



DISPELLING THE MYTHS: NINETEENTH- CENTURY BRITISH ART

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A summary of the 20 two-hour talks on nineteenth-century British art.

I will go through a number of works we covered on the course. I will not put up the artist, title and date to begin with. Please do not shout out the details as the aim is for each one of you to gradually recognise the painting. You may remember you have seen it before or you might remember all the details. I want everyone to silently score themselves against their own personal objectives. I will gradually reveal more and more about each painting and then give you the information before moving on. It is more important to remember what it is about than all the precise details of the artist's name, the exact title and the precise date.



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- The first and by far the most important category was **history painting**.
- Although history painting was never popular in England, the most popular categories were portraits and landscapes.
- Benjamin West was an American who came to England in 1763 aged 25, and never returned. He became the second President of the Royal Academy (1792-1805, 1806-1820) and declined a knighthood as he thought he should be made a peer.
- It is not an historical event, it could be mythological, it is a biblical or classical scene that ennoble the viewer.
- This painting created a minor scandal as the figures are wearing **contemporary clothes**, George III refused to buy it
- Benjamin West was **pushing the limits** of history painting and changed what was acceptable
- General Wolfe is **Christ-like**, wearing ordinary clothes, in blue Dr. Thomas Hinde, Simon Fraser in green was not there, only 4 of 14 were
- Runner approaching with news of victory
- Native American warrior, sign of deep thought, inspired by '**noble savage**' (not Rousseau), 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury – people are essential good (as opposed to Thomas Locke's 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish'. 18thC sentimentalism – David Hume – moral

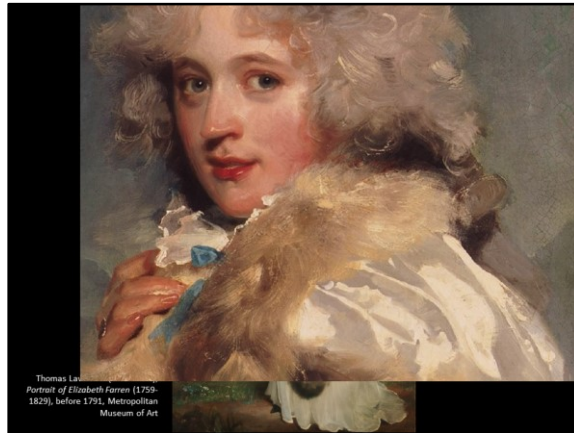
judgements are essentially emotional not rational, as opposed to Immanuel Kant.

History Painting

- This is a history painting, the highest academic genre of painting. It tells a noble story and should show man in general not a particular man. This painting is therefore, arguably, not a history painting. The figures are not classical and many—including Sir Joshua Reynolds and West's patron, Archbishop Drummond—strongly urged West to avoid painting Wolfe and others in modern costume, which was thought to detract from the timeless heroism of the event. They urged him to paint the figures wearing togas. West refused, writing, 'the same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil [paintbrush] of the artist.' After its completion, George III refused to purchase it because the clothing compromised the dignity of the event. The work, however, eventually overcame all objections and helped inaugurate more historically accurate practice in history painting. So this painting is important as it started the change in what was regarded as a history painting and ultimately it started to undermine the entire hierarchy of academic genres.
- Benjamin West was depicting the death of General James Wolfe during the 1759 Battle of Quebec of the Seven Years' War (1754-1763, a war involving most of the great powers). Britain gained a large part of North America from France (called new France) and Florida from Spain but ceded Florida to Spain and returned Cuba and the Philippines to Spain.
- William Woollett's engraving was the best known copy of West's original and became popular around the world
- The Death of General Wolfe is currently in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum (Canadian art collection), as well as the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The fourth copy produced resides at Ickworth House, Suffolk, England. There are five known portraits by the author. Wolfe's death and the portrayal of that event by Benjamin West make up half of Simon Schama's historical work *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations* (1991).
- This type of painting was not open to women as they could not attend life classes and learn to draw the nude male body.

Benjamin West

Anglo-American painter (born Springfield, Pennsylvania) of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was the second president of the Royal Academy in London, serving from 1792 to 1805 and 1806 to 1820 (James Wyatt, architect, the Destroyer of cathedrals was in between). He was offered a knighthood by the British Crown, but declined it, believing that he should instead be made a peer. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, painted *Death of Socrates* and met John Wollaston who had been a famous painter in London. Travelled to Italy and copied Titian and Raphael. Went to London in 1763 and never returned to America. Appointed historical painter to the court at £1,000 a year, encouraged George III to found the Royal Academy. *The Death of General Wolfe* is his most famous painting.



Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), *Portrait of Elizabeth Farren* (1759-1829), before 1791, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, largest art museum in US, 10th largest in the world, founded 1870).

- We start with a late eighteenth-century portrait from one of the great portrait painters, **Thomas Lawrence**. It is a known and named person, Elizabeth Farren, and we know from reports at the time that it was an excellent representation. In a moment we will explore what is meant by a portrait as many pictures of people are not portraits in the conventional sense. First, it is interesting to consider the artist Thomas Lawrence and the sitter **Elizabeth Farren**.
- Thomas Lawrence was a child prodigy who was supporting his family by the time he was 11. He became a fashionable portrait artist by the age of 18.
- One critic wrote that this portrait, showed Elizabeth Farren's 'mind and character on canvas ... **arch, spirited, elegant and engaging**'. This was a major change, previously artists were paid to create a **likeness** but increasingly they represented a **mood or a personality**.
- We will end with the other great nineteenth century portrait painter – **John Singer Sargent**.
- Reynolds said that the artist must present their subject in a poetic manner. Although the Scriptures say that **St Paul**'s bodily appearance was **mean** (or 'weak' or 'unimpressive', see 2 Corinthians 10:10) and **Alexander** was of **low stature** – Reynolds

said that '**None of these defects ought to appear in a piece of which he is the hero**'.

In this case Reynolds said, 'In you sire, the world will expect to see accomplished what I have failed to achieve.' The established artist Zoffany had also painted a portrait of Miss Farren and he unselfishly held back exhibiting it 'for a young man must be encouraged.'

- Lawrence's portrait was itemised in the Royal Academy catalogue not of a lady but of an actress, a word virtually synonymous with prostitute. Miss Farren was displeased and it can be assumed that the Earl of Derby, who commissioned the painting, was also displeased. Miss Farren wrote to complain that Lawrence had made her look too thin.

Notes

- The **Grand Manner** referred to an idealised style derived from classical art as interpreted by the Old Masters of the High Renaissance. As we know the highest genre was history painting but the term Grand Manner was increasingly applied to portraits. They were **ostentatious**, typically **full-length** and were also referred to as **swagger portraits**.
- '**Swagger portraits**' were popular and painted in the 'Grand Manner' (Reynolds referred to it as the 'great style' or 'grand style'). It is the portrait version of history painting. The sitters must be presented in surroundings that convey nobility and elite status and they are often full length.

Sir Thomas Lawrence

- Lawrence was a **child prodigy** who was **supporting his family** with his pastel portraits by the **age of ten**. At **18** he went to **London** and soon became established as a fashionable **portrait artist** and he received his first royal commission, to paint **Queen Charlotte**, wife of George III, when he was 21. He was **self-taught**, could capture a **likeness** and was a virtuoso at **handling paint (Click)**. Consider how he captures the sheen of the silk with a few dabs of white paint alongside the soft fur and the glowing skin of her cheek and the softness of her lips. Her face is animated and she seems about to speak. His un-English virtuosity meant that he was not widely appreciated after his death and some of his greatest paintings, such as this one, ended up in the US.
- Lawrence was described recently as '**one of the great painters of the last 250 years and one of the great stars of portraiture on a European stage**.' He was the foremost **Regency portrait painter** and on his return from **Italy** in **1820** he was voted as **president of the Royal Academy** that evening to **replace Benjamin West** who had just died. He **never married** and when he died in 1830 at the age of 61 he was the most fashionable portrait painter in Europe. His **death** is a **mystery** as his doctor described it as due to the ossification of his aorta but his first biographer suggested it was caused by over zealous bleeding and leeching. The other **mystery** was where all his **money went**. He worked extremely hard, was paid well and **did not gamble or drink**. He kept poor or **no accounts** and was **very generous** so it is wondered if he gave it away to his family and friends. He almost went **bankrupt** and on his death his estate was worth nothing. His reputation declined after his death but has recently been partially

restored.

Elizabeth Farren

- Farren was the **actress daughter** of an Irish surgeon and apothecary (pharmacist). She started acting when she was young and first appeared in **London** when she was **18**. She played many parts including **Portia** (Merchant of Venice), **Olivia** (Twelfth Night), **Juliet** (Romeo and Juliet) and **Hermione** (The Winter's Tale) in Shakespeare's plays. She later **married Edward Smith-Stanley**, the **12th Earl of Derby** and although she was the subject of satire **no imputation was ever cast** on her morals. **Horace Walpole** described her as the **most perfect actress** he had ever seen. One critic wrote,
 - *'We have seen a great variety of pictures of Mrs. Farren, but we never saw her mind and character on canvas. It is completely Elizabeth Farren: **arch, spirited, elegant and engaging**'.*
- She was at the height of her career when this canvas was shown at the Royal Academy in 1790. Seven years later, she married the twelfth earl of Derby. This beautiful portrait helped to secure for Lawrence the role of successor to the elderly Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792).



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art

- The intention was to create a positive sensation in Paris but the picture shocked and scandalised.
- Sargent later wrote: 'I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done'.
- There are mixed views of Madame Pierre Gautreau from 'stopped traffic in the street' to poorly educated and boorish.

Key point: a controversial portrait that scandalized society showing how little it takes to shock

Madame X

Sargent and Madame Pierre Gautreau (1859-1915) collaborated on this portrait in order to create a sensation at the Paris Salon of 1884. She did not commission it but Sargent pursued her unlike most of his clients. Sargent wrote to a mutual friend:

I have a great desire to paint her portrait and have reason to think she would allow it and is waiting for someone to propose this homage to her beauty. ...you might tell her that I am a man of prodigious talent.

She moved to France when she was eight and was later introduced to French high society. She became one of Paris's conspicuous beauties, as she was a pale-

skinned brunette with fine features and an hourglass figure. She used lavender-coloured face and body powder to enhance her complexion, to dye her hair with henna, and to color her eyebrows.

The original portrait had one shoulder strap hanging down and people were shocked and scandalized. It was described as a 'flagrant insufficiency' of clothing. Although the painting failed to establish as a society artist in France it achieved its objective in England and America. When he sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art Sargent wrote to the director, 'I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done'.

Most writers believe she attracted much admiration due to her elegance and style and she married Pierre Gautreau, a French banker and shipping magnate and she was rumoured to have had numerous affairs. Her beauty is described as 'having stopped traffic in the street'. However, some research indicates all this was the creation of later writers and she was rarely mentioned in society pages until the scandal of the public portrait and no affairs are known to have taken place. She has been described as poorly educated, boorish, vapid and naïve and she fell into obscurity after the scandal.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1776-1851), *Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*, exhibited at Turner's Gallery in 1809, Tate Britain

The view is from Salt Hill near Slough? In modern terms it is looking towards the M4 motorway towards the Thames, Eton College and Windsor Castle. Turner would have known the view and there was a famous inn, called Castle Inn, at Salt Hill a mile from Slough. It was named for its view of Windsor Castle and the Inn and its view were so well known that in 1814 the Prince Regent hosted a breakfast there for the King of Prussia and his three sons.

Pastoral

The painting was first exhibited April 1809 in Turner's gallery. At first glance we see a Romantic painting of the pastoral or bucolic type. That is it shows the herding of livestock. It is also known as Georgic based on Virgil's (70 BCE-19 BCE, an ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period)) *Georgics*, a poem about agriculture and animal husbandry which was very popular in the eighteenth century. The poem describes man's struggle against a hostile natural world and how hard work and animal husbandry can overcome setbacks (published 29BCE). Related to the Greek Hesiod's *Works and Days* regarding man's relationship to the land and the importance of hard work.

Turnips and Crop Rotation

The Tate says, 'As well as its distant view of Windsor Castle, this picture of a turnip harvest depicts current efforts to maximise yields and increase the food supply to serve the needs of a wartime economy'. There is a lot of history that was very significance at the time tied up in this sentence.

First it is necessary to understand the importance of the turnip. The most significant agricultural advance made in the eighteenth century was crop rotation. This was first practiced 8,000 years ago in the Middle East but ancient practice involved letting a field lie fallow for part of the year. The big advance was four-field rotation which was first used in England in the 18th century and was promoted by Turnip Townsend, Viscount Charles Townshend. It consists of growing wheat, then turnips or swedes (winter fodder), then barley and then clover or ryegrass (gazed) each year. Using four fields each one could be at a different stage of the rotation. This enabled the land to be used all the time to grow a useful crop. Turnips leaves would feed the crops in the autumn and the turnip could be stored over winter to feed the livestock. This in turn meant that livestock did not need to be slaughtered in the autumn but could over winter.

Turnips enabled four crop rotation but only if the land was enclosed so that livestock could be prevented from eating other farmer's turnips. In the Middle Ages all land was owned by the lord but the tenants had certain rights over part of the land. One such right was the right to pasture cattle, horses and sheep (another was turbarry – the right to take turfs for fuel and estovers – the right to take sufficient wood for the commoner's house). Over a period of hundreds of years common land had slowly been taken away by enclosing it. It was a major issue in the Tudor period and enclosures were constructed by the lord of the manor to create large fields to graze more sheep as our main export was wool. The final and most contentious wave of enclosures was later, between 1750 and 1850 and was justified by improving productivity. In this period one sixth of England was enclosed and this took the ability to grow food away from a large part of the population. The smallholders and commoners became dependent on poor relief and had to buy food.

Interpretations

Turner's painting supports many levels of analysis. It will limit this to three levels as I slowly unravel this intriguing painting. For many years it was simply seen as an example of the pastoral or more specifically the Georgic. However, most descriptions of the painting were formal and stylistic, for example, focusing on Turner's success in representing sunlight seen through haze and the 'poetically heightened atmospheric effects'.

The art historian John Barrell was the first to point out its celebration of progressive English agriculture. It was during the Napoleonic Wars and the French had blockaded our ports so we depended on farmers to produce our food. In this light we see the Royal

Palace at Windsor, representing monarchy, part of Eton school representing education and the aristocracy and in the foreground the labourers working to produce the food needed by everyone during the war. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of increased agricultural productivity resulting from new scientific agricultural practices.

The academic John Barrell was the first to draw attention to the laborers and subsequently it was seen as supporting progressive English agriculture that was helping us win the war against France. This needs some explanation. The painting was first exhibited in 1809 at the height of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815, started when Napoleon seized power in 1799 apart from the one year Peace of Amiens in 1802). In 1805 Nelson beat the French fleet at Trafalgar and in response the French blockaded European ports to stop food being imported into England. It therefore became critical for England to grow all its own food and agricultural productivity became critical for the war effort. The painting would therefore have been seen as patriotically supporting the war.

The third level of meaning was suggested by Michele Miller in 2004. She found anomalies in the work that suggested a different interpretation. Let us examine these anomalies one by one.

First some background information - the main food of the poor was bread and in 1815 the Government passed Corn Laws that fixed a high price for wheat which increased the price of a bread. At the same time land was being enclosed in the name of improved agricultural productivity. Four crop rotation enabled fields to be productive all the time, they no longer needed to lie fallow. However, the poor needed the common land to eke out their existence. It enabled them to grow crops and even keep a cow for milk and cheese. The last wave of enclosures was mostly in the South East - Kent and Sussex and later Essex - and it led to what became known as the Swing Riots. That was still in the future when this was painted but unrest was growing because of bad harvests and the enclosure of common land.

In the distance we see Windsor Castle, a palace of George III, known as 'Farmer George'. During the late 1780s he had converted large parts of Windsor and Richmond into farms that used the latest agricultural techniques. The women are sitting on part of a harrow and one of the men next to the broken plough is carrying a seedlip, both indicators of progressive agriculture and that the field will be replanted with another crop as soon as the turnips have been gathered.

The King promoted the new intensive agriculture which was particularly important as food supplies had been cut off by the French blockage. This was painted at the height of the Napoleonic Wars. By 1808 all foreign food had been cut off and for

the previous nine years the harvest had been poor to terrible. For this reason it has been interpreted as a patriotic painting showing a symbol of the King and the agriculture workers working hard to save the nature. But if this were true, why is the work so disorderly, why is the plough broken and the workers dispirited.

There are few representations of turnips, there is Constable's *Flailing Turnip-heads* and Gainsborough's *Going to Market* but generally they are poorly represented. Perhaps because they have little beauty or because they were a relatively new crop and did not represent timeless continuity but a new technique.

The open fields of common land did not allow turnip growing as your neighbours livestock would eat all your turnips. Turnips therefore called to mind enclosure. Lord Winchilsea had noted a few years previously that farmers pressed for enclosure to keep labourers dependent. Class differences are indicated by the lone figure in the white coat on the raised ground who has just dismounted from the white horse at the left. This juxtaposition of workers with a higher social class is unusual.

Turner has made the castle more prominent than it would be from the site and for a while it was known as 'Windsor' but Turner explicitly named it as 'near Slough' even though the site is nearer Eton than Slough. Slough was a very small hamlet until the railway came in 1836 when it was known as the station nearest to Windsor. The site was known at the time as offering a fine vantage point to view Windsor. The word 'slough' means a muddy or boggy place. The most famous slough is the Slough of Despond in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which was the most popular book after the Bible. In the book the slough is a place that cannot be mended. Help explains to Christian that the King's labourers have been working on it for 16 hundred years but it remains the Slough of Despond. The area around Windsor was boggy and not fully drained. We can see a four horse Berkshire plough which in 1808 was considered old-fashioned and inefficient. Yet even this heavy plough has broken down. Like the Slough of Despond this turnip field resists the efforts of the King's labourers. The harvest we can see consists of a small wheelbarrow of turnips alongside a large area of weeds. Notice the weeds vertically align with the broken plough and the palace. Turner tends to link important connected details using vertical alignment. Turnips were not a miracle crop and prefer light sandy soils and do not grow well in boggy soils. They also have low nutritional value. In the right soil they are an excellent preparation but in the wrong soil they 'will do more injury to the land than the turnips are worth' (1794, Board of Agriculture, Arthur Young).

Despite the new agriculture wheat production fell during the war, mostly because of bad weather and in Buckinghamshire it fell after enclosure because enclosed fields were used to pasture livestock an inefficient way to use the land. Bread shortages for the poor were caused by using enclosed fields produce grain-fed

wheat for the monied classes.

During the war the shortage of men meant that women worked the fields, known as the 'petticoat harvests'. It has even been suggested that the development of farm machinery was a result of farmers' dissatisfaction with the productivity of the women compared with the men (*Women, Work, and Wages in England, 1600-1850*, Michael Roberts, ed. Penelope Lane). We see one of the women is nursing showing the farmer is desperate for labour and the women for work. Viewers at the time would have understood everything I have been telling you. They would also have known that turnips were associated with hunger. They were used to feed livestock and as human food they implied extreme desperation. Many writers at the time use turnips as the example of extreme poverty in *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (Henry Fielding, 1749) Squire Western says 'the Hanover rats have eat up all our corn, and left us nothing but turneps to feed upon'. There was not widespread starvation but the following year, 1809, the harvest was even worse driving up bread prices further and there were demonstrations in Cookham.

At this time the poor were often blamed for their circumstances and one thing that distinguished the deserving from the undeserving poor was idleness and drunkenness. It is significant that a bottle is located in the middle of the brightest patch of land.

The third level of meaning is therefore that Turner was surreptitiously suggesting all is not right with the farming world. I do not mean this was a revolutionary painting and that Turner was calling for riots. I mean that for those who look carefully there is a whole world of levels of meaning, of ambiguity and uncertainty. Like the real world there is no simple answer, no single interpretation, it is neither patriotic nor unpatriotic, it shows beauty and ugliness, power confronting poverty, agricultural advances and their negative impact, hard work and idleness, patriotism and the causes of revolution.



Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, Science Museum

Key point: in the eighteenth century two types of aesthetic experience were defined – the beautiful and the sublime

The painting depicts the Madeley Wood (or Bedlam) Furnaces, which belonged to the **Coalbrookdale Company** from 1776 to 1796. The picture has come to symbolize the **birth of the Industrial Revolution in Ironbridge**. It is held in the collections of the Science Museum in London. The blazing furnaces, the heat and the danger instil a sense of awe and terror. These are aspects of the sublime.

Sublime

- Edmund Burke's description of the sublime was an importance concept as it was beyond reason and this was in an Age of Enlightenment when everything was subject to reason. It is when words fail us and involves painting the unpaintable and a oneness with nature. These days it is used to indicate a well executed performance, such as a good tennis shot or a delicious meal but in the eighteenth century it was an aesthetic experience distinct from beauty.
- The earliest writer about the sublime is **Longinus** (also called Pseudo-Longinus as his real name is unknown, he lived in the 1st or 3rd century CE and wrote ***On the Sublime***)

who saw it as an aspect of eloquence, the ability to uplift the soul of the audience and provide a sense of joy such they thought they had produced what they heard. Other examples are the Bible (Longinus used it to provide examples), Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) *Divine Comedy* and John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost*. The Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) were very concerned with the sublime.

- **Modern theorists** such as Barbara Claire Freeman have distinguished between the **feminine sublime** involving feelings of awe, rapture and the spiritual and metaphysical infinity of nature and the **masculine sublime** concerned with terror and domination. This painting is an example of masculine sublime.
- In the latter half of the nineteenth century the **sublime was abandoned** by artists for reasons of taste, an interest in beauty and scientific realism.
- Some argue the **sublime has returned** in terms of the interest in horror and **horror films**.

See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>

Week 6: Social Realism



Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Sempstress*, 1846

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Sempstress*, 1846

- This painting defined a new genre in art. The representation of social problems.
- It illustrates Thomas Hood poem *The Song of the Shirt* (1843). The poem was written in honour of Mrs Biddell a Lambeth widow and seamstress living in wretched conditions. In what was, at that time, common practice, Mrs. Biddell sewed trousers and shirts in her home using materials given to her by her employer for which she was forced to give a £2 deposit. In a desperate attempt to feed her starving infants, Mrs. Biddell pawned the clothing she had made, thus accruing a debt she could not pay.
- The 1840s were a time of the Railway Mania and fortunes made and lost and also the time of the Great Famine in Ireland. The decade led up to the Chartist petition and demonstration in 1848 and revolutions around Europe.
- It is impossible today to **understand the impact of the poem**. Thackeray described it as '**the most startling lyric in our language**'. It was set to music, the subject of a play and of many sermons.
- The *Athenaeum* criticized the painting as '**too sentimental**' and warned about art that appeals to the power of feeling rather than higher aesthetic

criteria. This is one of the first Victorian 'sentimental' paintings and it is carefully constructed using academic conventions that hark back to Caravaggio's chiaroscuro and Teniers's domestic interiors. The upturned face bathed in light suggest a religious martyr or saint experiencing a revelation.

- The poem and Redgrave's painting gave rise to many imitators and it created a new category of paintings devoted to social themes. The most common theme in the 1840s was the seamstress and many artists used the symbols first constructed by Redgrave.

Notes

The Sempstress

- This painting is **the fountain head** of a whole tradition of social realist painting in Victorian England.
- This painting is based on a poem of the same name and the two had a profound effect.
- You can see it is 2:30 in the morning and the sky is streaked with moonlight. The lit windows opposite indicate that the same thing is happening all over London. The seamstress's eyes are swollen and inflamed as she must do close work by the light of a candle. The morsel of food on the plate indicates she has to eat while she is working and on the mantelpiece you can see medicine bottles. One has a label saying 'The Mixture' and it is supplied by Middlesex Hospital so she is unwell.
- This is one of the first paintings in which art is used to campaign for the poor. **Richard Redgrave did not come from a wealthy family and his sister had been forced to leave home and find a job as a governess. She became ill when in service and had to be nursed by his family until she died. It was painted in 1843, the year that Punch appeared and in the Christmas issues there was a poem that struck a nerve.** By Thomas Hood and called *The Song of the Shirt*. It began:

*With fingers weary and worn
With eyelids heavy and red
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags
Plying her needle and thread –
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt"*

- The verse that inspired Redgrave. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844 (this is the 1846 version). The poem continues that she is sewing a shirt but also her own shroud.
- **Redgrave was an Academician, art director of the South Kensington Museum** (now the V&A), received the cross of the Legion of Honour and was **surveyor of crown pictures for 24 years** and produced a 34 volume catalogue. **He declined**

a knighthood in 1869.

- Sempstresses often went blind and if a single stitch was wrong their wages were docked. Articles appeared saying British citizens were being subjected to a **form of slavery** and a German living in England called **Friedrich Engels** showed a study he had written of the **horrors** of the situation to a **friend** living in **Paris** called **Karl Marx**.
- Redgrave had created a **new category of painting** but it is not based on visiting the poor but the interior is borrowed from a 17th-century Dutch work and the **swollen eyes** looking **heavenward** is typical of many Baroque images of **swooning saints**. Redgrave realised that unless he made the subject **respectable** it would not be accepted. He **succeeded** brilliantly.

Week 6: Social Realism



George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Found Drowned!*, c. 1848-50, Watts Gallery, Compton

George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Found Drowned!*, c. 1848-50, Watts Gallery, Compton

- It was painted when Watts returned from Italy but was **not exhibited** for 20 years.
- This is one of four social realist pictures that Watts painted between 1848 and 1850.
 - *Found Drowned!*, c. 1848-50
 - *Under a Dry Arch* c. 1845-50, the most brutal. In London 1 person out of 20 had no food or shelter.
 - *The Irish Famine* c. 1845-50
 - *The Seamstress* c. 1845-50
- '**Found Drowned**' is a **legal term** used in a coroner's inquest and the heading used in newspapers to report bodies that had been found in the Thames who were typically women. This woman looks as if she has just been pulled from the Thames as her feet are still in the water.
- There is a chain and heart shaped locket in her hand suggesting the cause of her suicide. The setting is under **Waterloo Bridge**, well known for illegal suicide and the drama is increased by her outstretched pose, illuminated face and the star which suggest she is a **martyr** to the injustice of the way in which women were treated in society.
- Her plain clothes suggest poverty and in the distance we see the heavily industrialised south bank near **Hungerford Bridge** contrasting the wealth of

capitalism with the despair brought about her poverty.

- This was one fate that befell a woman that had fallen on hard times. The other was prostitution which was the other scandal in Victorian London.
- Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851, 4th volume 1861 on prostitutes, thieves and beggars), detailed interviews first published in the *Morning Chronicle*. A significant part of the population had no fixed abode, outsiders and migrants teemed through the streets. All goods were transported by cart, there were thousands of street traders called costermongers. He describes now obsolete trades such as gathering snails for food, collecting dog dung for tanneries (pure finders) and sewer-hunters who such for metal. See <https://archive.org/details/londonlabourlond04mayh>
- Mayhew estimates the number of prostitutes as 50,000 in 1793 when the population was 1 million. The police estimate 8,000 and the Bishop of Exeter 80,000. 50,000 in 1 million is 1 in 10 of all women (including children). 105 women were born to every 100 men, which is 50,000 per million excess women who cannot earn a living.

Key point: Watts painted four social realist paintings between 1848 and 1850

Week 7: Photography



Oscar Gustave Rejlander (1813–1875), *Two Ways of Life*, 1857

Oscar Gustave Rejlander (1813–1875), *Two Ways of Life*, 1857

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

- Photography was invented by Louis Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot in the 1830s. The first surviving **permanent image** was taken by **Joseph Nicéphore Niépce** ('nee-say-four nee-eps') in **1826 or 1827** but the image took **several days** to record and could only be seen by holding the metal plate at an angle.
- Photographers combined multiple photographs to create artistic pictures in the academic tradition

Oscar Gustave Rejlander

- A **pioneering Victorian art photographer** and an expert in **photomontage**. His collaboration with **Charles Darwin** on ***The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*** has assured him a position in the history of behavioural science and psychiatry.
- He may have **invented combination printing** which enabled **two or more photographs** to be combined. One of the earliest is this called ***Two Ways of Life*** created in 1857 and first exhibited at the **Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition**. It is a made from **32 negatives** and took **six weeks to produce**. It is intended to create the same sort of **serious moral point as a history painting**. On the **left** was see the

immoral life and a **young man** being **enticed** towards it. On the **right** the **serious, religious, moral life** that is attracting the **other young man**. This type of photography became **popular**.



John Thomson, *Street Life in London, The 'Crawlers'*, 1877

The Crawlers

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

They sit on hard stone steps day and night in wind and rain and get little sleep. She is looking after the baby from 10 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon for a cup of tea which she does not always get. Many of the crawlers were previously middle class

people who fell on hard times. This woman's aim is to earn a few shillings in order to travel to the hop fields in order to save about a pound. With this she could start work again, her son could get his clothes out of the pawnshop and get a job and she would rent a little room in order to have an address so she could get a job.



Julia Margaret Cameron, *Alfred Tennyson*
 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Tennyson

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879, aged 63)

- In **1863**, her daughter gave Cameron her **first camera** and this is the **first print** with which she was **satisfied**. It already exhibits some of her **trademark** artistic effects. **Strong side lighting**, a slightly **out-of-focus** face (intentional), a background that places the **dark side** of the face in contrast with a **light background** and the **light side** of the face against a **dark background** (a technique commonly used by portrait artists).
- The technique of **soft-focus** 'fancy portraits' was **taught** her by **David Wilkie Wynfield** (1837-`887) a **British painter and photographer**. Wynfield used the technique of soft focus, close-up, large-format prints of famous people in historical costumes.
- Cameron was not rediscovered until 1948
- **Watts** as one of the **first artists** who **selected people** to represent. The **other** person was **Cameron**. She was very well connected in high society and used to select among the rich and famous those she wished to portray. This is the poet Alfred Tennyson.
- Cameron left no mark on photography and was **not rediscovered until 1948**. The American photographer Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976) commented '*I'd like to see*

portrait photography go right back to Julia Margaret Cameron. I don't think there's anyone better.' And Getty Images commented recently 'Cameron's photographic portraits are considered among the finest in the early history of photography.'

Alfred Tennyson

- Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson, FRS (6 August 1809 – 6 October 1892) was Poet Laureate of Great Britain and Ireland during much of Queen Victoria's reign and remains one of the most popular British poets.[2]
- Tennyson excelled at penning short lyrics, such as "Break, Break, Break", "The Charge of the Light Brigade", "Tears, Idle Tears" and "Crossing the Bar". Much of his verse was based on classical mythological themes, such as Ulysses, although In Memoriam A.H.H. was written to commemorate his best friend Arthur Hallam, a fellow poet and fellow student at Trinity College, Cambridge, who was engaged to Tennyson's sister, but died from a brain haemorrhage before they could marry. Tennyson also wrote some notable blank verse including Idylls of the King, "Ulysses", and "Tithonus". During his career, Tennyson attempted drama, but his plays enjoyed little success.
- A number of phrases from Tennyson's work have become commonplaces of the English language, including
 - *Nature, red in tooth and claw*
 - *Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all*
 - *Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die*
 - *To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield*

 - *My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure*
 - *Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers*
 - *The old order changeth, yielding place to new*

Week 8: 'The Angel in the House'



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Mrs Coventry Patmore*, 1851, Fitzwilliam Museum

John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Mrs Coventry Patmore*, 1851, Fitzwilliam Museum
Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Angel in the House*, 1873. Depicts Emily Peacock. Emily Peacock was either a visitor of the Cameron's or an Isle of Wight local. She posed frequently for Cameron.

The Angel in the House

- The role of wife was described by the poet Coventry Patmore in *The Angel in the House* (1854-1862, about 200 pages in 4 parts). He wrote the poem over eight years and it describes his evolving relationship with his wife **Emily Augusta Patmore**. Millais painted her three years before the poem appeared and **Julia Margaret Cameron** did a fictional portrait entitled '*The Angel in the House*' in 1871 by which time **the title of the poem had become a catch phrase**.
- The poem is about Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore's (1823-1896) **courtship** of his wife Emily who he believed was **the perfect woman**. The term 'Angel in the House' came to be used as a reference to women who embodied the **Victorian feminine ideal**. A **wife and mother** who was **selflessly devoted** to her children and **submissive to her husband**.
- **Virginia Woolf** satirized the angel in the house, writing that '*She [the perfect wife] was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it ... Above all, she*

was pure.' (Woolf, 1966) She added that she *'bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her'*.

- Nel Noddings (b. 1929), American feminist and philosopher views her as *'infantile, weak and mindless'* (1989).
- As long ago as **1891**, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), American feminist and novelist, wrote a short essay entitled ***The Extinct Angel*** in which she described the angel in the house as being as **dead as the dodo**. Gilman believed the domestic environment **oppressed women** through the patriarchal beliefs upheld by society. She embraced the theory of 'reform Darwinism' and argued that **Darwin's theories** of evolution presented **only the male** as the given in the process of human evolution, thus **overlooking the origins of the female brain** in society that **rationaly chose the best suited mate** that they could find. Gilman argued that **male aggressiveness** and **maternal roles for women** were **artificial** and **no longer necessary** for survival in **post-prehistoric times**. She wrote, *'There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. Might as well speak of a female liver.'* from *Women and Economics* (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898).

Excerpts

*Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure;*

- Daughter to her mother:
*Mother, it's such a weary strain
The way he has of treating me
As if 'twas something fine to be
A woman; and appearing not
To notice any faults I've got!*

Week 8: 'The Fallen Woman'



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-4, Tate Britain

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-4, Tate Britain

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Annie Miller*, c. 1860, black ink, pen and brush, National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm

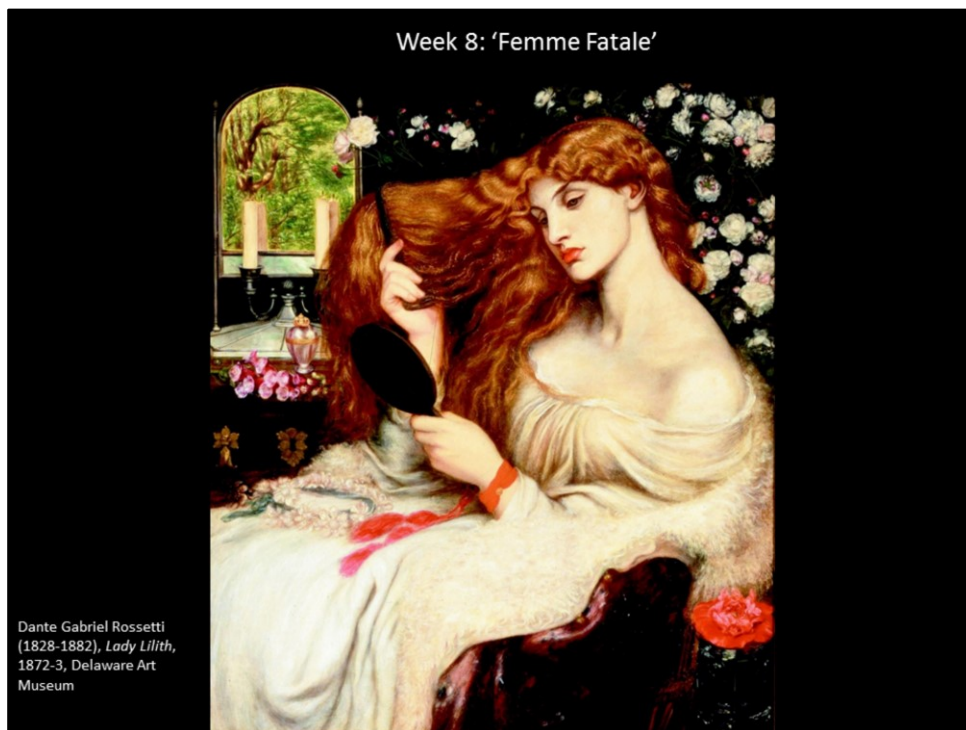
- The other development was from genre paintings of amusing subjects to the depiction of social problems, such as prostitution.

The Awakening Conscience

- The inspiration for this painting was Proverbs: 'As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart'. Some critics misinterpreted this painting, one thought it was a brother and sister playing the piano but the real meaning was quickly determined. It is a gentleman with his mistress (she does not wear a wedding ring) in the room he has rented for their meetings.
- Hunt hired a room at Woodbine Villa, 7 Alpha Place, St John's Wood to provide an authentic interior.
- As they play the piano and sing Thomas Moore's *Oft in the Stilly Night* (music can be played at http://www.james-joyce-music.com/song04_lyrics.html) together she has a sudden spiritual revelation. She gazes into the garden

reflected in the mirror representing God's work on earth and redemption is possible signified by the ray of sunlight in front of her.

- The painting is full of symbolic elements that are intended to be read. The cat toying with the broken winged bird symbolizes her plight, the man's discarded glove warns that the likely fate of a cast off mistress is prostitution. The tangled skein of yarn signifies the complex situation in which she is trapped. Ruskin wrote to *The Times* on 25 May 1854, 'the very hem of the poor girl's dress, at which the painter has laboured so closely, thread by thread, has story in it, if we think how soon its pure whiteness may be soiled with dust and rain, her outcast feet failing in the street'.
- The model is Annie Miller (1835-1925), a barmaid Hunt met when she was 15. He fell in love with her and wanted to marry her but only if she educated herself when her was away in the Middle East. When he was away and contrary to his instructions she sat for Dante Gabriel Rossetti and this caused a rift between them on Hunt's return. She became involved with 7th Viscount Ranelagh (pronounced ran-er-lah) and Hunt broke off their engagement. She was going to sue for breach of promise by Ranelagh's cousin Captain Thomas Thomson fell in love with her. And they married in 1863. Years later Hunt met her on Richmond Hill 'a buxom matron with a carriage full of children'. She died aged 90 in Shoreham-by-Sea. It is not known whether she became 'gay' (i.e. a prostitute) but one art historian (Jan Marsh) believes it is likely she remained 'pure'.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Lady Lilith*, 1872-3, Delaware Art Museum

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 represent 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 and it is likely that Goethe's introduction of Lilith as Adam's first wife and a seductress rather than a child-slaying witch influenced Rossetti. The ensnaring hair was certainly a theme that Rossetti responded to in many paintings. In Goethe's *Faust*, Mephistopheles warns Faust:

*Adam's wife, his first. Beware of her.
Her beauty's one boast is her dangerous hair.
When Lilith winds it tight around young men
She doesn't soon let go of them again.*

- 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

Week 9: Women at Work



Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*, 1857

Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*, 1857

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

Emily Mary Osborn

- Osborn began showing her work at the Royal Academy **when she was just 17** and continued to do so **over a period of 40 years**. This is **her most famous work** which has been called 'The most ingenious of Victorian widow pictures.' A recently bereaved woman is attempting to make a living as an artist by offering a picture to a dealer while two 'swells' on the left stare at her distracted from the bare legged ballet dancer they have been previously ogling. She nervously pulls on a loop of string while the dealer disdainfully judges her work. It has been suggested that this painting relates to Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control* published in 1810 but republished in 1850. This describes the struggles of a self-motivated female artist to sell her pictures in order to help save her father from financial ruin.

Society of Female Artists

- The difficulties experienced by women in exhibiting and selling their works led to the formation of the Society of Female Artists in 1857, the year *Nameless and Friendless* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy. Emily Mary Osborn was a member of this group and one of the artists associated with Barbara

Bodichon's Langham Place circle and campaign for women's rights.

- Osborn was a member of the Society and a member of Barbara Bodichon's Langham Place circle that campaigned for women's rights. Despite the problems faced by women artists Osborn went on to develop a successful career.
- The *Art Journal* on Emily Mary Osborn, 'Nameless and Friendless' 1857:
A poor girl has painted a picture, which she offers for sale to a dealer, who, from the speaking expression of his features, is disposed to depreciate the work. It is a wet, dismal day, and she has walked far to dispose of it; and now awaits in trembling the decision of a man who is to become rich by the labours of others.'
- Osborn never married and died aged 97 in 1925.

Reviews of Exhibitions of the Society of Female Artists:

***The Illustrated London News*, 6 Jun 1857:**

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

***The Art Journal*, 1 May 1858:**

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

Week 12: Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood



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

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

- The Pre-Raphaelites were one of the first groups to break away from the established academic practices.

Christ in the House of His Parents

- **The reaction to Millais's painting was unprecedented.** The term 'ugly' was rarely used by critics to describe fine art yet this painting was described not only as ugly but as hideous, loathsome and disgusting. The most unfavourable was the satirical piece by **Charles Dickens** in his *Household Words*. Dickens described Mary as 'horrible in her ugliness' and clarified what he meant by ugly:
 - Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.
- Saint Giles was an area that was well known for its crime and had 'the worst living conditions in all of London's history'. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* wrote that the painting contained 'Ricketty children, emaciation and

deformity' and 'we can hardly imagine anything more ugly, graceless, and unpleasant'. Dickens also described Christ as 'hideous, wry-necked, blubbering' and the whole painting with its **'ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude' expressing 'what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting'**.

- It is clear from the critical reaction that this painting was revolutionary and was seen as an extreme attack on the conventions used to represent religious subjects. Fourteen years later, in Paris, Manet caused a similar reaction by undermining bourgeois notions of respectability with *Olympia* (1863, exhibited 1865).
- The critical response changed over the years and **by 1898 the painting was 'passionately admired, and even loved'**. By the end of the century, the painting was no longer regarded as ugly and 'blasphemous'. This might be because Millais had become accepted as a member of elite society but the painting had also lost its ability to shock as the changes it brought about in the way we see the world had become established.

Notes

- In the painting, Christ has red hair, which was traditionally associated with Judas Iscariot and red hair regarded as both 'ugly' and a 'sign of degeneration'. Mary's eyes are almost closed and ringed in black and her brow is heavily lined, which combined with the twist of her neck, gives her a distorted appearance and Joseph's arms are veined and muscular, his nails are dirty, his left knee is damaged and his toenails are broken.
- In the *Art Journal* Ralph Wornum wrote: 'the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body' indicating that the moral worth of a character, in this case the Holy Family, must be signified by a beautiful body. *The Times* critic wrote that the picture 'is, to speak plainly, revolting' and there was 'no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, and even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness'. *The Athenaeum* also wrote that 'we recoil with loathing and disgust' at the 'pictorial blasphemy'. What is morally shocking to the reviewer is the minute detail, which suggests we are looking at something that is forbidden and so it must be seen only in some generalised or modified form.
- The room is unnaturally bright and evenly lit and the source of the light is on the left. In Millais's preparatory sketches, there is a window on the left, which is cut off in the final painting and is the notional source of the light. The figures have the idiosyncratic features associated with particular people and we know that they were modelled by Millais's family and friends. Millais went to a carpenter's shop in Oxford Street to sketch its interior in order to represent a carpenter's tools and method of working accurately. The tools are those of a nineteenth-century carpenter and the clothes are a mixture of Middle Eastern, conventional religious symbolism, such as Mary's blue dress and St. John's animal fur, with nineteenth-century additions, such as Christ's smock. Clearly, Millais was not trying to reproduce a historically accurate carpenter's shop but an accurately observed contemporary carpenter's shop with figures that were

modelled on friends and family. The critics pointed out that the painting is full of anachronisms such as the mixture of costumes from different periods and the Victorian carpenter's tools. However, the art historian Michaela Giebelhausen believes that Millais carefully constructed these anachronisms in order to create an ahistorical setting. In the eighteenth century, she points out that such an ahistorical setting was associated with religious devotion as it prevented a painting from being seen as a genre painting set in a particular time and period.

- Christ's small stature compared with the height of the table also suggests that Millais was representing an accident resulting from childish enthusiasm rather than a stage-managed event. This is also suggested by the assistant at the left ignoring the interruption to his work, Joseph's perfunctory examination and the look of 'I told you not to meddle' on St. John's face. Mary is holding her head back for a kiss suggesting she is the injured party and St. Anne offers practical assistance rather than comfort. Through the open entrance, a group of sheep stare over a fence inquisitively suggesting there could have just been a noisy scene. Millais linked the highest spiritual subject, the Holy Family, with the lowest rung of society, the urban poor, and turned a spiritual prefiguration into an everyday accident.
- By associating themselves with artists that pre-dated the formation of Protestantism the Pre-Raphaelites linked themselves with Puseyism, the Oxford Movement, and the widely resisted move towards Catholicism. This was reinforced by their unconventional approach to religious symbolism. The painting was therefore seen to be subversive and an attempt to undermine Protestant beliefs. This aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite movement is spelled out in Max Nordau's *Degeneration*.

References

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

Week 12: Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood



William Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat*, 1854-5, Lady Lever Gallery, Liverpool

William Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat*, 1854-5, 86 x 140 cm, Lady Lever Gallery, Liverpool
William Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat*, 1854-5, 33.7 x 45.9 cm, original oil study, Manchester Art Gallery

- Hunt's painting was controversial but for different reasons. It was a sincere attempt to express his religious feelings but he adopted a Biblical story that was unknown to the majority of people.
- The original oil study, now at Manchester Art Gallery, contains conflicting symbols of Christ, the goat and the rainbow. The rainbow implies hope and salvation for the goat rather than the viewer, which is not intended as the goat prefigures the suffering of Christ.
- Hunt hoped that thoughtful Jews would understand the symbolism and be converted to Christianity before the Last Judgement.

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".
- 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.

Week 13: Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood



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

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

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

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.
- 'Brown's 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.

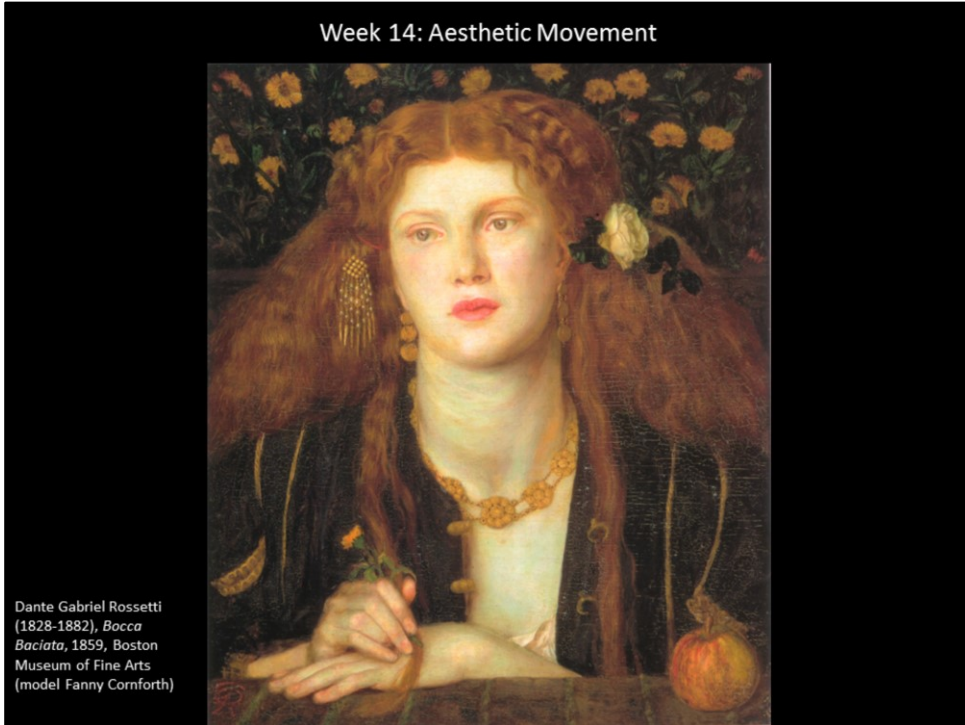
- The main theme is the ennobling nature of work which is taken from Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present*. One of Carlyle's extended metaphors likens work to digging an ever widening river that drains a pestilent swamp of ignorance.
- The workers are laying a **new water main** which was approved by Parliament on **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 drank **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 women **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'.

Week 14: Aesthetic Movement



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

Fleshly School Controversy

- Wikipedia: 'The Fleshly School is the name given by Robert Buchanan to a **realistic, sensual school of poets**, to which Dante Gabriel **Rossetti**, **William Morris**, and **Algernon Charles Swinburne** belong. He **accused them of immorality** in an article entitled "The Fleshly School of Poetry" in *The Contemporary Review* in October 1871. This article was expanded into a pamphlet (1872), but he subsequently withdrew from the criticisms it contained, and it is chiefly remembered by the replies it evoked from Rossetti in a letter to the *Athenaeum* (December 16, 1871), entitled *The Stealthy School of Criticism*, and from Swinburne in *Under the Microscope* (1872).'
- The criticism of Rossetti's first collection of poetry **contributed to his mental breakdown** in June 1872. He stayed with Jane Morris at Kelmscott but 'spent his days in a **haze of chloral and whisky**'. He improved the following year and painted portraits of Alexa Wilding and Jane Morris. In 1874, Morris cut Rossetti out of his business and Rossetti left Kelmscott in July 1874 and never returned. He deteriorated and **became mentally unstable** and spent his last

years as a **recluse at Cheyne Walk**. He died on Easter Sunday, 1882, at the country house of a friend. He had gone there to recover his health which had been destroyed by chloral and alcohol. He had been housebound for years because of **paralysis of his legs** resulting from his addiction to chloral which he took to reduce the pain from a botched operation. He suffered from alcohol psychosis resulting from the excessive amounts of whisky he used to disguise the bitter taste of the chloral hydrate.

Bocca Baciata

- This painting by Rossetti of 1859 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.
- 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, pain, and chagrin, that is, vexation resulting in humiliation or disappointment. In Christian symbolism, an apple represents temptation
- 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 described 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** – dangerous woman who will seduce and ensnare her lovers. A common figure in the European Middle Ages inherited from the Biblical Eve. The trope became 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: That has lost purity or innocence; ruined. a fallen woman : 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.

- Rossetti broke most of the conventions associated with female representation in contemporary 'books of beauty' by painting the woman in *Bocca Baciata* with fuller, more voluptuous lips, a less pinched face, unrestrained hair and exotic jewellery, in a more compressed space so we feel physically closer to the head and body, which are pressed close to the picture plane. Also significant were his use of thick oils and sensual Venetian colours.
- Rossetti had been **commissioned by George Boyce** to paint a portrait of Fanny Cornforth and the heavy, idiosyncratic features reinforce the fact that a particular person was being depicted. Its sensuousness can be judged from Arthur Hughes's comment: 'so awfully lovely. Boyce has bought it, and will I suspect kiss the dear thing's lips away before you can come over to see it.'
- Rossetti's image has a full face and chin that do not conform to any of the standard types of beauty, and she has a long neck, which, although it was an established attribute of beauty, is so long and wide that it could almost be considered distorted. Rossetti was not painting a conventional 'perfect beauty' but a particular person. However, the title also refers us to a story by Boccaccio suggesting the woman was being used to represent the central character who was described as the most beautiful woman in the world.
- She does not **meet our eye**, and her pose, though conventional, is made **disturbing** by her expression, which is **vacant** and charged with a slight **sullenness**, like a model who has sat for too long. This suggests volition and agency rather than passivity and so it conflicts with the view of the model as an impassive object. Other aspects of agency and female independence are present in the way Rossetti's has represented his model. For example, compared to women in books of beauty, her nose is not slim and pinched and her forehead is narrow, both signs at the time of a lack of refinement. The shoulders are broad, giving the appearance of **physical strength** rather than of a delicate and over-refined drawing-room beauty. With her flowing red hair, exotic and excessive jewellery and **robust features** she could be seen as **coarse and sexually experienced**. The conventions at the time would therefore label her as a **fallen woman**.
- Although conventional Christian symbolism equates the apple with temptation the term 'apple' was not mentioned in the Bible and the fruit in the Garden of Eden was from 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Theologians disagree about whether the term 'knowledge' should be interpreted narrowly or broadly but the Bible goes on to say that Eve decided to eat the fruit to make herself wise. Adam needed no convincing and ate the fruit he was given, which suggests the serpent chose Eve as she was the hardest to convince and her decision could be seen as the first example of female sexual power in the Christian tradition.

- In the Biblical account, God was unaware of Adam and Eve's transgression as he was elsewhere in the garden, but when he found out he constructed a complex curse, which included women, in future, experiencing pain during childbirth and obeying men. The acquisition of knowledge was concerned with the recognition of each other's nakedness and this implies that it became associated with sexual desire, which sexual selection equates with beauty. This loss of innocence was represented as the expulsion from a perfect garden and this has been interpreted in Darwinian terms as the evolutionary moment that humans developed a sense of right and wrong.
- This image is one of those that would have been criticized by Thomas Maitland when he wrote '**The Fleshly School of Poetry**: Mr D. G. Rossetti' in the magazine *Contemporary Review* (October, 1871).

References

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

Week 14: The Aesthetic Movement



Albert Moore (1841-1893), *A Quartet, a painter's tribute to Music*, 1868, private collection

Albert Moore (1841-1893), *A Quartet, a painter's tribute to Music*, AD 1868, 1868, private collection

- The painting makes little sense to modern viewers but in 1869 it inspired young artists. It is not a recreation of a classical scene because of the anomaly of modern instruments. It is a harmonious, decorative design without a subject, **like a piece of music** itself. Moore revived formal qualities of beauty inspired by the human body and nature.
- Of the last painting Rossetti dismissed critics who tried to evaluate its merits base on historical accuracy. They were missing the point. "Whether or not azaleas were known to Grecian ladies, whether or not they came from America," wrote Rossetti, "are questions not difficult of solution, but of sublime indifference to Mr. Moore". The same applies to the musical instruments in this painting.
- He was influenced by Greek sculpture and **Japanese art**.
- He had a **complex multi-stage process** he used to create his work that consisted of a sketch, a full-size cartoon that was transferred and a method of tearing out sections of tracing paper as he added the colours. He first painted the nude figure and then painted the drapery over the top in order to produce an accurate nude form.
- The painting of the **nude figure** became a central project for artists associated with the Aesthetic Movement from the 1860s onwards.
- Although this painting makes little sense to the modern viewer when it was exhibited

at the Royal Academy in 1869, the painting '**fired so many young brains with enthusiasm, which inspired so many sonnets, and furnished so many aesthetic drawing rooms**' (Robin Asleson, *Albert Moore*, 2000). For Moore, producing genuinely authentic ancient settings was of little importance; rather his goal was to produce graceful, elegant paintings without a subject. Known as the quintessential aesthetic painter, Alfred Moore's works sublimate everything to composition and a subdued color palette.

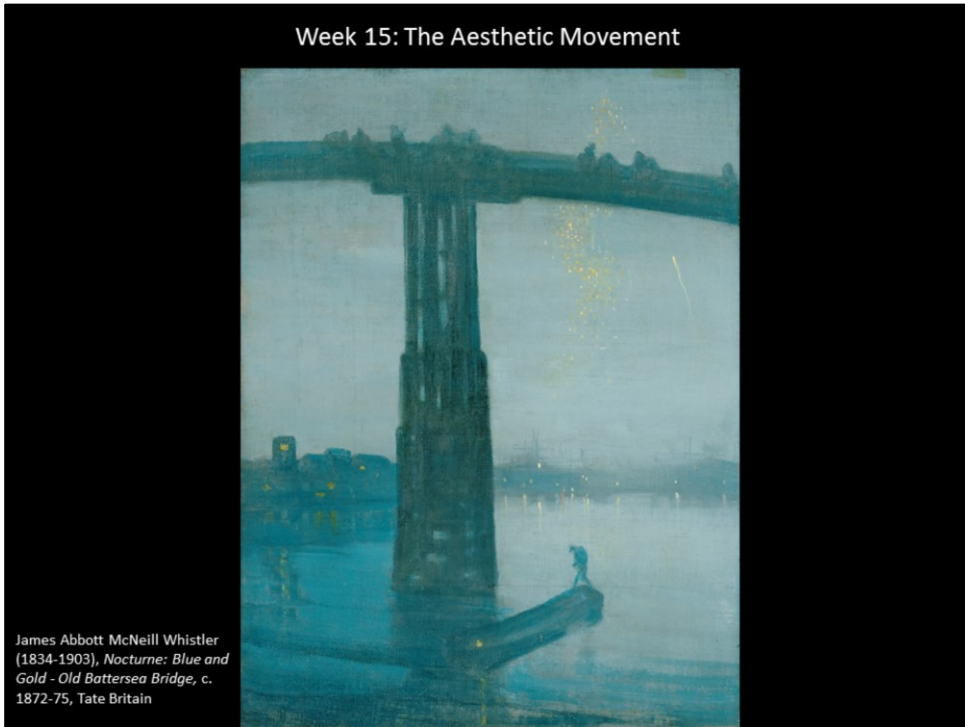
- Moore sought to revive the formal qualities responsible for the beauty which the Greeks had drawn from nature and the human body. Moore was greatly influenced by Greek sculpture and Japanese art. In his biography on Moore, Robyn Asleson comments on Moore's extensive preparatory work.

References

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

See <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/moore/paintings/sawhney.html>

Week 15: The Aesthetic Movement



James Abbott McNeill Whistler
(1834-1903), *Nocturne: Blue and
Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, c.
1872-75, Tate Britain

James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, c. 1872-75, Tate Britain

- In the late 1860s a few artists rejected art that had a narrative or made a moral point. The leading artist of this movement was James McNeill Whistler.
- The Aesthetic Movement became a fashion statement and a way of life by the 1880s and 1890s.

Although, we do not have a transcript of the Whistler v. Ruskin trial sufficient reports were published to enable it to be reconstructed.

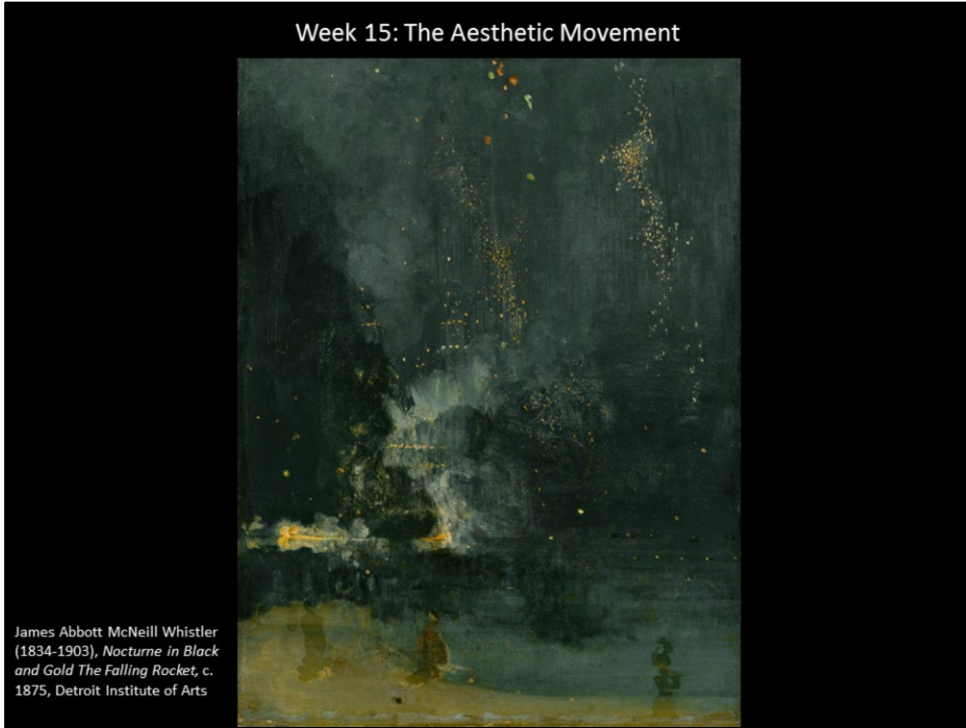
When asked 'Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people?' Whistler replied 'They are just what you like.'

When the judge asked if it was a barge beneath the bridge, Whistler replied 'Yes, I am very much flattered at your seeing that. The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a certain harmony of colour.'

Whistler stressed the colour rather than a harmony of form and the form is suppressed by the overall similarity in tone and hue; with the exception of the gold dots the painting is a wash of blue, in places a thin wash that allows the canvas to show. Whistler mixed

large quantities of the predominant tone that he called his 'sauce', and although he started on an easel, he often had to throw the canvas on the floor to stop the sauce running off. The sky and water were rendered by 'great sweeps of the brush of exactly the right tone.'

Week 15: The Aesthetic Movement



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold The Falling Rocket*, c. 1875, Detroit Institute of Arts

- One of two pictures of Cremorne Gardens, a pleasure garden, and the high point of Whistler's middle period.
- It is painted using mostly blue, green and yellow. He was influenced by Japanese artists like Utagawa Hiroshige. He spent years perfecting his technique of creating a figure with one dab of the brush and his attention to detail went as far as viewing his work through mirrors to ensure nothing had been overlooked.
- Whistler has been quoted as saying 'If the man who paints only the tree, or flower, or other surface he sees before him were an artist, the king of artists would be the photographer. It is for the artist to do something beyond this.'
- Not all paintings of the Aesthetic Movement were beautiful women and this painting by Whistler an American-born, British-based artist shows how far art went in the nineteenth century. This painting gave rise to one of the central artistic controversy of the Victorian period, known as the **Whistler v. Ruskin trial**. The trial tells us a lot about how the Victorians regarded art and the nature of the changes Whistler helped bring about.

The Whistler v. Ruskin Trial

- This painting and the next were exhibited in the **Grosvenor Gallery** in **1877**, the year

it opened. John Ruskin reviewed Whistler's work in his publication *Fors Clavigera* on July 2, 1877. Ruskin praised Burne-Jones, while he attacked Whistler:

For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [founder of the Grosvenor Gallery] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.

- Ruskin's attack meant that owners of Whistler's work were worried about retaining them as their value was perceived to have gone down. Henry James spoke out against Ruskin and felt he had overstepped the bounds of art critic and had become tyrannical. It has been suggested that Ruskin suffered from CADASIL ('Cerebral Autosomal-Dominant Arteriopathy with Subcortical Infarcts and Leukoencephalopathy') syndrome as he described visual effects that match the illness. CADASIL is a hereditary stroke disorder that Friedrich Nietzsche and Felix Mendelssohn may also have suffered from.
- Whistler, seeing the attack in the newspaper, replied to his friend George Boughton, "It is the most debased style of criticism I have had thrown at me yet." He then went to his solicitor and drew up a writ for libel which was served to Ruskin. Whistler hoped to recover £1,000 plus the costs of the action. The case came to trial the following year after delays caused by Ruskin's bouts of mental illness, while Whistler's financial condition continued to deteriorate. It was heard at the **Queen's Bench of the High Court on November 25 and 26 of 1878**. The lawyer for John Ruskin, Attorney General Sir John Holker, cross-examined Whistler:

Holker: 'What is the subject of Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket?'

Whistler: 'It is a night piece and represents the fireworks at Cremorne Gardens.'

Holker: 'Not a view of Cremorne?'

Whistler: 'If it were A View of Cremorne it would certainly bring about nothing but disappointment on the part of the beholders.

It is an artistic arrangement. That is why I call it a nocturne....'

Holker: 'Did it take you much time to paint the Nocturne in Black and Gold? How soon did you knock it off?'

Whistler: 'Oh, I 'knock one off' possibly in a couple of days – one day to do the work and another to finish it...'

Holker: 'The labour of two days is that for which you ask two hundred guineas?'

Whistler: 'No, I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime.'

At the heart of the criticism was the idea that an artist charged for the number of hours work put into the painting and by implication an expensive picture was expected to be a clear representation of something, should be well finished and should exhibit the hard work put into it through its size, the skill the artist needed to accurately represent

something and the attention to detail of its finish.

References

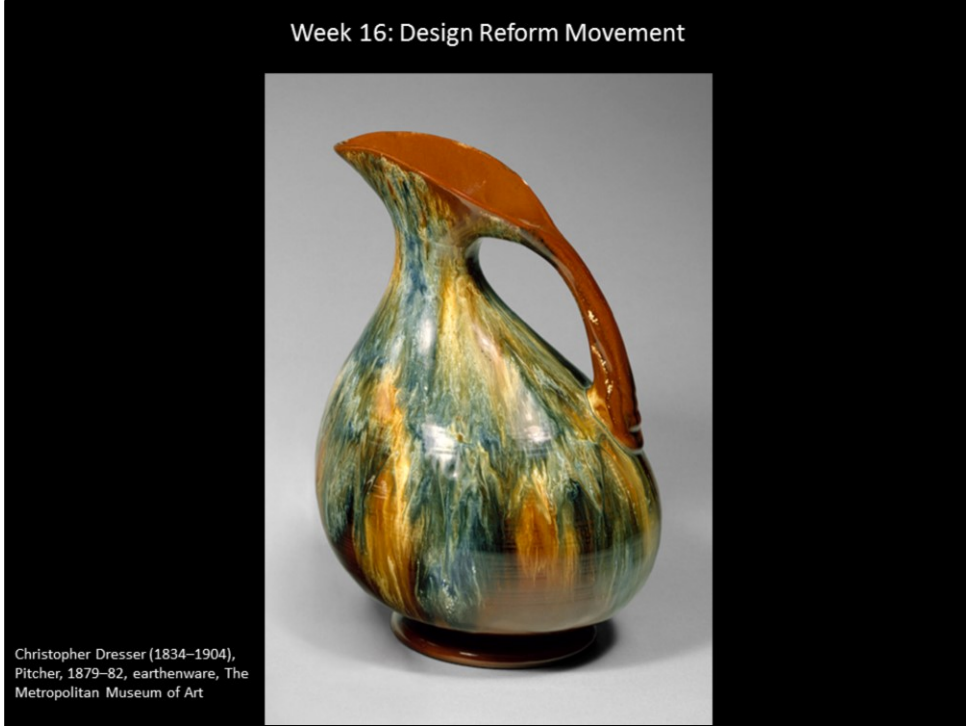
See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Abbott_McNeill_Whistler



The Aesthete, *Punch*, 5 February 1876

- The **Aesthetic Movement** became a fashion and a craze that encompassed interior design, furnishings and became a way of life. It was associated with effeminate man and manly women. The New Woman smoked, dressed austere and conversed as an equal.
- In 1881 the operetta *Patience; or, Bunthorne's Bride* by W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan was a satire on the aesthetic movement. Bunthorne was a reference to Algernon Charles Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde was not well enough known when the operetta was first shown.

Week 16: Design Reform Movement



Christopher Dresser (1834–1904),
Pitcher, 1879–82, earthenware, The
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Pitcher, 1879–82, earthenware, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

- Design Reform Movement
- Dresser, like his contemporary William Morris, strove to produce **affordable, functional, and well-designed domestic objects**. **Unlike Morris**, however, he recognized the **benefits of the Industrial Revolution** and designed specifically for the **growing consumer market**. Part of Dresser's success came from his ability to produce designs for a wide range of merchandise, whereas **Morris** and his colleagues sought to produce only **handcrafted pieces**.
- That leads us neatly on the **William Morris**, the **central figure** of the **Arts and Crafts Movement** ...

Week 17: Arts & Crafts Movement



Owen Jones, wallpaper, c. 1850,
Victoria & Albert Museum



William Morris, 'Acanthus'
wallpaper, 1875, Victoria &
Albert Museum

William Morris, 'Acanthus' wallpaper, 1875, Victoria & Albert Museum

- In parallel decorative art had lagged behind in England and the **design reform movement** led to the creation of Government Schools of Design.
- 'Owen Jones (1809-74), architect, designer and authority on historic pattern and ornament, had begun to formulate rational and reforming theories in the course of his travels in the 1830s and 1840s. He particularly admired **Greek, Egyptian and Islamic** (or Moorish) motifs, and adapted them into his own architectural schemes and designs for wallpaper which went into production with various manufacturers from the early 1850s. The fruits of his researches were published as ***The Grammar of Ornament*** (1856), an important source book for fellow designers of his own and succeeding generations.' (V&A website)
- Morris's designs were based on English design, observation of nature and images of plants in **16th and 17th century herbals**, illuminated manuscripts, tapestries and other textiles.
 - Despite his involvement with wallpapers and his decided views on their design and use, Morris always regarded wallpaper as a 'makeshift' decoration, a tolerable substitute for more luxurious wall coverings.

Some of the old snobbery about wallpaper as an imitative material, a cheap option, still persisted, and Morris, as a wealthy man, preferred woven textile hangings for his own home.

References

See V&A article on wallpaper design

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/w/wallpaper-design-reform/>

Week 18: The 'Other' - British Orientalism



John Frederick Lewis (1805-1876), *The Siesta*, 1876, Tate Britain

John Frederick Lewis (1805-1876), *The Siesta*, 1876, Tate Britain

- There were other types of Victorian painting that were popular, such as paintings of the Orient, often for religious purposes.

British Orientalism

- **John Frederick Lewis** (1804-1876) lived for several years in a traditional house in Cairo. He painted realistic genre scenes of Middle Eastern life and more idealized scenes in upper class Egyptian interiors. His careful representation of Islamic architecture and furnishings set new standards of realism, which influenced other artists. He "**never painted a nude**", and **his wife modelled for several of his harem scenes**. Leighton described his 'harem as a place of almost English domesticity, ... [where]... women's fully clothed respectability suggests a moral healthiness to go with their natural good looks'.
- 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient', Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1979
- 'Another important function, then, of the picturesque – Orientalizing in this case – is to certify that the people encapsulated by it, defined by its presence, are irredeemably different from, more backward than, and culturally inferior to those who construct and consume the picturesque product. They are irrevocably "Other."' Linda Nochlin, *The Imaginary Orient*, 1983

- Owed more to religion than a search for a plausible location for naked women. The Oriental sex slave or odalisque is mostly a subject for French artists. Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) exhibited *For Sale; Slaves at Cairo* at the Royal Academy in London in 1871, it was "widely found offensive"
- William Holman Hunt was inspired by a religious agenda and made many trips to the Middle East.
- The French artist James Tissot, who worked in England, used the Middle East landscape for Biblical subjects but with little regard for historical accuracy.

18: Fairy Painting



Richard Dadd,
Fairy Fellers' Master-Stroke,
1855–64, 54 x 39.5cm,
Tate Britain

Richard Dadd (1817-1886), *Fairy Fellers' Master-Stroke*, 1855–64, 54 x 39.5 cm, Tate Britain

- Another popular subject was fairy painting.
- Commissioned by George Henry Haydon, head steward at the Bethlem Royal Hospital or Bedlam.
- Dadd worked on it for nine years using a layering technique to achieve a three-dimensional effect.
- Dadd considered it unfinished and added 'Quasi' to its title.
- Dadd wrote a long poem called *Elimination of a Picture & its Subject—called The Fellers' Master Stroke* naming and describing every character in it to show that it was well considered and not just a random assemblage of figures.

Richard Dadd

- Dadd showed an aptitude for drawing at a young age and entered the Royal Academy School when he was 20 where he was awarded the medal for life drawing.
- With William Powell Frith, Augustus Egg, Henry O'Neil and others, he founded The Clique, of which he was generally considered the leading talent.
- In **1842 (aged 25)**, while traveling up the Nile by boat, Dadd underwent a **dramatic personality change**, becoming delusional, increasingly **violent**, and

believing himself to be under the influence of the Egyptian god **Osiris**. He was diagnosed as of unsound mind and cared for by his family in Kent. He became convinced that his father was the Devil in disguise and killed him with a knife and fled for France. On the way he tried to kill a tourist with a razor but was overpowered and was arrested by the police. Dadd confessed to the killing of his father and was returned to England, where he was committed to the criminal department of Bethlem psychiatric hospital (also known as **Bedlam**). Here and later at the newly created **Broadmoor** Hospital, Dadd was cared for and encouraged to continue painting. Dadd probably suffered from a form of **paranoid schizophrenia**. Two of his siblings were similarly afflicted, while a third had "a private attendant" for unknown reasons.

- In the hospital he was allowed to continue to paint, and it was here that many of his masterpieces were created, including his most celebrated painting, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, which he worked on between 1855 and 1864.

Fairy Painting

- Rooted in the literary influences of Romanticism.
- During the later part of the nineteenth century fairies were considered by some to have a scientific basis. The Cottingley Fairies were cited by Conan Doyle as evidence but the photographs were later discredited when one sister confessed to the fraud.
- Artists were inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Other literary works, such as Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Alexander Pope's mock-heroic *The Rape of the Lock*.
- Many artists painted a few fairy paintings, such as John Anster Fitzgerald (1823?-1906, 'Fairy Fitzgerald'), Joseph Noel Paton (1821-1901), Edwin Landseer (1802-1873, 'the Victorians favourite painter'), John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Arthur Hughes and William Bell Scott.
- Some historians, such as Jeremy Maas, see fairy paintings as a profound reaction against industrialization and science but others see them as 'just about fun' (Andrew Stuttaford).
- Fairies died with the First World War but were revived in the 1970s and are now part of fantasy art.

Week 18: English Impressionism



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

- English Impressionism
- Leading portrait painter of his generation, specialised in Edwardian aristocracy. This is an earlier picture at the time the NEAC was founded.

Week 18: English Impressionism



Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *The Bridge*, 1887-8, Tate Britain

- From Tate website:
 - This picture was strongly attacked by the critics when it was first exhibited in 1887, and dismissed by one as '**either a deliberate daub or so much mere midsummer madness**'. Steer considered giving up painting in the wake of this disapproval. With its exploitation of the creamy fluency of oil paint, its atmospheric lighting and subdued colouring, 'The Bridge' is like Whistler's landscapes he called 'Nocturnes'. It was unusual in London at the time for its **lack of detail**, and for the uncertainty about its subject. The view is probably at Walberswick in Suffolk.

Philip Wilson Steer

- At the beginning of the 1890s Steer was the **leading follower of French Impressionism in England**. However, he has a Post-Impressionistic technique that produced a balance between the formal properties of the surface and the naturalistic representation of the subject. He had been influenced by Whistler and Degas but from about 1895 he began to reassess the work of the Old

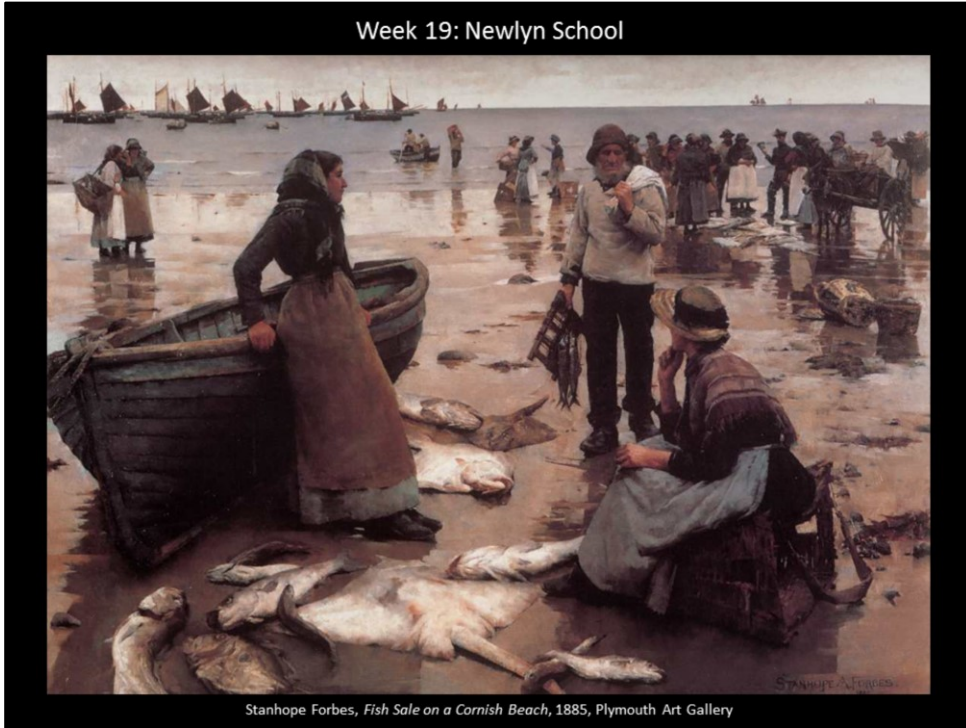
Masters such as Constable and Turner and he started to paint the English countryside.

- In 1927 he began to lose his sight in one eye and started to paint almost exclusively in watercolour with a looser style sometimes verging on total abstraction. He continued to teach at the Slade until 1930.

References

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

Week 19: Newlyn School



Stanhope Forbes, *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885, Plymouth Art Gallery

- Shown at Royal Academy summer exhibition 1885
- Forbes was born in Dublin and studied at Lambeth School of Art and the Royal Academy School. He travelled to Paris and was influenced by *en plein air* painting and by the landscapes of **Jules Bastien-Lepage**.
- Forbes lived in artistic colonies in Brittany and Newlyn in 1884 and **founded the Newlyn School**.
- Founded by Stanhope Alexander Forbes (1857-1947), 'father of the Newlyn School.
- Forbes was the son of a French woman and an English railway manager. He married Elizabeth Armstrong in Newlyn in 1899. He remarried a friend and former student called Maudie Palmer in 1915. His son died in WWI and he died in Newlyn aged 89.
- Forbes and Henry Herbert La Thangue (1859-1929) went to **Cancale, Brittany** and painted *en plein air*, like Jules Bastien-Lepage, which became a technique that Forbes used throughout his career.
- It grew to 50 artists including Henry Scott Tuke, his wife Elizabeth Forbes, Harold and Laura Knight (**1877-1970**), Alfred Munnings and Frank Bramley.

Notes

- Newlyn is a fishing village near Penzance, Cornwall.
- The founding of the School was similar to the founding of the Barbizon School (1830-1870, near the Forest of Fontainebleau).

The Barbizon School

- Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Charles-François Daubigny were inspired by John Constable in 1824 to paint direct from nature and they founded the Barbizon School. It later attracted Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley.

Week 19: Glasgow School



Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, *The May Queen*, 1900, gesso panel, 159 x 457 cm, Glasgow Museum

Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, *The May Queen*, 1900, gesso panel, 159 x 457 cm, Glasgow Museum

Made from gesso, hessian, scrim, twine, glass beads, thread, mother-of-pearl, tin leaf

- In 1896 Charles Rennie Mackintosh met **Catherine Cranston** an entrepreneurial local business woman, daughter of a Glasgow tea merchant and a strong believer in temperance.
- They conceived the idea of a series of 'art tearooms' which Charles worked on with his wife Margaret between 1896 and 1917. The first was the **Buchanan Street** tearooms for which he designed wall murals consisting of elongated female figures surrounded by roses. In 1898 he worked on the **Argyle Street tea room** for which he designed the interior and the furniture.
- In 1900 Miss Cranston commissioned him to redesign the entire tea room for **Ingram Street**. This included the mural ***The May Queen*** from the Ladies' Luncheon Room by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh. Before being installed the gesso panels were transported to the Eight Exhibition of the Vienna Secession in 1900.
- This led to the commission to design completely the proposed new tearooms

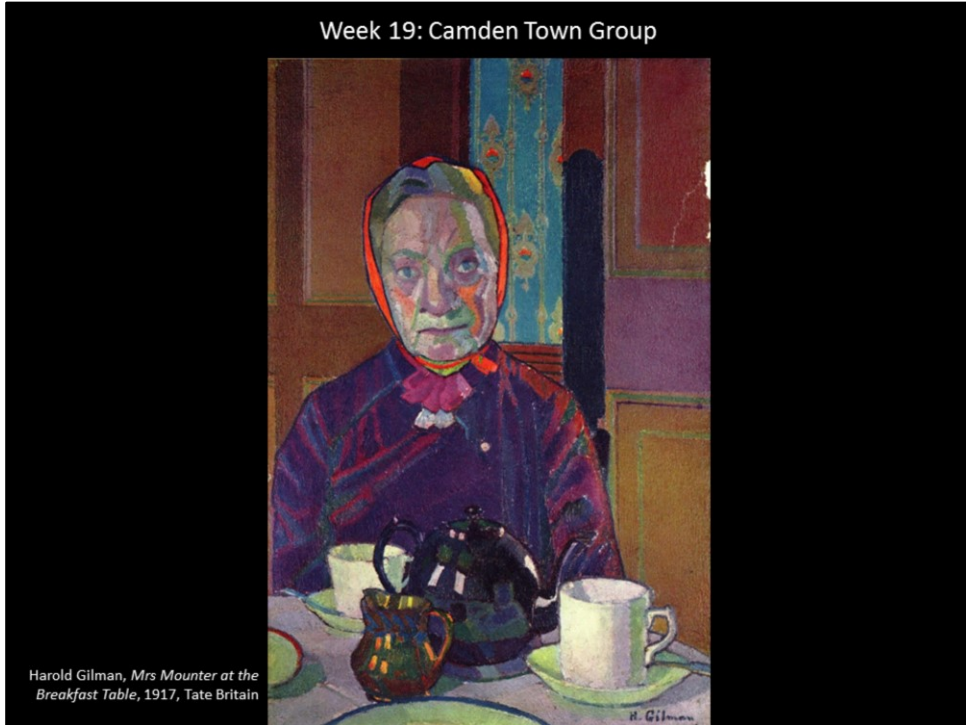
in Sauchiehall Street in 1903. For the first time, Mackintosh was given responsibility for not only the interior design and furniture, but also for the full detail of the internal layout and exterior architectural treatment. The resultant building came to be known as the **Willow Tearooms**, and is the best known and most important work that Mackintosh undertook for Miss Cranston. The name "Sauchiehall" is derived from "saugh", the Scots word for a willow tree, and "haugh", meadow.

- During the last full year of his life, Charles Mackintosh wrote to Margaret this summation of their joint work: ***You must remember that in all my architectural efforts you have been half if not three-quarters of them.*** He had repeatedly expressed the opinion that, while **he possessed talent, his wife had genius.**

Notes

- Gesso is a white paint mixture used to prepare bare canvas or wood panels. It forms the underlying substrate onto which the pigment is applied. There are many specialist gesso mixtures and techniques.

Week 19: Camden Town Group



Harold Gilman (1876-1919), *Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table*, 1917, Tate Britain
There is a larger version in the Walker Art Gallery with a William Morris chair on the right.

- **Mrs Mounter** was the subject of a number of portraits by **Harold Gilman**. She lodged at the same address as Gilman at 47 Maple Street, off Tottenham Court Road and may have been his **housekeeper**.
- The house was near Fitzroy Street where the Camden Town Group showed their work.
- By the time he painted this he and **Sickert** had become **alienated** as **Gilman's pure colours and bright palette** were not to Sickert's taste. Gilman was influenced by the **colour palette** of **Pissarro**.
- Mrs Mounter is **not glamourized**. **Gilman admired** not only of **Van Gogh's directness** in portraiture but also that of Cézanne and Gauguin.
- 'In this painting her **direct gaze and time-worn features**, highlighted in warm tones and haloed tightly by an orange kerchief, draws the viewer in. The ordinary crockery on the table indicates the unceremonious **sharing of breakfast across social classes** and despite wartime shortages.' (Tate website)

Notes

Harold Gilman

- Harold Gilman's father was a Rector in the Romney Marshes and he was educated in Kent, Berkshire, Rochester and Tonbridge and for one year at Brasenose College, Oxford University which he had to leave because of ill health. He studied at the Hastings School of Art and transferred to the Slade School in London where he met Spencer Gore. He met Walter Sickert in 1907 and became a founding member of the **Fitzroy Group** (1907) and then the **Camden Town Group** (1911). His interest in Post-Impressionism took him further and further away from Sickert. He **died in 1919 aged 43** of the Spanish Flu.
- **Tate:**
 - "Gilman uses a psychologically sophisticated composition to draw us into Mrs Mounter's space. The foreground consists only of the tea table, cutting the nearest plate in half, and it is as if we are sitting opposite her. Placed against the wooden doors, the lack of background recession further reinforces this personal proximity ... Gilman's sympathy with ordinary people found expression in socialist beliefs, which reputedly irritated Sickert on occasion. His move to Letchworth Garden City was partly an expression of his political outlook, as it was a model community which attracted a mixed bag of idealists, fresh-air fanatics and vegetarians. Letchworth was built in about 1907, only one tree was felled during its development and it was known as 'the town with no beer' as the sale of alcohol was banned (except in the four pre-existing pubs).
 - This meeting of artist and sitter is, as the art historian Andrew Causey has written, '**a confrontation that dignifies without flattering and is not limited by any class condescension**'."
- **Liverpool Museums:**
 - "Harold Gilman was born in Somerset to the Reverend John Gilman, a Rector of Snargate with Snave in Kent. After studying at Oxford for a year in 1894 he decided to become an artist. In 1897 he went to study at the **Slade School of Art** alongside Frederick **Spencer Gore** (who became his lifelong friend) under the instruction of Tonks, Wood, and Steer. The strong foundation in **draughtsmanship** encouraged at the Slade is evident throughout Gilman's artistic career.
 - Gore introduced Gilman to **W.R. Sickert** and his circle at Fitzroy Street in 1907 and it was here that the **colour of Lucien Pissarro** began to filter through into Gilman's painting. In 1910 Gilman travelled with Charles Ginner - another member of the Fitzroy Street Group - to Paris where he became familiar with the recent advances in French art made by **Signac, Gauguin, Matisse and Van Gogh**. In particular, he began to admire the work of the Post-Impressionist **Cézanne**. However it was not until **Roger**

- Fry's infamous 1910 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' exhibition** and later **1912 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition' held at the Grafton Galleries** in London that Gilman really began to **admire the art of Van Gogh**, who **became his idol**. Wyndam Lewis said of Gilman: “he was proud to be a man who could sometimes hang his pictures in the neighbourhood of a picture postcard of ...Van Gogh”.
- After **grievances with** their main exhibiting society, the **New English Art Club**, the informal **group of Fitzroy Street artists formed** themselves into the more progressive **Camden Town Group**. Gilman was a founding member of the group when it began in 1911. His paintings took on **Sickert's motifs of working-class cluttered interiors**, informal portraits, nudes, shop fronts and eating-places. He began to combine this subject matter with a **brighter palette** and **thickly-applied paint** inspired by **Van Gogh**. However, it was as **president of the London Group**, formed in **1914** when the **Camden Town Group was fragmenting**, that Gilman's confident and argumentative character really came to the fore. This was apparent both in his presiding over of the group, and through his more adventurous use of **vivid colour**. As he **grew apart from Sickert**, his style became more open to the influence of Ginner and his decorative use of thick flat paint and patterning inspired by Post-Impressionist and **Fauve styles** rather than that of Sickert, whose work retained a duller, more dauby Impressionist palette. Gilman **rejected the Impressionist** concept of **painting being like a sketch** in favour of permanence which he achieved using a firm base and strong framing element with thick layers of paint **working slowly from pen and ink sketches**, not from life.
 - Gilman developed a **very individual style** that had gone largely **unnoticed** when he **died suddenly during the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1919**. He **sold very few works during his lifetime** and it was not until the **1955 Arts Council exhibition** of his work that he began to **receive recognition** for his short-lived but significant contribution to British modernism.”

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/harold-gilman-mrs-mounter-at-the-breakfast-table-r1133436>

Week 19: Walter Sickert



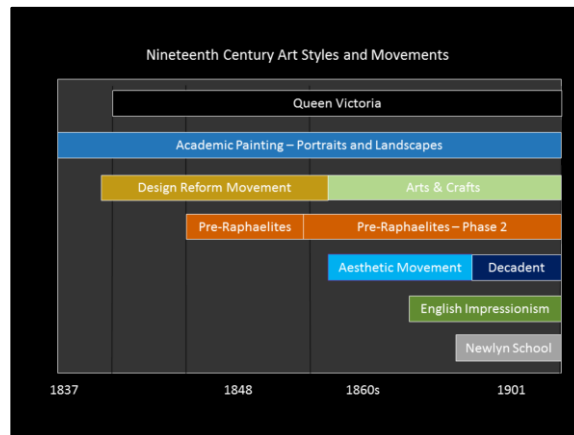
Walter Sickert, *Ennui*, c. 1914, Tate Britain

The Camden Town Group later reconfigured into yet another permutation, the London Group, from which Sickert resigned in 1914. That same year he re-joined the NEAC where he exhibited his most famous painting, *Ennui*.

Walter Sickert, see <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-r1105345>

- A colourful and charming character who was recognised as an important artist in his lifetime. He courted many eminent personalities and was a skilled raconteur. In old age he cultivated his eccentric habits frequently appearing in the newspaper having changed his appearance or his name or for some controversial painting stunt.
- He was born in Munich to a Danish father and an Anglo-Irish mother. In 1868 the family moved to England and London remained his home although he spent time in Italy and France. He spoke fluent English, German and French and had good Italian. His father was a painter and illustrator.
- His father discouraged him from painting and when he was 18 he took up acting under the stage name 'Mr. Nemo'. In 1881 however, he signed for the Slade School. In 1882 he abandoned the stage to join Whistler's studio.

- The **Camden Town Group** was a group of English Post-Impressionist artists **active 1911-1913**. They gathered frequently at the studio of painter Walter Sickert in the Camden Town area of London. It was decided it should be men only and limited to 16 members. Female artists like Ethel Sands, Anna Hope Hudson and Marjorie Sherlock that were involved on the periphery.
- The members of the Camden Town Group included Walter Sickert, Harold Gilman, Spencer Frederick Gore, Lucien Pissarro (the son of French Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro), Wyndham Lewis, Walter Bayes, J.B. Manson, Robert Bevan, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, and Charles Ginner.
- Influences include Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin whose work can clearly be traced throughout this groups work.
- A major retrospective was held at Tate Britain in 2008



Key Events

- The **Industrial Revolution started in Britain** and was the most important event in human history since the domestication of animals, farming and the invention of fire. For the first time average income showed sustained growth.
- The UK **population quadrupled** from 1801 (10.5m) to 1901 (40m) despite 15 million emigrating in the second half of the nineteenth century and the population of Ireland halving. The reasons for the increase were the avoidance of the 'Malthusian trap' brought about by the industrial and agricultural revolutions, more and earlier marriages because of increased prosperity, no major famine or epidemic, deaths per thousand per year dropped from 22 in 1848 to 17 in 1901 (5.4 today), the quality of drinking water improved and there was more money to spend on medical advances.
- Half the **population moved** from the country to the town (in 1800 25% worked in towns and by 1900 it was 75%).
- Britain established the **largest empire** the world has ever known (a fifth of the world's population and nearly a quarter of the land area).
- **Photography** was invented at the start of the Victorian period and influenced art and the way people saw the world.
- Academic painting, particularly portraits continued to be popular throughout

the period

Art Movements

- **Academic painting**, was painting as taught by the Royal Academy. History painting was regarded as the highest genre but there was never a market for it in England. Portrait and landscape painting were the most popular types of painting all through the nineteenth century.
- **The Design Reform Movement** came out of a Government committee that investigated the competitiveness of British design and as a result founded Government Schools of Design. **Arts & Crafts**, a movement that combined the fine and decorative arts and which had an enormous international influence at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is associated with William Morris but as we shall see it had many other precedents. It also became fashionable.
- **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**, founded by a group of three (Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti), then four more (Thomas Woolner, F. G. Stephens, W. M. Rossetti and James Collinson), in 1848. They rejected the way painting was taught at the Royal Academy and wanted to return to nature and represent its intense colours, complexity of form and infinite detail. It caused an enormous impact and the style influenced artists through the rest of the century but as a brotherhood the artists had gone their separate ways by 1853.
- **Aesthetic Movement**, also called 'art for art's sake', emphasized the aesthetic rather than making a moral point or telling a story. It can be considered the British equivalent of **French Symbolism** and it led to the **Decadent** art movement at the end of the century. Artists include Whistler, Leighton, Albert Moore and Edward Burne-Jones. In the 1880s and 90s it became very fashionable to have Aesthetic domestic interiors and it was satirized in cartoons and plays.
- **English Impressionism**, in this category I include schools, such as the **Newlyn School** (Stanhope Forbes), the **Glasgow School** and artists influenced by French Impressionism such as **John Singer Sargent**. However, English Impressionism took its own path and is associated with the **New English Art Club**, the **Camden Town Group** and Whistler's pupil, Walter Sickert, although this takes us into the twentieth century.

Queen Victoria

- Born 24 May 1819, reigned **20 June 1837** (coronation 28 June 1838) to **22 January 1901** – 63 years, seven months and two days (63 years 217 days). This means **Elizabeth II** will have reigned for longer than Victoria on the evening of 9th September 2015 (taking leap years into account and measuring to the exact time of death). Christened **Alexandrina Victoria**, daughter Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Her three older brothers all died leaving no legitimate children.
- Her father died in 1820 followed by George IV (1820-30), who had been Regent since 1811, and then William IV (1830-7), the 'Sailor King'.

- Victoria married her first cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (26 August 1819-1861) in 1840 and they had nine children (Victoria, Edward, Alice, Alfred, Helena, Louise, Arthur, Leopold and Beatrice).
- Her successor was her son **Edward VII** (1901-1910), the first Saxe-Coburg and Gotha monarch, later renamed Windsor by his successor George V in 1917.



THEMES & CONTROVERSIES

- Social realism and the poor
- Photography as art
- Women in art
- Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and religion
- Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School' criticism
- Beauty, Art for Art's Sake, Whistler v. Ruskin trial
- Design Reform Movement and floral carpets
- The 'Other', classical, medieval, Orient, fairy painting
- Max Nordau, 'Degeneration' and mysticism

The controversies tell us when art was a serious force that was changing society or challenging established conventions.

- **Social realism and the poor**
 - George Frederic **Watts**, Richard **Redgrave**, John **Brett**, Frank **Holl** all painted representations of the poor.
 - The deserving poor were recipients of charity but an artist could go too far.
- **Photography as art**, Ruskin never regarded photography as an art form and the debate about whether photography is an art continued through the nineteenth century. One school of thought tried to mimic the composition and subject matter of grand works of art using photographic techniques.
- **Women** were not accepted on art training courses involving nude models. There was a women's Government School of Design but it was difficult for women to find employment. Women were categorised as,
 - The 'Angel in the House'
 - In certain roles woman could work, such as a servant, governess or seamstress but these were not occupations for married women.
 - The 'Fallen Woman' was a woman who had lost her innocence and fallen from God's grace. Eve was the original prototype but it came to mean the loss of a woman's chastity. Female dancers and performers were generally regarded as fallen women.

- The 'Femme Fatale' was a well established trope based on Eve's seduction of Adam. Typically a femme fatale was a powerful woman who used her uninhibited sexuality and beauty to manipulate men, a classic example is Oscar Wilde's *Salome*.
- The male nude was a way of representing beauty and the female nude became acceptable to some during the 1860s and 70s. A classical theme made all representations of the nude more acceptable.
- **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Religion**
 - Reacted against what they saw as the lazy copying of the style of the Old Masters. They wanted artists to look afresh at nature and paint what they saw not what the Old Masters painted.
 - They were criticized for forming what was feared to be a Catholic, or anarchic or revolutionary brotherhood.
 - **Millais, Christ in the House of His Parents** was criticized by Charles Dickens, he described Jesus as a 'wry-necked boy in a nightgown who seems to have received a poke playing in an adjacent gutter' and Mary as 'hideous in her ugliness'.
 - They became very influential on later painters very quickly but the members of the Brotherhood quickly went their own ways. Holman Hunt produced moralising religious paintings, Rossetti was criticized for being too sensual and Millais was criticized for painting sentimental works that appealed to popular tastes rather than morally uplifting works.
- **Art for Art's Sake, Whistler v. Ruskin** put 'modern art' on trial in 1878. Whistler, i.e. modern art, won but with damages of a farthing.
- **Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School'**. In 1871 Rossetti was criticized by Robert Buchanan for combining fleshly desire with spiritual love which he strongly denied. This started one of the best known literary controversies of the nineteenth century.
- **Morris and Socialism**. In Morris's ideal society there is no private property, no big cities, no authority, no monetary system, no divorce, no courts, no prisons, and no class systems.
- **Design Reform Movement** criticized interior decoration. It was a moral crusade against the dishonesty of wallpaper and carpets that imitated real flowers and materials such as marble and woodgrain. One critic wrote, 'If you are content to teach a lie in your belongings, you can hardly wonder at petty deceits being practised in other ways ... All this carrying into everyday life of 'the shadow of unreality' must exercise a bad and prejudicial influence on the younger members of the house, who are thus brought up to see no wrong in the shams and deceits which are continually before them.'
- **Oscar Wilde**. Oscar Wilde's second trial was politically motivated and led to the harsher treatment of homosexuals. Wilde served two years in prison and came out chastened and bankrupt, but not bitter.
- **Max Nordau and Decadence**. In his pseudo-science book Nordau criticized many artists, including the Pre-Raphaelites of decadence arising from a mental illness. There is a path from his criticism to the rejection of modern art by the Nazi Party.

Notes

Artistic Controversies

Controversies show use where art is challenging existing assumptions and bringing about change. Amongst others we see,

- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a Catholic and anarchic organisation
- The Pre-Raphaelite style of painting was often criticized
- Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents* was seen as blasphemous
- 'Art for Art's Sake' led to the Whistler v. Ruskin trial
- Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School' controversy
- The representation of the nude
- William Morris and Socialism
- Oscar Wilde's homosexuality
- Max Nordau and his book *Decadence*



DISPELLING THE MYTHS

- Nineteenth-Century British art
 - Innovations that often pre-dated French art
 - Original, creative and sometimes outrageous
 - Often controversial
 - Influential on later European art

- Innovations that often pre-dated French art
 - John Constable and J. M. W. Turner
 - Pre-Raphaelites
- Original, creative and sometimes outrageous
 - Rossetti's 'Fleshly School' controversy (1871). 'One of the most celebrated literary controversies of the nineteenth century'.
 - Whistler v. Ruskin trial (1878).
- Often controversial
 - Particularly regarding religion, in France there was Manet's *Olympia* (1863) controversial because of the subject matter of prostitution, in England Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1849-50), controversial because of what was regarded as blasphemy.
- Influential on later European art
 - John Constable and English landscape
 - J. M. W. Turner
 - Design Reform Movement
 - William Morris and the Arts & Crafts Movement
 - Whistler and the Aesthetic Movement



British Art Since 1900

Two 10 week courses

Part 1: Wednesday 21 September 2016 – 30 November 2016
(10 classes with a half-term break the week of 24 October)

Part 2: Wednesday 4 January 2017 – 8 March 2017
(10 classes with no half-term break)

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