Sophie Gray** (1843-1882), **aged 13** and the 10th of 15 children.
- One puzzle is whether this was intended as a portrait. It was **called *Portrait of a Girl*** and sold to the artist **George Price Boyce** for 60 guineas (CLICK) along with this portrait of her **younger sister Alice**. It is **puzzling why her parents allowed** the portraits to be sold.
- Historians have described Sophie's **direct gaze as sensual and "knowing"**, which, almost inevitably, has provoked questions about the **nature of Millais' relationship** with his sister-in-law. Women of this period were not portrayed in a looking directly at us in a **confrontational manner as it was unacceptable** to Victorian society. By the way, the **portrait of Alice was perfectly acceptable as she was seen as a child** but Sophie was seen as a young woman. (CLICK).
- It is rumoured that Effie **sent Sophie away** but her parents continued to allow Millais to chaperone her.
- **Sophie suffered later** (1868, aged 25) from anorexia nervosa, she became obsessed with piano playing, became incoherent, was placed into care and died aged 39.

## SOPHIE GRAY

- Sophie Gray (1843-1882, also known as Sophy) Millais's sister-in-law, was only 13 when this portrait was painted and it was titled *Portrait of a Girl* and sold to George Price Boyce a friend of Rossetti and joint lover of Fanny Cornforth. The painting, or portrait of Fanny Cornforth was hung alongside that of Sophie Gray. It is difficult to understand why her parents did not object to this portrait of Sophie being sold.
- After Millais and his then wife Effie moved to Annat Lodge, close to Bowerswell in Scotland, her family home, she was readily available for sitting, and it seems she was beginning to displace Effie as a favoured subject. Sophie was one of Millais's favourite models in the 1850s, see *Autumn Leaves* (1856). This painting was painted in the summer and autumn of 1857 when Millais and Effie were living with her parents and sisters at Bowerswell, the family home in Perth.
- There is another portrait of Alice, another of his favourite models. Both works were bought by George Pryce Boyce for himself and on behalf of his sister Joanna, also an artist. The portrait of Alice is a straightforward portrait of an immature girl.
- The sensual and 'knowing' look has raised questions about Sophie's relationship with Millais and there is some evidence that Millais wife, Effie, sent her away because they were growing too close. Eleven years later Sophie became unwell and was suffering from what is now called anorexia nervosa. She became obsessed with piano playing and her speech became incoherent. She married Caird, later made a baronet (like Millais) and had a daughter called Baeatrice who Millais painted and who died aged 14 in 1888. She was placed in the care of Dr Thomas Tuke who had treated Edwin Landseer but her mental state continued to be a problem for the rest of her life. She died at the age of 39.

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

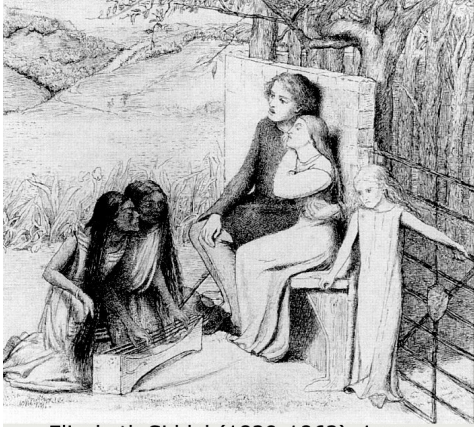
Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Pippa Passes or Pippa Passing the Loose Women*, 1854  
Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862), *Self-portrait*, 1853-54, 22.8cm, private collection

- One of **Millais's models was Lizzie Siddal** (1829-1862), the daughter of the owner of a **milliner's shop near Leicester Square**. In December 1849, she was spotted by Walter Deverell a friend of the Pre-Raphaelites and she posed for William Holman Hunt and John Millais. She was Millais's model for *Ophelia*, before **becoming Rossetti's model and muse**. While modelling she kept working part-time, an unusual and powerful position for a woman at the time. Deverell described her as **"like a queen, magnificently tall, with a lovely figure, a stately neck, and a face of the most delicate and finished modelling"**.
- As well as modelling she was an aspiring artist who was financially supported by John Ruskin and was **the only female artist in the 1857 Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that toured the United States**. The exhibition included this work, *Pippa Passes* and one critic (Coventry Patmore) wrote **"Her drawings display an admiring adoption of all the most startling peculiarities of Mr. Rossetti's style, but they have nevertheless qualities which entitle them to high praise."**
- Following a long engagement she **married Rossetti in 1860**. The following year a daughter was stillborn leading to post-natal depression and then her death from an opiate overdose (in 1862) which we believe was a suicide that was hushed up.
- She was buried with the only copy of Rossetti's poems but he exhumed the body seven years later to retrieve them. The exhumation was approved by the Home Secretary (Henry Bruce), a friend of Rossetti, and was carried out at night and kept secret until after Rossetti's death.
- *Pippa Passes* is based on several lines from Robert Browning's poetic drama of the same name, in which the virginal heroine encounters a group of prostitutes discussing their lovers. In the poem four poor girls sit on the steps of the cathedral and chatter.

## NOTES

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

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



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

#### Dead Love

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



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

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

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- The title of ***Lovers Listening to Music*** is taken from **Rossetti's description** of the drawing. The two women playing are variously described as **Egyptian or Indian and they are playing a santoor**. The picture may have been inspired by one of her poems or, it has been suggested, it is **Lizzie and Rossetti at** a romantic spot called **Lovers' Seat near Hastings** that they visited in 1854. When Rossetti showed this and other drawings to **John Ruskin** he immediately **bought them** all for £30 and said they **were better than Rossetti's**.
- Siddal began painting in 1852 soon after she met Rossetti. (CLICK) She also wrote poetry but saw none of her verses in print. The first edition of her poetry did not come out until **1978**. There was a suggestion that Christina Rossetti, her sister-in-law, should include some of Siddal's poetry in her collection of verse but she judged them to be **"almost too hopelessly sad for publication en masse"**.
- (CLICK) In *Lady Affixing a Pennant* the woman is helping the knight fix a pennant to his spear knowing she might never see him again.

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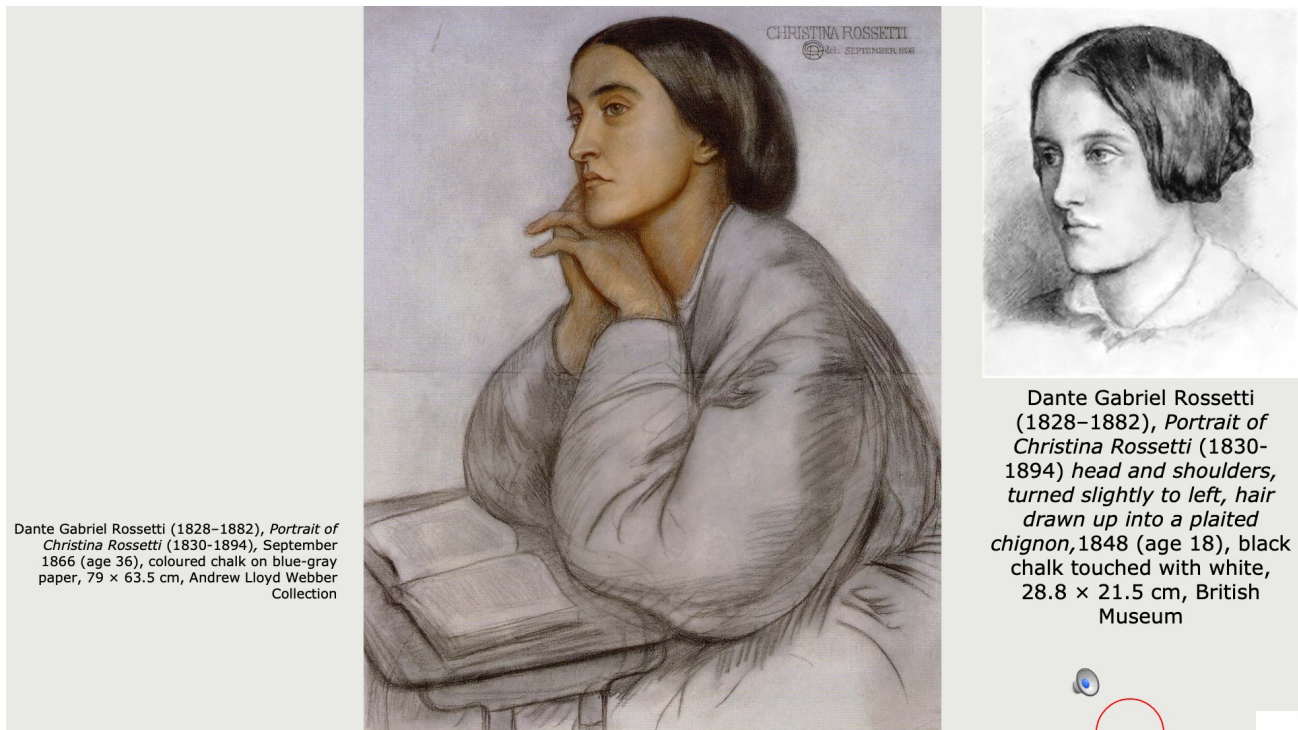
Then harbour no smile on your bonny face  
 To win the deepest sigh.  
 The fairest words on truest lips  
 Pass on and surely die,  
 And you will stand alone, my dear,  
 When wintry winds draw nigh.

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

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- Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti; head and shoulders, turned slightly to left, hair drawn up into a plaited chignon*, 1848, black chalk touched with white, 28.8 × 21.5 cm, British Museum
  - Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894), September 1866 (age 36), coloured chalk on blue-gray paper, 79 × 63.5 cm, Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection
  - Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Portrait of Christina Rossetti* (1830–1894), head and shoulders, turned slightly to left, hair drawn up into a plaited chignon, 1848 (age 18), black chalk touched with white, 28.8 × 21.5 cm, British Museum
- 'In the Bleak Midwinter', Harold Darke (it was also set to music by Gustav Holst)
- **The Rossettis were a creative family.** Their father was an **exiled Italian who became Professor of Italian at King's College**, Dante Gabriel was an artist and her other brother William Michael was a writer and critic. She also had a sister who entered an Anglican convent. As a child Christina was **given to temper tantrums on one occasion ripping her arm with scissors**. This continued as an adult but we see **no sign of it in her poetry** which is restrained. She published her first work of poetry **when she was 16** and it launched her literary career.
  - (CLICK on Audio) Christina **modelled for Dante Gabriel** and later she cared for him when he became ill as well as looking after two aunts and her mother. In this portrait on the left she is 36 and eight years before (in 1858) she had started charity work for girls who were former prostitutes which prompted her to write her masterpiece, *Goblin Market*. She also wrote the words of two well known Christmas carols, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, later set by Gustav Holst and by Harold Darke, and *Love Came Down at Christmas*, also set by Harold Darke and by other composers. This is Harold Darke's setting for *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

## NOTES

### • Goblin Market

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



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



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

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

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

- *Lady Lilith* is by Rossetti and he first painted it in 1866–1868 using his then mistress **Fanny Cornforth** (1835-1909, died aged 74 of dementia). In 1872–73 he altered the painting to show the face of **Alexa Wilding** (c.1847–1884) at the request of his patron Frederick Leyland. **Wilding sat for more of his finished works** than any other of his more well-known muses, including Elizabeth Siddall, Jane Morris and Fanny Cornforth.
- **In Jewish legend Lilith** was the name of **Adam's first wife** who in western culture became symbolic of the bewitching sexuality of a femme fatale as shown here but the legend goes back to the earliest known cuneiform records of the Mesopotamian city of Sumer. According to the legend, Lilith was created the same time as Adam and refused to be subservient to him. She is not mentioned in most translations of the Bible or rather, the King James Bible translates her name as 'screech owl' an attempt by the translators to translate a word they didn't know and Lilith is also mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- **Fanny Cornforth** (1835-1909), on the left, was born **Sarah Cox** and her father was a blacksmith. She was found by Rossetti in the Surrey Pleasure gardens and she modelled for him as well as Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones and others. Her hair was described as 'harvest-yellow' but Rossetti often painted her with red hair. The painting is inspired by Rossetti's poem 'Jenny' about a prostitute which includes the lines '**Lazy laughing languid Jenny / Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea**'.
- After **Lizzie Siddall** died **Cornforth moved in** with Rossetti as his 'housekeeper'. Cornforth claimed that she adopted the name 'Fanny' when she was young because of a sister of that name who died. It has been suggested by art historians that it is a reference to female genitalia and by association to prostitution but although the word did have these associations, as we see with the novel 'Fanny Hill', it didn't become strongly associated until the end of the nineteenth century and many respectable families called their daughters Fanny, as we will see with Fanny Waugh, the wife of Holman Hunt.
- Her last name is also complicated as she was born Sarah Cox and married Timothy Hughes, so she should be Sarah Hughes but his mother had married a man called Timothy Hughes and when he died his mother married George Cornforth and her son, also called Timothy Hughes, adopted Cornforth's name as did Fanny who then became Fanny Cornforth. They soon separated and when Timothy Cornforth died she married John Bernard Schott. There are four last names she could have used and two first names but Fanny Cornforth is the one history remembers.

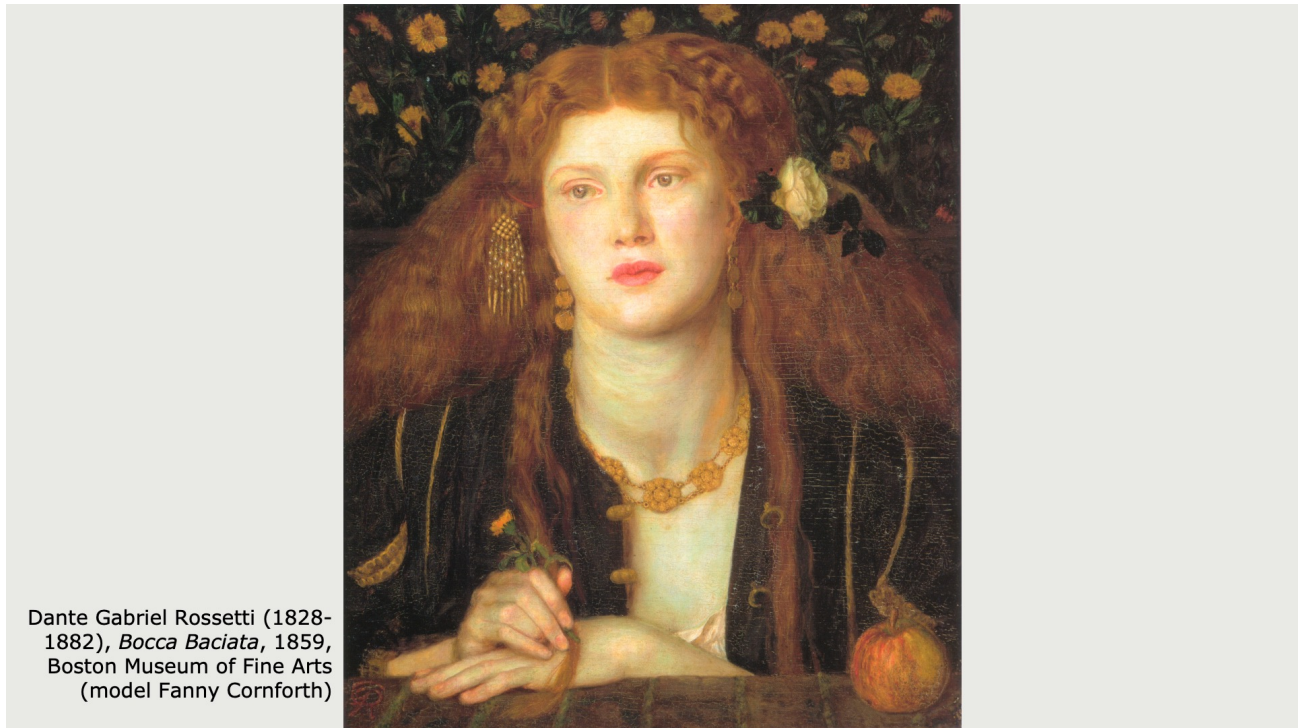
## NOTES

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

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

- In 1859, George Boyce, who, remember, had bought that portrait of Sophie Grey, commissioned Rossetti to paint Fanny Cornforth as a companion piece and this is the result—*Bocca Baciata*, which means "**Kissed mouth**". The title is from an Italian proverb which, in full, means "**A kissed mouth does not lose its freshness, but renews itself like the moon**" and it is from Boccaccio's *Decameron* which Rossetti would have known well.
- This painting is usually described as the **first** painting of the **Aesthetic Movement** as it is not a portrait, makes no moral point and represents female beauty. The Aesthetic Movement maintained that the purpose of art was the representation of beauty and nothing else, "**art for art's sake**", as they said.
- Rossetti adds a number of symbols, such as the marigolds and the apple, which suggests we need to interpret the painting like a coded message. Conventionally a **marigold**, in the language of flowers, signified **grief and pain**, the **white rose innocence**. In Christian symbolism, an **apple represents temptation**. One interpretation reading the symbols from foreground to background is that the temptation of an innocent beauty leads to grief and pain.
- Rossetti broke new ground with *Bocca Baciata* as the painting marked a distinct change in his style, and it does not fall into any established genre. It was generally admired but Holman Hunt was critical describing the painting as advocating '**the animal passion to be the aim of art**'.
- Although the interpretation of the painting in aesthetic terms sees it as a simple representation of beauty it is clear that it has multiple social, cultural, political interpretations.
- In terms of the role of women it raises question about,
  - **Femme fatale** – a popular Victorian shibboleth that is used to describe a dangerous woman who will seduce and ensnare her lovers. It was a common trope or theme in the European Middle Ages inherited from the Biblical Eve. It became more popular during the Romantic period and was used by the Pre-Raphaelites. It became fashionable in the late nineteenth century and was reinvented by Oscar Wilde as Salome who used her 'Dance of the Seven Veils' (invented by Wilde) to demand the head of John the Baptist. It is, of course, a phantasy, the projection of illicit male desires. The term was used in France with this meaning in 1800 or earlier but not in England until the late nineteenth century.
  - **Fallen woman** - In a moral sense, a woman who has lost her purity or innocence; in dictionary terms 'one who has surrendered her chastity' (OED). The idea relates back to Eve and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), Lord Byron and William Blake. It is also often linked to Hunt's *the Awakening Conscience*, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (Peggotty and Emily) and Rossetti's *Found*. The term was used by Josephine Butler when writing about the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864.
  - '**Angel in the House**', wife and mother and carer. The term is a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore first published in 1854. It only became popular in the late nineteenth century. It idealised his wife Emily whom he believed to be the perfect woman. The roles for a respectable woman were wife and then mother or unmarried carer of her ageing father.

## BOCCA BACIATA

- Rossetti broke most of the conventions associated with female representation in contemporary 'books of beauty' by painting the woman in *Bocca Baciata* with fuller, more voluptuous lips, a less pinched face, unrestrained hair and exotic jewellery, in a more compressed space so we feel physically closer to the head and body, which are pressed close to the picture plane. Also significant were his use of thick oils and sensual Venetian colours.

- Rossetti had been **commissioned by George Boyce** to paint a portrait of Fanny Cornforth and the heavy, idiosyncratic features reinforce the fact that a particular person was being depicted. Its sensuousness can be judged from Arthur Hughes's comment: '**so awfully lovely. Boyce has bought it, and will I suspect kiss the dear thing's lips away before you can come over to see it.**'
- Rossetti's image has a full face and chin that do not conform to any of the standard types of beauty, and she has a long neck, which, although it was an established attribute of beauty, is so long and wide that it could almost be considered distorted. Rossetti was not painting a conventional 'perfect beauty' but a particular person. However, the title also refers us to a story by Boccaccio suggesting the woman was being used to represent the central character who was described as the most beautiful woman in the world.
- She does not **meet our eye**, and her pose, though conventional, is made **disturbing** by her expression, which is **vacant** and charged with a slight **sullenness**, like a model who has sat for too long. This suggests volition and agency rather than passivity and so it conflicts with the view of the model as an impassive object. Other aspects of agency and female independence are present in the way Rossetti's has represented his model. For example, compared to women in books of beauty, her nose is not slim and pinched and her forehead is narrow, both signs at the time of a lack of refinement. The shoulders are broad, giving the appearance of **physical strength** rather than of a delicate and over-refined drawing-room beauty. With her flowing red hair, exotic and excessive jewellery and **robust features** she could be seen as **coarse and sexually experienced**. The conventions at the time would therefore label her as a **fallen woman**.
- Although conventional Christian symbolism equates the apple with temptation the term 'apple' was not mentioned in the Bible and the fruit in the Garden of Eden was from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Theologians disagree about whether the term 'knowledge' should be interpreted narrowly or broadly but the Bible goes on to say that Eve decided to eat the fruit to make herself wise. Adam needed no convincing and ate the fruit he was given, which suggests the serpent chose Eve as she was the hardest to convince and her decision could be seen as the first example of female sexual power in the Christian tradition.
- In the Biblical account, God was unaware of Adam and Eve's transgression as he was elsewhere in the garden, but when he found out he constructed a complex curse, which included women, in future, experiencing pain during childbirth and obeying men. The acquisition of knowledge was concerned with the recognition of each other's nakedness and this implies that it became associated with sexual desire, which sexual selection equates with beauty. This loss of innocence was represented as the expulsion from a perfect garden and this has been interpreted in Darwinian terms as the evolutionary moment that humans developed a sense of right and wrong.
- This image is one of those that would have been criticized by Thomas Maitland when he wrote '**The Fleshly School of Poetry**: Mr D. G. Rossetti' in the magazine *Contemporary Review* (October, 1871).

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



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

Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), *Portrait of Fanny Eaton*, 1859, 18 x 17 cm  
Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886), *The Young Teacher*, 1861, private collection

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

- **Joanna Boyce** (1840-1861, died aged 29), also known by her married name **Joanna Wells**, was one of the **most accomplished** Pre-Raphaelite artists. She was born to a **wealthy pawnbroker** and encouraged to paint by her father and brother. She formally started to **study art at the age of eleven**. She entered Cary's Academy (also called Bloomsbury Art School) when she was 18, a selective art school for the most able, and then travelled to Paris to study. **Her brother is the Pre-Raphaelite watercolourist George Price Boyce** (1826-1897).
- (CLICK) This work, *Elgiva* (pronounced 'ell-jiva' or 'ell-jeeva'), was the first she exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1855 **when she was just 15** and she received **glowing praise** from the critics including John Ruskin. Ford Madox Brown declared it "**the best head in the room**". It is the imagined portrait of an Anglo-Saxon queen who was forcibly divorced, disfigured to destroy her beauty and finally murdered.
- Boyce spent 1857 in Italy, and in December of that year married miniaturist **Henry Tanworth Wells** (later a Royal Academician) in Rome.
- **Boyce's later works include a portrait of Fanny Eaton** who we have just seen, it was originally called *Head of a Mulatto Woman*.

## NOTES

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





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

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



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

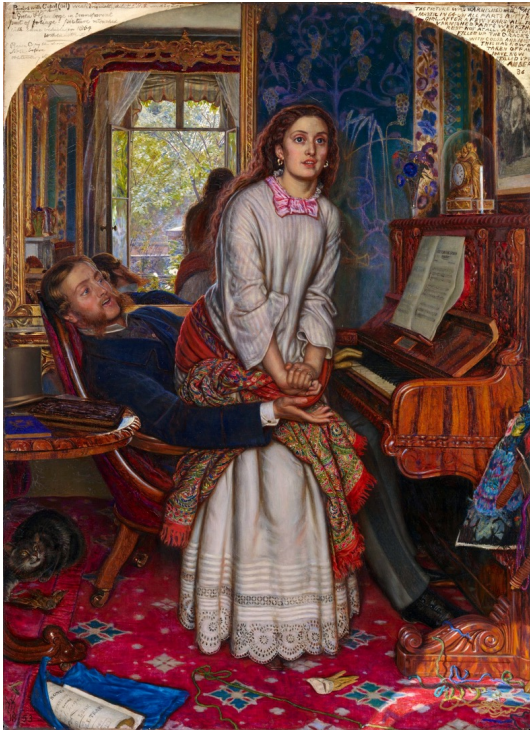
Joanna Mary Boyce Wells (1831-1861), *Gretchen*, 1861, 73 × 43.7cm, Tate

- She painted this portrait of her second child, Sidney, while he was still less than a year old. This is a highly personal work and has a small icon-like format. It is made especially poignant as we know that Joanna died when she was 29 and Sidney eight years later when he was 10.
- Gretchen refers to the central scene in *Faust*, the tragic play published by the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In the play, Gretchen, confused, seduced and pregnant by Faust, seeks solace in church.
- The sitter for the work was probably **Wells's nursery maid**. Women artists had limited access to models at the time. Wells had established a reputation during the 1850s as a painter of portraits, genre and landscape. She also wrote art reviews for the *Saturday Review*. Wells was pregnant when she began this painting and died shortly after the birth and the picture was left unfinished. The baby girl lived and was called Joanna, after her, and she lived to be 89.
- At the time of her death, contemporaries remarked on Boyce's talent as an artist: Dante Gabriel **Rossetti described her as "a wonderfully gifted woman"**, and another obituarist **called her a genius**. Her art has been highlighted in exhibitions up until the present day and many critics believe her reputation would be much higher but for her early death.

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



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

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

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

- **Annie Miller** (1835-1925) grew up in poverty in Chelsea near to Holman Hunt's studio. When she was 18 she modelled for this painting Hunt's *Awakening Conscience* and **Hunt fell in love with her**. He wanted to marry her but thought she **needed to be educated** so when he travelled to the Middle East the following year (1854-56) he **paid for her education** including how to **behave as a well-bred woman**. However, when he was away **she didn't attend classes** and posed for John Millais, **Gabriel Rossetti**, Arthur Hughes, Charles Collins and others. On his return Hunt was told by Ford Madox Brown that she had **behaved in a 'siren-like' manner** during his absence. Her association with Rossetti in particular created a rift between Hunt and Rossetti.
- Hunt was heavily criticised early in his career and achieved little success but *The Awakening Conscience* received good reviews but it was the still famous *The Light of the World* (1851-53) made him famous.
- *The Awakening Conscience* appears to depict a disagreement between husband and wife, but the title and many symbols within the painting make it clear that this is a mistress and her lover. The woman's clasped hands provide a focal point and we can see she has no wedding ring. Around the room are dotted reminders of her "kept" status and her wasted life.
- Art historian Elizabeth Prettejohn, who, incidentally was my PhD supervisor, notes that although the interior is now viewed as typically Victorian it would have been seen at the time as having a **'nouveau-riche' vulgarity, the bright colours, the clutter of objects, their gaudy appearance and the highly polished furniture would have looked distasteful to contemporary viewers**.
- Despite the break with Rossetti, Hunt continued to use Miller as a model. (CLICK) This is *Il Dolce far Niente* literally means 'sweet doing nothing', a popular Italian activity and the phrase is almost untranslatable. It means living in the moment, just enjoying time going by. Hunt painted her hair reddish-brown rather than blond as it was not intended as a portrait.
- Annie became involved with the seventh Viscount Ranelagh (pronounced 'ran-i-luh') while she was engaged to Hunt and this led to him ending their engagement on the grounds of her frivolity and 'wilfulness'. **However, she married Thomas Thompson a cousin of Lord Ranelagh** and they had a son and a daughter, **moved to Richmond** and then the south coast and **she died aged ninety**. **Hunt bumped into her** many years after their relationship **on Richmond Hill** and found she was very happily married. An example of how someone could rise from the **very bottom of society to the top** of the social scale.

## NOTES

- There has been much discussion about whether Annie Miller had sexual relations with any of her admirers and there is no evidence either way. There is a lot of indirect evidence, regarding her relationship with Hunt, that she refused to become 'gay'. The word 'gay' started to acquire associations of immorality as early as the 14th century and by the 17th century it meant "addicted to pleasure and dissipations" as well as its usual meaning of "joyful" and "carefree". By extension a gay woman was a prostitute, a gay man a womaniser and a gay house a brothel. The modern meaning was not widely used until the 1960s.
- *The Awakening Conscience* symbols:
  - The lack of a wedding ring.
  - The gaudy furnishings.
  - The cat toying with a bird.

- The unravelled threads of the tapestry.
- The print of Frank Stone's *Cross Purposes* on the wall.
- Edward Lear's musical arrangement of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 1847 poem "Tears, Idle Tears" which lies discarded on the floor.
- The music on the piano, Thomas Moore's "Oft in the Stilly Night", the words of which speak of missed opportunities and sad memories of a happier past.
- The discarded glove and top hat thrown on the table top suggest a hurried assignation.
- The painting's frame is decorated with further symbols: bells (for warning), marigolds (for sorrow), and a star above the girl's head (a sign of spiritual revelation). It also bears a verse from the Book of Proverbs (25:20): "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart".
- The mirror at the back shows a spring garden suggesting the joy of the outside world and God's forgiveness.

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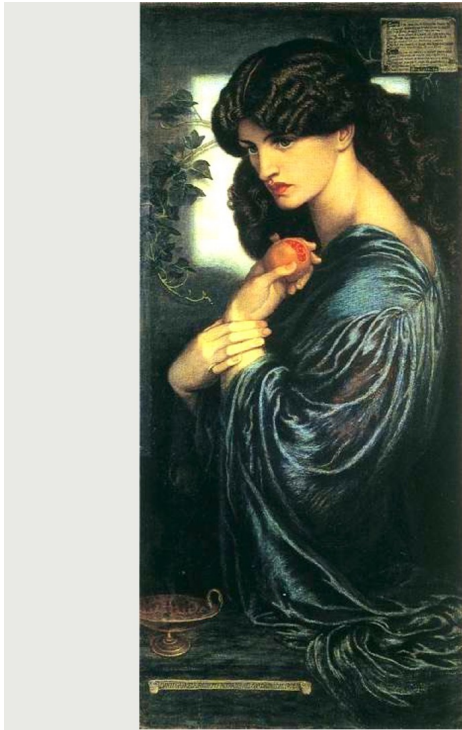


William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *Fanny Waugh Hunt*, 1866–68, 104 × 73cm, Toledo Museum of Art

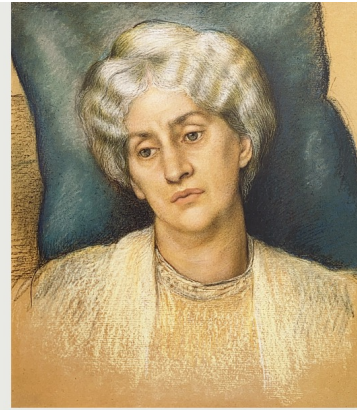


William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *Fanny Waugh Hunt*, 1866–68, 104 × 73cm, Toledo Museum of Art

- After Hunt broke off his engagement to Annie Miller he later married **Fanny Waugh** (1833–1866, aged 33). They left for a trip to Europe and settled in Florence. This painting was begun in Florence, during the late summer of 1866, when Fanny posed for Hunt behind a chair to conceal her pregnancy. Their son was born in October and **Fanny sadly died two months later of complications** from the delivery.
- Hunt completed the portrait in London with the aid of a photograph and Fanny's paisley shawl, purple dress, and cameo brooch that he retrieved from Florence. The rich interior features many objects of upper-class 'artistic' taste: the Chinese porcelain vase and gold mirror frame, Venetian glass bowl and chandelier, Persian pottery dish, and elegantly framed watercolours. Many of these objects are seen through the multiple, receding mirror reflections, which seem to evoke both eternity and the dimming of memory with time. (thanks to Toledo Museum of Art)
- Nine years later Hunt caused a major scandal by marrying her sister **Edith Waugh**, as marrying one's dead wife's sister was, in law, defined as incest at that time. They travelled to Switzerland to marry (in November 1875) and this led to a complete break with her family and with his friend, the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner who had been in love with Fanny but had married the middle sister Alice Waugh.
- Incidentally, in case you are wondering about the name, one of their brothers, Alexander, became a country doctor and was known as 'the Brute' as he bullied his wife and children and his eldest son Arthur, was the father of Evelyn Waugh, the novelist.



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



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

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

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

- This is *Proserpine* (pronounced 'pro-suh-pine') by Rossetti and modelled by **Jane Morris** (1839-1914, aged 74). According to one myth Proserpine also called Proserpina or Persephone (pronounced 'puh-seh-fuh-nee'), was the daughter of Ceres (pronounced as 'series'), the goddess of fertility and agriculture. One day the god of the Underworld, Pluto, came out of Mount Etna, fell in love with her and took her back to the Underworld. Ceres searched the world and could not find her daughter and so in anger she stopped the growth of fruit and vegetables worldwide and each step she took around the world created a desert. This worried Jupiter and so he ordered Pluto to free Proserpine. Before he released her Pluto made her eat six pomegranate seeds which meant she would have to return to the Underworld for six months a year. On her return her joyful mother reinstated the growth of plants and when she went back to the underworld for six months she stopped their growth, which is why we have summer and winter.
- **Jane Morris** (née Burden, 1839-1914) was born in Oxford, the **daughter of a stableman**. When she was 18 she attended a performance of the Drury Lane Theatre in Oxford and was **noticed by Rossetti and Burne-Jones** who were in Oxford to paint the Oxford Union murals. Rossetti was struck by her beauty and asked her to model for him. She sat mostly for Rossetti and later for **William Morris who fell in love with her**. They became engaged although by her own admission she **did not love Morris**.
- During their engagement Morris paid for her to be **privately educated to become a gentleman's wife** and her **considerable intelligence** enabled her to recreate herself. She read extensively, became **proficient in French and Italian** and became a **very accomplished pianist**. Her manners and speech became **so refined she was described as 'queenly'**. She could have indirectly been **the model George Bernard Shaw used for Eliza Doolittle** in *Pygmalion* (1914).
- After their marriage in 1859 they moved to the **Red House in Bexleyheath** (well worth a visit) where she had two daughters. They then moved to London and shared a house with the design firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. (1861-1875) which became Morris & Co. Later they bought **Kelmscott House in Hammersmith** as their main residence. Jane became renowned for her embroideries and her knowledge of ancient embroidery techniques but all her design were described as by William Morris, "**in the interests of commercial success**".
- Rossetti and Jane had started to become closely attached in 1865 and in 1871, William and Rossetti took out a joint tenancy on **Kelmscott Manor** (which is between Swindon and Oxford). Then **William went to Iceland leaving Rossetti and Jane** to furnish the house and spent the summer together there. Their relationship deepened and continued until Rossetti's death in 1882.
- (CLICK) The following year (1883) Jane met the poet Wilfrid Blunt (1840-1922) and they became friends and four years later lovers. Their sexual relationship continued for seven years and they remained friends until her death in 1914. William Morris died in 1896 two years after their sexual relationship had ended.

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Edward Burne-Jones, *Maria Zambaco*, 1871



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



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

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

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Georgiana Burne-Jones, their children Margaret and Philip*, 1883, private  
 Georgiana Macdonald (1840-1920, aged 79, later Lady Burne-Jones), *Dead Bird*, 1857, watercolour, 17.8 × 9.8 cm, Tate

- **Georgiana Burne-Jones** (1840-1920) was born MacDonald to a Methodist minister in Birmingham. (CLICK) She was a painter and engraver and **painted this dead bird when she was 17** and training at the School of Design, London. It reflects a contemporary interest in natural history, a common pursuit for educated young women, and her studies with the progressive painter Ford Madox Brown. (The bird, a Green-Headed Tanager, *Tangara seledon*, had been brought from South America.)
- She was one of the well-known MacDonald sisters and so was aunt of both Rudyard Kipling and the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. She became a close confidant of George Eliot, William Morris and John Ruskin (and her son Philip became a well known painter).
- **She met Burne-Jones**, then plain or Ned Jones, in Birmingham **when she was 15** and they **became engaged and were married when she was 19** (1860). They had **very little money** but lived an idyllic existence. They spent a **summer at the Red House with William and Jane Morris**. Their **first child Philip caught scarlet fever** when he was two and she caught the disease and miscarried her second child but Philip survived.
- The **1870s was a difficult decade** for the family as **Edward had many poor reviews** (CLICK) and he then began a **passionate affair with the Greek model Maria Zambaco** (pronounced 'zam-back-o'). This became a **public scandal bordering on farce** when she tried to commit suicide by jumping into the Regent's Canal in 1869.
- (CLICK) **This second portrait of Georgiana** when she was 43 shows her reading a herbal with their two children in the background. Margaret was born in 1866 and is about 17 and Philip was by then about 22. Philip (1871-1926) went on to become a well known artist. Burne-Jones never finished with the painting and dabbled with it the rest of his life
- About this time Georgiana developed a close relationship with William Morris whose wife, as we have heard, had fallen in love with Rossetti. The affair lingered on but slowly declined and the Burne-Joneses and the Morris remained together for another 30 years.

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



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

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

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Phyllis and Demophoon*, 1870, bodycolour and watercolour with gold medium and gum arabic on composite layers of paper on canvas, 93.8 × 47.5 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery  
 Maria Cassavetti Zambaco (1843-1914), *Marie Stillman*, 1886, alloy metal, 13.4 cm, inscription: Marie Stillman MDCCCLXXXVI, British Museum (ref. 1887,1207.1) Stillman and Zambaco, who modelled for (and became the mistress of) Edward Burne-Jones, were related to each other, and close friends  
 Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Portrait of Maria Zambaco*

- Both faces in *Phyllis and Demophoon* (pronounced 'dema-foon') are modelled by Maria Zambaco, the woman with whom Burne-Jones had an affair. The story is from Ovid and tells of how the Queen of Thrace falls in love with Demophoon. He has to leave but promises to return in six months. When he fails to return she hangs herself in an almond tree and the gods turn her into an almond tree. Demophoon returns and Phyllis emerges from the tree to return to her lover and forgive him.
- The **painting was controversial and Burne-Jones was told to remove it** from the Old Watercolour Society exhibition both because of the exposed genitals in the exact centre of the painting but because his scandalous affair with Zambaco and the attempted suicide which had just become public knowledge.
- (CLICK) **Maria Zambaco** (born Marie Cassavetti, 1843-1914) was **extremely wealthy as she inherited her father's vast fortune in 1858 when she was 15**. She was a **talented artist** who studied at the **Slade** and then in **Paris under Auguste Rodin** and she **exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon**. She **worked as a sculptor** in the 1880s and (CLICK) the **British Museum has four of the medallions she donated**. As well as Burne-Jones she also modelled for **James McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti**.
- **As a teenager she was pursued by George du Maurier** but she rejected his advances and when she was 18 she **married Dr Demetrius Zambaco** who was 11 years her senior. They had two children but the **marriage failed and they separated**. In 1866, when **she was 23 she met Edward Burne-Jones** when her mother commissioned a painting from him and started the **tempestuous affair**.

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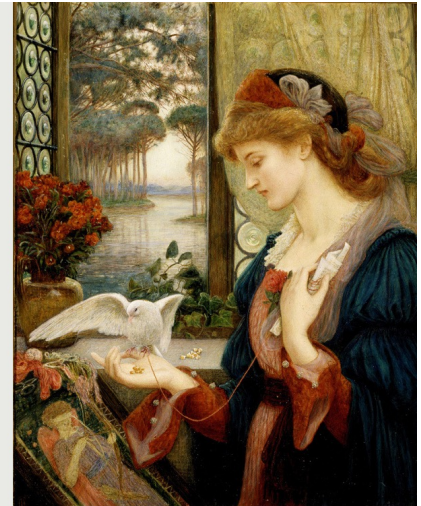
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria\\_Zambaco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Zambaco)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demophon\\_of\\_Athens#Mythology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demophon_of_Athens#Mythology)



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



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



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

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

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

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

- **Marie (Euphrosyne) Spartali Stillman** (1844-1927) was a **cousin of Maria Zambaco** and together with another cousin (Aglaia Coronio) were known as "the Three Graces", after the Charities of Greek mythology.
- **Spartali studied with Ford Madox Brown** who became her lifelong mentor. Her pictures were exhibited from 1867 when she was 23 and **she insisted on selling** them despite her father urging her to give them as a gift to **avoid the family shame** of her appearing to have to earn a living. In 1871 she married American-born journalist **William Stillman** whose career took them to Greece and Italy for extended periods.
- Her closest Pre-Raphaelite **friends were Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Jane Morris**. From 1877 she exhibited at the brand new Grosvenor Gallery, and also sent works to the USA.
- When Stillman was working in Florence (from 1878 to 1883) she was influenced by early Italian art and literature. **This picture illustrates a poem by Dante Alighieri entitled 'Madonna Pietra' (My Lady of Stone)**. It depicts the cold, heartless woman of Dante's poem ("Utterly frozen ... no more moved than is the stone"), and the elements of the picture — the green, stone, shade and hills — reflect the rhyming words of the poem.
- **Stillman pays homage to Rossetti who translated the poem and who died the year the painting was started**. Rossetti also produced a pastel version of *Madonna Pietra* in 1874 (in the Koriyama City Museum of Art). In it the figure is also holding a crystal globe. In the Stillman picture **the globe reflects a scene of the Annunciation**.
- ***Love's Messenger*** of 1885 is a watercolour in which a **dove has just carried a love letter** to a woman standing by an open window. She has just put down her embroidery of a **blindfolded Cupid**. The **symbols in the painting suggest a conflict** between the constancy and fidelity of the **love of Venus** symbolised by the rose and the dove and the sensuality and **pain Cupid's arrows** may inflict. It was exhibited in the **Grosvenor Gallery** in 1885 and was **one of her most important works** displayed in the 1880s. It was bought in 1901 for £100 from her daughter Effie Stillman and later donated to the Delaware Art Museum.

## NOTES

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



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



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

- **Evelyn de Morgan** (1855-1919) was born **Mary Evelyn Pickering**, the great-granddaughter of the **Earl of Leicester** and she was **born into an aristocratic life**. Her uncle was the painter John Roddam Stanhope Spencer.
- She began drawing lessons **when she was 15** and on her 17th birthday wrote, "**Art is eternal, but life is short ... I have not a moment to lose**". She decided to become a professional painter and was **one of the first women to be admitted to the Slade in 1873** and became a prize-winning student. She was described as "**full of mischief**" but "**all seriousness and absorption where painting was concerned**". She decided to use her **middle name 'Evelyn'** as it was then a name used by both men and women.
- She was **influenced by George Frederic Watts** and visited him in Florence. She was also friends with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt. In 1877 she **exhibited alongside Marie Spartali Stillman** at the Grosvenor Gallery and in 1887, when she was 32, she **married the ceramicist William De Morgan**. They built a close professional relationship with **her art sales subsidising his pottery production**. They became good friends of William and Jane Morris.
- *Cadmus and Harmonia* is based on a story from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. **Cadmus is changed into a snake by the god Mars and his wife Harmonia begs for a similar fate so she can be with him**. Her wish is granted and we see her just before she is transformed. De Morgan has changed the story which takes place at the end of their lives when Harmonia is an old woman. Harmonia is reminiscent of Venus in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* which she had copied as a student.

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



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

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

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

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

- Her subjects were medieval and classical legends as well as elaborate allegories of her Spiritualist beliefs. She boycotted the Royal Academy and signed the Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage in 1889. She was a pacifist and her later works included powerful messages against the violence of the Boar War and First World War.
- Flora is the Roman goddess of flowers and the tree behind her is a Japanese plum or loquat tree which is native to China and fruits in the spring. In the tree are a chaffinch and a siskin.
- (CLICK) It was painted in Florence and was inspired by Botticelli's *Primavera*. It was bought by one of her regular patrons, William Imrie, a Scottish ship-owner. (CLICK)
- How can you see her work? It used to be displayed in the former Wandsworth Library but it closed in 2014 and since the closure her work is now on display at Cannon Hall Yorkshire (former home of the Spencer-Stanhope family), Watts Gallery, and Wightwick (pronounced 'wittick') Manor Wolverhampton, a National Trust house in the Arts and Crafts style. Watts Gallery is the nearest and one work they have there is this one ...

## NOTES

- The scroll at the bottom is in Italian and reads, translated:  
*I come down from Florence and am Flora,  
 This city takes its name from flower  
 Among the flowers I was born and now by a change of home  
 I have my dwelling among the mountains of Scotia  
 Welcome, and let me treasure amid northern mists be dear to you.*

## REFERENCES

- <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/evelyn-de-morgan-the-pre-raphaelite-sister-you-may-not-know/>

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



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

- **The final work before her death in 1919.**
- One interpretation is that it represents the **entrapment of most married women**. The young woman at the window is **yearning to be part of the joyful life outside** but she is trapped like the **bird in the gilded cage**, top right, rather than free like the soaring bird outside. The **old man looks sad** perhaps because **she has rejected the knowledge** (the discarded book on the floor) **and riches** (the discarded jewels on the floor) **that he has to offer**.
- When de Morgan died her remaining works were sold for the benefit of **St. Dunstan's Charity for the Blind**. **Her sister purchased** a number of the works at the sale, like this one, and these form the basis of the De Morgan Collection today.

## NOTES

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

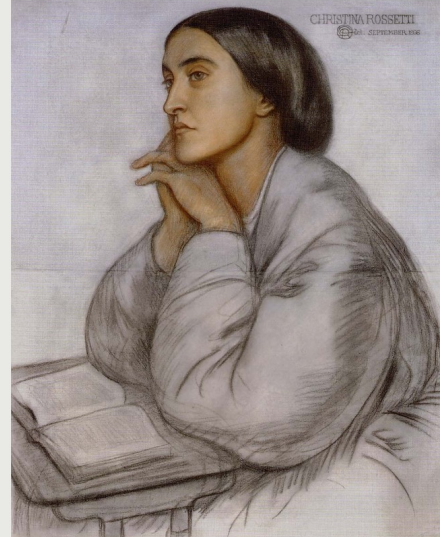
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*Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

### **'Remember' by Christina Rossetti**



- That concludes the talk on the Pre-Raphaelite Sisters. You may be thinking there were **too many models and artists to remember** and too many sad relationships. I will conclude, like the exhibition with this **sonnet by Christina Rossetti** (1830-1894), written when she was just 19 and one of the Victorian era's greatest poets. I will start at the volta or turning point of the sonnet:

*Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
**Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.***

'Remember' by Christina Rossetti

## **REFERENCES**

Mairin O'Hagan performs Christina Rossetti's *Remember* <https://youtu.be/SpmK4p5bY20>





## NEXT WEEK - RUSSIAN ART 1890-1932

The exhibition was Russian Art 1917-1932 but I have extended the start date in order to show you the type of art that came before Russian revolutionary art.