The Art of Magic: British Depictions of the Occult in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Alexandra Denman

Ph.D

University of York

History of Art

December 2017

Abstract

In 2013, *Witches and Wicked Bodies* was the first major British exhibition with a focus on images of witches and witchcraft in art and visual culture, with a timeline spanning from the Renaissance period to the early twenty-first century, but one era was sorely neglected - only two of the impressive number of images made in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were included. The first aim of this thesis is, therefore, to draw attention to the occult imagery in British artworks created between 1849 and the end of the First World War, providing new perspectives on the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederick Sandys, Simeon Solomon, Edward Burne-Jones, Evelyn De Morgan, and John William Waterhouse.

Additionally, this thesis addresses the prevalence of images of witchcraft, magico-religious ritual, and spiritualist practice (and the real-life continuation of such practices) in an era often characterised by scientific and industrial revolution, and tensions between the 'rational' and the 'irrational'. As indicated by the title, the crux of the argument rests on emphasising the connection between the occult arts and the visual arts, with both practices being forms of expression that rely on creativity.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	02
List of Illustrations	04
Acknowledgements	08
Declaration	09
Introduction	10
I.Defining Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery in Victorian and Edwardian Britain	32
II. “The soul’s sphere of infinite images”: Truth, Magic, and Spiritualism in the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti	60
III. The Kiss and the Kill: Frederick Sandys’ Enchantresses	106
IV.The Vanishing Act: Simeon Solomon and the Strange Disappearance of the *Femme Fatale*	142
V.The Sage and the Sorceress: Magic and Creativity in Edward Burne-Jones’s Representations of Merlin and Nimue	174
VI.Magic, Spiritualism, and Evelyn De Morgan’s Sorceresses	210
VII.Fairy-Ladies and Witches: A Glimpse into Magic and Creativity in the works of John William Waterhouse	247
Conclusion	266
Bibliography	272
Illustrations	290

List of Illustrations

1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Laboratory,* 1849, Watercolour, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* 1866–68, 1872–73, Oil on canvas, 965 × 851 mm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.

3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Sibylla Palmifera,* 1865-70, Oil on canvas, 984 x 850 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

4. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Woman Combing Her Hair,* 1864, Watercolour, 343 × 311 mm, Private Collection.

5. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Fazio's Mistress (Aurelia)*, 1863-73, Oil on mahogany, Support: 432 x 368 mm, frame: 771 x 708 x 82 mm, Tate, London.

6. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix,* circa 1864-60, Oil on canvas, Support: 864 x 660 mm, frame: 1212 x 1015 x 104 mm, Tate, London.

7. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel,* circa 1875-81, Oil on canvas, 1110 x 827 mm; predella 365 x 828 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

8. Frederick Sandys, *Morgan Le Fay,* 1863-64, Oil on panel, 437 x 618 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

9. Edward Burne-Jones, *Morgan Le Fay,* 1862, Oil on canvas, 965.2 × 482.6 mm, Leighton House Museum, London.

10. Cornelis Saftleven, *A Witches' Sabbath,* circa 1650, Oil on panel, 543 × 772 mm, Art Institute of Chicago.

11. Francisco Goya, *Witches' Sabbath,* 1797-98, Oil on canvas, 430 × 300 mm, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid.

12. Frederick Sandys, *Medea,* 1866-68, Oil on panel, 460 x 610 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

13. Frederick Sandys, *Vivien,* 1863, Oil on canvas, 640 x 525 mm, Manchester Art Gallery.

14. Frederick Sandys, *La Belle Isolde,* 1862, Oil on canvas, Private collection.

15. Frederick Sandys, *Cassandra,* Before 1904, Private collection.

16. Joseph Swain, after Frederick Sandys, *Helen and Cassandra,* 1866, Wood engraving, Composition: 176 × 124 mm; sheet: 183 × 130 mm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.

17. Frederick Sandys, *Helen of Troy,* circa. 1867, Oil on panel, Panel: 384 x 305 x 780 mm; frame: 648 x 559 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

18. Evelyn De Morgan, *Cassandra,* 1898, Oil on canvas, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.

19. Evelyn De Morgan, *Helen of Troy,* 1898, Oil on canvas, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.

20. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus,* 1867, Oil on canvas, 503 x 375 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

21. Simeon Solomon, *The Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love,* 1865, Pen on paper, 250 x 194 mm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

22. Simeon Solomon, *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mitylene,* 1864*,* Watercolour on paper, Support: 330 x 381 mm; frame: 511 x 558 x 46 mm, Tate London.

23. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Autumn Vintage Festival,* 1873, Oil on canvas, 753 x 381 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

24. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus,* 1867, Watercolour on paper, Private collection.

25. Simeon Solomon, *The Acolyte (A Jewish King and his Page),* 1873, Watercolour, 216 x 216 mm, Dublin City Art Gallery.

26. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Wizard,* 1896-98, Oil on canvas, 555 x 930 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

27. Marie Spartali Stillman, *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovegni,* 1884, Watercolour and gouache, 785 x 611 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

28. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Sappho and Alcaeus,* 1881, Oil on panel, Support: 660 x 1220 mm; frame: 1041.4 x 1549.4 mm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

29. Simeon Solomon, *The Magic Crystal (Study: Male Figure),* 1878, Oil on paper, 320 x 181 mm, Manchester Art Gallery.

30. Edward Burne-Jones, *Clara von Bork 1560,* 1860, Watercolour and gouache on paper, 342 x 179 mm, Tate, London.

31. Edward Burne-Jones, *Sidonia von Bork 1560,* 1860, Watercolour and gouache on paper, 333 x 171 mm, Tate, London.

32. Edward Burne-Jones, *Merlin and Nimue,* 1857-59, Wall Mural, Oxford Union Society.

33. Edward Burne-Jones, *Merlin and Nimue,* 1861, Watercolour, 942 x 815 mm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

34. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin,* 1872-7, Oil on canvas, 186 x 111 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

35. Edward Burne-Jones, *Witch's Tree,* 1905, Colour facsimile, Collotype Print, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

36. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Days of Creation,* 1870-76, Watercolor, gouache, shell gold, and platinum paint on linen-covered panel, Cambridge, MA: Fogg Museum.

37. Evelyn De Morgan, *The Love Potion,* 1903, Oil on canvas, 1041 mm × 521 mm, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.

38. Edmund Blair Leighton, *Tristan and Isolde,* 1902, Oil on canvas, 1285 x 1473 mm, Private collection.

39. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Invidiosa,* 1892, Oil on canvas, 1807 x 874 mm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

40. Marie Spartali Stillman, *Brewing the Love Philtre (Pharmakeutria),* 1869, Watercolour, 520 x 470 mm, Private collection.

41. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus,* 1891, Oil on canvas, 1480 x 920 mm, Gallery Oldham, Greater Manchester.

42. Evelyn De Morgan, *Medea,* 1889, Oil on canvas, Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead.

43. John William Waterhouse, *Jason and Medea,* 1907, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.

44. Evelyn De Morgan, *The Martyr (Nazuraea),* 1882, Oil on canvas, 2120 mm x 1023 mm, Southwark Art Collection, London.

45. John Everett Millais, *The Martyr of the Solway,* 1871, Oil on canvas, 5650 mm x 7050 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

46. John Everett Millais, *The Knight Errant,* 1870, Oil on canvas, Support: 1841 mm x 1353 mm; frame: 2200 mm x 1708 mm x 160 mm, Tate Britain, London.

47. Edward Burne-Jones, *Laus Veneris,* 1873-8, Oil on canvas, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

48. Evelyn De Morgan, *Hope in the Prison of Despair,* 1887, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.

49. John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1888, Oil on canvas, Support: 1530 mm x 2000 mm; frame: 2000 mm x 2460 mm x 230 mm, Tate Britain, London.

50. William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1905, Oil on canvas, 1180 mm x 1461 mm, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT.

51. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Lady of Shalott,* Illustration from *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, Wood engraving by Dalziel brothers after Rossetti's design, published 1857, 94 x 80 mm, Stephen Calloway.

52. John Atkinson Grimshaw, *The Lady of Shalott,* circa 1875, Oil on canvas, 610 x 914 mm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

53. John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1894, Oil on canvas, Leeds City Art Gallery.

54. Sidney Harold Meteyard, "*I Am Half-Sick of Shadows,*" *Said the Lady of Shalott,* 1913, Oil on canvas, Private collection.

55. John William Waterhouse, *The Crystal Ball,* 1902, Oil on canvas, 1207 mm x 877 mm, Private Collection.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisor, Liz Prettejohn, and thesis advisory panel member, Jane Hawkes, for their ongoing encouragement and enthusiasm for the project, as well as to the teaching, research and admin staff in the History of Art department, and the University of York library services.

I would also like to express my thanks to the following friends and family for their continued support over the course of this project - Max and Rosy for the study sessions involving copious amounts of tea and cake, my parents for their encouragement, and last, but certainly not least, my fiancé Martin for his patience (and yet more tea and cake).

This thesis is dedicated my son, due to join us in the outside world on 19th June.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

> "Artists are tricky fellows, sir, forever reshaping the world according to some design of their own," said Strange. "Indeed, they are not unlike magicians in that…"[1]

In 2013, *Witches and Wicked Bodies* was hailed as the first significant British exhibition to focus exclusively on visual representations of witches with its impressive survey of images from the Renaissance to the early twenty-first century, but only two paintings from the Victorian or Edwardian periods were featured. The relationship between art and magic has not yet been studied in any great detail - there have been no major art historical texts dealing with British nineteenth- or early twentieth-century images of witches. Yet the art of this period was rife with magic and depictions of witches and sorceresses, such as Circe and Medea. Indeed, J. W. Waterhouse's *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891) and Frederick Sandys' *Medea* (1868) find themselves on the covers of numerous textbooks about magic and witchcraft. As well as gracing the canvases of Victorian and Edwardian art, this thesis argues for a deeper connection between magic and art/craft in the images considered - that is, magic *as* a form of art itself.

Much of the literature concerning images of figures such as Circe, Medea, or Morgan le Fey situates them in relation to the the nineteenth-century

[1] S. Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 480

development of the *femme fatale* (fatal woman) type, interpreting the figure of the witch or sorceress as a threat to Victorian and Edwardian masculinity, alongside other figures, such as Salome and Helen of Troy. This thesis aims to draw attention to, and trace the development of how magic, spiritualism and magico-religious rituals were represented in British art between 1849 and 1918, and will address the question of why so many images of magical practices and paraphernalia were created in an era that supposedly represented a decline of magic.

Some of the possible explanations offered for this apparent 'disenchantment' in the nineteenth century are the advent of "the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, even nineteenth-century industrialization".[2] However, as historian Owen Davies suggests, we might also be prudent in asking "whether the decline in urban accusations was actually indicative of a declining belief in witchcraft".[3]

Of course, belief in the 'reality' of magic is not necessary for one to be fascinated by it. The current *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* exhibition at the British Library celebrates the twentieth anniversary of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* the first book in J. K. Rowling's renowned fantasy series. In addition to drawings by Rowling and others, the exhibition brings together rare books, manuscripts and magical objects

[2] M. D. Bailey, 'The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstitions in Early European Witchcraft Literature,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 2 (April 2006), p. 384

[3] O. Davies, 'Urbanization and the Decline of Witchcraft: An Examination of London,' *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring, 1997), p. 610

from the British Library's collection, such as the sixteenth-century Ripley Scroll, which contains instructions on how to create a 'Philosopher's Stone'. Rowling's series draws on a number of folklore and magical traditions throughout history, with references to Merlin (of Arthurian legend) and medieval witch trials, as well as fantastical creatures such as basilisks, mandrakes and phoenixes.[4]

Magic continues to capture the imaginations of its audiences through television shows such as *Once Upon a Time* (2011-) and *Grimm* (2011-17), while bringing fairy tales into contemporary settings.

> With natural forces running amok and wolves prowling in the shady woods of our workplaces, reality seems stranger than a folk tale or fairy story. Our daily lives seem to have become as dark and disturbing as anything dreamed up by the brothers Grimm, or written down by Charles Perrault, the great 17th-century chronicler of folk and fairy tales.[5]

The significance and relevance of fairy stories and folk tales in the present day is even being acknowledged in our newspapers. Andrew Simms, editor of *Knock Twice: 25 modern folktales for troubling times* (2017), recently wrote a piece for *The Guardian* to discuss the importance of these types of stories, claiming that 'We need new fairy stories and folk tales to guide us out of today's dark woods'. The collection itself contains

[4] For further reading, see the British Library's *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) and R. B. Waltz, *Harry Potter's Folklore World: On Myth and Magic* (Connecticut: Loomis House Press, 2016)

[5] A. Simms, 'We need new fairy stories and folk tales to guide us out of today's dark woods', *The Guardian* (01/11/2017)

retellings and re-imaginings of classic folk tales, such as ‘Cinderella’, ‘Puss in Boots’ and ‘Bluebeard’.[6] While Simms seems to advocate the creation of *new* fairy stories and folk tales, he also approves of reworking many of the tales that began circulating in nineteenth-century Britain, citing the example of “the story of killing the goose that lays the golden egg in order to extract its riches, and finding nothing” as “a parable for how we over-exploit the environment everywhere from our seas, to our forests, farms, fossil fuel extraction and more”.[7]

Fairy tales have also been brought into the debate surrounding education – and specifically the notion that “a fact-based education will, according to the British Government, be far more useful at helping you to get you a job once you’ve graduated from university”.

> In recent years there has been a steep decline in the number of pupils taking up the arts – design, drama, dance, music, painting, sculpture. Study science, economics and maths, the government urges, and pursue a serious career – such as business, law, banking and finance. A real career, where you can make real money. [8]

As writer Meg Rosoff points out there is, of course, nothing wrong with studying maths, science, medicine and the like. But without *imagination,*

[6] A. Simms, ed., *Knock Twice: 25 modern folktales for troubling times* (Charleston: CreateSpace, 2017)
[7] Ibid.
[8] M. Rosoff, ‘What Richard Dawkins could learn from Goldilocks and the Three Bears’, *The Guardian* (15/09/2017)

these disciplines lose some of their value – "You need imagination to be a great scientist (or a great politician or a great lawyer), just as you need it to be a great musician or writer".[9] Rosoff's piece was written as a response to evolutionary biologist and prominent atheist Richard Dawkins' assertion that fairytales could be dangerous or harmful as they "inculcate a view of the world which includes supernaturalism".[10] In Dawkins's view, instead of going along "with the fantasies of childhood, magical as they are", we ought to be "fostering a spirit of scepticism".[11] Dawkins later took to Twitter to clarify his position, and conceded that "Fairy tales, as well as charming, can be good training in critical thinking. Children learn to see through a certain class of falsehoods".[12] However, what Dawkins fails to take into consideration is the importance of the role of the imagination, and what McCartney refers to as "the truths that lurk in fictions"[13] – insights, for instance, about human nature or cultural differences or similarities, and meanings that relate to our own lives and our own environments, as in Simms's example of a retelling of 'The Golden Goose'. Dawkins's attitude towards fairy stories and folk tales is, in some respects, startlingly similar to those of late nineteenth-century anthropologists such as J. G. Frazer (author of *The Golden Bough,* first published in 1890), and E. B. Tylor (author of *Primitive Culture,* 1871). One

[9] Rosoff, 'What Richard Dawkins could learn'
[10] R. Dawkins, qtd. in I. Johnston, 'Richard Dawkins on fairy tales: 'I think it's rather pernicious to inculcate a view of the world which includes supernaturalism', *The Independent* (05/06/2014)
[11] R. Dawkins, qtd. in J. McCartney, 'Richard Dawkins should know it pays to believe in fairy tales', *The Telegraph* (07/06/2014)
[12] R. Dawkins. Twitter Post. June 4th, 2014. 10.21pm (https://twitter.com/RichardDawkins/status/474420845428109312)
[13] McCartney, 'Richard Dawkins'.

of the key claims in Frazer and Tylor's works was that those practising magic were not able to properly determine and link causes with their effects, as a result of their inferior knowledge and lack of critical thinking. As discussed in Chapter I, this relied on the assumption that 'primitive' peoples' beliefs in magic were very literal – something both Frazer and Tylor have since been criticised for.

The magical literature available during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was vast in scope – as well as the emerging anthropological approach favoured by Frazer, Tylor, and others, the nineteenth century saw the rise of what modern readers might recognise as the fantasy and science-fiction genres. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (first published anonymously in 1818), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), Frank L. Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900), and J. M. Barrie's play, *Peter Pan; or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904,) and subsequent novel adaptation, *Peter and Wendy* (1911), still continue to enchant modern audiences. Throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, these characters and their stories have appeared over and over in our mainstream media. The tale of Frankenstein has been retold and adapted many times, from J. Searle Dawley's short film *Frankenstein* (1910) to the considerably more recent British period crime drama, *The Frankenstein Chronicles* (2015-), created by Benjamin Ross and Barry Langford, and starring Sean Bean. Gregory Maguire's novel, *Wicked*

(1995) is a retelling of *The Wizard of Oz,* focused on the Wicked Witch of the West – the primary antagonist of Baum's story, and became the basis for the acclaimed Broadway musical of the same name, first performed in 2003. Other television shows, such as *Once Upon a Time* (2011-), which in turn is heavily inspired by *Disney* adaptations of fairy tales, include characters from all of these works, often inhabiting various realms before being thrown together.

Another key reason for investigation into the depiction of magic in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain is the publication and translation (and subsequent depictions) of numerous popular fairy tales, such as the Grimm Brothers' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (literally 'Children's and Household Tales', first published in German in 1812). The collection was translated into English by British solicitor and writer Edgar Taylor, and first published in 1823 as *German Popular Stories,* and includes classic fairy tales, such as 'Cinderella' and 'Tom Thumb'. Interestingly, the preface contains a passage that echoes current criticism regarding the prioritising of STEM subjects over the humanities, in which Taylor laments that

> The popular tales of England have been too much neglected. They are nearly discarded from the libraries of childhood. Philosophy is made the companion of the nursery: we have lisping chemists and leading-string mathematicians: this is the

> age of reason, not of imagination; and the loveliest dreams of fairy innocence are considered as vain and frivolous.[14]

Nostalgia for the past and a reverence for nature in an industrial age are prominent features of the Victorian period, and can be seen in the works of art critics, such as John Ruskin and Walter Pater. Such nostalgia, along with a desire to "return to Nature",[15] as Oscar Wilde put it, also formed the basis for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's formation in 1849 - bringing together Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and Frederick George Stephens. The significance of the notion of a 'brotherhood' and how it appealed both to a chivalric code and Rossetti's interest in secret societies is discussed further in Chapter II.

Magic, Religion, and Science

Late nineteenth-century anthropology also proved instrumental in facilitating the tensions between magical, religious, and scientific beliefs that are familiar to the modern reader, and can often be found in current mainstream media and popular culture. One recent notable example is introduced in *Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens* (2015). In the seventh installment in the epic space opera series, we witness tension between two of the villains, supposedly on the same side. The primary

[14] E. Taylor, trans., *German Popular Stories* (London: C. Baldwyn, 1823), p. iv
[15] O. Wilde, 'The English Renaissance of Art', *Essays and Lectures* (London: Methuen & Co., 1913), p. 122

antagonist, Kylo Ren, represents the more magical or 'mystical' side of the sinister organisation known as the First Order, while General Hux concerns himself with science and technology. The two characters have a clear strong mutual dislike of one another - rooted, at least in part, in their disdain for one another's approaches.[16] Rather than resolve the differences between them, the film's sequel, *The Last Jedi* (2017), continues to demonstrate this tension between the two characters, this time in the form of physical violence, in addition to verbal assaults.[17]

However, the relationship between magic, religion, and science is not always presented as antagonistic in nature. In the video game *Dishonored 2* (Arkane Studios, 2016), we are introduced to a pseudo-Victorian world in which science and magic may work in tandem - for example through a device known as the Oraculum, created through a collaboration between an inventor and a 'witch'.[18] As demonstrated throughout this thesis, a good deal of imagery dealing with magic and witchcraft (for example, in J. W. Waterhouse's pictures of Circe) contains objects and apparatus such as beakers and tripods, which are associated with science or medicine, as well as with magico-religious practice. Relationships between magic, religion, and science may be portrayed in different ways in literature and visual media - both in the nineteenth century and in the twenty-first - but

[16] J. J. Abrams, 2015. *Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens*. Film. Los Angeles: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
[17] R. Johnson, 2017. *Star Wars: Episode VIII - The Last Jedi.* Film. Los Angeles: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
[18] Arkane Studios, 2016. *Dishonored 2.* Playstation 4 Game. USA: Bethesda Softworks.

it is clear that these relationships affected, and continue to affect, our perceptions of magical practice, as discussed in Chapter I.

Histories and Reception

In addition to the rich plethora of contemporary media dealing with magic and witchcraft, recently published histories of magic (and *especially* the often neglected histories of magic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) compiled by scholars such as Owen Davies[19] and Ronald Hutton.[20] These provide vital insights into past magical practices through close examinations of primary sources, such as newspaper articles, chapbooks, and journals, as well as providing contexts for interpretations and reception of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attitudes towards magic and its practice.

As many of the figures depicted are characters from texts such as Homer's *Odyssey* (approx. 700BC) and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte*

[19] For discussion, see:
O. Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Culture, 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)
Grimoires: A History of Magic Books (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)
The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

[20] For further discussion, see:
R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
Witches, Druids, and King Arthur (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006)
Blood and Mistletoe: the History of the Druids in Britain (London: Yale University Press, 2011)
The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present (London: Yale University Press, 2017)

Darthur (first published in 1485), rather than from contemporary fiction, the first chapter will also provide background on the Victorian reception of the ancient and medieval periods and the impact that their admiration and nostalgia had on nineteenth-century perceptions of magic, witchcraft, and spiritualism. Throughout the thesis, I consider the ways in which the works examined may reflect or challenge these ever-shifting attitudes and beliefs.

Magic in Art Historical Scholarship

As previously mentioned, the art historical texts dealing specifically with occult themes (and especially with magic and witchcraft) in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British art are relatively scarce, though the subject was discussed in some of the feminist art historical scholarship in the late 1980s and 1990s. In *Pre-Raphaelite Women* (1987), Jan Marsh comments that

> The closest that Pre-Raphaelite art comes to presenting femininity in wicked or ugly guise is in the delineation of woman as enchantress or witch. But even here, womanhood is almost never shown as contemptible or base, and the images of the ensnaring sorceress are as idealised and beautiful as those of the courtly lady.[21]

[21] J. Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987), p. 109

In her essay in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse* (1991), Susan P. Casteras argues for the interpretation of the Victorian witch or sorceress as a representation of a learned woman, claiming that "the woman endowed with superior creativity typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress".[22] Beverly Taylor's 1997 essay on 'female savants' in Pre-Raphaelite art also notes the ways in which such images could represent the resistance, or even challenge, to women's learning in Victorian discourse:

> Represented with iconic tomes of obscure learning, cauldrons and potions, prophetic mirrors, globes, or magician's weeds, these figures are conspicuously erotic, their sexual appeal and threat graphically displayed in their abundant, loose hair, transparent or clinging garments, or accentuated erogenous zones. While these images in some instances may express fear of sexuality and power, they also pose a potent challenge to the pervasive Victorian discourse opposing women's learning.[23]

Deborah Cherry notes as "striking though unremarked by these authors is the preponderance of such imagery in the 1860s, a decade which saw the effective organisation of the women's movement on a national scale",[24] such as Edward Burne-Jones's *Sidonia von Bork* (1860), and *Merlin and*

[22] S. P. Casteras, '*Malleus Maleficarum or the Witches' Hammer:* Victorian visions of female sages and sorceresses', T. Morgan, ed., *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) p. 142
[23] B. Taylor, 'Female savants and the erotics of knowledge in Pre-Raphaelite art', M. F. Watson, ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment* (London: Scholar, 1997) p. 122-3
[24] D. Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 160

Nimuë (1861), Frederick Sandys's *Medea* (1868), and Marie Spartali Stillman's *Brewing the Love Philtre* (1869). Cherry argues that:

> Paintings of witches and sorceresses were among the many images in high art and popular culture to negotiate the representation of the learned woman and thus to participate in ferocious and at times violent contestations over middle-class women's education and professional training.[25]

Images of women as witches, sorceresses, and prophetesses "brought into tension and collision two highly contested concepts, womanhood and knowledge".[26] This was something that, as remarked by Casteras, could be empowering for women:

> these female wizards are more than dissidents; they are women whose gifted temperaments defy the rhetoric of masculine control both in literal and metaphoric terms.[27]

The figure of the witch has also proved empowering for real-life women. Speaking of the women's spirituality movement in 1960s America (which would go on to influence pagan witchcraft practice in Britain), Ronald Hutton notes that the witch figure's assimilation into this movement was all but inevitable, "based upon the simple and fundamental fact that the witch is one of the very few images of independent female power which

[25] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame,* p. 162
[26] Ibid., p. 162
[27] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 170

historic European cultures have bequeathed".[28] While Casteras, Taylor, and Cherry draw fascinating connections between representations of witches and notions of women's knowledge and learning in the nineteenth century, their accounts do not explicitly consider the histories of magic, or Victorian attitudes towards magical practices.

In 2013, *Witches and Wicked Bodies* provided an excellent survey of images of witchcraft throughout the years, but the current *Harry Potter and the History of Magic* exhibition is the first major British exhibition to consider artworks alongside historical magical objects, such as crystal balls and manuscripts, and to really delve into the history that inspired Rowling's novels, their illustrators, and all those who worked on the film adaptations. I argue that such considerations are necessary in order to understand exactly how and why nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists were using magic as metaphor for knowledge and, in particular, creativity.

Six Artists

Following the first chapter's introduction to the history of magic, spiritualism, and witchcraft in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the subsequent chapters form case studies for six artists, in

[28] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 341

roughly chronological order, with close examinations of some of their key works depicting magic, witchcraft, or spiritualism.

Chapter II focuses on Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). Rossetti is known to have been present at seances, some of which were held by his mistress, Fanny Cornforth.[29] *The Laboratory* (1849), which illustrates Robert Brownings poem of the same name, is an important work that has received very little scholarly attention. I argue that it is this image that provides the prototype for the *femme fatale* who was to be a repeated motif throughout Rossetti's career, as well as a fascinating study of the relationship between poisons and potions - science and magic.

Images such as *Lady Lilith* (1868) and *Sibylla Palmifera* (1870) have been discussed at length in art historical scholarship, particularly regarding "the conventional Victorian dichotomy between Madonna and Magdalen, wife and whore".[30] I expand on both Psomiades and Prettejohn's more complex interpretations of these two paintings as a challenge to that dichotomy by situating them in the contexts of nineteenth-century magical and spiritualist practices, and considering contemporary debates about spirituality and sensuality in art alongside the importance of both the soul and the body in Victorian spiritualist beliefs and practices.

[29] K. Stonell Walker, *Stunner: The Fall and Rise of Fanny Cornforth* (CreateSpace, 2011), pp. 94-98
[30] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* pp. 30-1

Frederick Sandys (1829-1904), Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), Evelyn De Morgan (1855-1919), and John William Waterhouse (1849-1917). Occult influences have been hinted towards in relation to Waterhouse's works.[31] De Morgan's involvement in spiritualist practices (such as automatic writing), has been discussed in some detail[32] and has provided both interesting and useful analyses of her works. However, her images of magic or *practitioners* of magic - *Medea* (1889) and *The Love Potion* (1903) - have not received the same level of attention.

The witch as *femme fatale* is not present in Solomon's artworks, although there are elements in his drawings and watercolours of the ancient poet Sappho that mirror the imagery often associated with the sorceress or the artist, as well as male figures practicing magic. Much of the art historical scholarship dealing with Victorian or Edwardian depictions of magic focuses on the figures of the witch and sorceress, and, therefore, the representation of women. The witch or sorceress can be interpreted, as in Casteras's and Cherry's essays, as a challenge to nineteenth-century femininity and masculinity. However, Solomon's artworks and - to an extent - Burne-Jones's images of Merlin and Nimue, present challenges to the dichotomy of feminine/masculine through their representations of

[31] P. Trippi, *J. W. Waterhouse* (Phaidon, 2002) p. 117

[32] For examples, see E. Lawton Smith, *Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and the Allegorical Body* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 'Evelyn Pickering De Morgan's Allegories of Imprisonment,' *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 25, No. 2 (1997), pp. 293-317, and J. Oberhausen, 'Evelyn de Morgan and Spiritualism,' C. Gordon, ed., *Evelyn De Morgan: oil paintings* (London: De Morgan Foundation, 1996) pp. 33-52

male figures, potentially echoing the concept of the 'feminised' artist or aesthete.

In comparison to works by Rossetti, Sandys, and Waterhouse, Solomon's images of young men engaging in magico-religious ritual, often drawing inspiration from High Anglican, Catholic, and Jewish religious rituals, as well as his depictions of same-sex desire within that framework of magico-religious ritual, and creative expression through poetry and performance, offer a different perspective on representations of magic in the nineteenth century. Many of Solomon's depictions of androgynous men associated with magical practice are, in some respects, visually similar to the witches and sorceresses depicted by Rossetti and Sandys, as Solomon "redeploys the Rossettian talismans of female eroticism to create a figure of androgynous beauty: the introspective gaze, the sensual mouth, the languid pose".[33] As discussed in Chapter I, some male magicians were feminised in the nineteenth century (notably stage magicians), and the perceived 'irrationality' of magic could pit it against the more 'rational' and 'masculine' discipline of science.

By considering the similarities between Solomon's images of Sappho and works depicting magico-religious ritual, as well as the relationship between the arts (in this instance poetry) and magic, and addressing the notion of religious and magical ritual as a form of creative expression and

[33] E. Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 37

performance, we come closer to understanding the persistence of the witch figure in British art, *beyond* the Medieval and Renaissance periods, and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The roles of the wizard and his apprentice are introduced in Chapter IV, but are examined more thoroughly in Chapter V, especially in relation to Burne-Jones's series of images of Merlin and Nimuë. *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-77) in particular has been analysed in terms of Burne-Jones's tumultuous relationship with Maria Zambaco, the model for Nimuë - no doubt encouraged by the artist himself hinting towards such readings in his letters, claiming that

> I was being turned into a hawthorn bush in the forest of Broceliande - every year when the hawthorn buds it is the soul of Merlin trying to live again in the world for he left so much unsaid.[34]

However, although the painting has often been considered within the context of their romantic relationship, no comment has been made on the fact that Burne-Jones chose Nimuë and Merlin, rather than another *femme fatale* and unlucky man*,* to represent Zambaco and himself - in doing so, he represented two artists as practitioners of magic. Additionally, while the image may be read as semi-autobiographical in nature, it is important to consider it alongside Burne-Jones's other representations of magical practices, including other images of Merlin and

[34] E. Burne-Jones, in a letter to Helen Mary Gaskell (Feb. 1893), qtd. in P. Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014) p. 147

Nimuë, as well as how it reflects and responds to other depictions of witches and wizards, and nineteenth-century attitudes towards magic. The chapter also briefly explores the ways in which some of the artist's images of mirrors, crystal balls, or spheres provide a commentary on the link between magic and creation.

Aside from their depictions of magico-religious and spiritualist practices, these artists are in many cases linked through personal and professional relationships. As Prettejohn has shown, Rossetti, Sandys, Solomon, and Burne-Jones shared a unique artistic practice with regards to their approaches to symbolism. Unlike many early Pre-Raphaelite works, such as Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-9), the images examined in this thesis frequently contain various signs and symbols that "point to a generalised mood rather than particular concepts; attempts to give them one-to-one readings fail to yield an unambiguous message".[35] As such, these images invite a multitude of different readings - yet while the signs and symbols in some, such as Waterhouse's *The Magic Circle* (1886), have been considered in their magical or spiritualist contexts, there are many images for which this is not the case, even where their depictions of magical practices have been acknowledged in art historical scholarship.

As well as examining works by the aforementioned male artists, this thesis provides further examinations of Evelyn De Morgan's works in

[35] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* pp. 14-5

Chapter VI (and, to a lesser extent, those of Marie Spartali Stillman and Julia Margaret Cameron). As a practising spiritualist herself, De Morgan's images of magical practice are particularly worthy of consideration. Cherry has discussed potential differences between nineteenth-century representations of witch figures produced by male and female artists (something many art historians have, thus far, remained silent about), and I continue this line of inquiry, drawing not only on De Morgan's spiritual practice, but also her knowledge and interest in classicism and notions about the relationship between a strong, healthy body and the mind, found both in Greek and Victorian physical culture - particularly in relation to images such as *Medea* (1889) and *Cadmus and Harmonia* (1877).

The chapter also explores the ways in which *The Love Potion* (1901) deals with similar themes to Rossetti's *The Laboratory,* in terms of distinctions (or lack thereof) between potions and poisons - hinted at in De Morgan's depiction of one of Paracelsus's books on the bookshelf, along with authors such as Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, a German occult writer born in the fifteenth century. Although Paracelsus was also a physicist, an astrologer and an alchemist, he is known for his work in the field of (what would now be considered) toxicology, and his interest in both magic and science has not gone unnoticed.[36]

[36] H. Pachter, *Magic into science: the story of Paracelsus* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951)

J. W. Waterhouse also drew inspiration from the classics, perhaps most notably drawing and painting Circe multiple times, as well as sirens and nymphs, and *Jason and Medea* (1907). Unusually, Waterhouse presented Medea creating a potion to aid Jason, rather than to use against him, and *The Magic Circle* (1886) has been noted for its depiction of protective magic,[37] and was chosen to appear in the 'Defense Against the Dark Arts' portion of the *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* exhibition at the British Library (2017-18).

Chapter VII also re-examines interpretations of the Lady of Shalott as an artist or, more specifically, as a critique of the artist/poet of the nineteenth century,[38] as well as considering her in the role of a witch or sorceress, given her craft as a weaver - one frequently associated with the witch. Tennyson's Merlin has also been considered as a representation of the "fallen artist",[39] further suggesting a connection between art and magic that may well have influenced figures such as Waterhouse and the other artists considered in this thesis.

While general attitudes towards magic, art, and femininity/masculinity shifted over the time period covered, and we must consider that artists had their own attitudes, as a group and as individuals, towards specific

[37] British Library, *Harry Potter: A History of Magic,* p. 187
[38] For example, see J. Wright, 'A Reflection on Fiction and Art in "The Lady of Shalott"', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), pp. 287-290, and W. Houghton & G. R. Stange, *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1956), p. 16 for discussions focusing on Tennyson's 1842 poem.
[39] F. Kaplan, 'Woven Paces and Waving Hands: Tennyson's Merlin as Fallen Artist,' *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter, 1969), pp. 285-298

subjects, this study demonstrates a common thread tying these (at times diverse) images together - the continuing depiction of a strong relationship between magical and artistic expression.

I. Defining Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery in Victorian and Edwardian Britain

> Magic is real action. Something really happens, often something violent, usually something of consequence. People are shaken, influenced, healed, destroyed, transformed.[40]

There have been several attempts to define terms such as 'magic', 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' by scholars in the humanities and social sciences, particularly among historians, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists. Art historians, however, have yet to be brought fully into scholarly dialogue about magic, despite the abundance of magical objects – amulets, talismans, wands, and the like – and, of course, visual depictions of magic.[41] Jeffrey Wechsler, a curator specializing in the lesser-known aspects of twentieth-century American art, has suggested that one reason for this could be that "the vast quantity of art that includes imaginative, fantastic, or odd imagery has provoked its often intended confusion not only in the minds of viewers in general but also in the minds of the art historians who struggle to define it and categorize it."[42] Some scholars, such as Linda C. Hults, have drawn from multiple methodologies to produce readings of images of witches created during the early modern period, and situate these within an art historical context,[43] but there are, as yet, no major works dealing with nineteenth- or early twentieth-century images of witches. Similarly, in 2013, *Witches and Wicked Bodies* was hailed as the "first

[40] D. L. O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: A Social History of Magic* (Oxford; Martin Robertson and Company Ltd., 1982) p. 25
[41] M. D. Bailey, 'The Meanings of Magic', *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Summer, 2006) pp. 18-9
[42] J. Wechsler, 'Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite' Art Journal, Vol. 45, No. 4, *The Visionary Impulse: An American Tendency* (Winter, 1985), p. 293
[43] See L. C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press)

significant British exhibition"[44] to focus exclusively on visual representations of witches, with an impressive survey of images from the Renaissance to the early twenty-first century, but only featured two paintings from the Victorian or early Edwardian periods. For this reason, this chapter will engage with a diverse range of literature from various disciplines, in order to work towards structuring an appropriate working definition of magic for art historical research into nineteenth- and early twentieth-century visual depictions of magic.

At this point, it is also necessary to briefly address the resistance to the study of magic and its practice in scholarly discourse. Often, this reluctance to include magic as a topic worthy of serious study can be attributed to the perception of belief in magic as 'irrational' and doubts about whether studying something that is not 'real' is of any value to us. My answer to this is that it absolutely is. The supposed irrationality of magic is no reason to discount it as an area worthy of intellectual investigation – human life is littered with irrational behaviours, from blowing on a dice while gambling to beliefs in the paranormal. In some cases, "evidence indicates that for some information, readers are at least as likely to believe what they read in fiction as in non-fiction",[45] even when they are *aware* of its status as a work of fiction. It has even been suggested that so-called 'irrational' belief in magic and other such things can be beneficial

[44] D. Petherbridge, *Witches and Wicked Bodies* (The Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 2013) p. 9
[45] S. Friend, 'Believing in Stories', *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind* (Oxford: OUP, 2014) p. 227

in terms of our well being[46], and that rationality is not *always* desirable.[47] The persistence of interest, if not belief, in magic is clear in the extent of its continued representation in mainstream culture – appearing frequently in art, literature, film, theatre, video games and tabletop role-playing games, there is no doubt that the notion of magic is as relevant today as it has ever been.

In *Stolen Lightning: A Social History of Magic* (1982), O'Keefe identifies the most important magical institutions as "medical, ceremonial, religious, occult, paranormal, sectarian and black magic", while acknowledging the overlap between some of these categories. He also notes the use of the word 'magic' as a "seemingly indispensable metaphor for making statements about certain striking qualities of human action, speech and thought", reflecting the word's origins as a derivative of local 'mana' words – frequently used to refer to some kind of social power.[48] In fact, the notion of 'mana' came into circulation among late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European intellectuals via ethnographic reports concerning Melanesian beliefs, and "quickly made its way into correspondence, toasts, even obituaries, as a jocular commentary on the power of personality".[49] Perhaps most importantly, to begin to understand the concept of magic, we ought first to consider the nature of its relationship with religion and science – this is especially important in discussing the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, given the (sometimes fierce) debate surrounding

[46] L. Hass, 'Life Magic and Staged Magic', in *Performing Magic on the Western Stage From the Eighteenth Century to the Present,* eds. F. Coppa, L. Hass & J. Peck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 16
[47] S. Sutherland, *Irrationality* (London: Pinter and Martin, 2011) p. 237
[48] O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: A Social History of Magic,* p. 1
[49] R. Styers, 'Mana and Mystification: Magic and Religion at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Women's Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 40, Nos. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter, 2012) p. 227

magic, religion and science, as well as the importance of the Victorian period for our own understanding of science-and-religion issues.[50] We ought also to consider ideas about what kind of person the practitioner of magic is, both in terms of their background (gender, race, class, appearance, age, occupation) and their individual personality. As will become clear, many Victorian and Edwardian ideas concerning the magician and the sorcerer, the wizard and the witch, the conjurer and the enchantress, have persisted into our own psyche.

Gregory W. Dawes, lecturer in philosophy of religion - currently working on a new book entitled *After Copernicus: Religion, Science, and Magic in Early Modern Europe* - offers some useful distinctions between the ways in which historians, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists tend to describe and categorise magic and magical thinking in his discussion on the rationality of renaissance magic. One thing that is notable, however, is that across disciplines, there is an inclination to define magic by reference to its irrationality. Psychologists and sociologists tend to hold that if magic is to be defined, "it cannot be by reference to any process of reasoning: they must arise from psychological and social factors". In some cases, magical thinking is associated with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, or at least "a sign that something has gone wrong with the functioning of our cognitive powers",[51] though it is also worth noting its relationship to cognitive development in

[50] B. Lightman, 'Victorian Sciences and Religions: Discordant Harmonies', *Osiris*, Vol. 16, *Science in Theistic Contexts: Cognitive Dimensions* (2001), p. 343
[51] G. W. Dawes, 'The Rationality of Renaissance Magic', *Parergon,* Vol. 30, No. 2 (2013) pp. 33

infants and young children, whose understanding of causality has not yet fully evolved.[52]

Certain connections have been made between the mind of the child and the mind of the so-called 'primitive', referenced in numerous anthropological studies,[53] and particularly in the works of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century 'armchair anthropologists', such as Edward B. Tylor and James George Frazer, whose "inherently evolutionary" views[54] are often unsettling to the modern reader. Although, given its prevalence in human history and culture, anthropologists and historians are "less inclined to regard belief in magic as pathological," they are liable to regard such beliefs as non-rational.[55] Magic, according to Tylor, "belongs in its main principle to the lowest known stages of civilization", and "the lower races, who have not partaken largely or the education of the world, still maintain it in vigour".[56] He goes on to explain how Europe "ascribes the powers of sorcery to despised outcast "race maudites", Gypsies and Cagots",[57] drawing attention to the sorcerer or magician's perceived 'Otherness', repeatedly referring to cultures in which magical beliefs were held and practised as "savage", and "barbaric".[58]

[52] L. Zusne, & W. H. Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Magical Thinking,* (Hillsdale; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1989) p. 26
[53] Ibid., p. 26
[54] R. Stark, 'Reconceptualizing Religion, Magic, and Science', *Review of Religious Research,* Vol. 43, No. 2 (Dec., 2001) p. 103
[55] Dawes, 'The Rationality of Renaissance Magic', pp. 33
[56] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (1871), reprinted in *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg (Sheffield; Equinox, 2013) p. 72
[57] Ibid., p. 74
[58] Ibid., pp. 73, 74, 77, 78, 80

Cambridge classicist Mary Beard has suggested that one of the factors leading to the success and popularity of Frazer's *Golden Bough* is its focus on the themes of exploration and travel, whisking the reader away to "places much further away in time and space, to the lands of all things strange, where the bizarre customs of primitive Britain (corn-dollies, maypoles and so on) stood side by side with the eccentric habits of the aboriginal populations of the Empire".[59] A few months after its first publication, *The Golden Bough* even inspired Grant Allen to write a novel based on its contents - *The Great Taboo* (1890), in which an English couple find themselves washed up on a strange and 'savage' island called Boupari. This Victorian enthusiasm for exploration and travel, coupled with the overall tone of *The Golden Bough,* represents Frazer's "symbolic service to the cause of the Empire" and represented the populations of Britain's colonies as "imperial subjects to their masters, legitimising British Imperialism by turning the natives into convenient supporting evidence in a grand scholarly project". This was, as Beard so aptly puts it, "political dominion neatly converted into academic prose".[60]

Similar views were reflected in the representation of Druidic practice in nineteenth-century novels, such as William Kingston's *Eldol, the Druid* (1874) and Alfred Church's *The Count of Saxon Shore* (1887) – the image of the Druids as 'monsters' proved alluring to authors.[61] It is interesting that as well as marginalized minorities, other people likely to be suspected of practicing magic

[59] M. Beard, 'The Golden Bough,' *Confronting the Classics: Traditions, Adventures and Innovations* (London: Profile Books, 2014), pp. 253-254
[60] Beard, 'The Golden Bough,' p. 255
[61] R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: the History of the Druids in Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2009) p. 335

in the nineteenth century were often those who were "in some way out of harmony with the local community" – either those who were "simply isolated and antisocial", or "at once aloof and charismatic".[62] Magic was associated with those who were different, strange, or 'exotic'.

Although Tylor first appears to accept that the sorcerer begins to learn magic with good intentions and maintains his magical beliefs (at least for the most part), he then continues to describe the figure of the sorcerer as simultaneously "dupe and cheat", combining "the energy of a believer with the cunning of a hypocrite".[63] As we shall see later, notions of duality, opposition, and contradiction are extremely important to many approaches to the study of magic and its practice.

Central to both Tylor and Frazer's analyses of magic and magical belief, is the "association of ideas",[64] a concept borrowed from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century epistemological discourse – notably in the works of philosophers such as John Locke *(Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* 1690) and David Hume (*A Treatise of Human Nature,* 1739). According to Hume, the "qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner convey'd from one idea to another, are three, *viz.*

[62] R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (St. Ives: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 85
[63] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 78
[64] J. G. Frazer, 'Chapter III: Sympathetic Magic' in *The Golden Bough,* reprinted in *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg (Sheffield; Equinox, 2013), p. 83

RESEMBLANCE, CONTIGUITY in time or place, and CAUSE and EFFECT".[65] For instance, the mandrake plant bears a strong physical *resemblance* to a person - leading to attributions of qualities normally associated with human beings, as can be seen in various folkloric and medicinal beliefs, as seen in medieval manuscripts such as the *Tacuinum Sanitatis*. As Frazer notes, attention to the *contiguousness* of objects is a key feature of what he calls 'contagious magic', the belief that "things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact".[66] Some love or attraction spells, for example, require something belonging to the victim – such as one of their hairs – to cast the spell.[67] Identification of a supposed *cause and effect* is, of course, vital to magical practice as defined by Tylor and Frazer, as the magician or sorcerer performs magic in order to bring about particular consequences – he "does not doubt that the same causes will always produce the same effects, that the performance of the proper ceremony, accompanied by the appropriate spell, will inevitably be attended by the desired result".[68]

According to Frazer, magical beliefs are an example of the principles of association, "excellent in themselves", gone awry. By his definition, magical beliefs are "necessarily false and barren", as they arise from a flawed application of the principles of association. 'Legitimately' applied, they yield

[65] D. Hume, eds. David Fate Norton & Mary J. Norton, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Volume 1* (Oxford; OUP, 2011) p. 13
[66] Frazer, 'Chapter III: Sympathetic Magic', p. 83
[67] 'Attraction Spell by Sleeplessness', in D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) pp. 233-4
[68] J. G., Frazer, 'Chapter IV: Magic and Religion' in *The Golden Bough,* reprinted in *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg, p. 84

science rather than magic, which he names as the "bastard sister of science".[69] While, in Frazer's analysis, religion "gives the universe free will; magic (like science) views it as a predictable and manipulable system".[70] It has been argued that Frazer "fails to show that *belief in* magic is any less defensible than *belief in* science", due to his endorsement of "a naive view of science as an accumulated mass of empirical observations from which theories have somehow to be squeezed".[71] The problem is that there is no distinction between the cognitive processes that lead to beliefs in magic and science, meaning that such an accumulation of empirical observations need not necessarily produce correct theories – indeed, many scientific theories that have appeared sound have later been debunked.

In the majority of discourse, both religion and science tend to enjoy "the standing of a socially acceptable form of activity and knowledge," standing in opposition to magic as "disreputable or unacceptable",[72] in spite of similarities they may share. As Frazer noted, the magician was often treated with hostility by the priest, who did not take well to his "haughty self-sufficiency", his "arrogant demeanour towards the higher powers, and his unabashed claim to exercise a sway like theirs".[73] Magic has been referred to as the "bastard

[69] Frazer, 'Chapter IV: Magic and Religion' p. 84
[70] I. C. Jarvie, & J. Agassi, 'The Problem of the Rationality of Magic', *The British Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 18 (1967) p. 57
[71] Ibid., pp. 59-60
[72] J. Neusner, 'Introduction' in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict,* eds. Neusner, Frerichs & Flesher (Oxford: OUP, 1989) p. 4
[73] J. G. Frazer, 'Chapter IV: Magic and Religion', *The Golden Bough,* reprinted in *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg (Sheffield; Equinox, 2013) p. 87

sister" of science[74] - "immoderate, irrational and primitive" – *and* religion – "materialistic, self-serving and impious",[75] which serves not only to feminize the practice and the practitioner, but also to reinforce its supposed illegitimacy. The victimization of women during the witch-hunts in Western Europe is well documented, though it is also worth noting the feminization of the male magician[76] and the associations of magic with "perverse sexuality"[77] – particularly male bisexuality or homosexuality, reflecting the image of the shaman. Although to be 'feminized' may often be considered synonymous with disempowerment, the opposite appears to be true in the case of the shaman (and possibly even some male magicians), whose blurring of the distinctions between the masculine and the feminine can be interpreted positively.[78]

One of the reasons that the 'feminization' of magic is of interest is that it distinguishes and distances it further from the typically patriarchal institutions of science, and particularly religion, in terms of practice and ideology. In many cases magical action is difficult to distinguish from religious action – in the Old Testament, for example, the Pharaoh's initial dismissal of the miracle performed by Aaron (whose rod was transformed into a snake) stemmed from the knowledge that he was able to witness Egyptian sorcerers, or soothsayers,

[74] Frazer, 'Chapter IV: Magic and Religion', p. 84
[75] R. Styers, 'Magic and the Play of Power', *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg (Sheffield; Equinox, 2013) p. 257
[76] S. Schwartz, 'Through a Glass Darkly: Magic and Religion in Western Thought and Practice', *Performing Magic on the Western Stage,* eds. F. Coppa, L. Hass & J. Peck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 206
[77] R. Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: American Academy of Religion/OUP, 2004) p. 183
[78] Schwartz, 'Through a Glass Darkly', pp. 206-7

perform the same 'trick'.[79] As Schwartz points out, "the distinction between a trick that works and a miracle is one made mostly in retrospect."[80] Indeed, there are many similarities to be observed between magical performances and religious ritual – incantation, mantra, chanting, ceremonial dress, particular movements and gestures, and the use of iconography, for example.[81]

At this point, it might be helpful to consider Frazer's distinction between religious and magical perceptions of the natural world. Typically, religion involves "a belief in superhuman beings who rule the world" and "an attempt to win their favour", which requires the assumption that the natural world is to some extent elastic and variable.[82] This certainly holds true for the Christian religion, as the belief in an omnipotent being demands that nature cannot be so rigid and invariable as it might sometimes appear, as His actions are not determined by it but vice versa. However, magic, like science, holds that the laws of nature are absolute and it is by gaining understanding of them that *we* can manipulate events to our own ends. This places an emphasis on belief and intention, rather than the performance of the act or its consequences. More recently, in his works on the histories of magic and witchcraft, Ronald Hutton provides definitions of magic and religion that distinguish the two practices, while maintaining room for their inevitable overlapping. He describes magic as any formalized practices by human beings designed to achieve particular ends

[79] Exodus 7:10-12
[80] Schwartz, 'Through a Glass Darkly', pp. 198, 206
[81] Ibid., p. 202
[82] J. G. Frazer, 'Chapter IV: Magic and Religion', *The Golden Bough,* reprinted in *Defining Magic: A Reader,* eds. Bernd-Christian Otto & Michael Stausberg (Sheffield; Equinox, 2013) p. 86

by the control, manipulation and direction of supernatural power or of spiritual power concealed within the natural world.[83]

Religion, meanwhile, is defined in the following terms:

> belief in the existence of spiritual beings or forces which are in some measure responsible for the cosmos, and in the need of human beings to retain relationships with them in which they are accorded respect.[84]

Hutton's definitions provide helpful distinctions, without dismissing the relationship between magic and religion. One of the issues with Frazer's distinctions between 'magical' and 'religious' worldviews is that the two appear incompatible - the magician regards the laws of nature as *absolute,* while a religious viewpoint requires that the laws of nature are *flexible.* However, magic and religion are not mutually exclusive - there are individuals, as Hutton explains, for whom magic is an important aspect of religion. One might, for instance, enact a magical rite "in order to gain a vision of or interaction with a favourite deity". But, of course, magic may also be attempted entirely independently of religion, by those who wish to "manipulate spiritual powers which they perceive as having nothing directly to do with deities, and which they seek to operate for purely practical benefits".[85]

[83] R. Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), x
[84] Hutton, *The Witch,* x
[85] Ibid., x-xi

The importance of the relationship between magic and science during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as noted by Frazer, ought not to be ignored either. In the first episode of *Penny Dreadful* (2014-16), a horror series featuring numerous characters from nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and Irish fiction, Sir Malcolm Murray's discussion with Victor Frankenstein of "that place where science and superstition walk hand in hand" seems as apt a description as any for popular perception of Victorian (and early Edwardian) Britain. Gothic tales such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) have ensured that science and the supernatural remained entwined in the popular imagination when it comes to recent representations of nineteenth-century Britain in popular culture, such as *Penny Dreadful,* Christopher Priest's *The Prestige* (1995, adapted into a film of the same name in 2006), a novel following a feud between two English stage magicians in the late Victorian era. But this nineteenth-century fascination with science and the supernatural, or spiritual, was not restricted to the gothic novel or penny dreadfuls. It found its way into the real lives of British Victorians in the form of psychical research - the aim of the Cambridge-based Society of Psychical Research, established in 1882, in their quest to better understand the supernatural and paranormal was:

> to approach these varied problems without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned enquiry

> which has enabled science to solve so many problems, once not less obscure nor less hotly debated.[86]

In some instances, this resulted in apparent spiritual or supernatural occurrences being explained in terms of psychology and medicine - as was the case with Hélène Preiswerk (known as Helly), the cousin of C. G. Jung, and the subject of his doctoral dissertation, 'On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena'. Much to their dismay, Jung's terminology linked the family's 'occult' propensities with "medical problems and a weak inheritance".[87] Other sceptics, such as Theodore Flournoy, claimed that the phenomenon of spirit mediumship could be explained as evidence, not of communication with spirits, but of the unconscious mind.[88]

Magic and, in particular, witchcraft had long been associated with another art - that of poisoning. A scandal in late seventeenth-century France, known as the *'L'affaire des poisons'* (Affair of the Poisons), for instance, resulted in a number of individuals being accused and sentenced on charges of poisoning *and* witchcraft,[89] and in nineteenth-century Britain, poison was sometimes sold and (mistakenly) administered under the guise of a love potion. In literature, too, this connection between magic and poison is made apparent - in Lewis Carroll's

---

[86] I. Grattan-Guinness, *Psychical Research: A Guide to Its History, Principles and Practices: In Celebration of 100 Years of the Society for Psychical Research*. (London: Aquarian Press, 1982), p. 19

[87] L. Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad, and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present* (London: Virago Press, 2008), p. 191

[88] T. Flournoy, trans. D. B. Vermilye, *From India to the Planet Mars: A Study of a Case of Somnambulism with Glossolalia* (London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900)

[89] See L. Wood Mollenauer's *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2006) and A. Somerset's *The Affair of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003)

fantasy novel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Alice considers that the magic potions *could* be poisons, due to their appearance, save for the fact that they are not labeled as such.[90] Other nineteenth-century literary representations of witches appeared in historical fiction, as in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Lois the Witch* (1859) - a fictional retelling of the Salem witch trials - which can provide insight both on some of the nineteenth-century perceptions of witches and witchcraft, as well as modern responses and attitudes towards beliefs in witchcraft and bewitchment. "We can afford to smile at them now," Gaskell tells us, "but our English ancestors entertained superstitions of much the same character at the same period".[91]Once again, the archetypal image of the old crone resurfaces, when Lois recalls old Hannah, a 'witch' she encountered during her childhood:

> They are fearful creatures, the witches! and yet I am sorry for the poor old women, whilst I dread them. We had one in Barford, when I was a little child. No one knew whence she came, but she settled herself down in a mud hut by the common side; and there she lived, she and her cat.[92]

The idea of an 'animal familiar' - "a widespread tradition that witches were assisted in their evil deeds by demons in the form of animals" - was a distinctly English phenomenon, and one that continued to influence the image of the witch in the British imagination, and in popular culture. The most common 'familiars' were cats, dogs, and toads, though a number of animals and insects

[90] L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), pp.17-18
[91] E. Gaskell, *Lois the Witch* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2008) p. 127
[92] Ibid., p. 113

could be believed to be the familiars of witches.[93] Two toads can be seen in Frederick Sandys' *Medea* (1868), and black cats feature in John Dickson Batten's *Sleeping Beauty: The Princess pricks her Finger* (c.1895) and Evelyn De Morgan's *The Love Potion* (1903), which will be discussed in Chapters III and VI, respectively.

Lois goes on to explain that "many a one fell sick in the village, and much cattle died one spring", and that, after being set upon by a mob, old Hannah

> caught sight of me, and cried out, "Parson's wench, parson's wench, yonder in thy nurse's arms, thy dad hath never tried to save me, and none shall save thee when thou art brought up for a witch."[94]

Lois describes her nightmares following old Hannah's 'curse' with "all men hating me with their eyes because I was a witch," and it is no surprise that all of those accused as witches in the novella are women. While there were areas of Europe in which men were more prominent as victims,[95] the majority of 'witches' accused and convicted in the early modern period tended to be women.

As mentioned earlier (p. 41), the 'feminization' of magic (and *especially* witchcraft) is also mirrored in its association with irrationality – a supposedly

[93] Hutton, *The Witch,* p.262
[94] Gaskell, *Lois the Witch,* p. 113
[95] Hutton, *The Witch,* p.193

feminine trait in opposition to 'male' rationality[96] (this notion regarding gender and rationality, or lack thereof, is in fact *still* commonly-enough held to be stated and debated across the internet)[97] – and 'hysteria', a state also most frequently associated with women. During the late nineteenth century, Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers to make the daring suggestion that "falsehood is equally, or perhaps more, essential to life than is truth",[98] but this was not a particularly popular opinion amongst European intellectuals of his time. Interestingly, he also made a connection between great art and irrationality in *The Birth of Tragedy* (first published in 1872), in which he details and explores the dynamic between the (rational) Apollonian and (irrational) Dionysian tendencies. Nietzsche, somewhat humorously, explains that the "development of art is bound up with the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, just as reproduction similarly depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation".[99] The two are in many ways fundamentally different, yet given favourable conditions may be remarkably compatible, even complementary. (As discussed in my MA thesis, we can witness similar trends in nineteenth-century British thought – there are some interesting parallels between Nietzsche's ideas concerning the

[96] S. Schwartz, 'Through a Glass Darkly', p. 207
[97] J. Baddeley, 'On the "irrationality" of women (and men)', *Psychology Today* (03/11/2010)
[98] F. Nietzsche, trans. Walter Kaufmann, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) §2
[99] F. Nietzsche, trans. I. Johnston, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (Virginia: Richer Resources Publications, 2009) p. 11.

Apollonian and Dionysian principles and Walter Pater's notion of "opposing tendencies",[100] referred to as the centrifugal and centripetal.)[101]

Although Nietzsche does not explicitly ascribe masculine or feminine attributes to the Apollonian and Dionysian principles as such, his comparison to the duality of the sexes and reference to reproduction are worthy of mention. In spite of what has come to be known as the cult of the male genius, reproduction and, in particular, childbirth, have frequently been used as metaphors for artistic creativity.[102] Although art was not 'feminized' in the way that magic often was and many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists were male, it is crucial to note that there were several prominent professional female artists, such as Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), Evelyn de Morgan (1850-1919), and Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), to name only a few, and that it was a profession from which women were not excluded – in many cases they were welcomed, recognised, and respected for their talent. Similarly, although the majority of cunning folk in the nineteenth century were men,[103] women were not excluded from magical practice. Often, they were as popular and commercially successful as the men, and this was one of the few ways in

[100] A. Denman, 'The Mother and the Maiden: Representations of Demeter and Persephone in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain' (MA Diss., University of York, 2013) p. 24
[101] W. Pater, *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays* (Macmillan, Kindle Edition, 2011) p.104
[102] S. Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), p. 49
[103] O. Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) p. 215

which ordinary women – and especially married or widowed women – could achieve a respected and independent position in nineteenth-century society.[104]

Female priests, on the other hand, were at that time unheard of, and the very notion has been hotly contested even in relatively recent years. An interesting intersection of magical and religious beliefs and behaviour may have occurred within the context of Victorian spiritualism in the latter half of the nineteenth century – particularly during the 1880s, the "golden age of English spiritualism".[105]

Although working-class spiritualists tended to think of themselves as opposed to Christianity, many middle-class spiritualists retained it as an important aspect of their religious lives. Of course, any such class-based lines of definition are often subject to blurring and obscurity,[106] but the crucial point here is that spiritualism – which often entailed beliefs and behaviours often associated with the magical – was not necessarily opposed to religion, and that there is evidence that, at least in some cases, spiritualist and religious beliefs became intertwined with one another. Morell Theobald, an accountant and practising spiritualist in 1880s London, explained his view that spiritualism "simply enlarges the atmosphere in which the mind and spirit ranges and gives great vividness and actuality to the supernatural plane of life, in which all

[104] O. Davies, 'Cunning Folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Rural History,* Vol. 8 (1997) p. 92-4
[105] A. Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) p. 1
[106] Ibid., p. 91

religion must find its abiding home".[107] Additionally, it was not unusual for religious language and rhetorical style to be used and appropriated when speaking at the behest of spirits.[108]

Many Victorian spiritualist mediums were women – in fact, it was often believed that "women were favoured by the spirits",[109] and that it was the feminine qualities, such as possession of a more "refined moral nature",[110] that made this so. Both spiritualist and magical practices had this in common. Many writers, such as Northcote W. Thomas (1868-1936), a British government anthropologist, also discussed the natural abilities of "women, children, and people of genius" as crystal gazers, attributing their aptitude to their superior imagination.[111] The role of the imagination in magico-religious belief and ritual is, as shall be discussed, an important feature of its relationship with artistic practice. Although Victorian spiritualism often provided a space in which the more traditionally feminine qualities were both celebrated and subverted, and in which female mediums could flourish, the movement was met with some resistance. Some physicians, for example, likened the practice of female mediumship to *hysteria*. It is crucial to stress that this problem was not simply a result of the misogyny of a few individual doctors – rather, it was rooted in a struggle between physicians and spiritualists that centred implicitly around the

[107] M. Theobald, *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887) p. 304
[108] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 28
[109] Ibid., p. 18
[110] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, p. 29
[111] N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing: its history and practice, with a discussion of the evidence for telepathic scrying* (London: Alexander Morning Limited: The De La More Press, 1905) xi

"key issue of the construction of normalcy and, by extension, normative womanhood".[112] In some cases, prejudice toward spiritualist beliefs even resulted in Victorian women being incarcerated in lunatic asylums.[113] Coincidently, art historians such as Susan Casteras have drawn attention to the similar tendency to present female practitioners of magic exhibiting an air of 'hysteria' in nineteenth-century art and visual culture.[114] The association of magical thinking with mental illness continued into the twentieth century, spawning studies concerning its connection to schizophrenia,[115] amongst other disorders. Although religion has more recently faced some attacks on the grounds of its supposed 'irrationality', perhaps most famously in Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006), such criticism remains controversial in comparison to similar views expressed about magic, and most people would not consider a religious disposition to be a sign of mental illness.

In fact, the connection between mental illness and magic is twofold – in addition to the idea that magical beliefs are a symptom indicative of mental illness, it is worth drawing attention to the notion that mental disturbance may be *caused* by magical means.[116] Some ancient Greek love spells and potions, for example, were known to induce madness in their victims,[117] either deliberately or as a side effect (some love potions were poisonous if taken in high doses). Some demonological theories of mental disorders also held that

[112] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 139
[113] Ibid., p. 139
[114] See Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum'
[115] For example, see G. Róheim, *Magic and Schizophrenia* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1970)
[116] L. Zusne, & W. H. Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Magical Thinking,* p. 261
[117] C. A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) PP. 28-9

malevolent spirits or sorcerers had the ability to cause either mental or physical illnesses in victims by possession or entrapment of the soul,[118] or by means of the 'evil eye'.[119]

To return to anthropological analyses of magic, it is necessary to stress the importance of Tylor and Frazer's views on magic, religion and science in relation to artworks produced in the same period, but I would argue that the theories of twentieth-century social anthropologists such as J. H. M. Beattie are better suited to exploration of the relationship between magic and the creative arts due to the emphasis on symbolism and expression. Beattie rejects the Western tendency to dichotomize the universe into "two distinct and mutually exclusive spheres labelled 'natural' and 'supernatural'", instead opting to focus on the presence or absence of symbolic elements in magico-religious rites and what we might typically consider to be "practical, common-sense techniques for doing things".[120] A symbolic element, in this context, is simply something that stands for something else. Beattie suggests that we ought to interpret magical and ritual behaviours similarly to the way in which we often interpret a piece of art – as "a way of saying something", its worth lying in "the effectiveness with which it says it, rather than in any end (the promotion of particular moral or social attitudes, the sale of a commodity, or whatever it may be) which it may be sought to bring about".[121] To contemplate something 'for art's sake' is "not to prejudge its meaning or value within Western (or any other

[118] Zusne & Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology,* p. 266
[119] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951***,** p. 174
[120] J. H. M. Beattie, *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology* (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966) p. 202
[121] Beattie, *Other Cultures,* pp. 204-5

society)", but rather to "free ourselves from the relentless instrumentality of our ordinary habits".[122]

It is interesting, and not merely coincidental, that this distinction between instrumental and expressive patterns of behaviour appears in both anthropological texts dealing with magico-religious rites and in art historical discourse on the Victorian Aesthetic movement. Both the artist and the practitioner of magic seek a way to express *something* in sensory form and, as Casteras notes, "the woman endowed with superior creativity typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress," in Victorian art.[123] Performance magic, or 'staged' magic, has been noted for its aesthetic value[124] and for its highly visual character,[125] further cementing its relationship to the creative arts, but there is no reason why the same cannot be said of magic practiced in private – in the same way that drawings that are not seen by anyone other than the artist are still a vehicle for self-expression and possess aesthetic value.

Much criticism of Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* (1842) has seen the poem as "a critique of early nineteenth-century perceptions of the artist/poet",[126] and while the Lady is not depicted explicitly as a witch or sorceress, she nonetheless "has characteristics that qualify her as one"[127] – in particular,

[122] E. Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 2007) p. 281
[123] Casteras, 'Malleus Malificarum or The Witches' Hammer', p. 142
[124] L. Hass, 'Life Magic and Staged Magic', p. 14
[125] S. L. Schwartz, 'Through a Glass Darkly', pp. 202-3
[126] J. Wright, 'A Reflection on Fiction and Art in "The Lady of Shalott', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), p. 287
[127] Casteras, 'Malleus Malificarum', p. 152

weaving is an image frequently associated with witchcraft, and the 'magic mirror' was a popular theme in Victorian literature, appearing in such novels as Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) and George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858). Although some scholars regard the Lady of Shalott as doomed "to produce an art object that is an inversion of a dim unreality",[128] we need not believe that this is the only interpretation – as Anodos wonders in MacDonald's *Phantastes,*

> Why are all reflections lovelier than what we call the reality? - not so grand or so strong, it may be, but always lovelier? Fair as is the gliding sloop on the shining sea, the wavering, trembling, unresting sail below is fairer still. Yea, the reflecting ocean itself, reflected in the mirror, has a wondrousness about its waters that somewhat vanishes when I turn towards itself.[129]

Related to the interpretation of magical performance as expressive is its interpretation as *symbolic* – something that stands for something else. This is frequently practiced in art, literature, film, video games and other media in a number of ways. For instance, Carl Jung (1875-1961) proposed that the sorceress or witch figure encountered in fairy tales and myths could be representative of the *anima* (the unconscious feminine psychological qualities that a man possesses), or the unwelcome and sometimes unsavoury side of our nature, which he refers to as the *shadow*.[130] Some versions of the myth of Demeter and Persephone are constructed in such a way that they symbolise

[128] J. Wright, 'A Reflection on Fiction and Art in "The Lady of Shalott', p. 287
[129] G. MacDonald, *Phantastes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000) p. 66
[130] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2010) pp. 25, 29-30

the changing of the seasons through divine or magical means.[131] Magical symbolism still maintains a significant presence in contemporary mainstream culture - several instances of magical symbolism can be found in BioWare's *Dragon Age* franchise, one of the most notable (and controversial) being the apparent use of possession as a metaphor for bipolar disorder,[132] and it is not difficult to see the parallels between real-life theories of eugenics and the 'pureblood' agenda in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

The purpose of magic in fantasy and fairy tale narrative frequently serves to offer perspectives on real-life issues while maintaining a certain distance. Although some of the issues may be different to those encountered in today's media, I would argue that this is also the case in much Victorian and early Edwardian painting. Speaking about the early modern period Hults describes witchcraft as providing "a way for male artists to displace fears about their own vulnerability onto women and display their control of this unruly beast",[133] perhaps reflecting Jung's notions of projecting the qualities of the *shadow,* or the *anima* onto others prior to recognising those qualities in ourselves.[134] Other art historians, as mentioned before, have suggested that nineteenth- and twentieth-century depictions of witchcraft are representative of anxieties about the "negative side of female sapientia or wisdom", as opposed to the more positive personifications of feminine wisdom, embodied in figures such as the

[131] R. Nickel, 'The Wrath of Demeter: Story Pattern in the 'Hymn to Demeter'', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2003) p. 59.
[132] BioWare. *Dragon Age II,* Electronic Arts, 2011. PlayStation 3.
[133] L. C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe,* p. 27
[134] Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* p. 29

good or wise mother.[135] However, whether or not all Victorian and early Edwardian images of witches, sorceresses or other female practitioners of magic are negative portrayals has yet to be seen, and it seems unlikely that this would be true – it would certainly be surprising in the case of an artist such as Evelyn De Morgan, who was in fact a practicing spiritualist.[136]

Some reasons for the association of magic with knowledge or wisdom may be due to the tendencies of many nineteenth-century witches or cunning-folk to collect a great deal of literature and display their books where they could be seen by visiting clients,[137] and the use of grimoires. Indeed, in recent media, we are accustomed to the image of the witch or sorceress with her spellbook, and it is telling that contemporary authors continue to use language that ties books to witchcraft or sorcery, the "the magic of reading or writing".[138]

The sorts of services that Victorian and early Edwardian cunning-folk provided, or were expected to provide, were extremely varied – the curing, or 'charming' of specific ailments in humans or animals, divinatory services (such as fortune telling or astrology), finding lost or stolen goods and detecting thieves, the removal of curses or other destructive spells, and the punishment of those who had cast them.[139] What these practices do have in common is that they all seem to be well meaning in their intentions. Witches occupied a different space

[135] Casteras, 'Malleus Malificarum or the Witches' Hammer', pp. 144-5
[136] J. Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and Spiritualism,' in *Evelyn De Morgan: Oil Paintings,* ed. C. Gordon (London: De Morgan Foundation, 1996), pp.33-52.
[137] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 89
[138] G.R.R. Martin, 'The Hedge Knight', *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* (London: Harper Voyager, 2017), p.16
[139] Hutton*, Triumph of the Moon,* p.85

in the nineteenth-century imagination, and were often associated more closely with fairies, pixies, and gnomes[140] than with cunning-folk. In *The Witch* (2017), Hutton coins the phrase *service magician*. This category includes cunning-folk but, unlike the broader category of *magical practitioner,* excludes witches, who use their powers - if not for explicitly malevolent purposes - for their own gain.[141]

However, this association of witches with mythical beings does not mean that we are not dealing with real people when we talk about Victorian and early Edwardian 'witches' – there were certainly women (and occasionally men) who were identified as such within their communities.[142] Characteristics of the archetypal witch often included 'great age',[143] deformity or disability, a 'funny way in their walk', the company of 'imps' or familiars, and, as historian Owen Davies notes, by far "the most frequently mentioned physical distinction of the witch was the possession of unusual eyes or an uncanny gaze".[144] Accounts of local witches often deviated from this account, but there were certainly those who conformed to these stereotypes, sometimes in order to exploit their reputations as witches for begging purposes.[145] Like cunning-folk, witches were often connected with books or "the parchment". Sometimes these books were believed to be the source of the witch's power, but more often they were

[140] Hutton*, Triumph of the Moon,* p.84
[141] Hutton, *The Witch,* xi
[142] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* p.174
[143] A. C. Swinburne, 'Notes on the Designs of the Old Masters at Florence', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875) p.326
[144] Ibid., pp. 174, 181
[145] Swinburne, 'Notes', p. 175

considered to be books of harmful spells for revenge.[146] As late as 1936, one man from Sussex described them as "powerful books which have a good deal of evil written in them",[147] again reinforcing the connection between magic and knowledge, and in particular the power of the written word.

Magic is by no means a homogenous category, and it is for this reason that it resists definition. However, it is the very differences in views on magic that make its appearance in works of art so fascinating – in this thesis, it will be argued that many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century paintings and illustrations of magic, witchcraft and sorcery express and negotiate the tensions discussed in this section, exploring the contrasts between the barbaric and the savage, and the wise and the cunning, as well as the blurring of the perceived binaries of the masculine and the feminine. While the ways in which these images may be interpreted by a modern audience will differ in some ways from Victorian or early Edwardian perceptions, both are worthy of examination in order that we might begin to pinpoint and better understand social, historical, cultural and psychological influences on our perceptions of art and magic.

[146] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* pp. 180-1
[147] A. R. Milton, 'The Wicked Old Woman', *Sussex Country Magazine,*Vol. 17 (1936) p. 48

II. "The soul's sphere of infinite images"[148]*:* Truth, Magic, and Spiritualism in the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

> For though the fine arts are not necessarily imitative or representative, for their essence is in being περί γένειω[149] - occupied in the actual production of beautiful form or colour, - still, the highest of them are appointed also to relate to us the utmost ascertainable truth respecting visible things and moral feelings: and this pursuit of fact is the vital element of the art power; - that in which alone it can develop itself to its utmost.[150]

This chapter aims to illuminate readings of Rossetti's creative works, with the focus primarily on his drawings and paintings, both through the lens of spiritualism, and in connection with magical practice through examining the influences of John Ruskin's doctrines of art, truth and beauty, and applying the aesthetic theories of the twentieth-century English historian and philosopher, Robin George Collingwood, whose father, William Gershom Collingwood, was an artist who had ties with Ruskin and the wider Pre-Raphaelite circle. In particular, I argue that Ruskin's comparisons between art and magic in *Modern Painters,* Collingwood's analyses of art *as* magic and as something that expresses *emotions* as opposed to *ideas*, Rossetti's own comments on his artistic process and, of course, the contents of the works themselves justify viewing his works through a spiritualist or occultist lens. Doing so offers perspectives on the images and on the role of the artist that have not yet

[148] D. G. Rossetti, 'The Soul's Sphere'*,* line 8, *Ballads and Sonnets* (London: Ellis and White, 1881), p. 224
[149] Here, Ruskin quotes from Plato's *Ethics*, vi. 4, 4: every art is concerned with production.
[150] Ruskin, *Lectures on Art,* p. 46

been considered in much of the scholarship on Rossetti or in any major exhibitions.

In *The Laboratory* (1849), which illustrates a scene from the poem of the same title by Robert Browning (first published in 1844), Rossetti anticipates the ongoing nineteenth-century trend in depictions of magic, witchcraft, and spiritualism – with a focus on the blending of science and magic, and the construction of gender and racial identity. His later works, however, deviate from more traditional representations, and instead are reminiscent of a close relationship between magic, spiritualism, and the visual arts, as can be seen in works such as *Lady Lilith* (1866-8) and *Sibylla Palmifera* (1865-70), which – along with their accompanying sonnets 'Body's Beauty' and 'Soul's Beauty' – form a pair, as well as in his drawing of *Cassandra* (1861) and *A Sea Spell* (1877).

In *The Principles of Art* (1938), Collingwood makes the bold claim that the "only profitable way of theorizing about magic is to approach it from the side of art."[151] In the last chapter, I touched upon the parallels between theatrical performance and magic (especially *stage* magic), and in many ways, Collingwood's analysis of art and magic follows on from this – magical practices "invariably contain, not as peripheral elements but as central elements, artistic activities like dances, songs, drawing, or

[151] R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 65

modelling".[152] One example he gives concerns a tribal war-dance, but we might also consider religious or spiritualist rituals that would have been practised during the nineteenth century – many of which persisted into the twenty-first century. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, similar patterns of thought began to emerge – Edwin Sidney Hartland (who was to become president of the Folklore Society in 1899) published an enquiry into the mythology of fairy tales*,* in which he discusses the importance of the 'art of storytelling' as "the outcome of an instinct implanted universally in the human mind", and something that continued to flourish in the modern period, uniting with "the kindred arts of dance and song to form the epic or drama", or developing into prose or novels.[153] The importance of narrative was also relevant to art appreciation in the nineteenth century. According to Roberts, some contemporary art critics "consider entering into the story of a painting and imaginatively participating in its narrative and mood quite unsophisticated, a receptive attitude more suitable to viewers of soap opera than to appreciators of art", but goes on to explain that this practice was "widely accepted" and "encouraged" in the nineteenth-century art world.[154]

Although Rossetti may, at least outwardly, have dismissed his father's work on secret societies and the esoteric sciences as "little more than

[152] Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, p. 65
[153] E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales* (Michigan: Singing Tree Press, 1968), p.2
[154] H. E. Roberts, 'The Dream World of Dante Gabriel Rossetti', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (Jun., 1974), p. 373

nonsense",[155] the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood itself was subject to ritualistic behaviour typical of secret societies such as the Freemasons, Rosicrucians and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn The secrecy surrounding the "mystic monogram PRB",[156] for instance, is suggestive of occult practices and traditions, in which adepts identified themselves "by the use of initials standing for a Latin phrase or motto".[157] A number of works published during Rossetti's lifetime refer to groups such as the Rosicrucians and the Knights Templar, and a Rosicrucian Brotherhood was known to have existed in Manchester around 1860,[158] and while it is not known if Rossetti engaged with the literature, it is certainly clear from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's use of ritual and secrecy that he held some measure of interest in the traditions and customs of such occult societies. Rossetti's interest and engagement with the occult is also discussed in Robsjohn-Gibbings's *Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art* (1947), in which the author describes him as "absorbed" and "fascinated" by "legend, witchcraft, symbolism, and spiritualism".[159] While the book has been subject to criticism,[160] Robsjohn-Gibbings rightly brings attention to the magic entrenched in the Arthurian legends that the likes of Rossetti, Sandys, Burne-Jones, and Waterhouse admired – stories filled with magical objects, such as the Holy Grail, and the sword

[155] R. Drew, *The Stream's Secret: The Symbolism of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2007), p. 146
[156] Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,* p. 111
[157] Drew, *The Stream's Secret,* p. 317
[158] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider, 1924), p. 562-3
[159] T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, *Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 25
[160] See H. R. Hope, 'Black Magic and Modern Art', *College Art Journal,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1947-1948), pp. 116-120 for a critical discussion of this work.

Excalibur, the deeds of the wizard Merlin,[161] and the sorceress Morgan Le Fay.

Rossetti's nostalgia for the medieval, as witnessed in so many of his watercolours during the 1850s, is telling. As Collingwood explains: "The change of spirit which divides Renaissance and modern art from that of the Middle Ages consists in the fact that medieval art was frankly and definitely magical, while Renaissance and modern art was not".[162] Collingwood refers here not only to the physical artworks themselves but, most importantly, the purposes for which artworks were created, and the ways in which they were received and appreciated by their audiences during these periods. Much medieval art was commissioned and created for religious purposes and, as noted in Chapter I, the lines between religious and magical rituals could become blurred. This is not to say that depictions of religious scenes cannot be found in artworks produced during the Renaissance era – they certainly *can* be – but 'learned' attitudes towards magic, religion, and art were shifting.

Both the Renaissance and modern periods can be characterized in terms of great and often rapid cultural, social and technological changes, and although it never died out completely, magical belief began to wane. With this in mind, it is no wonder that most art was no longer 'magical' but, although the nineteenth century was permeated by scientific thought,

[161] Robsjohn-Gibbings, *Mona Lisa's Mustache,* p. 28
[162] Collingwood, *The Principles of Art,* p. 71

many longed for nostalgia and a return to the 'truth' of nature – as can be seen in the clear medieval influences in Pre-Raphaelite art. Another such person was John Ruskin.

In *Modern Painters,* Ruskin speaks of the way Dante's thirteenth-century Italy, Chaucer's fourteenth-century England, and Masaccio's fifteenth-century Florence were "always getting the vital truth out of the vital present".[163] It is not necessary that we believe art to be concerned with providing 'facts' in the same way that science is, although this possibility reveals another intriguing parallel between art and magic as competitors with science. Rather, the kind of 'vital truths' Ruskin was speaking of had to do with spiritual or moralistic truths, while the role of science was to uncover *empirical* knowledge. Even so, the tensions between these different 'types' of truths can be witnessed throughout the nineteenth century – for example, the Society for Psychical Research (founded in 1882) began to conduct 'scholarly' research and apply contemporary scientific methods in attempts to illuminate the paranormal. This suggests that empirical knowledge was regarded by many, even those supporters of spiritualist practice, to be of a higher value. Equally, as stated in the previous chapter, magical belief was frequently dismissed as a remnant of the primitive mind.

[163] J. Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Vol. III* (London: George Allen, 1906) p. 98

Ruskin and Rossetti, however, do not appear to have shared this view. I do not intend to imply that they believed in magic in the most *literal* sense, as 'savage' civilizations did – if we are to believe Tylor and Frazer – although Ruskin made a point of not denying the actual existence of spiritual manifestations.[164] Rather, a significant component of their shared beliefs in the truth and beauty of nature, and nostalgia for the medieval and Greco-Roman pasts, is that truth that may be expressed creatively though magico-religious practice and rituals, and through *art*. In the fourth volume of *Modern Painters,* Ruskin speaks about the "magic" associated with great painters and paintings:

> Common talkers use the word "magic" of a great painter's power without knowing what they mean by it. They mean a great truth. That power *is* magical; so magical, that, well understood, no enchanter's work could be more miraculous or more *appalling*; and though I am not often kept from saying things by timidity, I should be afraid of offending the reader, if I were to define to him accurately the kind and the degree of awe, with which I have stood before Tintoret's Adoration of the Magi, at Venice, and Veronese's Marriage in Cana, in the Louvre.[165]

Writing to William Allingham, Rossetti expressed a need as a poet for "something rather 'exciting', and indeed I believe something of the 'romantic' element to rouse my mind to anything like the moods produced by personal emotion in my own life".[166] This chapter will

[164] J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Vol. III,* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1881) p. 156
[165] J. Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Vol. IV* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1856) p. 66-67
[166] D. G. Rossetti*, Letters*, eds. Oswald Doughty & John Robert Wahl (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 255

examine the ways in which Rossetti's paintings (and, to some extent, his poetry) explore this relationship between art and magic, beginning with *The Laboratory* (1849).

"Where is the poison to poison her prithee?" [167]

> …the crime of arsenic murder had become by the middle of the century 'a *national disgrace*'.[168]

It is important to note that, in many ways, *The Laboratory* (fig. 1) is not typical of Rossetti's treatments of similar subjects, and this is precisely the reason we ought to consider it before moving on to examine his later works. It illustrates the poem of the same name, in which Browning presents a dramatic monologue, set in seventeenth-century France, in which a woman converses with an apothecary (a purveyor of medicines and drugs), who is engaged in the act of creating a poison intended to destroy her rival in love. While not strictly magical in nature, poisons were frequently associated with potions, and *especially* the love potion – in part due to the ingredients used, which were often poisonous if ingested in large doses. Well into the twentieth century, we still see instances of magical poisons – one appears, for example, in Maxwell Anderson's Broadway drama, *The Wingless Victory* (1936).

[167] R. Browning, *The Laboratory,* Stanza 1, Line 4
[168] A London physician, writing in 1849, qtd. in S. Simkin, *The Cultural Construction of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 34

Poisons were also associated specifically with witchcraft, with figures from Greco-Roman mythology (such as Circe), and from Arthurian legends (such as Morgan le Fay) using magically-crafted poisons against their enemies. Potions often symbolized "love's ill-fortune" and those who consumed them were prone to madness and, in the most extreme cases, death.[169] The use of imagery in the poem's first stanza allude to such a parallel:

> Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
> May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
> As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy--
> Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?[170]

A "devil's-smithy" brings to mind instruments of darkness and evil and, although some folklore traditions attributed beneficial magical powers to smoke,[171] these particular curls of white smoke serve to make the atmosphere in the apothecary's workshop even more ominous. The smoke does not appear in Rossetti's illustration, which – although it has been suggested[172] that the lines illustrated are "In this devil's smithy Where is the poison to poison her prithee?" – appears to more closely resemble the scene from the final stanza of the poem, by which time the

[169] J. E. Cirlot, trans. J. Sage, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 261
[170] R. Browning, *The Laboratory,* Stanza 1, Lines 1-4
[171] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols,* p. 299
[172] Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, 'The Laboratory', www.preraphaelites.org (http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1904p481/the-laboratory)

woman has removed her mask and is offering her jewels as payment for the apothecary's services:

> Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
> You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
> But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
> Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's![173]

Rossetti's use of dark colours recreates the claustrophobia and the sinister nature of the apothecary's workshop from Browning's poem. The glass beakers and vials are, of course, reminiscent of a laboratory – but they are also consistent with much of the iconography in paintings of witches. Well into the second half of the nineteenth century, and the early twentieth century, glass beakers and vials are included in images of known witches, such as Evelyn De Morgan's *Medea* (1889) and John William Waterhouse's colour sketch of *Circe* (1911-14). We might read this as anticipating Frazer's treatise on the similarities in the roles of science and magic – but in this case, rather than existing in competition with one another, they appear to coexist – Rossetti's image blurs the boundaries between magic, alchemy, and science.

The pile of books on the ground in the corner of the painting are also suggestive of either, or *both* magical and empirical knowledge. They are not painted with such detail that we might easily realize their contents, but we might imagine them to contain something akin to the alchemical

[173] R. Browning, *The Laboratory,* Stanza 12, Lines 1-4

writings of Paracelsus – a sixteenth-century Swiss-German philosopher and physician, who wrote extensively on both occult practices and medicine, with whom both Browning and Rossetti were familiar.[174] As well as literature on alchemy, Paracelsus also produced materials dealing specifically with poisons and toxicology, with a focus on dosage, which is referenced in the poem when the female narrator discusses the quantities of poison with the apothecary – for instance when expressing her fascination at the potential to "carry pure death in an earring".[175]

Both Browning and Rossetti were enamored with the symbolism of the occult. One anonymous nineteenth-century critic, in describing the obscurities in Browning's poetry, comments that poetry "is with him an occult science", and goes on to speak of the interpretation that all poetry "has to do with occult associations, and meanings of words and thoughts which it is impossible to analyze".[176] Meanwhile, Rossetti "identifies Dante with a new occultism, a forerunner of the automatic, dream-inspired, late Romantic poetic-medium that Rossetti himself would become",[177] but occult and spiritualist ideas fuelled not only his poetry, but his artwork. As art historian Colin Cruise notes: "…when the psychical researcher F. W.

[174] R. L. Mégros, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Painter Poet of Heaven in Earth* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1971) p. 312
[175] Browning, *The Laboratory,* Stanza 5, Line 3
[176] Anon., 'Modern Poets', *The Times* (11 Jan. 1865), p.12
[177] C. Cruise, 'Baron Corvo and the key to the underworld', N. Bown & C. Burdett, eds., *The Victorian Supernatural,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 138

H. Myers wrote about the visual arts, it was upon Rossetti that his investigative mind rested".[178]

Writing in 1883, it is perhaps natural that Myers' discussion of Rossetti's works centred primarily around his later artworks – particularly his portraits of women – which differ significantly from his illustration for *The Laboratory.* The illustration of Browning's poem also forms a stark contrast with *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, which Rossetti would have been working on during the same period (1848-9), in terms of the subject matter, materials, style, and tone. While his representation of the Virgin Mary was, in some ways, unconventional for its time, the figure of Mary is certainly engaged in far more respectable activity, while it could be argued that the unnamed female customer in *The Laboratory* represents a kind of prototype for Rossetti's images of *femme fatale* characters.

Today, the *femme fatale* (literally 'fatal woman') is often associated with the film noir tradition, but it is in fact an archetype that has existed since ancient times, some of the most frequently referenced figures including Circe, Medea, Pandora, Lilith –the later *femme fatale* "derives power from her association" with these women, and in late nineteenth-century literary and visual culture, we may witness what literary scholar Rebecca Stott refers to as the 'fabrication' of the *femme fatale.*[179] In relation to her appearances in Victorian fiction, it has been suggested that although the

[178] Cruise, 'Baron Corvo and the key to the underworld', p. 138
[179] R. Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), viii

femme fatale type "can be found in the earlier nineteenth century, and indeed throughout literary periods and genres… she is only formulated as a clear and recognizable 'type' in the late nineteenth century".[180] The notion of the late nineteenth-century *femme fatale* is infused with anxieties about sex, gender, class, and race, some of which are peculiar to that period, others that had been relevant during the time in which artists such as Rossetti and Sandys were active, and others still that have persisted into the present day.

In his recent book *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox* (2014), Stevie Simkin draws attention to media tendencies to project or superimpose the image of the *femme fatale* onto the real life 'murderess' through case studies focused on three women from different time periods, each accused of and put on trial for murder: Frances Howard (1590-1632), Ruth Snyder (1891-1928), and Amanda Knox (1987-), and considers the interactions between these real life *femmes fatales* and their fictional counterparts. Although the Pre-Raphaelite models were surely not accused of anything so scandalous as *murder*, it is curious that some of the well-known models that posed for figures that fit the archetype of the *femme fatale,* such as Fanny Cornforth, have been inserted into narratives that rely on similar tropes and the dichotomy of the virgin and the whore – she is still frequently represented as having been a sex worker (and, as Kirsty Stonell Walker

[180] Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*, ix

clarifies, she might have been considered a prostitute by Victorian standards, if not by our own).[181] As with his images of Elizabeth Siddal as Beatrice, or Burne-Jones's images of Mary Zambaco as Nimuë, this can complicate our readings of Rossetti's images of Fanny, as it becomes more difficult to separate the character of the figure in the painting from some of the traits that have been attributed to the model herself, either by Rossetti's contemporaries or later biographers, and repeatedly asserted in the Pre-Raphaelite literary 'canon'.

The issues of race common to many European and Hollywood *femmes fatales* in the early twentieth century bear many similarities to those present in nineteenth-century constructions of the *femme fatale.* Film noir would often employ the trope of the 'exotic' *femme fatale* (typically of Asian or Eurasian descent, despite the fact that many were portrayed by white European or American actresses – for instance, Myrna Loy, in *Across the Pacific* (1926) and *Thirteen Women* (1932) – perhaps recalling certain types of female characters appearing in *fin-de-siècle* literature, such as Ayesha in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1905), a beautiful white queen and 'exotic' African sorceress all at once. In turn, Ayesha is a type reminiscent of some of the women that grace Sandys' paintings – particularly those for which he employed non-white models, such as Keomi Gray and Fanny Eaton. As shall be discussed in the next chapter, the entangling of Western and Eastern traditions, of English and Gypsy

[181] K. Stonell-Walker, 'What is it that we know for sure?', *The Kissed Mouth* (http://fannycornforth.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/what-is-it-that-we-know-for-sure.html)

identities, is crucial when forming meaningful interpretations of Sandys' images of *Medea* and *Morgan le Fay*.

But in Rossetti's illustration of *The Laboratory,* it is the apothecary who appears 'foreign', with his 'swarthy' complexion and headscarf – although the scene is set in seventeenth-century France, the figure of the apothecary is reminiscent of the appearance and style of dress often associated with gypsies in the nineteenth century, and if "English literature of the nineteenth century contains within it a constant, ubiquitous marker of otherness, of non-Englishness or foreignness, it is the gypsy".[182] A similar trend is found in the visual art produced in the nineteenth century, although (in both cases) it is more common to find a gypsy woman portrayed than a man, and particularly in the role of a *femme fatale* such as Morgan le Fay or Medea. Rossetti may have painted the apothecary this way due to his profession. In a piece published in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* in 1856*,* Capt. Newbold speaks of gypsies who deal in philters or poisons.[183]

One of the most striking features about Rossetti's apothecary is his long, delicate fingers. Although clearly intended to be interpreted as a male figure, the apothecary is feminized, as both male gypsies *and* male

[182] D. E. Nord, '"Marks of Race": Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 21, No. 2, (Winter 1998), p. 189

[183] F. R. S. Newbold, 'The Gypsies of Egypt', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 16 (1856), p. 299

practitioners of magic (and especially stage magic) tended to be during the period – for example in the case of Matthew Arnold's *The Scholar-Gipsy* (1853), the title character is associated with the moonlight, flowers and water:

> And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
> And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
> Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
> And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream:[184]

The figure of the gypsy often allowed nineteenth-century British writers to create characters "who deviated from conventional forms of masculinity and femininity", who "chafed against patterns of gender conformity."[185] Other artists in Rossetti's circle, such as Edward Burne-Jones and Simeon Solomon, were also known for producing images that challenged conventional nineteenth-century representations of masculinity.[186] Poison, too, is more frequently associated with women than with men. Ambrose Bierce captures the relationship between poison and beautiful women in amusing terms, when discussing the definition of Belladonna: "In Italian a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison. A striking example of the essential identity of the two tongues".[187] Although *The Devil's Dictionary* is intended as a satirical lexicon, the notion of woman *as* poison –

[184] M. Arnold, *The Scolar-Gipsey,* (1853), Stanza 8, Lines 7-10
[185] D. E. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 12
[186] E. Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998), pp. 37, 58
[187] A. Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1911), p. 36

particularly in the case of the *femme fatale* – is an intriguing one, and one that has clearly influenced artists such as Rossetti, Sandys, and Burne-Jones.

The Laboratory provides an interesting contrast to works featuring figures such as Medea, Morgan le Fay and Circe, who tend to create their own poisons. In this painting, the woman is the customer and the one intending to utilize the poison, but does not possess the knowledge, skills or materials to make it for herself. Perhaps for this reason, her portrayal is significantly different to Rossetti's later depictions of women endowed with supernatural powers, such as *Cassandra* (1861) and *Lady Lilith* (1866-8), with their long, unbound hair and loose-fitting garments. Of course, seventeenth-century French fashions *would* have differed from the clothing favoured by many of Rossetti's subjects – but it is, of course, worth remembering that his representations were not always strictly faithful to their sources and that he often took artistic liberties.

This depiction of a relationship between creator and customer is an interesting choice – while we must realize the location illustrated is in fact a seventeenth-century French apothecary's shop, it is also reminiscent of descriptions of dynamics between a nineteenth-century wise man or fortune teller and their customers. The way the environment is portrayed, with its collections of glass vials and books, and the darkness of the room, along with the physical appearance of the apothecary strengthens

this interpretation. Visual representations of fortune tellers tended to be non-white, and frequently of gypsy origin – as seen in works such as Caravaggio's *The Fortune Teller* (c.1594), although it is unlikely that Rossetti would have been familiar with this particular painting[188], and Joshua Reynolds's *The Gypsy Fortune Teller* (1778). Depictions of fortune telling were unusual in British painting during the nineteenth century, although fortune telling itself was often practised, either professionally or for amusement in the drawing room. However, there are a few nineteenth-century images of fortune tellers, including Abraham Solomon's *A Doubtful Fortune* (1856), in which two women appear to be getting their fortunes told by a third, seated woman. We find a critic's description of the painting in a review of the 1856 exhibition at the Royal Academy:

> In "Doubtful Fortune" (533) we have three "angels" in flounces, engaged, one telling fortunes by cards, the other two listening. One knowingly remarks without winking (but we cannot answer for which from their faces), "We know we're cheated, yet would fain believe". Our readers need not be told that one of these interesting creatures is dark, melancholy, and in love, and that she is contrasted by another—fair, gay, and bantering, and that these contrasts of brown and white are harmonised by a third—whitey-brown. The leafy sun-touched bower without, so gay and brilliant in spite of the passing cloud, which seems reflected in the dark girl's face, is very pretty.[189]

[188] E. Prettejohn, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Model', J. Desmarais & M. Postle, eds., *Model and Supermodel: The Artists' Model in British Art and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 40
[189] 'Exhibition of the Royal Academy', *Daily News* (21 May 1856)

While acknowledging the practice of fortune telling, the critic does not seem at all concerned with occult themes, describing it as a "genteel" picture[190] – the image is more reminiscent of respectable ladies playing at fortune telling for amusement in their drawing rooms than visiting an occult practitioner. This forms a clear contrast with the lady in *The Laboratory* – we see from her surroundings, and her company (and know from her intentions) that she is not what one might consider a 'respectable' woman. The women having their fortune told are well-dressed, and the scene takes place within a respectable interior setting with natural light from the large, open window. Playing cards, while often used in fortune telling, are not so sinister as the poisons or the various apparatus in the dark, claustrophobic and secretive atmosphere of *The Laboratory,* in which the woman leans uncomfortably near to the apothecary, whose gaze appears to linger on her breasts. The scene in *Doubtful Fortune,* taking place between three *women*, has no such expressions of inappropriate sexuality.

The female figure in *The Laboratory* is a far cry from the majority of the other women Rossetti portrayed in his early works, and even into the later 1850s – there is no chivalric code embedded in this painting. She schemes and cheats to win the man upon whom she has set her sights, rather than pursue him fairly. One is reminded again of Circe's poisoning of Scylla with the use of magical herbs, also motivated by jealousy –

[190] Ibid.

Circe was in love with Glaucus, but her feelings were not returned, as he only had eyes for Scylla. Rather than simply kill Scylla, Circe made her monstrous, and this also forms a parallel with Browning's poem, in which the woman expresses a desire not only to kill her rival, but to see her made ugly, bloated and deformed by the poison.

While, as previously stated, *The Laboratory* is not a strictly 'magical' painting, there are a number of parallels to be drawn between potions and poisons, particularly within the context of Victorian magical practice. From the ethnicity of the apothecary to the mixing of magical and scientific apparatus, the image conforms to and anticipates certain trends in nineteenth-century depictions of magical practice. As late as the early twentieth century, we see similar scenes in Waterhouse's later paintings of *Circe,* in which the sorceress is surrounded by beakers, papers, and books. In the case of Rossetti's later work, however, this blending of the magical and scientific all but vanished, making way for the reconciliation of art and magic, as we see in *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera*.

Strangling Golden Hairs and Fluttering Hems

BODY'S BEAUTY.

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could de-
ceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,

And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair. [191]

SOUL'S BEAUTY.

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days![192]

These are the types of sensual beauty and spiritual, the siren and the sibyl.[193]

[191] D. G. Rossetti, 'Body's Beauty,' *Ballads and Sonnets* (London: F. S. Ellis, 1881) p. 240
[192] Rossetti, 'Soul's Beauty,' *Ballads and Sonnets*, p. 239
[193] A. Swinburne with W. M. Rossetti, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition* (London, 1868), p. 46

Although the sonnet does not enter the frame or the canvas of *Lady Lilith* (fig. 2) or *Sibylla Palmifera* (fig. 3) as it does in late works such as *Astarte Syriaca* (1877) or *Proserpine* (1874), it nevertheless exists as an accompaniment to the visual image. Referring to the juxtaposition of Rossetti's paintings and sonnets, Catherine Golden suggests that the sonnet, "readily conveying the meaning and history behind the figures on canvas, directs and organizes the reader/viewer's response to the mythology of the painting which can only be hinted at on canvas through symbols and meaning-laden details." Equally, the painting serves to enhance the reader or viewer's interpretation of the sonnet, by positing "a concrete graphic knowledge which strengthens and specifies the visual imagery of the sonnet".[194]

In *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must be Lost,* Jerome Mcgann's analyses of Rossetti's artworks as demonstration of particular aesthetic practices, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's theories of art as response, are useful both when we consider painting/poem pairings, what Golden calls his 'two-sided' art, *and* when examining his depictions of magical or spiritual practice – themselves aesthetic processes. Currently in the United States some in congress are even pushing to pass a resolution that declares magic "as a rare and valuable art form and national treasure", comparable to "the great art forms of dance, literature,

[194] C. Golden, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Two-Sided Art', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 26, No. 4 (Winter 1988), p. 395

theater, film, and the visual arts".[195] Of course, this resolution refers almost exclusively to *stage* magic, and not necessarily the sort of magic we might imagine figures such as Lilith to be capable of. Nevertheless, the theatricality and performance – both of Lilith's image and of her model, Alexa Wilding – paves the way for this kind of interpretation. Given the rising popularity of stage magic in the nineteenth century, it seems reasonable to assume that Rossetti had some familiarity with magic shows, and there is evidence that he was familiar with séances and spiritualist practice, steeped in rituals such as table rapping.[196] Although these elements did not *directly* make their way into his works, I argue that what we do witness in *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* is performance and theatricality, and the notion of magic as creative expression.

It is important to note that when *Lady Lilith* was first painted and exhibited she had Fanny Cornforth's facial features, but the painting was reworked in 1872. The original face was painted over, to be substituted with Alexa Wilding's face.[197] Fanny's association with the *femme fatale* is still very much alive today - following the recent discoveries relating to Fanny's later life, a *Guardian* article was published with the title "From

[195] 'H.Res.642 - Recognizing magic as a rare and valuable art form and national treasure' (https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/642/text)

[196] See W. M. Rossetti's 'Séance Diaries (1865–8)', Oxford, Bodleian Library, Angeli–Dennis Collection, Films 1676/3, Microfilm 3, Series A.1.3.
[197] V. Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A Catalogue Raisonné, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) pp. 116-118

siren to asylum: the desperate last days of Fanny Cornforth".[198] Part of the appeal was undoubtedly the near-rhyme, but there is no denying that the type of characters Fanny often modelled for, such as Rossetti's Lilith or Burne-Jones' Lucrezia Borgia (to be discussed in Chapter V), fuelled her association with the siren, leading some to attribute the qualities of the *femme fatale* to Fanny herself. The rather cruel commentary from contemporaries such as William Bell Scott, who (falsely) claimed that during her first meeting with Rossetti she cracked nuts with her teeth, throwing the shells at him also served to express the unnatural, predatory, and almost animalistic sexuality that is so often associated with the *femme fatale.*

However, the fact that Wilding was made the model for the figures' faces in both paintings has the potential for simultaneously enhancing *and* complicating our readings of the images – she is at once Lilith *and* the Sibyl yet, in reality, neither. This may also be interpreted as showcasing, unintentionally or otherwise, the perceived distinctions between magic or witchcraft, and spiritualism or religion, as well as underscoring their similarities:

> Magic and religion are not the same thing, for magic is the evocation of emotions that are needed for the work of practical life, and a religion is a creed, or system of beliefs about the world, which is also a scale of

[198] M. Kennedy, 'From siren to asylum: the desperate last days of Fanny Cornforth', *The Guardian,* (13 April 2015)

> values or system of conduct. But every religion has its magic, and what is commonly called 'practising' a religion is practising its magic.[199]

In the case of the *sybilla* (prophetess), we have an individual who practises magic in a religious context. One of the most well-known artistic depictions of a sibyl can be found on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512) – Michelangelo's rendition of the *Libyan Sibyl* (fig. 4). This specific sibyl was first mentioned by Pausanias, as the daughter of Lamia and Poseidon, though later in the text, the sibyl's own oracles suggest a slightly different story:

> By birth I am half a mortal and half a goddess,
> For my mother was an immortal nymph, but my father was a corn-eating man.
> My mother's side I am Ida-born, but my fatherland was red Marpessus (sacred to the Mother) and the river Aidoneus.[200]

In her work on fairy tales and their tellers, Marina Warner has noted the significance of the sibyl's ties to Lamia, "the snake woman so sumptuously imagined later by Keats", and emphasised the suggestion of the sibyl's own identity as "an oracular woman with some hidden, snaky nature, which later influences the fairy-tale cast of fairy queens, demon brides, wicked enchantresses and cursing godmothers".[201] The "spectre of frenzied prophetesses", such as Cassandra (to be discussed further in

[199] Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, p. 74
[200] Pausanias, trans. J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* (London: Macmillan, 1898) p. 516
[201] M. Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 67

Chapter III), has at times provided a basis for arguments in favour of exclusive male priesthood.[202] Such imagery appears to be reflected in the language employed by certain nineteenth-century medical practitioners, when linking female mediumship or religious 'mania' with the condition of hysteria – at this time, religious mania "was a clearly established category of insanity and was viewed as the special preserve of women and clergymen".[203]

Victorian spiritualism was very much female orientated and feminine-coded – this is evident both from the fact that many of the most famous and successful spirit mediums were women, and from nineteenth-century discourse on the practice. Much spiritualist literature was "full of references to its women as gentle maidens or loving wives or mothers, women who mutely radiated grace, charm, and beauty, whilst embodying the highest moral and domestic virtues". Thus, spiritualism could be both liberating and restricting for the late Victorian woman – her traditionally feminine qualities afforded her status and a certain kind of authority as a spirit medium, but at the same time ensured that she was bound to particular codes and definitions of femininity.[204]

Lilith, on the other hand, is described in 'Body's Beauty' as a "witch", and while she is arguably beautiful – perhaps even charming and graceful – it

[202] Ibid., p. 75
[203] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 144
[204] A. Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 7-9.

is doubtful that she represents an embodiment of moral and domestic virtue. Rather, Lilith is usually interpreted as a woman possessing more typically masculine traits.[205] It is worth mentioning that in the later half of the nineteenth century, both magical *and* spiritualist practices were subtly gender coded, with magic generally assuming a more 'masculine' status – "intellectual, aggressive and scientific"[206] and spiritualism assuming a more traditionally 'feminine' status. Practices such as mediumship and automatic writing had more to do with the "surrender of self", in contrast to the assertion of oneself and one's authority that tended to be associated with magical practices.[207]

This notion of a perceived divide between 'masculine' and 'feminine' magic has persevered throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and in fantasy novels it frequently serves as a critical response to male privilege and the rigidity of traditional gender roles – British author Terry Pratchett's 'Discworld' novel *Equal Rites* (1987) explores this 'divide' between witches and wizards both humorously and meaningfully, and more recently we find similar themes in London-based author Zen Cho's *Sorcerer to the Crown* (2015), a novel set in Regency era Britain. Unlike nineteenth-century interpretations, however, these contemporary works of fiction explore a perceived divide between 'masculine' and 'feminine' magic that lies not between the magician and the medium, but

[205] For example, see Casteras's 'Malleus Maleficarum', for a discussion of masculine traits in relation to Lilith and other witch figures.
[206] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 89
[207] Ibid.*,* p. 88

between the academic occult magician and the more practical (hedge) witch or healer. This is curious, given that many cunning folk in nineteenth-century Britain were men – although there certainly *were* practicing cunning women. Nevertheless, differences of gender in relation to magical practice are familiar to a modern audience – one that informs our readings of Victorian images of magic, spiritualism and witchcraft – and the image of woman as healer is one familiar to nineteenth-century audiences, which can be tied to popular notions of feminine and particularly maternal virtues.

As Stott notes, binary oppositions in Western thought (such as man/woman, good/evil, law/chaos and so on) assume *hierarchical* oppositions, "the element of each pair needing the dominance or subordination of the other for its meaning. The two terms are dependent upon each other, but the dependency is premised on imbalance and inequality between the terms".[208] Witchcraft or folk magic might be paired with either science or religion, and in both instances (as seen in Chapter I), it is the 'subordinate' partner in the relationship. The sybil – a woman practicing magical rites within a *religious* framework – is naturally a morally superior being to Lilith, a witch and a demon with a penchant for stealing infants and ensnaring young men.

[208] Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale,* p. 32

In her analysis of *Lady Lilith,* Virgina M. Allen argues that Rossetti's choosing the character of Lilith specifically as the subject to represent body's beauty and the lethal female "implies that her personality traits were essential to the meaning of his work". At this point she was an obscure character in nineteenth-century British culture, her popularity far surpassed by figures such as Salome or Judith.[209] Philip McM. Pittman describes Lilith in similar terms, and as a woman "damned because her exercise of love is merely physical – animal and self-gratifying; she is both sterile and sodomistic".[210] Although Lilith's story has its roots in Talmudic legend, Rossetti's Lilith seems to be based upon her first 'modern' literary depiction - her brief appearance in Goethe's *Faust:*

> Adam's wife, his first. Beware of her.
> Her beauty's one boast is her dangerous hair.
> When Lilith winds it tight around young men
> She doesn't soon let go of them again.[211]

The notion of Lilith's hair as dangerous in a very literal way appears to be Goethe's own invention, but long, flowing locks, golden accessories, and especially *golden* hair have long been associated with feminine beauty – Aphrodite, Medusa (before her monstrous transformation), Helen of Troy, and other famously beautiful women in Graeco-Roman myth were

[209] V. M. Allen, '"One Strangling Golden Hair": Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*', *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 66, No. 2 (June, 1984), p. 286
[210] P. McM. Pittman, 'The Strumpet and The Snake: Rossetti's Treatment of Sex as Original Sin,' *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), p. 45
[211] J. W. von Goethe, trans. Martin Greenberg, *Faust, a Tragedy: Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), lines 4208-11

frequently described with particular attention to their "lovely hair", with writers such as Eurpides using "staging, together with the script, to focus our attention on that hair".[212] This tradition of fascination with beautiful, golden hair "gathered peculiar force and intensity in the latter half of the nineteenth century". Given the long tradition of using golden hair as a symbol in myth and folktales,[213] the emerging practices of comparative mythology (or religion), and the serious study of folklore in the nineteenth century, in addition to the popularity of the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm (first published in 1812), it seems likely that these myths and folktales further fuelled the associations of golden hair, magical power, and witchcraft (through its connections to the art of weaving)[214] in the Victorian imagination.

The use of colour (or perhaps *lack* of colour) in *Lady Lilith* works to emphasise further the power and grandeur of her hair – white clothing and pale flesh seem almost to blend together, while her beautiful, rich, golden locks form a contrast with the light and dark tones that dominate much of the canvas. The image bears notable similarities to two other paintings Rossetti produced within this decade - *Woman combing her hair* (1864, fig. 5) and *Fazio's Mistress* (1863-73, fig. 6), with the women's loose, abundant golden tresses being one of the more obvious repeated

[212] R. Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 9, 186
[213] E. G. Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', PMLA, Vol. 99, No. 5 (Oct., 1984), p. 936
[214] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', p. 936
This analogy shall be discussed in more detail in Chapter VII, in relation to The Lady of Shalott.

visual motifs. As well as this, the women occupy similar interior spaces – their toilettes – and each concern themselves with their physical appearances, and most of all with their hair, the "gleaming tresses" that both expressed woman's "mythic power and were its source".[215] The sibyl, on the other hand, appears most likely to be residing in a temple, and surrounded by objects and accessories that symbolize her devotion not to cosmetics, but to her spiritual pursuits. However, as shall be made clear, the two are not as easily separable as all that.

Speaking of the meanings and significance ascribed to hair in the Middle Ages, Bartlett suggests that part of the appeal and fascination is that hair, and especially a *woman's* hair is:

> an exceptionally malleable body part. It has almost the same range of possibilities of treatment as clothing - it can be shaped, dyed, removed - but it emerges from the body and is thus organic in a way that clothes are not. Second, head and facial hair surrounds the face, the part of the body with the most concentrated and diverse communicative functions. Here are grouped the organs of sight, smell, taste and hearing; here speech originates and eye contact focuses.[216]

This proximity to the mouth, nose, ears, and eyes emphasises the profound *sensuality* of hair that was to capture the imagination of the

[215] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', p. 936
[216] R. Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 4 (1994), p. 43

Victorians, and hair was also often, though not always, linked with sexuality:

> The combing and displaying of hair, as suggested by the legends of alluring mermaids who sit on rocks singing and combing their beautiful hair, thus constitute a sexual exhibition. And the more abundant the hair, the more potent the sexual invitation implied by its display, for folk, literary, and psychoanalytic traditions agree that the luxuriance of the hair is an index of vigorous sexuality, even of wantonness.[217]

This connection between sexual desire and hair was evident even in late nineteenth-century anthropological texts, such as Frazer's *The Golden Bough,* in which "little distinction between the sacrifice of the genitals, or sexual surrender, and the sacrifice of the hair".[218]

Particularly in the 1840s and 50s, this fascination with the sensuality of hair spilled over into everyday life in the forms of hair tokens and jewellery – hair was seen as "powerful, and the ubiquitous Victorian lock of hair, encased in a locket or ring or framed on the wall, became, through a Midas touch of imagination, something treasured, a totem, a token of attachment, intrinsically valuable, as precious as gold".[219] Particularly in the cases in which hair tokens were the woven remains of a loved one, they often resembled 'relics', working as "traces of a life and body completed and disappeared, in this sense something like last words",

[217] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair', p. 938
[218] Ibid., p. 938
[219] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair', pp. 942-3

serving as “frames or fragments of loss”.[220] It is this relationship between the body and the soul, the material and the immaterial, that is relevant when discussing interpretations of *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera,* and their accompanying sonnets.

In discussing beliefs and attitudes towards these hair relics, Lutz distinguishes between two approaches – the Romantic, and the Spiritualist approaches. The Romantic approach “entailed the view of death as a moment of beauty, as a transformation of the loved one into a paradise lost, to be yearned for with an erotic ache, and, in this sense, to be understood as the beginning or continuation of a narrative”.[221] This seems to fit very well with the intent behind works such as *Beata Beatrix* (fig. 7), completed in 1870. Begun around two years after her tragic and untimely death in 1862, *Beata Beatrix* depicts Elizabeth Siddall once again in the role of Dante’s Beatrice, “not as a representation of the incident of the death of Beatrice, but as an ideal of the subject, symbolized by a trance or sudden spiritual transfiguration”.[222] Here, the physical and the spiritual are not truly separate, but occupy the same frame.

In *The Mad Woman in the Attic,* Gilbert and Gubar suggest that “Lizzie Siddal Rossetti's hair leaps like a metaphor for monstrous female sexual

[220] D. Lutz, ‘The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture,” *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 39, No. 1 (2011), p. 128
[221] Lutz, ‘The Dead Still Among Us’, p. 130
[222] D. G. Rossetti, in a letter to William Graham (1873) qtd. in F. Horner, *Time Remembered* (London: W. Heinemann, 1933), p. 25

energies from the literal and figurative coffins in which her artist-husband enclosed her. To Rossetti, its assertive radiance made the dead Lizzie seem both terrifyingly physical and fiercely supernatural".[223] But whatever Rossetti's personal feelings might have been, regarding the often repeated tale that Siddall's hair continued to grow, even in death, her lush coppery locks filling her coffin, this is not the story told by *Beata Beatrix* - Lizzie-as-Beatrice is frozen in a moment of beauty, eroticism, and reverence, her red hair a memory, a 'relic' - we witness a fantasy of heaven as "a place where bodies might be rejoined, a *petite mort* fully realized". A similar moment is captured in *The Blessed Damozel* (fig. 7), completed a few years later - between 1875 and 1881. Here, we see the "just dead woman imagined as luminous and full of erotic pining for that lover still on earth".[224] Danahay's stance is rather different, and in his analysis of *The Blessed Damozel,* he suggests that Rossetti

> in both his painting and poem separates the lovers from their objects of desire, and then tries to overcome that distance, but is ultimately unsuccessful. In the poem the parentheses around the utterances of the earthly male lover and in the painting the wooden divider across the canvas both symbolize the separation of flesh and spirit. While both lovers may want to overcome the separation of flesh and spirit, desire is not strong enough to bridge the gap between them.[225]

[223] S. Gilbert & S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 22
[224] Lutz, 'The Dead Still Among Us,' pp. 30-31
[225] M. A. Danahay, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Virtual Bodies,' *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), p. 381

However, I would argue that Rossetti does not distinguish clearly between the flesh and the soul, as can be seen by his combining the sensual with the spiritual – one does not have to be without the other, and the two can overlap, just as the worlds of the living and the dead overlap in the mind of the spiritualist. Similarly, a painting, or even a poem put down onto paper, may be thought of as an idea made physical. When Buchanan attacked Rossetti's 'fleshy' creations, he likely had "in mind the conventional distinction between the "flesh" and the "spirit" in Christian theology",[226] as well as Rossetti's preoccupation with female bodies, but he did not recognise – perhaps chose not to recognise – the influence of the spiritual on Rossetti's works. Lisa Tickner has suggested that Rossetti may have been influenced by the sixteenth-century Swedish inventor and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg's book, *Conjugal Love* (1768), "which argued that sexual love was itself a religious experience through which humans could approach an understanding of the divine".[227] Notably, Swedenborg also authored a *Spiritual Diary* (1747-1765), and his influence reached Britain in the second half of the eighteenth-century. The Swedenborgian church, established in England in 1787, also accepted that every "human being, man or woman, is, like the Lord

[226] Danahay, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Virtual Bodies,', p. 380
[227] L. Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Tate, 2003), p. 54

himself, in a certain sense bi-sexual,[228] having both masculine and feminine qualities".[229]

Many spiritualists believed that "the dead remained tangibly among us," hovering close by, and that "the lines of communication might be kept open." Some even believed that "spirits were sufficiently substantial to be photographed and imagined they appeared with their own peculiar bodily texture: ectoplasmic draperies enveloping their wispy forms. Such spirits lent meaning to the relic, as they floated in the background of the bodily fragment and worked as another form of material evidence of eternal life".[230] While it is not known whether Rossetti himself subscribed to such a view, we do know that he engaged in spiritual practices such as séances, some of which were held by his housekeeper, model, and mistress, Fanny Cornforth.[231] And the sensuality of the artist's representations of spiritualism were not necessarily so peculiar, as spiritualists had "long argued that their beliefs were shaped precisely according to the evidence of their senses".[232]

Lutz has quite rightly identified the influence of sympathetic magic in relation to personal relics,[233] and perhaps one of the best literary

[228] 'Bi-sexual', in this context, is used to mean both male and female, and should not be confused with the contemporary definition of bisexuality as experiencing attraction to two or more genders.
[229] W. H. Holcombe, *The Sexes Here and Hereafter* (London: James Spiers, 1869) pp. 110-11
[230] Lutz, 'The Dead Still Among Us,' pp. 132-3
[231] K. Stonell-Walker, *Stunner,* p. 94-5
[232] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 143
[233] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 131

demonstrations of the period might be found in Emily Brontë's novel, *Wuthering Heights,* first published in 1847 under the pen name 'Ellis Bell' – a novel Rossetti expressed great interest in, and admiration for, in one of his letters to William Allingham in 1854.[234] Heathcliff sneaks into Catherine Linton's death chamber to open up the locket she wore around her neck, so that he might "cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own".[235] Thus, Heathcliff's presence lingers in the grave with Catherine's body, while his rival's has been cast aside. It is not difficult to see how similarities between this scene and old spells, especially love charms, which could often involve the use of a target (or victim)'s hair.[236] "To give a lock is to give one's body in promise".[237] Additionally, some nineteenth-century spiritualists did not necessarily consider the differences between their practices and magic to be *so* very different – for instance, Georgina Weldon, a well-known figure in British spiritualist circles during the 1870s, was "fond of remarking that had she lived in a different age she would have been burned as a witch".[238]

Lilith's gaze is not upon her audience, but fixed upon her own reflection in the mirror she holds. The mirror was frequently a symbol of feminine vice – of *vanity* – in images such as these, but as well as "the threat of narcissistic self-admiration", it reveals the woman's ability to "enhance

[234] G. B. Hill, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 1854-1870* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897) p. 58
[235] E. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858) p. 147
[236] 'Attraction Spell by Sleeplessness', in D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts,* pp. 233-4
[237] Lutz, 'The Dead Still Among Us," p. 131
[238] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 166

her looks, through dress, cosmetics, and grooming", usually for the purpose of seduction – "the most beautiful woman is the one with the best accessories".[239] Prettejohn offers another interpretation: that "eroticism and narcissism combine to hint at a topic of contemporary concern, female masturbation".[240]

> Victorian doctors claimed that female masturbation led to enervation and ill health. The languid poses and pale, drawn features of many of the depicted women may relate at some level to this medical stereotype. If the pictures betray male fear of self-sufficiency, they do so with equal admixture of fascination with the idea.[241]

Given Lilith's refusal to submit to Adam, such 'self-sufficiency' likely seems a reasonable alternative. Selecting cosmetics and accessories that best enhance her natural beauty requires a certain degree of finesse and creativity and, to some, the process may seem a deception, a glamour, or even a *transformation,* concealing what lies beneath. This is doubly true of the *femme fatale* figure, who must work not only to conceal the bags under her eyes, but the reality of her very *nature.*

This is perhaps a major reason for art historian Susan Casteras' belief that the nineteenth-century woman "endowed with superior creativity

[239] Blondell, *Helen of Troy,* p. 7
[240] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 27
[241] Ibid., p. 30

typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress".[242] Many witches or sorceresses in folktales are able to alter their physical appearance with magic, such as when the wicked Queen in the Grimm Brothers' *Snow White* – a tale in which a magic mirror is also a major motif – disguises herself as an old peddler woman and later a farmer's wife in attempts to trick and subsequently murder her stepdaughter, Snow White. Because of her associations with magic, poison, danger, and beauty, many contemporary interpretations of *Snow White*'s Wicked Queen*,* such as *Once Upon a Time'*s (2011-) Regina Mills, are introduced as characters who fit the mold of the *femme fatale,* and the same is true for many witch or sorceress characters – for both original characters and reinterpretations, in contemporary culture and nineteenth-century visual and literary culture – accounting for the renewed fascination with images of the Victorian sorceress.

One of the reasons for the continued portrayal of the *femme fatale* as sorceress, or sorceress as *femme fatale,* could be that the very language used in connection with the *femme fatale* evokes the imagery of magic, particularly with regards to the power she holds over men. This became particularly evident in a number of real-life murder cases in which the accused – or at least *one* of the accused – was a woman. For instance, Henry Judd Gray, who stood accused alongside his lover, Ruth Snyder, of murdering her husband, attempted to defend his actions by taking

[242] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 142

advantage of the press's characterization of her as a *femme fatale* by "painting a picture of himself as hopelessly ensnared by Snyder's charms",[243] formulating claims about her "complete physical and mental domination" over him. Various references were also made to her ability to 'hypnotise' him with her eyes,[244] reminiscent of accounts of the witch's 'evil eye'. Although we might doubt that Gray's accounts of hypnotism referred to any literal magical power that Snyder possessed, the language he uses is symptomatic of more widespread male anxieties regarding the dangers of succumbing to feminine wiles. Speaking on women and crime in 1914, Hargrave L. Adam wrote:

> There is some indefinable personal magnetism about certain women which seems to completely subjugate the will of certain men. Personally I feel quite convinced that some women wield hypnotic influence over men. And it is invariably a malign influence.[245]

With regards to *Lady Lilith* and the anxieties that plagued Rossetti's generation, Allen notes the confrontation with the Women's Emancipation Movement and controversy over family planning during the 1860s.[246] While we ought to acknowledge that the *femme fatale* and the "anxiety surrounding female adornment"[247] is not truly unique to any particular period or culture, artistic representations (such as *The Laboratory* or *Lady*

[243] Simkins, *The Cultural Construction of the Femme Fatale,* p. 106
[244] New York *Daily News* (1 April 1927), p. 3
[245] H. L. Adam, *Woman and Crime* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), p. 11
[246] Allen, 'One Strangling Golden Hair', p. 286
[247] Blondell, *Helen of Troy,* p. 10

Lilith) frequently do express or signify issues specific to the periods and cultures in which they are created, such as the perceived rise of female criminality in the mid-nineteenth century – and especially murder by poison, a problem "so profound that legislation was passed requiring all sales of arsenic to be recorded in a poison book by apothecaries and pharmacists"[248] – and a shift in attitudes towards women's bodies and sexualities, as well as constructions and subversions of femininity.

What is worth noting, is that while Rossetti's sibyl may not ensnare you with her hair, only partially tucked away, she, too, is depicted with objects that signify death – poppies and, beneath them, a representation of a skull and a sphinx (representing mystery), and a pair of butterflies (representing the soul, or souls). Opposite them, on the left of the canvas, are red roses and a representation of the blind figure of Love, over a censer (or thurible) – these were typically used in religious rituals, particularly in the Catholic Church or ancient Jewish rites to facilitate the distribution of fragrant incense smoke.[249] The sibyl is seated in the centre, between these contrasting sets of iconography, as if she is not defined wholly by one or the other. The link between love and desire, and death is not only evident in Rossetti's portrayal of Lilith.

[248] Simkin, *The Cultural Construction of the Femme Fatale,* p. 34
[249] M. D. Herrera, *Holy Smoke: The Use of Incense in the Catholic Church* (San Luis Obispo: Tixlini Scriptorium Inc., 2011) p. 4

Art critic, F. G. Stephens, who had been part of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and was known to have been heavily influenced by Rossetti, described *Sibylla Palmifera* as

> the noble seated figure of a virgin, quiet and pale, as if long absorbed in the contemplation of the mysteries of life and thought, and holding a palm before a shrine, while at her side burns a lamp whose steadfast flame rises towards a garland of roses which hangs near the sculptured head of a cherub; on the other side is a thurible from which smoke ascends slowly in circles, towards a Death's-head, over which is suspended a wreath of poppies. Above the sibyl's head hangs a festoon of olive boughs and, carved in a niche, is a sphinx, with other emblems of mysteries. Two butterflies, one of gold, the other of a carnation tint, whose significance may be easily imagined, hover near the sibyl's shoulder.[250]

Incense and smoke were also associated with prophetesses and oracles, and especially with the acts of prophecy themselves. These acts often involved speaking with the dead, as can be seen in Waterhouse's *Consulting the Oracle* (1884), which also depicts the use of incense while consulting the 'oracle' – a mummified human head, not so different in appearance from a skull. Incense smoke was central to the practices of Pythia, also known as the Delphic Oracle, who can be seen in late nineteenth-century art, such as John Collier's *Priestess of Delphi* (1891), and John William Godward's *The Delphic Oracle* (1899).[251] The presence

[250] F. G. Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Seeley and Co. Ltd., 1894) pp. 64-5
[251] These images, along with Waterhouse's *Consulting the Oracle,* are discussed in further detail in Chapter VII.

of the incense smoke, and the censer's placement beneath the skull and the poppies in *Sibylla Palmifera,* is also suggestive of the sibyl's communication with spirits.

Looking at both *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* through a spiritualist lens offers a new perspective on the two paintings, both individually and as a pair. It has been suggested that substituting Fanny Cornforth's "softly rubicund features" with Alexa Wilding's "heavy-lidded eyes and remote face" conveys a "colder and more dangerous form of Eros to the viewer".[252] Given that Rossetti himself has hinted towards his intended portrayal of Lilith as a *femme fatale* type, this may well have been part of the intention for the change. However, the weakness of this analysis is that it fails to take into account the significance of this substitution in relation to interpreting *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* as a pair. Literary critic and professor of English Kathy Alexis Psomiades articulates the changed relationship between the two paintings and the sonnets:

> Sybilla and Lilith, "Soul's Beauty" and "Body's Beauty," are a good girl and a bad one. Making a good girl and a bad girl into the same girl, in different dress and with different props, makes explicit a suggestion present from the beginning in the symbolic structures of the paintings: that these women compose a moment of identity as well as a moment of difference. Identity is suggested by the presence of the rose and poppy, flowers attributed to Lilith in the poem "Body's Beauty," in Sybilla's painting, and by the fact that Lilith, although representing sexual

[252] Allen, 'One Strangling Golden Hair," p. 293

> corruption, wears a white robe, while Sybilla, despite her purity, wears a red one.[253]

Lilith and Sibylla, now with identical faces, become more difficult to interpret as two distinct individuals. Rather, Lilith and Sibylla might be said to be two sides of the same coin – not unlike the (much more recent) example of Regina Mills and the Evil Queen in *Once Upon a Time,* and not unlike several real-life nineteenth-century spirit mediums. Prettejohn further elaborates on the relationship between the two paintings and their symbolism, suggesting that " perhaps Rossetti's pictures also refuse to offer a clear [moral] choice; the symbols of virtue and vice are oddly assorted between the two images".[254] Swinburne claimed Lilith as "a metaphor for art's independence from conventional morality":[255] "Of evil desire or evil impulse she has nothing; and nothing of good".[256] This interpretation of *Lady Lilith* as representative of the 'Bohemian' art world that Rossetti and his friends inhabited in the 1860s also raises the possibility of an important connection between the witch and the artist. Not unlike many witches, both in fiction and reality, artists and poets such as Rossetti, Swinburne, Sandys, Solomon, and Burne-Jones challenged social norms through their lifestyle, and through the ways in which they expressed themselves – often challenging or subverting traditional artistic

[253] K. A. Psomiades, 'Beauty's Body: Gender Ideology and British Aestheticism,' *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 49-50
[254] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 31
[255] Ibid., p. 30
[256] A. C. Swinburne, 'Notes on Some Pictures of 1868', E. Gosse & T. J. Wise, eds., *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968) p. 212

practices and conventions. It is not far-fetched to consider that a witch or sorceress, like Lilith, could be a powerful symbol of rebellion for the artist.

Following from the discussion on women and spiritualism in Chapter I, it ought to be noted that the intention of the majority of British spiritualists was not "to amount an overt challenge to received notions of womanhood". Rather, it was spiritualist practices themselves that lent themselves to "the subversion of the nineteenth-century feminine ideal", as spirit mediums who were under the influence of possession "were not responsible for (and often unaware of) anything that occurred during the course of a séance".[257] As a result, women acting as spirit mediums were able to undergo and display apparent transformations in terms of personality and behaviour, and sometimes even physical appearance.

Some nineteenth-century spirit mediums, such as Emma Hardinge Britten, described a crisis of identity of sorts – a feeling that one was *not* one, but *two* individuals at once, one "uttering a succession of sentences, sometimes familiar to me, still oftener new and strange", and the other "an onlooker and occasional listener".[258] This juxtaposition of the active speaker and the passive onlooker, or listener, is revealing. When considering nineteenth-century séances, and especially those involving 'materialisations' (in which a fully formed, materialised 'spirit' would

[257] Owen, *The Darkened Room,'* p. 202
[258] M. Wilkinson, ed., *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten* (London: John Heywood, 1900) p. 50

appear to walk among the living),[259] spiritual and earthly beauty do not always seem so far removed from one another. And quite often, female spirit mediums *were* described as "decidedly good-looking", with one observer notably focusing on a medium's "profusion of golden hair – very golden indeed, falling in studied negligence over her shoulders".[260] Flirtations and physical displays of affections were not unheard of in the séance room, particularly when they involved possession or materialised spirits, as the spirit medium would not be held accountable for their words or actions during those times. Again, the theatrical element of spiritualist practice may be at play as, throughout history, the theatre itself has often been regarded as having been "charged with a sexual energy encouraged by the crowded mingling of the sexes in frequently dimly lit spaces".[261] Additionally, as Owen has noted, the very language of spiritualism "oozed sexuality," as the mediums "surrendered and were then entered, seized, possessed by another",[262] who may not behave in ways considered all that appropriate for a Victorian lady – ways that *could*, even, be more appropriate for a character such as Lilith or even Sybilla, when entranced.

The Laboratory marks a beginning of a fascination with a particular brand of *femme fatale* – the witch and the poisoner – but *Lady Lilith* and *Sybilla*

[259] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 42
[260] C. M. Davies, *Heterodox London: or, Phases of Free Thought in the Metropolis,* Vol. 2 (London: Tinsley Bros., 1874) p. 44
[261] H. Maguire, 'The Victorian Theatre as a Home from Home,' *Journal of Design History,* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2000), p. 108
[262] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 218

Palmifera, paired together and with their sonnets, offer a fuller exploration into spiritualism and magic as a form of expression, and a more nuanced view of Victorian femininity. The archetypes of Lilith (the *femme fatale*) and Sybilla (the idealised beauty) mingle with one another, creating an interpretation of womanhood that encompasses the whore and the virgin, the lamia and the mother, and everything between.

III. The Kiss and the Kill: Frederick Sandys' Enchantresses

Unlike Rossetti and Solomon, Frederick Sandys, born Anthony Frederick Augustus Sands, did not grow up in London. He was born and educated in Norwich, where he studied under his father, Anthony Sands (himself an artist), as well as attending the Government School of Design. Before moving to London and exhibiting at the Royal Academy for the first time in 1851, he had exhibited drawings at the Norwich Art Union and won Royal Society of Arts medals in 1846 and 1847. During this time, Sandys had worked mainly on illustrations and portraits, as well as detailed studies of local antiques (commissioned, alongside other artists) by the Reverend James Bulwer). These studies required the kind of very precise, accurate drawing and careful colouring, and "gave the young artist a taste for the medieval" [263] that can be seen in many of his later works. It was not until the late 1850s that he began to produce the iconic oil paintings of enchantresses that this chapter is concerned with. In addition to *Medea* and *Morgan le Fay* – images of (what has often been perceived as) feminine cruelty – I examine other ways in which Sandys uses magic in his paintings, particularly in his depictions of Cassandra and Isolde/Iseult.

Although normally considered in a more sympathetic light than Medea, Vivien/Nimue and Morgan le Fay, Cassandra can, and has, been

[263] W. S. Talbot, "A Victorian Portrait by Frederick Sandys", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art,* Vol. 67, No. 10 (Dec. 1980), pp. 301-302

interpreted as mentally unstable as a result of her magical practices (the prophetic abilities bestowed on her by the god Apollo) and the love potion's influence on Isolde can be seen in a similar light. It has been argued that Sandys portrays the well-known archetype of the 'hysterical' woman in his representations of enchantresses, and while certain anxieties about gender and class are at play, this chapter aims to show another interpretation - that of the witch or enchantress as someone exercising their creative expression in a non-conventional manner.

By examining the narratives from which the subjects were taken, many of which would have been very familiar to a nineteenth-century audience, alongside Victorian folklore and popular beliefs about potions, poisons and prophecy, as well as the visual evidence in the images themselves, we find that Sandys' enchantresses are frequently wronged women, treated unfairly by the men to whom they have devoted themselves, and that his portrayals are fraught with ambiguities that, paradoxically, present us with female figures that are much more three-dimensional than they might first appear. Following on from the discussion of Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera* as overlapping representations of the physical and the spiritual, respectively, I argue that Sandys' enchantresses embody both feminine vice *and* virtue. It could be said, as with Swinburne's interpretation of *Lady Lilith,* that these figures exist outside conventional Victorian morality.

The Guises of Morgan le Fay

When Morgan le Fay first made her appearance in Arthurian legend, it was in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (c. 1130), as "a magical being, a shape-shifter who can fly, a skilled practitioner of herbal medicine", but as art historian Debra N. Mancoff so aptly puts it: "Time transformed some women from innocence to malevolence".[264] In later medieval sources, such as the *Post-Vulgate Cycle* (c. 1230-40), and subsequently, Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (first published in 1485), her character re-emerges dramatically altered. One possible explanation for these changes could be the shifts in attitudes towards magic and witchcraft in Europe around this time, spurred on by the works of figures such as Thomas Aquinas. It was only two years after *Le Morte Darthur's* first publication that Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger published their influential *Malleus Maleficarum,* perhaps anticipating the transition to the early modern witch hunts.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* we find a rather scathing description of Morgan as both physically ugly and "so lustful and wanton, that a looser woman could not have been found".[265] Sandys' image of *Morgan le Fay* (1863-64, fig. 8) contrasts sharply with this version, in terms of the sorceress' physical appearance, and the same can be said of Burne-

[264] D. N. Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (London: Pavilion Books Ltd., 1995), p. 94
[265] J. R. R. Tolkien & E. V. Gordon, eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 300, 311

Jones' depiction of her as a "comely seductress" (fig. 9), even if the sprig of poisonous daphne held to her lips betrays her more sinister nature.[266] Even in some of the texts in which Morgan did appear beautiful, it must be noted that this beauty was a deception, a result of using enchantment for cosmetic purposes "to conceal both the ravages of time and the physical toll exacted by magic",[267] most likely in addition to concealing the ugliness *within.*

It is more than reasonable to assume that *Le Morte Darthur* is the source that inspired Sandys' treatment of Morgan, given that the text was popular among artists within his circle – notably Burne-Jones, Morris, and Rossetti. The fact that Sandys would assign titles to works that appeared to reference this particular collection of Arthurian tales, as opposed to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (published between 1859 and 1885), which had been very popular with Oxford undergraduates during the 1850s, supports this hypothesis. However, we ought not to discount the introduction to Southey's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* (first published in 1817), which includes a summary and reprints of the 1498 edition of the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Prophesies de Merlin,* which were highly influential on Victorian perceptions of the figure of Vivien/Nimue[268] and, I would suggest, the archetype of the witch or sorceress more generally.

[266] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 94
[267] C. Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Legend* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006) p. 25
[268] Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 148

The passages dealing with Morgan le Fay in Malory's text are littered with references to her deceptive nature and her falseness – her "false crafts" as well as her "false lusts",[269] and the theatrical quality of Sandys' representation, in combination with the overwrought facial expression and open mouth common to many of the artist's *femme fatales,* seems to enhance this perception. Sexuality, and in particular so-called deviant or illicit sexuality, had been linked to the occult arts in the western imagination for some time, as can be seen in some of the descriptions of Morgan le Fay, but during the mid-nineteenth century this relationship was further strengthened with the appearance of a large body of literature concerning "magia sexualis", or sexual magic.[270] However, these works were not widely accepted, and "most of these advocates of magia sexualis were portrayed - both by their critics and in their own writings - as rebellious dissidents working against the grain of modern western society and mainstream values".[271]

This further intermingling of magical practice and sexuality goes some way towards explaining the appearance of the majority of witches or sorceresses in nineteenth-century British art as *femme fatale* figures, rather than the ugly old hags and frightening scenes that were common to earlier European depictions, such as Cornelis Saftleven's *A Witches'*

[269] T. Malory, 'CHAPTER XI: How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him'*, The Complete Works of Thomas Malory* (Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2014)
[270] H. B. Urban, "Magia Sexualis": Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Sept. 2004), p. 696
[271] Ibid., p. 697

Sabbath (c. 1650, fig. 10) or Francisco Goya's *Witches' Sabbath* (c.1797-8, fig. 11). On the other hand, certain aspects visible in these paintings, such as the presence of animals or familiars, persevered. The notion of animals – especially cats, mice and toads – as witches' familiars carried on into the Victorian era, and often made itself known in literary and visual depictions of witchcraft. In *Morgan le Fay,* we see two owls above the loom, but there are other representations of animals – notably the "winged, animal-headed creatures"[272] on the tapestry and the leopard pelt as part of Morgan's outfit, perhaps signifying her alleged shape shifting abilities. However, the motif of the animal or familiar took on multiple significances.

There are already numerous texts alluding to the links between sexuality (and, in particular, female sexuality) and bestial nature, but we ought also to consider Sandys' choice of model for *Morgan le Fay,* as well as *Medea* and *Vivien.* Sandys first became acquainted with Keomi Gray when she was living in a Roma encampment. Nineteenth-century attitudes towards English Romani people were frequently negative, both in anthropological texts and in popular culture – in *The Spanish Gypsy,* for instance, George Eliot describes gypsies as a "race that lives on prey as foxes do with stealthy, petty rapine",[273] revealing some of the views Victorians might have with regards to men and women of Romani descent. In the opinion of the "self-styled and idiosyncratic philanthropist" George Smith, the

[272] A. Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s: Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 80
[273] G. Eliot, *The Spanish Gypsy* (New York: John Lovell, 1868), p. 90

"physical and spiritual squalor found among the Gypsies exceeded the worst of anything seen or experienced previously".[274] To philanthropists such as Smith,

> Gypsy life offered clear proof that the animal in the human being was strong, and that English civilization had gone too far toward repressing healthy animal instincts. It was this image of the Gypsy as a creature of instinct that in turn encouraged writers to invest the race, especially the women, with magical powers.[275]

The presence of Romani gypsies in nineteenth-century England could be considered a challenge and struck some Victorians as "an intolerable affront to the values of modern civilization."[276] However, there were also those who romanticized the gypsies and their lifestyles[277] and, given his relationship with Keomi Gray and involvement in the 'Bohemian' art world, Sandys may have been one of them. What both these attitudes have in common is the way they present the gypsy as "other". To some extent these views have persisted to the present day, as shown by the way "accounts in the tabloid press often appear to be deliberately skewed towards painting a stereotypical picture of gypsies that undermines their acceptability within wider society",[278] with a similar trend

[274] D. Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Politics* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995) pp. 31, 34
[275] G. K. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter, 1985), p. 251
[276] Ibid., p. 231
[277] Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', p. 232
[278] K. Bhopal & M. Myers, *Insiders, outsiders and others: gypsies and identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008) pp. 29-30

appearing in at least some academic works.[279] With this in mind, it seems prudent to consider both the differences and similarities in how the nineteenth-century and twenty-first-century audiences might interpret works such as Sandys's.

This perceived 'otherness' and foreignness of the gypsy, in combination with with the 'otherness' of the sorceress, works to create a figure that seems almost superhuman - perhaps reminiscent of Morgan's original identity as a goddess, albeit one whose mind has now been poisoned with vengeance and jealousy. The use of Japanese objects and accessories in *Morgan le Fay,* such as the green kimono Keomi wears, enhance this 'otherness' and bring an additional kind of mystical, "Oriental" allure. Green is also one of the colours most often associated with witches and fairies during the nineteenth century, the other being red[280] – which can be seen both in the lining of the kimono and in the embellishments of the poisoned robe she weaves for her royal brother, King Arthur.

It is also worth noting the perceived associations between gypsies and occult magic (and its practitioners). Gypsies were known in particular for fortune-telling, with the American folklorist Charles G. Leland publishing a book on the subject later in the nineteenth century – *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling* (first published in 1891). Leland, along with the

[279] Bhopal & Myers, *Insiders, outsiders and others,* p. 30
[280] O. Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 187

encyclopaedist Francis Hindes Groome, even suggested that the gypsies were "colporteurs" of magical beliefs, and that "both European witchcraft beliefs and the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm allegedly owed much to Gypsy fertilization of folk culture".[281]

Additionally, both the gypsy and the practitioner of magic were often portrayed as figures who could subvert gender norms, displaying a "feminized masculinity" or "unconventional femininity".[282] For example, Nord suggests that Eliot utilised her gypsy characters in such a way, using their 'otherness' and foreignness "as metaphors for other kinds of unconventionality".[283] Similarly, as noted in Casteras's essay, the figure of the witch or sorceress could serve a similar function in literature and art, presenting women with ""masculinized traits" of strength, resourcefulness, and aggressiveness".[284] Speaking about *Morgan le Fay,* she says:

> Jealous, passionate, and somewhat out of control, she exhibits another frequent attribute of witches – weaving – which makes these females even more spiderlike as they enchant and ensnare men.[285]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the romantic image of the 'gypsy-artist' was a pervasive one, and, while the Bohemian art world in which

[281] Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', p. 243
[282] D. E. Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination,* p. 99
[283] Ibid., p. 99
[284] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 143
[285] Ibid., p. 156

Rossetti, Sandys and others resided may well have romanticised Romani people and their culture, it would have been more welcoming than other parts of Victorian society due to their "refusal to conform to conventional rules"[286] - and the fact that they likely related to (and perhaps envied) what they saw as freedom from those rules. The connection between Romani gypsies and magic is also pervasive in modern times, finding its way into twenty-first century fiction set in the nineteenth century, such as Paula Brackston's *The Winter Witch* (first published in 2013), in which the title character's disappeared father is identified as a gypsy.

The interior in which Morgan works her magic is likened to a "suffocating artist's space" with a malevolent atmosphere, and Casteras posits the notion that "the woman endowed with superior creativity typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress, whose supernatural powers permitted her to exercise her half-human, half-demonical or monstrous inspiration, autonomy, and degeneracy".[287] These parallels make sense when one considers witchcraft or magic as a process in which the practitioner *creates* something from something else – various ingredients if correctly combined, for example, could create a potion. Staley claims that the work is undermined by the figure of Morgan herself, "whose facial expression and action are so unconvincing that it is difficult to see her as more than a dressed-up model pretending to dance".[288] On the contrary, I would argue that the way the figure is represented reveals the

[286] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 20
[287] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', pp. 142, 154
[288] Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s,* p. 80

falseness associated with Morgan, and that the rituality and particularly the *theatricality* of nineteenth-century magical performance further supports an understanding of its practice as an art form – as does the motif of the witch as a weaver, skilfully crafting items endowed with magical power. Virginia Woolf's comment that fiction is "like a spider's web"[289] can also be interpreted in a similar way. In creating art and literature, it is possible to 'spin a tale', to produce a kind of magic that draws people in, entrapping them in the spider's web.

Morgan le Fay differs from *Medea* and *Vivien* in that it is the only portrayal of witchcraft in which Sandys chose to depict a clear visual representation of the written word – the scrolls in the foreground, at Morgan's feet. Although their contents are obscured, it is usually assumed that they contain magical spells, and most likely the spell currently being performed. Nineteenth-century magical beliefs frequently placed great importance on the value of words, whether used for benevolent or nefarious purposes. That the pages are loose in this instance, placed haphazardly on the ground rather than neatly contained in a book, adds to the frenzied, unbridled energy emitted from Morgan herself. As well as representing the written word, Sandys also makes his audience aware of the spoken word by depicting Morgan's open mouth – a motif also present in *Medea* (fig. 12). She appears to be chanting, reciting a spell, as she creates her magical object. Both the written word

[289] V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1929) p. 72

and the spoken word were thought to have great power – some believed that witches or cunning-folk were able to pass on their powers orally or by transferring books or scrolls to the intended recipient. Speaking of an account in a letter from a lady in West Norfolk, not so very far from where Sandys grew up, folklorist Mark R. Taylor writes:

> …when she was a girl, an old man in the village, a noted wart charmer, was dying. Having no one of his own folk to whom to pass over his power, he sent for the parson's daughter (my informant's sister) and told her the secret. This she could never divulge, or the power would be lost.[290]

This account also highlights the perceived importance of secrecy with regards to magical practice – something Sandys seems to take into account, given that in *Morgan le Fay, Medea* and *Vivien* he situates the sorceresses in claustrophobic interiors. Especially with respect to Morgan and Medea, whose spaces are filled with magical items of an esoteric nature, magical items that they may not fully understand, the viewer may have the sense that they are intruding. This, in combination with the distinct 'otherness' of Morgan's person, firmly places her in a world that mere mortals might glimpse, but never truly be a part of - something akin to the world of the artist that Walter Crane recalls, in reference to his experiences of Burne-Jones's art:

[290] M. R. Taylor, 'Norfolk Folklore', *Folklore,* Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 30, 1929) pp. 116-117

> The curtain had been lifted, and we had a glimpse into a world of romance and pictured poetry, peopled with ghosts of 'ladies dead and lovely knights,' - a twilight world of dark mysterious woodlands, haunted streams, meads of deep green starred with burning flowers, veiled in a dim and mystic light, and stained with low-toned crimson and gold, as if indeed one had gazed through the glass of
>
> "Magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faerylands forlorn."[291]

Vivien, La Belle Isolde and Keomi Gray

Sandys' paintings of *Vivien* (fig. 13) and *La Belle Isolde* (fig. 14), created in 1863 and 1862 respectively, are startlingly similar in terms of composition - yet the depict two very different characters from Arthurian legend. Vivien, sometimes known also as Nimue, was an apprentice of Merlin whose tale (popularized first by Tennyson's *Idylls*) usually ended with her using her feminine wiles to trick her teacher, earning her status as a *femme fatale* in the eyes of many nineteenth-century artists and poets. However, there was a tragic element to Vivien's story:

> From her first moments of life, Vivien knew only slaughter and devastation. Her father, fighting against Arthur in the wars to settle the kingdom, fell in battle, and her mother, heavy with child, died at his side in grief.[292]

[291] W. Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen & Co., 1907) p. 84
[292] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 95

Most Victorian responses to Vivien, however, remained without sympathy. Isolde, on the other hand – in spite of her deception and adultery – was often seen in a more sympathetic light. She was not a sorceress herself, but a *victim* of magic. When she and Sir Tristram made eye contact following the (usually) accidental consumption of the love potion, falling in love was the only possible outcome. In these versions of the tale, it is sometimes assumed that it absolves them from any responsibility they might have held for their behaviour in normal circumstances. In other words, the love potion is "an alibi for passion".[293] At least some Victorians may well have shared this view. There are a few surviving accounts of cases involving pregnancy as a result of pre-marital sex, in which working-class Victorian women attempted to explain their situation by claiming to have been "induced to surrender by a mysterious potion which robbed them of all willpower and made them easy prey for vice".[294]

The presence of the potion, in both the stories of these Victorian women, and of Tristram and Isolde, is necessary to free their passion "from every kind of visible connexion with human responsibility".[295] It absolves those under its spell from any wrongdoings, thus allowing the reader to accept the relationship between Tristram and Isolde. That it is consumed

[293] D. de Rougemont, trans. Montgomery Belgion, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) p. 48
[294] F. Barret-Ducrocq, trans. John Howe, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire Among Working-class Men and Women in Nineteenth-century London (*New York: Penguin Books, 1992) p. 106
[295] de Rougemont, trans Belgion, *Love in the Western World,* p. 48

accidentally, as well as by both parties, also helps to avoid some of the more disturbing undertones in other tales featuring love potions. Tennyson portrayed Tristram as a "sensualist, bent on earthly pleasures", but this treatment was atypical. In the nineteenth century, Tristram tended to be represented as a knight of decent character and a victim of fate, and many critics were unhappy with the liberties Tennyson had taken with Tristram's character.[296] While Lancelot's virtues, such as his devotion to chivalric duty, were acknowledged by Victorian audiences, his affair with King Arthur's wife "offended their belief in the sanctity of home and marriage".[297] Similarly, many judged Guinevere much more harshly than Isolde, even though the two women were in similar situations – both were married to kings and both were adulteresses. Even William Morris' more sympathetic representation of the queen in 'The Defence of Guenevere'[298] reveals her as a conniving woman, not above threatening the lords and then distracting them with her beauty.[299]

That the title of Sandys' work references and draws attention to the love potion indicates his perception of its importance to the narrative, suggesting a somewhat sympathetic reading of Isolde's character. Although repetition was a hallmark of Sandys's images of women, it appears that the similarities between *Isolde and the Love Potion* and

[296] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 64-6
[297] Ibid., p. 66
[298] W. Morris, 'The Defence of Guenevere', *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (London: Ellis and White, 1875), pp. 1-17
[299] R. L. Stallman, 'The Lovers' Progress: An Investigation of William Morris's 'The Defence of Guenevere' and 'King Arthur's Tomb'', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* Vol. 15, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1975) p. 662

Vivien may be intended to highlight their differences. Both dark-haired women gaze toward something, or someone, outside the frame and are dressed in white and gold. Also worth mentioning is the prominence of the lady's neck, an erogenous zone, in both images (as well as in *Medea*), which is adorned in each case with a distinctive coral necklace. As Pointon notes, the coral necklace can also be interpreted as suggestive of decapitation,[300] bringing to mind the fate of Medusa, with whom coral is often associated. Although Isolde, Vivien, and Medea did not themselves suffer such a fate, and led very different lives to one another, their relationships with men were similarly disastrous. Medea loves Jason, who abandons her for another, while Vivien is loved by Merlin and betrays him. Isolde both loves and is loved by Tristram, but is married to King Mark.

While many of their sources may have differed from ours, the Victorian or Edwardian artist would be no less familiar with love spells and potions than the present day fantasy reader. One thing is certainly true for both periods, and that is that the love spells one reads or hears about can differ a great deal from one another. The methods, equipment and ingredients (in the case of potions) required are some of the ways in which they could differ but these are not the only properties that we should concern ourselves with. Perhaps the most important thing that ought to be discussed is the *motive* of the person who casts the spell or

[300] M. Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) p. 143

provides the potion to their hopeless victim. It might seem clear that their wish is for another 'fall in love' with them, but unfortunately the situation is rarely that simple – as is usually the case within the realms of love and magic. As well as looking at images of both those who make the potions and those who consume them, it is helpful to consider historical and literary narratives that concern the use of love magic in order to gain a fuller understanding of the sometimes subtle differences in intention. This, along with the strange status of the love potion as potentially a poison *and* a remedy – which will be discussed in further detail in relation to Evelyn de Morgan's *The Love Potion* (1901) in Chapter VI – leads to some fascinating artistic expressions exploring the anxieties and unease associated with its use. As discussed by Prettejohn in *Rossetti and his Circle*, the use of symbolism amongst Rossetti, Sandys, and others was unique in nineteenth-century British art - in many of their works, signs and symbols were frequently open to multiple interpretations.[301]

Another motif with a dual nature is coral – that it was considered as symbolic of destruction, as well as possessing aptropaic and medicinal properties is highly significant. Love is not universally beneficial or disastrous, and it is not always simply one or the other. Most often it fluctuates, occupying some middle ground between the two. In the coral necklace we find a motif that has a certain fluidity and allows for more than one interpretation, as though each bead captures one moment of the romance. Although the peacock feathers in *Vivien* can be interpreted

[301] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* pp. 14-5

as symbolic of vice in the form of pride or luxury[302] they, too, allow for additional interpretations. Peacock feathers were also associated with the Virgin Mary, which Sandys was surely aware, given the influence of Rossetti.[303] Additionally, given the subject of the painting, it is worth considering the possible psychological effects of the peacock feathers as a visual cue. Certain visual triggers are capable of producing fear and anxiety in the viewer, such as "false eye spots that mimic direct eye contact, pointed versus curved shapes, and the quality of a drawn line."[304] The pattern of the peacock feathers mimics the effect of ten disembodied eyes staring out of the painting, each at a different angle to ensure that the viewer cannot escape their gaze. Whether or not the audience is conscious of this, it produces an unsettling effect, and it only becomes more unsettling when we consider it in relation to witchcraft beliefs centred around the "evil eye".

Reviewing Sandys' work in 1896, Esther Wood described *Vivien* as possessing:

> ...the stately and deliberate loveliness of the cultured Englishwoman, proud perhaps, and with certain possibilities of cold cruelty, but innocent of those fierce and wanton passions which lurk in the so-called 'child of nature', and having withal a

[302] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur*, p. 95
[303] Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses,* p. 161
[304] L. Atzmon, 'Arthur Rackham's Phrenological Landscape: Inbetweens, Gobins, and Femmes Fatales', *Design Issues,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn 2002), p. 66

> certain sweetness which redeems her from her studied self-regard.[305]

The most obvious clue to the dangerous and sinister aspects of Vivien's character – those "certain possibilities of cold cruelty" - can be found in the poisonous sprig of daphne, but it is also worth noting the red rose as this motif is also present in *Isolda with the Love Potion* (although not in *La Belle Isolde*). The rose was, and often still is, employed as a symbolic representation of love, passion and desire,[306] and that the rose in Vivien wilts on the table while one of the two roses in Isolda blooms in the lady's hand is certainly of interest. The blooming rose can be read as a metaphor for sexual awakening and the "blooming" of Isolda's feelings for Tristram, and the closeness of the love potion to this rose in the painting supports such an interpretation. Its situation also serves to remind the viewer that the love Isolda feels is the effect of the love potion; that she is a victim of fate rather than choice. Vivien's rose has been set aside in favour of the sprig of daphne that now holds her interest, perhaps revealing her disregard for passionate love, and fascination with dangerous magic.

Although it is perhaps understandable, given the "chiseled features and porcelain skin",[307] Wood's description of Vivien as possessing "the stately

[305] E. Wood, 'Being a Consideration of the Art of Frederick Sandys', *The Artist* (18 Nov. 1896) p. 24
[306] L. Moranelli, 'Speaking with Flowers: John William Waterhouse, Myth, and the Victorian Mind', *CUJAH,* Volume VI (2009-2010) (http://cujah.org/past-volumes/volume-vi/essay-12-volume/)
[307] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 95

and deliberate loveliness of the cultured Englishwoman" is amusing nonetheless, given that she was, like Morgan and Medea, modelled by Keomi Gray. Reactions to the figures in *Morgan le Fay* and *Medea* were generally much more scathing. In one instance, Morgan was described in *The Art Journal* as "a petrified spasm, sensational as a ghost from a grave",[308] and *Medea* was rejected last-minute by the Royal Academy in 1868.[309] Although *Vivien* shares some traits with *Morgan le Fay and Medea*, such as the "abundant hair"[310] associated with Sandys' *femmes fatales,* her overall expression is much more subdued and the moment in which she is captured is not one of illicit action.

In his analysis of *Vivien,* art historian Allen Staley questions the extent to which Sandys engaged with his subject, claiming that "Sandys probably chose the name because of its association with the type of malevolent women of which he was fond". I would argue that this assessment is unfair, and the assertion that "there is nothing in the painting to indicate why it bears that title" [311] presupposes a limit to the ways in which Vivien can or should be represented, as well as ignoring or devaluing many of the visual cues included in the painting. Although Sandys has not presented an easily identified scene from the sorceress' narrative, the "eye spots" of the peacock feathers, sprig of daphne, wilting rose – sometimes identified as a poppy, whose symbolism is also apt – and the

[308] *The Art Journal*
[309] Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s,* p. 85
[310] A. Grieve, 'Frederick Sandys. Norwich', *The Burlington Magazine,* Vol. 144, No. 1186 (Jan. 2002), p. 50
[311] Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s,* p. 78

apple all hint towards the *type* of character the viewer is engaging with. As previously mentioned, secrecy and ambiguity played a large role in magical belief, but it can also be considered in relation to Vivien's story – "as well as beauty, she cultivated the art of deception and entered Arthur's court as a friendless and pitiable orphan, longing for family and protection".[312] Given the presence of the peacock feathers as a symbol of luxury, and the fact that Sandys' Vivien is dressed in finery, it is not out of the question to suggest that he could in fact have intended to depict a moment that took place during her time at King Arthur's court. Since this was a time during which she was attempting to give false impressions regarding her moral character, it would not make sense for her to embody the more common tropes associated with magic and sorcery. When interpreted in this way, the image is a subtle and well-considered representation of Vivien's dual nature – "ravishing beauty" and a "degenerate soul" housed together in one body.[313]

An alternative and more sympathetic reading would be to consider the combination of the beautiful and the grotesque or disturbing as reflecting two different sides of Vivien – while she is undoubtedly a dangerous woman to cross, perhaps she is not wholly evil. Her expression gives little away as to what she may be thinking about and leaves room for ambiguity. This interpretation offers the viewer the opportunity to come to their own conclusions about the subject by providing a range of subtle,

[312] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 98
[313] Ibid., p. 95

sometimes conflicting visual cues, rather than presenting Vivien as unambiguously good or evil. When considered alongside *La Belle Isolde,* the compositional similarities and repeated motifs in the two paintings might appear to highlight the stark differences between the two women depicted, without necessarily portraying their characters and morality in black and white terms. Isolde responsibility for her adultery appears to have been lessened by the presence of the love potion, but the possibility for disastrous consequences are still acknowledged, while Vivien's character is shown as potentially dangerous but not entirely reviled by her decision to reject love in favour of magical knowledge.

As well as producing images of Arthurian enchantresses, Sandys looked to ancient Greek mythology and literature for artistic inspiration. Like Swinburne, he continued to be "drawn to the macabre, the weird, and the representation of woman as wilful enchantress, or broker between men and their fate. Medea is such a woman".[314]

The Myth of Medea

Medea was both a princess and a sorceress, initially using her powers to assist Jason, with whom she had fallen in love (in some versions as a result of a love spell), before turning to darker magic and – ultimately – the murder of their children, in response to Jason's betrayal. It has been

[314] A. Grieve, 'Frederick Sandys. Norwich', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 144, No. 1186 (Jan., 2002), p. 49

suggested that Sandys' painting depicts Medea in the act of casting the spell to curse the robe that kills Glauce, her rival for Jason's affections - the robe that will "consume her rival in flame".[315] While this is a fair assumption, it is worth noting that the iconography in the painting is also remarkably consistent with the practice of love magic – particularly in the use of fire,[316] knotted or beaded cords,[317] and perhaps even the fornicating toads, given the use of sympathetic magic in ancient Greece.[318] However, toads were also associated with more unpleasant spells, although sympathetic magical belief remains an important element:

> Another witch used to take toads and put them up the chimney, wishing that, as the animals wasted, so might her victims. When the toads shriek it is a sign that the spell has been laid on the person, and then the toads swell until they fall down and burst, when the spell is removed.[319]

Although a love spell may at first seem the more palatable option (for the toads at least), there is evidence to suggest that the Victorians did not necessarily shy away from some of its more grisly aspects. For instance, in her collection of Irish folklore and magical beliefs, Lady Wilde discusses a love charm known as "the dead strip", whose creation involved exhuming a corpse that had been buried for nine days and

[315] Grieve, 'Frederick Sandys. Norwich', p. 49
[316] Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic,* p. 50
[317] Ibid., p. 102
[318] Ibid., p. 42
[319] Taylor, 'Norfolk Folklore', p. 129

tearing a strip of the skin from head to toe.[320] The similarities between erotic spells and curses in ancient Greece were tied closely with their perceptions of erotic desire as the onset of a pathological disease, and "if eros is a disease, then erotic magic is a curse".[321] Medea would certainly be capable of making such a thing – one British Victorian professor of forensic medicine describes her as "universally regarded as the greatest adept in the art of preparing philtres".[322]

As mentioned earlier, *Medea, Isolda and the Love Potion* and *La Belle Isolde* have something in common – the motif of the red coral necklace. However, unlike Isolde, Medea is a *femme fatale*, with "the wild eyes and the mouth frozen in a scream or a chant," which Casteras notes, "are a shocking contrast to most Victorian images of femininity".[323] On the other hand, Isolde, with her dazed expression, appears as a woman who must forget her own personality when she is in love.[324] Both she and Medea are bound by their love for Tristram and Jason, respectively, but their demeanour is decidedly different. The sorceress rebels against her situation, symbolised in the way she claws at the red beads encircling her neck while Isolde, in both paintings, "chooses to desire her enslavement

[320] J. F. A. Wilde, *Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890), p. 32
[321] Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, p. 43
[322] D. Ferrier, 'Historical Notes On Poisoning. Introductory Lecture To The Course Of Forensic Medicine, Delivered At King's College, May 1st, 1872', *British Medical Journal,* Vol. 1, No. 597 (Jun. 8 1872) p. 602
[323] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 161
[324] S. de Beauvoir, trans. H. M. Parshley, 'Dependent Love in Women', D. L. Norton & M. F. Kille, eds., *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1988) p. 53

so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty".[325] The necklace itself is of interest in both paintings, given the associations of coral with the gorgon, Medusa. Indeed, the term gorgonia "referred to the polyp family better known as coral" during the nineteenth century.[326] In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes the process in which Medusa's head, with its growth of snakes, resulted in the origin of coral:

> The freshly gathered weed, still living and absorbent, drew into itself the power of the monster; hardening at the touch of the head, it acquired a strange new rigidity in its leaves and branches . . . Even today coral retains this same nature, hardening at the touch of air: that which was a plant when under water becomes a rock when brought above the surface.[327]

Pointon also draws attention to versions in which it is specifically Medusa's blood that is credited with producing the effect of petrification upon the coral, including a 1497 Italian translation of the *Metamorphoses*, as well as a work attributed to Orpheus. The stones' startling crimson colour "permanently recalls this connection".[328] However, Medusa's blood was also said to revive the dead, and the ancient Greek use of the gorgon's head or gorgoneion as a powerful apotropaic image, with

[325] de Beauvoir, 'Dependent Love in Women', p. 53
[326] Pointon, *Brilliant Effects,* pp. 136-7
[327] Ovid, trans. M. M. Innes, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 114
[328] Pointon, *Brilliant Effects,* p.136-7

deities such as Zeus and Athena wearing the symbol as a pendant,[329] may account for the association of coral with medicinal properties and protection from the "evil eye".[330]

Art historians have had difficulty in identifying some of the items on the sill before Medea, such as the object in the centre of the circle formed by the red thread or cord – Staley has suggested that it "appears to be part of the shell of a lobster or crab",[331] while the Birmingham Museum staff have identified it as a dried stingray.[332] Other motifs are more easily recognisable, such as the open flame, the large shell, the Egyptian tomb figure, and *Atropa belladonna* (deadly nightshade). The latter two of these could be interpreted as alluding to death, but deadly nightshade was also used in love potions. Amusingly, Weitz – a doctor and lecturer at the University of Schleswig-Holstein – provides a medical analysis of the composition of the love potion in *Tristan und Isolde,* noting that "Wagner's detailed description of the symptoms suffered by the protagonists may indicate his attention to possible ingredients",[333] and going on to compare the symptoms as described by Wagner with the symptoms of intoxication with nightshade. As mentioned earlier, the use of knotted and beaded cords, as well as fire, can also be associated with love magic.

---

[329] E. Vassilika, *Greek and Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 44
[330] Pointon, *Brilliant Effects,* p.127
[331] Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s,* p. 83
[332] Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, 'Medea', www.preraphaelites.org (http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1925p105/medea/)
[333] G. Weitz "Love and Death in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* – an epic anticholinergic crisis." *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 327, No. 7429 (Dec. 20, 2003) p. 1469

However, there is no known literary record of Medea performing any such spell. That is not to say that Sandys' could not have imagined and depicted such a scene, but there is evidence in the painting itself that reveals the importance he placed on the narrative – the golden, Japanese-inspired tapestry situated behind Medea. This image within an image depicts the *Argo,* the ship belonging to Jason and the Argonauts (on the left) and the infamous Golden Fleece (on the right). It is tempting to assume that these are events that have already passed, as this is normally the order of things – tapestries present a narrative in the past tense. If this is the case, the assumption that a malicious Medea is creating a potion to poison her rival makes a great deal of sense. However, when magic is at work, the usual order of things does not always hold, and there are two other options.

The first is that the events depicted in the tapestry are in the future. Textiles, and particularly woven textiles, are frequently used as a metaphor for the flow of time, for example when we speak of the 'fabric' of time, and spinning was a key part of the ancient Greek mythology of the *Moirai,* or the Fates, in which the thread represents human lives. Clotho (the spinner), Lachesis (the allotter), and Atropos (the unturnable) have complete control over the threads that span across whole lives, from a person's birth to their death and, in the words of Prometheus,

"strong truly is craft, but stronger far is fate".[334] The other interpretation I would put forward is that the image of the ship depicts a past event, but the image of the Golden Fleece represents an event that has yet to come. The composition of the painting makes this reading seem more likely – the two images on the tapestry are separated from one another by the figure of Medea herself, as she is situated *between* the two events. If this were the case, Medea ought to be providing magical herbs and a protective potion with which to lull the sleepless dragon into slumber and anoint Jason's weapons and armor to protect him during the trials to obtain the Golden Fleece. Such an interpretation could explain her expression of distress, as a manifestation of a deep concern for the man she has just fallen madly in love with. Yet another interpretation could be that she has foreseen future events and fears for her own tragic destiny, and the fates of her children.

As with *Vivien,* Sandys has once again chosen to represent a sorceress in a moment that is not easily identified as a particular part of the narrative she appears in. At the same time, the inclusion of the tapestry stresses the importance of the narrative – it does not feature purely decorative imagery, but two very specific points in the narrative of Jason and the Argonauts. The ambiguity with regards to *when* these events take place in relation to Medea's creation of the potion in the painting, as well as Sandys' decision to use magical imagery and ingredients that, like the

[334] Aeschylus, trans. E. R. Bevan, *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus* (London: David Nutt, 1902), p. 37

drugs in *Plato's Pharmacy,* "can be – alternately or simultaneously – beneficent or malevolent",[335] reveals a continuation of his pattern of presenting sorceress figures as multifaceted beings, rather than one-dimensional characters. Again, Sandys invites the viewer to consider the contents of the image for themselves, taking into account the complexity of the mythological narratives and leaving room for multiple readings of the images.

The Curse of Cassandra

Like Morgan and Medea, Sandys's image of *Cassandra* (fig. 15) 'speaks', her mouth agape, as she looks on in horror, in a "frenzied possession".[336] In Greek mythology, Cassandra was blessed with the gift of prophecy by Apollo, yet cursed so that not a single soul would believe her prophecies when she spurned his advances. Although she bears some of the visual hallmarks of the witch or *femme fatale*, she differs from figures such as Medea, Morgan, and Vivien in that she has not wronged another, nor does she plan to. Her devotion to the gods and pious lifestyle as a priestess of Apollo ensured that, after her death, her soul was sent to paradise in the Elysian Fields.[337]

[335] J. Derrida, trans. B. Johnson, 'Plato's Pharmacy', *Dissemination (*London: The Athlone Press, 1981) p. 70
[336] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame,* p. 166
[337] P. L. Westmoreland, *Ancient Greek Beliefs* (San Ysidro, CA: Lee & Vance Publishing Company, 2007) p. 179

Florence Nightingale, best-known for her contributions to modern nursing and work in the Crimean War, utilised the story of the cursed prophetess in her essay, *Cassandra* (first printed privately in 1860):

> While one alone, awake and prematurely alive to it, must wander out in silence and solitude—such an one has awakened too early, has risen up too soon, has rejected the companionship of the race, unlinked to any human being. Such an one sees the evil they do not see, and yet has no power to discover the remedy for it.[338]

Throughout *Cassandra,* Nightingale expresses her frustrations towards the lethargy and helplessness of nineteenth-century women, and her fears that her ideas were unlikely to come to fruition or have any kind of real impact - just like Cassandra's prophecies. The essay was not distributed for many years, but it does reveal one way in which the prophetess had perhaps begun to resonate with certain educated, middle-class Victorian women. Writing in the late 1980s, Jungian analyst Laurie Layton Schapira also used Cassandra's tale as a metaphor:

> What the Cassandra woman sees is something dark and painful that may not be apparent on the surface of things or that objective facts do not corroborate. She may envision a negative or unexpected outcome; or something which would be difficult to deal with; or a truth which others, especially authority figures, would not accept. In her frightened, ego-less state, the Cassandra woman may blurt out what she sees, perhaps with the

[338] F. Nightingale, *Cassandra and Other Selections from Suggestions for Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1992) p. 205

> unconscious hope that others might be able to make some sense of it. But to them her words sound meaningless, disconnected and blown out of all proportion.[339]

The association of Cassandra, a prophetess (or sibyl) whose prophecies *invariably came true,* with the condition of hysteria is an interesting one. Sandys's *Cassandra* does not radiate the cool, calm demeanour of Rossetti's *Sibylla Palmifera,* her hair and expression bearing a certain 'wildness'. However, while Cassandra might *appear* 'mad' or 'hysterical', the audience, aware of her tragic story, knows that this is not actually the case. While Medea, Morgan, and Vivien are renowned for their trickery and deceptive natures, Cassandra embodies their opposite - a woman who seeks to tell the truth, yet is condemned as a liar and a madwoman. Unlike Medea, Morgan, and Vivien, Sandys's Cassandra is not confined to a secretive, claustrophobic, cluttered interior - she is outside, exposed to the elements as she watches the destruction of Troy that she was unable to prevent. Neither does Cassandra have any magical objects at her disposal, perhaps suggesting a reluctance to prophesise about the future, given the reception her prophecies receive.

Sandys also produced a drawing of *Helen and Cassandra* (fig. 16) for *Once a Week* in 1866, in which we witness Cassandra berating Helen as Troy burns, the flames in the background encircling the figure of Cassandra to symbolise her anger. Her left foot partially covers a mirror,

[339] L. Layton Schapira, *The Cassandra Complex: Living With Disbelief: A Modern Perspective on Hysteria* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1988) p.65

presumably belonging to Helen - pointing to her beauty and her vanity as the cause of the calamity that has befallen the city. But mirrors were also a popular tool for practitioners of magic, particularly where prophecy and scrying were involved. Placed on the ground *between* the two women, it is possible to read the mirror both ways. Helen shrinks away from Cassandra's accusing finger, her expression petulant as she chews on a strand of hair in the manner of a spoiled child not getting her way. In this image, Cassandra expresses her anger towards Helen, but she is focused rather than 'frenzied', 'hysterical' or out of control, and her wrath is justified by the horrors inflicted upon Troy. Indeed, even her hair is carefully tucked into a neat bun, while Helen's is let loose. Considered together, the two images appear to offer two different sides of Cassandra, whereas Sandys's portrait of *Helen of Troy* (fig. 17), painted around 1857, provides an image of Helen with an almost identical expression of petulance. While Cassandra foresaw the destruction of Troy, it is Helen who ultimately led to its downfall, and for this reason she is depicted as the *femme fatale* character in Sandys's narrative.

In contrast, the compositions of Evelyn de Morgan's images of *Cassandra* (fig. 18) and *Helen of Troy* (fig. 19), both completed in 1898, mirror one another, highlighting similarities between the two women. Helen takes a strand of her golden hair in her hand as she gazes into a mirror bearing the image of Aphrodite, surrounded by white roses and doves - also associated with the goddess of love and beauty. Cassandra also clutches

at strands of her hair, but in a classical pose of mourning (and perhaps frustration), standing amongst roses that could almost be white-stained-red as the city of Troy burns behind her - she does not need to look, for she has already seen. Both women, in this reading, remain innocent of any wrongdoing, both victims of circumstances beyond their control.

One explanation for the differences in Sandys's and De Morgan's representations of the women could be down to their favoured source materials. For instance, some versions of the myth had Paris carry Helen away, whereas in others she went with him willingly, making herself partially responsible for the fall of Troy. In some accounts, Cassandra promised to have sex with Apollo in return for her powers of prophecy and then refused, and in others no such deal is mentioned - but in every tale, she earns the reader's pity.

In the Greek poet Lycophron's poem 'Alexandra'[340] (circa 300 BC), a slave appointed to listen to and record Cassandra's prophecies describes them thus:

> ...not quietly as of old did the maiden loose the varied voice of her oracles, but poured forth a weird confused cry, and uttered wild words from her bay-chewing mouth, imitating the speech of the dark Sphinx. Thereof what in heart and memory I hold, hear thou, O King, and, pondering with wise mind, wind and pursue the obscure paths of her riddles, whereso a clear track guides by

[340] In some texts, Cassandra was also known as 'Alexandra'.

> a straight way through things wrapped in darkness. And I, cutting the utter bounding thread, will trace her paths of devious speech, striking the starting-point like winged runner.[341]

Sandys's image appears to reflect such an interpretation of Cassandra - given her wide, wild eyes and her open mouth, it is not beyond the realms of possibility for the viewer to imagine "wild words" or a "weird confused cry" escaping her lips. The reference to the enigmatic speech of the "dark Sphinx" in this section is also recalled in Rossetti's *Palmifera Sybilla* and Sandys's *Medea,* both of which feature representations of the mysterious creature, known for its riddles and the merciless punishments inflicted upon those who fail to answer correctly. In Greek mythology, she was

> a monster in shape of a young woman with breast, feet and claws of a lion, sent by Hera to afflict the Thebans. She proposed riddles and devoured the people when they were not solved.[342]

The sphinx, associated in this instance with Cassandra, could be described as something of a *femme fatale* figure, but within the context of nineteenth-century art the symbol of the sphinx usually signified mystery. However, the importance of the spoken word - and, indeed, *how* it is spoken - is frequently central to prophecies and magical spells. In late twentieth- and twenty-first-century media, such as J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) and Blake Charlton's

[341] Lycophron, 'Alexandra', *Callimachus & Lycophron*, trans. A. W. Mair, *Aratus*, trans. G. R. Loeb (London: William Heinemann, 1912) p. 495
[342] Mair & Loeb, *Callimachus & Lycophron,* p. 640

Spellwright (2010), incorrect pronunciations or spellings of magical words are often used for comic effect, resulting in failure to cast a spell, or unintended, even dangerous results. Magic can be like poetry - an idea which is explored in the following chapter.

The theatricality of nineteenth-century spiritualist practices and stage magic also served to stress the importance of infusing words with a certain drama, flair, and even mystery in order for them to be truly effective on their audiences. But Cassandra's prophecies, while *true*, did not resonate with her listeners. But perhaps the narrative of Cassandra did resonate with Sandys and some of his contemporaries, as 'Bohemian' artists and poets rebelling against many of the nineteenth-century artistic conventions to pursue and express 'truth' in art and poetry, on their own terms and in spite of any opposition or negativity they faced. Sandys's enchantresses appear to embody such a spirit, and the fact that they were frequently modelled on his Romani lover, Keomi Gray, who might serve as a literal, visual reminder of the 'Bohemian' only strengthens this association between the magical world and the art world. Like Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera,* many of Sandys's images of women who practise magic or prophecy challenge the dichotomy of the virgin and the whore - but within the frame of a single canvas. Like art and magic, the '*femme fatale'* is neither wholly good nor wholly evil.

And in Chapter IV, she vanishes.

IV. The Vanishing Act: Simeon Solomon and the Strange Disappearance of the *Femme Fatale*

"A witch is just a girl who knows her mind."[343]

When we come to examine Simeon Solomon's body of work, one popular nineteenth-century archetype is conspicuous by her absence: the *femme fatale.* More specifically, there are no witches or sorceresses in Solomon's paintings and drawings – but there is magic. While his contemporaries, including Rossetti and Sandys, were producing images of beautiful but deadly sorceresses, Solomon's representations of magico-religious ritual are performed by androgynous male figures. As Solomon blends the realms of magic and religion on his canvas, he blurs the line between the masculine and the feminine. The ambiguity of the androgynous male faces in Solomon's paintings,[344] I argue, enhances our engagement with these images by offering readings of ritual that incorporate the mystery and ambiguity associated with magical practice and goes some way towards reconciling them with their 'Rossetian' female counterparts and the images of sorceresses and witches examined thus far. Additionally, the notion of 'giving birth' to art (which, I have argued, includes magical acts) becomes even more important as an alternative to biological reproduction for nineteenth-century homosexuals, bisexuals, and other individuals whose attraction and

[343] C. M. Valente, 'The Bread We Eat in Dreams'*, Apex Magazine,* Issue 30 (2012) (http://www.apex-magazine.com/the-bread-we-eat-in-dreams/)

[344] C. Cruise, ''Lovely devils': Simeon Solomon and Pre-Raphaelite Masculinity', E. Harding, ed., *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 197. Here, Cruise notes in their faces an "ambiguity of several shades…being both of emotion and of sex."

behaviours were not strictly defined by heteronormative ideals. Following from this, I examine Solomon's images of crystal gazing and consider the notion of the androgynous soul, in contrast to the more physical, and less 'acceptable' androgyny, its connections with Victorian stage magic, and its perceived relationship to same-sex desire.

The final part of this chapter is devoted to Solomon's pictures of a woman who is not a sorceress, but a poet: Sappho. By elaborating on Susan Casteras's argument for the image of the sorceress or witch as a woman artist – perhaps even a *wordsmith* – I aim to reveal Solomon's Sappho as an alternative expression of potent feminine creativity, and acknowledge the role her same-sex desire plays in these works, referring once again to metaphors of childbirth and artistic creation (in this case, poetry). Through his decision *not* to present the female artist/poet as a *femme fatale,* I argue, Solomon avoids the association of female creative expression (and same-sex desire) with hysteria or madness.

Gods and Girls Gone Wild: *Bacchus* and the Maenads

Solomon's interest in both Hellenism and Hebraism spilled into his public life, when "[h]e would entertain his friends by impersonating a Greek pagan youth, and then, in the next moment, a religious Jew, chanting Hebrew prayers in a sonorous voice."[345]

[345] A. Werner, 'The Sad Ballad of Simeon Solomon', *The Kenyon Review,* Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer, 1960), p. 407.

But rather than being treated as entirely separate entities in his works, the two often overlap, creating something that is neither purely Hellenistic or Hebrew inspired. Yet, as well as producing idealized images of Jewish and pagan ritual practices, Solomon was also interested in depicting Christian rituals in works such as *A Deacon* (1863), which shows a deacon of the Catholic Church, standing before an altar with an urn, and *A Saint of the Eastern Church* (1867-8), in which we witness an acolyte of the Greek Orthodox Church, holding a censer of burning incense in one hand, and a sprig of myrtle in the other.

It has been suggested that the vases on the altar in *A Deacon* also contain sprigs of myrtle, frequently associated with love in Solomon's iconography.[346] Yet this, too, could possibly demonstrate a fusion of religions, cultures, and even time periods. In addition to their association with love within the Victorian 'language of flowers' and popularity in royal wedding bouquets,[347] myrtle was also associated with the goddess Aphrodite (and her Roman counterpart, Venus), and used in the Eleusinian Mysteries.[348] It also held symbolic significance in Jewish lore – the Biblical heroine Esther's Hebrew name was *Hadassah,* which means 'myrtle' in Hebrew, and their branches formed part of the *lulav,* the palm

[346] Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, 'Oil Painting - A Deacon' (http://www.bmagic.org.uk/objects/2003.0174)
[347] E. C. Nelson, 'Victorian Royal Wedding Flowers: Orange, Myrtle, and the Apotheosis of White Heather', *Garden History,* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2009), p. 236
[348] M. P. Nilsson, 'Royal Mysteries in Egypt', *The Harvard Theological Review,* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 1957), p. 65

branch used during the Jewish Festival of Sukkot. Given his own religious background and his interests in pagan and especially (Catholic and High Anglican) Christian ritual, it is highly likely that Solomon was aware of these multiple, overlaying meanings.

His 1867 portrait of *Bacchus* (fig. 20), the Roman god whose ancient Greek counterpart was Dionysus, associated with wine and festivities, pleasure and madness; he was "the god of wine and vitality; of ritual madness; of the mask and the theater; and of a happy afterlife."[349] Solomon's Bacchus is recognizable due to the inclusion of his attributes – a crown of ivy, the *thyrsos* (a long staff, with a pinecone at its tip), and a tempting cluster of grapes. Here, as in many of his works, Solomon depicts the subject as an androgynous youth with a mysterious, sensual expression, but it is worth noting that he was not the first, and nor will he be the last, to portray Bacchus or Dionysus's gender and sexuality as fluid or ambiguous. The ancient Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, for example, described Dionysus as "a man who was effeminate in body and altogether delicate", although in his beauty "he far excelled all other men".[350] In the epic *Dionysiaca,* which chronicles the god's life, Nonnus of Panopolis personified the first grapevine as a satyr youth named Ampelos, with whom Dionysus had fallen in love. Dionysus, or Bacchus, emerges from mythology as an embodiment of both masculinity and

[349] A. Henrichs, 'Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* Vol. 88 (1984), p. 205
[350] Diodorus Siculus, trans. C. H. Oldfather, *Library of History, Volume II: Books 2.35 – 4.58* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 4.42

femininity, with homosexual as well as heterosexual desires: an androgynous, bisexual deity.

Although same gender attraction was widely considered taboo during the nineteenth century, Solomon is known to have dabbled in narratives of same-sex desire – and specifically bisexuality – more explicitly in some of his other works during the 1860s, such as *The Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love* (fig. 21), a pen-and-ink drawing produced in 1865, which depicts a love triangle between the central figure (the bridegroom), who embraces his bride (on the right-hand side), while his fingers intertwine with those of the winged male – *sad Love* – (on the left). His 1864 watercolour *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mitylene* (fig. 22) shows same-sex desire between women, both poets. An androgynous Sappho embraces Erinna, whose features are softer, less angular, and more 'feminine'. However, while photographic reproductions of these images were circulated among Solomon's friends and acquaintances, including individuals such as Rossetti and Burne-Jones, they were never exhibited in public.[351] As classicist Simon Goldhill notes, we must bear in mind that a "picture on display in the Royal Academy is not the same event as a privately circulated image" and that even a picture viewed by "90,000 people in a gallery in Liverpool has a different cultural significance from a picture seen and debated by the London critics."[352] However, it is also worth noting that while Solomon was, in some respects, marginalized, he

[351] E. Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), p. 223
[352] S. Goldhill, 'The Touch of Sappho', eds. C. Martindale & R. F. Thomas, *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 250

was also well-connected – many of his works circulated "not only in private circles but between self-selected aesthetes." What this meant was that, broadly speaking, Solomon's image of Sappho and Erinna remained within a specifically homosexual environment, which "privileged Greekness as a coded expression of desire".[353]

Bacchus, on the other hand, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1867, and so it is understandable that while Solomon flirted with themes of gender fluidity and same-sex desire, he did so cautiously – expressing them through coded visual language, in contrast to his more candid representations in *Sappho and Erinna*, and *The Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love*.

As was the case with Sandys' *Medea,* or Rossetti's *Lady Lilith,* the subject of *Bacchus,* and the context of the mythology surrounding the figure, allowed the artist to participate in a relatively 'safe' exploration of some of the more unconventional notions of gender and sexuality due to the god's distance (and freedom) from the laws and moralities of the nineteenth century. According to Cruise, the "important distinction between Rossetti and Solomon was in the change of sex of the central subject",[354] although it is worth noting that the ambiguity of gender is perhaps more pronounced in Solomon's representations. However, the formal qualities of Rossetti and Solomon's works, and their "fantasies of

[353] Goldhill, 'Touch of Sappho', p. 263
[354] Cruise, 'Lovely devils', p. 197

(or upon) beauty" with suggestions of internality, and "distant expressions which invoke for the viewer possibilities of pleasure, fear and loss",[355] are not the only parallels to be drawn here.

The "gorgeously painted accessories" that combined "sensuous engagement with suggestions of ritualism" were common not only to Solomon's images of beautiful men,[356] but to many of Rossetti and Sandys' representations of *femmes fatales*. In *Bacchus,* the presence of the *thyrsus,* the grapes, and the wreath of ivy upon his head ensures that the figure is recognisable as Bacchus, but does not provide a narrative. Solomon's Bacchus is not engaged in a dramatic scene from *The Bacchae,* nor is he revelling in the festivities with which he is associated. Rather, he is "essentially inactive, strong but significant when *at rest".*[357] *Lady Lilith,* too, is surrounded by objects that, as Prettejohn puts it (when speaking of *Bacchus*), "elaborate the sensuousness of the figure rather than dramatising a story".[358] However, as noted previously, the same cannot necessarily be said of Sandys' *Medea,* who actually engages with many of the magical objects in the frame – she *actively* participates in a ritual. It may be speculated that this lack of *passivity,* in terms of both her behaviour and expression, is one of the things that made works like *Medea, Morgan le Fay,* and *Vivien* less palatable to some contemporary audiences and critics. As Cruise reminds us, "*Bacchus* was shown at a

[355] Cruise, 'Lovely devils', p. 195
[356] Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites,* p. 249
[357] Cruise, 'Lovely devils', p. 204-5
[358] Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites,* p. 220.

time when depictions of femininity had shifted from the demure to the sensual, and further, to the 'wild'",[359] which may be traced back to Rossetti's treatment of "the heinous deeds and necromantic potential of women" – from *The Laboratory.* [360]

Lady Lilith and *Medea* differ from *Bacchus* due to their characterisation as *femmes fatales,* for which there was no precise male equivalent in nineteenth-century art or literature. The *femme fatale* "is characterised above all by her effect upon men: a *femme* cannot be *fatale* without a male being present, even where her fatalism is directed towards herself".[361] It is likely for this reason that several of "Rossetti's pictures of beautiful women seem to imply a male spectator",[362] while the implied viewer and their engagement with Solomon's images of beautiful men are far less certain.

The sorceress or witch's position in nineteenth-century discourse as a *femme fatale* in possession of a sexuality "both terrible and terrifying"[363] may be the reason (or at least *a* reason) for her exclusion from Solomon's repertoire. Although witches have often been associated with lesbianism[364] – a subject clearly of interest to Solomon – such a

[359] Cruise, 'Lovely devils', p. 209
[360] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 145
[361] Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale',* p. viii
[362] Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites,* p. 223.
[363] J. Ussher, 'Witchcraft – wickedness or woman hatred?', *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) p. 48
[364] J. Ussher, 'The female malady and the medicalization of sex: The Victorian madwoman', *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Whearsheaf, 1991) pp. 84-5

connection could lead to associations of same-sex desire with the unnatural, the perverse, and the deviant, when Solomon's goal appeared to be "to spiritualize male beauty and male-male desire".[365] Although some of Solomon's male figures are involved in ritualistic behaviour, and have often been discussed, both positively and negatively, in terms of their androgyny and homoeroticism, their reputation may be protected in part by their religious – or, in the case of Bacchus, divine – disposition. Although, for the artist, producing images that connected Christian and Jewish rituals with homoeroticism at a time when sodomy was illegal may have been risky, it did provide him with the opportunity to pursue his agenda of dissociating same-sex desire with sinfulness and immorality.

Although Bacchus was a pagan god and understood to be such, some nineteenth-century writers cast him not as the "god of ecstasy and sexual license" usually associated with the post-Nietzschean notion of Dionysus/Bacchus, "but as a mystical precursor of Christ, a dying and reviving god".[366] However, those women devoted to the god of wine – the maenads (literally, *mad women*) – were connected "with more threatening forces of nature, beyond masculine control: a community of women with the power to create and destroy, dedicated not only to song and dance in

[365] T. E. Morgan, 'Perverse Male Bodies: Simeon Solomon and Algernon Charles Swinburne', P. Horne & R. Lewis, eds., *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 79
[366] J. Zonana, 'Matthew Arnold and The Muse: The Limits of the Olympian Ideal', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), p. 61

honor of Dionysus, but to the darker acts of destruction".[367] In Lawrence Alma-Tadema's *Autumn Vintage Festival* (fig. 23), completed in 1873, we are presented with such a woman – "a drunken maenad crowned with ivy and cloaked in a leopard skin, eyes half-closed in ecstasy, brandishing a torch that suggests her burning sexuality".[368] The animal skin, frequently associated with witchcraft as well as with Dionysus, and the theatrical, animated posture of the figure are reminiscent of Sandys' *Morgan le Fay* (1864), and providing an intriguing comparison to Solomon's three-quarter length image of *Bacchus* (fig. 24), produced in the same year as the portrait.

As in his portrait, Bacchus wears an ivy crown and holds grapes in one hand, and his *thyrsos* in the other. Here, he is semi-nude, partially draped in a leopard skin over one shoulder and a flimsy strip of fabric that conceals his genitals. Unlike Alma-Tadema's excitable maenad, who looks ready to leap out of the frame at any moment, Solomon's Bacchus is still and serene. Just as the maenad disrupts preconceived notions of gender by "breaking out of the domestic sphere" and crossing boundaries into domains coded as "natural" and "savage",[369] Solomon's Bacchus is the lovely, effeminate, and passive "woman-like god"[370] Pater speaks of in his *Greek Studies,* any 'wildness' indicated only by the

[367] Y. Prins, 'Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters', R. Dellamora, ed., *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 49
[368] Ibid., p. 49
[369] Prins, 'Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters', p. 49
[370] W. Pater, 'The Bacchanals of Euripides'*, Greek Studies: A Series of Essays,* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 53

leopard skin he wears. The ancient maenads were frightening – however much the men disliked their ecstatic orgies, they were "too frightened to put a stop to them…the women were possessed, magical and dangerous to handle",[371] "maddened or, as the ancients would say, inspired by his spirit".[372] Pater's description of the female spirits who tended the vine (associated with the worship of Dionysus in primitive Greek religion) as "weavers or spinsters, spinning or weaving with the airiest fingers, and the subtlest, many-coloured threads"[373] brings to mind images of both witchcraft, and the Lady of Shalott, another figure who, like Rossetti and Sandys's sorceresses, has been interpreted as a "critique of early nineteenth-century perceptions of the artist/poet".[374]

Jane Ellen Harrison, a classical scholar and lecturer at Cambridge University during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also draws attention to the "aesthetic impulse" that manifested and expressed itself through Dionysiac religious ritual.[375] As mentioned in Chapter I and reiterated in Chapters II and III, performance magic has been recognised for its aesthetic value[376] and for its highly visual character,[377] further

[371] J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), pp. 397-8
[372] Ibid., p. 388
[373] W. Pater, 'A Study of Dionysus', *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 4
[374] J. Wright, 'A Reflection on Fiction and Art in "The Lady of Shalott"', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), p. 287
[375] Prins, 'Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters,' p. 63
[376] L. Hass, 'Life Magic and Staged Magic', in F. Coppa, L. Hass. & J. Peck, eds., *Performing Magic on the Western Stage From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 14
[377] S. L. Schwartz., 'Through a Glass Darkly: Magic and Religion in Western Thought and Practice', in *Performing Magic on the Western Stage,* pp. 202-3.

cementing the relationship between magic, creativity, and the arts. This might also be applied to Bacchic worship, as well as many of the Christian or Jewish magico-religious rituals represented by Solomon, and, given the role that same-sex desire plays in much of his work, it is perhaps doubly important.

In the nineteenth century, the "socially sanctioned cycle of courtship, marriage, and children" was, as Vicinus has set out, rendered irrelevant for most of those involved in non-heteronormative relationships:

> Men and women whose sexual lives were in opposition to biological reproduction did not defy its hegemony, but rather insisted upon a superior option – art. Physical reproduction is replaced with meta-physical and artistic generativity.[378]

Vicinus also recognizes the tendency in nineteenth-century homosexual writing to focus on relationships between an "older protector" (often an artist) and a beautiful boy or young man. The artist is "frequently the chief patron of the boy, establishing art as a tempting alternative to heterosexual reproduction".[379] Such is the dynamic between Basil (the artist) and Dorian (the beautiful young man who models for him) in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

[378] M. Vicinus, 'The Adolescent Boy': Fin-de-Siècle Femme Fatale', in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 86
[379] Vicinus, 'The Adolescent Boy: Fin-de-Siècle Femme Fatale', p. 87

Master and Apprentice: *The Acolyte,* or *A Jewish King and his Page*

Solomon's 1873 watercolour and gouache painting, *The Acolyte* (fig. 25), also known as *A Jewish King and his Page,* may represent a similar kind of pairing – that of magician and apprentice. The painting depicts a wizened old man dressed in the golden robes of an Orthodox priest, a crown of gold upon his head, and a crystal ball in his left hand. With his right hand, he clutches the arm of the younger man beside him, dressed in shimmering white robes and holding a gold-tipped staff decorated with a loose red ribbon. While the precise nature of their relationship is unknown to viewers, Solomon's focus on sensuality is analogous to similar tendencies in later nineteenth-century writings, and the appearance and dynamic of the two figures seems to anticipate that of pairings such as Basil/Dorian (or Henry/Dorian) in Wilde's novel.

It is worth noting that works by authors such as Oscar Wilde or E. M. Forster were rarely explicit, particularly by our modern day standards. Speaking on Forster's works, A. A. Markley explains that his novels

> can certainly be read as "straight" by mainstream audiences, they simultaneously allow a gay male readership to identify in them a distinctively homoerotic subtext, a subjectivity that allows for a reading or readings that are distinct from the conventional heteronormative interpretation.[380]

[380] A. A. Markley, 'E. M. Forster's Reconfigured Gaze and the Creation of a Homoerotic Subjectivity', *Twentieth Century Literature,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), p. 268

Forster accomplishes this by "switching the gendered object of the male gaze from female to male, and by disrupting the progress of his narratives at important moments during which the reader is invited to gaze on a tableau in which the male body is the central focal point", inventing "a kind of narration that powerfully expresses male homoerotic desire while shrewdly maintaining the veneer of heterosexual conventionality".[381] This is not to say heterosexual readers did not pick up on subtle hints throughout texts, or images, in Solomon's case. Oscar Wilde was famously on trial for 'indecency', and jailed for two years, and, as we have seen, certain reviews of Solomon's artworks often revealed an uneasiness with the androgyny or femininity of his depictions of male figures.

When we consider the aesthetic and creative qualities expressed through magico-religious ritual, we might consider the elder figure an artist of sorts, perhaps passing on the knowledge of his craft to a younger initiate, ensuring that while his genetics may not survive another generation, his art will – just as Basil's portrait of Dorian lives on, restored to its former beauty after the deaths of both artist and subject.

Crystal balls were most often associated with prophecy and fortune-telling, and crystal-gazing was often believed to entail a degree of imaginative or creative engagement from its practitioners. With reference

[381] Markley, 'E. M. Forster's Reconfigured Gaze', p.268

to the practice, British government anthropologist, Northcote W. Thomas helpfully distinguished between two types of belief – the belief in popular fortune telling, in which you may "pay half-a-crown, or a guinea, as a fee to a person who professes to discover by crystal gazing the whereabouts of lost property, or of a missing friend, or to foretell events",[382] and the belief that "some people have the faculty of seeing faces, places, persons in motion, sometimes recognisable, in a glass ball, or in water, ink, or any clear deep".[383] The reason for making this distinction, he explained, is that the former belief entails that the images in the crystal ball answer to the thoughts or desires of the person having their fortune told, and he is not convinced that this should appear to happen, "except by fortuitous coincidence".[384] The second belief, in contrast, requires only that we believe that it is possible for us, or at least for some people, to see images in the crystal ball - whether they correspond to another person's thoughts or even the gazer's own, is another matter entirely.

Interestingly, Solomon's painted crystal balls rarely reveal anything to the viewers. Instead, he depicts them in a "milky"[385] stage or an "interval of fog",[386] often believed to appear before or between visions in the crystal. In *The Acolyte,* the younger man's gaze is upon the crystal ball, in it's 'milky' state, suggesting that either he has had a vision, *is* having one (to

[382] N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing: Its History and Practice, with a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic Scrying* (London: The De La More Press, 1906) p. ix
[383] Ibid., p. ix
[384] Ibid., p. ix
[385] Thomas, *Crystal Gazing*, pp. x, xii, xliv
[386] A. Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism, Vol. II* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1926), p. 286

which we are not privy) or is at least expecting something to appear within the crystal ball, as the older man appears to encourage him. What they see, or expect to see, is known only to them, this secret knowledge further strengthening their special bond – as master and apprentice, and whatever else they may be to one another.

Burne-Jones also explores the theme of master and apprentice, discussed in the following chapter in relation to his images of King Arthur's court wizard, Merlin, and his apprentice, Nimue. But he produced another image in later years that arguably reflects the dynamics of wizard and apprentice, and that perhaps has more in common with Solomon's depiction of *The Acolyte,* or *A Jewish King and his Page.* In *The Wizard* (fig. 26), completed in 1898, the title character reveals an image of a shipwreck in a convex mirror to a young woman - although crystal balls were more widely available in the late nineteenth century, as they were then able to be mass produced,[387] mirrors remained as another popular tool for scrying. While similarities to the opening of Shakespeare's *Tempest* (c. 1611) have been noted,[388] Burne-Jones himself referred to the painting as his "Maiden and Necromancer picture".[389] It has also been suggested that the image may have "an element of fanciful autobiography to be read into the subject, as one of

[387] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* p. 251
[388] S. Wildman, J. Christian et al, *Edward Burne-Jones, Victorian Artist-Dreamer* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998) p. 322
[389] M. Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations, 1895-1898, preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981) p. 84

the artist conjuring up visions in his studio to entrance his beautiful young friend and model".[390]

This reading reflects dynamics similar to those shown in Solomon's *Acolyte,* in which an older figure reveals (or prepares to reveal) enticing visions to an attractive younger figure. Both magic and art can be seductive. However, Solomon's images of crystal gazing, along with many nineteenth-century depictions, rarely depict a clear image within the crystal ball - his audience are invited to revel in the mystery, or perhaps imagine for themselves what might appear within the crystal ball.

One of the few images of a crystal ball with a clear image is Marie Spartali Stillman's *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovegni* (fig. 27), dated 1884, in which – if we gaze into the crystal ball – we may see the figures of Love and Dante, likely an homage to Rossetti's depictions of the two, as Spartali Stillman was familiar with, and admired Rossetti's works. Once again, the connection between art and magic is realised visually. Given much of the nineteenth-century discourse on scrying and crystal gazing, the connection is unsurprising – Scottish anthropologist and folklorist Andrew Lang, for instance, emphasised the role of the visual imagination in crystal gazing – "people who, when they think, see a mental picture of the subject of their thoughts, people who are good 'visualisers,' are likely to

[390] Wildman, Christian et al, *Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 322

succeed best with the crystal", whereas those "who think in words, not in pictures" are less likely to make good crystal-gazers.[391]

In a similar vein, it was not uncommon for Victorian artists to encourage "nostalgia and a flood of associations, as well as inviting an active imaginative participation in narrative events" in their works.[392] The parallels between Rossetti's sensual but deadly female figures and Solomon's dreamy, androgynous figures has already been noted, but we ought perhaps to take this association a step further. Both artists make use of a certain type of "ambience" to guide their viewers to become more receptive to the thoughts and emotions they wish to convey in their works – a sort of sympathetic *magic*, if you will.

Although Lang stresses the importance of visual imagery with regards to scrying, this does not apply exclusively to artists who work with visual mediums. Poems are very often infused with visual language, and engaging with poetry, we are able "to dwell upon the affective properties of the sounds, meanings, images, and associations of the poem".[393] The connections between magic and poetry, two of the oldest traditions of humankind, can be witnessed in their mutual 'irrationality' and the "use of

[391] A. Lang, 'Scrying, or, Crystal Gazing', *Cock Lane and Common Sense* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), p. 214
[392] H. E. Roberts, 'The Dream World of Dante Gabriel Rossetti', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 17. No. 4 (Jun., 1974), p. 373
[393] V. G. Hopwood, 'Dream, Magic, and Poetry', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 10, No. 2 (Dec., 1951), p. 153

rhythm as an organic component in each, the similarity of the relationship of rhapsode and shaman to their respective audiences".[394]

Sappho the Sorceress

Sappho is, first and foremost, a poet. But she is tied to the figure of the witch or sorceress in two ways. As is so often the case for the witch or the sorceress, Sappho's passions and desires also reveal her as an outsider – a woman who exists outside the realms of the idealised females of the nineteenth century. Although it may seem that, in both France and Britain, female homosexual behaviour was more accepted than homosexual relationships between men, its "popularity as an artistic subject cannot be construed as evidence of moral acceptance".[395] Additionally, as Marilyn Waligore notes while discussing her own exploration of the 'artist-sorceress' through creative practice, "one of the personality traits attributed to the witch or independent female is her way with language, her cursing rhyme, her determination".[396] The Romans even used the same word *(vates)* to refer either to a seer or to a poet.[397] The association of poetry with magic persisted through the centuries, as can be witnessed in the arts – perhaps most famously in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c.1606), in which the "Weird Sisters", or the Three Witches'

[394] S. Musgrove, 'Poetry and Magic', *The Australian Quarterly,* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1946), p. 102
[395] D. M. Kosinski, 'Gustave Courbet's "The Sleepers." The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature', *Artibus et Historiae,* Vol. 9, No. 10 (1988), p. 197
[396] M. Waligore, 'Artist-Sorceress: Photography and Digital Metamorphosis', *Leonardo,* Vol. 28, No. 4 (1995), p. 250
[397] Musgrove, 'Poetry and Magic', p. 102

speech patterns incorporate repetition, alliteration, and assonance – three features that "commonly characterise magical formulae". These particular literary devices are also found in Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* (sometimes known as *Fragment 1*) – the only one of Sappho's poems that has survived in its complete form.[398] The poem's composition *"as a whole* has affinities with magical discourse"[399] and it has even been suggested that:

> …there is no positive reason why Sappho's poem should not…have been a real love spell. The poetess conceivably transcribed her spell and sent it to her girl friend as an invitation and a warning alike. In a predominantly oral culture such as Sappho's, written evidence of a spell may in itself have been psychologically "compelling" for the recipient.[400]

Whether or not Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* truly was a love spell, it is enough that we have reason to believe it *could* have been, hinting at an even stronger tie between the figure or the sorceress and this *particular* poet. Given Solomon's interest in depicting magico-religious ritual, as well as ancient Greek and Roman mythology, it perhaps seems odd that he did not represent a figure such as Cassandra or Medea. But thus far (at least, broadly speaking) the witches and sorceresses encountered had been adapted and appropriated for the (heterosexual) male gaze – it was

[398] J. C. B. Petropoulos, 'Sappho the Sorceress: Another Look at fr. 1 (LP)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik,* Bd. 1 (1993), pp. 43-46
[399] Ibid., p. 43
[400] Ibid., p. 54

because the mid-nineteenth-century sorceress had become almost synonymous with the Victorian conception of the *femme fatale,* whose very characterisation relied upon her interactions with a *man,* that Rossetti and Sandys' sorceresses appealed primarily to the fears and darker fantasies of the heterosexual male viewer. Once again, as Stott reminds us, "a *femme* cannot be *fatale* without a male being present, even when her fatalism is directed towards herself".[401]

However, the witch-like Sappho's regeneration and transformation in the Victorian era offered a viable alternative to the figure of the sorceress, and embodied new, exciting possibilities for writers and artists alike, appealing to individuals like Solomon and Swinburne in the 1860s, who "were exploring their own unconventional sexual identities" at a time during which homosexuality (and, though perhaps to a lesser extent, bisexuality) had entered into its configuration as a sexual *identity* rather than simply a sexual *behaviour*.[402] However, as Prettejohn argues, while both Solomon and Swinburne sought to cast Sappho as a lesbian "in the new sense of homosexual identity", they also worked against tendencies to "reduce her poetic greatness to a mere matter of sexual proclivity, or to secure her lesbian identity at the expense of her genius". In other words, "Sappho the poet and Sappho the lover become indivisible".[403] While Sandys' Medea or Morgan le Fay, in their transformation into

[401] Stott, *Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale,* p. viii.
[402] E. Prettejohn, 'Solomon, Swinburne, Sappho'*, Victorian Review,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2008), p. 103
[403] Ibid., p. 104

Victorian *femmes fatales,* did not always retain the full essence of their former identities as witches or sorceresses, Solomon (and Swinburne)'s Sappho the *poet*, in her reincarnation as an English,[404] Victorian lesbian, emerges unscathed.

In the art historical literature dealing with Solomon's art and career, *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytelene* has been discussed and evaluated largely in terms of same-sex desire and as an opportunity for Solomon to "express feelings forbidden in nineteenth-century England".[405] While Solomon's artistic engagement with themes of same-sex desire is certainly of great importance, I intend to argue that Solomon's drawings of Sappho have much more to offer, and that by considering the relationship between the figure of Sappho as poet and that of the sorceress, we can move towards forming a more comprehensive reading of these works.

As with many of his representations of the male figure, Solomon's Sappho appears androgynous, and her features are even somewhat *masculine* in comparison to those of her companion, Erinna – who is also fair, while Sappho is dark haired.[406] To the left of the two women is a deer, which, given Solomon's intimate knowledge of both Greek and

[404] As noted in Prettejohn, 'Solomon, Swinburne, Sappho', pp. 110-119, the two Englishmen's representations of Sappho and constructions of her identity as poet *and* lesbian differed from those of their French contemporaries.
[405] D. N. Mancoff, 'As Others Saw Him: A Self-Portrait by Simeon Solomon', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1992), p. 155
[406] As Cherry notes, the image of a pale woman with a darker-skinned woman often signified lesbianism. See *Beyond the Frame.*

Catholic imagery and symbolism, is endowed with a myriad of meanings. Firstly, the deer was associated with the god of music, Apollo, as well as the virgin goddess of the hunt, Artemis (or her Roman equivalent, Diana). Her role as a goddess also incorporated the protection of young girls, and her female followers took vows of chastity. In Catholicism, the deer has been associated with Christ himself, and with Saints Giles, Eustace, and Herbert, among others, in various stories and legends. Similarly, the pair of doves may indicate Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, to whom Sappho appealed in her *Hymn to Aphrodite…*or, if we were to consider their presence in relation to Jewish or Christian symbolism, they might be interpreted as evidence of the Holy Spirit, *or* as symbols of 'pure' love.

Given the ancient setting and the presence of the musical instrument (set aside to the right of Sappho) it seems reasonable to consider the presence of the deer as symbolic of the twin deities, Apollo, and Artemis – and given the romantic scene, and Sappho's infamous *Hymn to Aphrodite,* the doves are likely an emblem of the goddess of love. Nevertheless, the complexities of the imagery, and potential for the interpretation of multiple meanings remain significant – the image is known to have circulated among some of Solomon's friends and acquaintances, many of whom would have been familiar with both Christian and Greek symbols and motifs. Such fusions of cultural or religious meaning were typical of Solomon, though reception was mixed:

> Sometimes the occasion has been supplied by emblematic fancies in which a mystical union of Pagan and Christian symbolism has been effected, according to a sentiment which does not command itself very strongly to the present writer.[407]

Speaking about Solomon's *Bacchus* (1867) and *Heliogabalus, High Priest of the Sun* (1866), Thaïs Morgan claims that the association of the attractive, young male bodies with the divine reveals the artist's goal to "spiritualize male beauty and male-male desire",[408] though Prettejohn has noted similarities between Solomon's *Heliogabalus* and Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*:

> ...a subject as arcane as Rossetti's *Lady Lilith,* and with similar moral ambiguities. Heliogabalus was a historical figure, a Roman Emperor of the third century A.D. renowned for his extreme decadence. Like Lilith, Heliogabalus was a symbol of hyperbolic evil, but also of overwhelming personal beauty, emphasised in the ancient accounts of his reign.[409]

Interestingly, Swinburne's reading of the image suggests what Prettejohn refers to as a combination of "the resonances of *Lady Lilith* and *Palmifera Sibylla* into a single figure":[410]

---

[407] J. Beavington Atkinson, Sidney Colvin, et al., *English Painters of the Present Day* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1871), p. 14
[408] Morgan, 'Perverse Male Bodies', p. 79
[409] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 36
[410] Ibid., p. 37

> ...symbolic in that strange union of offices at once of east and west, of ghostly glory and visible lordship, of the lusts of the flesh and the secrets of the soul, of the kingdom of this world and the mystery of another.[411]

Both "respectable and illicit are wrapped into one image, rather than segregated between the realms of fine art and pornography"[412] as they were generally understood in the nineteenth century - though the perceived divide between the two forms of expression is still hotly contested today.[413]

As with those beautiful, androgynous male figures, Solomon's association of Sappho and Erinna with the divine may also be interpreted as an attempt to idealise and spiritualise same-sex desire – although the experiences of 'queer' men and women in the nineteenth century would, undoubtedly, have differed in certain ways, the frustrations associated with same-sex desire and its public perception provided a common ground. Yet in depicting two *women* as lovers, Solomon was both able to relate to the struggle of women who loved women, *and* distance himself from an 'autobiographical' reading of the image, to a degree.

Swinburne's Sappho "is violent in her passion, and the poem is laced with Swinburne's most extravagant sadomasochistic imagery, but this

[411] A. C. Swinburne, 'Simeon Solomon', *Dark Blue,* vol. 1, 1871), p. 574
[412] E. Prettejohn, ''The monstrous diversion of a show of gladiators': Simeon Solomon's *Habet!*' in C. Edwards (ed.), *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 169-170
[413] For an informative yet concise discussion of art and pornography, see M. Kieran's 'The erotic and the pornographic', *Revealing Art* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 151-165

Sappho betrays not the slightest awareness of the modern moral censure that would condemn her same-sex desire".[414] Although this Sappho was "wholly untouched by modern or Christian moral suppositions",[415] Solomon's Sappho, while bearing more than mere superficial similarities in Swinburne's, is distinct. The image of *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene* portrays the two women embracing, but is not explicitly sexual or pornographic in nature. Importantly, the moment is private - both in terms of Sappho and Erinna being alone together, and because the watercolour was not exhibited.

There is, as noted by Goldhill, a "long tradition of paintings of Sappho as expressions of female desire", but Solomon's depiction differs in that Sappho's desire is not associated with a man – such as either Phaon, whose rejection was the catalyst for her suicidal leap from the rocks into the sea, or Alcaeus, a fellow poet, with whom she was often romantically associated with.[416] For this reason, a later image of Sappho – Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's painting of 1881, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (fig. 28) – proves as a useful and insightful contrast to images like Solomon's.

Goldhill suggests that the image of Sappho, amongst beautiful young women, looking across an empty space towards Alcaeus, may well represent "a tension between the tradition that makes Sappho a lover of women and the tradition that has her dally with men – and indeed kill

[414] Prettejohn, 'Solomon, Swinburne, Sappho', p. 111
[415] A. C. Swinburne, 'Charles Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal', *Spectator* (6 Sept. 1862)
[416] Goldhill, 'Touch of Sappho', pp. 257, 253

herself for love of a man".[417] While this is certainly one way to read the image, another possibility is that we may be viewing a merging of or reconciliation between the two traditions – there is no reason to suppose that Sappho could not be a lover of women *and* men.

Homosexuality in the nineteenth century is more rightly understood as a *behaviour* or *desire* than as a sexual *identity,* although figures such as Solomon likely did consider homosexuality a part of their identity. But homosexual desires could, and often did, coexist with heterosexual desires – Oscar Wilde, for instance, famously had male lovers, but is also known to have been infatuated with Florence Balcombe (who went on to marry Bram Stoker),[418] and (at least initially) appeared to be happily married to his wife, Constance. To "use gay/straight here as an on-off switch is to underestimate both Wilde and the complexity of human sexuality".[419] Indeed, many modern critics tend to fall into the trap of discussing desire and sexuality in "the language of the binary" – that is, in terms of the homosexual/heterosexual binary, "as commonly engaged and utilized in sexuality theory as the male/female and masculine/feminine binaries are to sex and gender theory, respectively".[420] Through the lens of bisexuality, we can open up new possibilities and interpretations when looking at works like Solomon and

[417] Goldhill, 'Touch of Sappho', p. 254
[418] *The Irish Times* (8 March 1882), p. 5
[419] M. Garber, *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 354.
[420] N. R. Denton, 'Dare Not Speak Its Name: Bisexuality in Victorian Fin de Siecle Literature', *Journal of Bisexuality,* Vol. 12, No. 4 (2012) pp. 461-2

Alma-Tadema's *Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love* and *Sappho and Alcaeus,* respectively. Of course, it is also possible, and quite *plausible* that some individuals' desires and sexualities shifted over time – just as today an individual identifying as heterosexual, bisexual, or pansexual during one phase of their life may identify as homosexual in another.

Read this way, we might consider Alma-Tadema's *Sappho and Alcaeus* as either an expression of bisexual desire, or sexual fluidity. The names of Sappho's female lovers are carved into the marble benches – and when we follow them from left to right, they lead to *Alcaeus*. The image may still be interpreted as an expression of Sappho's desire for Alcaeus, but not at the cost of erasing her female lovers from her past. It is important, as Goldhill reminds us in his essay, to "negotiate our own processes of appropriation – the (inevit)ability of seeing ourselves in the mirror of painting".[421] Contemporary reviews of *Sappho and Alcaeus* expressed confusion as to the identities, and some cases even the *genders* of the figures depicted. One reviewer for *The Times* in 1881 wrote:

> [F]or Sappho and what she is reading or singing we do not care a straw, nor did the artist, if appearances may be trusted.[422]

Somewhat amusingly, this reviewer appears to identify the figure of *Alcaeus* as Sappho. Although Alcaeus's chin and upper lip are adorned

[421] Goldhill, 'The Touch of Sappho', p. 273
[422] *The Times* (June 6, 1881), p. 4

with fine facial hair, his attire, his loose, dark curls and his "soft beauty"[423] are reminiscent of *Bacchus* or *A Deacon,* as well as Solomon's later, dream-like images of beautiful, androgynous figures, such as *The Magic Crystal* (fig. 29). As Solomon's *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene* was never exhibited in a gallery during the artist's lifetime, there are fewer contemporary reviews of this painting. But we do know that it was displayed prominently in James Leathart's home, alongside Rossetti's *Sir Tristram and La Belle Iseult,* and Burne-Jone's *Sidonia von Bork* (as well as its counterpart, *Clara von Bork*), and *Merlin and Nimue*[424] - images depicting a potent blend of female desire and magic.

Yet desire, in and of itself, is not the sole link between these subjects – magic, and poetry too (especially within the oral tradition), incorporate both creativity and ritual. Greek poetry, after all, is "nearly all myth", and Greek mythology is best understood "on a basis of magic".[425] The practices of *looking* and *listening* are not passive, and the experiences of audiences who engage with poetry, music, or, indeed, visual art, have been compared to "dream, trance, or hypnosis".[426] As mentioned before, it has been suggested that Rossetti (as well as Solomon), in his artworks, tried to create "an ambience that would evoke a similar response in his viewers," often by depicting the figures themselves as "lost in a

[423] Goldhill, 'The Touch of Sappho', p. 269
[424] D. S. MacLeod, 'Mid-Victorian Patronage of the Arts: F. G. Stephens's 'The Private Collections of England'', *The Burlington Magazine,* Vol. 128, No. 1001 (Aug. 1986), pp. 600-601
[425] Musgrove, 'Poetry and Magic', p. 104
[426] Hopwood, 'Dream, Magic, and Poetry', p. 153

thoughtful reverie," or a "rapt ecstasy" to encourage a similar state in the viewer – almost as if bewitching them.[427]

Both the musical instrument and the references to Apollo, god of music, in *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*, recall the oral tradition of poetry, song and hymn, the importance of the spoken word, rhythm and, in some instances, an appeal to a higher being, or deity – as has been noted, the very devices frequently used in magical ritual and spell casting. Yet the parallels between Sappho and the sorceress do not end here.

Just as the sorceress is often a marginalized figure or outsider, Sappho, too, has been known to have dramatized herself as "an alien figure, looking wistfully at the unattainable".[428] Solomon, too, "lived the life of a Victorian "outsider" both by chance and choice".[429] In modern commentaries on the watercolour depicting Sappho and Erinna, it frequently noted that Sappho is "dark" (as Hesiod described her), which brings us once again to points made about Sandys's representations of Keomi Gray, a model of Romani descent, as both Medea and Morgan Le Fay, and the associations of the Romani people, or 'gypsies', with witchcraft, fortune telling, and other forms of magic. These portrayals of sorceresses also emphasised the potency of the spoken and written

[427] Roberts, 'The Dream World', p. 376
[428] D. O'Higgins, 'Sappho's Splintered Tongue: Silence in Sappho 31 and Catallus 51', in E. Greene, ed., *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) p. 69
[429] Mancoff, 'As Others Saw Him', p. 147

word, as well as performance, rhythm and incantation – qualities shared by sorceress and poet alike. The "darkness" of Sappho, Medea, and Morgan Le Fay reveals these women to the Victorian viewer as outsiders, as *Other.*

Conceptually, as well as visually, Solomon's Sappho and the sorceress share significant traits. They are artists, and they are outsiders. The key difference, however, is that while the sorceress was frequently depicted and interpreted as a malevolent or, at best, morally ambiguous woman, Sappho was not – she could be an outsider, and even an *Other*, but she was never the villain of the story. Medea's tale is tragic, and one may be tempted to sympathise with her to an extent, but the fact that she murdered her children is not erased.

It is for this reason that depicting Sappho, and not the sorceress, served Solomon well in terms of spiritualising same-sex desire combined with creativity. Some of Rossetti's images of women, such as *Sibylla Palmifera*, focus on the spirituality of women by emphasising their facial features – "sensuous faces, but faces lost in their own thoughts, not faces which smile enticingly at the viewer" – rather than their fleshly bodies, and transform sexual desire "into a purer emotion of love or the mystical ecstasy of a vague religious feeling", but the threat of succumbing to dangerous thoughts of death or evil undermines the

artist's attempt to spiritualise these women and their desires.[430] By employing Sappho to express and navigate same-sex attraction and desire, and especially by including Erinna – another *poet* – as her lover, Solomon is able to avoid this particular pitfall.

[430] Roberts, 'The Dream World', pp. 377, 388

V. The Sage and the Sorceress: Magic and Creativity in Edward Burne-Jones's Representations of Merlin and Nimue

Merlin's wily apprentice has been branded a witch and a sorceress, a harlot and a temptress but, as so often is the case, the truth - or *truths* - are perhaps not so simple. Normally known by the name of Vivien, or Nimue (with various spellings), as well as the enigmatic *Lady of the Lake,* she makes numerous striking appearances on the Victorian canvas as well as in poetry, including Swinburne's reinvention of her as a saint of love in *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882)*,* and Tennyson's rather less flattering portrayal in *Enid and Nimue, or the True and the False,* printed and bound first in 1857 for a small, private audience,[431] before reappearing as 'Vivien' alongside 'Elaine,' 'Enid,' and 'Guinevere' in 1859, as part of the first installation of what was to become a sprawling epic - *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885).

However, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* remained one of the favourite literary sources for many artists, including Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, with the former's wife, Georgina, believing "the book can never have been loved as it was by these two men." For Burne-Jones, she says, it

> became literally a part of himself. Its strength and beauty, its mystical religion and noble chivalry of action, the world of lost

[431] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 74

> history and romance in the names of people and places - it was his own birthright upon which he entered.[432]

He was so attached to this book that before he had the means to purchase it he resorted to visiting a bookshop in Birmingham every day to read it, buying cheap books to pacify the owner until Morris stepped in and "got it at once and we feasted on it for long".[433] Like Rossetti, Burne-Jones was "was fascinated by occult themes",[434] and his continued interest in the subject is plain in the many Arthurian paintings he produced throughout his career, and of them all, his representations of Nimue, are some of the most interesting. In this chapter, through a close reading of Burne-Jones' depictions of Merlin and Nimue, I follow the path of the sorcerer and apprentice that Solomon set out on, and further consider these roles alongside those of master (artist) and apprentice.

The usual account of Merlin's disappearance from the Arthurian court is one in which he is imprisoned by the woman he loved, after teaching her his magic, but it is important to note that Nimue was not universally portrayed as a malevolent *femme fatale*. In Malory's *Morte D'Arthur,* this was certainly not the case, with his Nymue eventually becoming the *Lady of the Lake,* and securing an identity as a benevolent lady who "dyd grete goodenes vnto kynge Arthur and to alle his knyhtes thurgh her sorcery

[432] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* (New York: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1906) p. 116
[433] E. Burne-Jones, qtd. in Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 117
[434] J. Christian, *The Oxford Union Murals*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 39

and enchauntement".[435] In Malory's retelling of Merlin's disappearance, Nymue (sometimes spelled as Nenyve, Nynyve, Nynyue, and so on, partly depending on the translation) who is responsible for the wizard's entrapment in a pit, as opposed to a stone or a tree, as in some other versions. Her motivations were more sympathetic than they often appeared in other accounts:

> And allwayes he lay aboute to have hir maydynhode, and she was ever passynge wery of him, and wolde have bene delyverde of hym, for she was aferde of hym for cause he was a devyls son, and she cowde not be skyfte of hym by no meane.[436]

Nymue feared Merlin and had no interest in beginning a sexual relationship with her wizard tutor, who continued to pester her as he obsessed over plans to take her virginity. It was Merlin's own unchivalrous behaviour that led Nymue to turn his magic against him, in order that she might free herself from his pursuit.

There were a number of works produced during the late 1850s that can be, as Prettejohn notes, "described as variations on a theme, that of women helping knights to arm themselves, or bidding them goodbye, as

[435] S. E. Holbrook, 'Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake, in Malory's Le Morte Darthur,' *Speculum,* Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct., 1978), p. 775
[436] R. Southey, ed.,*The Byrth, Lyf and Actes of King Arthur By Sir Thomas Malory* (London: Printed from Caxton's edition, 1485, for Longman, Hurst, Rees , Orme, and Brown, by T . Davison, 1817), Vol. I, xliii

they depart for battles of quests",[437] including Elizabeth Siddall's watercolour, *Lady Affixing a Pendant to a Knight's Spear* (1856), and two pen and ink drawings by Burne-Jones - *The Knight's Farewell* (1858) and *Going to the Battle* (1858). These images embody the Victorian notion of the chivalric code, both in the figures of the knights, and in the women who inspired them.

> To love one maiden only, to cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds[438]

Tennyson's Arthur believed that a true knight ought to honor a woman, through devotion and monogamy. But the pedestal provided by this kind of 'woman worship' could often prove difficult for Arthurian women in the Victorian period. Guinevere, Enid, Elaine, and Vivien "struggled, as all Victorian women struggled, to reconcile their individual identities with contemporary ethics."[439] This conflict has already been discussed in previous chapters, but is worth bringing up again, as Burne-Jones gives visual, physical form to Tennyson's notion of 'true' and 'false' women in his portrayals of two characters from the gothic romance, *Sidonia the Sorceress - Clara von Bork* (1860) and the central character, *Sidonia von Bork* (1860).

[437] E. Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), p. 103
[438] A. Tennyson, 'Guinevere'*, Idylls of the King,* 11. 472-473
[439] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* pp. 72-74

Clara and Sidonia, or the True and the False

Wilhelm Meinhold's *Sidonia the Sorceress* (published in Germany in three volumes in 1848, and subsequently translated into English and published by Lady Wilde in 1849) follows Sidonia, Pomeranian noblewoman and *femme fatale,* and catalogues her numerous crimes. The novel gained popularity amongst the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates, with William Morris' company, Kelmscott Press, later reprinting and publishing a beautifully decorative edition in 1893.

Burne-Jones' wife, Georgiana, and Fanny Cornforth modelled for the figures in *Clara von Bork 1560* (fig. 30) and *Sidonia von Bork 1560* (fig. 31), respectively. For him, according to art historian Kirsty Stonell Walker, Fanny provided a "perfect opposite to his virginal wife; small, dark and extremely Victorian".[440] In Western thought, binary oppositions such as black/white, good/evil, self/other, law/chaos, and, of course, man/woman are typically internalised:

> as *hierarchical* oppositions: the element of each pair needing the dominance or subordination of the other for their meaning. The two terms are dependent upon each other, but the dependency is premised on imbalance and inequality between the terms.[441]

Thus, the figures of the 'fallen woman' or the *femme fatale* act as foils to the figure of the madonna, or the respectable, idealised Victorian lady, the

[440] Stonell Walker, *Stunner*, p. 63
[441] Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*, p. 32

'angel of the house.' However, as with the overlapping symbolism present in Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* and *Sibylla Palmifera,* iconography more closely associated with the witch or sorceress finds its way into *Clara von Bork* in the form of a small black cat in the bottom right of the image, lurking at Clara's skirts, and possibly eyeing the birds cupped in her hands. Cats, and *black* cats in particular, have been associated with witchcraft in the popular imagination for a long time, often as a witch's 'familiar' or 'imp'.[442] In some cases, witches might even be able to transform themselves[443] - or others, as seen in the case of Circe in Homer's *Odyssey*[444] - into animals. The colours green and especially red, which also feature prominently in the background in *Clara von Bork,* were also associated with both witches and fairies, which were frequently linked in the Victorian imagination.[445]

As mentioned earlier, Fanny's more 'fleshly' figure, as seen in *Sidonia von Bork,* is a stark contrast to many of the more androgynous bodies that populate Burne-Jones' repertoire - many of them female, but not distinctly feminine *or* masculine. It is tempting to assume that this might have upset the gender binary, but the matter is not necessarily a simple one. The concept of androgyny has often been described by philosophers, poets, and theologians as "a state of exalted being, the

[442] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* p. 182
[443] Ibid., p. 189
[444] In Book X of Homer's *Odyssey,* Circe transforms several of Odysseus's men into swine. This is discussed in more detail in relation to Waterhouse's representations of her in Chapter VII.
[445] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* p.187

ideal completion of humanity in a condition of transcendence," and a means to "attain stasis and perfection beyond gender, sexuality, and desire".[446] Presentations of androgyny in the "real world" were (and *are,* in some cases) sometimes seen as "physical, sexy, and disturbing," with the potential to "lead to bisexuality, group sex, the "hapless confusion of the sexes", and the "superabundance of erotic possibilities", for which Eliade disparaged the work of decadent authors from Oscar Wilde to Théophile Gautier and A. C. Swinburne.[447] But Burne-Jones' androgynous figures are typically seen to embody the spiritual, archetypal concept of androgyny that has been so attractive and fascinating to scholars from Plato to Jung.

Another woman from a working-class background, Jane Burden (who was later to become Jane Morris, wife of William Morris), modelled for Rossetti's figure of Queen Guenevere in his Oxford Union mural in 1857, and Prettejohn suggests that one interpretation of making Jane an Arthurian queen could be "to demonstrate a radical disavowal of current class conventions".[448] Meanwhile, working-class models such as Fanny Cornforth and Annie Miller were repeatedly recreated as fallen women and, in Fanny's case, as a sorceress. Although it is worth noting that while Jane Morris was portrayed "not only as a queen, but as an adulteress",[449] we ought also to consider that Guenevere was a much more sympathetic

[446] M. Garber, 'Androgyny and Its Discontents', *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1997) p. 207
[447] Garber, 'Androgyny and Its Discontents', p. 218
[448] Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, p. 201
[449] Ibid., p. 201

figure than a character such as Sidonia, or even Nimue. To her Victorian audience, she was "neither true nor false, but both: true to her own passionate nature, but false to her faultless king" and redeemed herself through a life of service as a nun.[450] Nimue, Vivien, Morgan le Fay, Medea, Lilith, and - indeed - Sidonia, were frequently considered irredeemable:

> Only a woman without a woman's heart knowingly destroyed the men around her . . . Disguising her quest for ambition with stunning beauty and skillful charms, the false woman deceived men, gaining their love, trust, and, eventually, dominion over their destinies. She incarnated perversity by reversing the natural order: she wanted to command and gave her victim no choice but to obey.[451]

Although not every Victorian *femme fatale* was a witch or a sorceress, much of the language used to describe them is reminiscent of magic - such as the indication of performance, illusions, and manipulation or misdirection, as well as charming and bewitching a victim. Speaking on the 'language of witchcraft' and its connection with cultural perceptions the *femme fatale* Stevie Simkin, reader in drama and film at the University of Winchester, describes real-life accounts of some of the women reconstructed as *femmes fatales* by the media. One is reminded once again of the tale mentioned in Chapter I - that of Henry Judd Gray, a married corset salesman who began an affair with, and was an

[450] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 93
[451] Ibid., p. 93

accomplice to Ruth Snyder, who was executed in 1927 after being found guilty of murdering her husband. He gave detailed descriptions of how she would "hypnotise him with her eyes".[452]

> Her eyes ruled me. She gained complete physical and mental domination over me. [...] I was helpless to resist anything she bade me do.[453]

Burne-Jones's Sidonia casts her gaze over her shoulder, towards the viewer, as if to captivate and charm them, while Clara does not make direct eye contact. As noted in Chapter I, the notion of the 'evil eye' was still very much alive in the nineteenth century, and when combined with Sidonia's malicious expression, her glare becomes unsettling. The interlocking, serpentine design of her garments, and the black cat, suggestive of a familiar, also leave little to the imagination. The cat reappears in the image of *Clara von Bork,* seemingly taking an interest in the baby birds that Clara holds - a symbolic underscoring of Sidonia's predatory nature, as a counterpart to Clara's nurturing character. In his images of Clara and Sidonia von Bork, Burne-Jones plays into the well-traversed symbolism of good and evil but, as we shall see, his representations of Merlin and Nimue are both more complex and more interesting.

[452]Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale,* p. 109
[453] *New York Daily News*, 1 April, 1927, p. 3

Merlin and Nimue, or the Master and Apprentice

Burne-Jones' first known depiction of Nimue appears in the marvellous Oxford Union Library mural (fig. 32), on which he worked in collaboration with other artists associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, including William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to bring to life scenes from the Arthurian legends. His contribution was to produce an image of the scene in which Merlin is "lured" into the pit by Nimue. The two figures stand opposite one another, facing inwards towards the pit. Another part of the mural, *The Education of Arthur* (painted by William Riviere), contained the "paraphernalia of wizardry", including "an hourglass, a skull, books, and some arcane diagram",[454] hinting at the occult themes associated with the Arthurian legends, although this specific scene was derived from Edmund Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene* (1590), rather than Malory's text.

Particularly notable in Burne-Jones's image is the means by which Nimue lures her would-be suitor – by playing a lute. The instrument was not present in Malory's version of the tale, and it might be inferred that Burne-Jones employs it in his painting to suggest that it was the sweetness of music or song, rather than sexual desire, that leads Merlin to his doom. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter IV, many spells can involve chanting, rhyme, and rhythm. The presence of the lute rather than a book, as in the later paintings, also obscures her identity as a sorceress and apprentice

[454] Christian, *The Oxford Union Murals,* p. 54

of Merlin's. Instead, it might conjure images of the beautiful sirens and harpies of the classics, luring unfortunate sailors to their deaths with their sweet songs. In another sense, though, it could appear as a "safer," more conventionally feminine symbol. As Caroline Bingley tells us in the novel *Pride and Prejudice,* "a woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and, besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions"[455] - music was an acceptable pursuit for the middle-class Victorian woman…and could even aid in attracting a 'suitable' husband.

Another point worth noting is that *Nimue* was the name by which Burne-Jones always thought of the enchantress that bested Merlin,[456] and that he had been "pained" by Tennyson's "modernised and altered" interpretation of the sorceress while "preserving her ancient name", before Tennyson "good-naturedly changed it to 'Vivien'".[457]

The depiction of the pit and the absence of a hawthorn tree indicates *Morte Darthur* as the source material. Malory's retelling of Merlin's disappearance from King Arthur's court is a "highly compressed version"[458] of the account in the *Post-Vulgate Suite de Merlin* (one of the

[455] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: George Allen, 1894) p. 51
[456] C. Larrington, 'Vivien and the Victorians,' *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p.157
[457] Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 182
[458] C. Larrington, 'Viviane, Damoiselle Cacheresse, and the Lady of the Lake,' *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition*, p.114

major Old French prose cycles of Arthurian legend). Nimue is also present in Malory’s text, as well as another maiden identified as the Lady of the Lake, leading to some confusion with regards to his Ladies and Damsels of the Lake.

The two windows that break up the composition work both to bring the viewer's attention towards the pit in which Merlin meets his fate and to keep the two figures apart – Nimue’s expression may be more remorseful than malevolent, but whatever the case, there is to be no possibility of reconciliation between the two. Merlin fades away, while Nimue has taken a step towards regaining her independence.

Of special interest in this chapter, are two of Burne-Jones' later treatments of the wizard and his apprentice and the ways in which they mirror nineteenth-century attitudes towards women, and in particular the learned or educated woman. The sorceress, enchantress, or witch, was one such woman. As has been discussed, literacy was a prerequisite for anyone who wished to study magic – without the ability to read, the power of the written word is off-limits. This was true for both real-life witches and cunning-folk, whose workplaces were littered with books and manuscripts, and for fictional practitioners of magic. As English Professor Leah Price points out, for the majority of British history, “men's literacy rate outstripped women's; in the nineteenth century, however, the latter began to climb more steeply than the former, until around 1900 literacy

was actually more diffused among women".[459] Price argues that it was during this period that a shift towards the feminisation of reading began - "associated with men when it's rare and therefore prestigious, literacy is feminized in societies (like ours) where ubiquity breeds contempt".[460] Literacy amongst women was certainly not unheard in the middle ages, but it was much less common than it was during the Victorian period. Nevertheless, all of the Arthurian enchantresses, regardless of how they learned their crafts, were able to read and write - at a time when reading and writing were much more readily accepted as 'masculine' activities. Referring to images of figures such as Morgan le Fay, Medea, Cassandra, and Nimue, Cherry notes that "these images and many others portrayed women with rare powers and/or occult knowledge",[461] and it is the *uncommonness* of the sorceress's power and/or knowledge that is key to understanding the anxieties underlying her possession of that power and/or knowledge.

As Casteras observes in her essay in *Victorian Visions of Female Sages and Sorceresses*, "while there are few surviving personifications of positive feminine knowledge in Victorian painting, many images produced from the 1860s until the turn of the century delved into the negative side of female sapientia or wisdom, namely, witchcraft",[462] and as O'Keefe notes in his social history of magic, we can often consider magic "a

[459] L. Price, *How to do things with books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 56
[460] Ibid., p. 57
[461] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame,* p. 160
[462] Casteras, 'Malleus maleficarum', p. 145

metaphor for making statements about certain striking qualities of human action, speech and thought".[463] The presence of underlying male fears and anxieties in many Victorian paintings of the *femme fatale* type, and in particular the sorceress or enchantress, has already been taken into account, and parallels between Burne-Jones' *Beguiling of Merlin* and the artist's turbulent affair with María Zambaco have been drawn by other art historians. Casteras describes the scene depicted in *The Beguiling of Merlin:*

> the confrontation between the two is elevated to almost operatic proportions. Here, the sorceress is clearly a seductress as well; in fact, the artist ironically casts María Zambaco, a woman toward whom he felt great passion, in this role (and also in the role of Circe in another picture), perhaps partly portraying himself in the aging person of Merlin.[464]

Following Cherry's example,[465] I argue that we should also consider these artworks alongside attitudes towards women's education and the perceived threat to the masculine authority over the realms of knowledge and creativity. Such a reading is supported by some nineteenth-century texts - for instance, as Hutton points out, the French historian Jules Michelet considered the witch as "an archetypal figure, representing

[463] O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning,* p. 1
[464] Casteras, 'Malleus maleficarum', p. 162
[465] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame,* p. 162

spiritual freedom, and the rights of women and the working classes".[466] In the introduction to L. J. Trotter's English translation of Michelet's *La sorcière: The witch of the middle ages,* first published in 1863, the translator confesses to having "slurred or slightly altered a few of those passages which French readers take as a thing of course, but English ones, because of their different training, are supposed to eschew",[467] and amusingly suggests that a "Frenchman, in short, writes for men, an Englishman rather for the drawing room ladies, who tolerate grossness only in the theatres and the columns of the newspapers".[468] The suggestion that the subject might prove too rich for an English audience, and the decision to edit or emit details rather than merely translate, reveals the sensitivity that plagued some Victorians when it came to "plain-speaking".[469] However, it seems unlikely that many of the British artists and writers associated with the 'Bohemian' art world (some of whom were notably influenced by French thought and literature on art and poetry),[470] would have found this kind of frankness quite so daunting. Indeed, it would likely have made such literature even more appealing to figures such as Swinburne and Rossetti, who Boyce reported finding "poring over a copy of *Justine,* the notoriously licentious novel by the eighteenth-century French writer and pornographer, the Marquis de Sade,

[466] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 139
[467] J. Michelet, trans. L. J. Trotter, *La sorcière: The witch of the middle ages* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1863), p. v
[468] Michelet, trans. Trotter, *La sorcière*, p. v
[469] Ibid., p. vi
[470] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 18

whose name was the origin for the term 'sadism'".[471] For these artists and poets, medieval subjects could be an escape into fantasy or a nostalgia for the past, but they were also a way to "reject mid-Victorian conventions of didacticism, religiosity, domesticity, and sentimentality".[472]

Before engaging further with *The Beguiling of Merlin*, we ought first to look to Burne-Jones' second painting of the pair – a watercolour – completed in 1861, four years after his contribution to the mural in the Oxford Union Library. This representation of *Merlin and Nimue* (fig. 33) is perhaps the closest to the scene depicted in *Le Morte D'Arthur,* with the connection with the written source made explicit by a quotation inscribed on the frame, "so by her subtle craft and working she made Merlin to go under that stone". The little black dog tugging at Merlin's robes is symbolic of his lust for Nimue, suggesting that this could indeed be the Merlin who relentlessly pursued his uninterested apprentice.

Nimue herself was modelled by Fanny Cornforth, whose appearance as Sidonia von Bork was only a year earlier. Both women dominate their respective compositions, the other figures appearing small in comparison, hinting at the power they hold. Another parallel between the two is their difference from many of Burne-Jones' other representations of women, whose features were far more androgynous. In comparison to many other Pre-Raphaelite models, Fanny, is much more curvaceous and

[471] Prettejohn, *Rossetti and his Circle,* p. 18
[472] D. S. Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature,* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 287

"fleshly" and this was reflected in the paintings for which she modelled. It has been suggested that her "sensuality" and "hearty form" may have been one of the reasons Burne-Jones "felt more comfortable with portraying Fanny as a threatening, evil entity".[473] Unlike depictions of, for instance, Elizabeth Siddall, representations of characters modelled on Fanny were not spiritual, ethereal or waif-like. In *Merlin and Nimue,* in particular, her size - both in terms of her real-life figure and the space she occupies in the composition - work effectively in demonstrating her superior magical power and control over the situation, while Merlin looks as if he shrinks and fades away.

The presence of the book in the scene, as mentioned before, is a key item in revealing her identity as a sorceress, and the one who orchestrated the scene depicted - and it also shows us that she is literate. Despite the popular opinion that Fanny was both uneducated *and* illiterate, she was in fact, like most of the Pre-Raphaelite models, quite able to read. There were concerns about the effect of books on women, as some argued that "their physiology made them especially vulnerable to excitement and to over-identification; that they would become dissatisfied with the limitations of their lives" and "would waste time on exciting novels rather than occupy themselves more usefully around the house".[474] Nevertheless, reading was generally considered to be a reasonably acceptable pastime for the Victorian lady - though it seems doubtful that

[473] Stonell Walker, *Stunner,* pp. 63-64
[474] K. Flint, 'Victorian Readers', *British Library* website (May 2014) (https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/victorian-readers)

Nimue's reading material would be considered suitable. Victorian women were permitted to read “light” literature, such as sensation novels, but one must wonder how others would react to a seemingly respectable lady reading occult materials - literature that was not commonly available and perhaps even considered prestigious in some circles, reflecting the kind of reading practices that Price argues are aligned more closely ‘with masculinity’. As Casteras says (and Trotter implies, in his introduction to *La sorcière*) the sorceress would be “utterly doomed” in Victorian drawing rooms, where her traits of strength, resourcefulness, and aggressiveness would be unlikely to win her friends.[475] The figure of the sorceress fascinated many Victorians, but it also frightened them.

This Nimue has been interpreted as “cold and calculating as she practices chants from a book of incantations”.[476] As well as containing spells, incantations, and as one twentieth-century man put it, “a good deal of evil,”[477] witch's books were often believed to be the source of their power, and eventually passed on to their children to secure its survival after their own death. But this book was Merlin's, and his apprentice has *taken* it from him. In some versions, he may have given it willingly – due to his infatuation with her – but even then there is no doubt that she is not using it for any purpose he intended. However, this scene could also be interpreted as a depiction of a kind of magical inheritance - one fairly well-known belief held that magical practitioners (and especially witches)

[475] Casteras, ‘Malleus maleficarum’, p. 143
[476] Ibid., p. 162
[477] Milton, ‘The Wicked Old Woman’, p. 48

would transfer their knowledge to an apprentice or blood relative before they died, sometimes by the use of witches' books, manuscripts, or grimoires.[478]

Seeing Merlin hunched over, in this weakened state, it is as if his apprentice has absorbed his power, and now appropriates it for herself and her own purposes. The backwards glance, reminiscent again of *Sidonia von Bork,* hints at a more malevolent streak but the image's close ties to the Malory text, emphasised by the inscription on the frame, save her from becoming irredeemable – this could be the Nimue who goes on to become the benevolent *Lady of the Lake.*

It is worth noting that in the early French accounts of Arthurian legend, such as the *Prose Lancelot* - an important source of inspiration for Malory's text - Nimue was "not alone as a positive and intelligent woman". Other characters, such as Morgan, were endowed with great knowledge and magical power, and were not strictly 'good' or 'evil'. Figures such as Guinevere, while not witches or sorceresses, were also often portrayed as learned women.[479] Not every account of Merlin and Nimue presents us with "an austere moralistic account of the dangers a mature man of intellect might run with an entrancing young woman".[480]

[478] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* pp. 180-181
[479] Knight, *Merlin,* p. 68
[480] Ibid., p. 68

Moving on to the third, and perhaps the best known, painting of wizard and apprentice, we find Nimue's domination of the canvas has been taken to new levels. This is a life-size portrayal of the temptress, modelled by María Zambaco, the artist's lover, muse and, importantly, a fellow artist who acknowledged him as her tutor. One of the most often used words in accounts of Burne-Jones and Zambaco's relationship is "stormy",[481] which can reasonably be considered something of an understatement. "Two things had tremendous power over him", his wife Georgie noted driely, "beauty and misfortune".[482] While Zambaco's treatment differed from the Romani Keomi Gray's, she too was, as a Greek woman, considered 'exotic' and 'othered' to some extent. MacCarthy refers to the perceived "freedom" in the behaviour of women in Greek circles, and the way in which it "delighted and surprised visiting young men", and describes Zambaco herself as "a flamboyant woman of experience" who "exuded sexuality".[483]

This certainly comes across in *The Beguiling of Merlin* (fig. 34), where we see a rather ill-looking Merlin, paralysed both by the spell and by his love/lust for Vivien, whose statuesque figure and crown of snakes are reminiscent of Medusa, and recall the interlacing pattern of Sidonia von Bork's dress. Snakes were also equated, in Ruskin's *Queen of the Air,*

[481] See F. MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2011)
[482] Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 309
[483] MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, p. 205

with sensuality, as well as tainted Christianity.[484] On the other hand, Ruskin also allows that "there is a power in the earth to take away corruption, and to purify (hence the very fact of burial, and many uses of earth, only lately known); and in this sense the serpent is a healing spirit".[485] The notion of serpent as healer and as poisoner provides an intriguing parallel to the 'pharmakon' discussed in Jacques Derrida's essay 'Plato's Pharmacy', and some of the ideas explored in Paracelsus's theories of toxicology, both of which are interrogated further in the next chapter.

Nimue seems to have drained her tutor of his magical power, much as Snyder "seemed to draw every strength" out of Gray,[486] claiming it for herself. British biographer and cultural historian Fiona MacCarthy records Burne-Jones as claiming, "there are only two kinds of women, [...] those who take the strength out of a man and those who put it back",[487] echoing the use of the 'language of witchcraft' in discussions of the *femme fatale* - it appears that the enchantress is the former kind of woman, and as her power grows, his is depleted - but perhaps she is, like the serpent in Ruskin's mind, capable of both. Interestingly, in contrast to Gray, Burne-Jones seems to regard himself as a willing participant in the seduction, claiming in a letter to Mary Gaskell that "if I have given in I have given in

[484] J. Ruskin, *Queen of the Air: A Study of the Greek Myths of Cloud and Storm* (London: George Allen, 1906) pp. 99-100
[485] Ruskin, *Queen of the Air*, p. 98
[486] *NYDN,* p. 3
[487] MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, p. 206

with my whole will, and meant to do it",[488] suggesting that he took an active, rather than passive, role in the face of temptation.

Nevertheless, the image of Merlin is passive, feminised, and a far cry from Burne-Jones' depictions of heroes, such as St George, engaged in battle with a dragon and protecting a maiden, or Perseus, shown slaying monsters (including Medusa). The latter two showcase their physical strength and prowess, and their idealised masculine bodies. "Virile, manly, masculine, vigorous, healthy, vital," are all words that might come to mind when viewing these male figures, and the dominant Victorian discourse on physical culture frequently identified physical prowess with moral prowess, "the embodiment of masculine virtue".[489] Art historian Michael Hatt describes Victorian physical culture as:

> essentially an attempt to rebuild British manhood in the face of degeneracy and enfeeblement, and worked on the principle that if physical prowess is an index of morality, then in order to raise morals, the body must be changed.[490]

Although the "cult" of physical culture became most apparent after the scandal of Oscar Wilde's trial, its roots were already in place.[491] Many of the sentiments echo those embedded in the practice of hero worship and

[488] E. Burne-Jones, qtd. in MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite,* p. 207
[489] M. Hatt, 'Physical culture: the male nude and sculpture in late Victorian Britain,' in E. Prettejohn, ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 243-244
[490] Hatt, 'Physical culture', p. 244
[491] Ibid., p. 247

the Victorian reinvention of the chivalric code - sentiments of "ideal manhood closed in real man".[492] To become a man "in the fullest sense of the word," boys must strive to be in possession of good intentions, a good conscience, honor, discipline, and a charitable nature.[493] This in turn echoes idealised classical male bodies and patriarchal values, and their reception in the nineteenth century. As Mancoff explains, the King Arthur that occupied the Victorian imagination was frequently an anachronistic being, and his medieval appearance "only a shell that housed a man of a very different time". He was both the "paradigmatic Victorian gentleman," and "the athletic, classical hero disguised in medieval costume".[494]

The wilting Merlin is neither gentlemanly, nor heroic in his appearance. Here, it is Nimue who radiates strength and vitality, her statuesque form towering over him. While Fanny Cornforth as Nimue may have been interpreted as a robust, perhaps even *fleshly,* figure, Maria Zambaco as Nimue appears statuesque, further emphasised by both Merlin's posture and the oil painting's size. In addition to Burne-Jones' own confession, which may well have been a tongue-in-cheek remark, there is some evidence that hints towards an interpretation of Merlin as the artist himself, and Nimue as Zambaco, as MacCarthy explains:

> Maria was a flamboyant woman of experience. It is not hard to see how Burne-Jones was seduced by the sexual promise she

[492] A. Tennyson, 'To the Queen' (1873), 1.38
[493] Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur,* p. 52
[494] Ibid., p. 49, 53, 56

> spectacularly offered. Burne-Jones had been obsessed by his own undesirability. His self-caricatures show a pathetic scarecrow figure, ugly, scraggy and unlovable. His closeness to the confident Rossetti had only increased his own feelings of sexual inadequacy.[495]

Although Burne-Jones enjoyed continued success as an artist, it does not seem unreasonable to consider that he may have worried that Zambaco may one day surpass him. After all, his self-confidence was so poor that he could scarcely believe she was interested in pursuing a relationship with him, and following the end of their affair, she went on to study at the Slade, while Burne-Jones was largely a self-taught artist, and had left university without graduating. During their relationship, he had encouraged her creativity, but now she no longer needed him - just as Nimue no longer needed Merlin once she had learned all his secret knowledge. Through witchcraft (and her superior creativite powers), Nimue surpasses her mentor. On the other hand, Burne-Jones had accepted and encouraged Zambaco as his student. It was not entirely uncommon for women artists to be involved in the circles Burne-Jones moved in, and so it also seems perfectly reasonable to suggest that the two of them may have collaborated or inspired one another with regards to their creative ideas, as Rossetti and Siddall did during their professional and romantic relationship in the 1860s. Or perhaps, as is often the case, both interpretations contain an element of truth to them.

[495] MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite,* p. 205

There are alternatives to the popular ‘autobiographical’ interpretation of *The Beguiling of Merlin.* If we are to assume Burne-Jones took his inspiration from his beloved *Morte D’Arthur,* it is possible to interpret Nimue as the one having been wronged by a lecherous and unchivalrous Merlin, who is at least partly responsible for his own undoing. In this instance, we might imagine that Merlin’s frail, feminised body is indicative of his weak will and sexual depravity, while the strong, healthy figure of Nimue represents her triumph over strife, and her future as the benevolent Lady of the Lake, who used her magic for good. But there are other details with the painting that align it more closely with the older *Estoire de Merlin* than with Malory's text*,* such as Merlin's final resting place being the hawthorn tree rather than a stone or a pit. Robert Southey's 1816 reprint of *Le Morte D'Arthur* (the most available edition in Victorian Britain and the one in Burne-Jones's possession) not only provided its audience with the original Malory text, but also included materials from other Arthurian sources in its introduction - including various accounts of the dealings between Merlin and Nimue. However, Burne-Jones’s depiction of Merlin may be interpreted as a reflection of Merlin’s lack of ‘power’, despite his great knowledge of magic - as English professor Steven Knight points out in his work on the Merlin myth, Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur* reduced the role of Merlin’s knowledge, in favour of a focus on chivalry and moral interests. He goes on to explain that

> Merlin's knowledge establishes Arthur's power, but does not go very far in supervising or, especially, criticizing it.
>
> The reduced role of Merlin's knowledge relates to historical changes in the way power has come to use knowledge. The Merlin as grand vizier role had already been diluted in the post-Vulgate but though, when Malory wrote, English had become the language of the court's business, there was no longer any direct feudal and personal link between the king's decision making and his advisers: the structure of power had made knowledge valid only as prophecy.[496]

Nimue's expression, more wistful than triumphant, may resonate with the version of the tale in the *Estoire,* in which she experienced a conflict of love and remorse as she entombed her tutor, rather than in the *Morte D'Arthur,* in which it would be fair to say she did not particularly care for Merlin. In this instance, Burne-Jones' admission that *The Beguiling of Merlin* was at least semi-autobiographical could support this reading, but it does not serve as a basis for an entire interpretation of the painting. Although his relationship with Zambaco was certainly fraught with danger, it was decidedly not one-sided as Merlin's attraction towards Nimue had been in *Morte D'Arthur*.

Although the Merlin and Vivien episode in *Idylls of the King* was not Burne-Jones' source for the painting and we ought to be careful in drawing comparisons the two works, many of Fred Kaplan's observations in his paper about Tennyson's Merlin as a fallen artist can be applied to

[496] S. T. Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009) p. 96

this image - such as the idea that Vivien embodies the "negative side of creativity or the imagination, the dark and destructive force in the poetic whirlwind". He describes her as "a projection of Merlin's melancholy, vanity, and frustration as artist", and his defeat at her hands as "a symbolic representation of the defeat of the imagination in the tradition of Romantic poet".[497] This interpretation also forms parallels with Knight's analysis of Malory's Merlin as knowledgeable, yet lacking in tangible power.

Again, as Casteras reminds us, the Victorian woman "endowed with superior creativity typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress, whose supernatural powers permitted her to exercise her half-human, half demonical on monstrous autonomy, and degeneracy."[498] Creativity was considered a predominantly masculine trait, and depictions of creative women in Victorian popular culture were frequently masculinised and made fun of, despite the fact that there were many successful female artists and authors during the period. Concurrently, the (male) artists associated with the aesthetic movement were feminised and ridiculed, both in satirical representations that pitted them against the previously mentioned 'athlete' type,[499] and in the language of contemporary art criticism, as discussed in Chapter IV in connection with Simeon Solomon's works.

[497] F. Kaplan, 'Woven Paces and Waving Hands: Tennyson's Merlin as Fallen Artist,' *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter, 1969), p. 286
[498] Casteras, 'Malleus maleficarum,' p. 142
[499] 'Aesthetics versus Athletics', *London Illustrated News* (March 1883)

Burne-Jones' Merlin, too, suffers from impotence, both physically (evident in his posture and form) and mentally. In this image it is, unusually, Nimue who embodies the values of Victorian (or perhaps even ancient Greek) physical culture, uniting a strong, healthy body with a strong, healthy mind. Through witchcraft, as a metaphor for creativity, Nimue (or Vivien, in Tennyson's poem) demonstrates (female) superiority and sovereignty as she surpasses her mentor and leaves him behind, her imagination and creative prowess blossoming like the flowers of the hawthorn tree. This type of narrative often recurs in popular culture in various guises, such as in the first *Star Wars* film (1977), when Darth Vader proclaims to his former master, Obi-wan Kenobi, that "The circle is now complete. When I left you, I was but the learner. Now, I am the master".[500] Similar sentiments can often be found across cultures - for example, the Chinese phrase "青出于蓝" refers literally to the creation of a blue dye that is *bluer than blue* from the indigo plant, but also refers metaphorically to surpassing one's mentor, in a way akin to the dye becoming stronger and more vibrant than its source. But not all masters react well to their apprentice's knowledge or skills surpassing their own. In Greek mythology, Daedalus, the inventor, artist and craftsmen known for, amongst other impressive feats, constructing his son Icarus's wings, became envious of his apprentice and nephew, Perdix, leading him to conspire to kill the boy.[501]

[500] G. Lucas, 1977. *Star Wars.* Film. San Francisco: Lucasfilm Ltd.
[501] Ovid, trans. J. Dryden et al, *Metamorphoses,* Book VIII (London: J. F. Dove, 1826), p.197

However, Merlin, while not necessarily pleased by Nimue's progression - he *is* being trapped, after all - is not necessary envious of his apprentice.

To return to the hawthorn - the tree itself has a magical origin story and superstitious beliefs associated with it, as documented by Arthur Kells in his article for the *Irish Naturalists' Journal*:

> Hawthorn is said to have sprung from the lightning and although some have the uneasy dread of ill-luck through the bringing of its branches into the house, it was associated by the Greeks with marriage rites.[502]

He includes the hawthorn, along with the yew and roan, or quicken, as one of the three "magical trees"[503] and it is also worth recalling that the hawthorn tree, in Celtic tradition, is associated with balance and duality. The hawthorn tree's thorns, coupled with the beautiful flowers nestled amongst them, perhaps hint towards the figure of Nimue as a beautiful yet dangerous *femme fatale,* but they could also represent her potential to use her powers for good (as the Lady of the Lake, who assists King Arthur and his knights), or for ill (entrapping Merlin).[504]

---

[502] A. Kell, 'On Picking Hawthorn', *The Irish Naturalists' Journal,* Vol. 2, No. 9 (May, 1929), p. 189
[503] Ibid., p. 190
[504] It is worth noting here that whether entrapping Merlin should be considered an 'ill' use of Nimue's power is dependent both on the reader's interpretation and the precise narrative being discussed. If her motive was to neutralise a *predatory* Merlin, rather than simply 'steal' his powers for herself, this need not be seen as a negative act – except by Merlin.

The *femme fatale* figure as part of "split" personality is thought to have evolved from the dichotomy of the good and the evil, and the virgin and the whore, and still enjoys popularity in modern media. One of the more well-known examples is Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010), a psychological horror film in which Nina Sayers, the ballerina protagonist played by Natalie Portman, is "cajoled and bullied by her director into discovering the 'bad girl' beneath her 'good girl' exterior that will be capable of dancing the eponymous part as convincingly as she dances the white swan".[505]

> ...the journey, somewhat inevitably, connects her 'inner black swan' with her sexuality, and covers a number of over-familiar bases along the way, including masturbation, associations of blood, sex and shame, an experimental foray into lipstick lesbianism, and supposed fulfillment in a performance that ends, predictably enough, with her death.[506]

Nina's experience in the film has been perceived by some as "a poetic metaphor for the birth of an artist, that is, as a visual representation of Nina's psychic odyssey toward achieving artistic perfection and of the price to be paid for it".[507] Although it is doubtful that the writers and directors had Burne-Jones or the Arthurian wizard in mind, a case could

[505] Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale,* p. 17
[506] Ibid., p. 17
[507] J. Skorin-Kapov, *Darren Aronofsky's Films and the Fragility of Hope* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 96

still be made that Nina's fate reflects Merlin's, particularly through the linking of creativity with sexuality, and magic.

Another piece of modern media that makes use of the 'split' personality model, this time more literally, is Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz's ongoing fantasy series, *Once Upon a Time* (2011-). The fifth season of the series ended with Snow White's stepmother, Regina Mills, making use of Dr. Jekyll's potion in order to separate herself from her persona of the Evil Queen. In this instance, even the types of spells the two (physically) identical women are able to cast are dependent on their positions as the 'good' Regina Mills, who is able to cast light magic, and the 'Evil Queen', who is able to cast dark magic. Only when the two women are eventually able to reconcile and share one another's burdens are they able to truly find peace. Similarly, Nimue is only 'whole' when we consider her roles as both the object of Merlin's affections and the Lady of the Lake. By reconciling her various characteristics and her potential for good *or* evil, Burne-Jones has not doomed Nimue to be cast solely as the *femme fatale* as he did Sidonia.

The final image of Merlin and Nimue that I want to consider is one of Burne-Jones' last treatments of the subject – *Witch's Tree* (fig. 35), an illustration for his *Flower Book,* published by Georgiana in 1905. In this depiction, Merlin is a literal self-insertion of the artist and Nimue is modelled by his daughter, Margaret. The lute makes a reappearance, as

the sorceress plays music to a Merlin who looks as if he has merely fallen asleep, cradled in the serpentine branches of the hawthorn tree. Nimue wears a crown, perhaps suggesting that she has become the Lady of the Lake*,* ruler of Avalon. Her expression is hidden, leaving us to guess what she might be thinking, but what is clear is that this Nimue appears more gentle, and less dominating than her predecessors – although Merlin is old and Nimue young, these figures are of a similar size and they mimic one another in terms of their body language. In this painting, there is no clear visual reference to her status as a sorceress, a learned woman, or an artist – if one was unfamiliar with the source material, it could simply be an image of an old man about to fall into a deep, peaceful sleep as he listens to the sweet music from the beautiful, young woman who plays the lute.

Despite choosing to represent the same moment (that of Merlin's entrapment by Nimue) repeatedly, Burne-Jones managed to provide very varied portrayals of the same character, both in terms of physicality, as Nimue was embodied by different models, and in personality, as each image exhibits different moods and traits. Nimue, as Burne-Jones painted her, is a difficult character to pin down - she refuses to be pigeon-holed. She is not another incarnation of Tennyson's villainous Vivien, yet she is not presented as a wholly benevolent Lady of the Lake either. While Burne-Jones may have spoken of two types of women - "those who take

the strength out of a man and those who put it back"[508] - his representations of Nimue, considered together, seem to mark her as both, or neither.

Through the Looking Glass: Magic, Art, and Creativity

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Burne-Jones's image of *The Wizard* (fig. 25), completed in 1898, shows an older man (the wizard) revealing, via a large convex mirror, a vision of a shipwreck to a young woman. In this image, the dynamics are very different from those in the artist's depictions of Merlin and Nimue. The wizard is the only one actually performing magic, and we are given no indication as to whether the young woman beside him is able to cast spells or practice the art of scrying herself. The fact that Burne-Jones referred to the image as his "Maiden and Necromancer picture"[509] suggests that the magical power could lie solely with the wizard - this is not an apprentice about to surpass her mentor in skill. Rather, she appears to be in awe. Nor is she sexually experienced or intimidating as Nimue is sometimes considered to be, despite her beauty.

Interestingly, at the time Burne-Jones completed the painting, crystal balls were more widely available as they were then able to be mass produced,[510] but I suggest that depicting the vision in a large mirror allows for

[508] E. Burne-Jones, qtd. in Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 77
[509] M. Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations, 1895-1898, preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke,* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981) p. 84
[510] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* p. 251

interpretations of "the artist conjuring up visions in his studio".[511] Marie Spartali Stillman's *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovegni* (fig. 27) features something similar, in the form of a crystal ball depicting an homage to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's images of Love and Dante. Burne-Jones did in fact have a crystal ball in his studio since the 1860s, and it appears images such as his pastel and watercolour versions of *Astrologia* (1863 and 1865, respectively), and then much later in his *Portrait of Madeleine Deslandes* (1895-6). But the choice to depict a large convex mirror in *The Wizard*, literally mounted on a wall and viewed as a canvas might be, goes even further in cementing the relationship between magic and art.

The Days of Creation (1870-76) also explores a link between religion, magic and creation, through six related images of angels holding crystal spheres that depict the stages of God's creation of the world (fig. 36). Although they are now framed individually, the six images were originally framed together to form one 'picture', described thus by Oscar Wilde in a review originally published in the *Dublin University Magazine*:

> The next picture is divided into six compartments, each representing a day in the Creation of the World, under the symbol of an angel holding a crystal globe, within which is shown the work of a day. In the first compartment stands the lonely angel of the First Day, and within the crystal ball Light is being separated from Darkness. In the fourth compartment are four angels, and the crystal glows like a heated opal, for within it the creation of the Sun, Moon, and Stars is passing;

[511] Wildman, Christian et al, *Edward Burne-Jones,* p. 322

> the number of the angels increases, and the colours grow more vivid till we reach the sixth compartment, which shines afar off like a rainbow. Within it are the six angels of the Creation, each holding its crystal ball; and within the crystal of the sixth angel one can see Adam's strong brown limbs and hero form, and the pale, beautiful body of Eve. At the feet also of these six winged messengers of the Creator is sitting the angel of the Seventh Day, who on a harp of gold is singing the glories of that coming day which we have not yet seen.[512]

In their study of the images, published in *The Arts Journal,* Liana De Girolami Cheney suggests that

> The theme of God's creation of the world is conceptually fascinating and stimulating to Burne-Jones, not just visually, but iconographically as well. He likely associates the traditional concept of world creation to the individual creation, paralleling God's artistic creative powers with human artistic creativity. God's conception of the cosmic world inspires the artist's visualization of such a world.[513]

Here, Burne-Jones chose to represent each of the days of creation not *directly* on the canvas, but through images seen in crystal globes or spheres - images within images. Angels were often associated with the nineteenth-century spiritualist movement, as well as with various forms of Christian mysticism, and with Western occultism more generally. In the Elizabethan period, for example, John Dee (whose crystal ball resided in the British Museum, frequented by many of the

[512] O. Wilde, *Miscellanies* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), p. ix
[513] L. De Girolami Cheney, 'Edward Burne-Jones' The Days of Creation: *A Celestial Utopia*', *The Arts Journal* (Aug. 2014), p. 29

artists considered in this thesis), practised "scrying" with angels.[514] The idea of attributing spirit mediums' powers to angels or saints was criticised in a pamphlet published in 1868, entitled *Spiritualism and Common Sense,* in which the author claims that whoever attributes "such things as rapping tables, moving chairs, ringing bells, and such unintelligible confusion, cannot have very high views of the intelligence, good taste, and love of order, of the saints or angels who do such things". There is also the issue of false messages, and should we imagine angels or saints to be the communicators of such messages, "our confidence in the best and highest finite beings in the universe" will be shaken.[515] Nevertheless, angels continued to play a special role in spiritualist imagery, as can be seen in the works of Evelyn De Morgan.

[514] J. Holloway, 'Enchanted Spaces: The Séance, Affect, and Geographies of Religion', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Mar., 2006), p. 186
[515] R. T. H., *Spiritualism and Common Sense,* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886), p. 11

VI. Magic, Spiritualism, and Evelyn De Morgan's Sorceresses

> In mysticism the will is united with the emotions in an impassioned desire to transcend the sense-world, in order that the self may be joined by love to the one eternal and ultimate Object of love….In magic, the will unites with the intellect in in an impassioned desire for supersensible knowledge.[516]

It is often reported that in the late nineteenth century, both magical and spiritualist practices were subtly gender coded, with magic generally assuming a more 'masculine' status – "intellectual, aggressive and scientific"[517] and mysticism or spiritualism assuming a more traditionally 'feminine' status. Practices such as mediumship and automatic writing had more to do with the "surrender of self", in contrast to the assertion of oneself and one's authority that tended to be associated with magical practices.[518]

In this section, I examine the ways in which magic, spiritualism and gender manifest themselves in late Victorian and early Edwardian visual art, and in particular in the works of Evelyn De Morgan. To understand the sexual politics involved in magic and spiritualism, and their representation, it is first necessary to discuss the broader context of the so-called "sexual anarchy"[519] of the *fin de siècle*. "Men became women. Women became

[516] E. Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1911; 12th ed., New York: E. P. Dutton & Company Inc., 1930), p. 71
[517] Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 89
[518] Ibid., p. 88
[519] E. Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 1991), p. 3

men".[520] Perhaps this was a bold proposition, but what we can be certain of is that the concepts of femininity and masculinity were not static, as made clear by their various redefinitions and shifts in meaning during the 1880s and 1890s.[521]

The presence of the 'odd woman' in the latter half of the nineteenth century was, for many, a cause for concern. 'Odd women' or *les femmes superflues* – women who were odd in the sense that they did not make a match, like 'an odd glove'[522] – were, in other words, unmarried women. One of the reasons single women could be seen as a social problem was their need to earn their own living to support themselves. This was troubling both in the sense that it meant they were competing with men for employment opportunities[523] and in relation to anxieties about women who led "an independent and incomplete existence of their own" and whose lives did not revolve around "completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others".[524]

Although Evelyn De Morgan (née Pickering) *did* marry it seems likely that, to some extent, she may have been considered an 'odd' woman, at least prior to her marriage. When speaking of Evelyn's announcement that she was

[520] K. Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (London: Oxford University Press,1987), p. 209
[521] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* p. 3
[522] A. C. Young, ed., *The Letters of George Gissing to Edward Bertz 1887-1903* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p. 166
[523] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* p. 19
[524] W. R. Greg, 'Why Are Women Redundant?', *Literary and Social Judgements* (Boston: James Osgood & Co., 1873), p. 306

engaged to marry fellow artist William De Morgan, her sister Wilhelma noted the family's surprise: "Here, obviously was another jest - this time too far-fetched for credence! - Evelyn, whose sole romance was her art - Evelyn to have fallen in love, to be engaged - to be about to be married like any other ordinary mortal - the absurdity of the suggestion was manifest".[525] In addition, her goal to establish a career as a professional painter was met with resistance from her mother, who wished for a *daughter* rather than an artist and Wilhelmia described Evelyn as "brilliant, restless and withal frightening.... I could not have framed any exact reasons for the impression, but I felt dimly that at times she disturbed the Victorian placidity of our home like a flash from an alien world".[526] Even after her marriage to William, Evelyn provided financial (and moral) support for her husband and his 'precarious' pottery business.[527] But perhaps she bears more resemblance to the 'New Woman', critical of "society's insistence on marriage as woman's only option for a fulfilling life".[528] At the prospect of going out into society (with the goal of finding a husband), a young Evelyn Pickering declared, "No one shall drag me out with a halter round my neck to sell me!"[529] Of course, some of these remarks may be exaggerated (perhaps for comic effect) and ought to be taken with a small pinch of salt. But the fact remains that together, they paint a picture of a young woman whose main concerns did not include submitting to traditional gender roles.

---

[525] A. M. W. Stirling, *William De Morgan and his Wife* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922),p. 194
[526] Ibid., p. 26-7
[527] J. Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and spiritualism', *Evelyn De Morgan: oil paintings* (London: De Morgan Foundation, 1996), p. 33
[528] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* p. 38
[529] Stirling, *William De Morgan and his Wife,* p. 181

Although Victorian discourses about gender were varied and ideas about femininity and masculinity could be challenged and were always open to contestation, it is worth noting the influence of the idealised and often-discussed notion of the 'angel in the house':[530]

> In the narrowest sense the angel was the one near to God, the pious one who kept the family on the Christian path. In secular terms the angel provided the home environment that promoted her husband's and children's wellbeing in the world; she also provided a haven from its worst pressures through her sound household management and sweetness of temperament.[531]

Interestingly, that sense in which the Victorian woman might be considered closer to God and her "innate moral and spiritual superiority" were what endeared her to the spiritualist movement. Spiritualism was most securely established "amongst the ranks of respectable working- and middle-class people, precisely those who most closely identified with the dominant ideal of womanhood", and much spiritualist literature was "full of references to its women as gentle maidens or loving wives of mothers, women who mutely radiated grace, charm, and beauty, whilst embodying the highest moral and domestic virtues". Thus, spiritualism could be both liberating and restricting for the late Victorian woman – her traditionally feminine qualities afforded her status and a certain kind of authority as a spirit medium, but at

[530] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, p. 7
[531] M. J. Peterson, 'No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women', *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 8, No. 3 (Jun., 1984), p. 677

the same time ensured that she was bound to particular codes and definitions of femininity.[532]

In many definitions of gender, femininity was constructed and considered in contrast to masculinity – the 'feminine' attribute of passivity was "constructed in opposition to so-called masculine will-power" and, similarly, concepts of "female frailty" contrasted with the standard of "masculine strength and virility".[533] Of course, the negotiations of gender and identity associated with both the occult and the spiritualist movements were not set in stone, and there were plenty of opportunities for both women and men to *re*negotiate them and blur the boundaries between masculinity and femininity - something that certainly comes across in De Morgan's images of sorceresses, as we shall soon see. It would not be surprising if this was one of the attractions of spiritualism for the De Morgans – William was the one whose physical health was most precarious[534] and it is clear that Evelyn was hardly lacking in willpower. Although there are many instances of prominent nineteenth-century writers recording their reactions to spiritualism, there are considerably fewer instances in which visual artists chose to do so in an explicit way.[535] The De Morgans' decision to engage in automatic *writing* as a spiritualist practice is an interesting one, given the importance of the written word in relation to magic and witchcraft.

[532] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* pp. 7-9.
[533] Ibid., p. 7
[534] Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and spiritualism', pp. 33-34
[535] Ibid., p. 33

The Love Potion

Evelyn De Morgan's *The Love Potion* (fig. 37), completed in 1903, demonstrates her familiarity with a number of occult authors, including Paracelsus and Agrippa von Nettesheim. It has been suggested that the role of the books in this painting is to reveal the figure as a learned scholar,[536] but it can also be argued that their presence may be indicative of witchcraft - witches were often connected with books or "the parchment". Sometimes these books were believed to be the source of the witch's power, but more often they were considered to be books of harmful spells for revenge.[537] As late as 1936, one man from Sussex described them as "powerful books which have a good deal of evil written in them",[538] reinforcing the connection between magic and knowledge, and in particular the power of the written word.

The Love Potion provides a very interesting juxtaposition of the courtly love of medieval romantic tales and the potentially toxic effects of erotic magic. To better appreciate the ways in which De Morgan's image does this, it is necessary to look at both late nineteenth-century and contemporary understandings of love magic. While many of their sources may have differed from ours, the Victorian or Edwardian artist would be no less familiar with love spells and potions than the present day fantasy reader.

---

[536] E. L. Smith, *Evelyn Picking De Morgan and the Allegorical Body* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002) pp. 107-8
[537] Davies, *Magic, Witchcraft and Culture,* pp. 180-1
[538] Milton, 'The Wicked Old Woman', *Sussex Country Magazine,* p. 48

One thing is certainly true for both periods, and that is that the love spells one reads or hears about can differ a great deal from one another. The methods, equipment and ingredients (in the case of potions) required are some of the ways in which they could differ but these are not the only properties that we should concern ourselves with. Perhaps the most important thing that ought to be discussed is the *motive* of the person who casts the spell or provides the potion to their hopeless victim. It might seem clear that their wish is for another to 'fall in love' with them, but unfortunately the situation is rarely that simple – as is usually the case within the realms of love and magic. As well as looking at images of both those who make the potions and those who consume them, it is helpful to consider historical and literary narratives that concern the use of love magic in order to gain a fuller understanding of the sometimes subtle differences in intention. This, along with the strange status of the love potion as potentially a poison *and* a remedy – which will be discussed in the latter half of this chapter – leads to some fascinating artistic expressions exploring the anxieties and unease associated with its use. Bearing in mind the vigour of the Victorian reception of Greco-Roman classical antiquity, and De Morgan's personal knowledge of and interest in classical literature, it makes sense to begin there.

In ancient Greece, love spells and potions were usually used to produce one of two effects on their victim – uncontrollable, insanity-inducing sexual passion (*eros*), or tender affection (*philia*). Typically, those who performed

spells and rituals to induce *eros* were men, courtesans and whores with the desire to ensnare a young woman or man who was likely still unmarried, living in their natal home. Magic used to induce *philia,* on the other hand, was often performed by wives or social inferiors who craved love and affection, typically from husbands.[539] One major difference between these kinds of magic lies within the apparent motives of the person performing: if the former seeks to cause its victim to fall in love (or perhaps lust) with the caster, whereas the latter lends itself more to the maintenance of an already established relationship. Erotic magic can often be difficult to identify in images - as we shall see - with love potions or philtres often resembling a nondescript liquid in a flask or cup, but familiarity with the iconographies associated with both *eros* and *philia* magic may prove fruitful in identifying them.

However, even if we are to focus solely on *eros* magic, we find that not all those who perform it have the same impulses. One method to attract the object (or *objects*, in the case of Pausanias from Macedonia)[540] of your affections was by inscribing such a spell onto a lead tablet, often with an appeal to Aphrodite, or occasionally other gods. Although tablets of this sort do not, to my knowledge, make any appearance in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art or literature, they are worth mentioning briefly for two reasons. The first is the lingering emphasis on the written word with regard to magic in the nineteenth-century, which can be witnessed in *The*

[539] Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic,* pp. 28-9
[540] D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 231

Love Potion, and the second is their often *very* specific instructions with regards to the written spell's effects on its victim – this feature provides fascinating insight into the motives and desires of those that inscribed them, or had them inscribed on their behalf.

For instance, one tablet found in Egypt is notable for the very direct sexual language in its inscription – requesting for example that the woman shall not "be screwed or be buggered or give oral sex" to another man – yet its final line appears to suggest hopes for a long-term relationship, as opposed to immediate sexual gratification.[541] Other inscriptions seek to cause more disruption in the lives of their victims. In his attempts to attract Aenis, Pausanias stipulates that "she may not be able to lay hands on a sacrificial victim or achieve any other good thing" before she "looks kindly" on him.[542] As this tablet contains inscriptions with the aims of attracting two different women, it seems unlikely that Pausanias was seeking the type of long-term, monogamous relationship implied in the inscription of the tablet found in Egypt. He may well have loved Aenis, but the difference in these inscriptions is still illustrative of the fact that *eros* magic can be performed for various reasons and may strive towards a number of different outcomes.

The method most commonly represented in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art is one that many of us are still familiar with – the love

[541] Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts,* pp. 231-2
[542] Ibid., p. 231

potion. The reasons for this could be due to its status as a material object, making it easier for the artist to depict and for others to interpret. A Victorian audience would likely be familiar with the love potion from Greek myths (for instance, in the case of Jason's seduction of Medea, with the aid of Aphrodite), or from tales of medieval literature, such as those of Tristram and Iseult, which could be found in Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* – a notable favourite among Pre-Raphaelite artists – and was retold by some of the most renowned poets of the time, including Tennyson, Swinburne and Arnold. Many artworks directly reference this medieval tale, but there are many similarities between the potion's effects on the couple and those described as a result of *eros* magic.

It could be argued that the apparently cruel effects of *eros* magic upon its victim are merely consequences of falling in love. The experience one has when he or she falls in love can be characterised as a "phenomenon of attention".[543] The twentieth-century Spanish philosopher, Ortega, describes human consciousness as being "engaged by a multitude of external and internal objects".[544] While each of these objects inhabits our consciousness, our attention regularly shifts from one object to another – in the normal course of events, we do not maintain our focus on one object for a great deal of time. Generally, if someone's attention is focussed on one particular object for either a greater length of time or more frequently

[543] J. Ortega y Gasset, 'Falling in Love', in D. L. Norton & M. F. Kille (eds.), *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1988) p. 14
[544] Ibid., p. 14

than usual, it is associated with mania or obsession.[545] Fan culture provides an interesting example of this – while many can be said to enjoy certain books, television shows, video games and other forms of entertainment, there are some whose attention is fixed upon these objects for an extraordinary length of time, or extremely frequently, often theorising and occupying themselves with what others might consider to be minor details. According to Ortega, our different preferences of attention "constitute the very basis of character"; in addition to any "obsessions" we may harbour, even our more spontaneous shifts of attention can reveal much about ourselves.[546]

Falling in love is similar to this in the sense that our attention becomes fixed on a specific object – in this case, a person. Due to the limited nature of our consciousness, focussing on one thing necessarily means disregarding others. So, the disruption that some love spells aim to cause in the lives of their victims (such as frustrating their weaving)[547] can thus be read simply as the effects of the victim's falling in love. For the lovesick victim that person is everything, and their attention is focussed almost solely on them, all but disregarding the rest of their world. This notion of love as a type of obsession was certainly not lost on those who organised a recent exhibition of images of Jane Morris at the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Liverpool (20 June - 21 September 2014), entitled *Rossetti's Obsession.* The fact that depictions of Tristram and Iseult after drinking the love potion

[545] Ortega y Gasset, 'Falling in Love', p. 15
[546] Ibid., p. 15
[547] Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts,* p. 231

often feature no one other than the couple cannot be coincidental. Even in images which do feature other characters from the narrative – King Mark, for instance, in Edmund Blair Leighton's *Tristan and Isolde* (1902, fig. 38) – the lovers appear blissfully unaware of anything but each other, regardless of the others' proximity.

However, obsession with another person is not necessarily indicative of someone's being in love with them. There is one other case in which our attention may become unnaturally fixed upon another, and that is in the case of hatred, love's "hostile twin," both "identical and opposite."[548] In situations when love magic is the cause of a person's feelings for another, this is worth examining. Normally being in love is the result of an attraction to qualities perceived and, for whatever reason, admired in another person. As individuals we do not all admire the same qualities as one another. If this is the case, the question that must be asked is whether someone, when under the influence of a love spell, can truly be said to be in love. The answer depends on whether the victim perceives any admirable qualities in the other person, and perhaps even whether perceiving those qualities *as* admirable is due to the spell's effect, or their own preferences.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Oberon describes the state of being under a love spell as a "hateful imperfection" of the eyes, although he cannot be speaking of a literal inability to see what is there, since in the same act and

[548] Ortega y Gasset, 'Falling in Love', p. 19

scene, we have Titania referring to Bottom's “fair large ears”[549] - it would appear that she can correctly perceive his appearance, but under the love potion's influence has become attracted to features she would otherwise find repulsive. A different kind of situation was played for laughs in the sixth Harry Potter book, in which Ron accidentally consumes a love potion intended for Harry and “falls in love” with Romilda Vane - a girl he has never met. This example is helpful in that it provides us with a possible situation in which the victim is not *able* to directly perceive the object of his affections at all. For your attention to be focussed on something which has never been encountered seems paradoxical – and in this lies the humour in the episode – but it seems that to some extent the love potion makes this possible.

Most narratives involving love spells feature characters falling in love with people they already do know – as is the case in the events of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, causing both Lysander and Demetrius to fall in love with Helena (although Lysander is later released from the spell), and of Tristram and Iseult falling in love with one another. However, there is another character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who falls victim to Robin “Puck” Goodfellow's meddling with love magic, and at her own consort's request: Titania. This was the scene that was reproduced repeatedly in western art. At a first glance, the image of the beautiful fairy queen doting on Bottom, who currently has (thanks yet again,

[549] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* c.1590-6. Accessed: 18 Nov, 2017, http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/full.html

to Puck) the head of an ass, often appears amusing, perhaps playful. However, when the implications of this scene are considered along with the motives that led to the administration of the love potion, the fairy king becomes a sinister and unsavoury figure. Rather than having Puck obtain the magical ointment in order to have Titania's feelings for him rekindled, which was usually the reason for using love magic on a spouse,[550] Oberon's desire is to have her be humiliated by falling in love with the first thing she sees upon awakening:

> Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
> On meddling monkey or on busy ape.[551]

Prior to Oberon's decision to resort to love magic, the two are seen arguing over a changeling child that Titania refuses to hand over to her consort. What is particularly interesting here is that it is reasonable to imagine that a more "conventional" use of the love potion – that is, using the potion to cause Titania to fall more deeply in love with Oberon – could have helped the fairy king in acquiring the changeling child. We can assume that in this situation she would likely have been more susceptible to his suggestions as a result of her desire to please him. However, what Oberon desires at this point is no longer only the changeling child, but *revenge* – setting her up "in a sexual liaison with a plebeian mortal" is a form of punishment.[552]

---

[550] Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic,* pp. 28-9
[551] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
[552] H. Grady, 'Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics: The Case of A Midsummer Night's Dream', *Shakespeare Quarterly.* Vol. 59, No. 3 (Fall 2008) p. 290

Shakespeare provided an instance in which the motive that led to the use of love magic was decidedly cruel from the outset.

The ethical impact of using love magic on another person have been explored in contemporary media. The *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series provides the example of the near universally disliked antagonist, Warren Mears, using a magical artefact to control the mind of his ex-girlfriend, Katrina, in order to cause her to fall in love with him once again and sleep with him. When the spell is prematurely lifted, she equates the situation with attempted rape.[553] A similar story was told in the Japanese video game, *Bravely Default,* in which one of the villains uses a magical cologne as a love potion to capture the hearts of young ladies, including a fifteen-year-old, in order to kidnap and exploit them.[554] These examples are significant in that they both identify love magic as a type of mind control, and if the victim does not have full control over their faculties, it follows that this entails the removal of a person's choice to consent (or not). It is not difficult to see that these fictional episodes can be interpreted as analogous to instances of drug facilitated sexual assault.

There is evidence to suggest that Victorian physicians acknowledged similar problems relating to the use of drugs and the matter or consent. An account of a trial held in 1878 details the possibilities of the use of chloroform or other anaesthetics in the rape of a young working class

[553] *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* 'Dead Things'. Directed by J. A. Contner. Written by S. S. DeKnight. United Paramount Network. Feb. 5th 2002
[554] Silicon Studio, 2013. *Bravely Default.* Nintendo 3DS Game. Worldwide: Nintendo.

woman in France, who claimed to have lost consciousness and feeling during the time in which intercourse had taken place. Interestingly, the practise of mesmerism is also mentioned as a possible cause for the victim's loss of consciousness (although it was discounted in this particular case),[555] indicating that the notion that someone could unduly influence the mind and body of another was not so very far-fetched.

It is also possible that the feelings of unease surrounding the love potion could be informed, at least in part, by the lingering anxieties about the association of potions, and in particular love potions, with poison. One of the most well-known stories relating to this is that of Deïanira, one of Heracles' wives, and his accidental murderer – the potion she prepared in an attempt to "let him learn to love his wife" actually ended up poisoning him.[556] There was at least some truth in this fiction, as many love potions in the Greek and Roman periods were in fact poisons. Of course, these were properly administered in doses too small to do significant harm, but there were undoubtedly cases in which doses were not correctly measured. One such ingredient was mandrake, which was used in small doses in love potions, as well as in larger doses as a painkiller and cure for insomnia, but in yet larger amounts led to paralysis and was fatal.[557]

[555] 'Trial Of A French Dentist For Rape', *British Medical Journal,*Vol. 2, No. 922 (Aug. 31, 1878) pp. 326-7
[556] Seneca, trans F. J. Miller, ''Hercules Oetaeus', *Tragedies* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1917)
[557] Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic,* p. 129

Even in the Victorian era, there are documented cases of women slipping men love potions by some means or another, and accidentally poisoning them – one young widow "resorted to an old witch, and obtained from her a pill, which she took means to have introduced into the food of a young man upon whom she had cast eyes", not realising that the pill contained datura, a highly poisonous plant sometimes known as moonflowers or angel's trumpets, which naturally made the young man (and his father, who also ate the food) very ill.[558] Later in the same decade, love potions are mentioned once again in the *British Medical Journal* in a report on toxiphobia. Of sixty-one "sane" patients under the impression that someone was trying to poison or "philter" them, "eight men imagined that women were administrating love potions to them". It is also noted that "no woman suffered under a similar delusion". The sixty-one patients did include women who believed that someone was trying to poison them but according to this report, the fear seemed more common among males.[559] This is interesting, given that most characters (and in particular, *unnamed* characters) depicted mixing potions, philtres and poisons in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art are female – Waterhouse's *Circe Invidiosa* (1892, fig. 39), Spartali Stillman's *Brewing the Love Philtre* (1869, fig. 40), and, of course, De Morgan's *The Love Potion.*

[558] 'Administering a Love Potion', *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 2, No. 666 (Oct. 4 1873) p. 407
[559] 'Toxiphobia', *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 1, No. 790 (Feb. 19, 1876) p. 223

The contents of the bookshelf in De Morgan's *The Love Potion* have been noted before as revealing the figure as a learned scholar,[560] although such an interpretation perhaps ignores the fact that many witches were also reputed to collect (or inherit) a great deal of literature. Also in need of consideration are some of the implications of the inclusion of Paracelsus' work in this painting, given the long-standing concerns about potions and poisons. Like Agrippa von Nettesheim, whose work also rests upon the shelf, Paracelsus was very interested in magic and the occult, but what has not been discussed is his influential contribution to toxicology. His claim,*"dosis facit venenum"* (it is the dose that makes the poison)[561] is in part an expression of the way in which "poisonous action and remedial virtue are intimately bound up with each other".[562] In other words, many substances can have both the qualities of a remedy and a poison, as is the case with mandrake. Derrida has highlighted similar themes apparent in Plato's use of the Greek word *"pharmakon"*. During his discussion with Phaedrus, Socrates compares the written texts brought by the latter to a drug (pharmakon). The problems in translating the words lie in its malleable meanings, its ability to act "as both remedy and poison".[563] The love potion can be seen as as embodiment of this duality, with its potential to bring both pleasure and harm to its victims.

---

[560] E. L. Smith, *Evelyn Picking De Morgan and the Allegorical Body.* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002) pp. 107-8
[561] Paracelsus, trans. A. E. Waite, "Defensio No III 1538." *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus* (Ohio: Forgotten Books, 2007)
[562] W. Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance.* (New York: Karger, 1982) 145
[563] J. Derrida, trans. B. Johnson, *Dissemination (*London: The Athlone Press, 1981) p. 70

There is a certain ambiguity about the episode in this painting, as the identity of the central character, along with the couple in the background, is unknown. The relationship between the three characters is also something of a mystery – for instance, is the knight conversing with his betrothed, or embarking on a wild and dangerous affair with someone else's wife? What is their relationship to the central character – the lady in yellow? Without this information, we have to guess at the motivations behind the creation of the love potion, which is how the notion of the love potion's duality is fully realised in this work. To illustrate this point, it is possible to imagine two scenarios. In one, the lady in yellow is making a love potion to rekindle a spark between two people whose romance has stagnated, so that they might once again feel the youthful love expressed by the couple in the background, and remember why they fell for one another in the first place. In the other, she schemes to slip the love potion into the knight's meal and steal him away from his lover. Both situations seem relatively plausible, but are vastly different in terms of how the love potion is used, and that is what makes this painting fascinating – that we can imagine numerous possible scenarios in which the love potion realises its potential, either as a remedy or as a poison. Although it is tempting to argue that a love potion robs the one who drinks it of their agency or ability to consent (and there are certainly instances in which this is true), there are specific depictions where this may not be the case - for example, some versions of the tale of Tristram and Isolde have the two knowingly drinking the love potion together. The potion itself is not necessarily good or evil – it is the intention

of its maker or user that determines its role, and the ambiguity of *The Love Potion* and its symbolism emphasises this fact. This capacity for good or evil, so central to many of De Morgan's works, is also explored in *Medea.*

Medea's Struggle

Images of witches and sorceresses such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1866-73, fig. 2), Nimue as she appears in Burne-Jones' *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-7, fig. 33), Frederick Sandys' *Medea* (1868, fig. 12), and John William Waterhouse's *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891, fig. 41) each stand in stark contrast to typical nineteenth-century representations of female saints and martyrs. The women we see in these paintings are powerful, predatory women with the means and the will to seduce, imprison or otherwise victimize or bring misfortunes to the male characters they encounter – in these cases Adam and the archangel Samael, Merlin, Jason, and Ulysses (among several others).

De Morgan's sorceresses, on the other hand, frequently appear less threatening and with an air of dignity and grace more commonly associated with representations of respectable and morally virtuous women. Her 1889 oil painting of *Medea* (fig. 42) depicts the sorceress walking through a corridor with a vial of blood red liquid. One reading could be that the vial contains the poison she uses to murder Jason's new love, Glauce, with a poisoned robe, as well as her own two children. The liquid's blood-like appearance lends itself to such an interpretation, but the colour red has a myriad of meanings. As well as wrath, danger, and passion, it is associated

with love, courage, and strength - qualities that may well be associated with the potion created to aid Jason in his trials.

With this in mind, her understated expression and the presence of the doves in the corridor suggest the possibility that the contents of the vial need not be so sinister. A more sympathetic portrayal of Medea is entirely feasible as the sorceress was not a one-dimensional villain, but a complex character in the Greek myth that De Morgan was familiar with – "she was intelligent, passionate, cunning and assertive. At the same time she was emotionally vulnerable. She was capable of unconditional love but just as capable as its opposite".[564]

De Morgan's *Medea* is a far cry from the *femme fatale* character represented by Sandys, clawing at her coral necklace, surrounded by bizarre magical paraphernalia and symbolism. This Medea appears much more respectable in her dress and in her demeanor, appearing more like a princess than a practitioner of magic. Her golden hair might support such an interpretation, given its later nineteenth-century connotations with wealth, as well as female sexuality:

> The combing and displaying of hair, as suggested by the legends of alluring mermaids who sit on rocks singing and combing their beautiful hair, thus constitute a sexual exhibition. And the more abundant the hair, the more potent the sexual invitation implied by its display, for folk,

[564] R. Bell, *Women of Classical Mythology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 293

> literary, and psychoanalytic traditions agree that the luxuriance of the hair is an index of vigorous sexuality, even of wantonness…[565]

Unlike Rossetti's *Lady Lilith,* De Morgan's Medea's hair is carefully bound, not loose and reminiscent of a "glittering snare, web or noose" [566] but, rather appropriately, the rich and complex meanings the Victorians ascribed to golden hair allow room for multiple interpretations of her character. As Venus, "with her conventional abundant hair, her mirror, and her comb, may be dangerously narcissistic, or she may be the delightful goddess of love and fertility",[567] Medea can be a princess and a helpful figure to the 'hero', or a vengeful sorceress. Without knowledge of the story of Medea and Jason, her identity as a practitioner of magic, while not entirely hidden, is *obscured* in De Morgan's painting. Even with the presence of the vial in this image, there is nothing to suggest that she is necessarily the one to have mixed the potion. Another interpretation could be that this scene takes place before her marriage to Jason, and that the vial contains the potion that will protect him against the fire-breathing oxen in his quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece.

Waterhouse depicts the scene in which Medea creates the potion to protect her lover in his representation of *Jason and Medea* (1907, fig. 43), in which the two sit together as Medea works her magic. While the two images differ in many ways, it is worth noting some similarities between

[565] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', p. 938
[566] Ibid., p. 936
[567] Ibid.

Medea's portrayals in the two paintings. Although her status as a sorceress is much clearer in Waterhouse's painting – not least because we actually *see* her mixing the potion – the magical symbolism is not so immediately menacing and ominous as in Sandys' portrayal. Like De Morgan's Medea, the female figure in Waterhouse's representation is depicted with her hair neatly tied up and her expression is one of concentration rather than desperation. Both wear red, which Drawmer describes (in reference to De Morgan's work) as "the crimson draperies of martyrdom…appropriated for Medea herself, in reference to Jason's betrayal of her".[568] As has already been noted in previous chapters, the colour red was also associated with witches and fairies during the nineteenth century, providing an interesting juxtaposition of meanings and hinting at the complexities of her character, rather than focusing only on her vengeance while conveniently glossing over Jason's betrayal.

The darker, more claustrophobic setting of Waterhouse's *Jason and Medea* implies a certain measure of secrecy, but Jason's presence serves to negate some of the more unsavory implications this could have. In contrast, De Morgan's Medea is situated in a very different space. Although she is the only person in the corridor, she is still presented in a more public place and this, along with her more open body language, might reveal that her use of magic and her intentions are not necessarily hidden from the viewers or from anyone she might feasibly encounter in the moments following this scene.

[568] L. J. Drawmer, 'The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan' (Ph.D. Diss., Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, 2001), p. 169

In *Medea,* we witness a deliberate divergence from more conventional *fin-de-siècle* depictions of the witch or sorceress figure as a representation of "feminine evil" and the "bestial nature" of women.[569] Rather, like William Morris's Medea, in his poem *The Life and Death of Jason* (which was quoted in the New Gallery catalogue when the painting was first exhibited), De Morgan's Medea "reflects the fight of good and evil within".[570]

From the late fifteenth century onwards, western artists had focused on the "most sensational aspects of witches' activities, such as their supposed attendance at sabbaths and their enthusiastic engagement in 'diabolic pacts', both of which were thought to have involved them in lascivious sexual practices".[571] By the nineteenth century, many held different ideas about witches and witchcraft to their predecessors – for instance, the association of witchcraft with the Devil seemed to have waned[572] – but the representation of lascivious ladies and seductive sorceresses prevailed. Yet again - "the woman endowed with superior creativity typically found a visual equivalent in the witch or sorceress". Positive artistic representations of feminine wisdom were uncommon during his period, although examples of maternal wisdom can be found, particularly in genre paintings. From the 1860s until the turn of the century, painters would often venture "into the negative side of side of female sapientia or wisdom, namely, witchcraft".[573] As a woman artist herself, it is perhaps expected that De Morgan would

[569] B. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 324
[570] Yates, 'Evelyn De Morgan's use of literary sources', p. 58
[571] Petherbridge, *Witches and Wicked Bodies,* p. 9
[572] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* p. 179
[573] Casteras,'Malleus Maleficarum, pp. 142-5

portray the character of Medea (and witchcraft in general) in a much more positive light than many of her male contemporaries - although, as we have seen, many nineteenth-century images of witches and sorceresses may be more complex than they have previously been given credit for.

Although many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives of spiritualism draw attention to the importance of feminine passivity there are instances in which, like the witch, a skilled spiritualist was associated with creativity and the imagination. As mentioned previously, the British government anthropologist Northcote W. Thomas, explained these qualities as accounting for the natural abilities of "women, children, and people of genius".[574] Mid- to late nineteenth-century concepts of genius were frequently tied to popular Victorian notions of masculinity – in his *Hereditary Genius: An Enquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (first published in 1869) Francis Galton makes reference to literary *men* and *men* of science in the titles of his chapters – as well as class and race. Galton speaks about "lads" following painting as a profession[575] and makes reference to only male divines or religious figures.[576] Nineteenth-century attitudes regarding the notion of female creativity and towards women artists were often very negative, particularly in cases where women artists were seen as trying to 'emulate' the artistry of men:

> It is always foolish to imply that the art of women should resemble the

[574] Thomas, *Crystal Gazing,* xi
[575] F. Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Enquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892) p. 248
[576] Ibid., pp. 257-282

> art of men. Each should be distinct with the charm of sex, each should be the compliment of the other. But in our own time, somehow, most of the women-artists have tried their best to be masculine, while not a few of the men have turned out effeminate work. It may be useless to protest, but this kind of work is sterile, it has no future; the world soon wearies of it, and turns with joy to those men who put manhood into all their pictures or statues, and to those women whose art is charmed with their own natures.[577]

One might have thought that an artist such as Burne-Jones, who was involved in a turbulent and passionate affair with fellow artist María Zambaco, would be more accommodating toward women artists. However, when asked his opinion on women artists, he declared "there aren't any".[578] Without the full context of Burne-Jones's remarks we should, of course, be aware that they may well have been tongue-in-cheek comments. But, speaking of Evelyn De Morgan's works, he said:

> I went to see a lady's pictures yesterday. They were wonderfully painted and only extreme talent could have enabled her even to put them together as they are [but] if this girl had left figure painting alone and had gone about the world modestly and happily doing pretty views, cities, flowers, and every beautiful thing she came across in nature, with a cheerful mind, and if she'd rigidly left all figures out, she would have done admirable and useful work that would have been a

[577] *The Studio,* XX, 1900, p. 138

[578] Burne-Jones E., in M. Lago (ed.), *Burne-Iones Talking. Conversations 1895-1898, preserved by his studio assistant, Thomas Rooke* (London and New York: John Murray, 1982) p. 136

> pleasure to everybody. But these pictures are only a bore and an anomaly.[579]

De Morgan's refusal to limit her painting to flowers and other 'pretty' things and to conform to the stereotypes of 'women's art', and her decision to represent more 'masculine' mythological and religious subjects was no doubt perceived as a threat to the male-dominated sphere of creative genius. G. F. Watts looked upon her work more favorably, commenting that her artistic skill was "a long way ahead of all the women" as well as "considerably ahead of most of the men",[580] perhaps himself aware that other men might be intimidated by her talent for this very reason. Drawmer suggests that we might read De Morgan's works as a "consciously politicised response" to the restricting attitudes regarding masculine and feminine creativity:

> The foregrounding of women as principle subject in her works, combined with the original presentations of traditional treatments of well-known subjects, such as figures from classical mythology and biblical narrative, demonstrate De Morgan's determined commitment to contest these confining views of women in the late nineteenth century.[581]

Like *Medea,* the female figure in *The Martyr* (fig. 44), completed in 1882, is dressed in red, and above her head on the stake she is chained to is an inscription: 'NAZARAEA'. Patricia Yates suggests that the painting tells the

[579] Burne-Jones E., in M. Lago (ed.), Burne-lones Talking. Conversations 1895-1898, pp. 148-150

[580] Watts, G. F., qtd. in A.M.W. Stirling, William De Morgan and his Wife (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1922) p. 193

[581] Drawmer, 'The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan', p. 50

story of Margaret Wilson of Wigtownshire (1667-85), a Covenanter sentenced to be drowned in the Solway for her refusal to acknowledge the Episcopacy and King James II as head of the Church of Scotland. She was a popular figure of martyrdom around this time, having had her story published in the magazine *Once a Week* in 1862, accompanied by an illustration by John Everett Millais,[582] which appears to have influenced De Morgan's painting in terms of composition, if not tone. Millais' 1871 oil painting of the same subject, *The Martyr of the Solway* (fig. 45), presents us with what Yates describes as "a sad, sensual figure with a Rossetti like expression and an abundance of red hair".[583] De Morgan's martyr, in contrast, is not fearful of her fate, and her expression is one of religious stoicism. Although her robes cling to her figure and one of her breasts is exposed, she avoids the eroticisation of Millais' martyr, whose loose hair and downcast gaze are reminiscent of the nude figure in his 1870 painting of *The Knight Errant* (fig. 46).

This oil painting depicts a scene of medieval chivalry, in which a knight prepares to rescue a woman who has been stripped and tied to a birch tree by her molesters. Both images feature similar bound female figures, and in fact, x-ray photographs of *The Knight Errant* revealed that:

> …her head and torso were originally turned towards the Knight, establishing eye contact. Many poor reviews, coupled with the fact

[582] P. Yates, 'Evelyn De Morgan's use of literary sources in her paintings', *Evelyn De Morgan: Oil Paintings* (London: De Morgan Foundation, 1996) p. 55
[583] Yates, 'Evelyn De Morgan's use of literary sources in her paintings', p. 55

> that the painting did not sell, compelled Millais to cut out the head and chest of the female figure from his canvas and re-work these parts to show the woman turning modestly away. The original section was later sewn into another canvas and exhibited in 1872 as *The Martyr of The Solway.*[584]

There are numerous instances in Victorian art and literature in which artists entangle Christian and pagan elements, as can be seen in Edward Burne-Jones' *Laus Veneris* of 1873-8 (fig. 47), which illustrates Algernon Charles Swinburne's poem of the same name (1866). In this painting we see the pagan goddess Venus with her handmaidens in the foreground, exhausted by her carnal activities, contrasted with the pious Christian knights in the background. One could, perhaps, even read De Morgan's *The Love Potion* as providing an interesting juxtaposition of the courtly love of medieval romantic tales and the potentially toxic effects of erotic magic. As Drawmer points out, it "becomes apparent in De Morgan's work that the boundary between 'good' and 'evil,' magical and esoteric aims are often transgressed, reflecting the debates in the spiritualist press about the conflation of witches, saints and martyrs".[585] Although British spiritualism was often considered compatible with the "ideology of home and family, representing social stability, decency and morality",[586] it had its share of critics. Some of the more hostile criticism directed towards British spiritualists was remarkably

[584] 'The Knight Errant', *Tate Gallery,* http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-the-knight-errant-n01508/text-summary
[585] Drawmer, 'The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan', p. 135
[586] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 39

similar to that faced by witches and other practitioners of magic, with accusations of immorality and references to the radical American 'free love' movement and its associated "promiscuous adultery" that were reflective of the supposed diabolical orgies and depraved sexual acts of witches in the medieval period.[587] Spiritualism also faced criticism from the medical profession, much of it directly specifically against mediumship and "the challenge it represented to psychological normalcy".[588] Some physicians, for example, likened the practice of female mediumship to *hysteria*. It is crucial to stress that this problem was not simply a result of the misogyny of a few individual doctors – rather, it was rooted in a struggle between physicians and spiritualists that centred implicitly around the "key issue of the construction of normalcy and, by extension, normative womanhood".[589]

Nineteenth-century English author and theosophist, Alfred Percy Sinnett, makes reference to the word 'nazaraea' (the same word inscribed above the figure's head in De Morgan's *The Martyr*) in his occultist writings, revealing its source in eastern religious practices and, more specifically, to groups of female mystics and healers. The word itself can be interpreted as "seer" or "mystical healer".[590] Rather than juxtaposing the pagan with the Christian, and placing them in opposition to one another, De Morgan brings the two together, "fashioning a response to contemporary issues that was based upon her own strongly held belief system. This belief system was forged not only from her study of mythology, the classics and visionary

[587] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 38
[588] Ibid., p. 38
[589] Ibid., p. 139
[590] A. P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* (London: Trubner, 1883) pp. 112-3

literature, but also by her lengthy involvement with Spiritualism and its practices".[591] It is also possible to interpret parallels between the seer or healer and Victorian cunning-folk, whose services often included curing, or the 'charming' of specific ailments in humans or animals, divinatory services (such as fortune telling or astrology), finding lost or stolen goods and detecting thieves, the removal of curses or other destructive spells, and the punishment of those who had cast them.[592] However, *The Martyr* more closely mirrors the dynamics of the spiritualist women who:

> assumed a voice denied them by orthodox religion at a time when the church was struggling to shore up its traditional position as arbiter of social and moral values; and when medical science shouldered its way into the fray, ready to pronounce upon what constituted acceptable womanhood, they countered with quite different normative criteria – 'abnormal' states: voices, visions, and trance mediumship.[593]

It is also worth returning to Casteras' comments regarding the role of the witch or sorceress figure in relation to the creatively endowed woman, and considering them alongside the parallels between subjects of martyrdom and the struggle of the female artist in a male-dominated profession. Similarly to the ways in which she, and other female mediums, attempted to renegotiate and redefine the boundaries of gender within a spiritualist

[591] Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and spiritualism", p. 33
[592] Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon,* p. 89
[593] Owen, *The Darkened Room,* p. 39

framework, Evelyn De Morgan's works – both in terms of technique and subject matter – was situated, sometimes uneasily, within the traditionally masculine realm of art and challenged perceptions of the place of women's art in the nineteenth century.

De Morgan's Bodies as Instruments of the Spirit

In contrast to the perceived connection between spiritualist practice and mania, or hysteria (often endorsed by men in the medical profession, as noted in previous chapters), Alex Owen has emphasised the importance of the "spiritualist concern with a pure and healthy body":[594]

> Lectures, debates, books, newspapers, even the lyceums (Sunday schools) emphasised the themes of hygiene, dietary reform, temperance, and the beneficial effects of fresh air and exercise. [595]

These lectures and publications would be concerned with the "best means of promoting the welfare of the immortal spirit" in order to "furnish it with as perfect an instrument as possible for its expression, in the shape of a healthful mortal body".[596] Very unlike the Rossettian 'type', a phrase frequently used to refer to images of pale, waif-like women (as opposed to those for which the more 'robust' Fanny Cornforth modelled), De Morgan's sorceresses are more visually comparable to, for example, Burne-Jones's Nimue in *The Beguiling of Merlin* (fig. 33) – once again, her

[594] Owen, *The Darkened Room*, pp. 107-8
[595] Ibid., p. 108
[596] E. Hardinge Britten, in a review of Mrs Leigh Wallace's lecture, 'Physianthropy; or, the Home Cure and Eradication of Disease', reproduced in *Physianthropy; or, the Home Cure and Eradication of Disease*, *A lecture delivered by Mrs C. Leigh Hunt Wallace at the Royal Academy, London* (London: Philanthropic Reform Publishing Office, 1885) p. XII

posture and healthy body serve to highlight her power and superiority over the emasculated Merlin.

However, De Morgan's representation of *Medea*, as well as the figure in *The Martyr,* are pictured alone, and even the sorceress or cunning-woman in *The Love Potion* is set apart from the couple in the background. One of the effects is the impression that De Morgan's figures stand on their own terms - their healthy, vigorous bodies do not undermine another's power, and instead serve only to highlight their own strength of body and, most importantly, of spiritual and moral character. In other words, like Solomon and Burne-Jones, De Morgan appropriates certain visual imagery, that results in the depiction of figures that challenge popular Victorian notions of conventional masculinity and femininity.

It was not unheard of for nineteenth-century writers, such as the German philosopher and occultist, Carl du Prel,[597] and the naturalist A. R. Wallace (author of *On Miracles and Spiritualism. Three Essays*), to draw parallels between modern spiritualist practice and some of the cases described in accounts of the European witch-trials.[598] Jacob Grimm (known alongside his brother Wilhelm as one of the *Brothers Grimm*) was also one of the first to identify those persecuted of witchcraft with wise women.[599] In her thesis on the impact of science and spiritualism on Evelyn De Morgan's works,

[597] See C. du Prel, 'Witches and Mediums: A Historical Parallel', *Light* (4 Sept. 1886), pp. 403-405
[598] A. R. Wallace, *On Miracles and Spiritualism. Three Essays.* (London: Trubner, 1881) vii
[599] C. Tuczay, 'The nineteenth century: medievalism and witchcraft', in J. Barry & O. Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 54

Drawmer suggests that “De Morgan's representations of the occult and of the religious are not mutually exclusive and polarised positions, but are integrated through spiritual and mystical aspirations”.[600] She argues that although some of Evelyn De Morgan’s works bear “superficial similarities” to those of her contemporaries, such as Edward Burne-Jones and Frederick Sandys, De Morgan’s status as a woman artist and a practicing spiritualist allowed her to produce “a challenging deconstruction of the artificial incompatibility which functions to distinguish between the epitome of good (the saint or martyr) and the epitome of evil (the witch or occultist)”, obscuring the boundaries of morality.[601] De Morgan’s works can thus be interpreted as an attempt to establish “a new iconography for women, by showing them as positive and courageous figures, in the roles of witches, healers, mystics and martyrs in direct opposition to the dominant model of occult figures expressed in paintings by many of De Morgan's contemporaries”.[602]

However, there are additional layers of meaning to be taken into consideration when it comes to analysing De Morgan’s sorceresses. Yates describes her painting of Medea, drawing attention to the iconography:

> She is a queen in splendour with jewels in her hair but a relatively simple robe of mauvish red (for royalty) lined with white (for

[600] Drawmer, ‘The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan’, p. 153
[601] Ibid.
[602] Ibid., p. 21

> innocence). Yet she has bare feet showing her barbarian side or suggesting secrecy. The red roses at her feet may be symbols of love but also of bloodshed, as in the later picture *Cassandra.* The white doves are still happily pecking around; winged beings hold torches at the bottom of the stairs which she is passing. Medea herself holds up her gown with one hand and a phial in the other with a small amount of crimson liquid. She holds this away from her and looks down beyond it. This is not a vengeful and raging sorceress but a real person, trapped by terrible circumstances. Her face, her bare feet and her indecisive hands show her vulnerability.[603]

Although Medea has a healthy figure, this interpretation emphasises her moral and spiritual turmoil over committing murder - she is "sorrowful, uncertain, fearful of her own strange power as symbolised in the red potion she holds out away from her".[604] This is consistent with Euripides's depiction of Medea, who already considered her children doomed by Jason's new wife:

> Why wait then? My accursed hand, come, take the sword;
> Take it and forward to your frontier of despair.[605]

Despair and hope were of major concern to De Morgan, both in her automatic writing experiments with her husband and in her visual art, such as the aptly named *Hope in the Prison of Despair* (fig. 48), dated 1887 - potentially one of the first paintings produced concurrently with the De Morgans' spirit writing experiments.[606]

> The painting warns how damaging despair can be to the spirit unless vanquished by hope. Because despair is born from an obsessive preoccupation with the predicaments of the present, it blinds the soul

[603] Yates, 'De Morgan's use of literary sources in her paintings', p. 58
[604] Ibid., p. 58
[605] Euripides, trans. P. Vellacott, *Medea and Other Plays* (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), p. 55
[606] Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and spiritualism', p. 40

> to the future. It can be counteracted only by the cultivation of faith that offers hope. The thematic contrast of hope with despair in De Morgan's automatic scripts and paintings that it must express a strongly held belief that hope must be cultivated as one of the most potent spiritual/psychological weapons against the darkness of despair.[607]

Bondage and imprisonment were also prominent themes in De Morgan's work - while many spiritualists promoted a healthy body as the instrument of the soul, the De Morgans' communication with spirits and angels through their automatic writing reveal beliefs that the physical body could become a burden, particularly as one neared death:

> The flesh is a burden - the dreariness and heaviness of earth-life a trial! But it is very short. I got here and am free...Death came quite suddenly. I was sick and in pain for a few hours, then I thought I had fainted. I came to in a bright clear atmosphere, and felt light, young, and strong. My head very clear, and my eyes intensely clear. I did not realise it was my spirit body.[608]

This is perhaps the future in store for the figure in *The Martyr,* who calmly accepts her fate. Rather than fearing death, she is able to welcome the freedom it brings, releasing her from her physical and metaphorical bondage. That De Morgan herself used her artistic creativity to express her faith and spirituality is no surprise, when we recall that she once wrote that "Art is eternal, but life is short".[609]

---

[607] Oberhausen, 'Evelyn De Morgan and spiritualism', p. 40
[608] W. De Morgan & E. De Morgan, *The Result of an Experiment* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1909), p. 84
[609] 'Evelyn De Morgan', The De Morgan Centre website. Accessed 27/12/2017. http://www.demorgan.org.uk/de-morgans/evelyn-de-morgan

> I am glad of my art, it was of use to the world. Never doubt the great gain of beauty. It does more than much wordy preaching.[610]

Like the spirit, art lives on beyond the artist.

[610] De Morgan & De Morgan, *The Result of an Experiment,* p. 15

VII. Fairy-Ladies and Witches: A Glimpse into Magic and Creativity in the Works of John William Waterhouse

Art and spirituality also come together in what may well be one of the most well-known paintings of the nineteenth century - J. W. Waterhouse's first painting of *The Lady of Shalott* (fig. 49), made in 1888. This was the first of three images of the Lady of Shalott that Waterhouse created, and illustrates the following lines from part IV of Tennyson's poem:

> And down the river's dim expanse
> Like some bold seer in a trance,
> Seeing all his own mischance –
> With glassy countenance
> Did she look to Camelot.
> And at the closing of the day
> She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
> The broad stream bore her far away,
> The Lady of Shalott.[611]

But before probing and attempting to decipher the mysterious symbolism of Waterhouse's paintings and the ways in which magic, spirituality, and artistry are expressed, it is first necessary to familiarise ourselves with the context of Tennyson's poem, as this (rather than the original medieval source materials, such as Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*) was the inspiration behind Waterhouse's paintings and, indeed, the

[611] A. Tennyson, 'The Lady of Shalott', 1842. Accessed 23/12/2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/poems/the_lady_of_shalott.shtml

majority of nineteenth-century depictions of the Lady of Shalott.

Tennyson's Fairy-Lady

In her essay on the Lady of Shalott, Karen Hodder provides an excellent summary of the poem:

> Part I sets up a contrast between Camelot and Shalott ('a softer sound that Scalott', said Tennyson[612]), where the mysterious Lady dwells invisibly within 'four gray walls' on an island in the river, and is occasionally heard singing by reapers in the fields. In part II we are told that she is the victim of an unspecified curse and, not knowing what it is, spends her time weaving, and watching the events of the world of Camelot without, through 'a mirror clear'. These sights, described in an ascending order of interest to the Lady, cause her to feel restless about her fate: 'I am half sick of shadows', she says, in one of the lines which Hallam Tennyson claimed held 'the key to this tale of magic symbolism'.[613] In part III, the sight of the glamorous and colourful Lancelot reflected in her mirror causes the Lady to leave her loom and look directly out of the window[614]

Part III of the poem, in which the Lady is distracted by the reflection of Lancelot, and leaves her loom, is one of the most illustrated passages of Tennyson's poem. It can be seen in William Holman Hunt's colossal oil painting, *The Lady of Shalott* (and in his earlier treatments of the

[612] A. Tennyson, ed. C. Ricks, *Poems of 1842* (Plymouth: Macdonald & Evans, 1981), p. 288
[613] Ibid., p. 288
[614] K. Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott in Art and Literature', in S. Mendus & J. Rendall (eds.), *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary studies of gender in the nineteenth century* (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 68

subject in the 1850s), as well as in Waterhouse's 1894 painting of *The Lady of Shalott* (fig. 53), and Emma Florence Harrison's illustration for *The Lady of Shalott* in *Guinevere and Other Poems* (1912). The other most illustrated part of the poem comes from part IV, in which

> we reach at last the principal matter of the novella as the Lady floats singing her death-song, 'robed in snowy white', down the river to Camelot, where her corpse is greeted by wondering citizens and courtiers, including Lancelot[615]

It is this episode that Waterhouse first illustrated in his 1888 oil painting, although - just as Tennyson had taken liberties with the medieval source material, introducing his own elements such as the web, the mirror, and the island[616] - his depiction of the scene was not entirely faithful to the poem. For instance, as Hodder points out, he "did not recall, or chose to disregard, the 1832 text's line describing the Lady in her deathbed as lying 'with folded arms serenely'", as well as Tennyson's statements that it was raining heavily (in both the 1832 and 1842 versions of the poem).[617] Like Rossetti, in his illustration for the 1857 edition of Tennyson's poems (fig. 51), as well as John Atkinson Grimshaw in his 1875 painting of the Lady's death scene (fig. 52), Waterhouse has included candles at the front of the boat, which "increase the religious atmosphere generated by the crucifix".[618]

[615] Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott', p. 68
[616] Tennyson, ed. Ricks, *Poems of 1842,* p. 288
[617] Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott', p. 73
[618] Ibid., p. 73

Adapting and reshaping myths and legends to suit their audience (as well as their own personal whims) was, as we have seen, not unique to Tennyson or Waterhouse in the nineteenth century, and is a practice still very much alive today.[619]

As mentioned earlier, there has been some very interesting scholarship dealing with the themes of art and poetry in Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott', but these interpretations have not yet been discussed in great detail with regards to the art of the period. The aim of the next section of this chapter is to shed some light on the Lady of Shalott and her associations with art, poetry, and, most of all, magic.

Tangled Threads: Narratives of the Lady in Waterhouse and Holman Hunt

Both Waterhouse's and Holman Hunt's images of the Lady of Shalott have been subjected to a myriad of meanings and interpretations. Speaking primarily about Hunt's painting of *The Lady of Shalott* (fig. 50), Jan Marsh writes:

> it is hard to read his, or the other, images as anything but an oblique account of the confined and restricted world of the Victorian woman - accursed and prohibited by virtue of her sex alone - and the dire consequences attendant on rebellion. The

[619] For one example among many, see B. Willingham, *Fables: Legends in Exile* (Burbank: DC Comics, 2012)

> rejection of seclusion in the shadowy sphere or prescribed femininity, where the approved activity is weaving or embroidery, leads immediately to ostracism and social death.[620]

While Hunt certainly appears to have moralised the tale encountered in Tennyson's poem, interpreting the Lady as casting "aside duty to her spiritual self" and bringing "her artistic life to an end" for the sake of superficial, worldly temptations.[621] Tennyson was evidently critical of Hunt's portrayal of the Lady, with "her hair wildly tossed about as if a tornado" and the way in which the web of her tapestry wound "round and round her like the threads of a cocoon".[622] Hunt defended himself, claiming that he "had only half a page on which to convey the impression of some weird fate", while Tennyson used "about fifteen pages to give expression to the complete idea".[623] The Lady's wild hair might be seen, along with her exotic dress, as something that more closely "associates her with a class of enchantresses and sorceresses like Sir Frederick Sandys's 'petrified spasm', Morgan le Fay",[624] than with a medieval damsel or queen.

Waterhouse's second image of the subject, completed in 1894 and also titled *The Lady of Shalott* (fig. 53), depicts the Lady in a similar manner, entangled in her own web. The two artists' deviations from the

[620] Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Women,* p. 152
[621] W. H. Hunt, qtd. in Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott', p. 75
[622] A. Tennyson, qtd. in W. H. Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,* Vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 124
[623] Ibid., p. 125
[624] Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott', p. 75

source material (Tennyson's poem) is intriguing, as it hints at a continued evolution in the myth-making process. Prettejohn has suggested that the roundels of the tapestry in Waterhouse's 1888 painting may "allude to the round tapestries in Holman Hunt's first drawing of *The Lady of Shalott,* made in 1850, and in his illustration for the Moxon edition of Tennyson's poetry, published in 1857", and that the composition could also even reference Millais's *Ophelia* (1851-2),[625] whose fate was also a watery grave. Reflecting once again upon De Morgan's words about the eternal nature of art, it is interesting that Waterhouse's 1888 representation of *The Lady of Shalott* is one of the few to depict her with her tapestry after leaving the tower - although she will be dead by the time she reaches Camelot, her art will survive and be seen by those who gather by her corpse.

Interpretations of the Lady (or *Ladies*) of Shalott that rely solely on reading her depiction "as an innocent, passive prisoner of the domestic mores and taboos of Victorian middle-class life"[626] do the poem and the illustrations a disservice as they fail to take into account the magical, poetical, and artistic symbolism of the Lady and her story. For instance, weaving was not simply associated with femininity, but with magic and witchcraft,[627] and especially so in connection with the Lady's spider-like 'web'. While the mirror was a tool used by weavers

[625] E. Prettejohn, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy', T. Barringer, J. Rosenfeld & A. Smith (eds.), *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012) p. 233
[626] Hodder, 'The Lady of Shalott', p. 71
[627] Casteras, 'Malleus Maleficarum', p. 156

at their looms, the mirror in 'The Lady of Shalott' has a kind of mysterious and magical aura.

Both Hunt and Sidney Harold Meteyard depict convex mirrors in their images, with Meteyard's 1913 "*I Am Half-Sick of Shadows,*" *Said the Lady of Shalott* (fig. 54) containing what appears to be a small crystal ball on the left-hand side of the painting, by the Lady's elbow. The mirror in this painting even seems to function similarly to a crystal ball (or scrying mirror). Northcote W. Thomas helpfully distinguishes between two types of belief with regards to crystal gazing. Firstly, he describes the belief in popular fortune telling, in which you may "pay half-a-crown, or a guinea, as a fee to a person who professes to discover by crystal gazing the whereabouts of lost property, or of a missing friend, or to foretell events".[628] The second belief entails that "some people have the faculty of seeing faces, places, persons in motion, sometimes recognisable, in a glass ball, or in water, ink, or any clear deep".[629] Meteyard's painting may represent something akin to this second type of crystal gazing or scrying. The reason for Thomas's distinction, he explains, is that the former belief entails that the images in the crystal ball answer to the thoughts or desires of the person having their fortune told, and he is not convinced that this should appear to happen, "except by fortuitous coincidence".[630] The second belief, in contrast, entails only that we believe that it is possible for us,

[628] Thomas, *Crystal Gazing,* ix
[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid.

or at least for some people, to see images in the crystal ball - whether they correspond to another person's thoughts or even the gazer's own, is another matter entirely. Although Waterhouse's paintings do not depict convex mirrors, the mirrors in each painting are round and mimic the shape of a crystal ball, and their supernatural or magical qualities hinted at by the crack caused by the curse, and the representation of faraway places and people.

Other authors, such as L. W. de Laurence, an American writer and publisher of spiritualism and the occult, maintained the belief that in some cases a person's thoughts were able to influence the outcome of crystal-gazing. In one of his books on the topic, titled *Crystal-Gazing and Spiritual Clairvoyance,* he provides us with three classifications for for phenomena of what he terms "crystal vision," each of which he considers a real possibility for the gazer. Firstly, he posits the notion of seeing "images of something unconsciously observed," in which we might find ourselves experiencing new reproductions, without new knowledge. The second classification involves seeing "images of ideas *unconsciously acquired from others,* by telepathy or otherwise," and the third, seeing "*pictures bringing information* as to something *past, present or future* which the gazer has *no other chance of knowing*" - in other words, clairvoyance.[631] On this interpretation, the Lady could well be observing the events of Camelot through the act of scrying.

[631] L. W. De Laurence, *Crystal-Gazing and Spiritual Clairvoyance* (Chicago: de Laurence, Scott & Co, 1916) p. 20

In addition to serious literature on scrying, the crystal ball had a rich history of fictional literary depictions, in which it was assigned yet other roles. For instance, in one of the Grimm brothers' (usefully entitled "The Crystal Ball"*),* the hero undergoes difficult tasks to obtain it, in order to break the enchanter's spell upon the princess he has set his sights on. During his confrontation with the enchanter, he also learns that the crystal ball can be used to free his brothers from the curses placed upon them by their sorceress mother.[632] Another intriguing instance of a magic crystal can be found in H. G. Wells' short science fiction story, "The Crystal Egg"*,* in which a certain Mr Cave comes across an artefact with some curious properties. More specifically, the egg shaped crystal projects images of alien forms and landscapes to this character, though notably other characters who come into contact with the crystal are unable to perceive these images.[633] The former example is unusual in its depiction of a crystal ball which possesses the power to lift spells or curses, whereas Wells' crystal egg can be seen as more accurately reflecting the depictions found in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature on crystal gazing and scrying.

The similarities between the cases of Wells' crystal egg and documented psychical research concern both the types of images

[632] J. Grimm & W. Grimm, *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* (New York: International Collectors Library, 1900), pp. 481-83

[633] Wells, H. G., "The Crystal Egg," first published in *The New Review* (May,1897) http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/wells/hg/crystal_egg/ (Last accessed 19/06/2014)

seen in the crystal *and* the formation of the images. By gazing into his mysterious crystal egg, Mr Cave bears witness to life and technology on Mars, and although such a claim would be considered fanciful even among the most fervent supporters of crystal-gazing, there are certain parallels to be drawn with the "real-life" accounts of psychical researchers and those who experimented with crystal balls. Several years before "The Crystal Egg" had come into being, mathematician and logician, Augustus De Morgan (father to the ceramicist, William De Morgan), co-authored a book on spiritualism with his wife, Sophia, in which the two describe some of their experiences with crystal-gazing. In their experiments, they apparently used an "egg-shaped piece of clear glass"[634] and comment on the crystal's strange influences over gazers, likening the effects to "those produced by the fingers of a mesmerizer."[635] Although its effects may differ somewhat, Wells' crystal egg demonstrates a comparable degree of influence in its hold over Mr Cave, and the way in which it entices the customers in his store. This crystal also emits a strange light, "not steady, but writhing within the substance of the egg, as though that object was a hollow sphere of some luminous vapour,"[636] which brings to mind Thomas's descriptions of a "milky"[637] stage that can appear before or between visions in the crystal.

[634] A. De Morgan & S. De Morgan, *From Matter to Spirit: The Result of Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1863), p.64
[635] Ibid., p.109
[636] Wells, 'The Crystal Egg'
[637] Thomas, *Crystal Gazing,* xliv

As for the visions themselves, the character's experience with the Martians and their home, while certainly more bizarre than most crystal-gazers' accounts, does bear some resemblance to the real-life stories. The De Morgans' friend, “Miss L-”, spoke of “'*seeing*' or '*being in*' a lovely park, in which trees were loaded with blossoms, and grass gemmed with bright flowers,” with children “playing on the grass in groups, making wreaths of flowers.” Her vision was also so vivid as to allow her to describe people and recognise those she was acquainted with, in the world within the crystal ball.[638] The fictional account of Mr. Cave's crystal egg is reminiscent of such accounts, in which the gazers often found themselves encountering worlds previously unknown to them.

Having briefly demonstrated some of the influences at play in creative writing about crystal-gazing, it makes sense at this point to steer the discussion back towards explaining the ways in which these kind of beliefs were reflected in pictorial art and, in particular, in Waterhouse's *The Crystal Ball* (fig. 55).

Gazing into the Crystal Ball

One of the first noticeable things about the crystal ball in this painting

[638] De Morgan & De Morgan, *From Matter to Spirit* p.65

is that even if we look closely, we cannot interpret any kind of image or vision. This feature is common to many artistic representations during the period, including Edward Burne-Jones' *Astrologia* (1865), Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale's *Today for Me* (1901), Frank Dicksee's *The Magic Crystal* (1894) and, despite its rather misleading title, Simeon Solomon's *The Vision in the Crystal Globe* (1893). There are other paintings that depict crystal balls in which there are no visible images but the former examples are notable in that, as with *The Crystal Ball,* they are supposed to be representations of the practice of crystal gazing. It does not seem so strange that the crystal balls in Solomon's *The Toilette of a Roman Lady* (1865) or Burne-Jones' *Baronne Deslandes* (1895) are perfectly clear, because they are not currently being used or examined by the individuals in the paintings. One possible reason for painting a clear crystal ball could be to present the gazer's visions as private, but some writers and practitioners, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, maintained that so long as the crystal was within their view, the gazer's visions were "actually visible to the eye of the sitter".[639] There are records of instances in which visions would most certainly not be visible to a sitter; Lang, for instance, documented a case in which the gazer "took a common table glass water-jug, surrounded it with dark cloth, covered his own head with a cloth, and gazed down into the neck of the jug, which thus became a perfectly dark funnel" in order to "prevent the existence of reflections in glass or

[639] Conan Doyle, A., *The History of Spiritualism* (MacMay, 2010), p.286

water".[640] Although it is unclear whether the purpose of this method is to ensure that the visions are for the gazer's eyes only it is, nevertheless, a result.

What Waterhouse presents us with in *The Crystal Ball*, however, is not a perfectly clear crystal ball. Rather, when we scrutinize it, it appears to resemble something akin to Wells' aforementioned description of the crystal egg, or the state of Thomas' and Conan Doyle's crystals before or between the appearances of the visions. For this reason, I argue that the *The Crystal Ball* captures the crystal-gazer in a climactic moment; we (and perhaps even she) may not know what visions will appear to her in the crystal ball, but a feeling of anticipation or expectation is evident as she holds the crystal close, gazing intently upon it.

It is worth mentioning a few of the other objects in this painting – namely what looks to be a wand, a book and a skull. Not one of these items is required for crystal gazing, making Waterhouse's decision to include them an interesting one. From the fifteenth century onwards[641] we have become familiar with the macabre symbolism of the human skull and its associations with death. Undoubtedly, one of the most well-known representations of a skull can be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (completed around 1600), in which the title character contemplates the skull of Yorick in the graveyard. Although not the first

[640] A. Lang, "Tree Worship," *Folklore,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Mar.1902), p.91
[641] R. M. Frye, "Ladies, Gentlemen and Skulls: Hamlet and the Iconic Traditions," *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 1979) p.17

representation of its type, it is likely the most famous - “engraved on the popular mind”[642] - and inspired the creation of astonishing fashion pieces such as the skull-shaped watches, supposedly favoured by Queen Mary.[643]

Although the skull-shaped watches' popularity may not have lasted, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not see a decrease in *Hamlet's* influence. The play was still a favourite among artists, as we can tell by the fantastic number of representations of Ophelia, three of which were painted by Waterhouse himself. When *The Crystal Ball* changed hands in the early 1950s, its new owner disliked the skull and had it painted over (it has since been restored), perhaps due to its association with death and the macabre. As we are engaging with a painting whose character can be identified as magical and mystical in nature, we ought to take into account some of the layered meanings skulls had, both for the superstitious individual and for the occultist.

In the seventeenth century, it was sometimes claimed that "cunning Alewives do mix the Ashes of dead-men's bones in their ale to make it intoxicating”,[644] and according to archaeologist and ethnologist, Daniel G. Brinton, as late as the eighteenth century “pulverized portions of the

[642]Frye, ‘Ladies, Gentlemen and Skulls’, p.15
[643] Ibid., p.20
[644] D. G. Brinton, ‘Folk-Lore of the Bones’, *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 3, No. 8 (Jan-March 1890), p.21

human skull were administered in various diseases.[645] Similar powers seem to have been ascribed to bones in the Babylonian Talmud, in which it is mentioned that Joseph's bones were sealed in a metal coffin and sunk into the Nile to bless the waters.[646] Usually, it was the use of bones (rather than specifically the skull) that was related to such practices, but one could imagine that the artist might choose to represent the skull due to its being so easily identifiable as human in origin. *The Crystal Ball's* skull is still intact, and there is nothing in the painting to suggest that the lady in the painting has or will be using it for these purposes. What is significant, though, is that we take note of these supposed properties of skulls and bones, which are quite at odds with its more common representation as an omen or symbol of death.

In addition, bones are frequently referred to in tales of resurrection or a kind of life after death. A contemporary example can be found in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series in which the key items required for one character's rebirth are flesh, blood and bones – but although the ritual itself here is Rowling's creation, the notion of bones as life-restoring is nothing new. If we return to some of the writings in the Talmud, we find the belief in a person's bones "as the casket of the soul" and even claims to have "discovered which particular bone was its indestructible

[645] Brinton, 'Folk-Lore of the Bones' p.21
[646] From the Babylonian Talmud, qtd. in R. M. Schwartz, 'Joseph's Bones and the Resurrection of the Text: Remembering in the Bible', *PMLA,* Vol. 103, No. 2 (Mar. 1988), p.114

seat".[647] Brinton also notes that in popular western folklore "it was believed that the personality of the individual clung to his skeleton",[648] which goes some way towards explaining why bones could be associated with both life and death. Additionally, we may find similar portrayals of skeletons in the Tarot, which was gaining popularity around the time of Waterhouse's painting. Mathers, a nineteenth-century occultist and one of the founders of the *Golden Dawn,* describes the character of Death as "a skeleton armed with a Scythe (wherewith he mows down heads in a meadow like grass)," and goes on to say that "he signifies Transformation, or Change".[649] Whether the skull in *The Crystal Ball* has anything to do with the lady's current activity of crystal-gazing is unclear, but its removal (or perhaps more accurately, "cover-up") in the 1950s significantly changed the dynamic of the painting. Whatever our interpretation of the skull and its inclusion, its presence is decidedly ominous, evoking suggestions of necromancy or some other dark arts; the fact that it is situated directly next to what appears to be a book of magic does little to soothe these fears. As the only magical tool required for crystal-gazing is a crystal (or some equivalent object), we should consider the possibility that the inclusion of the skull in this painting was intended to reveal more about the crystal-gazer herself than the practice of scrying.

The book-and-wand combination was associated not with spiritualist

[647] Brinton, 'Folk-Lore of the Bones', p.19
[648] Ibid., p.18
[649] S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Tarot* (Kindle Edition, 2012), Kindle Locations 374-6.

crystal-gazers, but with the witch or sorceress – a figure Waterhouse clearly enjoyed representing, as we can see in such paintings as *Jason and Medea* (1907), *The Magic Circle* (1886), and his numerous depictions of Circe. Two of his representations of Circe show her with either a book or a scroll, and in *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus* (1891) she raises a magic wand as if preparing to cast her spell on Odysseus and his men. In another of his works, she holds a wand, but her posture does not suggest the intent to use it – she is not currently engaged in spell casting. In the case of this *Circe* and *The Crystal Ball,* it appears that the wand is represented more as a means of recognising the painted figure as a witch or sorceress than as a narrative device, as with *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus.* It was deemed a powerful artefact, as demonstrated by the Grimm brothers, in their tale "Sweet Roland," in which Roland expresses his belief that unless they stole her magic wand, he and his sweetheart would be unable to escape from the witch. There are also many instances of fairies holding magic wands, as in John Atkinson Grimshaw's *Spirit of the Night* (1879), and red clothing was also associated with both witches and fairies during the nineteenth century.[650] Certain other behavioural similarities between witches and fairies have been noted, with folklorist E. S. Hartland going so far as to claim that witches, fairies and ghosts were "all three of the same nature",[651] but it seems safe to say that Waterhouse's crystal gazer is distinctly lacking in some

[650] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* p.187
[651] E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales, an Inquiry into Fairy Mythology* (London, 1891) p. 348

of the more traditional fairy-like attributes - though perhaps this description could apply to his Ladies of Shalott.

The other object I drew attention to – the book – was another that witches were frequently associated with, as has been stressed in previous chapters. As with the magic wand, there were tales of a witch's power lying within books, scrolls and manuscripts; sometimes it was even said that a witch's power could be passed from one generation to another through the inheritance of their books.[652] Another practitioner of magic, the cunning-man or woman, was also likely to possess books as they served as an outward sign of learning and power. It was often believed that "each cunning person was empowered by the possession of one particular volume, from which he or she had learned the essence of the craft and which had an arcane energy of its own".[653] Waterhouse's placement of the wand on top of the open book relates the two objects to one another and identifies the book as another magical artefact.

Interpreting the crystal-gazer as a witch could raise some issues, with the main one being the lack of evidence for crystal-gazing amongst witches. As I have already pointed out, it was predominantly a spiritualist practice, or an exercise in fortune telling, and neither of these were particularly associated with the witch at this time. By 1939,

[652] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* p.180
[653] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* pp. 90-1

we see a witch with a crystal ball in the film adaptation of Frank L. Baum's “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” (first published in 1900) but this detail is not to be found in the book. Cunning-folk were known to offer “the provision of specific divinatory services such as astrology and fortune-telling”,[654] and would sometimes employ scrying as a method to assist a client in identifying a witch.[655]

Having said that, there appears to be no reason why witches could not also be crystal-gazers; indeed, one might argue that their gifts for magical practice ought to make them good crystal-gazers. Initially, the crystal ball could appear to be in conflict with some of the other imagery in Waterhouse's painting, which is more explicitly associated with magical (as opposed to spiritualist) practice. However, it does not prevent the interpretation of the lady as a witch or sorceress and it is my opinion that the artist's decision to dress the figure in red and to include such iconic magical artefacts as the spell book and magic wand invites such an interpretation. As said before, these objects do not appear to be implying anything about the practice of crystal gazing itself and therefore it is to be assumed that they are instead intended to reveal something about the figure in the painting. In other words, they signify her identity not *only* as a fortune teller, but as a witch - not merely an observer, but someone who *makes things happen*.

[654] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 85
[655] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture,* p. 218

Conclusion

As suggested in the introduction, the British image of the nineteenth- or early twentieth-century witch has persisted throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. Much of the art-historical scholarship, even when acknowledging the presence of magic within the canvas, focused primarily on the witch or sorceress figure as a *femme fatale,* or as an especially creative, talented or "learned woman"[656] who posed a challenge to Victorian masculinity:

> these female wizards are more than dissidents; they are women whose gifted temperaments defy the rhetoric of masculine control both in literal and metaphoric terms.[657]

By situating the images of six artists within the context of various Victorian and Edwardian magical and spiritualist practices, and considering popular beliefs about magic, I have demonstrated that these images have far more to offer than (heterosexual) male anxieties and fears with regards to femininity. Considering images of witches and sorceresses apart from other *femme fatale* types, such as Salome, allows a fresh perspective in terms of seeing these women in their roles as practitioners of a craft, rather than simply interpreting them in terms of their deadly beauty and potential threat to men.

[656] Cherry, *Beyond the Frame,* p. 162
[657] Casteras, *'Malleus Maleficarum',* p. 170

While Casteras and Cherry both acknowledge the possibility of the sorceress as a creative figure, this thesis further demonstrates this idea by delving into the status of magic as an art or craft, and as a form of creative expression. Tennyson's Merlin, too, has been considered in the role of a "fallen artist" and his entombment by Vivien as "a symbolic representation of the defeat of the imagination in the tradition of Romantic poet".[658]

Despite 'autobiographical' readings of, for instance, Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin* - drawing on his identification with the Merlin in the painting, alongside his lover (and student), Maria Zambaco - this connection had not previously been explored in relation to his work. By looking at images of wizards by artists such as Solomon and Burne-Jones, as well as images of witches, sorceresses, and prophetesses, it is also possible to demonstrate these artists' challenges to many of the common Victorian ideas about both femininity and masculinity.

The 'disenchantment' associated with the Victorian era, often associated with the Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution,[659] and the zeal for (masculine) rationality does not take into account the role of the artist, the poet, or the novelist. Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke famously stated, as the third of his three laws, that "any sufficiently advanced technology is

[658] F. Kaplan, 'Woven Paces and Waving Hands', p. 286
[659] Bailey, 'The Disenchantment of Magic', p. 384

indistinguishable from magic".[660] As we have seen, the debate surrounding magic, religion, and science that originated in the nineteenth century "was eager to see clear lines of demarcation between these concepts," and "was particularly responsible for trying to draw one or another of them into the specifically western European corrals of 'rationality' or 'irrationality'."[661]

However, as this was often not the case in nineteenth-century visual culture - many of the images examined in this thesis contain motifs associated with both science *and* magic, such as Circe's beakers and Medea's tripod, or they blur the boundaries between magic and religion, as in Solomon's artworks - it is no coincidence that in the pseudo-Victorian worlds found in novels such as Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus* (2011), or video games such as Arkane Studio's *Dishonored* series (2012, 2016), magic and technology exist together peacefully. After all, the artist or writer, like the magician, has no grudge towards that which may be 'irrational'.

As noted in the introduction, it is hardly necessary to believe in the 'reality' of magic in order to enjoy a fairy tale or to delight in the spectacle of stage magic. In addition to its aesthetic and theatrical qualities, magic captured the imaginations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists, and continues to enchant us today, as evidenced by the current *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* exhibition at the British Museum.

---

[660] See A. C. Clarke, 'Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination,' *Profiles of the Future: An Inquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) for further discussion of 'Clarke's Laws'.

[661] P. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Magic in the Ancient World', *The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft,* ed. O. Davies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.2

While portrayals of witches and wizards, sorceresses and seers did, of course, *evolve* during the following decades as attitudes towards magic, gender, sexuality, and race began to change, much of the imagery introduced in this thesis remains recognisable in recent popular culture and mainstream media. Retellings of folktales and fairy stories that were circulated, rewritten, and adapted during the Victorian and Edwardian eras are still commonplace today. This can be seen by the popularity of *Walt Disney's* twentieth- and twenty-first century fairy tale films, many of which are based on stories circulating in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, such as the 1937 adaptation of the Grimm brothers' *Snow White* (originally published in 1812), and the 1989 adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (first published in 1837). Many of the villains in *Disney* films, such as Ursula or the Evil Queen, bear some resemblances to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century portrayals of witches and sorceresses, and often reinforce a similar dichotomy between 'good' and 'evil' when paired with 'pure' or 'innocent' female protagonists like Ariel or Snow White.

As mentioned in chapter V, part of the (formerly) Evil Queen, Regina Mills' ongoing redemption arc in *Once Upon a Time* makes use of the 'split' personality model, when she quite *literally* splits her 'good' and 'evil' sides into two separate, but physically identical individuals. Over the course of the series, even before the physical 'split,' we witness Regina commit both heroic and horrific acts, emphasising the dichotomy of feminine 'good' and

'evil'. Although the roles of the Evil Queen and other fairy tale villains are frequently reexamined and reinterpreted throughout the series, it is worth noting that their redemption is often facilitated by feelings of motherly love, and/or heterosexual love interests. Zelena (also known as the *Wicked Witch of the West*) is even required to give up her magical talent and ability - something she took *great pride* in - in order to perform a kind of heroic sacrifice. While these things are not necessarily negative in and of themselves, it is perhaps unfortunate that they appear to be necessary requirements for a witch or sorceress to redeem herself, and that she cannot live a fulfilling life performing magic *on her own terms*. Redemption is available for these witches and sorceresses, and in that way they differ from some of the Victorian Medeas and Morgan le Fays - but they are still constrained by many of the same values and prejudices that plagued the imagery of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but often without the nuances demonstrated in this thesis.

This thesis provides new perspectives on images of occult practices in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain, but the principle aim was to provide close readings of a number of case studies to establish the importance of magical imagery, as well as patterns amongst a small group of artists over a period of time (rather than the inclusion of an exhaustive survey of visual depictions of magic and spiritualism from the period). Current interest in the history of magic and the revival of folk tales will, hopefully, encourage further research into this fascinating field of study, as well as

additional exploration of the ways in which Victorian and Edwardian magical imagery has survived well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Books and Journals:

Anon., 'Administering a Love Potion', *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 2, No. 666 (Oct. 4 1873), p. 407

Anon., 'Toxiphobia', *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 1, No. 790 (Feb. 19, 1876), p. 233

Anon., 'Trial Of A French Dentist For Rape', *British Medical Journal,*Vol. 2, No. 922 (Aug. 31, 1878), pp. 326-327

Adam, H. L., *Woman and Crime* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914)

Aeschylus, trans. E. R. Bevan, *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus* (London: David Nutt, 1902)

Beavington Atkinson, J., Sidney Colvin, et al., *English Painters of the Present Day* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1871)

Brinton, D. G., 'Folk-Lore of the Bones', *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 3, No. 8 (Jan-March 1890), pp. 17-22

Brontë, E., *Wuthering Heights,* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858)

Carroll, L., *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London: Vintage Books, 2007)

Conan Doyle, A., *The History of Spiritualism, Vol. II* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1926)

Crane, W., *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen & Co., 1907)

Davies, C. M., *Heterodox London: or, Phases of Free Thought in the Metropolis,* Vol. 2 (London: Tinsley Bros., 1874)

De Laurence, L. W., *Crystal-Gazing and Spiritual Clairvoyance* (Chicago: de Laurence, Scott & Co, 1916)

De Morgan, A. & S. De Morgan, *From Matter to Spirit: The Result of Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1863)

De Morgan, W., & E. De Morgan, *The Result of an Experiment,* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1909)

Diodorus Siculus, trans. C. H. Oldfather, *Library of History, Volume II: Books 2.35 – 4.58* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1935)

du Prel, C., 'Witches and Mediums: A Historical Parallel', *Light* (4 Sept. 1886)

Eliot, G., *The Spanish Gypsy* (New York: John Lovell, 1868)

Euripides, trans. P. Vellacott, *Medea and Other Plays,* (London: Penguin Classics, 2002)

Ferrier, D., 'Historical Notes On Poisoning. Introductory Lecture To The Course Of Forensic Medicine, Delivered At King's College, May 1st, 1872', *British Medical Journal,* Vol. 1, No. 597 (Jun. 8 1872). Pp. 601-603

Greg, W. R. 'Why Are Women Redundant?', *Literary and Social Judgements,* (Boston: James Osgood & Co., 1873)

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W., *German Popular Stories,* trans. E. Taylor (London: C. Baldwyn, 1823)

Harrison, J. E., *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908)

Hill, G. B., *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 1854-1870,* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897)

Lago, M., ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations, 1895-1898, preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke,* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981)

Lang, A., *Cock Lane and Common Sense* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894)
'Tree Worship', *Folklore,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Mar.1902), pp. 90-91

Lycophron, 'Alexandra', *Callimachus & Lycophron*, trans. A. W. Mair, *Aratus*, trans. G. R. Loeb (London: William Heinemann, 1912)

MacDonald, G., *Phantastes*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000)

Malory, T., *The Complete Works of Thomas Malory* (Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2014)

Mathers, S. L. MacGregor, *The Tarot* (Kindle Edition, 2012)

Newbold, F. R. S., 'The Gypsies of Egypt', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 16 (1856), pp. 285-312

Nietzsche, F., trans. Walter Kaufmann, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966)
trans. I. Johnston, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music,* (Virginia: Richer Resources Publications, 2009)

Ogden, D., *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Paracelsus, trans. A. E. Waite, "Defensio No III 1538." *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus* (Ohio: Forgotten Books, 2007)

Pater, W., *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays,* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895)

Pausanias, trans. J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, (London: Macmillan, 1898)

Rossetti, D. G., *Letters*, eds. O. Doughty & J. R. Wahl (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965)

R. T. H., *Spiritualism and Common Sense,* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886)

Ruskin, J., *Modern Painters, Vol. III,* (London: George Allen, 1906)
Modern Painters, Vol. IV (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1856)
The Stones of Venice, Vol. III, (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1881)

Seneca, trans F. J. Miller, ''Hercules Oetaeus', *Tragedies,* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1917)

Sinnett, A. P., *The Occult World* (London: Trubner, 1883)

Southey, R., ed.,*The Byrth, Lyf and Actes of King Arthur By Sir Thomas Malory,* 3 Volumes (London: Printed from Caxton's edition, 1485, for Longman, Hurst, Rees , Orme, and Brown, by T . Davison, 1817)

Stephens, F. G., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti,* (London: Seeley and Co. Ltd., 1894)

Stirling, A. M. W., *William De Morgan and his Wife,* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922)

Swinburne, A. C., 'Charles Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal', *Spectator* (6 Sept. 1862)
'Notes on the Designs of the Old Masters at Florence', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875)

Swinburne, A. C., with W. M. Rossetti, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition* (London, 1868)

Theobald, M., *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887)

Thomas, N. W., *Crystal Gazing: Its History and Practice, with a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic Scrying* (London: The De La More Press, 1906)

Wallace, A. R., *On Miracles and Spiritualism. Three Essays.* (London: Trubner, 1881)

Wells, H. G., "The Crystal Egg," first published in *The New Review* (May,1897)
Accessed 19/06/2014
(http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/wells/hg/crystal_egg/)

Wilde, J. F. A., *Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890)

Wilde, O., *Essays and Lectures* (London: Methuen & Co., 1913)
Miscellanies, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017)
The Picture of Dorian Gray (London: Penguin Classics, 2003)

Wilkinson, M., ed., *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten* (London: John Heywood, 1900)

Wood, E., 'Being a Consideration of the Art of Frederick Sandys', *The Artist.* (18 Nov. 1896)

Young, A. C., ed., *The Letters of George Gissing to Edward Bertz 1887-1903.* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1961)

<u>Newspapers, Magazines, and Pamphlets:</u>

'Aesthetics versus Athletics,' *London Illustrated News* (March 1883)

Ehrlich, D., '12 Scariest Moments in Kids' Films', *Rolling Stone* (October 19, 2015)

'Exhibition of the Royal Academy', *Daily News* (21 May 1856)

Milton, A. R., 'The Wicked Old Woman', *Sussex Country Magazine,* Vol. 17 (1936)

‘Modern Poets’, *The Times* (11 Jan. 1865)

New York *Daily News,* (1 April 1927), p. 3

Physianthropy; or, the Home Cure and Eradication of Disease, *A lecture delivered by Mrs. C. Leigh Hunt Wallace at the Royal Academy, London,* (London: Philanthropic Reform Publishing Office, 1885)

The Irish Times (8 March 1882), p. 5

The Times (June 6, 1881), p. 4

Poetry

Arnold, M., ‘The Scholar-Gipsy’ (1853)
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43606/the-scholar-gipsy)

Browning, R., ‘The Laboratory’
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43760/the-laboratory)

Morris, W., *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (London: Ellis & White,1875)

Rossetti, D. G., *Poems* (London: F. S. Ellis, 1870)
Ballads and Sonnets (London: F. S. Ellis, 1881)

Tennyson, A., *Guinevere and Other Poems* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1912)
ed. C. Ricks, *Poems of 1842* (Plymouth: Macdonald & Evans, 1981)

Other Sources:

Rossetti, W. M., ‘Séance Diaries (1865–8)’, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Angeli–Dennis Collection, Films 1676/3, Microfilm 3, Series A.1.3.

Secondary Sources

Books and Journals:

Allen, V. M., ‘“One Strangling Golden Hair”: Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Lady Lilith*’, *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 66, No. 2 (June, 1984) pp. 285-294

Atzmon, L., 'Arthur Rackham's Phrenological Landscape: Inbetweens, Gobins, and Femmes Fatales', *Design Issues,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 64-83

Bailey, M. D., 'The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstitions in Early European Witchcraft Literature,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 383-404

Barret-Ducrocq, F., trans. John Howe, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire Among Working-class Men and Women in Nineteenth-century London (*New York: Penguin Books, 1992)

Barry, J. & O. Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Bartlett, R., 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 4 (1994) pp. 43-60

Behlmer, G. K., 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter, 1985) pp. 231-253

Bell, R., *Women of Classical Mythology*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)

Bhopal K., & Myers, M., *Insiders, outsiders and others: gypsies and identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008)

Bierce, A., *The Devil's Dictionary* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1911)

Blondell, R., *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Bown N. & Burdett, eds., *The Victorian Supernatural,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Brackston, P., *The Winter Witch,* (London: Corsair, 2014)

British Library, *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Cherry, D., *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900,* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Cirlot, J. E., trans. J. Sage, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge, 1990)

Clarke, A. C., ‘Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination,’ *Profiles of the Future: An Inquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (1973)

Collingwood, R. G., *The Principles of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958)

Coppa, F., Hass. & Peck, eds., *Performing Magic on the Western Stage From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Cruise, C., ‘‘Lovely devils’: Simeon Solomon and Pre-Raphaelite Masculinity’, in E. Harding, ed., *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996)

Danahay, M. A., ‘Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Virtual Bodies,’ *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), pp. 379-398

Davies, O., ‘Urbanization and the Decline of Witchcraft: An Examination of London,’ *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring, 1997), pp. 597-617
‘Cunning Folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Rural History,* Vol. 8 (1997), pp. 91-107
Witchcraft, Magic, and Culture, 1736-1951, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History, (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)
Grimoires: A History of Magic Books, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)
The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

De Girolami Cheney, L., ‘Edward Burne-Jones’ The Days of Creation: *A Celestial Utopia*’, *The Arts Journal,* (Aug. 2014), pp. 28-36

Dellamora, R., ed., *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Denton, N. R., ‘Dare Not Speak Its Name: Bisexuality in Victorian Fin de Siecle Literature’, *Journal of Bisexuality,* Vol. 12, No. 4 (2012), pp. 461-483

de Rougemont, D., trans. M. Belgion, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)

Derrida, J., trans. B. Johnson, *Dissemination (*London: The Athlone Press, 1981)

Desmarais, J. & Postle, eds., *Model and Supermodel: The Artists' Model in British Art and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006)

Dijkstra, B., *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Drew, R., *The Stream's Secret: The Symbolism of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2007)

Fitzgerald, P., *Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014)

Galton, F., *Hereditary Genius: An Enquiry into its Laws and Consequences,* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892)

Garber, M., *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1997)

Gilbert, S. & Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979)

Gitter, E. G., 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', PMLA, Vol. 99, No. 5 (Oct., 1984) pp. 936-954

Golden, C., 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Two-Sided Art', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 26, No. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 395-402

Gordon, C., ed., *Evelyn De Morgan: oil paintings,* (London: De Morgan Foundation, 1996)

Gosse, E., & Wise, T. J., eds., *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne,* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968)

Grady, H., 'Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics: The Case of A Midsummer Night's Dream', *Shakespeare Quarterly.* Vol. 59, No. 3 (Fall 2008), pp. 274-302

Greene, E., ed., *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

Greenhill, P., & S. E. Matrix, eds., *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity,* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010)

Grieve, A., 'Frederick Sandys. Norwich', *The Burlington Magazine,* Vol. 144, No. 1186 (Jan. 2002) pp. 48-50

Hartland, E. S., *The Science of Fairy Tales* (Michigan: Singing Tree Press, 1968)

Henrichs, A., 'Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* Vol. 88 (1984), pp. 205-240

Herrera, M. D., *Holy Smoke: The Use of Incense in the Catholic Church,* (San Luis Obispo: Tixlini Scriptorium Inc., 2011)

Holcombe, W. H., *The Sexes Here and Hereafter,* (London: James Spiers, 1869)

Holloway, J., 'Enchanted Spaces: The Séance, Affect, and Geographies of Religion', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Mar., 2006), pp. 182-187

Hope, H. R., 'Black Magic and Modern Art', *College Art Journal,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1947-1948), pp. 116-120

Hopwood, V. G., 'Dream, Magic, and Poetry', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 10, No. 2 (Dec., 1951), pp. 152-159

Horne, P., & Lewis, R., eds., *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures,* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Horner, F., *Time Remembered* (London: W. Heinemann, 1933)

Houghton, W., & G. R. Stange, *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1956)

Hutton, R., *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
Witches, Druids, and King Arthur, (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006)
Blood and Mistletoe: the History of the Druids in Britain, (London: Yale University Press, 2011)
The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present, (London: Yale University Press, 2017)

Kaplan, F., 'Woven Paces and Waving Hands: Tennyson's Merlin as Fallen Artist,' *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter, 1969), pp. 285-298

Kastan, D. S., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Kell, A., 'On Picking Hawthorn,' *The Irish Naturalists' Journal,* Vol. 2, No. 9, (May, 1929), pp. 189-191

Kosinski, D. M., ‘Gustave Courbet’s “The Sleepers.” The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature’, *Artibus et Historiae,* Vol. 9, No. 10 (1988) pp. 187-199

Larrington, C., *King Arthur’s Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Legend* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006)

Lawton Smith, E., *Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and the Allegorical Body,* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002)
‘Evelyn Pickering De Morgan's Allegories of Imprisonment,’ *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 25, No. 2 (1997), pp. 293-317

Layton Schapira, L., *The Cassandra Complex: Living With Disbelief: A Modern Perspective on Hysteria* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1988)

Lutz, D., ‘The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture,” *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 39, No. 1 (2011) pp. 127-142

MacCarthy, F., *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination,* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2011)

MacLeod, D. S., ‘Mid-Victorian Patronage of the Arts: F. G. Stephens’s ‘The Private Collections of England’’, *The Burlington Magazine,* Vol. 128, No. 1001 (Aug. 1986), pp. 597-607

Maguire, H., ‘The Victorian Theatre as a Home from Home,’ *Journal of Design History,* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2000) pp. 107-121

Mancoff, D. N., *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (London: Pavilion Books Ltd., 1995)
‘As Others Saw Him: A Self-Portrait by Simeon Solomon’, *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1992) pp. 146-155 + 187-188

Markley, ‘E. M. Forster's Reconfigured Gaze and the Creation of a Homoerotic Subjectivity’, *Twentieth Century Literature,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp. 268-292

Marsh, J., *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987)

Martin, G. R. R., ‘The Hedge Knight’, *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* (London: Harper Voyager, 2017)

Martindale, C., & Thomas, R. F., eds., *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006)

Mayall, D., *English Gypsies and State Politics,* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995)

McM. Pittman, P., 'The Strumpet and The Snake: Rossetti's Treatment of Sex as Original Sin,' *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), pp. 45-54

Mégros, R. L., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Painter Poet of Heaven in Earth,* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1971)

Miller, K., *Doubles: Studies in Literary History.* (London: Oxford University Press,1987)

Moranelli, L., 'Speaking with Flowers: John William Waterhouse, Myth, and the Victorian Mind', *CUJAH,* Volume VI (2009-2010) (http://cujah.org/past-volumes/volume-vi/essay-12-volume/)

Morgan, T., ed., *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power,* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990)

Musgrove, S., 'Poetry and Magic', *The Australian Quarterly,* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1946), pp. 102-114

Nelson, E. C., 'Victorian Royal Wedding Flowers: Orange, Myrtle, and the Apotheosis of White Heather', *Garden History,* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2009) pp. 231-236

Nickel, R., 'The Wrath of Demeter: Story Pattern in the 'Hymn to Demeter'', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series, Vol. 73, No. 1, (2003)

Nightingale, F., *Cassandra and Other Selections from Suggestions for Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1992)

Nilsson, M. P., 'Royal Mysteries in Egypt', *The Harvard Theological Review,* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 1957), pp. 65-66

Nord, D. E., '"Marks of Race": Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 21, No. 2, (Winter 1998), pp. 189-210
Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)

Norton, D. L., & Kille, M. F., eds., *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1988)

Ovid, trans. M. M. Innes, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983)

Owen, A., *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990)

Pagel, W., *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance.* (New York: Karger, 1982)

Peterson, M. J., 'No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women', *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 8, No. 3 (Jun., 1984) pp. 677-708

Petropoulos, J. C. B., 'Sappho the Sorceress: Another Look at fr. 1 (LP)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik,* Bd. 1 (1993), pp. 43-56

Pointon, M., *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010)

Prettejohn, E., *Rossetti and his Circle* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998)
ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting (New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 2007)
'Solomon, Swinburne, Sappho'*, Victorian Review,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 103-128
The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites (London: Tate Publishing, 2012)

Price, L., *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012)

Psomiades, K. A., 'Beauty's Body: Gender Ideology and British Aestheticism,' *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992) pp. 31-52

Roberts, H. E., 'The Dream World of Dante Gabriel Rossetti', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (Jun., 1974), pp. 371-393

Robsjohn-Gibbings, T. H., *Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947)

Rowling, J. K., *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005)

Schwartz, R. M., 'Joseph's Bones and the Resurrection of the Text: Remembering in the Bible', *PMLA,* Vol. 103, No. 2 (Mar. 1988), pp.

114-124

Showalter, E., *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle.* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 1991)

Simkin, S., *The Cultural Construction of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Simms, A., ed., *Knock Twice: 25 modern folktales for troubling times* (Charleston: CreateSpace, 2017)

Skorin-Kapov, J., *Darren Aronofsky's Films and the Fragility of Hope,* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015)

Smith, E. L., *Evelyn Picking De Morgan and the Allegorical Body.* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002)

Staley, A., *The New Painting of the 1860s: Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011)

Stallman, R. L., 'The Lovers' Progress: An Investigation of William Morris's 'The Defence of Guenevere' and 'King Arthur's Tomb'', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* Vol. 15, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1975) pp. 657-670

Stonell Walker, K., *Stunner: The Fall and Rise of Fanny Cornforth,* (CreateSpace, 2011)

Stott, R., *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death,* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996)

Surtees, V., *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A Catalogue Raisonné, Vol. 1*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)

Talbot, W. S., "A Victorian Portrait by Frederick Sandys", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art,* Vol. 67, No. 10 (Dec. 1980) pp. 299-309

Taylor, B., 'Female savants and the erotics of knowledge in Pre-Raphaelite art', in M. F. Watson, ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment,* (London: Scholar, 1997)

Taylor, M. R., 'Norfolk Folklore', *Folklore,* Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 30, 1929), pp. 113-133

Tickner, L., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Tate, 2003)

Tolkien, J. R. R., & Gordon, E. V., eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)

Underhill, E., *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness.* (1911; 12th ed., New York: E. P. Dutton & Company Inc., 1930)

Urban, H. B., "Magia Sexualis": Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Sept. 2004) pp. 695-731

Ussher, J., *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991)

Valente, C. M., 'The Bread We Eat in Dreams'*, Apex Magazine,* Issue 30 (2012)

Vassilika, E., *Greek and Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Waite, A. E., *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider, 1924)

Waligore, M., 'Artist-Sorceress: Photography and Digital Metamorphosis', *Leonardo,* Vol. 28, No. 4 (1995), pp. 249-256

Waltz, R. B., *Harry Potter's Folklore World: On Myth and Magic* (Connecticut: Loomis House Press, 2016)

Warner, M., *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995)

Weitz, G., "Love and Death in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* – an epic anticholinergic crisis." *The British Medical Journal.* Vol. 327, No. 7429 (Dec. 20, 2003) pp. 1469-1471

Werner, A., 'The Sad Ballad of Simeon Solomon', *The Kenyon Review,* Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer, 1960), pp. 392-393 + 395-407

Westmoreland, P. L., *Ancient Greek Beliefs* (San Ysidro, CA: Lee & Vance Publishing Company, 2007)

Willingham, B., *Fables: Legends in Exile* (Burbank: DC Comics, 2012)

Woolf, V., *A Room of One's Own* (New York: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1929)

Wright, J., 'A Reflection on Fiction and Art in "The Lady of Shalott"', *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), pp. 287-290

Zonana, J., ‘Matthew Arnold and The Muse: The Limits of the Olympian Ideal’, *Victorian Poetry,* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), pp. 59-74

Newspapers, Magazines, and Pamphlets:

Johnston, I., ‘Richard Dawkins on fairy tales: ‘I think it’s rather pernicious to inculcate a view of the world which includes supernaturalism’, *The Independent* (5 June 2014)

Kennedy, M., ‘From siren to asylum: the desperate last days of Fanny Cornforth’, *The Guardian,* (13 April 2015)

McCartney, J., ‘Richard Dawkins should know it pays to believe in fairy tales’, *The Telegraph* (7 June 2014)

Rosoff, M., ‘What Richard Dawkins could learn from Goldilocks and the Three Bears’, *The Guardian* (15 Sept. 2017)

Simms, A., ‘We need new fairy stories and folk tales to guide us out of today’s dark woods’, *The Guardian* (1 Nov. 2017)

Websites

Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, ‘Medea’, www.preraphaelites.org
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1925p105/medea/)

Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, ‘Oil Painting - A Deacon’
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(http://www.bmagic.org.uk/objects/2003.0174)

Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, ‘The Laboratory’,
www.preraphaelites.org
Accessed: 18/11/2017 (http://www.preraphaelites.org/the-collection/1904p481/the-laboratory)

‘Evelyn De Morgan’, The De Morgan Centre website.
Accessed: 27/12/2017.
(http://www.demorgan.org.uk/de-morgans/evelyn-de-morgan)

Flint, K., ‘Victorian Readers’, *British Library* website (May 2014)
Accessed: 10/05/2018
(https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/victorian-readers)

Stonell-Walker, K., ‘What is it that we know for sure?’, *The Kissed Mouth*

Accessed: 18/11/2017 (http://fannycornforth.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/what-is-it-that-we-know-for-sure.html)

Shakespeare, W., *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* c.1590-6.
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/full.html)

'The Knight Errant', *Tate Gallery*
Accessed: 18/11/2017
(http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-the-knight-errant-n01508/text-summary)

Film, Television and Video Games

Abrams, J. J., 2015. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Film. Los Angeles: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Arkane Studios, 2016. *Dishonored 2.* Playstation 4 Game. USA: Bethesda Softworks.

BioWare, 2011. *Dragon Age II.* Playstation 3 Game. USA: Electronic Arts Inc.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 'Dead Things'. TV Series. Directed by J. A. Contner. Written by S. S. DeKnight. United Paramount Network. First aired: Feb. 5th 2002.

Johnson, R., 2017. *Star Wars: The Last Jedi.* Film. Los Angeles: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Once Upon a Time. TV Series. Created by Kitsis, E. & A. Horowitz. American Broadcasting Company. First aired: Oct. 23rd 2011.

Lucas, G., 1977. *Star Wars.* Film. San Francisco: Lucasfilm Ltd.

Silicon Studio, 2013. *Bravely Default.* Nintendo 3DS Game. Worldwide: Nintendo.

Other Sources

'H.Res.642 - Recognizing magic as a rare and valuable art form and national treasure' (https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/642/text)

Unpublished Sources

Denman, A., ‘The Mother and the Maiden: Representations of Demeter and Persephone in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain’ (MA Diss., University of York, 2013)

Drawmer, L. J., ‘The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan’ (Ph.D. Diss., Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, 2001)



1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Laboratory,* 1849, Watercolour, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,* 1866–68, 1872–73, Oil on canvas, 965 × 851 mm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.



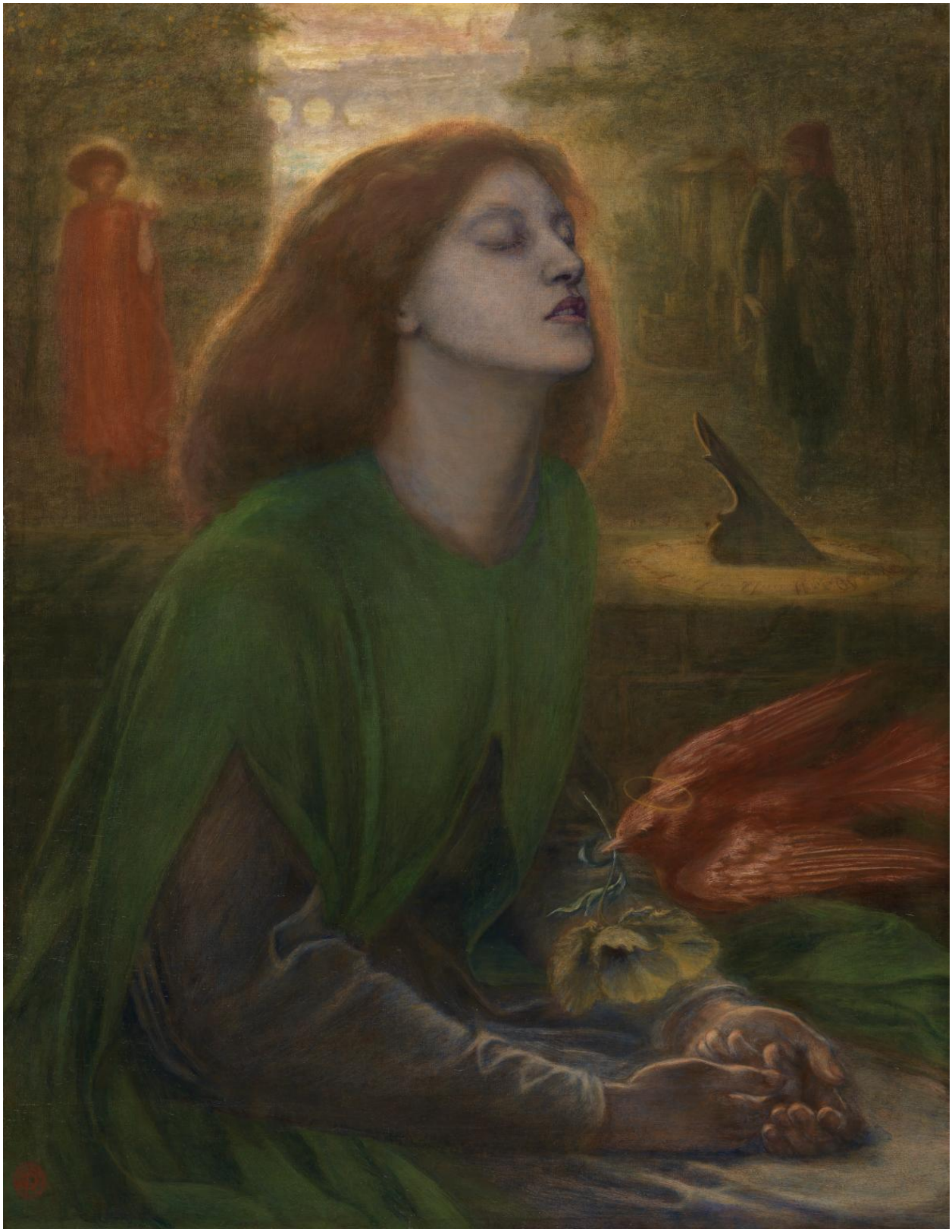
3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Sibylla Palmifera,* 1865-70, Oil on canvas, 984 x 850 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.



4. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Woman Combing Her Hair,* 1864, Watercolour, 343 × 311 mm, Private Collection.



5. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Fazio's Mistress (Aurelia)*, 1863-73, Oil on mahogany, Support: 432 x 368 mm, frame: 771 x 708 x 82 mm, Tate, London.



6. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix,* circa 1864-60, Oil on canvas, Support: 864 x 660 mm, frame: 1212 x 1015 x 104 mm, Tate, London.



7. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel,* circa 1875-81, Oil on canvas, 1110 x 827 mm; predella 365 x 828 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.



8. Frederick Sandys, *Morgan Le Fay,* 1863-64, Oil on panel, 437 x 618 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



9. Edward Burne-Jones, *Morgan Le Fay,* 1862, Oil on canvas, 965.2 × 482.6 mm, Leighton House Museum, London.



10. Cornelis Saftleven, *A Witches' Sabbath,* circa 1650, Oil on panel, 543 × 772 mm, Art Institute of Chicago.



11. Francisco Goya, *Witches' Sabbath,* 1797-98, Oil on canvas, 430 × 300 mm, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid.



12, Frederick Sandys, *Medea,* 1866-68, Oil on panel, 460 x 610 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



13. Frederick Sandys, *Vivien,* 1863, Oil on canvas, 640 x 525 mm, Manchester Art Gallery.



14. Frederick Sandys, *La Belle Isolde,* 1862, Oil on canvas, Private collection.



15. Frederick Sandys, *Cassandra,* Before 1904, Private collection.



16. Joseph Swain, after Frederick Sandys, *Helen and Cassandra,* 1866, Wood engraving, Composition: 176 × 124 mm; sheet: 183 × 130 mm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.



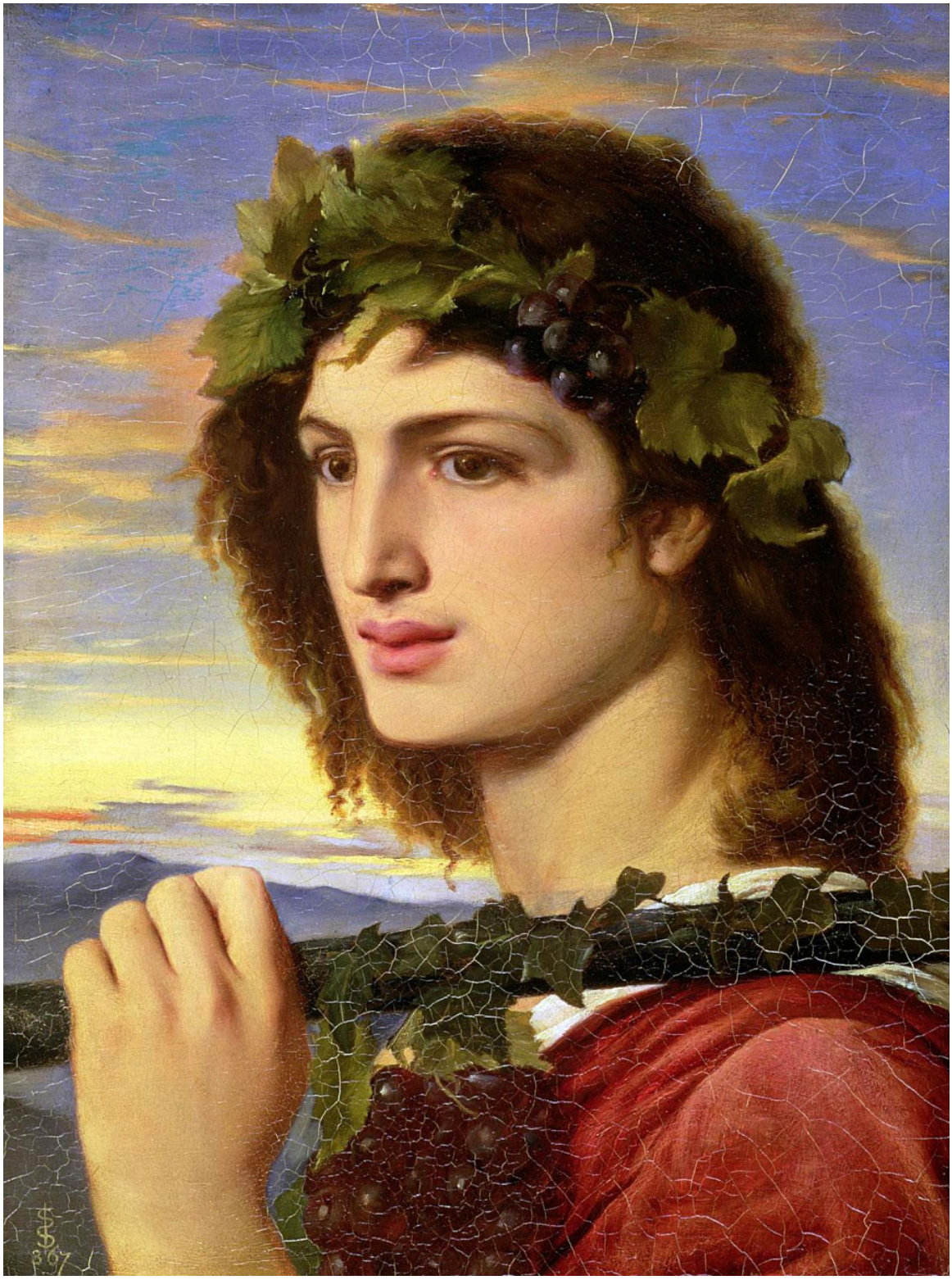
17. Frederick Sandys, *Helen of Troy,* circa. 1867, Oil on panel, Panel: 384 x 305 x 780 mm; frame: 648 x 559 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



18. Evelyn De Morgan, *Cassandra,* 1898, Oil on canvas, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.



19. Evelyn De Morgan, *Helen of Troy,* 1898, Oil on canvas, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.



20. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus,* 1867, Oil on canvas, 503 x 375 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



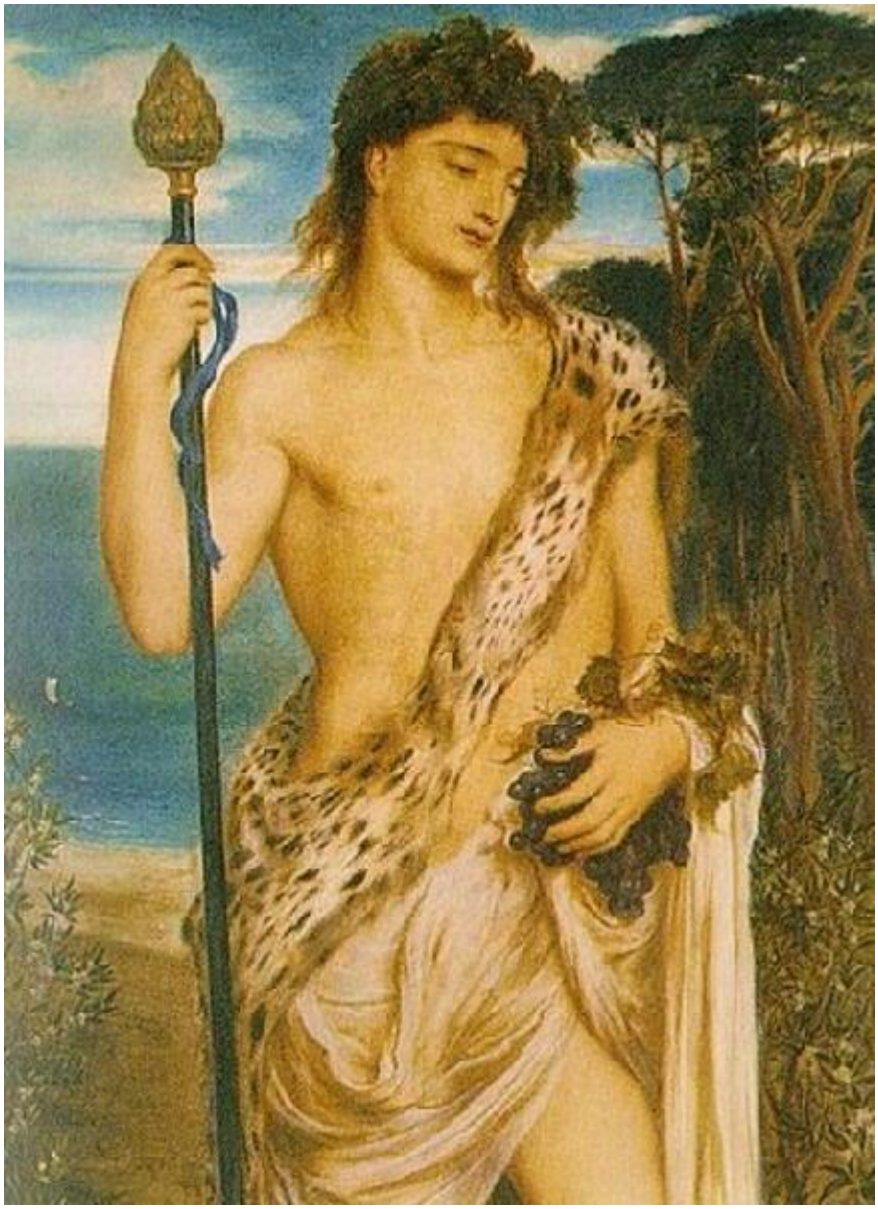
21. Simeon Solomon, *The Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love,* 1865, Pen on paper, 250 x 194 mm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



22. Simeon Solomon, *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mitylene,* 1864*,* Watercolour on paper, Support: 330 x 381 mm; frame: 511 x 558 x 46 mm, Tate, London.



23. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Autumn Vintage Festival,* 1873, Oil on canvas, 753 x 381 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



24. Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus,* 1867, Watercolour on paper, Private collection.



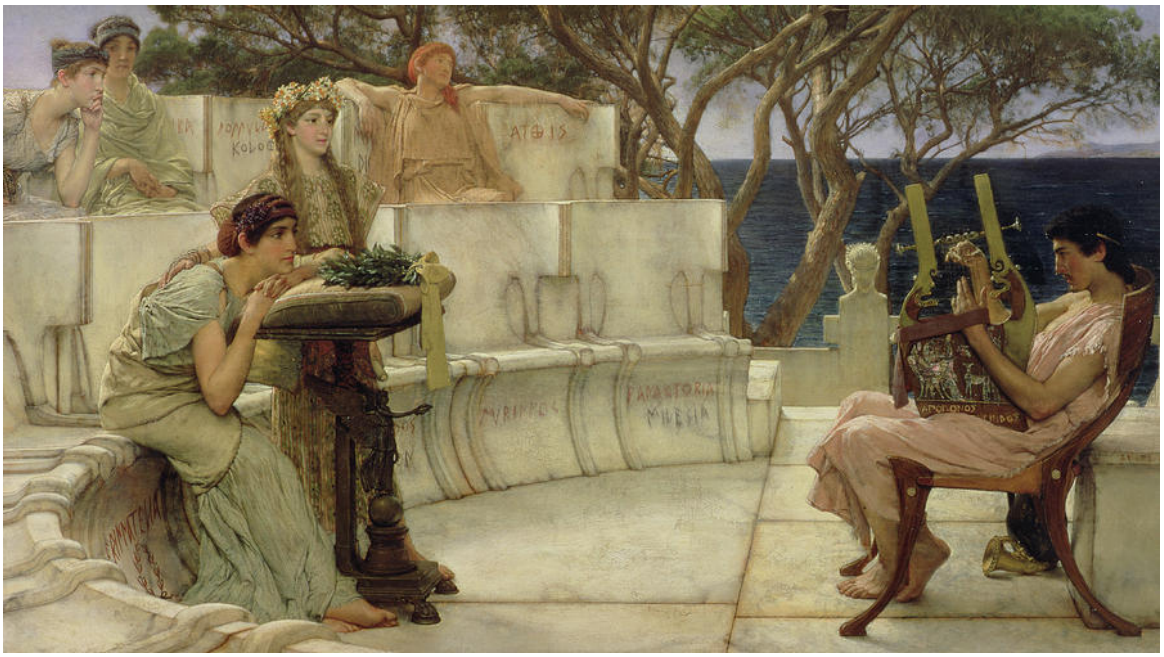
25. Simeon Solomon, *The Acolyte (A Jewish King and his Page),* 1873, Watercolour, 216 x 216 mm, Dublin City Art Gallery.



26. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Wizard,* 1896-98, Oil on canvas, 555 x 930 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



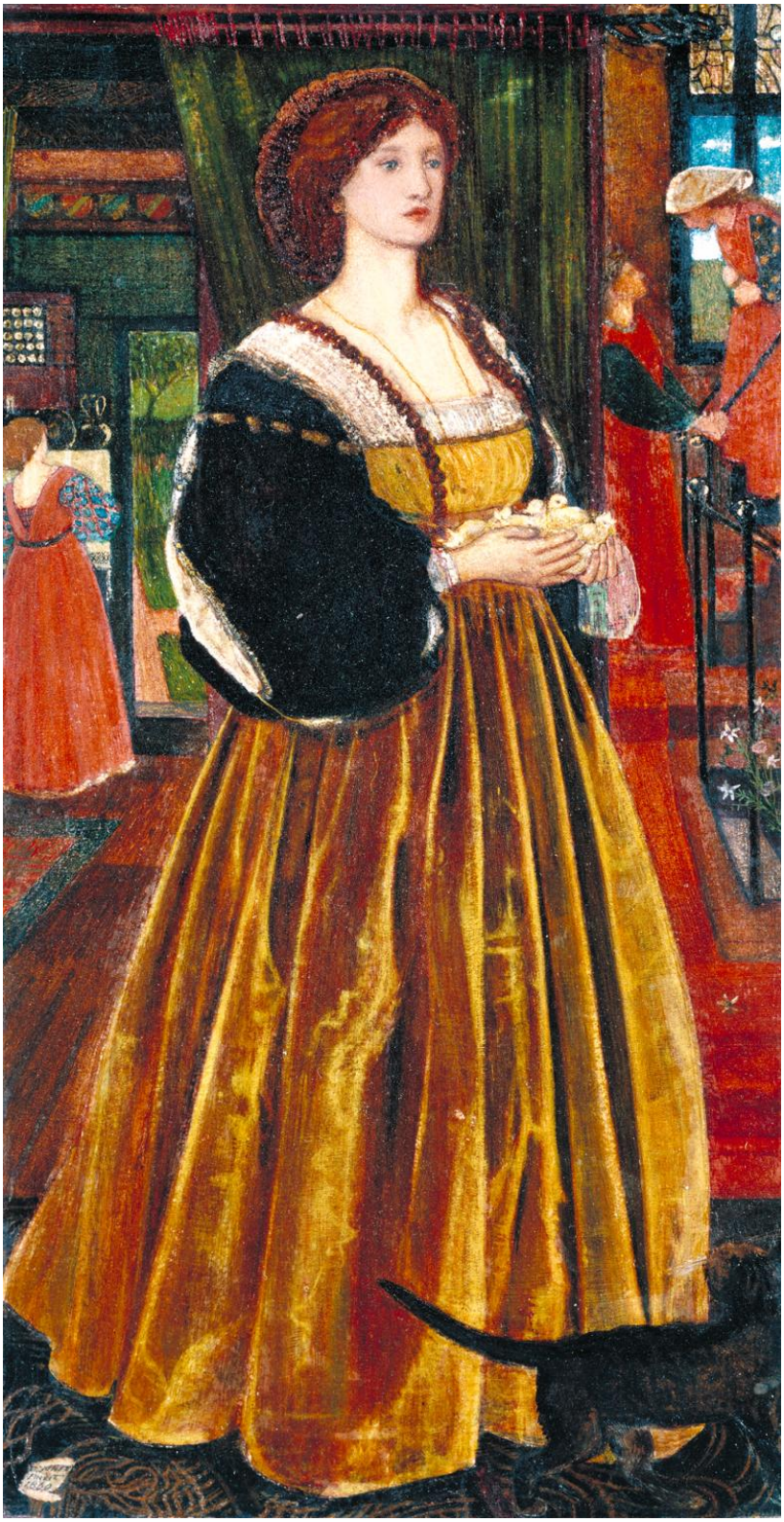
27. Marie Spartali Stillman, *Madonna Pietra degli Scrovegni,* 1884, Watercolour and gouache, 785 x 611 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



28. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Sappho and Alcaeus,* 1881, Oil on panel, Support: 660 x 1220 mm; frame: 1041.4 x 1549.4 mm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



29. Simeon Solomon, *The Magic Crystal (Study: Male Figure),* 1878, Oil on paper, 320 x 181 mm, Manchester Art Gallery.



30. Edward Burne-Jones, *Clara von Bork 1560,* 1860, Watercolour and gouache on paper, 342 x 179 mm, Tate, London.



31. Edward Burne-Jones, *Sidonia von Bork 1560,* 1860,
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 333 x 171 mm, Tate, London.



32. Edward Burne-Jones, *Merlin and Nimue,* 1857-59, Wall Mural, Oxford Union Society.



33. Edward Burne-Jones, *Merlin and Nimue,* 1861, Watercolour, 942 x 815 mm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



34. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin,* 1872-7, Oil on canvas, 186 x 111 mm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.



35. Edward Burne-Jones, *Witch's Tree,* 1905, Colour facsimile, Collotype Print, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



36. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Days of Creation,* 1870-76, Watercolor, gouache, shell gold, and platinum paint on linen-covered panel, Cambridge, MA: Fogg Museum.



37. Evelyn De Morgan, *The Love Potion,* 1903, Oil on canvas, 1041 mm × 521 mm, De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.



38. Edmund Blair Leighton, *Tristan and Isolde,* 1902, Oil on canvas, 1285 x 1473 mm, Private collection.



39. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Invidiosa,* 1892, Oil on canvas, 1807 x 364 mm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.



40. Marie Spartali Stillman, *Brewing the Love Philtre (Pharmakeutia),* 1869, Watercolour, 520 x 470 mm, Private collection.



41. John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Odysseus,* 1891, Oil on canvas, 1480 x 920 mm, Gallery Oldham, Greater Manchester.



42. Evelyn De Morgan, *Medea,* 1889, Oil on canvas, Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead.



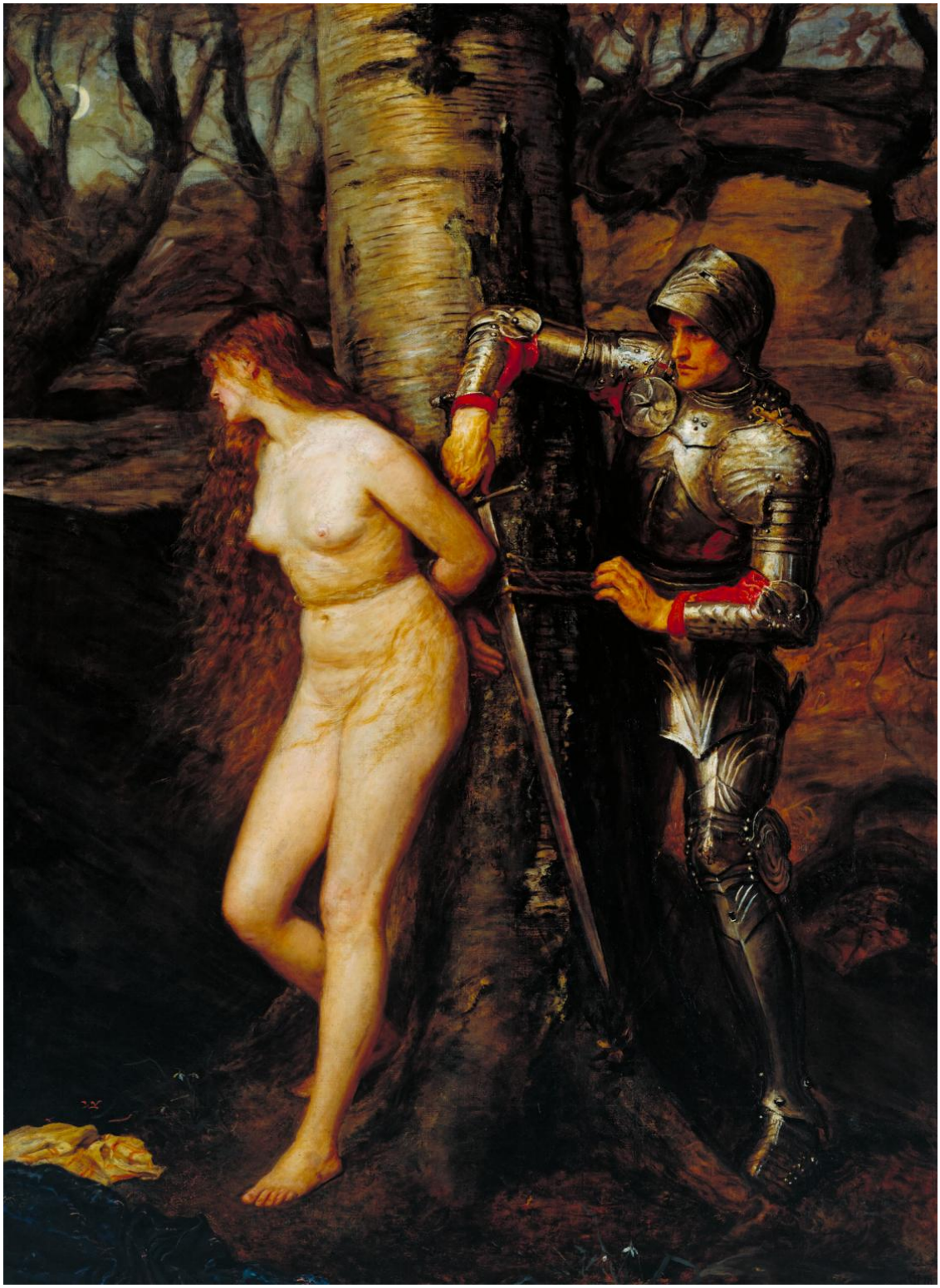
43. John William Waterhouse, *Jason and Medea,* 1907, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.



44. Evelyn De Morgan, *The Martyr (Nazuraea),* 1882, Oil on canvas, 2120 mm x 1023 mm, Southwark Art Collection, London.



45. John Everett Millais, *The Martyr of the Solway,* 1871, Oil on canvas, 5650 mm x 7050 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



46. John Everett Millais, *The Knight Errant,* 1870, Oil on canvas, Support: 1841 mm x 1353 mm; frame: 2200 mm x 1708 mm x 160 mm, Tate, London.



47. Edward Burne-Jones, *Laus Veneris,* 1873-8, Oil on canvas, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.



48. Evelyn De Morgan, *Hope in the Prison of Despair,* 1887, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.



49. John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1888, Oil on canvas, Support: 1530 mm x 2000 mm; frame: 2000 mm x 2460 mm x 230 mm, Tate Britain, London.



50. William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1905, Oil on canvas, 1180 mm x 1461 mm, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT.



51. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Lady of Shalott,* Illustration from 'Poems by Alfred Tennyson', Wood engraving by Dalziel brothers after Rossetti's design, published 1857, 9.4 x 8cm, Stephen Calloway.



52. John Atkinson Grimshaw, *The Lady of Shalott,* circa 1875, Oil on canvas, 610 x 914 mm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.



53. John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott,* 1894, Oil on canvas, Leeds City Art Gallery.



54. Sidney Harold Meteyard, "*I Am Half-Sick of Shadows,*" *Said the Lady of Shalott,* 1913, Oil on canvas, Private collection.



55. John William Waterhouse, *The Crystal Ball,* 1902, Oil on canvas, 1207 mm x 877 mm, Private Collection