

**Not Your Object of Desire:
Reclaiming Women's Role in
Constructing the Pre-Raphaelite Woman**

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Abstract

This thesis centres around the Pre-Raphaelite art movement and investigates the role of women artists in constructing the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. By focusing on four women artists, Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall (1829 – 1862), Joanna Mary Boyce (1831 – 1861), Lucy Madox Brown (1843 – 1894) and Marie Spartali Stillman (1844 – 1927), I argue that reclaiming the roles of women in creating this archetype enables the Pre-Raphaelite Woman to escape the image of an overly eroticised “sensual creature” which is what it is known as in mainstream Western art history. I use feminist art criticism and draw from scholars such as Nochlin, Pollock and Mulvey to dismantle the idea of the “male Pre-Raphaelite genius” and start a conversation about the relationship between the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman and the gendered gaze of the artist representing it. The analyses I conduct in this thesis show that artworks produced through the female gaze lack the sexual appeal the archetype is usually known for and instead highlight different qualities of women represented in this style such as intellectuality, agency, power and state of mind. This thesis proves that different representations of this archetype by women artists have been actively overlooked in mainstream Pre-Raphaelite history and were consequently overshadowed by the works of male artists to create a specific narrative which established the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as a product of the male gaze.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters, including footnotes, references, excluding bibliography, appendices, etc.): 33,428 words.

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Signed Derya Sayın



Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Declaration	iii
List of Figures	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 – The Pre-Raphaelite Woman	2
1.2 – Brief history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood	5
1.3 – Emergence of the archetype in mainstream Pre-Raphaelite history	8
Chapter 2: Smash the Male Gaze	16
2.1 – “I spy with my little eye”: visual analysis	16
2.2 – Reclaim and rewrite: feminist art criticism	18
2.3 – Male gaze, genius, and others: key concepts	23
2.4 – Literature review	29
Chapter 3: Women, Art and the Victorian Era	40
3.1 – Nonsense of the separate spheres: gender ideology of the time	41
3.2 – Victorian women artists	44
3.3 – Representation of women in traditional Victorian art.....	47
3.4 – Women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement	52
Chapter 4: “Pre-Raphaelite Woman” in the Works of Women Artists	56
4.1 – Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall (1829 – 1862)	57
4.2 – Joanna Mary Boyce (1831 – 1861).....	66
4.3 – Lucy Madox Brown (1843 – 1894)	75
4.4 – Marie Spartali Stillman (1844 – 1927)	84
Chapter 5: Conclusion	93
5.1 – The question of male gaze	94
5.2 – The consequences of female authorship	98
5.3 – Conclusion	101
Visual Sources	105
Bibliography	108

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. <i>The Girlhood of Virgin Mary</i> . 1849. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.	9
Figure 2 – Millais, John Everett. <i>The Bridesmaid</i> . 1851. Oil on panel. The Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Cambridge.	10
Figure 3 – Millais, John Everett. <i>Ophelia</i> . 1851-1852. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.	11
Figure 4 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. <i>Bocca Baciata</i> . 1859. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.	13
Figure 5 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. <i>Regina Cordium</i> . 1860. Oil on panel. Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg.	14
Figure 6 – Cope, Charles West. <i>Mother and Child</i> . 1851. Oil on gesso on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.	49
Figure 7 – Watts, George Frederick. <i>Found Drowned</i> . 1848-50. Oil on canvas. Watts Gallery, Guildford.	50
Figure 8 - Deverell, Walter Howell. <i>Twelfth Night Act II, Scene IV</i> . 1850. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.	58
Figure 9 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. <i>Sir Patrick Spens</i> . 1856. Watercolour on paper. Tate, London.	61
Figure 10 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. <i>Clerk Saunders</i> . 1857. Watercolour on paper. The Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Cambridge.	62
Figure 11 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. <i>Lady Clare</i> . 1857. Watercolour on paper. Private Collection.	63
Figure 12 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. <i>Lady Affixing Pennant to a Knight’s Spear</i> . c.1856. Watercolour on paper. Tate, London.	64
Figure 13 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. <i>Elgiva</i> . 1855. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.	70
Figure 14 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. <i>Study of Fanny Eaton</i> . 1861. Oil on paper. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.	71
Figure 15 – Jane Morris, photographed by John Robert Parsons, posed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, June 1865.	72
Figure 16 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. <i>A Bird of God</i> . 1861. Oil on card. Private Collection.	72
Figure 17 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. <i>Gretchen</i> . 1861. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.	73
Figure 18 – Madox Brown, Ford. <i>Lucy Madox Brown</i> . 1849. Private Collection.	76
Figure 19 – Madox Brown, Lucy. <i>The Tomb Scene from Shakespeare’s ‘Romeo and Juliet’ (Act V: sc.3)</i> . 1870. Watercolour and gouache on panel. Wightwick Manor, West Midlands.	78
Figure 20 – Madox Brown, Ford. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . 1870. Oil on canvas. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.	79
Figure 21 – Madox Brown, Lucy. <i>Ferdinand and Miranda Playing Chess</i> . 1871. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.	80

Figure 22 – Millais, John Everett. <i>Sophie Gray</i> . 1856. Oil on paper laid on panel. Private Collection.....	81
Figure 23 – Madox Brown, Lucy. <i>The Magic Mirror (The Fair Geraldine)</i> . 1872. Watercolour. Private Collection.....	82
Figure 24 – Cameron, Julia Margaret. <i>Marie Spartali Stillman</i> . 1868. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.....	84
Figure 25 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. <i>A Vision of Fiammetta</i> . 1878. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.....	86
Figure 26 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. <i>The Lady Prays-Desire</i> . 1867. Watercolour with gold paint on paper. Private Collection.....	88
Figure 27 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. <i>Beatrice</i> . 1895. Watercolour, gouache and tempera mounted on paper. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.....	89
Figure 28 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. <i>Love’s Messenger</i> . 1885. Watercolour. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.	90

Chapter 1: Introduction

The visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is a product of an art movement which emerged in Victorian Britain. It is an archetype that was widely used within the Pre-Raphaelite circle throughout different mediums, such as paintings, illustrations, and poems. The archetype became one of the most recognisable images of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and influenced the Western visual culture for centuries to come. Even today, it is possible to come across new portrayals of this archetype, whether in “traditional” arts, products of popular culture, or pages of a fashion magazine.

As one of the most influential movements of British art, the Pre-Raphaelites movement has been, expectedly, widely researched throughout the years. Yet it was only in the recent decades that scholars have turned to the women of this movement, and their contributions to the development of the art style. Scholars such as Jan Marsh, Pamela Gerrish Nunn, Griselda Pollock, Deborah Cherry, and Elizabeth Prettejohn are only a few names that initiated and contributed to the revival of attention directed at the women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle and challenged the male canon of Pre-Raphaelite history. Throughout their works, these scholars have demonstrated how women’s voices were left out of the Pre-Raphaelite history and how their contributions to the movement, both as models and artists, have been overlooked.¹ However, a study on the roots of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman and how women artists were directly involved with the construction of this archetype as much as men remains missing, so I decided to take it upon myself in this thesis to do just that.

Women artists were key figures for the construction of this archetype and had active roles in shaping it. Therefore, this research aims to reclaim the contributions of women artists in the construction of the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, and to demonstrate the

¹ See Chapter 2.

outcomes of such reclaim. For this reason, I focus on the works of four women artists from the first and second generations of the Pre-Raphaelite movement: Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall, Joanna Mary Boyce, Lucy Madox Brown, and Marie Spartali Stillman. As I am going to demonstrate in this thesis, acknowledging women's roles in this construction process enables the viewer to see this archetype beyond something which is often perceived as another eroticised and objectified portrayal of women. The outcome of this perception leads to this archetype to be interpreted as a product of the male gaze. However, my analyses of the works of these women show that the representations of this archetype were not always as enigmatic "sexual creatures," which is what the Pre-Raphaelite women are mostly known as today. This thesis shows that reclaiming women's role in, and representations of this archetype helps the Pre-Raphaelite Woman to escape the overly simplified outlook it had for so long in Pre-Raphaelite history. By exploring the different representations of this archetype in women's art, this thesis opens a conversation about the relationship between the archetype and gendered gaze.

1.1 – The Pre-Raphaelite Woman

If there is one image that signifies the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, it is the "Pre-Raphaelite Woman." Just like Vincent van Gogh's yellow or Georgia O'Keeffe's enlarged vulva-flowers, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman also stands as a powerful indicator of an artistic style. I even argue that it is the most powerful indicator of Pre-Raphaelitism, together with the two-dimensional, bright coloured art technique. This claim is not based only upon simple repetition of the same image, but also on an understanding of how this image was constructed in relation to real women in the Pre-Raphaelite circle, some of whom became cultural myths of the Victorian era. It is possible to trace the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in a number of artworks throughout the nineteenth century, from the canvases produced by the original members of the

Brotherhood to the other artists, women included, who were followers of the Pre-Raphaelite style.

The descriptions of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, from art magazines to academic papers, list the same fundamental elements: fair skin, (often) unrestricted and long copper/gold hair, corset-less, loose clothing, always accompanied by a vacant, pensive, and/or melancholic expression. Put together with the artistic style of the Pre-Raphaelites,² these are the main physical components that make up the visual construction of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. However, I argue that the Pre-Raphaelite Woman stands for more than the physical aspects related to it, which complicates the use of terminology as well. Because despite its prevalence and popularity, it is still unclear how to call the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. Scholars often talk about the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, yet they never commit to a specific name for it, outside calling it an image. And it is indeed an image, but I argue that it is also more than an image. Its frequent repetition suggests that it might be seen as a motif, since repetitions are often described as such in art history. However, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is often the central figure of the paintings it belongs to, not only a decorative element. Thus, calling it a motif would be an insufficient way to describe the essence of what the image stands for.

I suggest that the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is a visual archetype. This term acknowledges the repetitive nature of the image and clarifies its function. Moreover, the use of this term makes it possible to draw links between the Pre-Raphaelite Woman and the other pre-existing archetypes of womanhood and femininity of the Victorian period, such as the “angel in the house,” “the damsel in distress,” or the “fallen woman.” It enables the Pre-Raphaelite Woman to take its place in the canonical art history as something that has a similar function to these archetypes, hence allows this image to exist outside the borders of the artist’s canvas as well. After all, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman contributes to the construction of the myths about real

² See *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* by Elizabeth Prettejohn (2000).

women, such as Elizabeth Siddall, Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris,³ as much as it works as an aesthetic component of the Pre-Raphaelite artistic style. Therefore, by calling the Pre-Raphaelite Woman a visual archetype, it is possible to situate it as an archetypal image with pre-existing visual patterns attached to it.

The reception of this visual archetype in the Victorian art scene was not initially positive. As I will argue in the following section, the Pre-Raphaelites were constantly attacked for their artistic style, starting from their very first exhibition in 1849. A large part of these attacks was on the grounds that they were “flouting of prevailing standards of beauty and decorum.”⁴ In other words, it was this new archetype they were establishing which was under attack. The Pre-Raphaelite Woman, with her pale skin, bright locks of copper/gold hair, red lip, and strong jaw, was every bit different than the women represented in traditional Victorian art. This new type of woman was considered to be ugly, even grotesque. The copper hair was described as “eccentric and unpleasing,”⁵ the wide mouth and large hands as “a worship of ugliness and deformity.”⁶ Traditionally, Victorian women were depicted in “sweet, delicate looks to represent their humble, submissive characters.”⁷ These women had rosy cheeks, plump faces, and often maternal bodies which represented the image of the “ideal” Victorian woman; a woman who was modest, delicate, sexless and knew her duty in the society, which was to bear children. Compared to them, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was extremely unconventional as she was neither sweet and delicate nor maternal and humble. Quite the opposite, the women

³ See the following publications for more information about these women and the myths:

Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, “Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: A Study of the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall”, *Art History* 7, no. 2 (June 1984).

Francine Prose, *The Lives of the Muses: Nine Women & the Artists They Inspired* (London: Aurum Press, 2003).

Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019).

⁴ Susan P. Casteras, “Pre-Raphaelite Challenges to Victorian Canons of Beauty”, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 13–35, 13.

⁵ Casteras, 20.

⁶ Gillian Achurch, “The Pre-Raphaelite Woman: Controversy and Conservatism in Victorian England”, *Wall Street International Magazine*, 2014, <https://wsimag.com/art/10005-the-pre-raphaelite-woman>.

⁷ Achurch.

depicted within the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype were often portrayed as sensual temptresses, who directly looked at the viewer as if challenging them, or directed their gazes elsewhere in an unconcerned state.

This archetype is very much the product of an art movement, which I argue in this thesis was constructed by women of the movement as much as men. In the following section, I am going to give a brief history of this movement to provide the reader with a better understanding of the background and the context in which this archetype has been created.

1.2 – Brief history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelite movement and artistic style emerged in mid-nineteenth century London. It was kindled by a group of young artists and intellectuals who rebelled against the British Royal Academy of Arts and the artistic vision promoted by this institution, which was largely shaped by its founder and first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792). In 1848, these students founded a secret society called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which exclusively consisted of male members, as the very masculine name suggests. The three leading members were artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882), artist John Everett Millais (1827 – 1896), and artist William Holman Hunt (1827 – 1920), who are still the most famous of all other members today. They were followed by four more members; the only other artist (painter) member James Collison (1825 – 1881), poet and only sculptor member Thomas Woolner (1825 – 1892), and the only two “non-artistic” members of the Brotherhood, art critics Frederic George Stephens (1827 – 1907) and William Michael Rossetti (1829 – 1919) who was also the elder brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The art style developed by the Brotherhood and its followers swept the Victorian art scene with feelings of shock, disgust, admiration, and total adoration.

The Brotherhood itself was officially active only between 1848 and 1853, however, their influence over the Victorian art world lasted for generations to come. They held their first

meeting in September 1848, which was followed a year later with their first exhibition.⁸ At first, the Brotherhood agreed to sign their works with the initials of the Brotherhood, “PRB”, which was the case for the artworks exhibited in 1849.⁹ This practice was dropped later. In 1850, they started to publish *The Germ*,¹⁰ a periodical where they discussed their ideas on nature, art, and literature. The periodical gave the non-artistic members of the Brotherhood a space to publish their works as well, and contributions of those who were not members were also welcome. Unfortunately, this periodical was very short-lived, as there were only four issues published, from January to April. However, even though it was very short-lived and not a great success of its time, *The Germ* functions as a manifesto of the Brotherhood’s artistic style in the history of Western art, especially with the writings of William Michael Rossetti, who took it upon himself to express the aims of the Brotherhood in the introduction of their first issue as follows:

“(1) to have genuine ideas to express (2) to study nature attentively, so as to know how to express them (3) to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote (4) most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues”¹¹

The Pre-Raphaelites thought that the classical style promoted by the Academy was spoiling the pureness of art by taking it away from the truth of nature, and the salvation was

⁸ Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 33.

⁹ The exhibition in 1849 was not a dedicated exhibition of the Brotherhood, rather, it was the first time paintings signed with the initials ‘P.R.B’ was brought to the public eye at the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy. This is accepted as the first public outing of the Brotherhood. These paintings were *Isabella* (1848-9) by John Everett Millais, *Rienzi Vowing to Obtain Justice for the Death of his Young Brother Slain in a Skirmish between the Colonna and the Orsini Factions* (1848-9) by William Holman Hunt. Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *The Girlhood of Virgin Mary*, (1848-9) was also exhibited the same year with the initials of the Brotherhood, however it wasn’t sent to the Academy but to the Free Exhibition.

¹⁰ Various, *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2006), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17649/17649-h/17649-h.htm>.

¹¹ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1997), 15.

only possible through a close study of it. They were heavily inspired by the late medieval masters of the Quattrocento, who adopted the realistic depiction of human anatomy, perspective, and landscape in their art. The Pre-Raphaelites rejected the “ground-breaking” developments that came with Raphael (1483-1520) and the High Renaissance, such as light manipulations like sfumato and chiaroscuro, tone contrast and the use of linear perspective. Therefore, they wanted to take the art back to its “purer” state, which was before these developments, and Raphael. Hence the name Pre-Raphaelite was born.

The members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were not the only actors in making Pre-Raphaelitism into an art movement, rather than just an artistic style adopted by a group of students. They had a tight-knit circle of artists, models, and intellectuals around them, who inspired and influenced the members of the Brotherhood as much as they were inspired and influenced by them. Arguably, it was not the Brotherhood but the Pre-Raphaelite circle that made the movement what it is today. Among this circle there were names such as Ford Madox Brown (1821 – 1893), whom scholars agree to be the real “founder” of the Pre-Raphaelite style, as the Brotherhood was heavily inspired by his work.¹² Ford Madox Brown was from an earlier generation than the Brotherhood, and already adopted the “clear-cut realistic style with daylight effects and delicate fresco-like colouring.”¹³ Another name who is crucial to the development of the Pre-Raphaelite style was John Ruskin (1819 – 1900), often described as the most influential art critic of the nineteenth-century. His writings influenced the members of the Brotherhood, especially his advocacy for being true to nature in depictions. Ruskin was also an art patron and supported a number of Pre-Raphaelite artists. He was especially known for directing his patronees into adopting the Pre-Raphaelite art style, which shows his belief in

¹² See *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters: Their Associates and Successors* (1901) by Percy Bate and *The Pre-Raphaelites* (1970) by Timothy Hilton.

¹³ Mary Bennett, *Artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle: The First Generation* (London: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside by Lund Humphries, 1988) 22.

Pre-Raphaelitism.¹⁴ Furthermore, Ruskin was known for supporting a number of female artists throughout their careers, even Elizabeth Siddall herself.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood disbanded in 1853, due to the individual developments of artistic style and personal disagreements between the members. However, their influence over the Victorian art world was much longer-lived. Generations of artists continued to be inspired and influenced by this art style and contributed to keeping Pre-Raphaelitism alive, at least until the beginnings of the new century.

1.3 – Emergence of the archetype in mainstream Pre-Raphaelite history

In traditional Pre-Raphaelite history, the very first traces of the visual archetype in Pre-Raphaelite paintings date back to the first years of the Brotherhood, in numerous earlier works of members John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The latter is especially important when it comes to the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, as most art critics and scholars point to his work while discussing this archetype, as if he is the sole creator and promoter of it. As I will later demonstrate in this thesis, the male members of the Brotherhood, Rossetti included, are far from deserving the entire credit for the construction of this archetype. With this in mind, it is still undeniable that much is owed to them for developing and promoting the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, as I will demonstrate in this section.

According to the conventional perspective, the signifier copper hair first shows itself in Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-9) (Fig.1), signed by the Brotherhood's initials PRB, as well as the artist's name, on the bottom left corner. In this painting, Virgin Mary is illustrated working on an embroidery piece with her mother. Even though the painting is full

¹⁴ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, "Ruskin's Patronage of Women Artists", *Women's Art Journal* 2, no. 2 (Autumn, - Winter, 1982 1981): 8-13.

of Christian symbolism, from the palm leaves on the ground to the dove on the branches, to an uneducated eye Virgin Mary is just an ordinary girl. Compared to later Rossetti standards, her dress is yet modest, however her hair is unrestricted, showering down her back in a copper hue. As a singular figure, Virgin Mary stands as she could be anyone; but in particular, anyone who fits into Pre-Raphaelite beauty ideals. For this painting, Rossetti used her sister,



Figure 1 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Girlhood of Virgin Mary*. 1849. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

poet Christiana Rossetti as the model, whose face as Virgin Mary had been attacked by Victorian art critics and declared “ugly.”¹⁵ However, this was not the last time Rossetti used her face as the face of Virgin Mary, nor it was the last time his portrayal of Virgin Mary had been condemned. In another painting he started the same year, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (1849-50)¹⁶ Christiana Rossetti was once again the face of Virgin Mary. This painting depicts the annunciation scene from the Bible, in which the Archangel Gabriel announces to Virgin Mary that she would conceive Jesus, which is quite a popular scene in Western art history, previously illustrated by artists such as El Greco and Leonardo da Vinci. Although traditionally humble and accepting, Virgin Mary is portrayed as a young, ordinary girl who is scared by the

¹⁵ Achurch, "The Pre-Raphaelite Woman: Controversy and Conservatism in Victorian England."

¹⁶ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* 1849-50. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Figure 2 – Millais, John Everett. *The Bridesmaid*. 1851. Oil on panel. The Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Cambridge.

cake, which is a Victorian marriage tradition, as Victorians believed that bridesmaids could see their true love if they repeated this for nine times. The Bridesmaid's hair draws the viewer's eye immediately. It is a bright shade of copper, flowing down her sides and covering her shoulders, as well as some of her chest. Her mouth slightly ajar, her fair skin flushed faintly on her cheeks, her lips painted in shiny red, the Bridesmaid seems to be looking for her lover somewhere above the viewer's gaze. The background is painted in shades of royal blue, contrasting the red of her hair and making it show up even more. From the composition of the painting to the physical details of the figure, *The Bridesmaid* stands as an early prototype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.

1851 is also the year Millais started working on his masterpiece; *Ophelia* (Fig.3). The painting was only completed a year later, however, the appearance of the copper hair in Millais'

appearance of the Angel in Rossetti's painting. Once again, the bright copper hair can be found on the canvas, even though it is not yet in its true ideal form for the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.

The earlier works of Millais prove to have figures which are much more fitting to the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. In 1851, Millais painted *The Bridesmaid* (Fig.2), with a single female figure at the centre of the canvas. The bridesmaid in the painting has a ring in her hands, through which she passes a piece of the wedding



Figure 3 – Millais, John Everett. *Ophelia*. 1851-1852. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

work at this time was not a coincidence, as the model for *Ophelia* was Elizabeth Siddall. As commonly known, Siddall was “discovered” one day in a shop by Walter Deverell (1827 – 1854), an artist and the associate of the Pre-Raphaelites, and brought into the attention of the Brotherhood as a model.¹⁷ In the painting, Siddall is illustrated as the face of Ophelia, a character from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, who drowns in a river. In *Ophelia*, Millais transforms the river into a water ditch, surrounded by bushes and other nature. There is a willow tree above Ophelia’s head, and picked wildflowers, some still in her grasp, some already floating on the water around her, both elements pointing to the ambiguity around her death. The female figure once again has the fair skin with faintly flushed cheeks, ajar mouth, and the red hair, although it is much more subdued. Her expression is vacant with a hint of melancholy, much like the expression of the Bridesmaid and Mary Virgin. Ophelia is an early example of the Pre-

¹⁷ Laurel Bradley, "Elizabeth Siddall: Drawn into the Pre-Raphaelite Circle", *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, British Art: Recent Acquisitions and Discoveries at the Art Institute, 18, no. 2 (1992): 136–45, 139.

Raphaelite Woman, and compared to some of the later Pre-Raphaelite works, not an ideal one. Yet, it is one of the most recognizable Pre-Raphaelite paintings, which is why it is also an important example of the archetype.

Millais moved away from the Pre-Raphaelite style by the 1860s, but he brought together the single female figure and the subdued red hair together in one of his last Pre-Raphaelite paintings in 1857. This painting was *Sophie Gray*,¹⁸ a portrait of the artists' future wife Effie Gray's (1828-1897) sister. In addition to the physical features of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, Sophie's gaze is also focused directly at the viewer. The background, as opposed to the Bridesmaid, is a dark red, almost as the same colour as Sophie's hair, which gives the impression that she blends into the background seamlessly. At first glance, *Sophie Gray* only appears to be a simple portrait that somewhat fulfils the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. However, its significance is much more important, since this is the portrait most scholars suggest that influenced Rossetti to paint *Bocca Baciata* (1859).¹⁹

Bocca Baciata (Fig.4), also known as *The Kissed Mouth*, is a painting which has great importance for both Rossetti's artistic style and the construction of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. It is the first painting in which Rossetti uses a single female figure, adorned with motifs from nature and interior details. Therefore, this painting signifies a turning point in Rossetti's career, since the artist is known for his iconic single female figure paintings today. The model is Fanny Cornforth (1835-1909), a lower-class woman who was one of Rossetti's many lovers. Cornforth is painted in true Pre-Raphaelite Woman style, with her fair skin, melancholic expression and unruly copper hair. However, the persona of the archetype is further explored in this painting, especially through symbolism. The female figure is adorned with marigolds on the background, holding one in her hand as well, which symbolises grief and pain. Her dress

¹⁸ Millais, John Everett. *Sophie Gray*. 1857. Oil on paper laid over panel. Private Collection.

¹⁹ Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith, *Millais* (London: Tate, 2007), 134.

is more open than in the earlier examples of the archetype, showing more of the fair skin to the viewer than socially acceptable for women in Victorian era. The apple placed on the left bottom corner of the painting indicates temptation, while the white rose in her hair points to her innocence. On the back of the canvas, the following Italian proverb is recorded:

“Bocca baciata non perde ventura, anzi rinnova come fa la luna”

(“The mouth that has been kissed does not lose its good fortune: rather, it renews itself just as the moon does”)

The woman in *Bocca Baciata* is a true Pre-Raphaelite Woman from the perspective of male artists. She is portrayed as innocent and suffering, her grief and melancholy written all



Figure 4 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Bocca Baciata*. 1859. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

over her expression and the flowers on the background. However, she is still sensual, an invitation to temptation offered before her, her kissed mouth, unruly hair and open dress defying the modesty of the Victorian era. In this way, *Bocca Baciata* serves as the “true prototype” for the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, even more than the *The Bridesmaid*, and kindles Rossetti’s obsession with working with single figure paintings with the Pre-

Raphaelite women located at the centre of attention.

The archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is further explored in Pre-Raphaelite art, especially in Rossetti’s work, after *Bocca Baciata*. The first one to follow is *Regina Cordium* (Fig.5) (1860), a marriage portrait of Mrs. Rossetti after the Siddall-Rossetti couple married in

1860. The composition of the painting similar to *Bocca Baciata*. In the portrait, Siddall is drawn in the centre, holding a violet, its colour symbolizing royalty. A pattern made of hearts and crosses, divided into even squares, adorns the golden background. Siddall's vibrant copper locks of hair is flowing behind her shoulders, a matching red necklace made of beads with a little heart charm is wrapped up around her neck. Her pensive gaze is directed low, her fair skin, apart from the flush on her cheeks, carrying a bluish tint around



Figure 5 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Regina Cordium*. 1860. Oil on panel. Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg.

her chest. The dress which was opened in Cornforth's figure is even looser with Siddall, slipping down from her shoulders. In *Regina Cordium*, Siddall isn't the sensual temptress Cornforth was in *Bocca Baciata*; yet she is still the queen of hearts who holds the men's attention.

The archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is repeated again and again in Rossetti's work throughout his career. The works such as *Helen of Troy* (1863),²⁰ *The Blue Bower* (1865),²¹ *The Roman Widow* (1874)²² are only a few examples to many creations of the artist which puts the Pre-Raphaelite Woman at the centre of attention. Therefore, his role in the construction of the archetype, as well as popularisation of it, is undeniable. Yet, the emergence

²⁰ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Helen of Troy*. 1863. Kunsthalle Hamburg, Hamburg.

²¹ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Blue Bower*. 1865. Oil on canvas. The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham.

²² Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Roman Widow*. 1874. Oil on canvas. Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce.

of this archetype presented in this traditional way is a faulty one, since it only focuses on the male members (and distinctively, two of them) of the Brotherhood and leaves out the voices of women, both as models and as artists. This account of the archetype creates a narrative that situates the (male) artist as the “genius,” fed only by a holy inspiration, who later comes up with images such as this out of nowhere. The women portrayed in this archetypal style is so often referred to as Rossetti’s “dark Venuses”²³ whose purpose was to “reflect the moods of the spectator,”²⁴ i.e. reflect the ideals created by male desires; an image of an erotic, sensual, yet passive and mysterious woman who lures the attention of innocent men and seduces them. However, a thorough investigation of the roots of this archetype suggests a very different narrative, which is that the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is not simply a product of male genius and desire but a collaborative construction between both male and female artists as well as the models involved with the movement. Furthermore, contrary to canonical belief, women who portrayed in this style were always not “dark Venuses” or “sexual creatures” but had more intricate roles.

²³ Casteras, "Pre-Raphaelite Challenges to Victorian Canons of Beauty", 30.

²⁴ Archie K. Loss, "The Pre-Raphaelite Woman, the Symbolist “Femme-Enfant” and the Girl with the Flowing Hair in Earlier Work of Joyce", *Journal of Modern Literature* 3, no. 1 (February 1973): 3–23, 11.

Chapter 2: Smash the Male Gaze

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the methodology, main concepts, and the literature which is relevant to my thesis. The first section is going to include a brief discussion of my main method of analysis, which is visual analysis. The following two sections are going to be on the methodology and key concepts, therefore I will first discuss the impact of feminism on the discipline of art history and art criticism by giving an overview of the emergence of the feminist shift in art criticism in the 1970s and talk about the frontiers of this shift. Then I will examine the concepts which are crucial in my approach and understanding of this research; the concept of the “male gaze,” the feminist take on the concept of “genius,” and self-image making and self-representation in visual arts. The very last section is going to be a literature review on the important texts of Pre-Raphaelite history; to give a better understanding of how the narrative evolved throughout the decades, I will first discuss the primary texts produced on the movement which have a more traditional, i.e. male-focused approach to the Pre-Raphaelite art movement, which I call the canonical history. Then I will discuss the texts which challenged this canon and sought to reclaim women artists’ voices and contributions to the movement, and recognise them as individual, professional artists.

2.1 – “*I spy with my little eye*”: visual analysis

This research revolves around the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, and more specifically the contributions of women artists of the Pre-Raphaelite movement in creating such archetype. To limit the extent of my research, I decided to focus on four women artists, two from the first generation of the movement (Elizabeth Siddall and Joanna Mary Boyce), and two from the second generation (Lucy Madox Brown and Marie Spartali Stillman). The intention behind this was to look at the ways in which women directly contributed to the emergence of this archetype, but also to establish a link between women artists from two

different generations of the movement to demonstrate the continuity of the presence of the archetype on their canvases. Their works will be analysed more in detail in Chapter 4.

Since I am dealing mostly with visual materials, the main method I use in my research is visual analysis, most often used by art historians to understand their materials. There are different ways of using visual analysis in order to make sense of an art piece, which depends on the argument or concern of the art historian. The aim of visual analysis is to observe an artwork and its different components to get a better understanding of the artwork, the specific style of an artist and/or art movement, and so on. This aim changes according to the methodology used by the art historian. For instance, a formalism analysis is oriented towards questions of aesthetics and style, and it focuses on close examination of technical details like the use of colour, line, light/shadow, texture, mediums, and size. However, in order to interpret different meanings of the artwork, visual analysis also includes the study of certain iconography, symbols, stylisation, the composition of the figures and historical context.

The methodology I use in this research is mainly based upon critical theory and feminist art criticism, although I also pay attention to technical details of the artwork to demonstrate the Pre-Raphaelite qualities of the artworks. My main focus when I analyse the works is the use of female figures, their stylisation and composition, the identity of the figures,²⁵ as well as the symbolism associated with certain figures, to get a better understanding of how the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype was used/constructed in women's art.

²⁵ By "identity of the figures" I mean the historical or literary women portrayed in the artworks, such as Ophelia, Beatrice, Lady Clare and so on.

2.2 – Reclaim and rewrite: feminist art criticism

“[...] as we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class, and above all, male.”²⁶

Art has always been a profession only the most privileged could succeed in. The art world is one where the chance of success is immensely tied to the opportunities and fame, which was hard for non-privileged to achieve. Moreover, the success of an artist is very much determined by art critics and historians, and who they choose to record in the pages of art history, which has traditionally been one kind of art history; the story of white, male, and usually Christian. With individual exceptions, women, queer artists, artists of colour and the art of other religions were either forgotten, purposefully left out, or recorded as amateurs who wouldn't compare to the level of success these privileged, white male artists had. This narrative has been challenged for some time now from various different perspectives. For the context of this thesis, the most important one, and the one I will discuss in this section, is the challenges to the mainstream narrative from the perspective of exclusion of women artists, which started to gain attention with the second wave of feminism. It is important to go back to the root of the feminist art criticism, back to when it first emerged in the 1970s, because a lot of the issues raised at that time are still relevant to this day and how art history is still written and taught by many.

Feminist challenges to the mainstream Western art history started in the 1970s as a part of a wider feminist turn in the field of art and art criticism. Feminist art critics started to speak up against the gender blindness of the art industry. The fact that women were never offered the same opportunities as men in the profession was impossible to hide anymore, especially with the realisation that exclusion of women was not something that belonged to the pages of old

²⁶ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", *ARTnews*, (1971), 5.

dusty art history books, but was very much present at the time as well. As Jill Fields notes in “Frontiers in Feminist Art History,” the women’s art movement (also known as the feminist art movement), led by names such as Judy Chicago, Louis Bourgeois, and Hannah Willkie, ignited the start the feminist art criticism.²⁷ As Amy Mullin also argues, feminist art theory and the approaches to feminist art criticism and history was created as much by artists and actors outside the academia, as it was through pioneering feminist art historians who published the first pieces of literature on the subject, such as Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock, and Arlene Raven.²⁸

The major struggle feminist art historians face and have always had to deal with in one way or another is the question and the absence of women from the canonical art history. Women were not “forgotten” as artists, they were simply, structurally and actively, left out of the art world, as Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock argue in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*.²⁹ For feminist art historians, challenging this canon, which did not include women, was the first step. Although much progress has been made in this account, it is impossible to undermine centuries of male-focused art history writing in only a few decades, which is why feminist art criticism is still relevant today. Revising pre-existing histories of art movements and artists is as much important as uncovering the women artists who were left out of those histories. My aim, after all, is to challenge the canon of Pre-Raphaelite history from the perspective of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman and investigate how it was constructed, represented, and recorded in Pre-Raphaelite literature. But I faced the question which many other feminist art critics and historians had to face before me, how to do it? To understand this, I turned to the roots of feminist art criticism and studied how the scholars before me tackled

²⁷ Jill Fields, "Frontiers in Feminist Art History", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 1–21.

²⁸ Amy Mullin, "Art, Politics and Knowledge: Feminism, Modernity, and the Separation of Spheres", *Metaphilosophy* 27, no. 1/2 (April 1996): 118–45, 121.

²⁹ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

this issue. The first step was to recognise that there was a problem with the canon. Once this problem had been recognised, the next step was to figure out how to challenge it. Was the solution simply to recover and insert women in the canon? Or did the solution come with putting the canon aside completely – or in Nochlin’s words, “firing the canon”?³⁰ Or perhaps the solution was to find “great” women artists and replace them with the existing “great men” and create a canon or women’s own?

In *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art’s Histories*, Pollock proposes three positions in how to deal with the canon. The first one is to “encounter the canon as a structure of exclusion” which requires the task of filling the “gaps” of women artists in art history.³¹ According to Pollock, it is possible to expose the canon’s “selectivity and gender bias” by proving women’s involvement in fine arts throughout history.³² However, she does point out that this position achieves nothing but essentialism and marginalisation of women in special issues and books, while keeping the canon as the canon. The second position is to “encounter the canon as a structure of subordination and domination which marginalises and relativizes all women according to their place in the contradictory structures of power – race, gender, class and sexuality.”³³ Pollock suggests that in this second position, art historians attempted to give value to practices and mediums that were specifically used by women but devalued in the canon as feminine practices, such as textile art, embroidery, ceramics, and so on. Through such position, Pollock argues that art historians aimed to also challenge the canonical division between “intellectual and manual art forms”³⁴ which exposed how domestic art practices were deprofessionalised, therefore the value system in the canon has been very

³⁰ “Firing the Canon:” title of the discussion Linda Nochlin opened at 1990 College Art Association of America (CAA) convention.

³¹ Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 23.

³² Pollock, 23.

³³ Pollock, 24.

³⁴ Pollock, 25.

much connected to gender. This, as Pollock also notes, reinforces the gender binary by putting “women’s art” against “men’s art,” and affirms that “professional” art made with paint and canvas belongs to men.³⁵ The third and last position Pollock proposes is to “encounter the canon as a discursive strategy in the production and reproduction of sexual difference and its complex configurations with gender and related modes of power.”³⁶ This position suggests that sex is everywhere, therefore a genderless art or art history is impossible. As Pollock notes, art historians of this position aim to expose the canon as a declaration and expression of Western masculinity.³⁷ Furthermore, this position suggests that sexual difference has a direct impact on women’s “social positions, cultural practices, and aesthetic representations” therefore also sexualise the masculine and “demand that the canon be recognised as a gendered and engendering discourse.”³⁸

To sum up Pollock’s positions on how to deal with the canon, there are mainly these three ways; as a feminist art historian, one either takes on the quest of finding lost women artists of the history (1), rejects the superiority of traditionally professional mediums of art and seeks to reaffirm the value of art made with domesticated mediums (2), *or* accepts that the canon is built on power structures that revolve around sex and gender which have a direct effect on how someone’s art is positioned or valued in art history (3). Out of all three, the last position seems to offer the most in terms of being able to avoid falling into the trap of creating a binary on the basis of sex, even though the argument itself is very much connected to the difference of such thing. But it is important to note that what Pollock argues in the last position is not that the artist’s sex simply makes a difference in the art they produce, but rather how the patriarchal structures of the art world function unfairly based on the gender of the artist, whether it is a

³⁵ Pollock, 25.

³⁶ Pollock, 26.

³⁷ Pollock, 26.

³⁸ Pollock, 26.

woman or a man. This position also seems to be the most functional one, since it is also possible to use it to make similar arguments for other identities like race, religion, and sexuality.

It is possible to trace this last position back to the very first texts of feminist art history as well. In “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists,” a ground-breaking article which is considered to be the foundational piece of feminist art history, Nochlin argued that the structures of the art world itself, and the value system (which includes everything from the hierarchy of genres, mediums, and even movements) were created by men, for men.³⁹ Therefore, even the greatness in art, or the notion of “great artist” is very much gendered in itself, which makes it, bluntly put in my words, pointless to try and value women’s art by these standards.⁴⁰ What Nochlin achieved with this article, with Pollock’s words, was to challenge the discipline of art history itself “at its ideological core.”⁴¹

Thus, the real challenge for feminist art history is, in essence, to find a way to write about women artists without essentializing them, without celebrating their art simply because they are women, without leaving them completely out of the “canon” of art history, but also not simply inserting them into the existing “canon” without acknowledging its patriarchal structure which silences anyone but the most privileged. The way to do this, as Nochlin, Pollock, and many other feminist art historians argue, is to simply change the way people think about art, artist, and the history of those. Pollock writes: “[A]rt history is not merely to be understood as the study of the artistic artefacts and documents left deposited in the present by time. Art history is a discourse in so far as it creates its objects: art and artist.”⁴² Therefore as I position myself as a feminist art historian, what I aim to achieve in my research is to challenge the ideology of what is art and who is considered an artist; and beyond that, to challenge the way people think about how the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was

³⁹ Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” , 5.

⁴⁰ Nochlin, 5.

⁴¹ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, xviii.

⁴² Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories*, 27.

constructed, and most importantly, by whom. My intention is to acknowledge the contributions of the women artists in creating such a powerful signifier for the movement, and to show how our understanding of women's role in such a creation can change the way we look at the movement as a whole. The way to achieve this is to challenge the canon of Pre-Raphaelite history, to reposition women artists within the movement and to acknowledge their influence and importance to the movement and the art style created within, which I will do through demonstrating their importance for constructing the most powerful image which came out of Pre-Raphaelitism.

2.3 – Male gaze, genius, and others: key concepts

“In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.[...]”⁴³

The concept that the “gaze,” the right to “look,” the identity of the “spectator/viewer” belongs to men has been discussed and developed by many art theorists and feminist scholars alike, such as Walter Benjamin, John Berger, Laura Mulvey, Griselda Pollock, Suzanna Danuta Walters and others. This concept of the “male gaze” and the relationship between gender and how and for whom an image is created is at the core of my thesis which aims to prove women's roles in creating a visual archetype traditionally seen as a product of male gaze.

A brief look at Western art history exposes the way female figures were used as passive, erotic, decorative “objects” over and over again. Starting from as early as the art of antiquity, the female nude was always a central and important part of Western art tradition. In her book *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality*, Lynda Nead investigates how and why the

⁴³ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, 2016), 62.

female nude is such a popular and recurrent theme in the Western canon, even arguing that “[m]ore than any other subject, the female nude connotes ‘Art.’”⁴⁴ The recurring image of the eroticised and objectified female figure is a strong indication and reminder of the direct relationship between gender and gaze, and whose gaze the art was created for. As art theorist John Berger writes in his renowned book *Ways of Seeing*, “the ideal spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of woman is designed to flatter him.”⁴⁵ The “pleasure in looking”⁴⁶ belongs to men.

Conceptualised by Mulvey, the critic of the “male gaze” serves to expose the way women are treated in visual culture. Although she uses the concept for movie studies, it is undeniable that the roots of such concept lay within visual arts. As Suzanna Danuta Walters explains, Mulvey suggests three looks within the male gaze: “First is the gaze within the representation itself: men gaze at women, who become objects of the gaze; second, the spectator, in turn, is made to identify with this male gaze and to objectify the woman on the screen; and third, the camera’s original “gaze” comes into play in the very act of filming; the camera here can be understood as an extension of the male eye.”⁴⁷ This is easily applicable to art, where the first gaze is the (*male*) artists’ gaze on the female model, the second is the (*male*) viewer/spectator who looks at the artwork, and three is the act of painting, the image artist creates with canvas, paint and brush. Therefore the “determining male gaze” Mulvey talks about initially establishes itself through the artists’ artistic “phantasy,” then in the way he *styles* the female figure to serve this phantasy and also through the different viewers’ gaze.⁴⁸ In this research, I use the concept of the male gaze to question the nature of the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. In Chapter 5, I will discuss if it is possible to see such an image as

⁴⁴ Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 1.

⁴⁵ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 64.

⁴⁶ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 62.

⁴⁷ Suzanna Danuta Walters, *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 57.

⁴⁸ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 62.

a product of the male gaze, if the female gaze is also in the process of creating the said image. Moreover, I will look at the ways women artists create images of other women, but especially themselves, on canvas.

In addition to the “pleasure of looking,” men also hold the pleasure of *creating*. Just as it was the case for the Pre-Raphaelite movement with the glorification of Rossetti, the artist with capital A, the “great” artist, the old masters, were all men, who held the power to create. The story about how the man uses his artistic “genius” to kindle the fire of an art movement is an old tale in canonical Western art history, but one that is still very prominent to this day. I discussed in the previous chapter that the same story goes for the Pre-Raphaelite movement as well; that the Hunt-Millais-Rossetti trio is singled out as the geniuses of the era, Rossetti even more so than the others. Therefore the concept of the “genius” affects the way people look, read, and interpret the Pre-Raphaelite art and anything that derived from it, including the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.

As I mentioned above, Linda Nochlin’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” is a revolutionary piece of literature in feminist art history which shaped the way feminist art critics and historians think about art and its creation process. She completely dismantled the misconception that art is produced as a result of the artist’s imagination or artistic expression, when in reality it was and is a profession, a way to make money for people. In this article, Nochlin also challenged the concept of artistic genius and called out the discipline of art history “romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying and monograph-producing” for creating a “magical aura” around arts.⁴⁹ She writes: “[...] the Great Artist is, of course, conceived of as one who had “Genius”; Genius, in turn, is thought of as an atemporal and mysterious power somehow embedded in the person of the Great Artist.”⁵⁰ A quick look at the

⁴⁹ Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, 7.

⁵⁰ Nochlin, 7.

Pre-Raphaelite literature reveals that many canonical art historians believed that this “genius” was possessed by Rossetti himself as well. According to Nochlin, this genius always – shockingly – shows itself in white men. Nochlin argues that this concept of the genius (or the “golden-nugget theory of genius”, as she likes to call it), is a big part of the reason why women’s artistic achievements are so easily disregarded: “If women had the golden nugget of artistic genius, then it would reveal itself. But it has never revealed itself. Q.E.D. Women do not have the golden nugget of artistic genius.”⁵¹

Nochlin argues that the reason women do not have the artistic genius is because it doesn’t exist. Because the ability to create art does not come from a high and mighty magical power, but it comes with training. She writes that therefore, the reason women do not have this golden nugget is because of the “social and institutional structures throughout history,” not that it is biologically impossible for women to have such magic power.⁵² If these structures did not exist, could Elizabeth Siddall be the “genius” that shaped the Pre-Raphaelite movement, instead of Dante Gabriel Rossetti? Maybe, maybe not.

Although it seems like the majority of the images of women were created by men in art history, women more than often took it upon themselves to create their own images as well. This is not at all surprising considering portrait genre was one of the most popular genres among women artists, which was of course not purely out of preference but more of a result of women being banned from proper academic education, access to real life models, etc. Since it was harder for women artists to get models, they often used themselves or the women around them (their friends, sisters and mothers) to create representations of the female figure on canvas. This gave women the power to create their own image in the way they saw it, without the gaze of the men in between, however they wanted to do it, especially when it came to self-

⁵¹ Nochlin, 9.

⁵² Nochlin, 10.

portraits. For artists from all genders, self-portraits have been a way to establish themselves as artists, show off their profession, and reaffirm their status in society. In *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits*, Frances Borzello writes that for women, self-portraits were a “way to present a story about [themselves] for public consumption.”⁵³

Therefore, self-portrait was and still is a very powerful genre for women artists to not only establish themselves as professional artists but also challenge the male-produced images of women. In some cases, like the cases of the artist/models of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, women had the opportunity to directly challenge and oppose their own representation in men's art through their own creations.⁵⁴ In feminist journalist Amanda Scherker's words, this gave women a “rare break from the typical objectification of the female form as depicted by the male artist.”⁵⁵ In creating visual images of womanhood and femininity, women artists held a power not many women had the opportunity of holding: the power of deciding how they were going to be represented. As Pollock demonstrates in “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” there was often a difference in how and whom male artists chose to represent women in their art.⁵⁶ In her research on Impressionist art, Pollock shows male artists often had “fallen women” as their subjects, depicting women in erotised or objectified poses, whereas female artists of the same movement showed different types of women in their art, like young children, mothers (other than Virgin Mary) and women who read or travelled the city.⁵⁷ The study Pollock did on Impressionist artists alone shows how women, when given the opportunity, chose to

⁵³ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits* (London: Thames&Hudson, 1998), 19.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 4.

⁵⁵ Amanda Scherker, "Why Female Artists Have Used the Self-Portrait to Demand Their Place in Art History", *Artsy*, 13 May 2019, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-female-artists-self-portrait-demand-place-art-history-05-13-19>.

⁵⁶ Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity", in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: IconEditions, 1992).

⁵⁷ Pollock, 256-258.

represent different types of women in more complex scenes rather than sticking with male representations of objectified women.

My intention in this section is not to create a “women versus men” binary, but rather show how gender plays a very important role in the representation of the female figure. This is not to say that women never create nudes or eroticised representations of other women (or themselves), or that they never deal with subjects such as the fallen women, because they do.⁵⁸ But there is a difference between whose voice is used in such depictions, because one falls under the category of the “male gaze,” the other the “female gaze” or “self-representation.” Historically, it is already always men whose voices are heard, whose opinions matter, whose gazes are served for, but when women try to make their voice heard, they are ignored or silenced; the emergence of feminist art criticism is proof enough for this claim. Yet a quick study on women artists’ depictions of women – whether it is Impressionist women like Pollock studied, or Pre-Raphaelite women as I study in this research – often show that they have a different story to tell about themselves, that they are not always the objects of desire, nor they want to be shown as. And when they do, it is on their own terms, their own ways. This argument is immensely important for my thesis because it gives me an opportunity to show that women’s voices were silenced, and still are being silenced, in the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. As I will aim to prove in the following chapters, this image was created by women of the movement in their art as much as it was by men. But when we talk about the visual archetype today, it is only Rossetti’s or Millais’s depictions of these women that matter, it is only their voice that tells the story of this archetype, only their gaze which produces it. However, I argue that this is not the case at all, and this archetype is as much a product of self-

⁵⁸ See examples:

Danae (1602) by Artemisia Gentileschi (Oil on canvas, Saint Louis Art Museum).

Maenad (1785) by Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun (Oil on oak, Musée Nissim de Camondo).

Clytie (1886-7) by Evelyn de Morgan (Oil on canvas, Private Collection).

representation as it is of the male gaze, that it is neither this or that, but a collaboration, which changes everything about how this image should be regarded.

2.4 – Literature review

Although the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood kindled a movement which was incredibly influential, as I discussed above, it wasn't only the Brotherhood which made "Pre-Raphaelitism" what it is today. Besides the devoted followers and the web of intellectuals which created the Pre-Raphaelite orbit, the legacy of Pre-Raphaelitism lived through literature, and how art historians (and historians alike) built up the history known as the Pre-Raphaelite canon today. Anyone who is familiar with Pre-Raphaelitism, or even the art scene of Victorian Britain has heard of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, that they were the three leaders of the Brotherhood, the most successful painters of them all, which is confirmed again and again in the earlier texts written about the movement. But they also have heard of the stories which surrounded the movement. The story of how *Ophelia* was painted, the model Elizabeth Siddall laying in a bath only warmed with candles; the story of John Everett Millais and his scandalous affair and marriage to John Ruskin's wife, Effie Gray; the story of Fanny Cornforth and Dante Gabriel Rossetti; the story of Jane Morris (1839 – 1914) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti; the story of Elizabeth Siddall and Dante Gabriel Rossetti... and so on.⁵⁹ A big part of what made Pre-Raphaelites so attractive to so many art historians was the personal lives of the artists as much as their art. So it was almost impossible to write about one without the other, since the two were so intertwined together. But the outcome of this was that in earlier canonical texts, women were only mentioned as exciting details of the

⁵⁹ For more information about these stories, see *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era* by Kirsty Stonell Walker (London: Unicorn Publishing Group, 2018).

male artists' personal lives. Their contributions to the art movement, nor their own personal artistic achievements were never, if so rarely, mentioned.

One of the earliest texts written on Pre-Raphaelite artists and their legacy was *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters: Their Associates and Successors*⁶⁰ by Percy Bate, published in 1901. In the book, Bate breaks down the story of the Pre-Raphaelite movement into chapters that focus on either one or a group of people, attributing roles to each of them. As many scholars after him also do, he singles out Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and William Holman Hunt from the other members of the Brotherhood. Holman is attributed to the role of the “staunch,” Millais the “transitory” and Rossetti the “Pre-Raphaelite and idealist.” Outside of the trio, there is a chapter saved for Ford Madox Brown, who Bate positions as the “founder” of the artistic style which the Brotherhood adopts. Bate’s book stands as a template on which other art historians built on for decades, when it comes to discussing the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The trio of Rossetti-Millais-Hunt is almost always the focus, while other members of the Brotherhood are rarely, if ever, mentioned as significant to the movement. Ford Madox Brown is the stylistic founder, while Rossetti is seen as *the* Pre-Raphaelite, the artist who devotes his art truly to Pre-Raphaelitism. Women, models and artists alike, are not at all mentioned in the book, neither their contributions recognized.

However, Bate at least accomplishes to only focus on the artistic developments of the movement. Even though he is male-focused, he doesn’t include women in his story only to serve as passive plot devices in men’s lives, which is something the following publications fail to do so. Both William Gaunt’s *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy* (1948) and Gay Daly’s *Pre-Raphaelites in Love* (1989) have a larger focus on the social (especially romantic) lives of the Pre-Raphaelites than their art. Gaunt’s *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy* is built on the premise that

⁶⁰ Percy Bate, *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters: Their Associates and Successors*, The British Artists Series (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901).

it tells the true story of the Brotherhood.⁶¹ As it becomes clear in the following pages, “true” means the personal, often scandalous, lives of these artists. Gaunt constructs the worth of the Pre-Raphaelites’ legacy through mainly private details of their lives, instead of their professional accomplishments. And although I also agree that the two very much go together, and the professional success of the Pre-Raphaelites would only get the movement so far without the help of the personal scandals, Gaunt illustrates it in a way that the private foreshadows the professional a big deal. Moreover, Gaunt very impressively (!) accomplishes to leave the women out of his narrative even though he constructs his whole book around their experiences with the artists of the movement. He talks about them, yes, but it is only in relation to men, without a mention of what they mean to the movement. This becomes even more clear when Gaunt lists the “actors” of his book, as if it is a real Shakespearean tragedy, at the start of the book. He lists the members of the Brotherhood, friends and “unofficial associates,” and people involved in what he calls the “second Pre-Raphaelite phase.” Yet, he does not include the name of a single woman in the whole list, which proves that he uses the women as props in his book, to tell the stories of the men.

Gay Daly’s *Pre-Raphaelites in Love* is different in the sense that it does recognize the women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. However, this recognition does not often go beyond the romantic relationships they had to the men of the movement. In the prologue of the book, Daly declares her interest in the models of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, how she saw them on the canvases and wondered about their story.⁶² Her intention and aim, from the start, seems to be to tell the stories of these women. Yet, she fails to follow through with her claim; mainly because she ends up constructing the narratives of these women only in relation to men. For instance, in the case of Elizabeth Siddall, although Daly discusses Siddall’s artistic career, it is

⁶¹ William Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, Third (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948, 11).

⁶² Gay Daly, *Pre-Raphaelites in Love* (New York: Ticknor&Fields, 1989), xviii.

never actually about her as an artist and her art, but more that it was what she did as Rossetti's lover. She exists in the Pre-Raphaelite history either as a docile model or the tragic lover of the male artist, which is further proved when Daly includes Rossetti's creations of Siddall on her chapter but never Siddall's own creations.⁶³ Although Daly provides her readers with plenty of personal details about these women's lives, which is also very hard to come by as the research on these women proved again and again, she still falls short on demonstrating the importance of them to the movement beyond their importance as love affairs of the male artists.

As Timothy Hilton notes in the preface of his book, *The Pre-Raphaelites* was the first book in "the history of Pre-Raphaelitism to concentrate on the painting itself" since Percy Bate's publication. The book was published in 1970, around seventy years after Bate's, however not a grand deal seemed to have changed since. The biggest difference in Hilton's book is the amount of importance put on John Ruskin. According to Hilton, Pre-Raphaelitism only evolved into what it is with Ruskin's writings and his career, therefore, the history of Pre-Raphaelitism should start with Ruskin instead of the emergence of the Brotherhood in 1848.⁶⁴ Thus the "beginnings" chapter of Hilton's history of the Pre-Raphaelites focuses on John Ruskin and his writings, but the rest is pretty similar to Bate. Ford Madox Brown is once again illustrated as the founder of the technical style, the Millais-Hunt-Rossetti trio as the golden boys of the movement, their individual styles and differences from each other highlighted, and so on. Hilton, like Bate, singles out Rossetti and portrays him in a way that suggests the whole Pre-Raphaelite affair was Rossetti's own little project. Furthermore, Hilton's account of Rossetti and the whole trio is overall extremely romanticized, with a lot of suggesting and imagining between the lines in a way that serves these three and their legacy. Women are discarded as much as the other members of the Brotherhood, and when mentioned, they are

⁶³ Daly, 31-94.

⁶⁴ Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 10.

mentioned as lovers of the trio. Siddall is completely portrayed as a puppet of Rossetti's, with no agency of her own, serving only to construct the tragic love life of Rossetti. Effie Gray is used as a plot device for both Ruskin and Millais' stories, as she married them both. Jane Morris is only mentioned as Rossetti's forbidden lover that appears in his later work, rather than the designer and embroider that she is.

As I demonstrated above, women were mostly left out of the canonical texts of the Pre-Raphaelite history. When they were included, it was either as passive models or romantic interests of the male artists, and these two instances were combined more often than not. Their own artistic creations and active involvement in the movement, as well as in the development of Pre-Raphaelitism, was completely overlooked, and their representation in the Pre-Raphaelite history was very much tied to men. However, this traditional way of writing Pre-Raphaelite history started to be challenged in recent decades.

The critique of representation of women in Pre-Raphaelite literature began in the 1980s' after feminist art criticism became more established in Western art history in the 1970s with scholars such as Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock. In 1984, Griselda Pollock and Deborah Cherry's "Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: A Study of the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall" was published. In this ground-breaking article, Cherry and Pollock demonstrate how women were constructed in Pre-Raphaelite literature to specifically serve the male artists' narratives. The article has an emphasis on Elizabeth Siddall and how she was constructed as "fatally ill, consumptive, as an enigma and yet with a specifiable melancholy personality, as a beautiful model, and as the beloved of Rossetti"⁶⁵ to function as a sign of Dante Rossetti's artistic genius.⁶⁶ Although Cherry and Pollock acknowledge Siddall's artistic profession, they do not discuss her artistic achievements, but rather focus on the identity which

⁶⁵ Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, "Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: A Study of the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall", *Art History* 7, no. 2 (June 1984), 207.

⁶⁶ Cherry and Pollock, 206-207.

was created around her. They argue that Siddall (and other women) were portrayed as the opposites of male artists to put an emphasis on men's power, creativity and so on. What Cherry and Pollock achieved with this article was to expose the exploitation of the lives and stories of these women in the Pre-Raphaelite canon.

Yet, the aims to recognise women's creativity and artistic productivity came with the research of Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, in the 1980s. In their collaborative book *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (1989), the authors set out to recover the "forgotten" women artists of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and "reinststate" them in the history of the movement. However, this restoration did not mean simply adding women into the Pre-Raphaelite history and assert their work with masculinist value systems, but understanding the gender ideology of the time and analyse their work in relation to it.⁶⁷ In their book, Marsh and Nunn separate the women artists into three generations, ranging from 1848 to 1910, and count eighteen women. With this work, the authors accomplish to start a discussion on how the Pre-Raphaelite history was written with only one side of the story, and what telling the other side means for the movement. They argue that through acknowledging these women artists and their contributions to the movement, they also challenge the definition of "Pre-Raphaelitism."⁶⁸ This discussion, what Pre-Raphaelitism is and what can and cannot be included within its frame, still continues to this day, but thanks to the work of Marsh and Nunn, women are now a big part of the discussion.

In 1999, ten years after their first book, Marsh and Nunn collaborated again in the creation of the exhibition *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (initiated by Manchester Art Galleries); an exhibition solely focusing on the creations of women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The exhibition catalogue was published the same year, written by Marsh and Nunn,

⁶⁷ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (London: Virago Press, 1989), 6-7.

⁶⁸ Marsh and Nunn, 7.

included individual chapters from each of them. In her chapter “Women and Art 1850-1900,” Marsh discusses the struggles of women artists in everything from receiving “proper” education to getting into the profession. Furthermore, she demonstrates how “gendered disparity in opportunity” denied women success in the art world and placed women in the margins, outside the borders of “dominant” (traditional/male-focused) art history.⁶⁹ In “A Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood?” Nunn questions the possibility of a collective structure in relationships between the women of the movement, as was the case for men. Her chapter builds on Marsh’s argument and how women were pushed outside the Pre-Raphaelite history, as Nunn discusses how historians of Pre-Raphaelitism defined the movement through men who were associated with it, often choosing one of these men as the protagonist in their “Pre-Raphaelite drama,” whereas the women only showed up as objects which the art was formed around.⁷⁰ Marsh and Nunn’s *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, both brings together works of women Pre-Raphaelite artists to demonstrate how women’s Pre-Raphaelitism looked like; and calls out the “canon” of Pre-Raphaelite literature for leaving out this side of Pre-Raphaelitism for so long. Marsh and Nunn’s both publications stand as important pieces of feminist critique on Pre-Raphaelite history.

In 2000, Elizabeth Prettejohn published *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, a book which is more of a critique of a certain art aesthetic than a history, as she calls it.⁷¹ Prettejohn’s account on the Pre-Raphaelite movement succeeds in creating a new canon that is not only inclusive to women and their contributions to the movement, but also does not marginalize them in the slightest. In Prettejohn’s book, women are as much under the spotlight as men are, for their artistic activities. She argues, just as Marsh and Nunn argued before her, that “activities of women are no longer incidental but necessary to the plot” of the Pre-Raphaelite

⁶⁹ Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 52.

⁷⁰ Marsh and Nunn, 54.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.

history.⁷² And she does just that, in her book which is supposed to be about the Pre-Raphaelite art, by putting women together with men and weaving a Pre-Raphaelite history which includes both. It is important to bring out publications which focus on, recover and rewrite women in art history, yet it is also equally important to stop marginalising them in chapters of books or special editions of journals and treat them in a completely tokenist way.

As I demonstrated above, in recent decades women artists had been brought out of the dusty backstage of the Pre-Raphaelite history and took their places under the spotlight. The struggle of constructing an inclusive history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement still continues, yet scholars moved onto more nuanced issues surrounding women artists and their work, such as professionalism, individualism in style (against the argument that women simply copied men's work), patronage and more. In her article "Too individual an artist to be a mere echo': Female Pre-Raphaelite artists as independent professionals," published in 2011-12, Helen Nina Taylor tackles professionalism and individualism. She focuses on seven women artists of the movement and demonstrates how these women "used" Pre-Raphaelitism to gain more recognition as professional artists, as well as where that puts them in the Victorian art world in terms of opportunities and freedom as opposed to their women colleagues who chose the academic/royal route.⁷³ Taylor argues that instead of simply copying what the male members/followers of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was doing, the women adapted the Pre-Raphaelite style in their own ways, with their own topics, to "suit their own ends."⁷⁴ She also suggests that since women were "outside the conspicuous art world of the male Pre-Raphaelites, [they] were able to present their pictures free from immediate critical scorn,"⁷⁵ suggesting that women had more freedom in choosing their topics and were able to be more

⁷² Prettejohn, 8.

⁷³ Helen Nina Taylor, "'Too Individual an Artist to Be a Mere Echo': Female Pre-Raphaelite Artists as Independent Professionals", *The British Art Journal* 12, no. 3 (Winter 2011): 52-59, 52.

⁷⁴ Taylor, 52.

⁷⁵ Taylor, 58.

adventurous with their style. Taylor's argument that women used Pre-Raphaelitism for their own benefit highlights women's agency in choosing their own style and career path, instead of following the men around them blindly.

The interest in women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement only grew by years, which is not only evident in the number of scholars researching them or the ever-growing literature published on this topic but also the number of popular culture products dedicated to the movement, and often including the portrayals of women of the movement.⁷⁶ With Pre-Raphaelitism taking its place in today's popular culture, blogs about these women also sprung up around the internet.⁷⁷ *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, published in 2019, is a book written by Kirsty Stonell Walker, historian and creator of *The Kissed Mouth*, a blog inspired by and dedicated to the Pre-Raphaelites. Walker brings together the summarized biographies of fifty women who were in one way or another involved with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The book includes models, artists, and lovers of the male artists from all ages and social and ethnic backgrounds. I chose to include this book in my discussion of the Pre-Raphaelite historiography because it does something most academic literature fails to do; makes these women and their stories accessible to people beyond academia: the public. The language is extremely easy, seasoned with Walker's unique style of humour in her writing. Twenty years ago, a book entirely dedicated to biographies of women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement would be unimaginable. Today, it is a necessity to have such a book, and have it in a way which it is inclusive to not only women of all social backgrounds or career paths, but also ethnic backgrounds, who are often ignored in the white history of British art.

⁷⁶ See *Dante's Inferno* (1967), *The Love School* (1975), *Desperate Romantics* (2009) and *Effie Gray* (2014).

⁷⁷ See the blogs:

The Kissed Mouth (<http://fannycornforth.blogspot.com/>)

Lizzie Siddal (<http://lizziesiddal.com/portal/>)

Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood (<http://preraphaelitesisterhood.com/>)

Pre-Raphaelite Reflections (<https://dantisamor.wordpress.com/>)

The public and academic interest in the Pre-Raphaelite women spiked in 2019. In October, the National Portrait Gallery of London held an exhibition called *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*,⁷⁸ which I had the chance to see in person. The exhibition stayed open until January of 2020, during which a number of events, talks, and a conference about the Pre-Raphaelite women took place. It was divided into four sections, each section focusing on a specific role women played in Pre-Raphaelite movement; models, muses, wives and artists. This was National Portrait Gallery's first exhibition on the Pre-Raphaelite movement in its history, and the fact that it was focused around women shows how much progress there has been in acknowledging women as an important part of the movement.

A catalogue edited by Jan Marsh accompanied the exhibition with the same title. It consists of biographies of the twelve women (Elizabeth Siddall, Annie Miller, Fanny Eaton, Maria Zambaco, Christiana Rossetti, Fanny Cornforth, Jane Morris, Marie Spartali Stillman, Effie Gray Millais, Joanna Mary Boyce, Georgiana Burne-Jones and Evelyn De Morgan), and a number of essays about different aspects of this "sisterhood." Marsh, once again, accomplishes to situate women as the main figures of the movement (as they should be) and tell their stories through their own importance and contribution to the movement, rather than their relationship (in whichever form it was) to men. Furthermore, both with the exhibition and the catalogue, Marsh accomplishes to demonstrate the nuances and dualities these women had in their role in the movement, which is extremely important. Most women were not only just a model or an artist, but these roles often intersected in their lives. Elizabeth Siddall started her career as a model, later becoming a professional artist. Christiana Rossetti modelled for her brother, yet she was an important contributor to the Pre-Raphaelite periodical as a poet. Jane Morris was a model, a muse, and an embroider and designer, whose work is often overshadowed by one of her roles. And what Marsh achieved with this book, or why it is so

⁷⁸ Exhibition: *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* (<https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/pre-raphaelite-sisters/exhibition/>)

important for the Pre-Raphaelite historiography is precisely that: not one of the roles overshadows the other. Marsh proves again and again, that these women do not have to be presented as simply love interests of the male members, as was the case in the “canon.” They have much more to offer, both to the movement and to the history of it.

A part of the events which took place during the exhibition was the conference hosted by the University of York: “Pre-Raphaelite Sisters: Making Art.” The conference took place over two days in mid-December 2019, bringing together scholars and art enthusiasts from all over the world, including myself. I was a reserve speaker for the conference, and although I never had the chance to present my paper on Marie Spartali Stillman, the experience was invaluable. The opening speech was by Elizabeth Prettejohn, the closing by Jan Marsh herself. In the closing speech, Jan Marsh discussed the future of the research on Pre-Raphaelite women. As she also stressed, much work has been done, but there is still a long way to go in terms of research on these women. Yet, I think one thing was certain, through both the conference and what I aimed to demonstrate in the last two sections of this chapter: the Pre-Raphaelite history changed immensely throughout the last two decades and continues to do so. But the challenges to the white, male-focused canon of Pre-Raphaelite history should continue to be made, until it is no longer possible to talk about such a canon.

Chapter 3: Women, Art and the Victorian Era

The period between 1820 to 1914, which includes Queen Victoria's (1819 – 1901) reign over the British Empire (1837 – 1901), is often referred to as the Victorian era. In this period, British society transformed from all directions as a result of significant political, cultural, technological, and economic developments that shaped the country. To name a few, these developments included political expansion as a result of Britain's overseas colonisation, the spread of railways which made travel easier and more accessible to people, and rise in print culture and design due to technological advancements which shaped Victorian literature and visual culture, all of which consequently resulted in the rise of the middle-class.⁷⁹ The Pre-Raphaelite movement emerged exactly at the halfway point of this era, right as the culture was being transformed. The Pre-Raphaelites themselves brought a change to the mainstream art taste of the Victorian public, from the techniques they used in their art style to their relationship with the women in their circle. They were revolutionaries, liked and despised at the same time. An important difference between the Pre-Raphaelites against the traditional Victorian art circles was that women were always central to their circle. While women were constantly discouraged to take the artistic professions in other circles of the art world, such as the Academy, the Pre-Raphaelites often encouraged their daughters, lovers, or wives in their artistic productions.

In this chapter, I am going to discuss how women were situated in Victorian society, especially the art world. This discussion will include both women inside and outside the Pre-Raphaelite society to highlight the different conditions women artists had inside the Brotherhood's circle compared to some of the other women artists who were not a part of this

⁷⁹ For more information about Victorian culture and history, see the following publications:

Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain, by Susie L. Steinbach (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture by Francis O'Gorman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

orbit. I will first look at the dominant gender ideology of the time, which had a direct impact in organising the everyday life in Victorian society, especially for middle-class women, since this ideology was extremely influential for visual arts and the public's taste as well. In the following section, I am going to discuss the struggles women had to face to be a professional artist in the Victorian era, illustrating the lack of opportunities when it came to education, exhibiting, and gaining recognition. Next, I am to focus my attention on the women on canvas and examine the representations of women in traditional Victorian art, to draw attention to the difference of the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman had to other images of femininity and womanhood that co-existed in the Victorian culture. In the will conclude this chapter with a section on women and the Pre-Raphaelite movement, discussing their roles within the movement and how they influenced the development of the Pre-Raphaelite art style.

3.1 – Nonsense of the separate spheres: gender ideology of the time

The dominant gender ideology of the Victorian era was shaped by the doctrine of separate spheres, which assigned people private (domestic) or public (professional) spheres based on their genders (the genders in question were the binary of men and women).⁸⁰ According to the doctrine, women were expected to stay at home and have domestic roles, such as caring for children and looking after the household, whereas men were to belong in public and have professional presence in the society. The private/domestic sphere, i.e. home, was considered to be the most sacred place, a safe haven away from the cruelty and all the ugliness of the workplace and public.⁸¹ Keeping women confined to “home” as its carer was therefore a way to uphold the myth of the safe haven, while also ensuring men's own freedom outside it. Men's claimed ownership over the public sphere was therefore secured by confining women

⁸⁰ Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Second Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 166.

⁸¹ Susie L. Steinbach, 166.

to the domestic one, which, as Clarissa Campbell also notes, further reinforced and reproduced women's subordinate place in the hierarchy of sexes.⁸²

However, even though the ideology of the separate spheres was very influential, it was not always the lived reality and changed according to different social situations such as race (especially in the colonies), nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and most importantly, class.⁸³ Susie L. Steinbach mentions that the confinement for women became more or less strict according to the level of their social status. Women of the lower classes, such as working-class women and “prostitutes” had much more freedom compared to middle-class women and aristocrats. As Donald J. Olsen emphasizes, middle-class women were especially encouraged to withdraw to the private sphere more, for instance.⁸⁴ On the other hand, lower-class women were still able to belong to public life, since they had to contribute to the economic situation of their families and did not have the option to stay at home most of the time. This did not mean that it was socially acceptable for women to work, as these women were not considered to be respectable in society due to their class anyway. Hence, although the ideology was not the lived reality in practice, it was still very much engraved in the social mind, therefore still played a very important role in oppressing women of all classes in one way or another.

In addition to class, women's marital status also played a very important role in how this ideology was practiced in real life. Unmarried women had more freedom, yet the freedom they had was to be used for seeking a suitable candidate for marriage, especially in the case of middle- and higher-class women. They were still very much monitored by their fathers or the patriarchs of their family, yet their role was to secure a marriage before “too late” since they

⁸² Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 70.

⁸³ Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 165-168.

⁸⁴ Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 108.

were not allowed to take on professions themselves and there weren't any laws ensuring their economic security, so it had to be secured through marriage. Yet, even though unmarried women had more idle time and freedom compared to married women, they were still more or less deprived of their own agency as their role in society was set out for them once again. In most cases, they were married off to men who were significantly older than they were, as for men it was ideal to get married once they reached economic stability in their life. As for women, they were expected to marry much younger, like right after adolescence, since they were expected to bear legitimate heirs for their husbands, which also meant they had to be virgins.

Once they were married, women's duties changed from making themselves desirable for men to making sure men's desires were met. So, in a way, their duties did not change at all, only transformed. As I mentioned above, married women had even less freedom than unmarried women; they were expected to stay at home and birth and raise children, which meant they were to retreat from social gatherings that were available to them as unmarried women. Their confinement to the domestic sphere was further secured through very few legal rights they had, or did not have. Once married, women were considered to be the property of their husband, hence they lost all their autonomy, at least legally. They had no possessions of their own, as everything they had belonged to their husband upon marriage.⁸⁵ Even their social class was changed according to their husband's, which meant a woman could easily "lose" her higher social status if she married a man from a lower social class. The children born from the marriage also belonged to men. Divorce, while possible, was incredibly hard to obtain, as the only way for women to divorce their husbands was through proving their ongoing adultery, incest, or domestic abuse, which they needed hard proof for.⁸⁶ And even if obtained, divorce left almost nothing to women, since all their possessions had been transferred to their husbands

⁸⁵ Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 169.

⁸⁶ Steinbach, 176.

when they married anyway. Luckily, women gained more legal rights within marriage and protection outside it by the end of the century. But the transition was slow, painful, and social stigma did not change as quickly (!) as the laws.

By the end of the Victorian era, women's rights changed drastically across the country. Throughout the century, women were stepping outside of their domestic cages more and more and claiming space in the public sphere, especially with the rise of the women's rights movement which kicked off around the 1860s in London. In 1869, Harriet Taylor Mill and her husband John Stuart Mill published *The Subjection of Women*,⁸⁷ drawing attention to how women were considered below men in a hierarchy of sexes and the moral wrongness of it, which built on the legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft and her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,⁸⁸ published almost a century ago in 1792. Parliamentary changes regarding women's status have also been made at this point, with the laws such as *The Divorce Act* (1837), *Married Women's Property Act* (1870) and the *Matrimonial Causes Act* (1884), all of which granted legal rights for women inside and outside the marriage and the right to file for divorce.⁸⁹

3.2 – Victorian women artists

Even though middle-class women were strictly encouraged to stay in their cages that were politely described as the domestic sphere, there was an undeniable rise of women's participation when it came to one particular profession: art. According to feminist art historian Wendy Slatkin, there was an enormous increase in the number of professional women artists in England under Queen Victoria's reign. In her book *Women Artists in History: from Antiquity to the Present*, she records that in 1841, there were 300 recorded women artists in the country,

⁸⁷ Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869).

⁸⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792, (London and New York: Penguin, 2004).

⁸⁹ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, Third Edition, World of Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 177.

and this number increased up to 1000 by 1871.⁹⁰ Slatkin's research demonstrates that the number of women taking up the art profession grew significantly in this century so much that a society for women artists was founded in 1856, which was called the Society of Female Artists (name later changed to the Society of Lady Artists).⁹¹

Yet, despite the growing number of women artists in the country, being a practicing professional artist came with a number of struggles for most women. After all, although women were producing art as much as men, their conditions were not exactly the same. The first and foremost of their struggles was, expectedly, education. All around Europe, women were purposefully left out of art academies for centuries, and it wasn't that different in Britain. The Royal Academy, despite having two female members at the time of its foundation, allowed women to have neither full membership nor full studentship.⁹² At the beginning of the century, a number of leading art institutions of the country were closed off to women. The study and perfect execution of the human body was a fundamental part of most (and usually highly valued) genres of art.⁹³ This proper execution of the human body on canvas required studying nude, life models in the classroom, and women were not allowed to attend these classes, since "exposure to nude model was thought to inflame the passions and disturb the control of female sexuality that lay at the heart of Victorian injunctions."⁹⁴ So even in the cases women were admitted to institutions such as the Royal Academy as students, they were banned from classes which allowed them to have proper education.

However, just because women were not allowed to be part of the mainstream, traditionally male-populated institutions, did not mean they had no place to go for art education.

⁹⁰ Wendy Slatkin, *Women Artists in History: From Antiquity to the Present*, Third Edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 123.

⁹¹ Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 178.

⁹² Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London: The Women's Press, 1987), 47.

⁹³ There was a hierarchy of genres when it came to paintings, which was established by The French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. According to this hierarchy, the value of art genres was as follows, from highest to lowest: history (which included religious and mythological paintings), portrait, genre (scenes of everyday life), landscape and still-life.

⁹⁴ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 175.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a number of art institutions started admitting women students – although with restrictions to keep them away from nude lessons – and several all-female art schools were established to offer art education to women. In 1843, the Female School of Art and Design was founded, which, while being a great institution that offered women a place to study art, according to Chadwick, it was also the excuse used by many for not admitting women to the Royal Academy schools as well.⁹⁵ By 1848, the National Art Training School started admitting women students; and by 1862, the Royal Female School of Art was founded. Women who had the opportunity – i.e. money – also travelled abroad to obtain art training, popularly to Italy or France. Most women artists who had fathers or brothers were also taught by them from an early age, for instance, Lucy Madox Brown (daughter of Ford Madox Brown). However, although they had the opportunity to be taught at home, these women often had to give up their art educations to look after the house upon marriage, and even before, if need be, which was the case for both Lucy Madox Brown and Joanna Mary Boyce.⁹⁶

The exclusion from opportunities did not end with education for women; they were also often excluded from exhibiting in leading institutions. London was not only the political capital of the country, it was also the art capital, with the headquarters of the Royal Academy of Art located right at its centre (where the National Gallery building is today). The Academy held annual exhibitions, where a selection of artworks from artists inside and outside the institution were showcased. It was not uncommon that these annual exhibitions often included works of women artists as well; however, compared to their male contemporaries, the number of women who had a chance to exhibit at the institution was significantly lower.⁹⁷ Moreover, women who exhibited in the Academy often faced criticism from more angles, as their gender was almost

⁹⁵ Chadwick, 178.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 5.

⁹⁷ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 27.

always a part of the discussion of their works. The beloved (by conventional Pre-Raphaelite historians such as Tim Hilton) John Ruskin is a great example of such art critics who made it a point to draw attention to the women artist's gender in his writings; this was discussed in detail by Pamela Gerrish Nunn in her article "Ruskin's Patronage of Women Artists."⁹⁸

Although the Royal Academy was considered to be the most prestigious institution to exhibit an artist's work, there were also a number of other institutions and private galleries inside and outside London where women could exhibit their works. Chadwick notes that in the second half of the century, there was a large number of women exhibiting regularly in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other small cities across the country. Some of the institutions which allowed women artists to participate in exhibitions were the Old Watercolour Society (1804), the British Institution (1805), the Society of British Artists (1823), and New Watercolour Society (1831, later renamed as the Institute of Painters in Watercolour), Free Exhibition (1848), The Society of Female Artists (1857), and Grosvenor Gallery (1877, later renamed as New Gallery).⁹⁹

3.3 – Representation of women in traditional Victorian art

*"[T]he Victorian female was often lost or embedded in a superstructure of categories and prejudices, telescoped and often trivialized into restrictive sentimental stereotypes."*¹⁰⁰

Educating the public by conveying moral and virtuous lessons through paintings was a fundamental quality of Victorian art. As a result of the patriarchal structures that were deeply embedded in the Victorian culture, the "dignity" of the society was very much controlled

⁹⁸ Nunn, "Ruskin's Patronage of Women Artists".

⁹⁹ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 28-29.

For more information on the struggles and status of women artists in Victorian era, see the following publications: *Victorian Women Artists* by Pamela Gerrish Nunn (London: The Women's Press, 1987).

Women, Art, and Society, by Whitney Chadwick (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Susan P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Rutherford etc.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987), 177.

through how women behaved. As I argued earlier in this chapter, the gender ideology of the Victorian era was based on the doctrine of separate spheres, and even if it wasn't always the lived reality, it still had a significant influence on Victorian cultural products such as novels, periodicals, illustrations, plays and paintings. These cultural products often promoted certain gender roles and stereotypes of women. As a result, "fictional ideal[s] of womanhood"¹⁰¹ dominated the traditional Victorian art, especially in the case of (narrative) genre painting, which appealed to a larger portion of the public as it often reflected the life of lower- and middle-class people.

The portrayal of women in Victorian art was limited to only a few stereotypes. Among these, there were two most prominent ones which fell on either side of this very narrow spectrum. There was often the "ideal woman" or in other words, the "angel in the house" who was submissive, humble, nurturing, very much like the "Madonna" ideal, who was the good example for the public. On the other end of the spectrum, however, was the "fallen woman," who was an example of what could happen if women did not follow the protocols of society, whose appearance on canvas almost stood out like a warning. As Susan Casteras argues in her book *Images of Womanhood in Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, Victorian artists fabricated their own iconography around certain stereotypes which included everything from the way they posed, the clothes they wore, the locations they appeared in and so on.¹⁰² In this way, these stereotypes were reconstructed as visual archetypes on canvas. There were different variations or different characterizations of these visual archetypes. The "angel in the house" could appear either as a young mother or a nurturing daughter.¹⁰³ The 'fallen woman' could be a prostitute, a woman who has sex outside marriage (as it commonly was), but could also be a

¹⁰¹ Casteras, 12.

¹⁰² Casteras, 11.

¹⁰³ See the following examples:

The Young Mother (1845) by Charles West Cope (Oil on a gesso ground on panel, Victoria & Albert Museum, London).

Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age (1862) by George Elgar Hicks (Oil on canvas, Tate, London).

cheating woman.¹⁰⁴ The scenarios and situations changed on the canvas, yet the duality often stayed the same. The contrast between these two visual archetypes were exposed through Victorian canvas repeatedly.

The ideal of the submissive woman required women to be often indoors, and when outside, with an appropriate escort on their arms. They were always clothed in a way that was



proper and acceptable to the Victorian public, never showing too much skin. Images of pregnant women and young mothers were especially popular when it came to this visual archetype, as it can be seen in genre artist Charles West Cope's (1811 – 1890) many paintings such *Mother and Child*¹⁰⁵ (Fig.6) or *The Music Lesson*.¹⁰⁶ These women had plump faces and maternal bodies, and their gazes were always lowered down, or focused on the task on their hands. By refusing to establish direct eye contact

Figure 6 – Cope, Charles West. *Mother and Child*. 1851. Oil on gesso on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

with the viewers, these women were constructed

as products of and for the male gaze. They reflected the ideals put on women by the Victorian gender ideology and the patriarchal structure. They were important examples for women of all classes, but especially the middle class.

¹⁰⁴ See the following examples:

Redgrave, Richard. *Outcast*. 1851. Oil on canvas. Royal Academy of Arts, London.

O'Neil, Henry Nelson. *A Mother Depositing Her Child at the Foundling Hospital in Paris*. 1855. Foundling Museum, London.

¹⁰⁵ Cope, Charles West. *Mother and Child*. 1851. Oil on gesso on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

¹⁰⁶ Cope, Charles West. *The Music Lesson*. 1863. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

The “fallen woman,” on the other hand, was often illustrated in the public sphere, as opposed to the domestic one. These women were used as examples as to what could happen if Victorian women refused to fulfil the roles set out for them. The most popular representation of this visual archetype was through prostitutes, closely followed by women who engaged in sexual activities outside marriage such as cheating women or young women who were seduced by men. Examples of this archetype can be found on the canvases of artists such as Augustus Egg (1816 – 1863) (*Past and Present Series*, 1858),¹⁰⁷ George Frederick Watts (1817 – 1904)



Figure 7 – Watts, George Frederick. *Found Drowned*. 1848-50. Oil on canvas. Watts Gallery, Guildford.

(*Found Drowned*, 1848-50 (Fig.7)), and even Pre-Raphaelite artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti (*Found*, 1853)¹⁰⁸ and William Holman Hunt (*The Awakening Conscious*, 1853.)¹⁰⁹ The main difference in the portrayal of these women as opposed to their “better” examples was that they were not only situated in the public space but also in disreputable locations such as bridges, under bridges, near water, or sometimes literally in the water. As a punishment to what they have done, they could appear either drowned, dead, starving, sick, or pregnant. Their unhealthy

¹⁰⁷ Egg, Augustus. *Past and Present Series*. 1858. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

¹⁰⁸ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Found*. 1854–1855, 1859–1881. Oil on canvas. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

¹⁰⁹ Hunt, William Holman. *The Awakening Conscious*. 1853. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

conditions were evident in the lifeless, dull, and grey tone of their skin. Their hair was often illustrated as untidy, frizzy, or dishevelled, not the perfect, slicked-back buns that the “angels” often had. Everything about the representation of these women pointed to their exclusion from the “respectful society.” Yet, despite all the differences these women had in character, they also shared similarities with the portrayal of women who were at the other end of the spectrum. Much like the “angels,” the “fallen women” also had modest clothing which covered most of their skin, and their gaze was also often directed away from the viewer in not modesty but shame and humiliation.

Casteras writes that in Victorian art, “feminine themes bordered on a cultural fixation.”¹¹⁰ Yet, for all their in-depth exploration and over-representation in art, these women were, at the very end, fictional. They were ideals or “failures” created by men to control women’s behaviour, dress code and overall self-representation. However, the frequent use of such visual archetypes led to an oversimplification of women and their roles in society. The fictitious constructions of Victorian womanhood were, and still are, so popular that they overpower the experiences of real women, because the only women represented on canvas were the women men create themselves. How Victorian art treated the representation of women is a very good example of how art is often used as a tool to manipulate the public in a specific way. The gender ideology of the time shows itself so clearly in Victorian art. Although there is a difference between how the Pre-Raphaelites portrayed women in comparison to the traditional Victorian art, this is where they share a similarity, because the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman constantly overpowers the stories of real women as well.

¹¹⁰ Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, 14.

3.4 – Women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as the name suggests, was comprised of male members only. Yet the same thing could not be said for the movement, because women were always at the very centre of it, as artists, models, lovers, wives or sisters. Yet, as I already mentioned before, regardless of the roles they had, women's contributions to the development of the artistic style and overall success of the movement was ignored in the Pre-Raphaelite history for a long time. This approach has been gradually changing over the last few decades with the research of many feminist art historians, and especially with the work of Pamela Gerrish Nunn and Jan Marsh.¹¹¹ This recent recognition of the role women played in the movement truly shows how different the Pre-Raphaelite circle was compared to other art movements before them or even to their Victorian contemporaries in terms of the presence of women. Today, Elizabeth Siddall or Jane Morris are considered to be as crucial to the movement as Dante Gabriel Rossetti or John Everett Millais had been. The most recent exhibition on the Pre-Raphaelite women, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* demonstrates the different roles women had in the movement, as I discussed in the previous chapter. In the exhibition, Pre-Raphaelite women were divided into different categories based on their roles (with the acknowledgement that several of them had not only one intersecting roles in the movement). In this section, I am only going to focus on their roles as models to demonstrate their direct influence in shaping the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as something other than artists, as the next chapter will emphasise just that.

A very important role women had within the Pre-Raphaelite movement was being models. Modelling was not considered to be a decent job for women in the Victorian era, or any era before that. Most models were hired anonymously, per session, and paid pitifully.¹¹² It

¹¹¹ See Chapter I.

¹¹² Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 16.

is quite rare in art history that the names of the models are almost as well-known as the artists who painted them, yet it is the case for the Pre-Raphaelites. These women attracted a lot of attention in their time, as well as in the pages of Pre-Raphaelite history and certainly did not stay anonymous. However, as Jan Marsh argues, although women who modelled for the Pre-Raphaelites were well-known, their active contributions to the construction of the art style have still been overlooked, since “conventions around female modesty and the worthlessness of female opinions combined to render most Victorian models voiceless.”¹¹³ Nonetheless, these women played key roles in shaping the artistic style and especially constructing the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype. First and foremost, it was their appearance that inspired the Pre-Raphaelite beauty ideals. The artists were drawn to these women because they looked a certain way, and painted them without idealisation, which meant each of their individual differences appeared on the canvas. Since the Pre-Raphaelite ideal of beauty was more or less similar, evident by the construction of a visual archetype, these women often modelled for more than one member of the Brotherhood and were sometimes drawn by several artists at the same session. According to Jan Marsh, this was due to the economic situation of the artists, as they barely had enough money to afford their painting supplies, let alone hire models individually.

¹¹⁴ Virginia Surtees suggests that another reason for sharing the models was due to Pre-Raphaelites’ strict refusal to idealise the models on their canvases.¹¹⁵ As the Pre-Raphaelites advocated for being true to nature, the figures in their paintings also had to be true to their own nature, not tampered versions of the women in front of them. And since the artists already had their beauty standards in their minds, which was an unconventional ideal for the Victorian era anyway, it was definitely harder to find many women who fit into this ideal.

¹¹³ Marsh, 16.

¹¹⁴ Marsh, 16.

¹¹⁵ Virginia Surtees, *Rossetti's Portraits of Elizabeth Siddal: A Catalogue of the Drawings and Watercolours* (Hants: Scholar Press, 1991), 12.

Yet, it was not only the physical features that influenced the artistic style or the construction of the visual archetype. For example, Siddall's physical features, such as her copper hair and slim figure influenced the construction of the archetype as much as her character did. Her close relationship with the Brotherhood as a model and her romantic connection to Rossetti meant that the artists became more familiar with how she was outside her physical appearance, and parts of her personality also carried on to the Pre-Raphaelite canvases, such as her melancholic aura, caused by her turbulent mental health. It is possible to make the same argument for Fanny Cornforth as well. Another of Rossetti's model and lovers, when Cornforth stepped into the history of the Pre-Raphaelites, the ideals of beauty shifted from Siddall's slim and composed figure to Cornforth's fuller and looser one, at least for Rossetti's canvases, which is a very obvious sign of how individual physical differences of these women influenced the beauty ideals. As Marsh writes, Cornforth "embodied [a] pictorial move from saints to courtesans,"¹¹⁶ which points out to Cornforth's direct influence on the artistic style, also exemplified with Rossetti's creation of *Bocca Baciata*. Cornforth came from a lower-class family and was a housekeeper, although she is also often rumoured, by Pre-Raphaelite authors to be a "prostitute" as well. Her appearance in the Pre-Raphaelite circle inspired a sensual turn; Siddall's copper hair and melancholy intertwined with Cornforth's "merry golden head"¹¹⁷ and enticing personality, shaping the construction of the persona associated with archetype, as much as its visuality.

Everything about the models' self-presentation made an impact on the artists style and the construction of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, big or small. Their dresses which they often made themselves found their ways on the canvases, their gestures and emotions inspired the artists.¹¹⁸ Marsh even suggests that although the evidence is lacking, it is possible that the

¹¹⁶ Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Marsh, 18.

¹¹⁸ Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 9, 18.

models also chose their roles in some cases.¹¹⁹ She writes, “if their appearance provided the first inspiration for the artists, their adoption of each role, and active participation in the picture-making process also, or often, contributed to success.”¹²⁰ Therefore, the Pre-Raphaelite art was not the end product of the visualisation of the male artistic genius, rather it was a collaboratively shaped by women, (artists, models and muses) as much as it was shaped by men.

¹¹⁹ Marsh, 18.

¹²⁰ Marsh, 18.

Chapter 4: “Pre-Raphaelite Woman” in the Works of Women Artists

It is not enough to only recognise Pre-Raphaelite women artists as individual professionals, it is also important to recognise their role in shaping the Pre-Raphaelite art, especially the essence of this artistic style. The archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was developed by women artists of the movement simultaneously as it was by men, despite the fact male artists such as Rossetti and Millais are traditionally recognised for the creation of the first prototypes and examples of the archetype. Regardless of who is “officially” considered to have created the first prototype of this archetype, women’s involvement in the construction of it is undeniable due to the direct influence of the models on the end product, as I argued in the previous chapter. However, I also argue that it is crucial to establish women artists as contributors and pioneers of the creation of this archetype as well, since this then can open up a discussion on the nature of Pre-Raphaelite Woman in the context of male gaze, female gaze and self-representation.

The archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman has been constructed within the Pre-Raphaelite movement over years, evolving from an image of a woman that fitted well with the Pre-Raphaelite beauty ideals to a visual archetype which became a signifier of the entire movement. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to deal with the artwork of women who were the pioneering artists and who contributed to the construction of this archetype as much as their male contemporaries. To limit the extent of my research, I picked out two artists from the first, and two from the second generation of artists associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, which I believe to be the time period where this archetype was being created. The first two artists are Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall and Joanna Mary Boyce, who were directly involved with the Pre-Raphaelite circle when the Brotherhood was first established in 1848, even though they were not official members themselves. Elizabeth Siddall was also the model which inspired the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in the first place, which is also related to her later engagement with the

archetype as a creative artist as well. The last two artists are Lucy Madox Brown and Marie Spartali Stillman, both from the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites, as well as close friends. Stillman's relation to the archetype was similar to Siddall's, as she too carried the duality of being a Pre-Raphaelite model and artist at the same time. Madox Brown, on the other hand, put forward some of the most capturing examples of the archetype in her very short career. In this chapter, there is a dedicated section to each artist, where I will first give a brief overview of her life, then analyse her work in the context of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. By having a chronological approach to the artists, I will both be able to explore the first experiments with this archetype and also to investigate the later creations produced during the second generation to draw attention to the continuity of this archetype in women's art.

4.1 – Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall (1829 – 1862)

Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall is one of the most well-known names of the Pre-Raphaelite history. As an artist, she was one of the first and the only woman to exhibit in an official exhibition of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; she was also one of John Ruskin's proteges, who supported her financially during her professional artistic career. As a model, Siddall was known for her iconic appearances in some of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite paintings, such as Millais' *Ophelia* and Rossetti's *Regina Cordium*. She was also a poet, and had a very famous, long-term romantic relationship with Rossetti. Siddall's art was as much Pre-Raphaelite as the art of the rest of the Brotherhood; she too adopted the Quattrocento technique on her canvas, the topics she explored were also taken from the pages of Bible or literary texts. Even though most of her work is yet to be dug up from private collections around the world, a number of her works have successfully been recorded and brought to the eye of the public in recent years.



Figure 8 - Deverell, Walter Howell. *Twelfth Night Act II, Scene IV*. 1850. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Siddall's family history was not as well recorded as some of the other Pre-Raphaelite women artists since she wasn't related to any of the other members by blood, nor any other artists from different art circles. Siddall was born in 1829, in London, to a family of ten as the third child. Siddall's mother Elizabeth Eleanor Evans was from a "petit-bourgeois" family; her father Charles Siddall was a cutler from Sheffield, who owned an ironmongery shop in London.¹²¹ Siddall herself was a dressmaker when she first met the artist Walter Deverell, who convinced her to model for his *Twelfth Night* (Fig.8) in 1849-50, which was how Siddall first appeared in the Victorian art scene. Deverell was a close friend of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and a regular contributor to *The Germ*. As famously known, he was the one who introduced Siddall to the Brotherhood around the same time as he met her, and she appeared in Millais' *Isabella*¹²² in 1848-1849 and *Ophelia* in 1851-1852. Besides Millais, she also

¹²¹ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 65.

¹²² Millais, John Everett. *Isabella*. 1848-1849. Oil on canvas. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

modelled for William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and sparked up a love interest with the latter around the same time as well.

Contrary to popular belief in Pre-Raphaelite literature that Siddall owed all her artistic education to Rossetti (which had some basis, since Rossetti was Siddall's tutor when they lived together for a while in the early 1850s), Siddall actually received professional art education. In 1857, she started to attend the ladies' classes in Sheffield Art School, where she studied for a year.¹²³ Compared to her colleagues, Siddall's education started much later in her life as she was already twenty-eight years old at the time. Most artists, as I will demonstrate in the examples of Joanna Mary Boyce and Lucy Madox Brown, started their education in their early teens, and sometimes even before they reached adolescence. Siddall's late and short art education certainly comes through in her art, especially in her figures, which makes it clear that she lacked proper training of human anatomy. As a woman artist, Siddall also didn't have access to real life models in either her training or later in her painting process. She often drew from inspiration, which resulted in her figures to be "boneless,"¹²⁴ "stiff," and "anatomically awkward."¹²⁵ As for materials, Siddall usually worked with chalk and watercolour. The only full oil painting known from her is a self-portrait, which is sadly unlocated today. However, despite her lack of "proper" training and her stiff and awkward figures, Siddall's art was very influential within the Pre-Raphaelite movement. As Cherry records, it was Siddall's works such as *Clerk Saunders* and *Lady Affixing a Pennant to a Knight's Spear* which pushed the Pre-Raphaelite movement to a more medieval direction with themes such as chivalry, courting, quests, and sorcery were explored.¹²⁶

¹²³ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 66.

¹²⁴ Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019), 27.

¹²⁵ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 66.

¹²⁶ Deborah Cherry, "Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall (1829–1862)", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 183-185.

As Kirsty Stonell Walker writes, Elizabeth Siddall was the one to thank for the bright red/copper hair of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.¹²⁷ She was the feminine ideal for the Pre-Raphaelite artists, which was probably why she was painted by so many of them until Rossetti's jealousy turned her into an exclusive model for him only. As I argued in the previous chapter, models had an important influence on the appearance of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. Siddall, being one of the earliest and most popular models of the movement, was *the woman* who gave inspiration to the visuals of the archetype. Her fair skin and flaming red hair were what drew the artists to her, and as they started to get to know Siddall as a member of their art circle and through her close relationship with Rossetti, it was not only her looks but also her manners, especially her melancholy, which seeped onto the canvases as well.

However, I argue that the main reason Siddall's own personality (melancholic, fragile, enigmatic and so on) was so intertwined with the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is that Siddall herself was represented on the canvas so many times. Apart from many male artists who used Siddall as their model, Siddall also usually used her own image as the main figure in many of her paintings. Therefore, she was recreating a representation of herself in her artworks at a time where the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman had just started taking shape. Her figures which had self-portrait characteristics fit in seamlessly with Millais or Rossetti's creations of the red-haired "ideal beauty." In Pre-Raphaelite art, especially in those very early days, Siddall's own image was so intertwined with the Pre-Raphaelite Woman that the two were almost inseparable. When one looks at Siddall's paintings without knowing that her figures were a recreation of her own image, it seems like Siddall simply reflected the Pre-Raphaelite archetype in her art. Yet, because it is known to many Pre-Raphaelite historians that Siddall did, in fact, use her own image in her paintings, then the

¹²⁷ Kirsty Stonell Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 24.

examples of this archetype in her art are simply branded as self-portraits of Siddall, without drawing attention to the intricacy of the situation. I argue that Siddall's self-portraits are both an attempt to recreate herself on her canvas through her own gaze, but also a construction/recreation of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. The fact that the two intertwines in early Pre-Raphaelite art so much and so often is proof of how much the models influenced the end product; especially how much Siddall was directly involved in the construction of this archetype. Not just as a model, but also as an artist.

A number of Siddall's most well-known paintings belong to a series she started in the mid-1850s. In this series, the artist illustrated a number of stories from Walter Scott's (1771 –

1832) *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*,¹²⁸ which was an anthology of Scottish ballads. The first of these paintings was *Sir Patrick Spens* (Fig. 9) completed in 1856. In this painting, Siddall's figures are placed on a shore, facing the sea. Six figures are located at the front, but four more are dispersed in the landscape in the background, all female. The only standing figure, a woman with open,

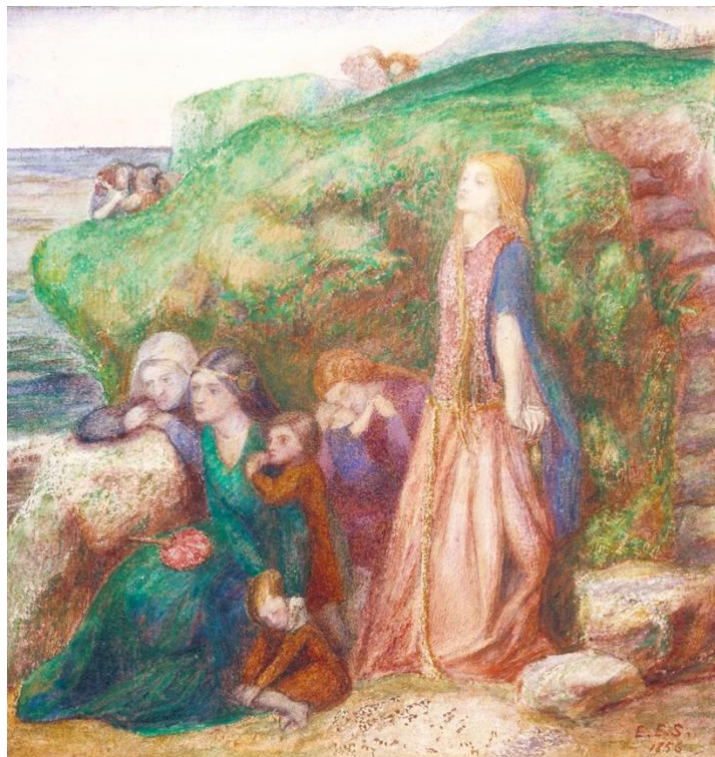


Figure 9 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. *Sir Patrick Spens*. 1856. Watercolour on paper. Tate, London.

long red hair, is a self-portrait of the artist herself.¹²⁹ She is in a loose, medieval-style dress, which covers most of her skin except the fair skin of her face, neck, and arms. Her head is slightly tilted back, as her gaze is focused somewhere outside the canvas, most probably the

¹²⁸ Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1802).

¹²⁹ Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 29.

sea. Her expression is the vacant, melancholic expression which became one of the fundamental components of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.

Clerk Saunders (Fig. 10) is another painting from the same series, completed a year after the first one, which also has the female figure with long red hair. This time the canvas has only two figures, placed slightly off-centred. On the right left corner, the landscape of a

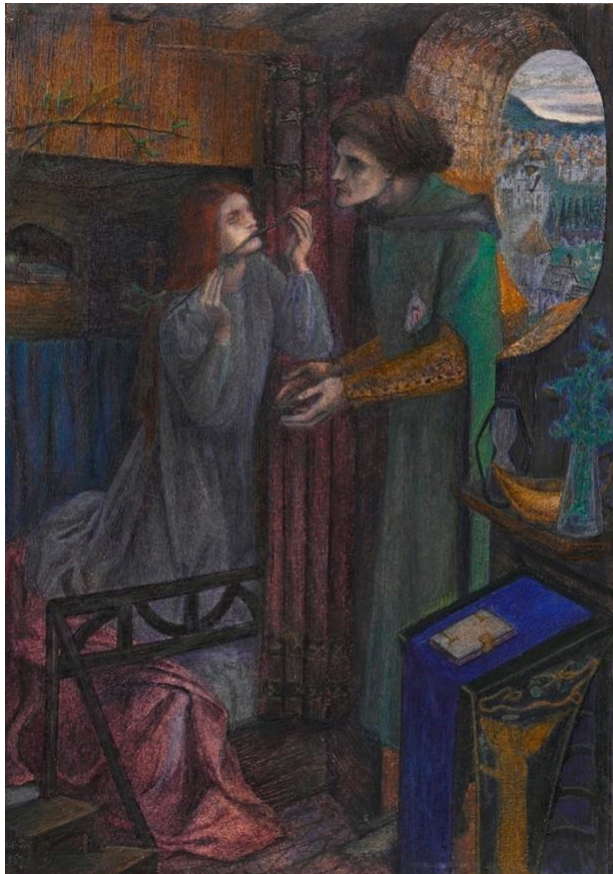


Figure 10 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. *Clerk Saunders*. 1857. Watercolour on paper. The Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Cambridge.

medieval town is peaking through. The ghost of the story is located in front of this window, on the right side, whereas the woman, Margaret, is on the left. This painting depicts a significant scene from the story where Clerk Saunders returns from the dead to reclaim his bride. Accordingly, his skin is painted dark and greyish, contrasting the white of the female figure's. Margaret, the female figure, is right in front of the ghost, her gaze fixated on his face, the expression is vacant, as always. She is once

again in a corset-less, loose dress that covers most of her body. Her hair drapes over her

shoulder, the shade a darker red, but red nonetheless. The features of her face are similar to the standing figure of *Sir Patrick Spens*, so it is possible that this one was also modelled after the artist herself. This was one of the paintings which found its place in Siddall's contribution to the exhibition of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in June of the same year, along with five others, one of which was her oil self-portrait.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 71.

Lady Clare (Fig. 11), completed in 1857, is another painting of Siddall's which includes the example of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, which illustrates the romantic ballad of Tennyson with the same name. The main female figure is Lady Clare, located at the centre of the frame. She is in an emerald green, medieval-looking dress that seems to cover up the shape of the female body. The dress is completely loose, except for the gold band which encircles her at the waist. Her face and neck, the only visible part of her skin apart from her hands, are fair, contrasting with the green of her dress and the red of her hair. As opposed to Siddall's other two female figures which I discussed above, Lady Clare's hair seems to be a lighter colour, almost the shade of the bright copper/gold which is so common in Rossetti's interpretations of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. The



Figure 11 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. *Lady Clare*. 1857. Watercolour on paper. Private Collection.

length of Lady Clare's hair is hidden from the viewer, as it seems to shower down her back. Yet, the texture of the hair is different from the previous two female figures of Siddall's, since here the artist played with light and shadow to create a more curlier looking hair as opposed to her own silky straight hair. Lady Clare's expression, in line with the expression commonly associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, is vacant, with a hint of melancholy giving itself

away at the corners of her mouth. Her gaze is directed below, away from the figure clinging to her body and attempting to stop her from the ajar door placed on the left side of the frame.

The last painting of Siddall's that I am going to discuss is *Lady Affixing Pennant to a Knight's Spear* (Fig. 12), completed around 1856. This is another painting that belongs to Siddall's series on Scott's ballads. Similar to *Clerk Saunders* and *Lady Clare*, this painting also



Figure 12 – Siddall, Elizabeth Eleanor. *Lady Affixing Pennant to a Knight's Spear*. c.1856. Watercolour on paper. Tate, London.

only contains two figures, placed at the centre of the frame. The two figures are placed in a distant embrace, with the female figure's arm resting awkwardly on the knight's shoulder. The scene seems to depict a moment right before the departure of the knight, as his servant and horse are visible through the open door placed at the right side of the frame. This is

a popular medieval scene, illustrated by other Pre-Raphaelite artists at the time as well, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones. However, Siddall's interpretation of the scene takes place in a more domestic atmosphere, as the figures are placed inside, still away from the dangers that the war or the quest could bring upon them. The blue of the female figure's dress is vibrant, drawing the attention to the stark contrast it makes with the knight's red pennant. Although the faces of the figures are a bit blurry, it is still possible to notice that the female figure has the vacant/melancholic expression as she stares at where the knight's hand is on the pennant. Her hair, unsurprisingly red and unrestricted, flows down her back.

Although most of Siddall's works are lost today, it doesn't really take much to notice the repetition of the visual archetype in her paintings. Her female figures share the same qualities which are associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Woman: the long, unrestricted copper/gold hair, the vacant, melancholic expression, the lowered gaze, fair skin, slim figure, long flowy dress, and so on. The date of these four paintings (1856-1857) suggests that these are very early examples of the archetype, as they were completed only a few years after after Millais' *The Bridesmaid* but earlier than Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata* and *Regina Cordium*, which, as I discussed earlier, are considered to be first prototypes of this visual archetype in the "canonical" Pre-Raphaelite history. The examples discussed here prove that Siddall explored the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman simultaneously with her male contemporaries, who are often credited for coming up with this image (especially Rossetti).

What Siddall accomplishes in her paintings is her own contribution to the development and the construction of the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, rather than a simple repetition of the art of male artists. Needless to say, although it is possible to interpret Siddall's use of her own image so frequently in her art as a result of her lack of access to real life models, from nowadays point of view such a practice clearly shows her own contribution to the development of the archetype. However, regardless of if it's intentional or not, this was a way for Siddall to establish herself through her own means and her own art, as opposed to Millais and Rossetti's representations of her. The differences between her representation in Millais and Rossetti's art and her own art are proof of that. Siddall's Pre-Raphaelite Woman has an emphasis on the melancholic side of the archetype, even much more than what Millais had represented in *Ophelia*. Neither her dresses are sliding off her shoulders like in Rossetti's *Regina Cordium*. It may be the lack of the male gaze, but Siddall's portrayal of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman appears to be less of a sensual object and more of a melancholic being,

which is evident in her use of pensive expressions, lowered mouths and careless gazes, and the lack of sensual appeal.

4.2 – Joanna Mary Boyce (1831 – 1861)

Joanna Mary Boyce¹³¹ is one of the most accomplished Victorian women artists. Although her technical style departed from the traditional Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic quite a bit, she still shared their artistic ideals, such as being true to nature, the vibrancy of colours, and the themes she chose to explore in her paintings. Boyce had a complete devotion to her career from a very early age and managed to juggle the requirements of her professional and domestic lives even after she married. When she passed away following the birth of her third baby, only at the age of thirty, Dante Gabriel Rossetti was recorded saying “a great artist sacrificed to bringing more kids into the world, as if there were not other women just fit for that.”¹³²

Boyce was born to a middle-class family of seven as the third child. Her mother was Anne Price, and her father was George Boyce, a wine merchant who later became a pawnbroker instead.¹³³ Boyce was quite close with her oldest brother, George Price Boyce, who also grew up to be an artist. It is reported that the two were very supportive of each other’s artistic developments and both of them started producing sketches from a very early age, around when Boyce was twelve.¹³⁴ Unlike Siddall, Boyce had a very thorough art education from very early on. In addition to practicing and learning with a sibling who was also interested in the same profession, Boyce was also sent to Cary’s Art Academy, a private art institute in London, when she was only eighteen. As Marsh and Nunn write, Boyce often pursued other forms of art education as well, such as attending to private lectures, studying artworks in private collections,

¹³¹ I will refer to Joanna Mary Boyce as “Boyce” and her brother George Price Boyce as “George Price Boyce,” or simply “George” to avoid confusion.

¹³² Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 95.

¹³³ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 47-48.

¹³⁴ Marsh and Nunn, 47.

and later in her career, travelling to a number of cities in the Netherlands, France, and Italy. In 1852, Boyce transferred to Leigh's, another private art institution in London, to continue her artistic education.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, although Boyce had a very thorough art education from a young age on, it was interrupted quite a few times, first with her brother George's illness, and later with her father passing away. The first interruption happened in June 1850, only a year after Boyce started her training at Cary's. When her brother fell ill, Boyce took off five months from her education to "devote" herself to the "care and companionship" of him.¹³⁶ The second interruption came with her father's death, in 1853, who was a devoted supporter of his daughter's career since the beginning.¹³⁷ Boyce once again took time off her training to stay home and look after the household, especially her mother. In 1855, two years after her father's death and at the age of twenty-three, she finally went back to her training, this time at the Government School of Design.¹³⁸ At this point, Boyce had already started submitting her works to the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy, the first one being *Elgiva* in 1885 (which was completed in 1854). Boyce was also one of the few women who had the opportunity to obtain art training abroad, as she travelled to Paris in September of 1855 and had the chance to study proper human anatomy as her training included the study of nude models as well.¹³⁹

Boyce's introduction to the Pre-Raphaelites was through her brother George, who became a close friend and patron of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. As Bradbury notes, George and Joanna weren't exactly completely dependent on the movement, they both had their own independence when it came to their art, especially their technique. Yet, the movement was still extremely important for both of them, as they always "moved in its orbit and breathed in its

¹³⁵ Marsh and Nunn, 48.

¹³⁶ Marsh and Nunn, 48.

¹³⁷ Marsh and Nunn, 48.

¹³⁸ Kirsty Stonell Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 52.

¹³⁹ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 48.

atmosphere.”¹⁴⁰ Boyle was a part of the Pre-Raphaelite art circle; her artworks were praised by Ruskin and Rossetti constantly, she was a close friend of Henry Tanworth Wells (1828 – 1903), a miniaturist and academic painter who romantically pursued her throughout their friendship, until Boyce married him in 1857. As I noted above, the Pre-Raphaelites had a different approach to women artists, which was that they often encouraged their artistic talents rather than criticising them based on their gender. Perhaps this was why Boyce was very easily accepted and praised for her artistic talent in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Although it is important to note that this was with the exception of Ruskin, who favoured Boyce’s brother George over her and became his patron even though Boyce was no less accomplished than her brother.¹⁴¹ Nunn argues that Boyce was rarely present at the Pre-Raphaelite gatherings as a middle-class, unmarried woman, whereas her brother constantly attended them;¹⁴² which shows that even though Boyce was praised for her artistic talents that were no less than her brother’s (some might argue that were even superior), her gender was still an obstacle in her career that she constantly had to overcome. Despite all, Boyce was an important figure of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, who took the ideals of the movement and merged them with her own technical style on her canvas. Her work was exhibited or exchanged between the artists, which means she was an active contributor to the growing artistic style of the Pre-Raphaelite movement as well.

Boyce was extremely devoted to her profession. Despite the obstacles which presented themselves in her career, such as the illness of her brothers and the passing of her father, she kept on pursuing her art. She constantly studied other people’s artworks to better her own, travelled abroad multiple times, and exhibited at the Royal Academy somewhat regularly. She was so devoted to her art that she even declined Henry Tanworth Wells’ marriage proposal a number of times, on the grounds that she was scared being married would take away her

¹⁴⁰ Sue Bradbury, *Joanna, George and Henry: A Pre-Raphaelite Tale of Art, Love and Friendship* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 14.

¹⁴¹ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, "Ruskin’s Patronage of Women Artists", 9.

¹⁴² Nunn, 9.

professional life and turn her into simply a wife and a mother.¹⁴³ Boyce believed that marriage was being a “slave,” and she had no interest in being a slave, all she wanted to do was to produce art.¹⁴⁴ This of course changed later, as she did end up marrying Wells, but she did not stop painting. The topics she frequently explored in her art were historical themes, literary scenes and portraits. After she married Wells and had her first child, she began to produce more portraits of babies and children as well. When her art is examined, it is very notable that some of her artworks resemble the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics more than the others. In addition to the Pre-Raphaelite influence, Boyce’s art was also very much shaped by old Venetian masters,¹⁴⁵ as well as classical, academic and romantic traditions as a result of her time in Paris.¹⁴⁶ Boyce’s time in Paris also gave her the opportunity to study human anatomy, which can be seen in a number of her works, especially when they are compared to those of Siddall’s, where Siddall’s her lack of training on the subject becomes very visible. When it came to finding models for her art, Marsh records that Boyce usually turned to her servants or children of the neighbourhood, as well as her friends and people in her circle.¹⁴⁷ As her brother was also an artist, it would not be wrong to assume that they often shared models as well. Her presence in the Pre-Raphaelite circle also gave her access to a number of Pre-Raphaelite models, most well-known being Fanny Eaton (1835 – 1924), who she used in her *Head of a Mulatto Woman* (Fig.14) in 1861.

The Pre-Raphaelite Woman appears scarcely in Boyce’s art, and when it does, it is most often transformed in some way. Important components of the archetype appear in different female figures in Boyce’s art, and there is only one example where they all come together in an unfinished painting at the time of her death. Since she died very young, I believe it’s possible

¹⁴³ Bradbury, *Joanna, George and Henry: A Pre-Raphaelite Tale of Art, Love and Friendship*, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 54.

¹⁴⁵ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, 155.

¹⁴⁶ Bradbury, *Joanna, George and Henry: A Pre-Raphaelite Tale of Art, Love and Friendship*, 87.

¹⁴⁷ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 48.

to argue that perhaps she passed away at a time where she just turned into experimenting with the visual archetype. Or maybe she did have more full examples of it, but they were lost, since a very important part of her work was lost in a bombing during World War II.¹⁴⁸

One of Boyce's most well-known paintings is *Elgiva* (Fig. 13), completed in 1854 and exhibited in 1855 in the annual exhibition of Royal Academy. This was Boyce's first submission to the Royal Academy in her career, and it was highly praised by many, John



Figure 13 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. *Elgiva*. 1855. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Ruskin and Ford Madox Brown among them.¹⁴⁹ The model in the painting was a family friend, whose name is unknown, painted as the Anglo-Saxon Queen Elgiva, who was “persecuted, forcibly divorced, disfigured to destroy her beauty and finally murdered.”¹⁵⁰ In the painting, Boyce illustrates the ill-fated Queen from the side, in a dark blue dress, most of her hair covered with a headscarf of the same colour. Her face and chest are left naked, however there seems to be a white ruffle lining the top of her dress,

right above her breasts. The headscarf on her head is secured with a gold band, contrasting the darkness of the blue where the light hits it from the side. Although Elgiva by no means seems to be a Pre-Raphaelite Woman due to the composition and the clothing used in the painting, she does have some of the qualities attributed to the archetype. The first and most important is the expression on Elgiva's face, which reflects the melancholic expression of the Pre-

¹⁴⁸ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 111.

¹⁴⁹ Marsh and Nunn, 111.

¹⁵⁰ Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 88.

Raphaelite Woman; her gaze is directed low, her mouth curled downwards, her bottom lip on the brink of quivering. Only a very small part of her hair is visible to the viewer, so even though the length of her hair is not obvious, the colour is, which seems to be a reddish-brown, hidden under the blue headscarf. Although the red hair which seems to capture most of the Pre-Raphaelite artists' attention is only presented as a sample in *Elgiva*, it seems to capture Boyce's attention as well in some of her other work, especially her illustrations of children such as *Little Red-Haired Boy (1852-1854)*¹⁵¹ and *Do I Like Butter?(1859)*.¹⁵²

Study of Fanny Eaton or *Head of a Mulatto Woman* (Fig. 14) is another of well-known painting by Boyce. This time the model is Fanny Eaton, a Pre-Raphaelite model originally from Jamaica, who worked in domestic service.

Fanny Eaton neither had the Pre-Raphaelite Woman's fair skin and rosy cheeks nor her vivid copper/gold hair, yet she did have the vacant/melancholic expression so often associated with these women. Furthermore, Boyce's study of Fanny Eaton is very reminiscent of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's works including Jane Morris, such as *Proserpine*¹⁵³ and the photo series by John Robert Parsons (1826 – 1909) in which Morris was posed by Rossetti (Fig. 15).



Figure 14 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. *Study of Fanny Eaton*. 1861. Oil on paper. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

Everything from Fanny Eaton's expression, pose, and even how her textured hair is styled is undeniably similar to Rossetti's recreations of Jane Morris, which was when his interpretations

¹⁵¹ Boyce, Joanna Mary. *Little Red-Haired Boy*. 1852-1854. Private Collection.

¹⁵² Boyce, Joanna Mary. *Do I Like Butter?* 1859. Private Collection.

¹⁵³ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Proserpine*. 1874. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.



Figure 15 – Jane Morris, photographed by John Robert Parsons, posed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, June 1865.

of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman started including more of the darker hair rather than the bright gold/copper of Siddall and Cornforth's. It is possible that Rossetti was simply inspired by Jane Morris' physical appearance. But considering Rossetti was a very close friend of Boyce's brother and did have the chance to see most of Boyce's work, I suggest that it is also possible Boyce's study of Fanny Eaton stuck in his mind and influenced his compositions of Jane Morris.

Boyce's last completed work before she

passed away in July of 1861 was *A Bird of God* (Fig. 16). Inspired by Browning's poem *Guardian Angel*, a cruel irony for the last piece she completed. The painting received a lot of attention, expectedly so. However, what brings my attention to this painting is not the fact that it was Boyce's last, it is the clear use of bright golden/copper hair. Boyce's angel seems to be inspired by Raphael's take on cherubim, two angel-children figures he used in his painting *Sistine Madonna*.¹⁵⁴ In Boyce's angel, the focus is on the face, as the figure's face is at the



Figure 16 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. *A Bird of God*. 1861. Oil on card. Private Collection.

¹⁵⁴ Raphael. *Sistine Madonna*. 1512. Oil on canvas. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

centre of the frame. The angel seems to be floating on air, the background completely filled with clouds. Everything from the clouds, the wings and the dress of the angel is white, even the skin of the angel is very fair, only flushed slightly on the cheeks. The red of the hair looks



Figure 17 – Boyce, Joanna Mary. *Gretchen*. 1861. Oil on canvas. Tate, London.

so vivid amongst all the white that it captures the attention of the viewer immediately. It is unrestricted and floating in the air. Although it is not much, and certainly not a recreation of the archetype, it is an important example of Boyce’s use of the copper/gold hair which circulated the Pre-Raphaelite canvases so frequently.

The last painting of Boyce’s that I am going to discuss is an unfinished one; to me, it is the most important of her works in the context of this thesis. *Gretchen* (Fig. 17), dated January 1861, is Boyce’s only true experiment with the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman from her known works. According to Marsh and Nunn, the model she used for the painting was the

German nursemaid hired to look after her children.¹⁵⁵ The subject matter of the painting is a character taken from Goethe’s *Faust*,¹⁵⁶ Gretchen, who is seduced and “destroyed” by Faust early in the play.¹⁵⁷ In the painting, Gretchen is placed at the centre of the frame, her full body

¹⁵⁵ Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 114.

¹⁵⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust I & II*, 1790, trans. Stuart Atkins (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).

¹⁵⁷ Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 113.

on display. She is wearing what seems to be an emerald green dress, although it is still unfinished. Her skin is extremely pale, with a hint of pink flush on her cheeks. As she gazes at something or someone outside the frame, her expression is vacant, the shape of her mouth indicating the signs of sadness. Her hair, which showers down her back is red and voluminous, completely unrestricted but for a thin black band on top of her head. Once again, Boyce's interpretation of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman proves to be more on the melancholic side, just like Siddall's own interpretations, rather than the sensual temptress people are so used to seeing in male artists' art. To this day, Boyce's recreation of *Gretchen* is one of the most famous illustrations of the character in Western art, which is especially impressive considering both Gretchen and the novel Faust in general are very popular subject matters of Western art.

Yet, *Gretchen* is important beyond Boyce's illustration of the character in the Pre-Raphaelite Woman style, or that it is famous for its subject matter. The painting is also very significant to the construction of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype, as it proves, once again, the involvement of women artists in the construction process. The painting's date suggests that it is still a very early stage in the formation of this archetype, its best examples being produced by the mid- and late-1860s. With *Gretchen*, Boyce shows that she was a part of this Pre-Raphaelite tradition of including an unruly-haired, fair-skinned, melancholic-looking women in the paintings. Moreover, as I discussed earlier, this was the year Boyce passed away. Her experimentation with the archetype when it just started to come to its own shape suggests that had she lived, Boyce could produce many more paintings which included the archetype itself. The fact that this painting was described to be the most finest work of Boyce's by Rossetti further underlines the importance and the influence Boyce had in the creation of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ "'Gretchen', Joanna Mary Wells, 1861", *Tate* (gallery website), accessed 6 July 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wells-gretchen-n03814>.

As I argued earlier, even though Boyce doesn't seem to have produced a large amount of artworks including the visual archetype, the paintings I discussed above, especially *Study of Fanny Eaton* and *Gretchen* prove her active role in shaping not only the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman but also the Pre-Raphaelite art itself. Considering that her career was cut short by her unexpected death in the prime of her life and career, Boyce could be much more than what she is for English art had she lived. Nonetheless, even with her very short career, she is still considered to be one of the most important and influential artists of the nineteenth century.

4.3 – Lucy Madox Brown (1843 – 1894)

Lucy Madox Brown¹⁵⁹ was as Pre-Raphaelite as they came; born only a few years before the Brotherhood was established, she grew up surrounded by the members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Madox Brown's father was artist Ford Madox Brown, whom many believed to be the initial founder of the Pre-Raphaelite technical style.¹⁶⁰ She was completely encircled by art from a very early age, whether it was under her father's care when she was only a child or for being in the Rossetti household for a great part of her adolescence. Madox Brown's productive years as an artist coincided with the second generation of the movement, when, as Jan Marsh notes, women artists were more and more accepted in the Victorian art scene.¹⁶¹ Her art, both for the topics she used and the technical details of her painting style, was very much Pre-Raphaelite, and she was an important artist who kept up the tradition of including the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in her artworks.

Madox Brown was born in 1843, in Paris. Her mother, Elizabeth Bromley, passed away only three years after Madox Brown's birth, leaving her artist husband to care for their baby.

¹⁵⁹ I will refer to Lucy Madox Brown as "Brown" and her father with either his full name "Ford Madox Brown" or simply "Ford."

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 1.

¹⁶¹ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 80.

However, her father did not look after Madox Brown for too long. Upon their return to Britain, Madox Brown was first sent off to her aunt Helen Bromley's care, and later, to live with the Rossetti household in 1856.¹⁶² This brought her even closer to the Pre-Raphaelite circle, as at least three members of the Rossetti family were associated with the movement (Christina, Dante, and Michael). Under the Rossetti's care, she was tutored by Maria Rossetti, eldest daughter of the family. Later in her life, Madox Brown joined the Rossetti family line officially as well, as she married Michael William Rossetti, who was fourteen years older than her.

Prior to her move to the Rossetti's, Madox Brown was a frequent model of her father's, most famously known in the portrait Ford Madox Brown produced of her (Fig. 18). When she



Figure 18 – Madox Brown, Ford. *Lucy Madox Brown*. 1849. Private Collection.

was thirteen, she returned to her father's studio, this time as a pupil and a studio assistant. Madox Brown did not start painting until she was twenty-five years old, which is peculiar since she did grow up with art surrounding her at all times. Ford Madox Brown's studio was no stranger to Pre-Raphaelite women artists, as artist Georgiana Burne-Jones (1840 – 1920) trained there in 1856, and Marie

Spartali Stillman in 1864.¹⁶³ At the time Madox Brown returned to her father's side and started her art education herself, Stillman was still in Ford Madox Brown's studio, which gave the two women artists the chance to train together, later becoming very good friends. However, when

¹⁶² Marsh and Nunn, 80-81.

¹⁶³ Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 112.

their work is examined side-by-side, it is clear that the two artists have their own distinctive styles, although both painted with the Pre-Raphaelite principles and trained in the same studio.

In addition to her father, the Rossetti family, and Marie Spartali Stillman, Madox Brown was constantly in the company of other people who were in the Pre-Raphaelite circle as well. In 1869, the same year she exhibited her first artwork, Madox Brown travelled to Belgium and Germany with Jane Morris and her husband William Morris (1834 – 1896), both well-known Pre-Raphaelite figures and design pioneers.¹⁶⁴ She was also noted to be in the company of other Pre-Raphaelite artists such as William Bell Scott (1811 – 1890) and Alice Boyd (1825 – 1897), whom she travelled to Italy with in the summer of 1873, along with her future husband William Michael Rossetti.¹⁶⁵ At the time of the wedding Madox Brown was thirty-one years old, and her husband was forty-five. The couple was married for twenty years, until Madox Brown passed away at the age of fifty-one in 1894. Madox Brown was also a supporter of the women’s rights movement, and signed the national petition for women’s suffrage in 1889.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, she published a biography of Mary Shelley, Gothic author and daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, in 1890. This biography, called *Mrs. Shelley*, was published as a part of a series called “Eminent Woman.”

Madox Brown’s artistic career was very short-lived, only alive between 1868, when she started painting for the first time after many years in her father’s studio, to 1874, when she married William Michael Rossetti. In only six years, Madox Brown produced some of the most capturing images of English art. She mainly worked with watercolours, illustrating scenes taken from literature, especially Shakespeare, historical scenes, and portraits. As she followed the Pre-Raphaelite principles, her art usually had the “true to nature” quality preached by the Brotherhood, as well as the vivid colours that can be found on her father’s canvases as well. It

¹⁶⁴ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 126.

¹⁶⁵ Marsh and Nunn, 126.

¹⁶⁶ Marsh and Nunn, 126.

is certainly a pity that Madox Brown did not continue her art career after her marriage, as she could produce many more masterpieces as the sample of her works suggest. As she was a Pre-Raphaelite thorough and thorough, it is very easy to come by the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in her art. Since she belongs to the second generation of Pre-Raphaelite artists, her examples show a more developed version of the archetype, as opposed to the prototypical examples put forward by Siddall and Boyce.

One of Madox Brown's best-known works is *The Tomb Scene from Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' (Act V: sc.3)*, or shortly *The Tomb Scene* (Fig. 19). According to Marsh and



Nunn, it was one of the paintings which were included in the list of *Masterpieces of English Art* in 1896.¹⁶⁷ As the very detailed name suggests, the painting depicts the scene from *Romeo and Juliet*,¹⁶⁸

Figure 19 – Madox Brown, Lucy. *The Tomb Scene from Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' (Act V: sc.3)*. 1870. Watercolour and gouache on panel. Wightwick Manor, West Midlands.

more specifically, the scene right before Romeo commits suicide thinking that Juliet is dead. It truly is a very capturing image. The composition of the painting is spectacular in terms of how the viewer is positioned from a specific perspective to witness the intimate moment. On the right side, there are stairs leading up to an opening, which seems to be the only light source in the room. The left side of the frame, where Romeo is leaning over Juliet's body with the poison in his hand,

¹⁶⁷ Marsh and Nunn, 126.

¹⁶⁸ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, c.1590, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

is in shadows. Romeo is in a dark red overcoat/cloak, his black hair falling onto his shoulders. His image contrasts with Juliet's, who is in a white wedding dress, her fair skin is illuminated with the light leaking through the opening. Juliet's red hair is mostly hidden under the veil on her head. One of her best works, Madox Brown's *The Tombscene* captures the tragedy of what is going to happen to the young lovers extremely well. Juliet's image is very reminiscent of Millais' *Ophelia*, another of Shakespeare's young women who commits suicide. Madox

Brown's take on both Romeo and Juliet and the portrayal of Juliet as a Pre-Raphaelite Woman is quite different from her father's, who also produced a work based on the play the same year. In Ford Madox Brown's reinterpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* (Fig. 20), the chosen scene is not the tragedy of the young lovers, which, quite frankly, is the message of the play, but the "balcony scene," where Romeo seduces Juliet. Ford Madox Brown's Juliet is as fair as his daughter's, but her eyes not closed as



Figure 20 – Madox Brown, Ford. *Romeo and Juliet*. 1870. Oil on canvas. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

with the pleasure of being kissed by her lover. In Ford Madox Brown's version, Juliet is a product of pleasure and seduction, whereas in Madox Brown's version, she is the tragic young lover, the fourteen-year-old girl, who chooses to take the matters in her hand to escape a marriage she doesn't want to be in.

Madox Brown's *Ferdinand and Miranda Playing Chess*, or simply *Ferdinand and Miranda*, (Fig. 21) is another painting based on a Shakespeare play, this time *The Tempest*.¹⁶⁹



Figure 21 – Madox Brown, Lucy. *Ferdinand and Miranda Playing Chess*. 1871. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Madox Brown's first exhibited work in oils, *Ferdinand and Miranda*, depicts the scene from Act V, where King Alonso spots his son Ferdinand, whom he thought was drowned, in Prospero's cave.¹⁷⁰ The focus on the painting is the couple, placed slightly off-centred to the left. They sit on either side of a wooden chess table, Miranda in a flowy yellow dress, Ferdinand in red shirt and tights. Just like

in *The Tombscene*, the couple is placed in a close, intimate space, with an opening providing light into the room; this time it's the opening behind Miranda, which reminds the viewer of the location in which the story takes place (an island). The right side of the painting is completely in the shadows but for the faces of Caliban and Alonso, spying on the couple. Madox Brown's Miranda is one of the best examples of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. Her gaze is directed at her opponent, challenging him as she makes her move, instead of gazing low with a vacant or melancholic expression. Her copper hair frames her face and showers down her shoulders, contrasting with her yellow dress and fair skin. Everything from Miranda's challenging gaze

¹⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, c.1610, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁷⁰ Marsh and Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 127.

to her confident pose, and the fact that she is winning the chess game, reaffirms her power over Ferdinand, and goes against other interpretations of Miranda as an innocent, foolish girl who falls in love with the first man she sees. Madox Brown's Miranda seems to know exactly what she is doing, or who she is flirting with. It is instead Ferdinand who looks defeated under Miranda's will, his shoulders slumped low, his expression almost sad as he stares at her. Madox Brown's Pre-Raphaelite Woman fits well with other examples of the visual archetype produced by Millais, such as

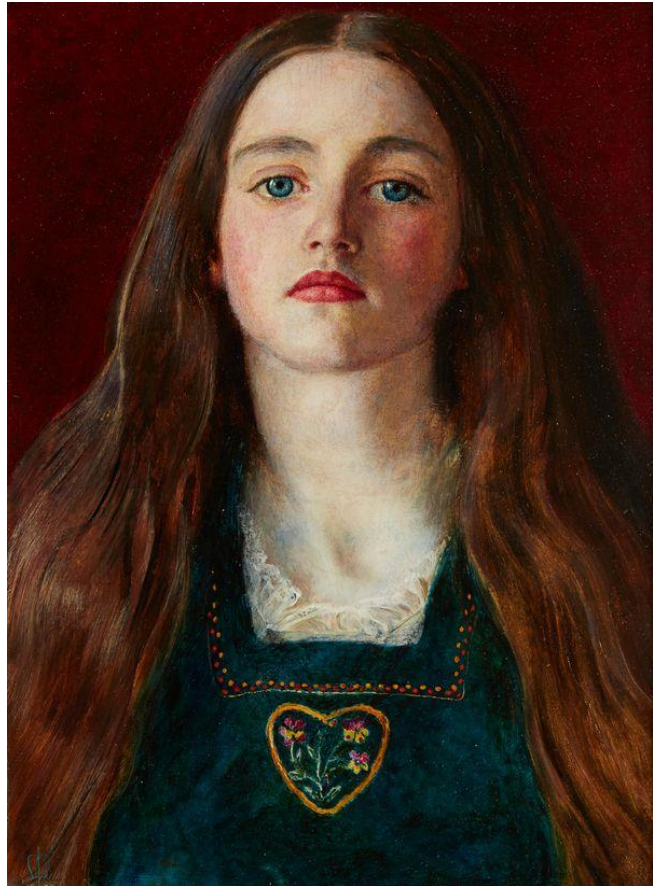


Figure 22 – Millais, John Everett. *Sophie Gray*. 1856. Oil on paper laid on panel. Private Collection.

The Bridesmaid or *Sophie Gray* (Fig. 22); a woman who is not afraid to challenge the others with her gaze.

Another example of Madox Brown's inclusion of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in her art is *The Magic Mirror*, also known as *The Fair Geraldine* (Fig. 23) which was exhibited in the Dudley Gallery in 1872.¹⁷¹ Madox Brown based this painting on another literary text, this time by Thomas Nashe (1593 – 1647) instead of Shakespeare. The literary text in question was *The Unfortunate Traveller*.¹⁷² The scene depicted in Boyce's painting is the part of the book when the Earl of Surrey asks a wizard to show him Lady Geraldine, his lover, to make sure that she

¹⁷¹ Angela Thirlwell, "William Michael and Lucy Rossetti: Outsider Insiders - The True Cosmopolitans", in *Outsiders Looking In: The Rossettis Then and Now*, ed. David Clifford and Laurence Roussillon (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 29–46, 37.

¹⁷² Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, 1594, ed. J. B. Steane (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

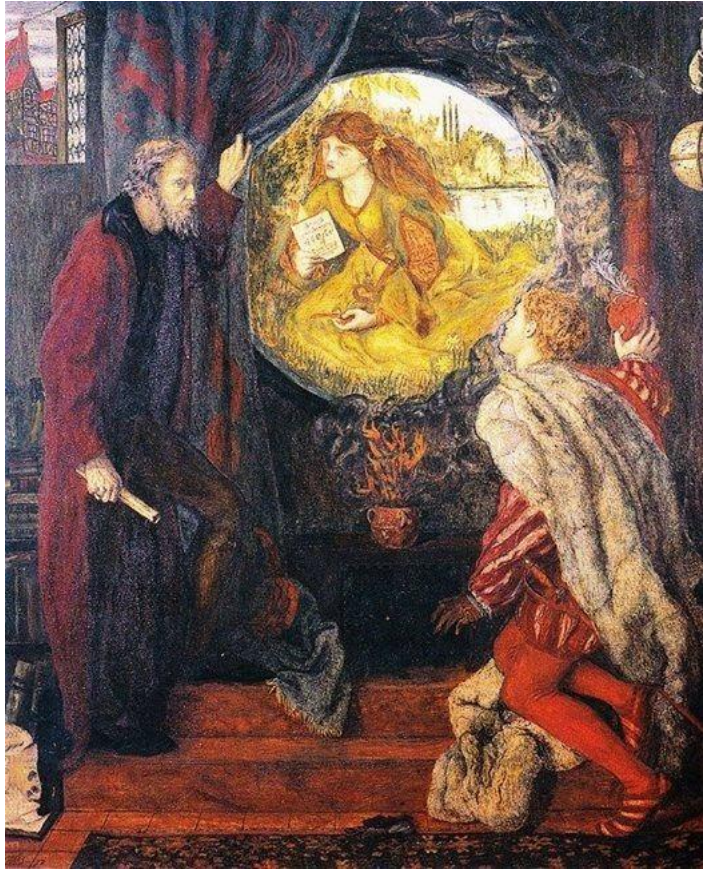


Figure 23 – Madox Brown, Lucy. *The Magic Mirror (The Fair Geraldine)*. 1872. Watercolour. Private Collection.

is faithful to him. Upon the Earl's request, Lady Geraldine appears on the "magic mirror," looking ill, and weeping in her bed, which, according to Thirlwell, was a "tearful image of mythic female loyalty."¹⁷³ In Madox Brown's interpretation of the scene, the magic mirror is hung behind a curtain which is drawn to the side by the wizard. The room is depicted in dark colours, especially red, to contrast with the image of Geraldine at the centre which is illuminated as

she is drawn outdoors. The Earl of Surrey falls onto his knees upon laying eyes on his lover, while the wizard's gaze is fixated on the Earl's face. However, Madox Brown's Geraldine is neither ill, nor weeping. Instead, she is outside, sitting on the grass and enjoying her book. She embodies the general characteristics of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman; fair skin, loose dress, copper hair, pensive or vacant expression. Just like in *Ferdinand and Miranda*, Madox Brown once again gives the female character her own agency. Geraldine is more than the love interest of the main character, who falls ill the moment she is left behind because she cannot stand being without her lover. Instead, she is depicted in the act of reading, which is a sign of rebellion, since through reading women can free themselves from the submissive roles assigned to them by the society. A woman who is reading is a woman who men fear, because by reading women have access to knowledge, pleasure and enjoyment which is not provided to them by

¹⁷³ Thirlwell, "William Michael and Lucy Rossetti: Outsider Insiders - The True Cosmopolitans", 38.

men, but by themselves. However, Geraldine is still faithful to her lover, since the book she reads is *The Songs and Sonnets of the Earl of Surrey*, a sign of her love and loyalty.¹⁷⁴ Geraldine is a very important example of Madox Brown's reinterpretation of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, especially because her position in the original story is transformed by Madox Brown on the canvas to make her into a more independent, strong, autonomous woman. In a sense, *The Fair Geraldine* is an example of Madox Brown's approach to the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman; which is to subvert the "passive" side of the archetype in her paintings and illustrate her characters in this style to include representation of stronger women within the examples of the archetype.

In addition to the paintings I discussed above, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman appears in Madox Brown's other paintings as well, such as *The Duet*¹⁷⁵ and *Margaret Rescuing the Head of her Father, Sir Thomas More from London Bridge*.¹⁷⁶ Madox Brown's use of the archetype in her paintings is quite interesting, as she often uses it in a way to merge the women from the pages of literature with the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, but then transforming them into strong women who challenge their submissive roles. Her choice of literary heroines help bring a different perspective on the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, which is that the women depicted in this style do not have to be submissive, erotic "creatures," but can be women of their own agency, who are there not for the male gaze but to take their role in Madox Brown's paintings to tell a story. What Madox Brown accomplishes is to take the women of the Pre-Raphaelite archetype outside the category of sensual temptresses who serve as decorative elements to the male gaze. At the same time, her frequent use of the archetype proves women's involvement in the construction process of this archetype, as it is also possible

¹⁷⁴ Thirlwell, 38.

¹⁷⁵ Madox Brown, Lucy. *The Duet*. 1870. Private Collection.

¹⁷⁶ Madox Brown, Lucy. *Margaret Rescuing the Head of her Father, Sir Thomas More from London Bridge*. 1873. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

to find this type of use of the archetype in late-Pre-Raphaelite artists' work such as Evelyn de Morgan and Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale.



Figure 24 – Cameron, Julia Margaret. *Marie Spartali Stillman*. 1868. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

4.4 – Marie Spartali Stillman (1844 – 1927)

Marie Spartali Stillman was one of the most productive artists of her time, with over a hundred paintings attributed to her today. She belonged to the second generation of Pre-Raphaelite artists. Stillman was also a model, painted by artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron. However staged, the image she had in Cameron's photographs (Fig. 24) pointed to her embodiment of the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. With her extremely long, reddish hair (which fell under her waist), loose clothes, and the expressions she chose to adopt for the photoshoot, Stillman looked exactly like a Pre-Raphaelite Woman. Although she was a very successful

artist, her identity as a model, especially in relation to Rossetti, often overshadowed her own artistic accomplishments in the Pre-Raphaelite history.

Marie Euphrosyne Spartali (later Stillman) was born in 1844, in London. Originally from Greek descent, she was the daughter of Euphrosyne "Effie" Varsami and the merchant Michael Spartali.¹⁷⁷ Stillman's family was extremely wealthy, as her father was the owner of a company called "Spartali&Co" which dealt with export/import business; he was also consul-general for Greece in London.¹⁷⁸ Being born in this very wealthy family brought a great deal

¹⁷⁷ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 98.

¹⁷⁸ Angela Thirlwell, *Into the Frame: The Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2010), 108.

of privilege in Stillman's life; she had every opportunity to study and practice art without the worry of having to work or to find a husband from an early age to take care of her financially. She wasn't the only woman artist in the family, either. Her cousins Maria Zambaco (1843 – 1914) and Aglaia Ionides (1834 – 1906) were both artists and contributors to Pre-Raphaelite art movement.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, her family was a part of the Greek community in London, a community known for its close relations to the Pre-Raphaelite artists as art patrons.¹⁸⁰ In 1871, Marie Spartali married William James Stillman, an American author and journalist. Upon taking her husband's last name, she used it throughout her career, even after their marriage came to an end in 1901 with William's death, which is why I chose to refer to her as Stillman here as well.

Stillman started her art career as a model. As her family held an important position in the Greek community which often had gatherings including artists and other intellectuals, it is not surprising that Stillman had close contact with a number of artists from an early age. According to Thirlwell, Stillman and her cousins Maria and Aglaia were highly in demand as models, often referred to as the "three graces."¹⁸¹ She reports that artists usually attempted to "secure all three" as their models, either individually or all together.¹⁸² From the way Thirlwell reports the strong interest in these three Greek women, with an emphasis on their Greek identity, it is quite clear that there was some sort of obsession on the basis of exoticism

¹⁷⁹ Kirsty Stonell Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 120.

¹⁸⁰ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 98.

¹⁸¹ Angela Thirlwell, *Into the Frame: The Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown*, 105.

"The Three Graces" are the goddesses of charm, beauty and creativity in Greek and Roman mythologies.

¹⁸² Thirlwell, 105.

surrounding them. Other scholars report that Stillman herself was fairly disturbed by all the attention her physical appearance was getting, since it often overshadowed her artistic career which she later devoted herself to.¹⁸³ The artists Stillman modelled for included, but was not limited to, Edward Burne-Jones (for *Cupid Finding Psyche*, 1866), Julia Margaret Cameron (for portrait and staged photographs, 1868), Ford Madox Brown (for *Marie Spartali*, 1869), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (for *Dante's Dream*, 1871 and *A Vision of Fiammetta*, 1878 (Fig. 25)) and Maria Zambaco (for *Medallion of Marie Stillman*, 1887).¹⁸⁴



Figure 25 – Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *A Vision of Fiammetta*. 1878. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Coming from a wealthy family, Stillman grew up with tutors teaching her languages (Greek, German, French), music, and art.¹⁸⁵ But she did not start her proper art education until 1864, which was the year she joined Ford Madox Brown's studio to train with him. She was twenty years old at the time, but her late start was not really a late start, since she did have a proper intellectual education prior. Stillman stayed in Ford Madox Brown's studio for years, training at the same time as his artist daughter Lucy Madox Brown, who she later became very

¹⁸³ Walker, *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang: Fifty Makers, Shakers and Heartbreakers from the Victorian Era*, 120.

¹⁸⁴ Burne-Jones, Edward. *Cupid Finding Psyche*. 1866. Watercolour and bodycolour. The British Museum, London.

Cameron, Julia Margaret. *Imperial Eleanore*. 1868. Private Collection.

Cameron, Julia Margaret. *Marie Spartali*. 1868. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Madox Brown, Ford. *Marie Spartali*. 1869. Coloured chalks on paper. Private Collection.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Dante's Dream*. 1871. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

¹⁸⁵ Thirlwell, *Into the Frame: The Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown*, 108.

close friends with.¹⁸⁶ According to Thirlwell, Ford Madox Brown taught his pupils everything from how to work with different materials such as watercolours, chalk, oil, and ink to studying the “old masters,” drawing from real-life models and learning the Pre-Raphaelite principles of being true to nature in their paintings.¹⁸⁷ It seems that by coming to his studio to obtain art training instead of going to a private art institution, Stillman had the chance to study human anatomy properly, since at this time women were still not allowed to work from nude models. However, Jan Marsh suggested otherwise in her latest publication *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, describing Stillman’s time in Ford Madox Brown’s studio as “serious but somewhat limited, with seemingly little instruction to anatomy and no tuition in oils.”¹⁸⁸ This comment might be due to Stillman’s medium of choice for her paintings, which was often watercolour, gouache, and chalk, not oils like traditionally used by “professional” artists.

Nevertheless, Stillman’s choice of mediums did not make her a less successful artist. She exhibited in 1869 for the first time, at the Dudley Gallery,¹⁸⁹ submitting three of her paintings which were *The Lady Prays-Desire* (Fig.26), *The Pacha’s Widow*,¹⁹⁰ and *Corinna*.¹⁹¹ She frequently exhibited in the Dudley Gallery after this first time, as well as in the Grosvenor/New Gallery.¹⁹² She also submitted her work to the Royal Academy in London, in 1870. Among over a hundred paintings she produced in her sixty years of professional career, Stillman often illustrated landscape scenes from Italy (she lived in Rome for quite some time upon her marriage), portraits of her art patrons and friends, scenes from history and literature, and single female figure paintings adorned with allegorical symbols. She passed away at the age of eighty in 1927.

¹⁸⁶ Thirlwell, 109.

¹⁸⁷ Thirlwell, 112-114.

¹⁸⁸ Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 159.

¹⁸⁹ Marsh and Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement*, 99.

¹⁹⁰ Stillman, Marie Spartali. *The Pacha’s Widow*. 1867. Location unknown.

¹⁹¹ Stillman, Marie Spartali. *Corinna*. 1867. Location unknown.

¹⁹² Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, 131.

Marie Spartali Stillman's relationship with the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is very similar to that of Elizabeth Siddall's. Just like Siddall, Stillman too was a Pre-Raphaelite model and known for her physical appearance in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Therefore, her interpretations of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman were also a way to establish her own version of the popular archetype, as well as establish herself as an artist rather than a

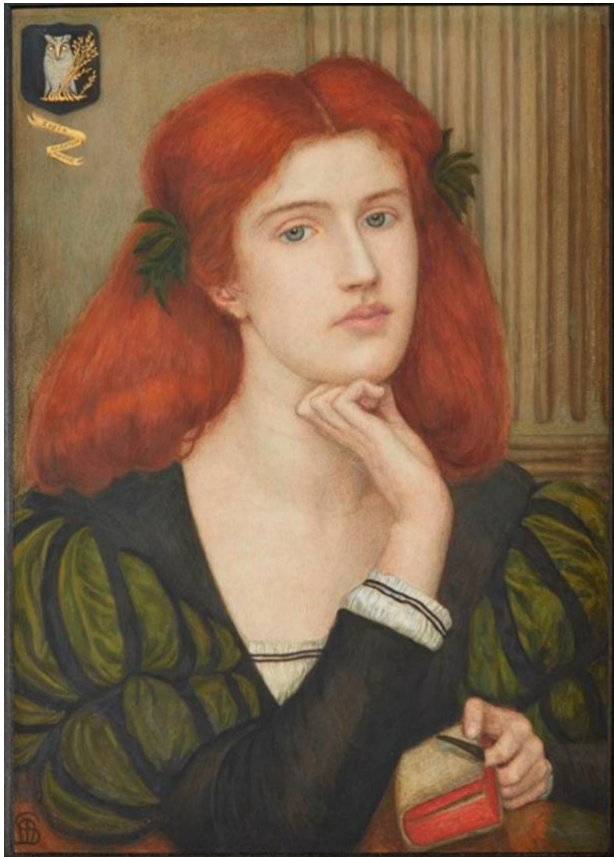


Figure 26 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. *The Lady Prays-Desire*. 1867. Watercolour with gold paint on paper. Private Collection.

model, in her art. Some of her best-known work were her single female figure compositions, which were either portraits of her patrons or allegorical pieces. The women illustrated in these paintings were often drawn in the style of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. One example of these paintings is *The Lady Prays-Desire* (Fig. 26), one of Stillman's first exhibited work in the Royal Academy. The female figure in the painting is Stillman herself, drawn as the allegorical figure in Edmund Spenser's

(1552 – 1599) *The Faerie Queen*,¹⁹³ who

symbolises ambition. According to Jan Marsh, the title of this painting represents the “pursuit of fame and acclaim,” which translates as Stillman's own “desire for praise.”¹⁹⁴ The background of the painting is a neutral shade, slightly animated with the inclusion of the fluted column. In fashion with her other paintings, the female figure is in a dark green, medieval looking dress with puffed shoulders. The visible parts of her skin are fair, contrasting with the

¹⁹³ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590-96, ed. Thomas P. Jr Roche (London and New York: Penguin, 1987).

¹⁹⁴ Jan Marsh, "Marie Spartali The Lady Prays-Desire", Blog, *Jan Marsh* (blog), 8 April 2019, <http://janmarsh.blogspot.com/2019/04/marie-spartali-lady-prays-desire.html>.

green of her dress and the bright red of her hair. Her expression, like many other examples of Pre-Raphaelite Woman, is vacant, yet her light-green eyes are directed straight at the viewer. At the bottom of the frame is a book, placed on top a wooden surface on which the figure's elbows are also resting. The owl, which is placed on the top left corner is a symbol of Athena, which Marsh suggests to be a sign of Stillman's Greek heritage,¹⁹⁵ but I believe it to be a symbol of wisdom, which is also often associated with Athena herself. *Lady Prays-Desire* is a clear attempt by Stillman to present herself as an intellectual artist (as the use of the book and the owl indicates) who wants to be known not with for her beauty but for her success as an artist (as the use of allegorical figure as herself implies). In this way, her interpretation of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is not unlike Madox Brown's.

Beatrice (Fig. 27) is another example of the single female figured paintings Stillman made which includes the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in a way that challenges the "traditional" depictions of the archetype. In this painting, Stillman's subject matter is Beatrice, the infamous love interest of Dante, which is often seen in Rossetti's earlier work as well. However, the focus of the paintings is neither Beatrice's love for Dante nor her divine beauty as Dante likes to



Figure 27 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. *Beatrice*. 1895. Watercolour, gouache and tempera mounted on paper. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

¹⁹⁵ Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, 159.

describe her as, but it is Beatrice as an intellectual individual. In the painting, Beatrice is on what seems to be a balcony, or an alcove in the garden, under a vine of red roses. She is in a dark blue dress, a tulle veil framing the crown of her head and wrapping down her chest. Her head is rested on one of her hands, while the other hand is placed on top of the book, pointing at the spot she stopped reading with the tip of her finger. There are a couple of violets placed next to her book, symbolising her spiritual wisdom. Her gaze is directed at a point outside the frame as she seems to be lost in her contemplation. Her expression, clothing and hair all point to the Pre-Raphaelite archetype. While this is not the first the Beatrice is portrayed as the Pre-Raphaelite Woman, it is definitely one of the most interesting examples, especially due to its stark contrast with Rossetti's interpretations of her, which are either overly dramatic with a heavy emphasis on the tragic consequences of her love with Dante or simply sensual figures.



Figure 28 – Stillman, Marie Spartali. *Love's Messenger*. 1885. Watercolour. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

Yet in Stillman's painting, Beatrice transforms into an everyday beauty who spends her leisure with the act of reading, which can be read as a sign of rebellion by women against the society's expectations of them, as I mentioned earlier.

Another example of her single female figure paintings is *Love's Messenger* (Fig. 28), one of her best-known work. The painting is another allegorical work. The female figure is

placed in front of a double-frame window, one of the frames covered with a curtain, the other wide open to give the viewer a peek of what lays beyond the frame. The window frame works

as a divider, keeping the female figure on the right, closed side of the frame. She has all the archetypal qualities, the loose medieval dress, fair skin, melancholic expression with a lowered gaze, copper/golden hair. In her right hand she is holding a white dove which seems to just have flown in from the open window. Her left hand is pressed against her chest, the message of her lover in its grip. At the bottom left corner of the frame there is an embroidery frame, which she seems to have been working on before the dove flew in and distracted her. The embordered piece is of Eros, also known as Cupid, the little god of love, illustrated with a bow and arrow, and a blindfold around his eyes. The dove and the rose attached to her chest imply love, innocence and loyalty.

In addition to single female figure paintings which have the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as the main figure, Stillman also included it in a number of her paintings as side characters as well. The examples of this situation can be found in her *Antigone and Ismene Burying their Brother Polynices on the Battlefield* (1871), *Fiammetta Singing* (1879) and *By a Clear Well, Within a Little Field* (1884).¹⁹⁶ All of these paintings, and many of her other work include “the red-haired woman” figure drawn with the qualities of the archetype. Just like Madox Brown, Stillman’s interpretations of the archetype suggest a different perspective on the Pre-Raphaelite Woman than what some of their other contemporaries took. Merging the archetype with intellectual symbols and female heroines from history and literature, both Madox Brown and Stillman succeed in presenting this popular archetype as something other than sensual temptresses seeking out to lure the men’s attention. Furthermore, Stillman’s single female figure paintings are very comparable to that of Rossetti’s, as their compositions are often similar, yet they differ quite a bit in terms of technical style and representation of the archetype. Most of Rossetti’s work, like *Bocca Bacciata*, *Regina Cordium*

¹⁹⁶ Stillman, Marie Spartali. *Antigone and Ismene Burying their Brother Polynices on the Battlefield*. 1871. Oil on canvas. Simon Carter Gallery, Suffolk.

Stillman, Marie Spartali. *Fiammetta Singing*. 1879. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

Stillman, Marie Spartali. *By a Clear Well, Within a Little Field*. 1884. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

and *The Blue Bower*, some of which I discussed above, present the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman through a strong male gaze. From the way he styles his figures to the allegoric objects he chooses to adorn them with, his creations almost always tell the story of overly eroticised (mind, eroticised in the “Pre-Raphaelite” way) women. Yet Stillman’s interpretation of the same archetype is quite different, as she chooses to present her women not as eroticised sexual creatures but as individual, intellectual beings; which points out to the importance of the relationship between gaze and gender.

This chapter showed that all artists discussed here were directly involved with constructing the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman at the same time as their male contemporaries. Although each of the women discussed in this chapter had different styles and figures they chose to explore in their art, all of them were very important figures in the Pre-Raphaelite circle who constantly influenced and were influenced by other people in the orbit. Whether as Siddall’s melancholic female figures or as Madox Brown’s strong heroines, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was always a part of women’s art. However, their exploration of the archetype goes beyond affirming their involvement with its construction; it also exposes the different the artist’s gender makes in how women are portrayed in visual arts. The artworks I discussed above show that with the presence of the female gaze instead of the male gaze, women have a very different story to tell about themselves.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this thesis, I demonstrated the role women played in constructing and promoting the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman; in particular I focused on a number of artworks from four prominent women artists of the movement (Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall, Joanna Mary Boyce, Lucy Madox Brown and Marie Spartali Stillman). The intention I set for myself for this research was to prove that women were involved in shaping this extremely influential art style and movement, especially the visual archetype which is considered to be the very essence of the art style. I argued that reclaiming women's roles in creating this archetype would not only change the way one looks at the overall importance women had in Pre-Raphaelitism but also prove how an artist's positionality, especially gender can have an influence on how one regards certain images/archetypes.

For the longest time, scholars have interpreted the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as a product of the male gaze. This interpretation suggested that this archetype promoted the image of a woman which was physically very different to other images of femininity in Victorian era, yet still fit into the gender ideology of the time as she was passive and voiceless. Moreover, the argument was that this archetype was not very different from other portrayals of women in Western art which served the purpose of pleasing the male gaze (such as the Venus figure). Or, they claimed that the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was a revolutionary image which offered a fresh take on the "pretty woman on canvas" theme. This claim came from the argument that women portrayed in this archetypal style had more agency compared to their contemporary examples. Because they were often represented on the canvas as women who took their fate in their own hands (such as Ophelia, Lady of Shallot or the Nymphs), or were illustrated as sensual temptresses who set out to seduce men to fulfil their own needs. Although these are two very different perspectives on the archetype, they have one thing in common; both perspectives assume that the default Pre-Raphaelite artist is a man. The

artworks mostly discussed to prove these points are usually created by men such as Rossetti or Millais or Hunt. Furthermore, the idea that the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is a male construction does not get challenged, rather, it is even linked to Rossetti time and time again. Yet as I demonstrated in this thesis, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was a collaborative construction created by women as much as men, which complicates the arguments of both perspectives on the archetype.

In this concluding chapter, I will demonstrate how reclaiming women's role in creating this archetype complicates the question of the male gaze. Furthermore, I am going to highlight the difference that female gaze and authorship make in understanding how this archetype appears on the canvas. I will use the analyses I made in the previous chapter to argue that approaching the Pre-Raphaelite Woman with the "creator male/object female" duality falls very short, especially when women's role as contributors to its construction and the artwork they produced is taken into account.

5.1 – The question of male gaze

Mulvey's original interpretation of the male gaze is that there is a duality when it comes to the pleasure of looking and whom it belongs to, which assigns male as the active, with the right to look and female as the passive, who exists to be looked at.¹⁹⁷ This creates an imbalance, especially in visual products such as plastic arts, photography, or cinema which displays women as sexual objects for male desire.¹⁹⁸ The same argument has also been made for Pre-Raphaelite art and how women are portrayed in it. Although nudes are very scarce compared to other art movements, which is a result of the preferred subject matters¹⁹⁹ of the members more than anything, women are still charged with incredible sexual appeal. The many

¹⁹⁷ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", 56.

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter II.

¹⁹⁹ Such as scenes taken from the Bible or literature, as well as medieval themes.

descriptions of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as “sexual creatures,”²⁰⁰ “stunners,”²⁰¹ or “femme fatales”²⁰² are enough proof of how this archetype is regarded in the Pre-Raphaelite literature, where it is interpreted as undeniably a product of the male gaze.

But is it really, if the women were as crucial to its formation as men? Based on Mulvey’s formula of “male gaze,” there are three looks involved in the process of creating an artwork which would be considered a product of the male gaze; (1) the gaze of the male artist directed at women, (2) representation of the woman (the model) on canvas through stylisation and composition, (3) the male spectator/viewer who takes pleasure from looking and objectifies the woman he sees on canvas.²⁰³ The claim that the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Women is inseparable from the male gaze proves to be fundamentally wrong, when one considers all the artwork I discussed in the previous chapter in the context of this formula, which I will concise into “(1) the artist, (2) the artwork and (3) the audience” to demonstrate how it works with the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

The first work I discussed from Siddall, *Sir Patrick Spens*, has a self-portrait of Siddall as the main female figure. When Mulvey’s formula is applied, then the result is this: Siddall as the artist, who is a woman, *Sir Patrick Spens*, as the artwork which includes a self-reflected female image in a medieval dress, used as a part of the composition to tell a story to the viewer rather than simply being used as a decorative object, and the Pre-Raphaelite circle as the audience, which, although predominantly male, still included a great number of women as well. Another example from Siddall is *Lady Clare*: the artist is the same, the audience is the same, and the artwork reflects a similar use of female figure to the previous one. Siddall’s women

²⁰⁰ Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore, "Sensuality, Lust and Passion: How the Pre-Raphaelites Changed the Way the World Sees Women", *The Guardian*, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/dec/19/sensuality-lust-and-passion-how-the-pre-raphaelites-changed-the-way-the-world-sees-women>.

²⁰¹ Alison Smith, "The Sisterhood & Its Afterlife", in *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, ed. Jan Marsh (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019).

²⁰² Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*.

Femme fatale: a seductive woman who lures men into dangerous or compromising situations. (merriam-webster)

²⁰³ Walters, *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory*, 57.

illustrated as the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman are far from being objectified for the male gaze, especially because they were instead constructed through the female gaze. Moreover, Siddall's female figures had a self-portrait quality to them, which means beyond constructing another woman's image on canvas, they were instead a reflection of Siddall's own image. This consequently complicates the relationship between the gaze and the artwork (the art and the artist) even more, as well as the relationship the artwork had with the audience, since Siddall's paintings then were more than just showcasing her artistic abilities to the audience, they were also a way for her to construct her own image and express herself to the audience.

Another artist which had a similar relationship to the archetype was Marie Spartali Stillman, as she was depicted in it by male artists as much as she depicted herself as the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. The scope of Stillman's audience was definitely more complicated than Siddall's, since she operated beyond the small Pre-Raphaelite circle of Britain quite often, especially later in her career. Yet, the representation of the female figure as the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is pretty much similar. *The Lady Prays-Desire* is the best example in this case, which is an allegorical self-portrait of Stillman as an ambitious woman who yearns for praise. The female figure is styled in a way that points to her intellectuality, rather than her beauty or body which might capture the male attention. Hence Stillman (the artist), uses the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype as a form for her self-portrait which highlights her professional desires (the artwork), to be exhibited in the Royal Academy, where she establishes herself as a professional artist to the academy members and the public, as well as the Pre-Raphaelite circle (the audience).

The artworks by these women debunk the claim of the male gaze beyond paintings which are self-portraits. Stillman's reinterpretation of *Beatrice*, lover of Dante, offers a similar emphasis on the intellectuality of the female figure over her beauty. I discussed earlier that

Stillman herself was disturbed by being famous for her looks instead of her profession. Thus it is very easy to make the assumption that Stillman's Pre-Raphaelite Women were drawn as to highlight qualities other than the women's physical appearance in purpose. In this way, Stillman might have hoped to save her female figures from the male gaze she herself suffered from so often. By establishing the women in her paintings as intellectual individuals or allegorical constructions, Stillman was able to create images which aimed to avert the male gaze from the women's appearance, i.e. sexuality.

These brief examples from Siddall and Stillman are enough to show that female authorship and the inclusion of the female gaze in creating an artwork helped break away from the traditionally promoted the male gaze of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Yet, in addition to the effect the artist's gender has on the end product, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman archetype already defies the claim of the male gaze by how it was constructed in the first place. I discussed earlier that recent studies on the Pre-Raphaelite movement advocate for the models' influence on the artworks and style of the movement, on top of the contributions of women artists who shaped this archetype as well. It is also widely accepted in Pre-Raphaelite literature that the archetype owes so much to Siddall for the physical appearance it has, as Siddall was one of the first models who truly influenced a number of members of the Brotherhood with her looks. As I argue in this thesis, Siddall herself was one of the artists who put forward the first examples of the archetype and shaped the construction of it from a very early stage. Therefore, the Pre-Raphaelite archetype can be considered as a product of self-reflection, if not fully, then definitely partially. The same argument can also be made for Stillman, who also often used her own image blended together with the characteristics of the archetype, hence presented herself as the Pre-Raphaelite Woman through a process of self-reflection. Hence it is undeniable that the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was created through the female gaze and female authorship as much as it was through the male gaze.

5.2 – *The consequences of female authorship*

A discussion on the female authorship is important as it shows how the presence of the female gaze truly affects the way Pre-Raphaelite Woman was portrayed and further highlights the importance of reclaiming women's voices in creating this archetype. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the women artists I examined in this thesis had their own very distinct styles, even if they were all a part of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Yet within these distinct styles, there were similarities in terms of how they portrayed their female figures in the archetypal style. Women's portrayals of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman were often significantly different from their male contemporaries'. As the examples I analysed show, the presence of the female gaze resulted in the lack of oversexualised images of women in these paintings. Instead, the focus was much more on either the stories which the paintings attempted to tell, or other characteristics of the female figures, like their agency, intellectuality, frame of mind, and so on.

For instance, my analysis of Elizabeth Siddall's works show that her paintings had a self-portrait quality to them. In a sense, Siddall's Pre-Raphaelite Women were a way for the artist to establish her own image, by her own means, in her own art. The images she created had similarities to the images male artists of the movement created of her, yet they were missing the "sexual appeal" quite a bit. As examples such as Millais' *Ophelia* or Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* prove, even her images as dying women had (very unnecessary) euphoric, "near orgasmic"²⁰⁴ expressions. In men's paintings, Siddall as the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was always constructed as sensual yet enigmatic, melancholic yet desirable, beautiful yet unattainable. However, the focus was very different in Siddall's own interpretations of the same archetype. Her female figures were constructed in a way to reflect her state of mind. The

²⁰⁴ Sebag-Montefiore, "Sensuality, Lust and Passion: How the Pre-Raphaelites Changed the Way the World Sees Women".

vacant expression of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman wasn't just a vacant expression in Siddall's art, it was transformed to show her melancholy, as the artist had a very turbulent mental health throughout her life. The submission which was indicated with the bow of the women's heads did not mean submission to men's sexual desires, but to the circumstances they found themselves in, whether in real life or mentally, and did not know how to escape.

Joanna Mary Boyce's *Gretchen* is the artist's best example of the use of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. It is also a very good example for showing the impact the presence of the female gaze makes in reinterpreting a female figure from literature, especially when it is compared to Rossetti's painting which explores the same character, *Risen at Dawn* (also known as *Gretchen Discovering the Jewels*).²⁰⁵ Rossetti's *Gretchen* is, unsurprisingly, overly eroticised. She is clothed, yet her upper body is barely covered with the see-through fabric of her dress, which falls down one of her shoulders. Her red hair is swept behind her shoulder to showcase her fair skin, as her eyes are focused on the bead necklace she holds. Yet, Boyce's *Gretchen* tells a different story, as Taylor argues, there is a sympathy for the character in this painting.²⁰⁶ Boyce's female figure is not illustrated as a sexual temptress, rather she is the innocent girl who is destroyed as a result of Faust's pursuits. It is the same book, same character, yet two very different approaches to its representation. For Boyce, Gretchen is not only a woman who is Faust's object of desire, she is simply an ordinary girl who is later lured into Faust's claws. This shows that what the presence of the female gaze does is to establish the female figures as their own figures, constructed not in relation to, but independently from the men in their stories. Although Gretchen is simply the love interest of Faust in the play, a character which serves the purpose of moving Faust's quest further, through the female gaze she becomes the protagonist of Boyce's painting.

²⁰⁵ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Risen at Dawn (Gretchen Discovering the Jewels)*. 1868. Coloured chalks. Tullie House, Carlisle Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.

²⁰⁶ Helen Nina Taylor, "Too Individual an Artist to Be a Mere Echo": Female Pre-Raphaelite Artists as Independent Professionals", 55.

As I also claimed earlier, Lucy Madox Brown put forward the most interesting examples of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman in the movement. Her depictions of the female figures who were illustrated in this style completely subverted the passive characterizations of women. She borrowed female heroines from English literature, like Juliet, Miranda or Lady Geraldine, and transformed the way they were traditionally illustrated as submissive women who were props in stories where men were the main protagonist, just like in the case of Gretchen. In Madox Brown's art, the "protagonists" of the paintings are women who are autonomous subjects. Juliet is not the young girl seduced by Romeo and wastes her life for him, she is a woman who takes her fate in her own hands by conspiring to save herself from a marriage she doesn't want to be in. Miranda is not a naive girl who falls in love with the first man she ever lays eyes on, she is a woman who holds the power over Ferdinand, the one which pursues the man she wants. Lady Geraldine is not a weak girl who falls sick over her gone lover, she is an intellectual woman who has other entertainment in her life than just the company of the man she loves. The heroines Madox Brown takes from male authors are reconstructed as strong women on her canvas. They are stripped away from the purpose of being "passive sexual objects" and are instead given other qualities that highlight their agency and power. Madox Brown's female gaze liberates these women from their conventional representations, which shows that women have a different story to tell about themselves when they are the ones who have the power to do so.

Works of Marie Spartali Stillman are very comparable to those of Rossetti's as both artists often made paintings which had single female figures. As I argued earlier, Rossetti was largely to blame for the Pre-Raphaelite Woman's reputation as the "dark Venus" or the "sensual creature." His paintings often overly eroticised the female figures, giving them red, ajar lips, dresses which fell from their shoulders and expressions which often played at the border between melancholy, temptation and euphoria to create enigmatic yet sensual women.

Examples as *Lady Lilith*²⁰⁷ or *Aurelia*²⁰⁸ show that Rossetti's intent with his single female figure paintings was never to tell the story of the women themselves, it was rather the sexual appeal of them. Yet, as I argued above, in Stillman's paintings, like *Beatrice* or *Lady Prays-Desire*, women did not appear simply as sexual beings. Stillman's focus in creating these paintings was to highlight the intellectuality of women and establish them as such, instead of simply focusing on their beauty or sexual appeal. The number of artworks from both artists dealing with the same composition prove that the presence of the female gaze made an immense difference in how these women were portrayed. Although they worked in very similar compositional styles, their legacies are so different from one another. Today, it is Rossetti who is known for his paintings of women famous for their sexual appeal, yet Stillman is known for her allegorical paintings which often include a female figure. The focus is not on the objectification of women, but the symbolic meaning of the paintings.

The works of these artists show that women had different stories to tell about themselves and wanted to establish that they had other qualities beyond being objects of the male desire. The analyses of their work prove that the presence of the female gaze made a remarkable difference in how the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was portrayed. Compared to paintings which were created through the male gaze, women's paintings were constructed to highlight either genuine representations of their images, or intellectual, strong, independent women who defied the conventional expectations of the society.

5.3 – Conclusion

It is only possible to see the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as another product of the male gaze, existing on the canvas for the male pleasure of looking, if one considers the Pre-

²⁰⁷ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Lady Lilith*. 1866–68, 1872–73. Oil on canvas. Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

²⁰⁸ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Aurelia*. 1863–1873. Oil on mahogany. Tate, London.

Raphaelite art as simply a collection of artworks created by men. Yet this approach completely overlooks the work produced by women artists, as well as the self-portrait characteristics of the archetype. But the myth of “the band of genius brothers who revolutionized the Victorian art scene all by themselves” crumbles with the inclusion of missing information, such as recognition of the women artists who contributed to this movement and their works which engage with the archetype, and all the models who actively and constantly influenced the art produced by men like Millias and Rossetti; with all of these data considered, it is not possible to see the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as a product of male gaze anymore. This is not to say that the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman was not used or transformed by male artists, and that in their interpretation it did not serve for their objectification of women. But these aspects should not define fully the archetype itself and its role in art history. The archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman cannot be analysed without the inclusion of women’s voices, which undoubtedly played a huge role in its creation. Consequently, the inclusion of women’s voices and female gaze impacts the way this archetype is perceived, which proves to be immensely important for liberating women’s works from the interpretative framework of male-cantered art history and art criticism.

In this thesis, I have undertaken to show the important role women played in creating the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman as muses, models, and especially artists. I argued that in mainstream art history, the Pre-Raphaelite Woman is perceived as an eroticised, sensual, “sexual creature.” Yet I tried to demonstrate that such a perspective is only partially justified by the art practices in which the archetype has been constructed; rather, it is based upon the representations of the archetype the dominant male artists, and interpretations of the scholars who talked about the Pre-Raphaelite Woman without taking the time to trace it in women’s works. The claim that the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman only serves the purpose of pleasing the male gaze rejects the contribution of female authorship and influence to shaping

this archetype, and oversimplifies an entire movement as if it were based on individual artists' works only. Therefore, I turned to feminist art criticism and drew from scholars such as Nochlin, Pollock, and Mulvey to deconstruct the idea of the "male Pre-Raphaelite genius" and open a discussion about the relationship between the archetype and the gendered gaze of the artist. The analyses I conducted on women's art prove the importance of the artist's gender in representing the Pre-Raphaelite Woman. As I demonstrated, female authorship resulted in freeing this archetype from overly eroticised portrayals which were created to please the male gaze and instead highlighted different characteristics to establish women as intellectual, autonomous, powerful agents with complex states of mind.

This thesis hopes to contribute to the discussions about the role of canon in art history, and in particular discussions the role of women artists has in shaping the canon. I demonstrated that male-focused canon misrepresents the visual archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman by erasing its roots. In this case, the inclusion of women's contributions and the female gaze in my interpretations of the archetype clearly shows the shortcomings of a limited male-canon. By situating Siddall, Boyce, Madox Brown and Stillman as pioneers of this archetype, I showed that the inclusion of women artists and more generally of gender perspective in interpretation of art movements not only enriches, but also reshapes the perspective in which it has traditionally been perceived. Therefore, I hope that this thesis expands the ongoing discussion on women's role in shaping the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and consequently contributes to the discussions on the role of women in art history more generally.

Further research on other Pre-Raphaelite women should be expanded to include more voices to reshape other parts of Pre-Raphaelite history, and art history more broadly. Although there is a great number of women associated with the movement, only a handful of them have been researched properly by a limited number of scholars. There is still much work to be done to write the stories of Pre-Raphaelite women, recover their works, and establish them as active

contributors to the movement. There is also a lack of research on the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman; although it is recognised in different artists' works, further research on the visual archetype including better understanding of the symbolism attached to it, and the way it continued to be influential in arts beyond the time of the movement still needs to be done.

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