'Young While the Earth is Old | And, Subtly of Herself Contemplative':

Investigating the Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Neo-Victorian Visions of Femininity

Helen Victoria Murray

Master of Arts (M.A)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Research (MRes), English Literature

School of Critical Studies

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

August 2018

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Acknowledgements

I owe my sincerest gratitude to the people listed below.

To my academic supervisors, Dr Matthew Creasy and Professor Alice Jenkins. Thank you for your astute advice, ready availability, references, resources, occasional pep talks and constant calm in the storm.

I am also grateful to Professor Christine Ferguson of Stirling University, who first inspired me as a Neo-Victorianist, and who encouraged this project from its conception.

To my colleagues from the MRes cohort: Caroline Evans Abbott, Connor Schofield Mellor and Emma Jayne Shores. Thank you for the support, commiserations, hilarity, and sloth gifs. I can't wait to watch you succeed.

To my family, for your constant love and unflagging support of your difficult literary child. Truly, I would be nowhere without you.

To my many other colleagues, friends, and beloveds. Thank you for being there to remind me that I am enough and encouraging me to be my best self, even so. There are too many of you to name individually, but I hope each of you knows who you are and how much you change me for the better.

To myself, the person women in academia are most prone to forget: you wrote, researched, funded and survived this. This achievement is your own.

Finally, I inscribe this work to the memories of Elizabeth Siddal, Jane Burden Morris, Fanny Hughes Cornforth, Annie Miller, Alexa Wilding and the many women whose brilliance and compassion we forget for the sake of adoring and consuming an image.

Introduction
The Pre-Raphaelite Metonym and the Neo-Victorian Woman

Of the multifarious culture texts and cultural influences which go into writing Neo-Victorianism, there is a near-ubiquitous influence which has been overlooked in the criticism. This influence is the art, aesthetics and biographies of the Victorian art movement known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This movement originated with the artists Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais in 1848, but would later take on other followers, notably Edward Burne Jones and William Morris, and critical support from John Ruskin. The PRB was an enduring, culturally influential group of artists, poets and critics whose work influenced much of the nineteenth century. Crucially, in a philosophy which can be read as similar to Neo-Victorianism, the Pre-Raphaelites looked backwards into history for expression of their ideals. Their preferred narratives and aesthetics were that of the medieval period – their name, literally meaning 'before Raphael', while their stories and artworks incorporated the Victorian (re)interpretation of myth and chivalry. Why and how has Pre-Raphaelitism become a metonym for Victorian femininity in Neo-Victorian literature and culture? This is the central question of this research thesis. Using texts from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I examine the figure of the Pre-Raphaelite woman, how she is encoded metonymically, to recreate the Victorian era.

1. Neo-Victorianism

Neo-Victorian literature and culture has been the subject of interest for scholars in Victorian studies since the 1990s. Previous studies of historical novels which adapt or revise nineteenth-century forms emphasise their postmodernity and historiographic metafictionality. However, such studies did not account for the proliferation of texts in the late twentieth century, specifically interested in Victorian re-imaginings. In 1997, Sally

Shuttleworth wrote on the need to understand this literary phenomenon, which she termed the 'retro-Victorian novel.'[1] Shuttleworth argues that the 'retro-Victorian' text sprung out of the cultural moment of the late twentieth century, where the 'second order loss' of postmodernism yearns for the defined ideological boundaries of the nineteenth century, which allows for both crisis and authentic human development.[2] For Shuttleworth, following Frederic Jameson's nostalgia model, Neo-Victorianism symbolises the death of history, where pastiche (an implicitly denigrated form) demonstrates our desperation for a return to the past which can alleviate our modern ontological displacement.[3] In the same year, Dana Shiller used the term 'neo-Victorian' to describe how Victorian historical novels recuperate and revise historical events.[4] Shiller reconsiders Shuttleworth's Jamesonian reading of Neo-Victorianism as part of the nostalgia mode. She instead contends that the Neo-Victorian text seeks not to clarify and reproduce empirical Victorian knowledge, but 'enact ambiguities and confusion' which demand our investment in historical injustice.[5]

In 2001, Christian Gutleben sought to further these arguments in *Nostalgic Postmodernism,* a text which ambitiously delineates differences between 'retro-Victorian' and 'Neo-Victorian' by examining the reproductions of Victorian forms and narrative conventions. Gutleben provides comprehensive reading of the different directions in Neo-Victorianism, arguing that the reproduction of Victorian narrative necessitates formal and ideological conservatism.[6] Cora Kaplan's *Victoriana* (2007) examines our recent 'desire to know and "own" the Victorian past through its remains.'[7] Kaplan reads the consumption of

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[1] Sally Shuttleworth, 'Natural History: The Retro-Victorian Novel', in *The Third Culture: Literature and Science*, ed. by Elinor S. Schaffer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 253-268, p. 253.

[2] Shuttleworth, p.260.

[3] Shuttleworth, p.266.

[4] Dana Shiller, 'The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel,' *Studies in the Novel* 29.4 (1997), pp. 538-560, p.540.

[5] Shiller, p.550.

[6] Christian Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition in the Contemporary British Novel* (Amsterdam, New York: 2001), p.16.

[7] Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticisms* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.1.

Victorian culture and the recreation of it across different forms, from the reception of culture texts, through literary biography, material culture and historical fiction.

In 2010, Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn presented *Neo-Victorianism*, a comprehensive critical analysis of Neo-Victorian texts in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This text marked a critical milestone in the field, which acknowledges that as the field of Neo-Victorian criticism expands, it has become necessary to step beyond questions of form, and self-reflexivity to examine the 'metatextual and metahistorical conjunctions' interacting in 'fields of exchange and adaptation between the Victorian and the contemporary.' [8] Heilmann and Llewellyn ask readers to consider the aesthetics as well as the ethics of the Neo-Victorian mode. [9] They approach Neo-Victorianism from a reconsideration of the prefix 'Neo', encouraging us to consider its multiplicity of forms and styles, and their function in contemporaneity, rather than their impact on our relationship with the past.[10]

These seminal Neo-Victorian critics set up major debates for the field: is Neo-Victorianism a vehicle for social critique of our past, or a nostalgic desire to recreate it? Does its popularity offer restitution to the oppressed, or enforce the voice of the oppressor? Is there a marked distinction between Neo-Victorian high culture and low culture? And where in these debates do questions of modern aesthetics and temporality lie?

2. Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism: An Unexamined Influence

It is rare to find a Neo-Victorian text which does not feature, or at least reference, the Pre-Raphaelites. Pre-Raphaelite art has become a referent for our present-day vision of the Victorian. One only needs to look at the visual appearance of a Neo-Victorian novel, to see

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[8] Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.4.
[9] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p.10.
[10] Heilmann and Llewellyn, pp. 23-24.

reproductions or graphic re-imaginings of Pre-Raphaelite art. Then, looking to the text, we find Pre-Raphaelite influences and references. It is common to find a famous Pre-Raphaelite figure wandering across the reimagined cobblestones of (Neo-)Victorian London. Sometimes they are fictionalised into a protagonist; sometimes they are a background character. Very often, these characters are women, contemplating their relationship with the art world they inhabit; or else they are male painters, seeking women whose image they may capture, and whose bodies they may romance while seeking an artistic ideal.

Neo-Victorian writers use Pre-Raphaelite artists and their art to comment on images and norms of femininity in the nineteenth century. Recreating that world, Pre-Raphaelitism and its members are a convenient metonym. Indeed, the ubiquity of Pre-Raphaelite figures and images in Neo-Victorian writing is so prevalent as to have become a trope to be reimagined and played with. To illustrate the prevalence of this effect (and how it may be interrogated), *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) provides an interesting example. Describing his heroine's unfashionable, yet otherworldly beauty, Faber writes of Sugar:

> Oh, she's read about the Pre-Raphaelites in journals, but that's as far as it goes; she wouldn't know Burne-Jones or Rossetti if they fell on top of her. (Nor is such a collision likely, given the statistical improbability: two painters, two hundred thousand prostitutes.[11]

Faber's description of Sugar – her simultaneous alignment with and rejection of Pre-Raphaelitism – plays with an expectation already present in the reader's mind. A century's worth of Neo-Victorian texts, paired with the enduring popularity of the PRB's artworks have created a contemporary view of Victorian femininity that follows the Pre-Raphaelite pattern. In her lack of interest in Pre-Raphaelitism, her rejection of its aesthetics, and the absence of its members from her life, Faber demonstrates that Sugar is an unusual Neo-

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[11] Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 39.

Victorian woman. Sugar's rejection of Pre-Raphaelitism is a significant inclusion, one that points out that we have come to expect Neo-Victorian femininity to follow a pattern formed in a Pre-Raphaelite mould.

Neo-Victorianism centres and commentates upon womanhood and the unique, often complex role of women in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. In this thesis, I trace the chronology of the Pre-Raphaelite influence through the twentieth century, establishing a timeline of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism which predates the accepted commencement of the literary movement in the 1960s. I begin with H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red* (1948), a biofictional retelling of the life of Elizabeth Siddal which features crucial qualities of Neo-Victorian literature rather earlier in the timeline than has commonly been discussed. In Chapter Two, I compare John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) with Ken Russell's *Dante's Inferno* (1967), a contemporaneous film re-imagining the biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This demonstrates the creative reimagination of biography and the biographilic subject within the context of postmodern artifice. Finally, in Chapter Three, I examine feminist texts of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century: A.S Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and *The Children's Book* (2008), and Joanne Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister* (1993). These three novels demonstrate how the transformation of Pre-Raphaelite women's actual biographies into fictional character archetypes allows for a more empowering depiction of the women, as well as illustrating further development in the Pre-Raphaelite influence.

3. (Re) Defining Women's Role in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

Despite referring to themselves as a 'Brotherhood' (with all the maleness that implies), the Pre-Raphaelite art movement is often associated with femininity. Those drawn aesthetically to the rich costumes and sensuality of the paintings, the chivalric and romantic elements of

Pre-Raphaelite poetry will find certainly find an idealised female figure.[12] The artists referred to the women in these paintings as 'Stunners.' Their flame-red hair, uncannily long, languorous limbs and melancholy expressions became iconic imagery associated with the PRB. Yet the women of the Pre-Raphaelite movement are not only of interest because of how they are used in art. Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is more than an aesthetic motif. The women of the circle had complex histories and artistic talents of their own. Elizabeth Siddal, famed for being discovered by the artist Walter Deverell in a milliner's shop and later tragically romanced by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was a talented poet and painter in her own right. Jane Morris, wife of William Morris and lover of Rossetti became an accomplished embroiderer and woman of letters. Fanny Cornforth, portrayed as only a mistress, model and Victorian loose woman, was a loyal and vocal supporter of the Brotherhood throughout her life. These are just some of the instances of how Pre-Raphaelite women's lives have been simplified to fit into the structures of narrative and archetype.

William Holman Hunt recalls at the foundation of the Brotherhood in 1848, 'some of us drew up a declaration that there was no immortality for humanity except that which was gained by man's own genius or heroism.'[13] The maleness of this statement stands out. While Hunt's phrase can of course be read as man equalling humanity, the substance of their declaration points to a canonisation of male role models. The Pre-Raphaelite 'List of Immortals', compiled as a manifesto of Pre-Raphaelite influences, features only two women on the list (see Appendix 1, Fig 1). These women are a martyr – Joan of Arc – and a poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Isobel Armstrong calls the presence of these two women in the list, 'an indicator of the group's sexual politics, and a muted but perceptible feminism.'[14] Julie Codell argues in a similarly progressive tone that at the formation of their Brotherhood,

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[12] Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (London: Quartet Books, 1985), p. 1.

[13] William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), p. 158.

[14] Isobel Armstrong, 'The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*, Ed. by Elizabeth Prettejohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 15-31, p. 17.

the Pre-Raphaelites resisted the highly structured, patriarchal environment of the Royal Academy of Art, and that their eclectic List of Immortals reflects a 'jumble approach [...] a reaction against the orderly imposed canons of their Academic training [...] an unruly list without a narrative.'[15] As these critics suggest, there are indicators of progressivism in the inclusion of women within the history of the PRB. However, canonical works by male Pre-Raphaelites reflect the division of the female subject into artist's subject, rather than autonomous creator. The presence of these two women in a chiefly male list is testament to the men's beliefs about artistic immortality. The act of creation immortalises the artist, and not their subject. The most that can be said of the list is that the Brotherhood were not unaware of the artistic credibility of women – that female artistic immortality was possible in their view.

Historically speaking, audiences receive the image of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, and chase their biography with an already idealised vision. 'Pre-Raphaelite Womanhood' is therefore both an aesthetic and a biographic term. Rather than examining the complex gender politics within the original source texts of Pre-Raphaelite art and literature, my purpose in this research is to examine the reception of such gendered discourse in our contemporary culture: how it is read and rewritten as part of what Heilmann and Llewellyn define as the Neo-Victorian 'act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians.'[16]

4. Popular Perceptions of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman

Recent popular art criticism has suggested (with merely anecdotal evidence) that for modern audiences, women are the demographic most interested in Pre-Raphaelitism. Johnathan Jones remarks that:

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[15] Julie Codell, 'Dismantling the Canon: The Pre-Raphaelite List of Immortals' in *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, (2018) 27, pp. 5-21, p. 8.

[16] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 4.

Few dead white male artists are as popular as Rossetti and co, despite a near total condemnation by modern critics. Even a senior curator at Tate Britain recently expressed to me his dislike of these artists - but what can Tate Britain do? As he said, if they don't show the Pre-Raphaelites they get complaints from "teenage girls."[17]

Several gender-biased assumptions are at work in this statement: on one hand, that young women have the cultural and commercial power to dictate to world-famous art galleries. On the other hand, that by favouring the Pre-Raphaelites, their poor taste is implicitly linked to their gender and therefore inferior; we cannot ignore the arch tone of those quotation marks.

Women's identification with Pre-Raphaelite art is very much bound up in femininity. It is the fact that the Pre-Raphaelite woman's image is generally filtered through the male gaze that leads Lisa Tickner to remark that in Pre-Raphaelite painting:

The viewer is tacitly implied as male, although this has not undermined the popularity of such images with young girls, who, tending to narcissistic self-absorption, cheerfully identity with the gorgeously fetishised object of a desiring gaze.[18]

I do not dispute Tickner's analysis of desire and fetishization within Pre-Raphaelitism, but her reading shames women who see themselves within such images. Although here they are questionable in their reasoning, we should not underestimate the importance of such popular perceptions. Given that Neo-Victorianism is as much a pop culture phenomenon as an academic term, and the gallery-going public encounter these interpretations before more nuanced critical works, they are worth considering as textual artefacts demonstrating our contemporary cultural engagement with Victorian art. Tickner's and Jones's commentaries

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[17] Johnathan Jones, 'We Can't Escape the Pre-Raphaelites' , *The Guardian*, Wednesday 16 May 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2007/may/16/wecantescapethepreraphaeli [accessed 16/11/2017].

[18] Lisa Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), p. 42.

do not offer a satisfactory answer as to why Pre-Raphaelite images, symbols, aesthetics, and historical figures endure as popular influences upon contemporary arts. Nor do they satisfactorily enquire into why the centrality of womanhood is such an integral part of Pre-Raphaelitism's appeal to the contemporary audience. Are we really to believe that young women desire to see themselves objectified? Or that they relish the specific kinds of objectification present in art and literature of the nineteenth century?

5. Critical Analysis of the Pre-Raphaelite Woman

While such views as Tickner's and Jones's are part of public discourse about Pre-Raphaelitism, scholars of art history and critical studies can provide a more nuanced reading of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. Rather than falling prey to outdated assumptions that women secretly crave objectification, we should consider that contemporary audiences identify not only with the beauty, but with the power of femininity in Pre-Raphaelite art. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries – a period concomitant with the rise of Neo-Victorianism – critics have recovered and re-evaluated both the artistic value of Pre-Raphaelite women's works and the complex theoretical position they hold as figures, symbols and signs. The 1980s saw a period of biographical reclamation by authors such as Jan Marsh, whose books, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (1985) and *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* (1988), attempt to flesh out the biographies of Pre-Raphaelite women and clearly demarcate historic record from subsequent recreation.

As attempts were made to reclaim women's biographies, critics used semiotic analysis to examine Pre-Raphaelite womanhood as a textual referent. One such key text is 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature', in which Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock explain how Pre-Raphaelitism takes ownership even of Siddal's name, to transform

her into a sign, made in their image, after their aesthetics.[19] For Cherry and Pollock, the changing of Siddal's name by the Pre-Raphaelite circle from 'Siddall' to 'Siddal' represents a complete declaration of ownership of Siddal on the part of the PRB: 'An historical personage is thus transformed into a construct of Pre-Raphaelite literature.'[20] 'Elizabeth Siddal' is a property for debate in feminist politics. The uncertainty around her name places Siddal(l) at the locus of a debate that is theoretical as well as historiographic. Elisabeth Bronfen includes this figuration in *Over Her Dead Body* (1992). Examining the transformation from 'animate body to inanimate text', Bronfen uses Pre-Raphaelite womanhood as a case study.[21] For Bronfen, Siddal exemplifies, 'a sign that does not simply refer to a historical woman or even Woman, but rather whose signified is masculine creativity.'[22] These readings lay the groundwork for understanding Pre-Raphaelite womanhood as unfixed and mutable – a historic icon turned into a sign whose meaning is interpreted through the structures of patriarchy. Much like in Yopie Prins's investigation of the declension of Sappho's name:

> Out of scattered texts, an idea of the original woman poet and the body of her song could be hypothesized in retrospect: an imaginary totalization, imagined in the present and projected into the past.[23]

Like Sappho, the actual texts of Pre-Raphaelite women's lives are fragmentary, yet their referent haunts each contemporary period in which they are reimagined.

Kathy Alexis Psomiades has written on the commodification of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's body and selfhood in *Beauty's Body*, arguing that femininity is the mediating force

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[19] Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: The Representation of Elizabeth Siddall' (1984), in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 91-114, p. 93.

[20] Cherry and Pollock, p. 95.

[21] Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.58-59.

[22] Bronfen, p.173.

[23] Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) p.3.

between the high ideals of aestheticism and the commodity culture of the art market that enables aestheticism to exist.[24] In this text, feminine duality is emphasised by Psomiades, as a way of understanding the mediation between the aesthetic and the economic functions of art. The Pre-Raphaelite woman is the mediating sign and unifying ideological conceit, a model which can be seen expanded in her role in Neo-Victorian culture. Meanwhile, J.B Bullen writes on the embodiment of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, in *The Pre-Raphaelite Body*, situating the female form as the locus for ideological projection, variously pathologized, used as the vehicle for the philosophical challenges of Victorian sexuality and integrity of male self, and ultimately the target for the public debates which would emerge in second wave Pre-Raphaelitism.[25] Recently, interest in Pre-Raphaelite womanhood has extended even to the symbology of their individual body parts, such as Louise Tondeur's essay 'Elizabeth Siddal's Hair: A Methodology for Queer Reading', which reads Siddal's iconic hair through Julia Kristeva as a queer force generating disruption and spectral return.[26] In analysing the subversive bodies of the Pre-Raphaelite women, Victorianists across disciplines reclaim the power of Pre-Raphaelite woman's body and identity. This power, repressed by the canon, can be reclaimed in Neo-Victorian fiction. The popularity of both the original Pre-Raphaelite source texts and the Neo-Victorian re-interpretations, speak to a continuity of interest in women, their narratives and their power.

6. Methods: Biographilia

Biographilia is a term coined by Cora Kaplan in *Victoriana.* Describing the phenomenon of biography-fetishism in both fiction and non-fiction markets, 'biographilia' describes both 'life writing's renaissance' in modern biographies of prominent Victorians, and 'the

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[24] Kathy Alexis Psomiades, *Beauty's Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford University Press, 1997), p.3.
[25] J.B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry and Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.3-4.
[26] Louise Tondeur, 'Elizabeth Siddal's Hair: A Methodology for Queer Reading', *Women: A Cultural Review* (2011) 22.4, pp. 320-386.

novelisation of biography.'[27] It is a phenomenon which repeatedly reoccurs about the Pre-Raphaelites. While other biographical subjects have been explored in Neo-Victorian criticism – such as Dickensian, Jamesian and Wildean archetypes, there are only brief mentions of the significant role Pre-Raphaelite biography has played in creating Neo-Victorian character.[28] Biographilia is partly a function of the commodification of Victorian figures. As Gutleben acknowledges, 'Its commercial approach [does] not hesitate to advertise, foreground and exploit the names, texts and illustrations of Victorian celebrities.'[29] Gutleben reads cynical commercial exploitation of the famous name into the retro-Victorian novel, treating it as evidence of the lack of radical subversion in the mode. Heilmann and Llewellyn have pointed out that:

> Fictional and factual individuals are blurred to the extent that the text cannot help but highlight the ways in which the derivative nature of neo-Victorianism consumes the figures it seeks to emulate.[30]

As Tracy Hargreaves has highlighted, '"real" historical figures have been subjected to postmodern, gendered and humanist explorations', as various authors reconstruct the Victorians according to the forms and imaginings of their period.[31] These phrases, 'exploitation,' 'consumption,' and 'subjection' all suggest that the modern text in some way resurrects the names of Victorian figures for somehow abusive ends. As we will see from the idealised biographies I examine in this thesis, biography is as much used as a means of fictionalising history as it is to legitimise fiction. For example, Franny Moyle's biography of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, *Desperate Romantics,* opens with a disclaimer that much of the

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[27] Kaplan, pp.40; 65.

[28] Georges Letissier, 'Neo-Characterization in the Neo-Victorian Novel', *E-rea* (2015) 13.1, pp.1-16, http://journals.openedition.org/erea/4834 [accessed 10/01/2018], pp.3-4.

[29] Gutleben, p.218.

[30] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p.19.

[31] Tracy Hargreaves, '"We Other Victorians": Literary Victorian Afterlives' in *Journal of Victorian Culture* (2008) 13.2, pp.278-286, p.282.

content of the book is 'conjecture, but based on actual facts and events.'[32] The popular 2009 BBC drama of the same name is made in this spirit, adapting Moyle's sensational conjectures, rather than the biography itself. The biographilic influence is one way to explain the enduring status of the Pre-Raphaelite woman as Neo-Victorian referent, not just as an individual or a Victorian sign, but as a figure adaptable to the age of reinvention.

7. Methods: Hauntology

Coined by Jacques Derrida in his examination of the spectral return of the Marxist figure, hauntology has become a critical term enabling examination of both actual spectres in fiction, and the spectral return of literary forms and textual presences. *Specters of Marx* (1994) reacts to the apparent end of Communism and the coming of neo-liberalism at the end of the twentieth century, by invoking the Spectre of the opening of *The Communist Manifesto* to declare, after Hamlet that 'the time is out of joint', the order of history disrupted.[33] As William Hughes interprets,

> The present exists only with respect to the past, and the state of liberal democracy at the
>
> 20th-century fin de siècle—which is itself a political situation far removed
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> from Marx's predicted triumph of communism over capitalism—has engendered
>
> an inclination to read the "ghosts" of past history, namely those ideas that at
>
> times may be regarded as residual, bizarre, or less than academic.[34]

The term puns on 'ontology' and the French pronunciation of the English word 'haunt.' The deconstructive analysis of temporality and temporal disjunction has been taken up in critical studies. It is this emphasis on hauntology as a theory for understanding the disrupted

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[32] Franny Moyle, *Desperate Romantics: The Private Lives of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: John Murray, 2009*)*, p.1.

[33] Jacques Derrida*, Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International,* trans. by Peggy Kamuf, (1994) (London: Routledge, 2006), p.96.

[34] William Hughes, *Historical Dictionary of Gothic Literature* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013), p.137.

temporality of contemporary fiction, and particularly Neo-Victorian fiction, which I find most useful in my investigation of the Pre-Raphaelite woman. For Mark Fisher, Derrida's hauntology is the logical progression of deconstruction, from the trace and *différance*. If deconstruction argues for existence based on a system of absences which dictate its structure, hauntology enters temporality into that model.[35] In defining the uses and limits of hauntology for reading contemporary culture, Fisher explains:

> We can distinguish two directions in hauntology. The first refers to that which is (in actuality is) *no longer,* but which is still effective as a virtuality (the traumatic "compulsion to repeat", a structure that repeats, a fatal pattern)/ The second refers to that which (in actuality) has *not yet* happened, but which is *already* effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behaviour).[36] (Italics Fisher's).

Both hauntological directions are present in the figure of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman. Her continual resurrection in the Neo-Victorian text represents the compulsion to repeat trauma and to indulge the uncanny of the Pre-Raphaelite woman-as-sign, as examined by Pollock, Cherry and Bronfen. However, the temporal dislocation of the Neo-Victorian text, which immerses the reader in a fictive Victorian present allows for Fisher's second definition. The anticipation of the Pre-Raphaelite heroine's aesthetic death shapes her fictional construction and continually influences the reader's experience of her textual present.

Julian Wolfreys's compelling monograph, *Victorian Hauntings* (2001), provides another hauntological model for reading Victorian literature. Wolfreys outlines the structural significance of haunting and spectrality, tracing its application to the Gothic genre, and its implications as a potentiality to disrupt any text or ideology.[37] However, Wolfreys focuses

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[35] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p.17
[36] Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly* (2012) 66.1, pp.16-24, p.19.
[37] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, The Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 22-23.

on original nineteenth century texts without the additional dimension of the self-reflexive Neo-Victorian novel form, or the additional temporal fragmentation of a writing perspective from our current time. Linking this temporal fragmentation to Neo-Victorianism, Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham build upon Wolfreys's foundation in their edited essay collection, *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2009). In their introduction, Arias and Pulham unite the fields of hauntological criticism with Neo-Victorian studies. As they point out, 'the Victorian age is spectralized and appears as a ghostly apparition in contemporary literature [opening] up multiple possibilities for re-enactment, re-imagining and reinterpretation.'[38] For Arias and Pulham, the unification of binaries which emerge from haunting and spectrality ('absence/ presence, incorporeal/ corporeal, spiritual/ material, the Victorian past and the present'[39]) are the same critical questions which emerge from Neo-Victorian literature.

There is an unexamined hauntological dimension to Kaplan's figuring of biographilia as 'illicit intrusion on the living subject and a somewhat more macabre activity in relation to the dead.'[40] In bringing the living culture closer to the dead figure, biographilia disrupts temporality and performs cultural necromancy. Reading biographilia alongside hauntology, I approach a critique of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood that analyses the biographilic fascination with the iconic Pre-Raphaelite woman, the spectral return of the uncanny Pre-Raphaelite image, and the fictional revenant of the Neo-Victorian figure who may embody both.

8. Cultural Importance of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite Woman

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[38] Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham, 'Introduction' in *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past*, ed. by Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.xi-xxvi, p.xix.
[39] Arias and Pulham, p.xx.
[40] Kaplan, p.47.

Despite the ubiquity of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism there has been no comprehensive study of this important trend within the literature. Considering the Pre-Raphaelite images, artworks and figures which are repeatedly referenced in Neo-Victorian novels, television and film adaptations – and beyond into modern art and fashion – this omission is striking. Consider, this example: the cover image of Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn's seminal book, *Neo-Victorianism* is Dante Gabriel Rossetti's watercolour 'How they Met Themselves' (Appendix 1, Fig 2). Rossetti's image of two lovers meeting the exhausted spectral forms of their future selves is so striking as to have been selected during the publication process to illustrate the temporal de-synchronicity and haunting which characterises the Neo-Victorian text. Yet *Neo-Victorianism* itself features only three pages of analysis related to Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, the contents of which dismiss the very continuities of influence and intertext which create the phenomenon.

By ignoring the significant parallels between the Pre-Raphaelite and Neo-Victorian, the current criticism relegates Pre-Raphaelitism to Neo-Victorian paratext, even as it demonstrably, repeatedly, and significantly features in the text itself. It is currently one of the most significant omissions in the field of Neo-Victorian studies. Taking this underrepresented feature of Neo-Victorianism, I use it to examine a subject that is far more widely discussed: the role of women and the central female protagonist in the Neo-Victorian novel. The prominence of womanhood and femininity is something that Pre-Raphaelitism and Neo-Victorianism have in common as cultural movements, and which act as influencers upon each other.

In the title of this dissertation, I quote from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet 'Body's Beauty', a meditation on Adam's rebellious first wife, Lilith. In focusing on women's stories and women's creativity, it may seem a contradictory choice to inscribe this work with a poem by one of Pre-Raphaelitism's most prominent, canonical males. However, in the spirit of Neo-Victorian authors' reimagination and reinscription of Pre-Raphaelite source texts, I

find this quote perfect for feminist reclamation. It aptly summarises the power of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's central role in Neo-Victorian literature and culture: 'And still she sits, young while the Earth is old | And, subtly of herself contemplative.'[41] It is the Lilithian uncanny quality of the Pre-Raphaelite heroine that stills her in her permanence.

As the Pre-Raphaelite heroine's role endures, she is 'young while the Earth is old'–ageless yet reinvented as each passing decade brings a new Neo-Victorian incarnation. The self-reflexivity and historiographic metafictionality of the postmodern Neo-Victorian novel prompt us to reconsider historical and critical assumptions about Pre-Raphaelite women's roles. Rossetti's Lilith is a femme fatale, threatening and seductive in equal measure. However, in the intervening years, the Lilith figure has moved from an objectification to an empowered feminist symbol.[42] It is in this spirit of reclamation that I inscribe my work. Neo-Victorianism reimagines the Pre-Raphaelite woman as one who is both historical and ageless, aesthetic and contemplative: a Pre-Raphaelite figure in a Neo-Victorian frame.

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[41] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Sonnet LXXVIII. Body's Beauty' in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p.161, Lines 5-6.
[42] Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, 'The Lilith Question,' *Lilith* (1976), 1. http://www.lilith.org/articles/the-lilith-question/ [accessed 08/08/2018].

Chapter One

H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red*

A Prototype for Pre-Raphaelite Womanhood in Neo-Victorianism

H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red* (1948) is a fictional retelling of the life of Elizabeth Siddal:
poet, painter, long-time lover and short-lived wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, arguably the
most famous muse of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. *White Rose and the Red* offers an
alternate narrative of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to that which was offered by most art
criticism and biography of the early twentieth century. Rather than overlooking Siddal's
contribution, the fictionalised version of the PRB, their lives and their creations are all
filtered through the biofictional experiences of Siddal. The centring of this iconic Pre-
Raphaelite woman as poet, painter and lover offers the opportunity to observe the developing
cultural influence of a particularly Pre-Raphaelite style of Neo-Victorian heroine. Who is
this heroine, perpetually being reread and re-inscribed with cultural meanings? H.D.'s novel
emphasises the fragmentation and inscrutability of Elizabeth Siddal's short life, with a text
in seven parts, through which temporal disruptions and complex metaphors for
reincarnation, haunting and spiritualism mirror H.D.'s own interests within her modernist
circle.[43]

1. Applying Neo-Victorian Criticism to the Modernist Text

In this chapter, I establish a Neo-Victorian reading of *White Rose and the Red*, that sees
beyond the modernist resistance to Victorian culture, to understand this early novel as a
precursor of the Pre-Raphaelite influence that would go on to dominate Neo-Victorianism.
Establishing the unusual presence of Victorian aesthetics within canonical modernism by
reinterpreting biographical, fictional and poetic works as representative of Neo-Victorian

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[43] Alison Halsall, 'H.D. and the Victorian Spectres of "White Rose and the Red"' in *College Literature*, (2011),
38.4, pp. 115-133, pp. 118-119.

prototypes, I will establish the personal interest H.D held in Elizabeth Siddal as a female creator in a male-dominated circle, and argue that Neo-Victorian concepts of biographilia and hauntology are present in this work, in a way that prefigures what would later become commonplace in Neo-Victorian texts.

Alison Halsall writes that 'both H.D. and the Pre-Raphaelites looked to the past in an effort to understand their respective presents.'[44] This shared interest in using the past to reframe and re-examine the present is also a key concept in Neo-Victorianism. The commonality which Halsall expresses between H.D, the Pre-Raphaelite ethos and the Neo-Victorian ethos is the same as that which Heilmann and Llewellyn underestimate in their statement that:

> Victorian revivalism *delivered a sense of purpose beyond the adaptive* in the fact that the revival of an earlier period – such as the mediaeval – served not so much as a visual or fashion statement, but rather reflected a political position, invoking an ideological inheritance at the same time.[45] (Italics mine).

The concepts of ideological inheritance, and the amalgamation of contemporary politics with historical aesthetics do indeed reflect a continuity between Pre-Raphaelitism and Neo-Victorianism. However, Heilmann and Llewellyn argue that recent Neo-Victorianism adapts the works and lives of the Pre-Raphaelites not to trace cultural continuities, but to unmoor the figures from their Victorian contexts and meet the expectations of 'a post-millennial sensibility.'[46] Such a statement overlooks the wealth of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism which had existed before 2000. Rather, the central concept of *White Rose and the Red* as a work of biofiction, is that there is indeed a shared ideological inheritance between the Pre-

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[44] Alison Halsall, 'Introduction', in *White Rose and the Red* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2009), pp. ix-xlviii, p. xviii.
[45] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 235.
[46] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 235.

Raphaelite circle and the modern poets; between H.D. as a creative autonomous woman and Elizabeth Siddal as both would-be autonomous creator and unstable cultural referent.[47]

In an epochal mode of criticism, the Victorians are deemed 'an uneasy transition from Romanticism to Modernism (if you are doing literary history) and from the premodern to the modern.'[48] In 1928, Virginia Woolf writes of the nineteenth century in *Orlando,* as 'a huge blackness [...] A turbulent welter of cloud [that] covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion [...] the Nineteenth century had begun.'[49] The image encapsulates the perceived sordid dirt and ideological confusion of the Victorian era from a modernist perspective. Though not without irony, Woolf, in common with many other modernist writers, re-examined the nineteenth century to criticise and reject its received ideologies. Yet, by the very measures of recent Neo-Victorian criticism, texts like *Orlando* could be read as Neo-Victorian. Modernist works, all heretofore situated within an epochal canon, have only lately been reconsidered in the critical movement away from epochal thinking.[50] It is important to consider this context for creation. As a literary work examining and reconsidering Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics and figures, *White Rose and the Red* is far from existing in a vacuum. As Kristin Mahoney acknowledges, such modernist texts '[offer] a prehistory of Neo-Victorianism' in their interrogation of ideological and aesthetic modes of the nineteenth century.[51]

Texts such as Ezra Pound's poem 'Yeux Glauques', or Max Beerbohm's *Rossetti and His Circle*, demonstrate a modernist interest in the Pre-Raphaelites as cultural influences outside nineteenth-century epochal bounds. In the early twentieth century, Pound and

[47] Cassandra Laity, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin De Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.152.

[48] John McGowan, 'Modernity and Culture, the Victorians and Cultural Studies' in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press,2000), pp.3-28, p.9.

[49] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928) (London: Penguin, 1993), p.156.

[50] Simon Joyce, *The Victorians in the Rearview Mirror* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), p.17.

[51] Kristin Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.23 – 24.

Beerbohm were both engaged with producing work inspired by and commentating on the Pre-Raphaelites. Beerbohm prefaces his edition of *Rossetti and his Circle* (1922) by saying:

> Even you, flushed though you are with the pride of youth, must have heard of the Victorian era […] for [Rossetti], the eighteen-fifties-and-sixties had no romance at all. For me, I confess, they are very romantic – partly because I wasn't alive in them, and partly because Rossetti was.[52]

In this passage, Beerbohm captures some crucial tenets of Neo-Victorian cultural relevance, and places Pre-Raphaelitism within their context. He presents both the concept of the Victorian genius whose art was ahead of his time, aligning it with the nostalgic romance of another era. There is a curious contradiction in Beerbohm's concept for these caricatures. The tone of the works is at once mocking and reverential. He parodies Rossetti because he belongs to the nineteenth century, yet notices him because his ideas transcended this period. As Elizabeth Prettejohn has argued, there is something modern about Pre-Raphaelitism which modernist writers appear to feel both commonality with, and uneasiness about. Pre-Raphaelitism aims, Prettejohn claims:

> Not just to look back to an archaic past; it is also defiantly to reject the idea of following in the footsteps of a master or school. The word thus carries a modernist implication difficult to disentangle from its archaizing one, something that has caused critical problems throughout the century and a half from the formation of the PRB to the present day.[53]

The vexation of this categorisation – a modernist identification with the PRB on one hand, a reaction against their undeniable Victorian-ness on the other – is part of what befits these

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[52] Max Beerbohm, *Rossetti and His Circle* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), pp. v-vi. https://archive.org/details/rossettihiscircl00beerrich, [accessed 28/01/2018].
[53] Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp.1-12, p. 1.

modernist reinterpretations. It also gives another reason why modernist texts contemporaneous with H.D.'s novel which engage with the PRB can more easily be read through the critical lens of the Neo-Victorian. H.D.'s work however, comes far closer to more canonical Neo-Victorian texts of the later twentieth centuries. A major reason for this is the progressive feminism and empathetic depiction of the novel's central character, Elizabeth Siddal.

The tendency to condescend to women of the circle (particularly Siddal) is marked in texts written by members of H.D.'s literary circle. In Max Beerbohm's caricatures, the women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle are ever-present, gazing down at the proceedings of Rossetti and his circle with an air of hauteur or disapproval (see Appendix 2, Figures 1-2). In 'Rossetti's Courtship' (Appendix 2, Fig 1.), which features a full-length caricature of Elizabeth Siddal, in stereotypically languid and ethereal guise, she and Rossetti are overlooked by a yet more stylised Siddal portrait, the figures framed by a scattering of loose sheets from a portfolio, upon which can faintly be seen the many ink sketches of Siddal which Rossetti produced.

Similarly, Ezra Pound's poem 'Yeux Glauques' (or 'sea-green eyes') takes interest in the figure of Elizabeth Siddal not as an individual, or a creator in her own right, but as an emblem of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal. Pound writes of the embodiment of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal as having a 'vacant gaze' and 'half-ruined face', a passive aesthetic onlooker to the storms of art criticism and the shifting social norms which Pound perceived to have passed the Pre-Raphaelites by.[54] As Halsall has pointed out, H.D. clashed with Pound over the depiction of Elizabeth Siddal, with H.D. viewing her as a powerful embodiment of disjointed modernity, as well as an analogue to H.D.'s own relationships in her poetic circle. [55] The

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[54] Ezra Pound, 'Yeux Glauques' in The Norton Anthology of Poetry ed. by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, Jon Stallworthy et al., 5th edn. (London: Norton, 2005), p. 1301, Lines 10; 18.
[55] Halsall, 'Introduction', pp. xxxii-xxxiii

depiction of Siddal as a passive backdrop to Pre-Raphaelite genius is challenged in *White Rose*, which centres her experience and creative challenges.

Both Pound and Beerbohm comment on the primacy of femininity as an aesthetic quality in Pre-Raphaelite art. However, they do so in a manner which furthers a cult of Pre-Raphaelite beauty, wherein femininity is an object of the male gaze. In these texts, Pre-Raphaelite femininity is a backdrop before which the (implicitly masculine) process of creation can be enacted. Contrast this with the interiority of Elizabeth Siddal's voice in H.D.'s novel. The opening line of the novel is 'If only he would stop talking.'[56] The 'he' that is the subject of this sentence is Siddal's father, droning about their family history and lost inheritance. But this 'he' could as easily stand in for the universal patriarch, a usually male biographer, eager to interpret and reconstruct Siddal according to his own principles.

2. The Biographilic Siddal

In addition to being influenced by and refuting her contemporaries in modernist circles, H.D.'s *White Rose* builds upon the biographilic culture which sprung up around Pre-Raphaelitism. Cora Kaplan points out that literary biographilia closes the distance between the modern reader and the Victorian subject, either through 'scopophilia', snooping into the Victorian private life through morbid desire to know, or hagiography which overidealises the subject to the point of envy.[57] These models can be seen in the biographies which inspired H.D.'s biofiction. The same year Woolf published *Orlando*, Evelyn Waugh published his biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Siddal is not treated favourably in Waugh's text. His passages describe the 'slightly comic result' of Siddal's artworks and the 'unrelieved

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[56] H.D., *White Rose and the Red* (1948) (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), p.11.
[57] Kaplan, pp.47-50.

melancholy' of her poetry, casting her creative credentials and poetic value into doubt.[58] Most damning of all, Waugh claims:

> Rossetti, in the full vigour of his youth and in the exultation of first love found himself suddenly brought up sharply by the icy breath of corruption and mortality [...] He had for a long time been in love with love and, when he at last found it, it withered at his approach.[59]

The fleshly, almost necrophilic nature of Rossetti's later works inspired by Siddal has been widely acknowledged and critiqued.[60] Yet Waugh treats the presence of Siddal in Rossetti's life as a manner of artistic, social and spiritual taint. A later biography by Violet Hunt would treat Elizabeth Siddal's figure with a greater respect and reverence, bordering on the extremes of secular hagiography. *Wife of Rossetti* is written in a novelistic, rather than a biographical style. It is a much-idealised 'contribution to the legend [...] [that] can only be described as a fictional Elizabeth.'[61] Nonetheless, H.D.'s novel was heavily influenced by Violet Hunt, with regards to the historical figures and episodes she describes. She writes, 'we are immeasurably indebted to the late Violet Hunt [...] Though we differ in our attitude and approach to *The Wife of Rossetti*.'[62] H.D.'s fictionalised account of the biography destabilises the very idea of biographical chronology. In H.D.'s emphasis on Siddal, we can read a reaction against the diminution of Siddal's figure in the movement.

Both Waugh's and Hunt's preceding biographies emphasise the spectrality, the deathly, death-bound form of Siddal's femininity. In Waugh, this spectre is blameable for Rossetti's fall; in Hunt, it is reproachful against Rossetti. As we will see, H.D.'s text also

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[58] Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti: His Life and Works*, (1928) ed. by Michael G. Brennan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 36.
[59] Waugh, p. 38.
[60] Deborah Lutz *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism* (New York and London: W.W Norton & Company, 2011, p. 23.
[61] Marsh, *Legend*, p. 100.
[62] H.D., p. 7.

glories in the subjectivity of the spectral Siddalite figure. The spectrality of the Siddalite mythos is built into her earliest biographies.

When we consider the examples from the early twentieth century – Pound and Beerbohm caricaturing on the one hand, Waugh and Violet Hunt variously imagining and idealising biography on the other – we can see that there was already literary and cultural interest in reading and Pre-Raphaelites which preceded H.D.'s novel. While these texts were indeed '(re)visioning', [63] their purpose was to parody and highlight difference and development between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or else to self-identify the author with their biographical subject. They are post-Victorian, after Mahoney's definition, a continuity between nostalgic Victorianism and modernism proper, that warmly affirms and ironically laughs at its position between two movements, at a temporal and ideological interim. [64] Nonetheless, they demonstrate a significant cultural engagement with Pre-Raphaelitism which belies the received wisdom that Modernism exclusively sought to 'blast' the nineteenth century.[65]

2. Neo-Victorian Features of *White Rose and the Red*

How does *White Rose* differ from its post-Victorian biographilic counterparts? The novel is written with a sense of aesthetic and ideological 'inheritance' (to borrow Heilmann and Llewellyn's term) that both appreciates the works of the Pre-Raphaelites and critiques the exploitative methods in which they co-opt female beauty and creative power.[66] As Cassandra Laity has observed, 'H.D.'s regrouping of her male contemporaries around the nineteenth-century cult of womanhood also represents an ambitious scheme for a *continuous feminine tradition rooted in the Pre-Raphaelite past*.'[67] (Italics mine). The inheritance of Victorian

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[63] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 4.
[64] Mahoney, Pp.22-24
[65] Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto 1' in *Blast* (1914) 1, pp. 11-29.
[66] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 35.
[67] Laity, p.152.

traditions reframed in modern reclamation is a profoundly Neo-Victorian concept, which is reflected in the novel's hybrid of Victorian subject matter in modernist style. In his criticism of the novelistic conventions of the Neo-Victorian novel, Christian Gutleben writes:

> If the primacy of narrative is not questioned, if the domination of well-rounded plot is not altered, the novelistic organisation, at the level of narration, cannot therefore be truly innovative; and if the narrative structure is not dissimilar from the Victorian model can one really talk of revision or rectification? Finally, if there is no revision or rectification what is the point of re-telling Victorian stories?[68]

Yet this is exactly what *White Rose* effectively questions and innovates, placing it, by Gutleben's definition, outside the regressive tendencies of retro-Victorian forms.[69] The novel questions the primacy of narrative, leaves the reader without the satisfaction of rounded conclusions. Tracy Hargreaves describes the apparent ideological disconnection between modernism and Victorianism as the 'desire for a rupture'.[71] This phrase is apt, as it evokes the violence of severance. H.D.'s novel marks both the connections which are ruptured, and the spectral presences which pass between the movements, haunting the text at a formal level. Writing modernist prose in a Victorian setting, H.D is not interested in the 'Victorian art of description.' Instead, she uses the traumatic interior life of Siddal to lead the reader through a temporally fragmented text.

4. The Centrality of the Neo-Victorian Heroine

The fictionalised version of Elizabeth Siddal, her womanhood, femininity and subjectivity are central to H.D.'s depiction of Pre-Raphaelitism. H.D. cannot avoid presenting a political, feminist stance on Siddal's identity – not least because of the historical and semiotic controversy surrounding even her name (see Introduction). Because of the politics of

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[68] Gutleben, p.54.
[69] Gutleben, p.159.
[71] Hargreaves, p. 279.

meaning and gender in the name, it is impossible to write a biography or biofiction of the woman without also taking an ideological stance on her personhood. Of the many Pre-Raphaelite figures who are named, adapted and transformed in Neo-Victorian literature, Siddal is the woman with the most aliases, all of which are charged with political significance in the Pre-Raphaelite cultural imaginary. Throughout *White Rose and the Red*, H.D switches between the many names of Elizabeth Siddal, making wordplay of the many identities Siddal as a figure was made to take on throughout her life. We are told, 'She was the Dove now. What had she not been? She was Ruskin's Princess Ida. They had called her the Cid; they got that from Mr Allingham still calling her "Miss Sid."'[74] At different points in the text, Siddal is given names by turns romantic and sexualised, idealising and insulting, a naming process that mirrors the ever-changing biographilic positioning of her figure as reinscribed in the Pre-Raphaelite mythos.[75] Yet her repeated refrain is the phrase 'I am Elizabeth Siddall.'[76] Siddal uses this phrase like a mantra throughout the text, as if asserting that whatever ways she is reinscribed this is a reality which she can adhere to.

If Siddal's name is both a deterministic force and the subject of historical debate, the text engages at length with her wider mythology. H.D. rewrites a stereotypically Victorian, romantic idea that Siddal's working class family came from aristocratic stock. This is a Victorian literary tradition we recognise from Hardy's *Tess* or Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. However, rather than the discovery of aristocratic lineage or wealthy relations being a call to action for the heroine, *White Rose* makes Siddal's tie with history a burden. The iconography of legacy that gives Siddal her noble bearing actually prefigures her fall from grace. In the novel, the source texts for these genealogies are dead things: graves and dusty family crests which map onto the young Siddal's childhood trauma and hypochondriacal fear. From the beginning of the narrative, she is haunted by her own history, a queasiness about her identification with

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[74] H.D., pp.46-47.

[75] Marsh, *Legend*, p.154.

[76] H.D., p.12.

the crest of her dead ancestors. When Siddal thinks, 'I am [...] the bird in the middle', referencing her father's family crest, she is already in dialogue with her own legacy, a fact that will continue to be relevant as we further investigate the spectral and haunted aspects of H.D.'s text.[77]

5. Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite Intertexts

Following the significance of names to H.D.'s neo-Victorianism, it is perhaps worth noting the intertextual link between the titles of H.D.'s *White Rose and the Red* and later texts, such as Michael Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White*. In each text, their titles present apparently stark binary contrasts (white/ red; Siddal/ Rossetti; wife/ mistress; contemporary/ Victorian) which the texts go on to complicate and intermingle. While there is no evidence that H.D.'s text specifically influenced Faber's construction of his Neo-Victorian work, it is certainly worth noting the causality of a Neo-Victorian continuum that links literary allusion, binary symbolism with women's intellectual ability to destabilise such binaries. Considering this causality, it is possible to read intertextual links. For example, both H.D.'s and Faber's titles recall lines from Tennyson's poem *The Princess*: 'Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white.'[78] Tennyson had mutually inspiring relationships with the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Siddal herself illustrated several scenes from his poems.[79] The eponymous heroine of *The Princess* was Ida, the nickname John Ruskin gave Siddal. Ida is the headstrong, independent, intellectual Princess of a proto-feminist, academic court. Her resistance to matrimony or patriarchal control is an intertextual model for Faber's intellectually refined, independence-seeking main character, Sugar. Similarly, while Ruskin's nickname is often treated as patronising, Jan Marsh suggests that far from an infantilising allusion to Siddal's delicacy and refinement, it may have been the headstrong

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[77] H.D., p.12.

[78] Alfred Tennyson, *The Princess* (1847), ed. by L.A. Sherman (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1900) p.97, line 161.

[79] Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood,* p.77.

nature of the character which Ruskin saw in Siddal, as she resisted his interference in her life and career.[80] Hence we can see that these intertextual links between H.D.'s and Faber's text thematically link questions of Victorian women's intellectual autonomy.

White Rose and the Red takes its title and epigraph from Shakespeare's *Richard III*: 'We will unite the white rose and the red'.[81] Rather than the lyricism of Tennyson's lines, the Shakespearean reference is one of conflict. It presents the idea of binary opposition, of battling forces analogised by aesthetic principles. The binary opposition of white and red are symbolic Pre-Raphaelite colours, ones particularly associated with Siddal. Alison Halsall claims the titular roses reflect 'Siddall, the white rose, and Rossetti, the red, two figures united in desire and matrimony, but mutually irreconcilable.'[82] While this relationship is important, both to historical readings of Siddal, and to the biographilic depictions that would follow, I read the concept of irreconcilability itself as more important to this text than one specific romantic relationship. Elizabeth Siddal's pale skin and red hair have taken on an iconographic quality in Pre-Raphaelite art, but also hauntingly reference her death: Rossetti's later association of Siddal with white and red poppies, symbolic both of eternal rest and opiate addiction. This imagery reoccurs in *Beata Beatrix* (see Fig 3), Rossetti's posthumous portrait memorial to his wife. This too is a haunted text, completed from memory, after Siddal's death, but intended to honour her life.

Contrary to the detailed, yet highly idealised biographilic detail of Violet Hunt's *The Wife of Rossetti*, H.D. emphasises the interior lives of the Pre-Raphaelites, with Siddal at their centre. There is little or no explication of the vast circle of different Pre-Raphaelite figures which surround Siddal, or how they relate to Siddal herself. As she is named and renamed, the implicit goal is one of possessing her personhood, controlling her inner life.

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[80] Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, p.91.
[81] William Shakespeare, *King Richard the III,* ed. by James R. Simon (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), V.5.19.
[82] Halsall, 'Introduction', p.xxiv.

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H.D.' s novel can be seen to contradict the opening statement of another modernist text critical of Victorian culture: Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*. Strachey writes that 'the history of the Victorian Age will never be written; we know too much about it.'[83] H.D.'s novel contradicts this statement, rewriting Pre-Raphaelite biography by emphasising the subjective and interior life of Siddal. The text enforces biographilia, even as it transcends the typical conventions of biography.

Elizabeth Siddal's image acts as a metonym for Pre-Raphaelitism, and by extension, for the Victorian era, but empirical sources for her personal history remain largely conspicuous in their absence. The consequence of this historical uncertainty means objects which are undeniably connected with Siddal attain the cultural significance of secular relics, while her image in the paintings of Rossetti and the rest of the Pre-Raphaelite circle are akin to religious iconography. The subjectivity of her existence, lacking the epistemological anchor of a confirmed birth date, or even an agreed spelling of her surname are subjects which H.D. plays with in the novel.[84] At one point, Siddal reasons that to trace prophetic symbolism in dreams or stars, 'you did not need to know […] even your own birthday. You could follow it out.'[85] With her identity unfixed, Siddal pursues a goal of creative autonomy which is repeatedly disrupted as her image and affections are co-opted by members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

6. Problematising the Victorian Romance Narrative

If romantic love and physical or symbolic fragmentation are inextricably linked in this text, the question of who Lizzie loves goes unanswered and nearly unconsidered by the heroine herself. Siddal is unusual as a Victorian heroine (though apt as a Neo-Victorian one) in that her love story is never soundly resolved. Instead, it is muddled within the narrative, and in

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[83] Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.5.
[84] For a complete discussion of the historical uncertainty of Siddal's birth date, see Marsh, *Legend*, p. 148
[85] H.D., p.302.

the clouded thoughts of the heroine herself. It can be argued that the biofictional Lizzie of *White Rose* never really loves at all, but merely seeks after artistic and aesthetic experience, finding only disappointment in the figures connected to that experience. When Lizzie falls in love with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, it is described in the novel not romantically, but with a sense of irrevocable fatalism, as if she is a figure in Gabriel's beloved Dante translation: '"Yes, she [says], "Mary, I am going to marry Gabriel." [And] she stepped into the magic-circle of Gabriel's fame and influence.'[86] The image of Siddal trapped within circles reoccurs repeatedly within the novel. These are circles of Pre-Raphaelite influence, but, by inference, the circles of hell, as in the translations of Dante which Rossetti and his father, Gabriele Rossetti both worked on. Later, confiding in William Morris, in an ambivalent discussion of their relationship, Siddal describes how, 'At first, he set me in a flame. I called it a magic-circle [...] But it burnt away everything outside the circle.'[87] These various circles of influence have much more to do with the artistic and interpersonal relationships in *White Rose*, than the poetic evocations of romance and desire in Pre-Raphaelite source texts.

Lizzie seeks artistic immortality more than actual love. In place of the repressed sexuality which is a common erotically charged feature of much Neo-Victorian literature, genius takes the place of Siddal's desire.[88] The novel never follows the views of H.D.'s art-historical contemporaries to suggest that the source of Siddal's own creative genius stems from the male figures around her. Their desire is also artistically motivated. The fascination with her image is a befuddling and obfuscating restriction on her creative clarity. H.D.'s version of Siddal retains a quiet but defiant confidence in her own creative value, declaring that, 'she had scribbled in the stitched-together leaves of her wrapping-paper note-book, long before she heard of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.' However, the heroine experiences imposter syndrome, struggling with completion because linear thought eludes her. Siddal 'mix[es]

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[86] H.D. p.48.
[87] H.D., p.172.
[88] Kaplan, p.86.

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things up', she confides in William Morris – mistaking St. Paul's cathedral for the ruins of Byzantium, and Euston Road with Constantinople.[89] Untethered to the synchronicity of linear time, her artworks and imaginings suit her to a rich inner creative life in the Pre-Raphaelite style. Yet practically, artistic and poetic success elude her; the very source of her creative energy also restricts her: Siddal is literally out of her time. Yet this fact places H.D.'s reconfiguration of the character perfectly in the frame of the Neo-Victorian heroine. Siddal hopes that through the force of his nature, her relationship with Rossetti can create clarity in her disjointed life, helping her to 're-assemble her impressions; herself, it seemed for the first time in her life, needed no assembling.'[90] But Siddal's relationship with Rossetti proves to be a source of greater fragmentation and pretence – the clarity is only temporary. In an exchange which casts Lizzie's love as a problem to be solved, the men in her life discuss her not with tender words, but in the terminology of art. Rossetti tells Ruskin, 'You're hypnotic, Ruskin. You could make her love you', receiving the reply, 'Women don't love line. They want colour.'[91] Once again adapting Violet Hunt's text, H.D. takes Hunt's biographical statements about Rossetti and Ruskin's aesthetic disagreements and extrapolates Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics into colourful metaphors for a romance plot.

True love and affection are found, for this textual incarnation of Elizabeth Siddal, in feminine circles – amongst female friends and relations. Repeatedly, Siddal muses within the narrative upon her creativity as something which originates in domestic (implicitly feminine) spaces. In a scene in which she goes to visit family in Sheffield, it is telling that she muses, 'She was one person, Elizabeth Siddall, connection of the Ibbitts.'[92] Having so far established the fractured, multiple, multiplying identities of her central character, H.D. gives Siddal a brief respite from her own multiplicity, close to the end of her narrative. In a

[89] H.D., p.198.
[90] H.D., p.71.
[91] H.D., p.91.
[92] H.D., p.282.

sinister closing to Part VI of the novel, Siddal reflects: 'she could think things out here, and what did it matter if she got into a fever? It was worth it.'[93] Once more with a sense of fatalism, Siddal faces a choice all too familiar to those well-versed in women's texts of the nineteenth century: she can be singular and purposeful, escaping the external pressures of the PRB, but risking her physical health, or she can be muddled and continually rewritten, while remaining protected by their circle of influence. Yet is this in fact a form of protection? Or does the PRB's control heighten her fragmentation through a sublimated, gendered violence?

7. Textual Dismemberment

Throughout the novel, Siddal's feelings of fragmentation and bodily control caused by her liminal position in the Pre-Raphaelite circle are represented through recurring traumatic flashbacks to her memories of a murderer named James Greenacre. It is one of the curious facts of Elizabeth Siddal's life that James Greenacre, a neighbour of the Siddal family, would later go on to be the subject of a sensational murder trial. The specifics of Greenacre's murderous acts were sensationalised in the Newgate Calendar – he had murdered and disembowelled his fiancée, Hannah Brown to take possession of her disposing of her parts in different locations.[94] After her death, biographers of Siddal would dwell on her connection to Greenacre with rather ghoulish glee. William Michael Rossetti writes,

> To the British public, [Greenacre] is a murderer, more than commonly execrable and duly hanged. To Miss Siddal, he was a good-natured neighbour, who would on occasion help her toddling steps over a muddy or crowded crossing. Such is the difference in "the environment".[95]

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[93] H.D., p.287.

[94] 'James Greenacre and Sarah Gale: The First Executed for Murder, The Second Transported as being Accessory to the Fact' in *The Newgate Calendar*, http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng884.htm, [accessed 03/03/2018].

[95] William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters with a Memoir* (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1895), p.173.

W.M Rossetti uses the fact of this connection not only to sensationalise his memoir, but to tacitly comment on Siddal – the discrete but undeniable otherness of her character, and the perceived danger in her working-class background. Similarly, Violet Hunt's biography of Siddal speaks of her 'Greenacre complex,' implying that the incident entered her psyche at a young age.[96] Rather than dwelling on the murder to glorify the sense of the Other as W.M Rossetti does, Violent Hunt clearly relishes drawing a textual parallel between the 'interesting degenerate – Greenacre; a bit of an actor', the 'silly and vain' murder victim, Hannah Brown, and Greenacre's devoted accomplice Sarah Gale, with Rossetti and Siddal, with Siddal serving as both murder victim and accomplice.[97] While factually, there are only tangential connections which link Siddal and Greenacre, in H.D.'s fiction, the role of the violent male disemboweller becomes a metaphor for the Pre-Raphaelite heroine's experience.

Early in the novel, while Siddal feels anxiety about announcing her engagement to Rossetti, she suffers the intrusive memory of Greenacre's acts. She thinks: 'Mr Greenacre. She was to have married him.'[98] The 'she' that is the subject of this sentence is Hannah Brown, Greenacre's murder victim. Yet the sentence is placed in a paragraph where another 'she' (Siddal) is considering the murder and its traumatic effect on herself. Siddal draws a causal link between unhappy marriages and disembowelment, Brown's downfall and her own uneasy position in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Her way of managing intrusive thoughts of Greenacre is to 'count the pieces. She went on counting them, severed arms, legs, the head caught in the weir. She counted them carefully and then something happened. She was no longer afraid.'[99] This is a kind of existential body checking, which anchors Siddal's unnamed dread in a very real female fear. Hannah Brown's physical fragmentation by a controlling

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[96] Violet Hunt, *Wife of Rossetti: Her Life and Death* (London: Bodley Head, 1932), p.120.
[97] Violet Hunt, p.157.
[98] H.D., p.12.
[99] H.D., p.12.

man mirrors Siddal's mental anxiety, which stems from awareness that a Pre-Raphaelite woman's body is frequently disembowelled in art: Siddal's hair placed onto Jane Burden's body, or Alexa Wilding's head, transposed onto the limbs of Fanny Cornforth.[100]

In this sense, Rossetti and his circle cause these morbid fantasies. Siddal's intrusive thoughts about Greenacre reoccur throughout the novel, normally when she is anguished by her relationship with Gabriel, or her artistic role in the circle. The Greenacre connection is a particularly lurid instance of biographilia which H.D. makes use of in her fiction. Here both a morbid fascination with Victorian murder, and the seeming vulnerability of the beautiful, frail Pre-Raphaelite model take the sensationalism of a Victorian text and reinscribe it in a haunted, desynchronised modernist mode. In Neo-Victorian terms, this depiction of Siddal's trauma represents Llewellyn's 'aesthetic question [...] about what lies beneath our almost parasitic fascination with the continued return to the Victorian.'[101] In such cases, the Neo-Victorian ethical problem of violence against women as symbolic cultural signifier re-appears. It is the 'repetition compulsion [...] the trauma under[lying] much of the Neo-Victorian project [...] the desire to render belated witness to or commemorate historical wrongs.'[102] This compulsive return to trauma is also, according to Fisher, the 'effective [...] virtuality', the 'fatal pattern' of the hauntological moment.[103] Siddal has no recourse to right Greenacre's historical wrongs, and her belated witness is as much a commentary on the reader's contemporary consumption of Pre-Raphaelite women's bodies as it is upon the violent act itself. Siddal sees herself in the physical fragmentation of Greenacre's murder victim. In turn, this disembowelment is related to the artistic fragmentation of women within the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and the effect of both influence the disjointed, non-linear structure

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[100] Cherry and Pollock, p.112.
[101] Mark Llewellyn, 'Neo-Victorianism: On the Ethics and Aesthetics of Appropriation' *in Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 20 (2009), pp.27-44, p.37.
[102] Marie-Luise Kohlke, 'Mining the Neo-Victorian Vein: Prospecting for Gold, Buried Treasure and Uncertain Metal' in *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations*, ed by Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss (London: Routledge, 2014), pp.21-37, p.26.
[103] Fisher, *Ghosts,* pp.18-19.

of the novel. These three forms of fragmentation each play into anxieties regarding women's physical, intellectual and creative autonomy.

8. Temporal Fragmentation

We have already established that H.D. drew biographical parallels between herself and Siddal. Matte Robinson has suggested that H.D.'s biographilic paralleling of Siddal's life with her own is part of the temporal de-synchronicity and haunted supernature of *White Rose.* Specifically, the spiritualism and supernatural concept of reincarnation: 'Reincarnation was not an uncommon belief among writers and artists from the nineteenth century, and [*White Rose*] would explore the connections between her own circle and the Pre-Raphaelites through [this] lens.'[111] The influences of the Pre-Raphaelites upon H.D.'s modernist circle are here read as more than cultural and intertextual. Rather, the literary parallels in *White Rose* reflect not just the reimagining of Pre-Raphaelite works, but the idea that in these various talented creators, there lies a foreknowledge that is hereditary, passed down as the gift of a past life.[112] Robinson reads this idea in the context of H.D.'s interest in the occult. Yet the idea of parallel lives, parallel talents and the cultural inheritance of art and ideas can as easily be read through the lens of Neo-Victorian haunting and spectrality.

Rachel Connor theorises that H.D.'s interest in spiritualism, occultism and reincarnation 'provided her with a means of thinking beyond the strictures of the highbrow literary establishment [...] [and] beyond the dominant norms of society in general.'[113] Reading H.D.'s interest in these forces as the expansion of a literary imagination, and having established the biographilic interest which H.D.'s novel takes in Elizabeth Siddal's life, it is worth interrogating the ways in which the author resurrects the Siddalite mythos, through

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[111] Matte Robinson, *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.'s Poetry and Prose* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), P.17.
[112] Robinson, pp.17-18.
[113] Rachel Connor, *H.D. and the Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.113.

the conceit of spectrality and haunting. In such a case, H.D.'s biographilic fascination with fictionalising Pre-Raphaelite memoir feeds directly into notions of hauntology.

In its combining of fictional and biographic elements, as well as its subjective, inwardly focused female heroine, *White Rose* represents a break from prior works of the mid-twentieth century about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The novel has a partial quality – 'partial' in the sense that it demonstrates partiality, through the self-identification between H.D. herself and her fictionalised Elizabeth Siddal.[114] Yet it is also partial in the sense of the fragmentary or unfinished. While the narrative itself is complete and carefully structured, the thoughts of its central character are incomplete and increasingly disjointed, creating a sense that the reader can never accurately situate themselves in the place or time of Siddal's narrative. An accepted characteristic of most life-writing is the establishment of a chronology.[115] H.D. draws much of her inspiration and research content from Violet Hunt's heavily fictionalised biography of Siddal, which, despite its speculation and novelistic style, follows the convention of chronology. *Wife of Rossetti* starts in the 1850s with the discovery of Siddal as a model, follows her life and concludes not with her death, but with her exhumation. However, in *White Rose and the Red*, H.D. disrupts the narrative conventions of life writing through the discontinuities of Siddal's narrative. These discontinuities take the form of invasive memories and impossible foreknowledge.

The sense of fragmentation in *White Rose* extends beyond the imagist styles of H.D.'s writing, and into the novel's subject; Siddal's story can never be complete, because the figure herself is a tissue of subjectivities. The subjectivity of the Siddalite legacy and mythos is always significant to retellings, within both studies of Siddal's work, and within the co-influential fields of biofiction and Neo-Victorianism. The ideas of biographilia and hauntology are once again compatible. Kaplan writes on the Neo-Victorian biofictional text,

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[114] Laity, p.155.

'Nostalgia [evokes] a subjectivity that never was, writing a life as an elegy, a form of discursive mourning that creates its own loss.'[116] In the process of becoming closer to the biographical subject, the sense of loss and division from them only intensifies. We can see this in the steady disintegration of the Siddal character.

9. Haunting Forwards

The seven sections of Siddal's narrative are all beset by various forms of haunting. Some are traumatic memories, encounters with spiritualists, or narrative disruptions in which past events resurface in free indirect discourse. For example, H.D. retells an episode from Pre-Raphaelite mythos about the death and supposed ghostly sighting of Walter Deverell. The experience of the already-dead Deverell's walk across Blackfriars Bridge is validated by Siddal pondering, 'Stephens was leaning out of the window with her, so it wasn't just another of her fancies.'[117] The presence of Stephens acts as both verification of this strangely prosaic ghost story. A male Pre-Raphaelite chronicler is there to bear witness. Nonetheless, the scene highlights Siddal's sense of connection to the spirit realm. She feels an emotional connection to Deverell which gives the moment significance. Yet the word 'another' implies Siddal has already experienced visitations (whether actually supernatural or only symptomatic of the fragmentation her emotional trauma creates). Paradoxically, while Stephens verifies her account, the scene implies he can only see the spectre because he is in the presence of Siddal, the symbolic spectral link between life and death, present and past. The male Pre-Raphaelite captures and records supernatural phenomena, but the Pre-Raphaelite woman is the locus and originator of it.

It is telling that H.D. leaves out two of the most famous episodes in the Siddalite mythos: her death, caused by an overdose of laudanum (whose status as suicide or accident remains open to romantic speculation) and her subsequent exhumation in 1869 by Rossetti,

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[116] Kaplan, p.62.
[117] H.D., *White Rose*, p.18.

to retrieve the poems he had interred with her. These events are the source material for many of the biographilic narratives of Siddal and Rossetti. Their omission from *White Rose and the Red* is therefore significant. Siddal's narrative ends not on the day of her death, but on one of a seemingly timeless sequence of days between her miscarriage and her eventual laudanum poisoning. The Siddal we see at the end of *White Rose* is befuddled by laudanum and has lost grip on her sense of bodily autonomy, or of her place in chronological time. However, she is not a hopeless suicide case. Her final thought is 'I must remember to stop in, at Mr. Keates, on the way out to-morrow, for fresh laudanum.'[118] Siddal's end (really an unresolved non-ending) is in keeping with the rest of the text. The reader is temporally dislocated, knowing from the protagonist's confusion that her death is near, but never to know which of many 'to-morrows' it will be. H.D. wrote of this final scene, 'I wanted to avoid the tragedy, but I think it really does end the sequence and it is final, and I make Lizzie in a daze and forgetful, not rabidly destructive.'[119] The haunting which the narrative of *White Rose and the Red* has repeatedly prefigured, at last comes to pass.

In the epigraphic scene, 'L'Envoi', the narrative perspective shifts back to the poet and diarist William Allingham, who, like Siddal, finds he cannot keep chronology straight in his mind. Allingham experiences temporal double vision as he at once overlooks her burial in Highgate cemetery, while simultaneously observing the scene which first led to her immortalisation – her original discovery by the Pre-Raphaelites: 'he might have thought of Ophelia, but remembered an awkward, tall girl in the dim circle, cast by the street-lamp.'[120] The disruption of temporal linearity which William Allingham experiences mirrors the disruption experienced by the reader when we read Neo-Victorian fiction. Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham describe this sort of disruption as a generative, transformative process, in

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[118] H.D., p.321.
[119] H.D., quoted in *Between History and Poetry: The Letters of H.D. And Norman Holmes Pearson* Ed. by Donna Krolik Hollenberg (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1997) p.92.
[120] H.D., p.322.

which binaries can be brought into unity.[121] Ultimately, Siddal can only create this unity as a spectre; never as herself.

The Derridean spectre is the focal point for temporal disruption as well as the perpetuated sense of loss and mourning invoked by the Siddal historical figure/ fictional character. The ubiquity of Elizabeth Siddal's image provides the reader with the living image of future death. She is at once an image of pure beauty, which has always existed, and a real woman who in her own art and the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, is always anticipating her own death. William Morris (also in love with Siddal in the book) says of her: 'there was something about her. I had seen her somewhere. I had written about her in my first poems and romances. She answers the description. You invent her – or imagine her – she appears.'[122] Morris's speech very closely paraphrases the description of the Derridean spectre, that ghost which 'never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back.'[123]

H.D.'s version of Siddal marks the dissonance between Lizzie's otherworldly beauty and her character as a practical, contemplative woman. This dissonance is one of the ongoing traumas which she must reckon with. Characters like Morris, Gabriel and Ruskin see only versions of this timeless, deathbound figure. H.D.'s foreknowledge predicts how Neo-Victorian authors would flatten and fictionalise the biographies of actual figures. In this and subsequent Neo-Victorian re-imaginings of Elizabeth Siddal, the construction of her character is inescapably bound up in the anticipation of her death. If it is true, as Alison Halsall states, that Siddal is the 'epistemological centre'[124] of *White Rose and the Red*, both the surprising absence of empirical knowledge about Siddal's life, and the reclamation of her own work, which occurred many decades after her death, mean that this early depiction of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is fractured. The disrupted chronology of her narrative means

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[121] Arias and Pulham, p.xx.
[122] H.D., p.248.
[123] Derrida, p.123.
[124] Halsall, 'Introduction', p.xix.

that she is always in dialogue with her own mythos. Haunting forwards, the fictional Siddal is always in dialogue with her own death and resurrection.

H.D.'s version of Siddal in *White Rose* is at once an eternal referent, a symbol for beauty, and an autonomous consciousness. The fragmented nature of the novel reflects upon such dissonance. Mark Fisher writes on the hauntology of cultural referents:

> There are those who refuse to allow the body to be interred, just as there is a danger of (over)killing something to such an extent that it becomes a spectre, a pure virtuality […] Haunting then can be construed as a failed mourning. It is about refusing to give up the ghost or – and this can sometimes amount to the same thing – the refusal of the ghost to give up on us.[125]

It is one of the curious, haunted qualities of Elizabeth Siddal's biographical life and textual afterlife, that Fisher's description of the hauntological subject can be taken almost literally in her case. Retold (or resurrected) so many times, the Siddal figure is the pure virtuality. She is the ghost who refuses to give up.

In 1869, seven years after her death, Rossetti disinterred Siddal's corpse from his family plot in Highgate Cemetery, retrieving for publication the only copies of poems which he had buried with her. As Samantha Matthews describes, the Gothic quality of this action would echo in the Siddalite mythos.[126] The endurance of Siddal's image and the tragedy of her narrative, inscribed and reinscribed in biographies has led to the cultural fetishization of her as a living dead beauty. Given the comparative lack of documented historical evidence surrounding Siddal's life, it is in a morbid sense apt that her cultural narratives are haunted in the way Fisher describes hauntologies of popular culture – the uncanny simulation of

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[125] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Croydon: Zero Books, 2014), p.22.
[126] Samantha Matthews, *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies and Books in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.22-23.

history within contemporaneity.[127] Yet the cultural image of Siddal's undeath has far exceeded that of her life, almost to the point of becoming a meme. The events of the nineteenth century have entered the popular imagination, recurring in Neo-Victorian works. H.D.'s text is a precursor and originator to this cultural resurrection.

Most of the accounts of Siddal's life come from the memoirs and accounts of male Pre-Raphaelites, each of which furthers their own agenda in the retelling. As Jan Marsh puts it, 'Elizabeth Siddal's story really began, not with her birth, the date and place of which long remained unknown, but with her death in 1862.'[128] The endurance of the exhumation narrative in retellings of the Pre-Raphaelite story causes readers to interpret gory detail into texts by Rossetti and by Siddal herself. It is a theory which can be applied both to the resilient cultural memory of the Siddalite mythos, and more broadly, to the appeal of Neo-Victorianism. In knowing so much about her death and so little of her life, the many depictions of Elizabeth Siddal in Neo-Victorian texts are always an aesthetic anticipation of her death and resurrection.

H.D.'s fictional Lizzie Siddal exists in a state of living death. If she is indeed the epistemological centre of *White Rose*, which is one of the first that centres and interrogates Pre-Raphaelite womanhood as a Neo-Victorian cultural referent, this hauntological reading is significant. I agree with Halsall's statement that *White Rose* represents, 'the figuration of a dead woman *as* a work of art by which Siddal's dynamic spectre continues to circulate in literary history.'[129] As Halsall has acknowledged, *White Rose and the Red* is a work which critics have struggled to categorise.[130] Both at the time of its completion and subsequently, this biofictional text did not fit easily with publishers' or critics' perceptions of modern writing. The novel has been subjected to epochal modes of criticism, and as such, found to

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[127] Fisher, *Ghosts,* pp. 10-12.
[128] Marsh, *Legend*, p. 9.
[129] Halsall, 'H.D. and the Victorian Spectres', p. 117.
[130] Halsall, 'Introduction', p. xix.

be a curious specimen, an anomaly within the oeuvre of a canonical imagist poet and modernist prose writer. It therefore seems much more fitting to read the text as Neo-Victorian. The misreadings and miscategorisations of *White Rose and the Red* are more easily parsed through reading the novel according to Neo-Victorian critical principles. H.D.'s literary concerns align very nearly with those outlined by Heilmann and Llewellyn in *Neo-Victorianism*. *White Rose and the Red* foregrounds some of the key concerns of Neo-Victorian literature, and Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism in particular.

10. Conclusion

It is not my contention that *White Rose and the Red* can necessarily be called a 'first' Neo-Victorian novel – there are many claims on this title, and to do so would be to enforce the same epochal thinking which first led to its being overlooked in the canon. Equally, to suggest that Neo-Victorianism is definitively aligned with postmodernism and can be chronologically traced to the 1960s is to apply epochal thinking to the detriment of Neo-Victorian studies. Rather than reading the Pre-Raphaelitism of *White Rose* as H.D.'s anomalous aesthetic tendency towards Pre-Raphaelitism and the haunted female subject, the novel should be treated as a Neo-Victorian prototype, and noted for its foresight in centring Raphaelite ideas and aesthetics and for specifically, consciously, prioritising the female experience of Pre-Raphaelitism.

White Rose follows an interest in the Pre-Raphaelites which already existed in the poetry of Pound, in the caricatures of Max Beerbohm and in the biographies of Evelyn Waugh and Violet Hunt. However, while the text follows these authors' simultaneous fascination with and criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites and their works, *White Rose* neither parodies the works, as Beerbohm and Pound had done, nor fetishizes their biographies as Waugh and Hunt do. Instead, H.D. constructs a self-reflexive narrative. She makes the experience of Elizabeth Siddal central to this narrative, as both one of the most iconic Pre-

Raphaelite figures, and a female artist in search of intellectual autonomy and creative freedom. In its fragmentary style, the novel uses parallels and mirroring to hold up the glass to the author's contemporary literary context, engaging the influence of the Victorian. Meanwhile, H.D.'s late-modernist style digresses, obfuscates and disrupts the narrative conventions of typical biography.

The novel was demonstrably not the first text to fictionalise the biography of a Pre-Raphaelite woman. Nor would it be the last. *White Rose*, however, is the first work of fiction which does not merely undertake to retell Elizabeth Siddal's story but makes the impossibility of objective retelling the subject of the narrative. In exploring this paradox, H.D. plays with narrative, creating fragmentary, chronological disruption which anticipates the development of historiographic metafiction. The text is, to quote Linda Hutcheon, 'intensely self-reflexive, yet also [lays] claim to historical events and personages',[131] foregrounding the historiographic metafictions which would later be found in Neo-Victorian texts by John Fowles and A.S Byatt. However, because these methods have not been read in the context of the postmodern Neo-Victorian canon, with its 1960s commencement, their significance to the field of Neo-Victorianism (and, by extension, the significance of *White Rose* as a Neo-Victorian prototype) have been overlooked.

White Rose deserves recognition as a prototype for the Neo-Victorian novel. It displays many key characteristics of Neo-Victorianism, despite being written before the assumed origins of Neo-Victorian fiction. Furthermore, this prototypic Neo-Victorian novel's engagement with Pre-Raphaelite figures, works and aesthetics is indicative of the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood on Neo-Victorianism from this early stage in Neo-Victorian chronology. In focusing on Elizabeth Siddal as a central character rather than a satellite, *White Rose and the Red* marks the start of a movement towards Neo-Victorian

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[131] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.5.

womanhood, in which female experience is privileged and women can speak beyond the muse and helpmeet role. When we look beyond the widely-held epochal assumption that Neo-Victorianism has its origins in the 1960s with Jean Rhys and John Fowles, we can see that the Pre-Raphaelite influence has been present in Neo-Victorianism almost from its outset.

The novel introduces an idea which occurs repeatedly in Neo-Victorian texts featuring the PRB: that Pre-Raphaelite source texts – their paintings, poems, letters, biographies, Victorian ephemera, and all – are merely a skeleton of material culture around which a tissue of modern fiction can be constructed. These fictions of Pre-Raphaelitism and Pre-Raphaelite womanhood become, by extension, a means of re-examining and re-appropriating some of the aesthetic ideas of the nineteenth century. In this novel, H.D. demonstrates a creative foresight, privileging Elizabeth Siddal's voice and creative contribution in fiction, several decades before the corresponding movement of reclamation in literary and art-historical criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Chapter Two
Adaptation and Artifice

Postmodern Pre-Raphaelite Womanhood in the 1960s

In 1967, the BBC broadcast Ken Russell's film *Dante's Inferno: The Private Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Poet and Painter*. Staging the biographical detail of Rossetti's life through creative filmmaking techniques, vivid imagery and experimental styles, the film was controversial, accused of deviating from BBC documentary broadcasting guidelines.[132] Two years later, in 1969 came the publication of John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Fowles's postmodern text would become a seminal Neo-Victorian novel, thanks to its use by Linda Hutcheon to coin the term 'historiographic metafiction', a key theoretical concept for critical reading of Neo-Victorianism that highlights the self-reflexive artifice of the contemporary historical novel.[133]

The close publication dates of the two works are notable, evidencing a gradual return of Pre-Raphaelitism to cultural favour in the latter half of the twentieth century.[134] Both Russell and Fowles emphasise the relationship between Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal as signifiers for complex sexual relationships and problematic muse figures. Furthermore, the Neo-Victorianism of the 1960s marks a reinscription of Pre-Raphaelitism as 'the counter-culture of its time: iconoclastic, unconventional, progressive and self-confident [...] a forerunner of the "alternative society."'[135] Both texts rely on biography to loan them formal legitimacy. In Russell's case, the apparent biographical structure of the film loans legitimacy to creative

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[132] Vito Adriaensens and Steve Jacobs, 'Celluloid Bohemia? Ken Russell's Biopics of Visual Artists' in *Journal of British Cinema and Television* (2015), pp. 479-495, p. 481.

[133] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 108.

[134] GM Peter Swann, 'Is the World Flat or Round? Mapping Changes in the Taste for Art' in *New Frontiers in the Economics of Innovation and New Technology*, ed. by Cristiano Antonelli, Dominique Foray, Bronwyn H. Hall et al (Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2006) pp. 158-187, p.161

[135] Marsh, *Legend*, p. 131.

filmmaking techniques; in Fowles's case, the biographies of the Pre-Raphaelites provide a framework to understand and authenticate female creative independence.

In both texts, Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is fictionalised to suit the ideology of the text. Pre-Raphaelite women transform into archetypes, encoded by interpretable signs. Biographilia applies to this process precisely because it cannot be used interchangeably with either biography or biofiction. It may apply either to close adaptations of biographies, or fictionalised versions, or the use of biography as the building materials for Neo-Victorian character archetypes. All biofictions are biographilic, but not all instances of biographilia are fictional. [136] Such a distinction is important because, in texts such as *Dante's Inferno*, scenes are staged to enact biographical detail, yet imagine, embroider and speculate for the benefits of entertainment, narrative or cinematic effect.

1. Adapting Biography

When we consider the success or failure of a literary adaptation, it is reductive to focus on accuracy alone. Adriaensens and Jacobs provide three helpful criteria for adapting the biography of an artist into film: 'the representation of the artist's personality, the visualisation of the process of artistic creation and the relation between the style of the film and that of the artist portrayed.'[137] With Rossetti as the critical focus of Russell's film, it is logical that the woman of the Pre-Raphaelite circle have their own biographies flattened into their archetypal selves, the better to emphasise that process of artistic creation. In turn, Russell's process of visualising Rossetti's artistic creation by diminishing Pre-Raphaelite womanhood to a sequence of images fulfils the third step of Adriaensens and Jacobs' criteria. To prioritise their forms in art, as they are in the creations of Rossetti, their biographies must be fictionalised, exaggerated and adapted to serve the narrative of Rossetti as both troubled

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[136] Kaplan, p. 65.
[137] Adriaensens and Jacobs, p. 479.

genius and privately absurd figure. As Marsh wryly points out, 'the film-maker was only a little more inventive than the biographers.'[138]

Marsh is concerned with how Siddal's life is depicted accurately or inaccurately, as well as the cultural impact of these different adaptations. However, as Linda Hutcheon reminds us, we should beware of falling into the accuracy trap, charting the ways a biographilic work differs from its source texts, rather than analysing the cultural impact of the adaptation itself.[139] This is a problem in 'adapting' the Pre-Raphaelites into the medium of film or fiction. Writers cannot adapt from a single source text, such as a memoir, poem or even the static image of a Pre-Raphaelite painting. The Neo-Victorian writer adapts the combination of these things which connote Pre-Raphaelitism and Pre-Raphaelite womanhood in the cultural imaginary. Consequently, the 'mosaic of citations' which adapt more than one specific text, referred to by Hutcheon in her theory, is more imaginative, leaning not necessarily towards fidelity (which is impossible, given the variety of subjective perspectives reflected in the primary source texts of Pre-Raphaelitism) but towards an evocation of Pre-Raphaelitism that is culturally relevant to their audiences. Indeed, the inventive, imaginative and postmodern works of Fowles and Russell cause us to question the very idea of historical accuracy. In both *Dante's Inferno* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the Neo-Victorian writer (or adapter) faces the challenge of marrying the intertextual dialogue of the Pre-Raphaelite feminine ideal with their personal and cultural understanding of contemporary womanhood. Then result are two texts which reconstruct Pre-Raphaelitism to a compelling effect, while never inhabiting its intellectual stance.

2. Biopic or Horror Flick? Ken Russell's Genre Defiance

In his film, Russell adapts Rossetti's biography in a manner which, while innovative, did not meet the BBC's standards for factual programming at that time. His approach

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[138] Marsh, *Legend*, p. 136.
[139] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, pp. 20-21.

garnered criticism and controversy for its atypical filmmaking methods.[140] The result is a text which does not glorify and uphold biography but uses it as the skeleton around which to build commentary on the roles of artist, genius, gender and the public celebrity figure in a manner as commentative about the culture of the 1960s as it is about the 1860s. It does this through combining the conventions of both documentary and horror filmmaking, creating a hybrid text. The film challenges, 'conventional distinctions between "drama" and "documentary" employed by the BBC at this time [and creating] [...] new hybridised forms,' writes John Hill. What are these hybridised forms, and why are they significant to our understanding of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman?

According to Lawrence Grossberg, there are three ways to make genre identifications in film:

> The first defines a genre by a shared set of conventions (such as conventions about narrative, characters, location, styles). [...] The second approach defines genre as the underlying structure of values that the genre puts into play. [...] Finally, and perhaps most flexibly, genres can be articulations of texts that define a particular set of intertextual relations. In this sense, genres tell us how to read a particular text by placing it into more familiar structures of meaning.[141]

If we apply Grossberg's first category to *Dante's Inferno*, we can see that the 'characters' are refigurations of actual Victorians, dramatized to fit into a narrative structure. Rossetti is presented as a tortured genius, Christina Rossetti as an enigmatic mystic, Fanny Cornforth as a good time girl. Elizabeth Siddal has a more complex, spectral character construction, which will I will explore further in this chapter. Meanwhile, Russell stages typical Victorian aesthetic settings, such as parlours, studios and forests, yet transforms them into broken

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[140] John Hill, '"Blurring the lines between fact and fiction": Ken Russell, the BBC and "Television Biography"' in *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 12 (2015), pp. 452-478, p. 453.
[141] Lawrence Grossberg, Ella Wartell, D. Charles Whitney, *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (London: Sage Publishing, 1998), pp. 160-161.

down, dilapidated, shadowy or barren settings which connote threat and dissolution. Turning to Grossberg's second point, on the underlying structure of values, in Russell's film, the embodiment of conflict is embodiment itself. The film presents the conflict between Rossetti and Siddal as the artistic ideal of Siddal's beauty within her fallible flesh, its ultimate decay, and the subsequent torment for Rossetti when the ideal continues to haunt him.[142] These are not conventions of documentary, but horror tropes, dramatized through the structure of Pre-Raphaelite biography.

In his third example of genre identification, 'intertextual relations', Grossberg refers to 'double-coding,' in which different structures of meaning are combined.[143] In *Dante's Inferno*, the limitations of the BBC meet the experimentalism of Russell's directorial style to create 'contradictory codes.' Hence, Russell's surreal sequences add a thrill to the viewer's biographical curiosity, while documentary conventions such as non-digetic narration by Huw Wheldon, and narrations of Pre-Raphaelite poetry by the cast, ground and legitimise the film. Kaplan's concept of the 'stubbornly insoluble' separation of biography and fiction are not united.[144] Instead, their dissonance is artfully exploited to heighten the uncanny qualities of Russell's film. This hybridity in Russell's filmmaking is significant because it marks an interrogation of the boundaries and interpretations of historic facts through the artifice of film: 'Russell trying to reconcile the contradiction between historical and artistic reality which is at the heart of his experiments with documentary form.'[145] While Huw Wheldon, as series editor, sought truth above expression, Russell is more interested in exploring artifice.[146]

3. *Old Battersea House* (1961)

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[143] Grossberg, 161.
[144] Kaplan, p.65.
[145] Baxter, p.24.
[146] John Baxter, *An Appalling Talent: Ken Russell* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1973), p.123.

Dante's Inferno was preceded in Russell's work for the BBC by *Old Battersea House*, a documentary film for *Monitor*. Like *Dante's Inferno,* the film examines cultural and temporal relationships between the Pre-Raphaelites and the 1960s. Visually and thematically, it sets up many of the concerns which Russell would advance in his later film: it depicts a tour through the home of elderly collector of Pre-Raphaelite art, Wilhelmina Stirling, combining conventional art documentary with a more 'spooky' discussion of ghosts and spirituality in the Victorian home.[147] In understanding the line Russell treads between his documentary subject matter and surreal, phantasmagorical treatment of that subject matter, *Old Battersea House* is a significant precursor to *Dante's Inferno.*

Russell's use of light in the film, specifically the moving torchlight which illuminates walls and stairwells as a visitor tour moves through, appears intended to unsettle. The camera follows at the tail end of the tour, so that the scene is always chasing the light, partially engulfed in darkness. As Wheldon's narration reveals, there is a practical reason for these Gothic illuminations: 'the manservant, Mr Peters, carries a lamp to illuminate the darker corners.'[148] Despite this practicality, the images of modern people climbing stairs and traversing shadowy corners of the house, create a sense of anachronism. In one scene, as Wheldon narrates the biography of Pre-Raphaelite ceramicist and designer, William de Morgan, a portrait of the 'truly extraordinary man' swings open like a secret passage to reveal the figure of a fashionably dressed modern man who walks through the portal and out of frame.[149] Behind him, figures advance – only tour members, but engulfed in shadow that makes them appear spectral. These Gothic visuals contrast with contemporaneity of the visitors, almost giving the impression that modernity is haunting the Victorian structure, rather than the other way around. Russell would later return to this *mise-en-scène* in *Dante's Inferno* with a more overt Gothic flair, depicting Rossetti in a chloral-induced hallucination,

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[147] 'Old Battersea House'*, Monitor,* dir. by Ken Russell, BBC Television, 4th June 1961.
[148] Russell, 'OBH.'
[149] Russell, 'OBH.*'*

lit only by a candle, scrutinising portraits of Siddal as her spectral figure advances upon him.[150]

In this short, however, Russell's treatment of Battersea House is 'uncharacteristically restrained'.[151] He uses none of the phantasmagorical images of his later films. Scenes which emphasise the artworks of Evelyn and William de Morgan are conventional for an art documentary – the artworks are well-lit, camera panning from top to bottom of the canvas slowly, allowing the viewer to take in the work (though it could be argued that Russell chooses to linger more on Evelyn de Morgan's details of snarling dragons or bound heroines within the composition). Sinister torchlit sequences are interspersed with more conventional talking head interviews with Mrs Stirling, where she discusses her art collection and her belief in the spirit world. Mrs Stirling sits in a high-backed chair, facing the interviewer, with head and shoulders framed in the shot. The conventionality of this framing contrasts wildly with her strange accounts of ghosts sitting in her chair or sneezing in her ear while she sleeps.[152] Ninety-five years old in 1961, Mrs Stirling is herself a Neo-Victorian spectre: a true-born Victorian living at the dawn of postmodernism, she embodies a disjunction between two temporalities and cultures commonly seen as opposed.

Old Battersea House marks a transition between Russell's documentary filmmaking for *Monitor*, restrained by the formal requirements of the BBC, and the surrealism of his later films. The spectral image of modern art viewers and media consumers, traversing the shadowy, uncanny stairs and internal structures of the Victorian house presents a different kind of haunting forwards, in which modernity intrudes.

4. Mundane, Iconic, Undead: Russell's Three Readings of Elizabeth Siddal

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[150] *Dante's Inferno: The Private Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Poet and Painter*, dir. By Ken Russell (BBC, 1967) [on DVD].

[151] Michael Brooke, 'Old Battersea House (1961)', *BFI ScreenOnline*, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1284993/index.html, *[accessed 30/10/2018]*.

[152] Russell, 'OBH.'

Before we encounter Elizabeth Siddal as a character within the narrative of *Dante's Inferno*, we are presented with her spectral image. Following a decadent modality, Russell recreates Siddal's exhumation at Highgate Cemetery. Sweat-covered arms pull a coffin from the earth and draw back a veil, revealing Elizabeth Siddal's rotting, skeletal corpse, surrounded by her iconic hair. Directly after, she appears as Joan of Arc, suspended with a sword above a bonfire of paintings by Joshua Reynolds, backlit despite the flames. The scenes cut between this vision and close ups on the face of Rossetti, squinting through smoke and flames after his muse. While we are first presented with an image of Rossetti as himself (albeit an idealised iconoclastic vision of his earliest Pre-Raphaelite fervour), Russell's first depiction of Siddal is not as herself, but as the junction between death and art. [153]

The effect of the image of Siddal as immortal yet ethereal muse is heightened by the vision's appearance directly after the voiceover concludes its summary of the origins of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with the word 'inspiration.' [154] The ideal vision of Siddal is, a separate character within the film who appears only when Rossetti is painting. By contrast, scenes in which Siddal speaks are marked by absurd comic sequences, involving slapstick choreography or childish dancing, frequently scored with the sound of a wind-up music box. [155] As a woman, Siddal is marked out as mundane, childish and neurotic. It is only in scenes which depict Parris's Siddal and Reed's Rossetti in silent interaction, that a degree of dignity is conferred upon Siddal's character. Most often in these scenes, it is important to note, Siddal does not act her own self, but appears in the guise of the muse. For example, a scene of Siddal modelling against a background of leaves. Beginning with a close-up of her face, the camera zooms out gradually to reveal Siddal framed against a window. As more of the set becomes visible, we see she is surrounded by empty frames. Cut to Rossetti, drawing, his figure also surrounded by an empty gilt frame. These images demonstrate the narrator's

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[153] Russell, *DI*.
[154] Russell, *DI*.
[155] Russell, *DI.*

statement that Siddal and Rossetti, 'exist in a world of their own, each shaping the other to their own desire.' [156] Their images – perfect Pre-Raphaelite woman and brooding genius are shown to be an empty façade when the audience sees the bigger picture. Russell's biographilic adaptation of Rossetti and Siddal's lives agrees with Griselda Pollock's assessment of the reconstructed woman-as-sign. In fictional and fictionalised account of the PRB, as in Pollock's examples of academic monographs and biographies, Neo-Victorian texts also 'fabricate and celebrate individuality in the focus on a single main character [...] "Siddal" becomes a cipher for masculine creativity inspired by and fulfilled in love for a beautiful feminine face.'[157]

Indeed, it can be argued that the Siddal figure in Russell's film is not just one character but three: the real woman, mundane and stereotypically ignorant, the embodiment of an ideal, who is beautiful and serene on the screen, but most importantly never speaks, and finally the spectral or haunted figure – the corpse which rises from her coffin and haunts Rossetti in both his artworks and his dreams. When we return to the source texts of Pre-Raphaelite biography and art work, each of these three characters can be seen to have equal legitimacy; they reflect the many different biographilic spectres recalled to life in the enduring biographic fascination with Siddal's life and afterlife.

5. The Body's Failure to Contain the Muse

In *Dante's Inferno*, Siddal's art career is diminished, in keeping with her role as a muse whose inspiration is detached from the realities of her physical body. The film's narrator explicitly separates her physical body from the symbolism it holds for Rossetti, stating that 'it is unbecoming for the personification of a spiritual ideal to display an appetite.'[158] In the scene in which she confesses to Rossetti, 'I don't want to be an artist. I only did it to please

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[156] Russell, *DI.*

[157] Cherry and Pollock, p.94.

[158] Russell, *DI.*

you,'[159] we see her physical form beginning to fail, as if a drive within her has perished. Rossetti comically covers her in the ivory dust gifted by Ruskin to apparently restore her health, turning his face a ghastly clown white. As she coughs, the images of her in the 'Guggums' portraits loom in the background of the shot, as if as a reminder that Rossetti's iconic vision of Siddal is unfailing, while her physical self is fallible.[160] As Cherry and Pollock discuss, many of the women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, particularly those who progressed from models and muses to wives and independent creators 'were subjected to a programme of drastic re-education,' which encompassed both their artistic and poetic knowledge and their manners, which were altered according to their alignment as Pre-Raphaelite symbols.[161] However, this process of re-education has been exaggerated in Neo-Victorian biographilic texts, creating the impression of narrative structure in works which adapt the complex source texts of life writing, or to create dramatic conflict.

Indeed, the several horror-inflected sequences depicting Rossetti interacting with a rotted, spectral Elizabeth Siddal in her coffin serve almost to ground Oliver Reed's portrayal of Rossetti, driving his character to feats of art, rather than acts of despair. Once again, Russell treats the dead, symbolic Siddal as more artistically valuable than the living version. Russell's Siddal has a role as a spectral, posthumous disciplinarian, scolding her spouse into the resumption of his art and poetry. In death, she can no longer disappoint or embarrass, by acting in a manner too forward, insufficiently knowledgeable or simply working class.

Moments before her onscreen death, the following exchange takes place between Rossetti and Siddal:

'"How's your poem going?"

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159 Russell, *DI*.
160 Russell, *DI*.
161 Cherry and Pollock, p. 105.

"I'll finish it tonight."[162]

Even for the viewer not aware of Siddal's death as the result of laudanum overdose, Russell's narrative has prepared us for the woman's end. Between the aestheticism of her idealised image and the frailty of her physical body, we understand that the 'poem' is her life. Having diminished Siddal's artistic and poetic contribution to the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Russell amends the diminution; Siddal's last moments are narrated in her own voice, taken from her own literary works. Her narration in voiceover of the poem 'Lord, May I Come?' is the first time we have heard her poetry in the film. Thus far, her character has always been described through the recitation in voiceover of poems by Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti. Russell shows her death as part of the artistic tradition of Siddal as aestheticized, deathbound model – her bedbound body fading to an image of her floating on a river in a translucent dress (Appendix 3, Fig 1). The image connotes the mythological River Styx, in which the souls of the dead float – yet more present in the minds of the viewer is John Everett Millais's iconic painting, 'Ophelia' (Appendix 3, Fig 2). The women artist's contributions to the movement only feature in the process of adapting and fictionalising Pre-Raphaelite biography when they foretell a death that is aestheticized and fetishized. Russell's film marks a visual and aestheticized continuation of the biographilia which starts not with a woman's life, but with her undying image on canvas.

When her corpse is laid out, the image of Siddal in her coffin, surrounded by the Rossetti family, is composed to be visually unsettling (see Appendix 3, Fig. 3). Russell uses a wide-angle lens with shorter focal length, so that the Rossetti siblings and Swinburne, appear distorted, bulging around the narrow coffin in the centre of the scene. Siddal's body appears smaller than the literary giants who dwarf her. She positioned so that her head is nearest the viewer, her body pointed away from us. The fisheye effect places the viewer

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[162] Russell, *DI*.

almost in the corpse's position. Our view falls nearest her head, just as, moments before, we have, in her last hallucination been in her head.[163]

A stark, Gothic image of the Pre-Raphaelite women (Christina Rossetti, Fanny Cornforth, Emma Madox Brown and Annie Miller) carrying Lizzie's coffin through the forest that was formerly Siddal and Rossetti's love scene (Appendix 3, Fig 4). Though not necessarily an image of female empowerment, it is certainly one of female vengeance, as the various women of Rossetti's affection upbraid him in silent solemnity for his conduct. Here once again, Russell adapts the view of many art historical critics: that Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is a cipher for the internal lives of male genius. Yet this time, they do not evoke Rossetti's ideal, but his conscience. This and subsequent scenes of the exhumation, and hallucinatory fantasy of Siddal rising, rotted and zombie-like from her coffin to prevent the retrieval of the poems, owe far more to the horror genre, the medium of documentary (see Appendix 3, Fig 5). Jan Marsh agrees that Russell's imaginative leaps appear as 'a Gothic motif taken, it would seem, from the contemporary horror movie genre.'[164] However, I would add that the dreamlike sequences of *Dante's Inferno*, which counterpose eroticised women with rotting corpses, gilded statues with living flesh, and mundane reality with nightmarish fantasy, may also be read as hallucinogenic dreamworlds, redolent of 1960s drug culture. Russell presents Rossetti's chloral addiction and Siddal's laudanum addiction as analogous symbols of the bohemian and visionary. Through these hallucinogenic scenes, two Neo-Victorian reimaginings of Siddal are fulfilled: the spectral, immortal, ever-dying wraith figure which we also examined in Chapter One, and the 'Sixties Swinger' referenced by Marsh, whose drug addled state is

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[163] Russell, *DI*.
[164] Marsh, 'Imagining Elizabeth Siddal', p. 77.

a figure for fantasy, around whom [young women] wove their own dreams of love
and fame, as muse and mate to a poet or painter or perhaps pop singer [...] all the
elements of glamour and defiance, drugs and death-flirtation.[165]

Russell's film aims more at a sensual evocation of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's experience
– even if idealised and leading towards an aestheticised death.

6. Cultural Analogies

Adriaensens and Jacobs have discussed Russell's casting choice of the pop artist Derek
Boshier as Millais and the poet Christopher Logue as Swinburne as intentionally
'debunk[ing] the atmosphere of elevation that often surrounds the artistic process and,
indeed, the artistic biopic.'[166] Many of the actors Russell cast were chosen not particularly
for their acting talent, but because they were culturally analogous to the Pre-Raphaelite
figures they portrayed. As discussed in Chapter One, H.D. also used the Pre-Raphaelites as
analogues for her contemporaries. However, Russell does not have the same authorial
investment in the role of women in a male dominated circle. Consequently, his biographilic
analogies read more as commentary on the broader culture. Just as the canonical male
painters and poets of the Pre-Raphaelite circle are cast to reflect analogous art movements
of the 1960s, the female actors selected for the roles of the Pre-Raphaelite women can be
read as intentional commentary on the Stunners' roles as fashionable and iconic figures.
Their costume and makeup choices are subtly adapted to suit the beauty standards of the
1960s: Annie Miller is costumed in heavy lidded 1960s eyeliner; Fanny Cornforth is a bottle-
blond 'Cockney model of rather wider experience.'[167] The aesthetically languorous, near-
silent Jane Morris is acted by the supermodel Gala Mitchell, posing in a manner which seems
as appropriate to a fashion magazine as to a Pre-Raphaelite painting. The vocal and irreverent

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[165] Marsh, 'Imagining Elizabeth Siddal', p. 78.
[166] Adriaensens and Jacobs, p. 482.
[167] Russell, *DI*.

characterisation of Cornforth is played by Pat Ashton, a comedy actor and music hall performer known for her 'popular blonde, cockney persona,'[168]while Miller is acted by Caroline Coon, feminist artist and 'High Priestess of the Sixties Counterculture.'[169] It is evident from these casting choices that it was important to Russell to cast female actors whose personas were analogous to their biographilic characters. In selecting these models of female excellence within the art scene of the 1960s, Russell's fictionalised Pre-Raphaelite characters also call into question the matter of how Pre-Raphaelite ideals of beauty and femininity meet, or clash, with the cultural context of the film's creation.

7. *The French Lieutenant's Woman:* **The Body of the Victorian Woman as Text**

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Charles Smithson, amateur palaeontologist, labels and collects geological specimens based on beauty and fascination, rather than actual scientific value.[172] Fowles divides up the woman in his novels in a similar taxonomy which reveals the narrator's historiographic interests. Just like Russell's three incarnations of Elizabeth Siddal, Fowles presents three versions of Victorian femininity in Ernestina, Mary and Sarah. Ernestina epitomises Victorian feminine artifice. She has 'exactly the right face for her age; that is, small-chinned, oval, delicate as a violet. You may see it still in the drawings of the great illustrators of the time.'[173] The presentation of Ernestina as a living sketch by Phiz or John Leech sets her apart as a model of femininity which is at once illustrative and conventional. Ernestina enforces her identity through clothes and furniture, wielding a 'copious armoury of catalogues.'[174] The use of the word 'armour' demonstrates that buying mass-produced Victorian items are both the structural framework of her character, and the adornment which gives her conventionality a sense of authority. Ernestina's feeling of

[168] Nick Godwin, 'Pat Ashton Obituary' in *The Guardian*, Sunday 23 June 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/jun/23/pat-ashton-obituary [accessed 23/03/2018].
[169] Barbara Ellen, 'Still Fighting the Bad Guys' in *The Guardian*, Sun 30 Jul 2000, https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2000/jul/30/features.review17 [accessed 23/03/2018].
[172] Fowles, p.46.
[173] Fowles, p.28.
[174] Fowles, p. 194.

rivalry with her maid reflects the insecurity of the Victorian repressed position when faced with modern liberation – at least in the biased eye of the omnipotent modern narrator. The narrator betrays his own temporal fixity in the 1960s through his preference for the beauty of Mary the maid, whose face is 'not, I am afraid, the face for 1867.'[175] Mary, who is blonde, blue-eyed and curvaceous reflects the sensuality of the narrator's own time. Her place in the narrative is a construct of his own desire in his metafiction, as evidenced by the fact that:

> Mary's great-great-granddaughter, who is twenty-two years old this month I write in, much resembles her ancestor [...] is known over the entire world, for she is one of the more celebrated younger English film actresses.[176]

Mary is designed to be beautiful in a cinematic arrangement – a Victorian maid with the face of a movie star. The visual coding of the different women provides us with a register to understand postmodern artifice.

If Ernestina's beauty provides the cultural referent for Victorian ideology, and Mary's beauty reflects the familiar, sexually liberated beauty standards of the 1960s, Sarah's beauty represents some in-between state that is simultaneously Victorian, modern, and beyond temporality. Sarah's character is described as almost supernaturally insightful, possessing, 'an uncanny [...] ability to classify other people's worth.'[177] Yet this uncanny quality, of haunted, unsettled foreknowledge is not because Sarah is a ghost from the past, but because, paradoxically, she has the attributes and characteristics of modernity. The narrator uses modern terms to describe how, 'as if, jumping a century, she was born with a computer in her heart.'[178] Her 'profundity of insight' is a characteristic she has in common with many Victorian and Neo-Victorian heroines, but it is the characters', and indeed the narrator's inability to define Sarah to one archetype which contributes to making her an

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[175] Fowles, p.75.
[176] Fowles, p. 75.
[177] Fowles, p.71; 53.
[178] Fowles, p.53.

outcast. Some of her physical characteristics can be classed Pre-Raphaelite in character, particularly the 'very brown, almost ruddy hair', 'suppressed intensity of her eyes' and 'suppressed sensuality of her mouth.'[179] Yet divorced from an aesthetic context, neither narrator nor characters know how to interpret these signs. Sarah's attributes make her an anachronism in 1867 Lyme; her mutability and supernatural insight come from her liminal position as Neo-Victorian heroine – a constructed referent. It is only when she is positioned in Rossetti's house that Pre-Raphaelitism provides a unifying code through which we can read her character.

8. Aesthetic Symbols of Liberation

Hutcheon points out that there are two narratives of feminine self-construction for Fowles's Pre-Raphaelite heroine: There is Charles's construction of Sarah, and her own self-identity. Her art-making functions as a 'mode of control, of freedom denying' that alludes to the difficulty of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's struggle for artistic legitimacy.[180] Cora Kaplan has claimed that Sarah's entrance into the Pre-Raphaelite circle marks a replacement for the imprisonment of eroticism and gendered expectation which controlled her earlier in the text: 'Sarah finds her employment as amanuensis to Dante Gabriel Rossetti "so pleasant" it doesn't feel like work – one must accept the subordinate femininity of normative heterosexuality and motherhood, or go for the unconsoled loneliness of autonomy.'[181] However, if Sarah's melancholia has stemmed from her ideological and temporal fragmentation as a 'vast potential', her life in Cheyne Walk presents apparent unity, rather than alternate oppression.[182] Between Chapters One and Sixty, Sarah's character has been unfixed, obscured even from the otherwise self-aggrandising narrator who claims to create her, as he asks, 'Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?'[183] Now, in Rossetti's

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[179] Fowles, p.117.
[180] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p.65.
[181] Kaplan, p.99.
[182] Fowles, p.130.
[183] Fowles, p.94.

house, the combination of unfixed signifiers that comprise her character – her physical characteristics, mental acuity and enigmatic nature – can be arranged into a stable referent: Sarah is a Pre-Raphaelite woman, because the Pre-Raphaelite circle provides a frame to understand her.

9. The Function of Biographilia

In Chapter 13 of the novel, the narrator of *FLW* declares, 'This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind.'[184] Yet this is untrue. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his professional and domestic circles are introduced as (meta)fictional characters in Chapters 60 and 61 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Having Rossetti as Sarah's benefactor in his Cheyne Walk days with Swinburne is a specific and directed choice, which connotes both bohemian excess and buried tragedy. Though fictionalised visions of Siddal and Jane Morris do not feature as active characters in Fowles's narrative, and Rossetti appears mostly through oblique reference, the image of the Pre-Raphaelite woman continues to haunt, as the weight of Siddal's biography influences any fictional Pre-Raphaelite narrative. Consider the evasive dialogue of Charles and Sarah as they refer to the dead Siddal:

> '"I believe his wife is dead?"
>
> "She is dead. But not in his heart."
>
> "He has not remarried?"
>
> "He shares this house with his brother."[185]

Each of Charles's short statements in this scene act as interrogatives, establishing whether Sarah is acting as Rossetti's mistress, in the way other biographies and biographilic texts

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[184] Fowles, p.95.
[185] Fowles, p 449.

sensationalise the role of women in the artist's life. Sarah's art, her clothes, her modelling, her intellectual freedoms are all displayed through her immersion in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. The sparsity of this dialogue conceals the implied subtext of Charles's attempts to establish whether Sarah is romantically or sexually involved with Rossetti. For Charles, the circumstances in which he has found her have connotations of debauchery. His immediate discomfort in Rossetti's home, as well as his jealous statement that Sarah has found 'friends who are far more interesting and amusing than I could ever be,' highlights the Pre-Raphaelite circle as her natural environment, from which he is excluded.[186] This aesthetic environment, which evinces modern ideologies expressed in a historical register, further demonstrates Sarah's Neo-Victorian, ex-temporal state.

Pre-Raphaelitism within the self-reflexive narrative of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* acts as an ideological as well as an aesthetic principle: something not exactly modern but approaching modernity. Fowles's omniscient narrator tacitly approves them; earlier in the story (before Sarah's introduction to Rossetti), he writes of 'the execration first poured on the Pre-Raphaelites, who tried – or seemed to be trying – to be one-minded about art and life.'[187] The narrator's approval of Pre-Raphaelitism indicates a return to the idea that the Brotherhood were in some way cultural visionaries, whose aesthetic principles and more liberated gender politics placed them beyond their time.

Referring to the 'List of Immortals', Julie Codell has claimed that the art and praxis favoured by the Brotherhood, 'levels and collapses historical temporalities into simultaneities, a time travelling that closes the gap between past and present.'[188] The multi-layered, postmodern techniques employed by Fowles in his historiographic metafiction do a

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[186] Fowles, p.450.
[187] Fowles, p 371.
[188] Codell, p.13.

similar task. This may be one reason why the text prioritises the Pre-Raphaelite influence in its later passages. As Linda Hutcheon points out, the PRB, 'paradoxically chose their subjects from the past to [responsibility to paint contemporary life and its problems], as do Fowles and his narrator.'[189] The paradox of the PRB's description by Charles Smithson as nineteenth-century 'modern art'[190] creates an associative link between nineteenth century aestheticism and art movements of the 1960s, with womanhood placed at the centre.

10. Postmodern Yearning for Authenticity

In addition to the surprising continuities between Pre-Raphaelitism and historiographic metafiction, there is also a gendered component to their use in Fowles's novel. Of a novel abounding with Victorian intertexts, aligning Sarah's freedom with the movement is a decided aesthetic and gender political choice. When Fowles's narrator comments upon the cultural 'schizophrenia' of the Victorian era, 'the fact that every Victorian had two minds – is the one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century', he curiously echoes a statement H.D. makes in her depiction of Rossetti in *White Rose*.[191] In H.D.'s novel, Rossetti comments, 'it's being in two minds kills people.'[192] The fact that these different texts each highlight the aesthetic, idealistic desire for one-mindedness within Pre-Raphaelitism marks an important influence upon the Neo-Victorian literary movement. Conversely, the fragmentation of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite heroines – H.D.'s Siddal through her own lack of clarity, Russell's Siddal and Fowles's Sarah, demonstrate that both their fragmentation and reconstruction is inherently linked to the PRB's artworks and ethos. According to Kaplan, this return to the Victorian aesthetics in *FLW* appeals because it is:

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[189] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* (New York and London: Methuen), p.68.

[190] Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 444.

[191] Fowles, p.371.

[192] H.D., p.104.

an imagined past where knowledge and creativity operated in a milieu less regulated by the state and more integrated in its understanding of the world, even if more bounded by social convention and haunted by inequalities.[193]

The home of Rossetti is chosen specifically because it is a boundary between the Victorian and the contemporary, in which a character with Sarah's duality can find continuity – even if this continuity is in the metafictional double ending.[194]

In Harold Pinter and Karel Reisz's 1981 film adaptation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Pinter's script circumvents the adaptive complexity of biography. Rather than becoming a Pre-Raphaelite muse and amanuensis to Rossetti, Pinter's adaptation of Sarah Woodruff is placed in the household of a generic Victorian figure: 'an architect. His name is Elliott.'[197] Where Fowles has placed the Rossetti storyline in a prominent narrative position, near the end of the novel, Pinter effectively negates the weight biographilia bears upon the source text, erasing the biofictional Rossetti altogether. In Pinter's adaptation, Sarah's benefactor is quite literally a patriarch: we are first introduced to by his son, Tom.[198] The household in which the cinematic Sarah finds herself is markedly different to the cultured and bohemian circles of Rossetti's Cheyne Walk, in which Charles bristles at the prospect of decadence and depravity. As Joon Hyung Park points out, 'the film omits direct references to the Pre-Raphaelites[...] and employs images associated with vision and framing such as mirrors, windows, archways, and eyes as their equivalents.'[199] As Julian Wolfreys highlights, 'the spectral effect [...] needs structure.'[200] Elliott's house is not haunted by Pre-Raphaelite referents as Rossetti's is. It nonetheless follows a haunted model that recalls Pre-

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[193] Kaplan, p.93.
[194] Fowles, p.
[197] Harold Pinter, *The Screenplay of The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p.100.
[198] Pinter, p.98.
[199] Joon Hyung Park, 'Intertextual Dialogism with Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*' in *Adaptation* 9.3 (2016), pp.393-416 p.395.
[200] Wolfreys, p.5.

Raphaelitism in architectural forms, without biographilic bodies attached. Pre-Raphaelitism ghosts the adaptation, visually implied but disembodied.

The decision to make Elliott an architect also highlights the architectural structure of the film, the artifice of the self-reflexivity expressed in two forms; Victorian and modern narrative styles. The imagery Fowles uses repeatedly relates Sarah to the image of a Pre-Raphaelite woman. For example, in her sad nobility and mystery in the role of 'poor Tragedy'[201], the fallen woman seduced by the French Lieutenant, she is reminiscent of Rossetti's 'Found' (see Appendix 3, Fig 6), which depicts a fallen woman, discovered by her former lover, being grimly persuaded to return to the fold. In Pinter and Reisz's film adaptation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the medium of film allows for more explicitly visual allusions. For example, the love scene on the Undercliff frames Sarah against the branches of a tree. The rich purples and greens in this shot, as well as Meryl Streep's posture and way of holding her hands recall Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting 'The Daydream' (See Appendix 3, Figs 7-8).

The artificiality of Fowles's model of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite heroine is also more overtly expressed through Sarah's (and her modern actor Anna's) body. In the cinema adaptation, we are reminded that these visual allusions to Pre-Raphaelite womanhood are part and parcel of the artifice of the Neo-Victorian text. The prominent swoop of Siddalesque auburn hair which Sarah has in the Victorian narrative strand can be discarded in the modern one as simple artifice – a wig.[202] Anna's wig offers a comic image that mocks both the artifice of the Neo-Victorian retelling of history, and of the transferable symbolism in the Pre-Raphaelite ideal of femininity. Pre-Raphaelitism is a costume which can be put off and on. The intertextual reference, the comforting Neo-Victorian referent becomes the symbol

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[201] Fowles, p.9.
[202] Pinter, p.104.

of temporal disorientation, as the audience considers the dissonance of the Neo-Victorian text.

11. Conclusion

The vision of femininity and womanhood in Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry is at once a woman and a fiction. Bodies convey meanings: narrative and symbolism pass through them and are inscribed upon them. These women's bodies are the metonymic referent for Pre-Raphaelite principles. John Dixon Hunt writes of the feminine image in late-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, that the Pre-Raphaelite woman 'comes to exist, hackneyed and reduced to a few token features, an end in herself and no longer a means of revelation […] Vital only when she is used deliberately as decoration.'[225] The same may be said for the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman in the postmodern texts of the 1960s. Taking token features of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood as described by Hunt, Fowles and Russell reconstruct this womanhood to examine the artifice of the aesthetic ideal (Russell) or the postmodern yearning for sincerity (Fowles). In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Dante's Inferno*, we can see the ongoing cultural fascination with the Pre-Raphaelites beginning to encounter the metafictional, historiographic and hybrid modes of Neo-Victorianism, which would develop in the latter part of the twentieth century. Where critics have tended to emphasise either the symbolic image of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, or the glamour of the women's biographies, Neo-Victorianism takes a different path. Fowles's novel and Russell's film mark a deeper interest in adapting and re-examining women's roles in Pre-Raphaelitism, and their cultural relevance as creators of valuable art. As I will go on to demonstrate in Chapter Three, the transformation of Pre-Raphaelite women's biographies into character archetypes would follow the feminist criticism of the late twentieth century. There is space for creativity and empowerment within such adaptations. As feminist critics resuscitate the poetic and artistic oeuvres of the Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood, we may observe a corresponding

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[225] John Dixon Hunt, p.200.

movement in Neo-Victorian fiction. The reclamation of Pre-Raphaelite female artistry would usher in a new use for Neo-Victorian biographilia, as the character archetypes of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood are deployed for a new process of reparation and empowerment.

Chapter Three
Ethereal to Ethical:

Pre-Raphaelite Character Archetypes and the Agency of Feminist Reclamation

A female Pre-Raphaelite artist commits suicide when her partner, a seemingly lesbian poetess leaves her for a married man; a Pre-Raphaelite stunner grapples with the disappointment of her abusive marriage; an oppressed Pre-Raphaelite muse enters into a supernatural pact with a brothel-keeper to escape her tyrannical husband. These are some of the narratives of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-centuries. The last three decades have seen rapid advancement in the range of Neo-Victorian texts available for readers. As texts and authors have diversified, the various fictional modes and literary styles through which to examine Neo-Victorian womanhood have correspondingly diversified. Throughout the increased popularity of Neo-Victorianism, and the corresponding politics of the Neo-Victorian canon, Pre-Raphaelitism has remained a focus for investigation. Literary depictions of Pre-Raphaelitism have become more vivid in their re-imaginings. Such narratives are more melodramatic and supernatural than the texts examined in Chapters One and Two. Less reliant on the biographies of actual Pre-Raphaelite women, these stories allow more focus on the intertextual and cultural constructions of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood that developed in the century after the PRB. In such texts, Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is reclaimed, and begins to deviate from the pattern of Neo-Victorian fictions developed in the twentieth century; a pattern reproducible as a William Morris print.

Where previously, Pre-Raphaelite womanhood was used metonymically simply to evoke a Victorian setting, more recent works of Neo-Victorianism have focused more strongly on emphasising the voices of Victorian women, displaying more overt feminist and post-feminist re-reading of the Victorian canon. Thus far, we have traced Pre-Raphaelitism in Neo-Victorian womanhood from the biofictional prototype of *White Rose and the Red*, through the loaned Victorian textual legitimacy of the biographical Pre-Raphaelite subject

in John Fowles's metafictional novel, and Ken Russell's artistically adapted arthouse biopic. These texts relied to varying extents on biography, enhanced by fictional invention and the ever-present spectrality of the Pre-Raphaelite heroine. This chapter, however, looks more closely at original characters, drawn as feminist Pre-Raphaelites. My purpose here is to illustrate the progression of the Pre-Raphaelite influence, showing how the development of feminist poetics occurs concomitantly with the rapid advancement of Neo-Victorian culture in the 1990s and 2000s.

A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and *The Children's Book* (2008), and Joanne Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister* (1994) problematise Pre-Raphaelitism's exploitative artist-muse relationships and add more of the flair of Gothic horror to the Pre-Raphaelite woman's iconography. Byatt's Neo-Victorian novel *Possession* is, like Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, one of the novels most commonly cited as a seminal example of self-reflexive metafictional Neo-Victorianism. The novel, which features intertwined narratives of the Victorian and modern eras, as two Victorian poets engage in a secret love affair, and two modern academics uncover and trace that affair through secret letters, presents metonymic references to Pre-Raphaelitism in a style typical of that which we have also seen in Chapters One and Two.

I am interested in the intertextual relationship between *Possession* and Byatt's later novel *The Children's Book*. *Possession* demonstrates subtle but nonetheless evident Pre-Raphaelite influences, while the later novel *The Children's Book* displays a far more overt Pre-Raphaelite influence, and uses the setting of the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras to critique the progress of women's artistic and professional autonomy. Joanne Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister* sits chronologically between the two texts. This novel abounds with tropes from both classic and contemporary Gothic literature: unreliable narration, Bluebeard narrative, haunting dead children, mysterious occult wise women, astral-projections of the heroine's soul from her frail body. In examining this more overtly Gothic text as intermediary between

Byatt's two novels, I will demonstrate that Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood has begun to move away from adherence to biography, showing how the developing Pre-Raphaelite feminine archetype allows for expansion of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's mythos in fiction.

In the context of Neo-Victorianism's development in the 1990s and 2000s, Byatt's influence is essential. Prior to Byatt's success, Neo-Victorian fiction had tended to fall either to the side of cerebral postmodern fiction, heavily inspired by literary theory (in the case of Fowles) or to the vivid romanticising of the nineteenth century. Winning the Booker Prize in 1990, the commercial and critical success of *Possession* marked Neo-Victorianism's entry into mainstream culture.[226] In its intricate examination of feminism and female identification with texts, *Possession* has been read as the attempt by women to reclaim the Victorian era, or the sceptical stance that any reclamation can ever be satisfactorily done. The creation of character archetypes inspired by the PRB play an important role in such reclamations and explorations.

1. Blanche Glover: Pre-Raphaelite Woman's (Dis)Inheritance

In *Possession*, several critics have noticed the similarity of the fictional poet Christabel LaMotte to actual poet Christina Rossetti. Christabel's character is an amalgamation of different Victorian female poets.[227] Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Dickinson are all named as influences on the construction of the LaMotte character, or rather the construction of Byatt's Victorian poetic pastiche.[228] It is easy to read Pre-Raphaelite intertexts into many of Christabel's works. Because she is a scholar of Victorian poetry, Byatt is deeply knowledgeable about the poetic forms which she pastiches.

[226] Philip Tew, Leigh Wilson and Nick Hubble, 'Critical Introduction: Recovering the 1990s' in *The 1990s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Nick Hubble, Philip Tew and Leigh Wilson (London: Bloomsbury, 2015),pp. 1-35, p.20.
[227] Shiller, p. 551.
[228] Kaplan, p. 92.

For example, some of Christabel LaMotte's poems are comparable with poems by Rossetti. However, as Jan Marsh has commented, Christina Rossetti is a complex and not entirely representative figure of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. Marsh writes:

> [Christina Rossetti] did not belong to the group […] chiefly because her life and work deserve attention in their own right; she should not be defined simply as one of the "Pre-Raphaelite women".[229]

Because Christabel's character is in some ways analogous to C. Rossetti's, Christabel's relation to the ubiquitous feminine Pre-Raphaelite archetype is correspondingly complex. The heroine of *Possession* is so concerned with her creative autonomy and so resistant to becoming a muse or lover figure that she does not model the ubiquitous Pre-Raphaelite archetype which previous texts examined in this dissertation have established in Neo-Victorian literature and culture.

Pastiche is a problematic term in Neo-Victorian criticism, because the term connotes the inferiority of the Neo-Victorian text in relationship to its nineteenth century precursor. Byatt's fellow novelist and contemporary, Jeanette Winterson has commented, 'If you want to read nineteenth-century [texts], there are plenty for you to read, and you may as well read the real thing and not go out and buy a reproduction.'[230] The question of the value of reproduction is apposite when considering the parallels between Neo-Victorian literature and culture and Pre-Raphaelitism. Readers should consider that Byatt's pastiche technique is entirely appropriate for a text which adapts and re-imagines the art and culture of a preceding era. Christabel's role as the repeated pattern of a certain archetype of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood has been briefly discussed in the criticism, by critics such as Letissier, who deems her character a hybrid of Jane Burden Morris and other Victorian women with iconic

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[229] Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood,* p. 2.
[230] Jeanette Winterson, quoted in Louisa Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative: The Victorians and Us* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 142.

images.[231] However, the intertextual variety in the poems Byatt invents for Christabel have meant she has been written about more as a hybrid construct of Victorian poetic ideals rather than a specifically Pre-Raphaelite-inspired heroine, in the style of Fowles's Sarah Woodruff.

When seeking the Pre-Raphaelite influence on Byatt's *Possession*, we may instead turn to another character, secondary and spurned: Christabel's former partner, Blanche Glover. In Blanche, we may see the strands of several plotlines in the narrative of the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite woman. Like Ken Russell's Siddal, Blanche is 'working-class, but respectable' rescued by Christabel from the governess trade to allow her to pursue painting.[232] An inspirational collaborator, working alongside Christabel as a helpmeet, Blanche is subsequently rejected when a more inspiring romantic muse is discovered. She sinks into mental illness and finally suicide. Blanche's narrative is a variant on the model of the Siddalite legend, variations of which have already been discussed in the preceding chapters: a promising artist, beset by illness and rejected by her more applauded lover decides to end her life.

In *Possession*, the iconic yet formulaic construction of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is queered by Christabel and Blanche's poet-muse-amanuensis relationship. The power balance of that relationship is inverted by Christabel betraying Blanche to take the male figure of Randolph Henry Ash as her muse. Blanche Glover does not become an icon in her own right as Siddal did; Blanche's works are lost, and few records of her survive to help the literary detectives. In the novel, Blanche's paintings are described as illustrative interpretations of myths and legends, a key theme for the PRB. Blanche shares an interest in Arthurian legend with Elizabeth Siddal (in both her real paintings and illustrations, and her fictional fascination, as described by H.D. in *White Rose and the Red*). In common with many Pre-Raphaelite artworks, the paintings Blanche describes in her journals and suicide

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[231] Letissier, p.3.

[232] Russell.

note are inspired by Arthurian legends and mythology, while her 'artistically written, faintly Gothic' handwriting is also suggestive of Pre-Raphaelitism.[233] But in considering Blanche as a Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite, we should consider that ultimately, the images these references conjure in the reader's mind are the product of Pre-Raphaelite intertexts.

At this stage in the development of the Neo-Victorian fiction movement, many informed readers will be accustomed to the Pre-Raphaelite influence, having experienced its ubiquity in a range of texts. Even those not well-versed in Victorian art are often familiar with the iconic imagery of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, even if they cannot situate it in art historical context – as discussed in the Introduction, the ongoing popularity of Pre-Raphaelite artworks in the Tate Gallery and Victoria and Albert Museum speak to a cultural familiarity with and appreciation of Pre-Raphaelitism as Victorian cultural referent.[234] As a result, when challenged with a narrative that presents not artworks, but the absence of artworks, we, like *Possession*'s overzealous American feminist academic, Leonora Stern, 'imagine them all pale and tense […] voluptuous but pale, lovely willowy creatures with heaving breasts and great masses of pre-Raphaelite hair.'[235] Leonora desperately wants to believe that Blanche's works were 'not derivative', a hope which echoes Pre-Raphaelite scholars who situate Elizabeth Siddal's works within the Pre-Raphaelite canon.

The question of whether Blanche's work displays true genius or is merely derivative is never actually resolved. In a neatly subjective turn which mirrors the ongoing critical question of the value of Pre-Raphaelite women's original works, readers must draw their own conclusions as to Blanche's artistic value, based on intertextual references within the 'meagre remains' of Blanche's oeuvre.[236] It is interesting to note that in the 2002 film adaptation of *Possession*, the Pre-Raphaelite influence on Blanche and Christabel's

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[233] A.S. Byatt, *Possession* (1990) (London : Vintage, 2009) p. 233.
[234] Jones.
[235] Byatt, *Possession*, p. 312.
[236] Byatt, *Possession*, p. 306.

relationship and art is more overt (See Appendix 4, Fig 1). As with the film adaptation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, this may be because the visual medium of cinema allows for stronger visual parallels with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Yet curiously, the paintings shown in Blanche's studio are altered versions of paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones.[237] The film shows several scenes of Blanche at work in her studio, painting Christabel (see Appendix 4, Figs 1-2). Yet they go so far as to depict her painting as a reproduction of Rossetti's painting 'Monna Vanna' (Fig. 3), with Christabel's actress, Jennifer Ehle's face superimposed over the top of it. It is as if even this fictional Pre-Raphaelite woman's artworks must be derivative, because her real-life counterparts are commonly accused of being derivative. The qualities of mystery, otherworldly absence and ethereality ascribed to Blanche's artworks are lost when the paintings cease to be missing masterpieces, unseen by the reader, and are instead shown in film, half-finished pastiches of works by more famous men.

In deciding to show Blanche's work as derivative, the production makes an implicit statement both on the fictional character, and the actual Pre-Raphaelite women which inspired her construction. Blanche's missing paintings are the 'central metaphor for (dis)inheritance and mourning' in the Pre-Raphaelite woman artist's formulation of Heilmann and Llewellyn's theory of inheritance in the Neo-Victorian novel.[238] Once again, the art of the Pre-Raphaelite woman takes on the status of the haunted object.

2. Challenging the Pre-Raphaelite Body Beautiful

The feminist critics in *Possession*, Leonora Stern and Maud Bailey tether their idea of Blanche to the tangible materiality of Victorian artefact. Through her imagined works, they construct an equally imagined Blanche. The feminist critics fall prey to fallacious

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[237] *Possession* (film), dir. by Neil LaBute (Warner Bros., 2002) [on Prime Video Streaming]
[238] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p.35.

reasoning in their praxis of 'studying primarily what was omitted.'[239] However, the absence of concrete depictions allow both the characters and the reader to conjure up their own vision of Blanche's art and Blanche herself. The absence of Blanche's cultural inheritance is pivotal to her absence in the narrative, both within Byatt's fictional canon of poets, and in her ultimate relevance to Christabel's poems. Without the tangibility of her works, she is a different sort of female Pre-Raphaelite ghost to the spectre explored in Chapter One – Blanche is a textual reference without tangible materiality of her own.

When, in the latter part of the novel, we receive a brief description of Blanche (unrecorded by history, but present in the book's Victorian narrative strand), her image is at once the sickly and the fatal vision of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood:

> The poor mad white-faced woman [...] Behind her steel-framed glasses, she had very bright blue eyes, glassy blue. And the reddish hair, and a few orange patches of freckling on the chalky skin.[240]

This image is reminiscent of some of the faint praise offered by Pre-Raphaelite figures like William Michael Rossetti or in description of Elizabeth Siddal: 'somewhat uncommon features, greenish-blue unsparkling eyes[...] what many call red hair and abuse under that name.'[241] Blanche's pallor, striking eyes and red hair are typically Pre-Raphaelite, but far from reading as ethereal, she is exhausted and manic. She is the Pre-Raphaelite ideal turned ugly and uncomfortable (a theme that Byatt would later return to in *The Children's Book* in the character of Seraphita Fludd). The inclusion of her glasses forms an additional frame through which to consider her figure, not only as an artist and a muse, but as a woman, struggling to match an ideal. They serve as a barrier to the eye's natural, subjective vision ('truth to nature' being one of the central tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism). Blanche has her own

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[239] Byatt, *Possession*, p. 221.
[240] *Byatt, Possession*, p. 454.
[241] William Michael Rossetti, p.171.

'Yeux Glauques'. She, like the Siddal figure in Pound's poem, has been betrayed in both art and love. But her gaze is not 'questing and passive'[242] but retributive and accusatory. Her clouded sight endangers and ultimately destroys her as both lover and artist.

The words Blanche chooses in her parting note to the world act as both social commentary and art criticism. She comments not on the status of lesbian relationships in the nineteenth century, but on the difficult realities of being a woman artist, realities which are far harsher for her than in the romanticised ideal, seen in Siddalite biography and biofiction, of the female pupil following the tuition of a male lover/ tutor/ supporter. It is typical of Byatt to take the aestheticised and fetishised aspects of Victorian text (and Victorian womanhood) and portray them with a greater social realism. By withholding the actual image of Blanche from the modern-day critics and giving only the reader that image through the conceit of narrating unrecorded events, redacted from history, Byatt challenges our interpretation of the Pre-Raphaelite fantasy woman.

Possession featured the subtle influence of Pre-Raphaelitism, deployed through Blanche, a character who is adapted from the archetypal muse-martyr figure in Pre-Raphaelite biographilia. Blanche's purposes in the narrative are twofold: she demonstrates the complex, difficult to categorise qualities of Christabel's sexuality and identity as a Victorian woman. Her second narrative function is to situate the fictional artists of *Possession* in the mid-nineteenth-century cultural milieu of art, poetry and letters. As an example of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, Blanche's character is interesting in her own right; worthier of critical attention than she has previously been afforded. However, she ultimately remains a minor figure; her narrative is secondary to the text's primary interest of the novel's status as 'A Romance', and that romance's defiance of critical analysis and archival ownership as a means of critics' self-identification with cultural texts.[243] It has been

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[242] Pound, Line 19.
[243] Lena Steveker, *Identity and Cultural Memory*, p.104.

pointed out that *Possession*, 'appears to be imposing a happy ending on the template of viewing the Victorian past through a contemporary focus.'[244] Yet beyond the centrality of the novel's core romance, there is no happy ending for Blanche, the archetype of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, whose uncertainty and historiographic fragmentation follow the same trajectory as H.D.'s Siddal and Fowles's Sarah Woodruff. I would therefore suggest that Byatt's interest in Pre-Raphaelitism is foregrounded in *Possession*. The influence of Pre-Raphaelite femininity on Neo-Victorianism is subtly present in the text, and Byatt is able to explore it more fully in her later novel, *The Children's Book*.

3. *Sleep, Pale Sister:* Gothicising the Pre-Raphaelites

Between Byatt's two Neo-Victorian novels, there is another which also develops Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite femininity through the archetypal character: Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister*. By mobilising Gothic tropes in their reconstruction of women's experience in the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Harris takes the established features of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism and exposes the horror that is their other side. The term 'Gothicisation' can refer to transforming something according to a Gothic character, or simply to indulge one's taste for the Gothic.[245] I would argue that the Gothicisation of Pre-Raphaelitism within Neo-Victorian fiction is intended to enact both of these definitions: it is in part a stylistic choice, and in part a commentary on the development of the Pre-Raphaelite woman in Neo-Victorian fiction. Jessica Cox has claimed that Neo-Victorian writers are furthering the revelation of uncomfortable social truths in furthering Victorian Gothic sensation writing models.[246] Gothicisation marks a development in the role of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman. *Sleep, Pale Sister* follows a particularly Gothic plot construction: that of an innocent young

[244] Nick Hubble, 'Historical Representations: Between the Short and Long Twentieth Centuries: Temporal Displacement in the Historical Fiction of the 1990s' in *The 1990s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Nick Hubble, Philip Tew and Leigh Wilson (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.149-179, p.156.

[245] 'Gothicize, v.' in *OED Online*, June 2018 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/80229?redirectedFrom=gothicise#eid [accessed 31/06/2018].

[246] Jessica Cox, '"[T]he Ghost of Myself": Women, Art, and (Neo-)Sensational Representation in Joanne Harris's Sleep, Pale Sister', *Contemporary Women's Writing* 7.3 (2013), pp.346-360, p.347.

woman who is tempted to model for a seemingly talented and impressive Pre-Raphaelite artist, only to discover that a murderous secret lies in the heart of the man's character and art. As we start to see the Gothic mode entering Neo-Victorian texts of the 1990s, we can see how it allows archetypal Pre-Raphaelite heroines to enter new narratives.

Harris's protagonist Effie comes from a downtrodden middle-class family who allow her to be groomed by a predatory artist to further their social status. Her narratives and even her name intentionally connote the popular biography of Effie Gray: a repressed, sexually disappointed wife who finds freedom from her eccentric and demanding husband by entering a relationship with a younger, more bohemian artist. This interpretations of Gray's story is itself reinscribed through biographilia: they are the established stereotypes of a highly subjective biographic interpretation of the woman's life. However, the Gothic is injected into this archetypal story: Effie Chester's oppressive husband is a paedophile and a murderer, whom she temporarily escapes through forays into the occult, led by a morally ambiguous matriarchal figure, Fanny Miller, whose magisterial presence and forthrightness is drawn in the style of an archetypal Fanny Cornforth.

So many of the narratives of Pre-Raphaelite femininity are reliant on the body. Pale skin, long limbs, opulent red hair and even a sickly constitution have been repeatedly used in our texts to denote the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite heroine. In this novel, Effie Chester's spectrality is no longer merely at a narrative level. Unlike Elizabeth Siddal in *White Rose and the Red*, whose conscious awareness of her own mortality and exploitation as part of the greater arc of Pre-Raphaelite art is enacted at a narrative level, Harris's *Sleep Pale Sister* expands on a hauntological conceit: the spectral consciousness. Effie's soul literally leaves her body and reads her surroundings with supernatural insight. Effie follows the pattern of

the Pre-Raphaelite woman whose body is text; she must literally leave her body to regain agency.

The narrative of *Sleep, Pale Sister* involves doubles, pairs and twinning. In the text, the doubling and pairing are used in the Gothic mode to unsettle the reader, as well as highlight the artificiality of the Pre-Raphaelite woman-as-sign. Effie is possessed by the spirit of Marta, the child who Henry Chester murdered during a sexual assault. These two women variously represent and are trapped by the dualities of Henry Chester's desire for the ideal – a sexual perversion which fetishises purity and the untouched even as he violates them. Effie's doubles may also be read as another example of the spectral influence on Neo-Victorian fiction. However, they are also a commentary upon the selfhood of Pre-Raphaelite women in the face of their many incarnations. Everything about Effie as a character has been shaped by her need, from early childhood onwards, to play multiple parts, assuming multiple idealised identities for her own safety. While she is still in love with Henry Chester, Effie plays one type of character, a symbol of purity and religiosity. Then, falling in love with Mose Harper – tellingly, another artist, written in the pattern of the cad-like Rossetti type – she must become another type of character, wilder and more akin to the late Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatale*. Mose, enchanted by her changeability, writes that she was 'never twice the same. Her lovemaking reflected this, so that she gave the illusion of being many different women and I suppose that was why she held on to me so long.'[247] Her sexuality is multiple, her identity so well-used to dividing herself; repressing one instinct in favour of that which will protect her. The multiplicity of this archetypal Pre-Raphaelite woman is a direct result of her lifelong experience of being split across many canvases.

Effie welcomes the dreamlike state of possession which overtakes her when Marta enters her mind, describing her as 'My sister, my shadow, my love.'[248] Harris treats the

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[247] Harris, pp.98-99.
[248] Harris, p.232.

commingling of these two women, both broken by the same artist who destroyed their innocence as a spiritual communion. Their shared brokenness is a form of kinship and self-recognition. The spiritual unity of women who have been broken by the sexual and artistic obsessions of one artist is the Gothic interpretation of Pre-Raphaelitism's search for the ideal women, as has been read by Pollock and Cherry as ownership and the denial of female autonomy.[249] Throughout the narrative, we see Effie beginning to lose track of her temporal presence. In common with many other Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite heroines, Effie's chronology is disrupted, as she slips in and out of the memories of the possessing spirit of Marta. Effie's gradual untethering from linear chronology share commonalities with H.D.'s prototype of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood in *White Rose and the Red*. Like Lizzie Siddal, laudanum plays a part in Effie's loss of clarity and autonomy.

However, *Sleep, Pale Sister* adds a more overt dimension of the supernatural to the spectral Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman, through its many references to witchcraft, enchantment and mesmerism by Fanny Miller, brothel keeper and mother of the murdered Marta. The complex, intermittent link between the two becomes blurred – when Fanny mesmerises Effie, Marta overtakes Effie's body, effectively becoming her, not only mentally but physically, through Fanny's art with dyes and makeup. Effie's white blonde hair turns to Marta's black. As the two consciousnesses disappear into one another, Effie welcomes the escape from her own image. Her possession is distressing, yet it is also transformative, as evoked in the line 'Does the imago mourn for the caterpillar it once was? Does it even remember?'[250] The simultaneous difference and oneness of Marta and Effie – spiritually linked by their victimisation at the hands of Henry Chester – is not noticed by Henry when he has sex with Marta-Effie, but he subconsciously examines it in his painting. (As has been discussed in Chapter One's discussion of *White Rose*, the idea of uniting seemingly opposing

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[249] Cherry and Pollock, p.96.
[250] Harris, p.189.

binaries is a matter of fascination both to the Pre-Raphaelites and to more recent Neo-Victorian authors.)

As he becomes obsessed with Marta (who he only ever meets in Fanny Miller's establishment, when Effie's body has been disguised and her consciousness stifled by the influence of mesmerism), he begins to obsessively paint her as he once did Effie. This transfer of Henry's painterly obsession, and the fundamental truth that these two women share one body, strongly connotes the Pre-Raphaelite pursuit of the feminine ideal. When Christina Rossetti wrote 'In an Artist's Studio', it was this maniacal pursuit of the feminine ideal that she referred to.[251] While critics commonly read the poem as Rossetti's concern over her brother Dante Gabriel's apparent obsession with the image of Elizabeth Siddal, David Latham has refuted this correlation, stating that Siddal:

> speaks out through her own poems and paintings, not in the form of personal confession, but in the Pre-Raphaelite fashion of writing a reflexive art based on art, self-consciously steeping her artistry in the framework of traditional genres, literary conventions and [archetypes].[252]

This is an unusual reading of Siddal's work, which places her within the canon, making her work part of the Pre-Raphaelite tradition without suggesting she is a derivative artist. In the context of *Sleep, Pale Sister*, such readings are important, as they mark the corresponding critical movement towards acknowledging the power of the female Pre-Raphaelite's creativity. In *Sleep, Pale Sister*, Effie discovers a perverse creative power in the act of unmaking. She disrupts the existential control her spectral art-selves have over her life and identity by destroying the work her husband designs for her: 'a bloody handprint branded

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[251] Christina Rossetti, 'In an Artist's Studio' in *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. by R.W. Crump and Betty S. Flowers (London: Penguin, 2005) p.796.

[252] David Latham, 'A "World of Its Own Creation": Pre-Raphaelite Poetry and the New Paradigm for Art' in *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 25 (2016), pp.5-27, pp.19-20.

the needlework, obliterating half of the sleeping girl's face.'[253] Foreshadowing the death, fragmentation and revelation which is to come, Effie finishes the 'unfinished state' of Henry's design – with her own blood.[254] Cox reads this physical disruption of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal with the female body as, 'Neo-Victorian reclamation, through which the female body is rescued from the patriarchal vision that distorts it and shapes it according to its own subject view.'[255]

In *Sleep, Pale Sister*, pivotal crises in the Pre-Raphaelite woman's experience take place within the exhibition space of the gallery. In these scenes, Effie is forced to view herself as seen by the male artists who have co-opted her image. The disparity between the stylised and idealised images of Effie's painted self with their real ones create a crisis of selfhood, and a reflection on the idea of imagery as ownership. In common with the themes of text, artefact and ownership within the spaces of museums and collections, which are explored in Byatt's writing, the gallery space in Harris's novel provides a space for the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite woman to consider her role within the artistic and literary canon – a metacritical and self-reflexive art criticism that gives the usually static image a voice. These fictional exhibitions also allow for the trope of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism which has by now become familiar to us: the insertion of actual Pre-Raphaelite figures into the scene for the purposes of legitimising the archetype and fleshing out the Neo-Victorian setting. Whether or not the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite heroine feels commonality or alienation with the fictional representations of the PRB acts as an indicator of her character.

All the texts examined in this chapter share a common feature of Pre-Raphaelite texts in the last twenty to thirty years: they take established figures from Victorian history and biography and cherry-pick iconic narratives, combining them to create character archetypes.

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[253] Harris, p.47.
[254] Harris, p.47.
[255] Cox, p.353.

With these character archetypes, the authors gain freedom to create alternate narratives for the Pre-Raphaelite woman. Neo-Victorian texts create space for exploring alternate Pre-Raphaelite womanhood and the relationships between such women. Their relationships may be queered, their iconography satirised; they may reflect critically on their own legend, and escape from it. However, in reinscribing the historical traumas faced by women in the nineteenth century, modern writers also perpetuate a certain degree of textual violence. Authors' eagerness to transcribe, transform and adapt biography (splicing together different subjects' traumas and oppression in the process) is a Frankenstein-like creation process. This may explain why the Gothic mode has become a favourite way for contemporary authors to interpret the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman: the ambivalence of her symbol, the image of oppression that nonetheless pleases our senses. These are the murderous and haunted undersides of aestheticism which Neo-Victorianism exposes and challenges.

Harris's more lurid, overtly Gothic novel demonstrates that in the most recent developments in Neo-Victorian fiction, female authors have had the agency to examine the ethics of Pre-Raphaelitism. The Neo-Victorian archetypal women more overtly critique an art movement which co-opted women's beauty and imagery to embody the ideals of men, but which fundamentally devalued the creative autonomy and intellectual contribution of those same women to their artist's circle. Its publication, four years after the success of Byatt's novel, marks a development in the way Neo-Victorian women's creativity can be described. There is a subtlety of literary allusions about the influence of the Gothic upon *Possession*. Lena Steveker describes these influences as 'play[ing] with typical generic elements such as ghosts and the savage forces of nature, thus evoking a highly ironized Gothic atmosphere.'[256]

4. *The Children's Book*: Pre-Raphaelite Archetype as Metaphor of Gendered Violence

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[256] Lena Steveker, *Identity and Cultural Memory*, p.131.

Contrasting with the characters of *Possession*, who are in their individual capacities intent on attaining creative and emotional autonomy and intellectual solitude, *The Children's Book* focuses on the challenges and problematics of the late Victorian artist's community. As with the real Pre-Raphaelite circle, the cast of characters in *The Children's Book* comprises a vast, expansive circle of artists and artisans, writers and men-of-letters, art collectors and general models of eminent Victorianism. In its way, this fictional circle, which (according to the established Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite model) intersects with real PRB members, is precisely representative of the idea of educated, interdisciplinary bohemianism. The two most important houses in *The Children's Book*, Todefright and Prospect House, can be read as analogous to social and collaborative spaces dreamed of by the PRB in their living experiments at the likes of William Morris's Red House and Kelmscott Manor. However, within these fictional collectives, infidelities and abuses occur. Biographers of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood have made it their object to tease out the complicated social, collaborative, and sexual bonds between its members. Byatt, however, is free to extrapolate, imagine and experiment with Victorian social norms and creative bonds through character archetypes which draw from but do not replicate actual biographies.

Of the cast of twenty-five characters, I will make a case study of one of the central women in *The Children's Book*: the artist's model turned wife and mother, Seraphita Fludd. Her narrative is the most overtly reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelite biographilic narrative pattern we have explored in Chapters One and Two. Seraphita Fludd's character is defined not by her works but by her marriage to violently tortured, mercurial potter, Benedict Fludd. While Seraphita is herself a maker – the novel repeatedly refers to her Arts and Crafts embroidery and tapestry – she is always shown as an ineffectual, comic character, whose otherworldliness is entirely at odds with the practical circle of craftsmen and workers who surround her. Seraphita is, in several senses, unreal. We are told:

> Her name was not Seraphita. She had been separated from her class by her great beauty. She had been, in late Pre-Raphaelite, early Aesthetic days, a "Stunner" and had modelled for Millais.[257]

And in another scene that:

> Seraphita, in the days when she was a Stunner from Margate called Sarah-Jane Stubbs, had been painted by Burne-Jones and Rossetti. Now in her forties she still had the fine bones, the knot of black hair, the huge brow, the wise-spaced green eyes and calm mouth of the paintings.

Such characteristics typify the archetype of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. However, more so than other archetypes of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood we examine in this chapter, Seraphita is defined less by her personal characteristics, than by the men who have painted her, and the art style which she represents. All descriptions of Seraphita read like an art critic analysing a painting, rather than a narrator describing the inner life of a character. In her characterisation of Seraphita, Byatt emphasises colour, form and composition rather than writing any kind of inner life. Consider this scene, in which Seraphita is observed by Philip, Benedict Fludd's apprentice. He thinks:

> She wore white muslin decorated with violets, and a violet shawl. The muslin flowed from a high yoke: she was uncorseted, with a simple violet sash. Her gleaming hair was coiled […] She looked straight ahead, dreamy and distracted, her mouth composed in a pretty, unchanging half-smile […] He thought she passed whole days without speaking. When he read about the Lady of Shalott, who was under a curse and saw the world only in a mirror, he thought of Seraphita Fludd, and her large, glaucous, luminous eyes.[258]

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[257] A.S. Byatt, *The Children's Book*, (London: Vintage, 2009) p.321.
[258] Byatt, *TCB*, p.134.

Philip reads Seraphita as one might interpret the detail on a Pre-Raphaelite painting, noting the colours and textures of her surface. All description of Seraphita is surface. Rather than examining her depths for their own sake, those depths are encoded by yet another Pre-Raphaelite symbol: the Lady of Shalott. Byatt's descriptions are rich with intertextual reference, both to the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the literary texts and legends which inspired them. Even Seraphita's 'glaucous, luminous eyes' offer a textual allusion to the twentieth century critical reception of Pre-Raphaelitism, so evocatively described in Pound's poem.

In Seraphita, Byatt creates an archetype of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, which amalgamates the cultural legends of the melancholic Elizabeth Siddal, the dutiful but dissatisfied Jane Burden, and the commoner amongst genius, Fanny Cornforth. By writing Seraphita as a laudanum addict, alcoholic and escapist, Byatt amalgamates several threads from the biographies of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. Byatt's technique is comparable to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's practice of painting the women he saw in his mind, hybridising their actual bodies in an amalgam of their respective best features to create an illustrative ideal.[259] Pollock and Cherry have noted the similarities in style and composition which typify Rossetti's paintings of women –'not portraits', they argue, but 'features and devices' which amalgamate the features of several Pre-Raphaelite women:

> These patterns of intertextual consistency and inconsistency erode the attempts to secure an identity between the drawings labelled "Siddal" and a person or personality of whom the drawings are claimed to be portraits.[260]

In much the same way, Byatt explores the possibilities of counterfactual histories of the real Pre-Raphaelite women in fiction. Rather than splicing one woman's face onto another's body, she splices together their narratives, creating a character who seems at once familiar

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[259] John Dixon Hunt, p.180.
[260] Pollock and Cherry, p.112.

and unsettling in her difference; archetypal yet discursive in her deviation from the biographilic narrative trajectory.

In *Possession*, Byatt introduced the idea of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics and character archetypes as metonyms for Victorianism. As characters, Benedict and Seraphita more completely realise this idea. Moreover, by setting the novel at the fin de siècle and following the characters' stories into the twentieth century, Byatt engages with the changing literary scene and cultural upheaval of this transitive period in literary history. While Byatt's work famously meditates on the reception and cultural influence of Victorian art, I would argue that in *The Children's Book*, she shows progression from the meditative, metacritical stance of *Possession*.

In *TCB*, Byatt takes key aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and semi-legendary tales of their works and actions, Gothicising the history of the PRB as part of a wider Neo-Victorian trend for empowerment after the female Gothic tradition. In the story, Byatt takes Pre-Raphaelite texts on prostitution – Rossetti's idea of 'lazy laughing languid Jenny'[261], or the unnamed, eternally incomplete prostitute from his unfinished painting 'Found' (Appendix 3, Fig 6) – and splices them with the darker principles of the Gothic, and the Victorian Penny Blood. Fludd's search 'up and down the Haymarket like Rossetti [...] looking at the flesh for sale' relies on connotations created by the Neo-Victorian text's familiarity with, and taste for, violence.[262] The depiction of Fludd's lover, Magdalen, as 'a mass of raw, open wounds and blood [...] pools of it [...] congealing, like glaze' aestheticises the violence perpetrated upon her, fusing Jack the Ripper sensationalism with the language of art and art criticism.[263] As H.D. did through her suggested parallels between the Pre-Raphaelites and Siddal's childhood acquaintance with the murderer James Greenacre, Byatt

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[261] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Jenny' in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann, pp. 60-69, L1.
[262] Byatt, *TCB*, p.115.
[263] Byatt, *TCB*, p.115.

parallels the Pre-Raphaelite artist's use of the female form with the violent disemboweller. Both the artist and the mutilator take possession of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's body, posing, cutting and splicing hybrids from different women's body parts. Byatt leaves it ambiguous whether the drunken, volatile Fludd is responsible for Magdalen's murder, yet proves that he is capable of aestheticising violence towards women, through the sexual abuse of his daughters and transformation of that abuse into sexually explicit ceramic pots, which depict the girls' disembodied genitals in detail.[264]

5. The Death of Aestheticism, and the Haunted Pre-Raphaelite Subject

Though Seraphita's aesthetic uselessness recurs in the novel as a comical feature, this surface belies the violent abuse she has had to live through as Fludd's wife and muse. Margaret D. Stetz has argued that death and art are the dual driving forces of *The Children's Book*, writing that:

> the killing of others as the necessity at the root of artistic activity, regardless of the medium and in the ethical dilemma that such a cruel necessity presents for both the artist and for the audience.[265]

While death of plants, animals and people are important to the artistic processes depicted in the book I would argue that it is not literal death, but the artistic death of cultural obsolescence which truly haunts *The Children's Book*. In Chapters One and Two of this dissertation, I have discussed how death and spectrality haunt the narratives of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood in Neo-Victorianism. As already seen in the character of Blanche Glover, Byatt is concerned with the cultural afterlives of Victorian figures through their literary creations. In all her Pre-Raphaelite splendour, Seraphita Fludd embodies the death of a type – of an art movement, and a certain view of beauty and femininity. She has escaped

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[264] Byatt, *TCB*, p.279.
[265] Margaret D. Stetz, 'Enrobed and Encased: Dying for Art in A.S. Byatt's The Children's Book' in *Journal of Victorian Culture* (2012) 17, pp.89-95, pp.89-90.

the tragic, laudanum poisoned fate of the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite heroine, only to find herself in kind of suspended animation at Prospect House, typifying an art form that Byatt shows to be falling out of cultural favour.

It is not physical violence which kills, but the reduction of certain figures to a museum cabinet. Families are damaged by being 'turned to art.'[266] While Byatt portrays museums and exhibitions as places of wonder, there is another side to the concepts of display, forced ownership and retention which they suggest. A concept of imprisonment which aligns with the disrupted selfhood that Effie Chester experiences in the face of her many painted incarnations in *Sleep, Pale Sister*. As certain characters of *The Children's Book* are magnetically drawn to the artists' space of galleries, museums and studios, other characters – like Seraphita and her daughters –find that they cannot escape such spaces. This unsettled relationship is a central conflict amongst this wide cast of characters. The gallery of Pre-Raphaelite – and all Victorian – artistry preserves, but it also traps and rarefies.

The Children's Book begins in 1895 and ends in 1918 with the end of the First World War. Over the course of the novel, the eponymous children grow up, enter professions like finance and medicine, and betray resistance to the aesthetic and moral ideals of their forebears. For Heilmann and Llewellyn, 'the crisis is one of time: the narrative feels nostalgic for its own moment', causing 'slippages between understandings of the world around the characters'[267] Seraphita does not have a death scene, but she nonetheless haunts the characters, as they hurtle towards modernism through the brutal baptism of the First World War.

While other characters fight, nurse and die, 'Seraphita [sits] in semi-darkness, semi-conscious, and [waits] for the day to end, coming briefly to life in the early evening when

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[266] June Sturrock, 'Artists as Parents in A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book* and Iris Murdoch's *The Good Apprentice*' in *Connotations* 20.1 (2010), pp. 108-130, p.115.
[267] Heilmann and Llewellyn, p.157.

safe sleep was on the horizon.'[268] She is like Rossetti's 'Beata Beatrix': 'wrapped in the amber of the image, always dying and perpetually to be yearned for.'[269] Following the wide artistic circle of *The Children's Book*, we may see how her striking beauty and carefully described Pre-Raphaelite free dress are gradually denigrated by changing tastes. In her abstracted stare there is, once again, more than a little of the glassy, Siddalite stare from Ezra Pound's 'Yeux Glauques'. More as an object than a subject, Seraphita's relevance wanes with the changes in the art world. Seraphita, like Blanche, is a 'superfluous person, of no utility in this world'.[270] This time, however, it is not because of her failure to thrive as an artist in her own right, but because her entire existence has been reduced to a system of images which have fallen out of favour.

Abused for decades by Fludd, her selfhood and autonomy are broken down to the point that Seraphita is nothing but an image, a living painting. And when the aesthetics of Pre-Raphaelitism fall from favour in the twentieth century, Seraphita no longer has relevance even as a symbol. Seraphita's cultural obsolescence, paired with the destruction of her autonomy explains why this character has little to no depth, and is consistently described with the same phrases. In this new incarnation of the Pre-Raphaelite woman in Neo-Victorian fiction, Seraphita typifies the idea of the living ghost, haunting the narrative. Yet in this case, her phantom-like presence remonstrates not only against the oppression of the Pre-Raphaelite muse, but also the cultural obsolescence of her image in the face of modernity. In Seraphita's case, she is the living spectre out of time, less a symbol of 'temporal disjoining', than embodying the suspension of time.[271] Seraphita's ineffectual, regressive character traits may even be construed as Byatt's criticism of the fetishised Pre-Raphaelite biography as it functions in Neo-Victorian literature.

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[268] Byatt, *TCB*, p.583.
[269] Lutz, p.30.
[270] Byatt, Possession, p.216.
[271] Derrida, p.20.

Highlighting the biographilia within *The Children's Book*, Stetz has examined how 'in the course of fulfilling its duty as Neo-Victorian historical fiction, it also reanimates actual personages [...] only to enact their deaths all over again.'[272] The notion that Neo-Victorian texts have a duty is problematic in itself. Implicit in Stetz's statement is the idea that biography can convey legitimacy upon fictional Neo-Victorian characters, who in their archetypal roles may enact historical justice. Yet in the darker underside of Pre-Raphaelite biography and the construction of the female Pre-Raphaelite archetype which Byatt touches upon in *The Children's Book* is the wider tendency in Neo-Victorian fiction towards feminist and post-feminist discourse. Byatt's novels introduce hints of an exaggerated, Gothic interpretation of Pre-Raphaelite source texts: the genius artist turned Bluebeard captor, the pale, aesthetic children Imogen and Pomona Fludd, secretly oppressed by their tyrannical father; one of Fludd's muses abused, the other disembowelled. However, while Byatt introduces aspects of the Gothic in her Neo-Victorian interpretation of Pre-Raphaelite source texts and imagery, it is usually through oblique reference and subtle influences. Byatt retains a focus in her novels on social realism that means *The Children's Book* never entirely tips over into Gothic melodrama. In Harris's novel, the Gothicisation of Pre-Raphaelitism in the Neo-Victorian text is exploded, marking a further development in the archetype of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. In the progression from *Possession* to *The Children's Book*, we may see similar development. Yet, placed within the sprawling cast and multiple arcs of the novel, the Gothicisation of Pre-Raphaelitism is not a focal point, merely a Neo-Victorian accent.

The examples of feminist Pre-Raphaelite femininity in Byatt have been intended to make the reader think about gendered relationships in artistic circles, and the wider question of Victorian culture, cultural obsolescence and subsequent revival in the Neo-Victorian mode. While the characters of Blanche Glover and Seraphita Fludd are interesting examples of the Pre-Raphaelite feminine archetype and come from one of our most important

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[272] Stetz, p.90.

contemporary Neo-Victorian authors, they are undeniably secondary characters. Being secondary, Blanche and Seraphita also fulfil an important feature of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism: they metonymically immerse the reader in the cultural setting of Byatt's Neo-Victorian. The culture of Byatt's re-imagining of the nineteenth century is referential, produced from a position of foreknowledge about Victorian intertexts, and encourages critical discourse. In *The Children's Book*, we can see hints of Gothicisation in the text, that inform the characterisation of Seraphita Fludd and the otherworldliness of Prospect House. However, despite these influences, Byatt's Neo-Victorianist remains 'devotedly realist' at heart.[273]

6. Conclusion

Byatt's and Harris's treatment of Pre-Raphaelite women's experience is filtered through Gothic melodrama. While the style and tone of Harris's text is rather different to Byatt's, their focus on reclaiming and reimagining the role of the female Pre-Raphaelite figure within the canon remains the same. Like Byatt, Harris takes the biographilic formula of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood to create archetypal heroines. In comparing Byatt's text with Joanne Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister* it is possible to see how the Gothicisation of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics and the Pre-Raphaelite muse mythology is furthered. Just as A.S Byatt discusses the violent underpinnings of the habitual splicing of women's bodies in the violence of Benedict Fludd, Harris reads the historical trauma of these women's co-opted faces and bodies through the Gothic narrative of spiritual possession.

Contemporary Neo-Victorian fiction finds new ways to further the discourse around Pre-Raphaelitism's co-option of femininity, without necessarily contributing to that co-option. These archetypal heroines both reflect upon and deviate from the historic narratives of their Pre-Raphaelite foremothers. These archetypal Pre-Raphaelite women come the

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[273] Joseph Bristow, 'Introduction: What Happened? *The Children's Book* and the Question of History, 1895-1919' in Journal of Victorian Culture 17.1 (2012), pp.64-72, p.65.

closest to following what Tracey Hargreaves claims is the function of the literary Victorian afterlife: 'to recuperate what was not said or sayable in the nineteenth century [...] flesh out not just the past but the present too.'[274] Yet, as Christine Ferguson reminds us, 'we must be wary of vaunting a form of "radical" historiographical imagination that ultimately regenerates the myths of patriarchal power it claims to oppose.'[275] The Gothic experience of archetypal Pre-Raphaelite women liberate them from the strictures of biographical narrative, allowing new, imaginative ways to reconstruct Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism. Yet as we have seen, these new narratives also tend to perpetuate scenes of gendered violence and female suffering. In seeking liberated and empowered versions of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, who may escape the prison of biography, we must remain critical of how texts reconstruct Victorian oppression and gendered violence for perverse pleasure.

More recent texts filter their re-creation of Pre-Raphaelitism through the Gothic mode (a mode which has, from its earliest developmental stages in the eighteenth century, had been written by, for and championed by women).[276] In doing so, Neo-Victorian writers defamiliarise that apparent safety and nostalgia which the reader may expect when imagining a nineteenth-century setting or picturing the beauty of a Pre-Raphaelite artwork – nostalgia of the type challenged by Simon Joyce.[277] There have been more instances of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood in the last ten years than I could adequately examine in depth within this work. I can, however, refer the reader briefly to certain texts which further illustrate the phenomenon of the empowered Pre-Raphaelite character archetype. There is Julie Hearn's young adult novel *Ivy* (2006) in which the eponymous heroine escapes Victorian slum life through modelling, being shocked out of laudanum addiction by the spectral presence of

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[274] Hargreaves, p.285.

[275] Christine Ferguson, 'Victoria-Arcana and the Misogynistic Poetics of Resistance in Iain Sinclair's *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* and Alan Moore's *From Hell*' in *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 20 (2009), pp.45-64, p.62

[276] Alison Milbank, 'Gothic Femininities' in *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.155-163, pp.155-156.

[277] Joyce, pp.111-112.

Elizabeth Siddal, and mentored by a red-haired transgender woman named Carrotty Kate, whose beauty is subversive, yet very much in the Pre-Raphaelite style. Tim Powers's Gothic horror novel *Hide Me Among the Graves* (2012) recasts Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti as unlikely vampire hunters, wielding pistols loaded with silver bullets to prevent the unquiet spirit of Elizabeth Siddal from tormenting her husband. In Marina Fiorato's 2017 novel *Crimson and Bone*, rather than having a supernatural cause, the element of Gothic horror is achieved through the archetypal model-prostitute, Annie Stride's gradual unravelling of a fictional Pre-Raphaelite painter's mysterious past and revelation of his murders. In this novel, Annie's literary education runs parallel to her emerging detective skills. She is, of course, ably assisted by a living-dead advisor – a particularly sickly, yet sardonically critical Neo-Victorian reincarnation of Elizabeth Siddal.

In this Chapter, I have linked the idea of the developing Pre-Raphaelite archetype to feminism and the Gothic. These movements and modes allow for the latest incarnation of Pre-Raphaelitism in Neo-Victorian literature. They fulfil many of the key concerns of Neo-Victorianism: to imaginatively reinvent the Victorian era and its artforms, and to achieve this reinvention in a way that privileges the ethical re-appropriation of marginalised voices – in this case, the artistic and intellectual autonomy of women in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. In the hardships suffered by Blanche Glover, the spectral fragmentation of Effie Chester and the abused life of Seraphita Fludd, we may read Neo-Victorian fiction as interrogating the treatment of femininity in Pre-Raphaelite art and literature. Although this is the final chapter of this dissertation, it is intended more as an assessment on the latest development in Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, rather than a definitive endpoint. The influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Neo-Victorian literature and culture has adapted and changed over the past century and will almost certainly continue to do so. The novels of Byatt and Harris are among the latest incarnations of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood within Neo-Victorian literature: an ever-evolving legend of Pre-Raphaelite femininity.

Conclusion

In January 2018, while this dissertation was still in draft form, the Pre-Raphaelites shocked the art world and re-entered public discourse from beyond the grave. As part of a solo show by the artist Sonia Boyce, Manchester Art Gallery staged a 'takedown' of one of its most popular Pre-Raphaelite artworks, John William Waterhouse's 'Hylas and the Nymphs.'[278] Temporarily removing the painting, the gallery left the exhibit's space blank, allowing the public to leave notes with their reactions and encouraging them to consider the feminist implications of the painting. Following criticism in the media, Sonia Boyce commented on her artistic praxis, offering a counterpoint to those who reported the curatorial event as an act of censorship. Boyce wrote that the removal was:

> An attempt to involve a much wider group of people than usual in the curatorial process [...] The past never sits still, and contemporary art's job is increasingly about exploring how art intersects with civic life.[279]

This event was timely. It demonstrates that as I write, contemporary culture remains engaged with how the nineteenth century remains in intertextual dialogue with the present, specifically through Pre-Raphaelite art, and the role women play within it. The gallery-goers leaving their marks and comments upon the empty space – some praising Waterhouse's painting, others criticising its implicit male gaze – were engaging in their own critical debate about the role of Pre-Raphaelite femininity and its relationship to contemporary culture. These modern viewers literally inscribed the space taken up by Pre-Raphaelite femininity. The texts which I have investigated in this dissertation perform the same function.

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[278] Mark Brown, 'Gallery removes naked nymphs painting to "prompt conversation"' in *The Guardian*, Wednesday 31st January 2018 https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/31/manchester-art-gallery-removes-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-painting-prompt-conversation [accessed 15/05/2018].
[279] Sonia Boyce, 'Our removal of Waterhouse's naked nymphs painting was art in action' in The Guardian, Tuesday 6th February 2018 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/06/takedown-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-art-action-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce [accessed 15/05/2018].

The dissertation's purpose was to show the chronological development of the female figure in Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, to prove her reinvention has influenced both the Neo-Victorian vision of nineteenth century womanhood and the '(re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision' of Pre-Raphaelitism in a Neo-Victorian mode.[280] The women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle are real figures – subjects for historiography. Yet it is through their reinscription in art and literature that the reader comes to know them. The Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman is inextricably linked with the (canonically male) art. It is the art which makes her an icon, but seldom her own art, which, prior to the late twentieth century, is deemed derivative. As the woman takes on the status of an icon, thanks to her role as artistic and poetic muse, she becomes the subject of biography. Yet these same roles which made her biographically significant are also responsible for the ideological disjunction which separates Pre-Raphaelite woman as painter's object from Pre-Raphaelite woman as autonomous subject. However historically accurate a biography aims to be, it is never just the Pre-Raphaelite woman herself who is the biographical subject. Her iconic image is too compelling – it demands narrative retelling. Consequently, a biographilic mythology springs up around the figure of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. The obsession with retelling her life in literature is not to codify what is known about her, but to reconstruct and romanticise her unknowability. In so doing, the biography industry stays in business, profiting from a Pre-Raphaelite mythology which grows and changes with each retelling.

Eventually, all narratives of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood – purported fact, invented fictions, and texts which blur the boundaries between forms – become haunted by the reader's cultural knowledge of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. This knowledge is the intertextual soup of associations, images and narratives received from the source text of Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry, and the culture texts of the constructed Pre-Raphaelite legend. These are attractive narratives for fiction: the charismatic, careless Dante Gabriel Rossetti,

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280 Heilmann and Llewellyn, p. 4.

the beautiful, beleaguered Elizabeth Siddal, the tart-with-a-heart Fanny Cornforth, the eccentric William Morris, accompanied by his languid wife Janey. Literary works transform historical figures into character archetypes which may be altered and deployed for the benefit of narrative, exposition, or simply to set a scene.

From the spectres of tragic Pre-Raphaelite femininity, authors have created archetypes. Like Yopie Prins in her investigation of the re-interpretation of the figure of Sappho through modernist and Victorian literatures, I have observed this archetype operating in contemporary Neo-Victorianism and worked backwards to try and understand the chronological development of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood.[281] Prins writes,

> Suspended in the metalepsis of reading, projecting the past into the future and the future into the past, I [the reader] will find myself in the same non-place as the spectral "I" of Sappho.[282]

In this dissertation, I have argued after a similar model: that the Pre-Raphaelite woman is a metonym for Neo-Victorianism because her image and biography position her across temporal lines, simultaneously representing the Victorian, and modern contexts of creation. I have found expressed in Kaplan's biographilia, 'an occasion for elegy in its capacity both to retrieve and to bury the past,'[283] and through hauntology an interpretation of the iconic figures who are spectralized into multiple virtualities.[284]

In Chapter One, I examined how H.D. emphasised the subjective experiences of Elizabeth Siddal, placed femininity and woman's experience as central to Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism, and marked the spectral, temporally dislocated quality of Pre-Raphaelite femininity. As I have shown, these key features would resonate into the development of Neo-

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[281] Prins, p. 246.
[282] Prins, p. 247.
[283] Kaplan, p. 8.
[284] Derrida, *Spectres,* p.212.

Victorianism. In Chapter Two, I describe the origin of the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite woman in the self-reflexive artifice of John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and in the fractured, romanticised selves of Ken Russell's Siddal. Yet, as I have argued in Chapter Three, with the coming of feminist criticism, women writers retake control of the archetype and begin to reshape the narrative of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. Byatt's and Harris's novels emphasise women's empowerment and challenge the tragic paradigm, while still invoking the source texts from which they draw.

In Neo-Victorian literature and culture, Pre-Raphaelite femininity is always spectral. Ethereal aestheticism others her, while biographilia creates foreknowledge that the Pre-Raphaelite woman is an inevitable victim of a tragic end. Fictional versions of archetypal Pre-Raphaelite womanhood follow the pattern of the woman's life from subject to object, object to icon, icon to myth and myth to spectre. This is how the Pre-Raphaelite cultural influence has evolved over a century of Neo-Victorian fiction: woman becomes image, image becomes icon, icon inspires biography, biography haunts narrative, spectral subject is revitalised as fictional archetype. Through such archetypes of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood, authors are freed to write new narratives. Rather than the restrictions of biography, Neo-Victorian fiction allows for the *what-if* – the space in which readers can reinscribe empowerment into the beauty and uncanny melancholy of the Pre-Raphaelite image.[285]

Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is fragmented; it is haunted; it is aesthetic. How we as readers conceive Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is contingent on the highly subjective reception of source texts, such as biography and memoir. Even in its self-reflexive Neo-Victorian reincarnation, Victorian biography should be read as politicised, subjective, and selective. Opposing and conflicting narratives emerge from the romanticised fictions in biographies of Elizabeth Siddal, Jane Morris, Fanny Cornforth and others. However, the

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[285] Shiller, p.551.

materiality of these women's lives – letters, documents and artworks – show Pre-Raphaelite women as historical subjects rather than the textual invention of painters and biographers.

Pre-Raphaelite femininity is also (re)constructed for modern eyes through the commercialism of Neo-Victorian culture. The easily consumed image of Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite womanhood occurs in part through the commodity fetishism of the modern market for Victorian goods. Cora Kaplan's assessment of 'Victoriana' rings true, from the 'collectible remnants of material culture in the corner antique shop,' to the 'complementary miscellany of evocations and recyclings of the nineteenth century, a constellation of images which became markers for particular moments of contemporary style and culture.'[286] In many ways, Neo-Victorian consumption of the Pre-Raphaelite woman's image is a continuation of Psomiades's reading of the woman's body in aestheticism as a vehicle for reconciling elite artistic and ideological separatism with the reality that art is a commodity.[287] Viewers consume paintings, illustrations and patterns depicting damsels and stunners, femmes fatales and virginal heroines. They buy reproductions in the gift shop. As models, the women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle became metonyms for the aesthetic principles of the movement, and the figure of the Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite heroine takes on this iconography. In the Neo-Victorian mode, Psomiades's idea that 'aestheticism is radically dependent on the images it uses to represent itself to itself' is heightened by the self-reflexivity of Neo-Victorian forms, which put the past into dialogue with the present and allow repressed women's voices to represent themselves to themselves in a new way.[288] The Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman is always in dialogue with the familiarity of saleable image and marketable biography. All the texts examined here rely either on fictionalising biography or transforming the key features of Pre-Raphaelite femininity into a character

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[286] Kaplan, pp.2-3.
[287] Psomiades, p.9.
[288] Psomiades, pp.23-24.

symbology: the ethereality, otherworldliness and tragedy of the spectral icon; the profusive hair, sensual bodies and opulent settings of the idealised 'Stunner'.

Pre-Raphaelite womanhood is an appropriate metonym for the Neo-Victorian nineteenth-century because Neo-Victorianism is a constructed tissue of fiction and intertextual reference that relies on disrupted temporality in much the same way the PRB used disrupted temporality to express their ideals. As the characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood were constructed, idealised signifiers, serving metonymically for an aesthetic ideal, the Pre-Raphaelite women in twentieth- and twenty-first-century fictions bridge the temporal disjunction of the Neo-Victorian text. Her image is enduring, haunted; undying, yet somehow always dying. The Neo-Victorian Pre-Raphaelite woman is like Maud Bailey's reflection on the body in *Possession*, both 'A matrix for the susurration of texts and codes' and an 'awkward body. The skin, the breath, the eyes, the hair, their history.' [289] We encounter Pre-Raphaelite womanhood within the liminal textuality of the Neo-Victorian text, in which histories may be rewritten, wrongs righted and re-interrogated in the ongoing ethical debates of historical appropriation.

(33,344)

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[289] Byatt, *Possession*, p.251.

Appendix One
LIST OF IMMORTALS

We, the undersigned, declare that the following list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and that there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries, in whom this list is reflected –

Jesus Christ****	Raphael*
The Author of Job***	Michael Angelo
Isaiah	Early English Balladists
Homer**	Giovanni Bellini
Pheidieas	Giorgioni
Early Gothic Architects	Titian
Cavalier Pugliesi	Tintoretto
Dante**	Poussin
Boccaccio*	Alfred**
Rienzi	Shakespeare***
Ghiberti	Milton
Chaucer**	Cromwell
Fra Angelico*	Hampden
Leonardo Da Vinci**	Bacon
Spenser	Newton
Hogarth	Landor**
Flaxman	Thackeray**
Hilton	Poe
Goethe**	Hood
Kosciusko	Longfellow*
Byron	Emerson
Wordsworth	Washington**
Keats**	Leigh Hunt
Shelley**	Author of *Stories after Nature**
Haydon	Wilkie
Cervantes	Columbus
Joan of Arc	Browning**
Mrs. Browning*	Tennyson*
Patmore*	

Fig. 1. William Holman Hunt, 'List of Immortals' in *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, Volume 1 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), p. 159.

Fig 2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *How They Met Themselves*, c.1860-1864, Watercolour on Canvas https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti_-_How_They_Met_Themselves_(1860-64_circa).jpg [accessed 08/08/2018]. Copyright Fitzwilliam Museum.

Appendix Two

Fig 1. Max Beerbohm, *Rossetti's Courtship*, 1916 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beerbohm-rossetti-and-his-friends-65258/3[accessed 29/01/2018]. Copyright Tate Gallery.
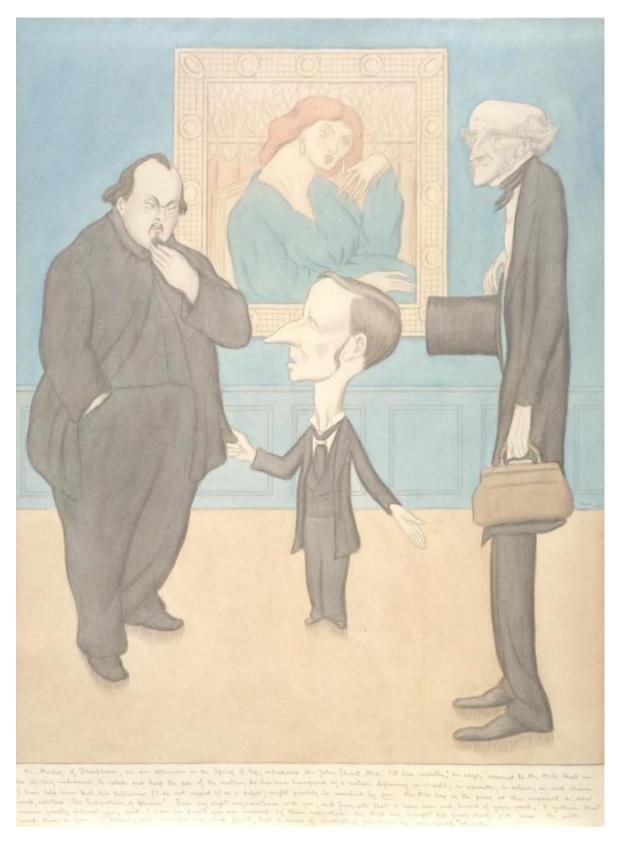
Figure 2. Max Beerbohm, *Mr Morley Introduces Mr John Stuart Mill*, 1917,
http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beerbohm-rossetti-and-his-friends-65258/16 [accessed
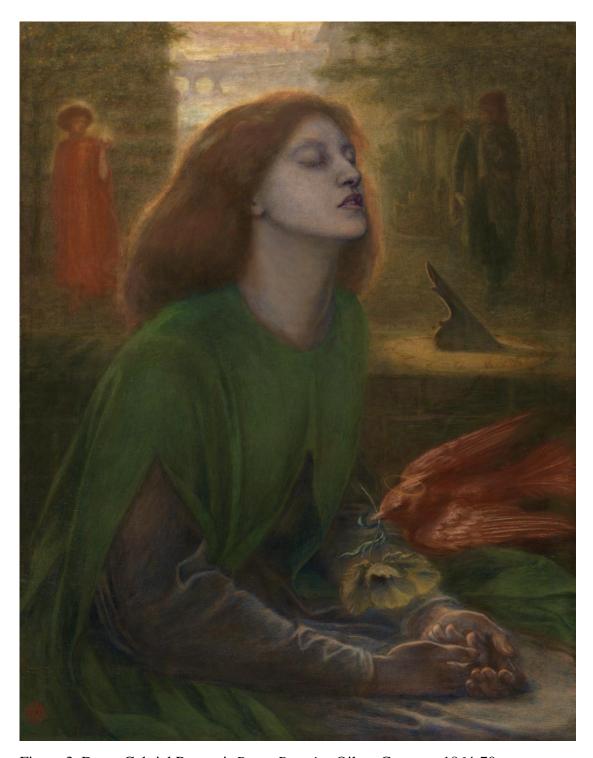29/01/2018]. Copyright Tate Gallery.

Figure 3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*, Oil on Canvas c.1864-70

http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rossetti-beata-beatrix-n01279 [accessed 29/01/2018].
Copyright Tate Gallery.

Appendix Three

Fig 1. Still Image, from *Dante's Inferno*, dir. by Ken Russell, 1967. Copyright BBC.

Fig 2. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852, Oil on Canvas. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-ophelia-n01506 [accessed 28/07/2018]. Copyright Tate Gallery

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Fig 3. Still Image, from *Dante's Inferno*, dir. by Ken Russell, 1967. Copyright BBC.

Fig. 4. Still Image, from *Dante's Inferno*, dir. by Ken Russell, 1967. Copyright BBC.

> **Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions**

Figure 5. Still Image, from *Dante's Inferno*, dir. by Ken Russell, 1967. Copyright BBC.

Figure 6. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Found*, Oil on Canvas, c.1869 (unfinished) http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/exhibitions/rossetti/works/love/found.aspx [accessed 08/08/2018]. Copyright Delaware Art Museum.

Figure 7. Still image, from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, dir. by Karel Reisz, 1981.

Copyright MGM.

Figure 8. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Day Dream*, 1880. Oil on Canvas.

https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O14962/the-day-dream-oil-painting-rossetti-dante-

gabriel/ [accessed 08/08/2018] Copyright Victoria and Albert Museum.

Appendix Four

Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions

Fig. 1. Still image, from *Possession*. Dir by Neil LaBute, 2002. Copyright Warner Bros.

Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions

Fig. 2. Still image, from *Possession*. Dir. by Neil LaBute, 2002. Copyright Warner Bros.

Fig.   3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Monna Vanna*, Oil   on   Canvas,   1866,
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rossetti-monna-vanna-n03054 [accessed 07/08/2018].
Copyright Tate Gallery.

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