

Sir John Everett Millais, Bt., PRA

The Wolf's Den, 1863

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MARTIN BEISLY FINE ART

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John Everett Millais, courtesy of Geoffroy Millais

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Contents

Cataloguing *Page 4*

1. *Introduction* *Page 7*
2. *Millais in the 1860s* by Dr Jason Rosenfeld *Page 8*
3. *Family Man: 'The Wolf's Den' and John Everett Millais's Expressions of Paternal Affection in the 1860s* by Dr Jason Rosenfeld *Page 14*
4. *'The Wolf's Den' and its artistic contexts* by Dr Jessica Feather *Page 26*
5. *Home and Family* by Rosie Jarvie *Page 34*
6. *Reports, reviews and a Royal Commission – 1863 at the Royal Academy* by Rosie Jarvie *Page 40*
7. *Past Owners* by Rosie Jarvie *Page 44*
8. *Conclusion* *Page 48*
9. *Endnotes* *Page 49*

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MARTIN BEISLY FINE ART

Sir John Everett Millais, Bt., PRA (1829-1896)
The Wolf's Den

Oil on canvas
Signed with monogram and dated '1863' (lower right)
83.8 x 114.3 cm. (33 x 45 in.) (unframed)
110.5 x 140.3 cm. (43½ x 55¼ in.) (framed)

Engraved:
Wood engraving, P. Naumann, for *The Magazine of Art*, 1891, p. 89.

Provenance:
Purchased from the artist by Thomas Agnew and Sons, 1 April 1863 (600 gns), where purchased by
John Graham, 10 August 1863, who resold it back to
Agnew's, London, 8 June 1864, where purchased by
Kirkman Finlay of Dunlossit House, 16 October 1865, bought back from him by
Agnew's, London, 22 March 1869, for
Ralph Brocklebank, his posthumous sale; Christie's, London, 29 April 1893, lot 81 (210 gns to Stone).
Kōjirō Matsukata circa 1920; offered by him to save his company, Kawasaki Dockyard Co., Ltd and then seized by the Fujimoto Bill Broker Bank, Osaka, 1927.
The First Sale of the Matsukata Collection, Tokyo Prefectural Art Museum, Tokyo, 13-30 March 1928, lot 350 where purchased by
Private Collector, Japan.
Acquired Tokyo, 2018, by the present owner.
For information on previous owners see chapter 7, pp. 44-47.



Exhibited:

London, Royal Academy, 1863, no. 498.
Leeds, *National Exhibition of Works of Art*, 1868, no. 1450.
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, *Grand Loan Exhibition of Pictures from Lancashire Collections*, 1886, no. 40.

Literature:

The Times, 2 May 1863, p. 11.
Athenaeum, 2 May 1863, p. 590.
Illustrated London News, 2 May 1863, p. 495.
Illustrated London News, 9 May 1863, p. 518.
Reader, 9 May 1863, p. 462.
The Spectator, 9 May 1863, p. 1980.
Saturday Review, 9 May 1863, p. 592.
Saturday Review, 16 May 1863, p. 628.
Art Journal, 1 June 1863, p. 109.
Fraser's Magazine, June 1863, 67, pp. 791-2.
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, July 1863, p. 70.
F. T. Palgrave, *Essays on Art,* London*,* 1866, p. 5.
[F. G. Stephens] 'The Private Collections of England, No. LXX, Childwall Hall, Near Liverpool', *Athenaeum*, 80, 23 September 1882, p. 408.
E. Rimbault Dibdin, 'Mr Brocklebank's Collection at Childwall Hall', *The Magazine of Art*, 1891, p. 89.
E. Chesneau, 'Peintre Anglais contemporains. John Everett Millais', *L'Art*, 59, 1894, pp. 241-2.
M.H. Spielmann, *Millais and His Works,* Edinburgh, 1898, pp. 64, 165, 170, 184.
J.G. Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, London, 1899, I, p. 374, II, pp. 17, 343, 472.
A. Fish, *John Everett Millais*, London, 1923, p. 140.
M. Bennett, 'Footnotes to the Millais Exhibition', *Liverpool Bulletin*, 12, 1967, pp. 55-6.
D. Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*, Princeton, 1978, p. 413.
M. Warner, *The Professional Career of John Everett Millais to 1863 with a catalogue of Works to the same date*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London (Courtauld Institute of Art), 1985, cat. no. 626, fig. 93.
The Old Matsukata Collection, Kobe City Museum, 1990, p. 276, no. 1035.
P. Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past, The Art of John Everett Millais*, Aldershot, 2005, p. 102.
J. Rosenfeld and A. Smith, *Millais*, London, 2007, pp. 172, 200.
Masako Kawaguchi and Megumi Jingoaka (eds.), *The Matsukata Collection, Complete Catalogue of the European Art*, I, Tokyo, 2018, p. 252, no. 751.

1. Introduction

The reappearance of one of Millais's seminal works after an absence of over ninety years is a cause for celebration. *The Wolf's Den,* exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1863, was previously only known from a wood engraving (fig. 1) published in 1891.

The picture was executed when Millais was only thirty-three and yet well on the way to becoming one the most successful artists of his generation. He had recently moved into his newly built house and studio at 7 Cromwell Place with his wife Effie, the former Effie Ruskin (née Gray), and their growing family, four of whom are depicted in *The Wolf's Den*. The painting belongs to a key phase in the artist's career when he had turned away from his Pre-Raphaelite beginnings and stood on the threshold of being enshrined into the art establishment. The picture boldly displays Millais's technical prowess in the portraits of his children, their clothes and costumes and also the many facets of the artist himself: Victorian gentleman, family man, painter of child portraits and Royal Academician. *The Wolf's Den* is a charming and timeless depiction of sibling play and a rediscovery which enhances the canon of Millais's child portraits.

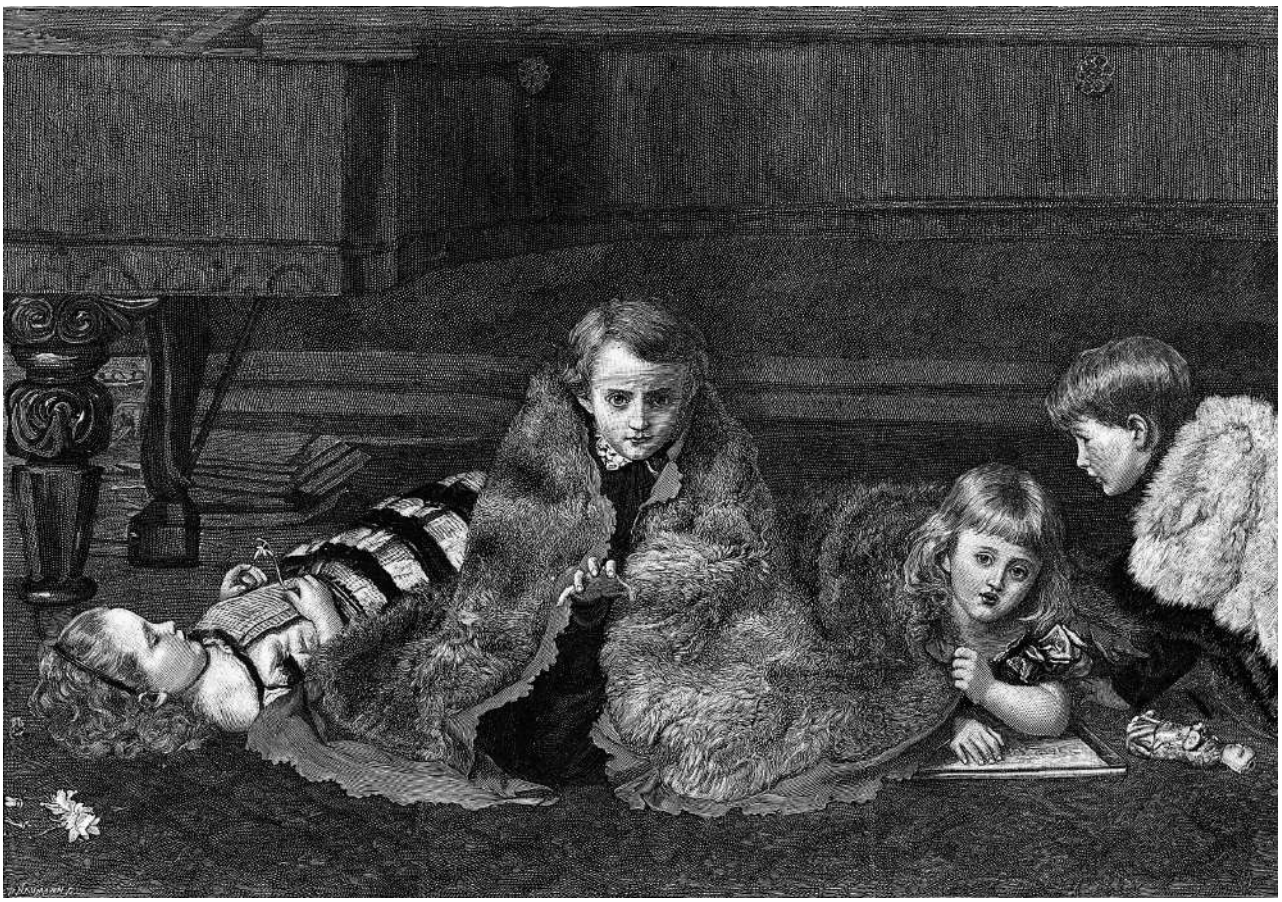


Fig. 1 Paul Hermann Naumann (active 1851-97), *The Wolf's Den*, wood engraving after John Everett Millais, in *The Magazine of Art*, 1891.

2. Millais in the 1860s

Dr Jason Rosenfeld

In late 1862, when John Everett Millais began painting *The Wolf's Den*, he was but a few years into a decade that would see him rise to the highest ranks of art in Britain and Europe. At thirty-three, he was already fourteen years removed from the foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) in his family home on Gower Street in September 1848. Association with that radical group of seven male artists intent on both upending British art and impacting the broader culture had cost him but a little. Millais had long been the great hope of the British art establishment – he had gained entry in June of 1840 to the schools of the Royal Academy of Arts (RA) at the still record age of eleven, and earned the title of Associate of the Royal Academy on 7 November 1853, at the age of twenty-four. Despite the Pre-Raphaelites' avowed attack on Academy torpor, the artists' works were accepted for exhibition and sympathetically hung. Millais endured some criticism, but more often than not praise. In the newly evolving commercial London art market, dealers were very interested in working with this upstart yet productive and popular late teenager.

In the decade of the 1850s there was no more inventive painter in the Western world. If we stretch the period back just a bit, to May 1849 and *Isabella*, his first Pre-Raphaelite submission to a RA exhibition, then held in the east wing of the present National Gallery on Trafalgar Square, we can trace a remarkable run of pictures. This began with *Isabella*, 1848-9 (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; fig. 2), that stunning and transcendent revisioning of John Keats's own Romantic reworking of Boccaccio: in 1905 Millais's closest Pre-Raphaelite brother, William Holman Hunt, described it as 'the most wonderful picture that any youth under twenty years of age ever painted'.[1] Millais followed this work with *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, 1849-50 (The Makins Collection), *Portrait of James Wyatt and his Granddaughter Mary Wyatt*, 1849 (Lord Lloyd-Webber Collection), *Christ in the House of His Parents (The Carpenter's Shop)*, 1849-50, (Tate, London; fig. 3), *Mariana*, 1850-1 (Tate, London), *The Woodman's Daughter*, 1850-1 (Guildhall Art Gallery), *The Bridesmaid*, 1851 (Fitzwilliam Museum), *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, 1851 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), *Ophelia*, 1851-2 (Tate, London; fig. 6), *A Huguenot*, 1851-2 (The Makins Collection), *The Proscribed Royalist, 1651*, 1852-3 (Lord Lloyd-Webber Collection), and *The Order of Release, 1746*, 1852-3 (Tate, London). Thus Millais was working in ostensibly the most traditional of genres – religious paintings, Shakespearean subjects, portraiture, and history painting, yet in the most newly radical form in his medievalism, sharp-focus portraiture, and hyperreal landscape elements: his labours won him that title of Associate in the most prestigious and commercially essential organisation in Britain, the RA. These pictures have become icons of Victorian art history, and we are not even halfway through the 1850s, although we have reached the end of the functioning of the PRB as a group, which disbanded in 1853.



Fig. 2. John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, 1848-9, National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery. Photo: Bridgeman Images.



Fig. 3 John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents ('The Carpenter's Shop')*, 1849–50, 86.4 × 139.7 cm. (34 in × 55 in.), Tate, London.



Fig. 4 John Everett Millais, *The Blind Girl*, 1854-6, 80.8 x 53.4 cm (31¾ x 21 in.), Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

Millais followed this extraordinary spate of invention with his *Portrait of John Ruskin*, 1853-4 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), *The Blind Girl*, 1854-6 (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; fig. 4), *The Rescue*, 1855 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne), *Autumn Leaves*, 1855-6 (Manchester City Art Gallery; fig. 5), the portrait of *Sophie Gray*, c. 1857 (private collection), *Peace Concluded, 1856*, 1856, (Minneapolis Institute of Arts), *Spring*, 1856-9 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight; fig. 10), *The Vale of Rest*, 1858 (Tate, London), and *The Black Brunswicker*, 1859-60 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight). Thus, in the second half of the decade, he merely expanded his repertoire into modern subjects, established a new ideal of female beauty based on realist principles, and co-authored the new Aestheticist movement.

This extensive recitation of Millais's achievements in the first decade of his production, with works that were as popular in the period as they are today, works that retain their radical edge and ability to shock, is meant to impress – who can rival Millais in Western art after the death of J.M.W. Turner in December of 1851? Not the artist whom adherents of the myopic tale of modernism would select, Gustave Courbet (1819-77), whose production after *The Stonebreakers*, 1849-50 (destroyed) and *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) is socially charged but markedly uneven and often aesthetically suspect. Nor Delacroix or Ingres, labouring somewhat repetitively in their penultimate decades. Perhaps Adolph Menzel (1815-1905), that adventurous and wildly gifted German painter, or in the United States, Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), the greatest landscape painter of the period.



Fig. 5 John Everett Millais, *Autumn Leaves*, 1855-6, 104.3 x 74 cm. (41 x 29⅛ in.), Manchester Art Gallery. Photo: Bridgeman Images.



Fig. 6 John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-2, 76.2 × 111.8 cm. (30 in × 44 in.), Tate, London.

This is all to say that in 1860, with a slate of dealers eager to work with him, an ascendant reputation as the premiere illustrator of modern literature in the period, a growing family, and the rise of an international awareness of his art via the cultural exchange embodied in World's Fairs beginning with the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1855, where he exhibited *The Return of the Dove to the Ark* (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)*, The Order of Release, 1746* (Tate, London) and *Ophelia* (fig. 6) and won a second class medal, Millais was in a position to have a commanding influence on contemporary art. However, here the story shifts. Millais had married Effie Gray (1828-97), formerly Effie Ruskin, on 3 July 1855. He was prepared to give her a number of things that her first husband John Ruskin (1819-1900) was not: love both emotional and physical, and a family. It was this that had the most impact on the development of his career in the decade of the 1860s, and it goes a long way to explaining the impetus for a new type of picture like *The Wolf's Den*. It was the evolution of Millais the person that provides the reason why such works were successful.

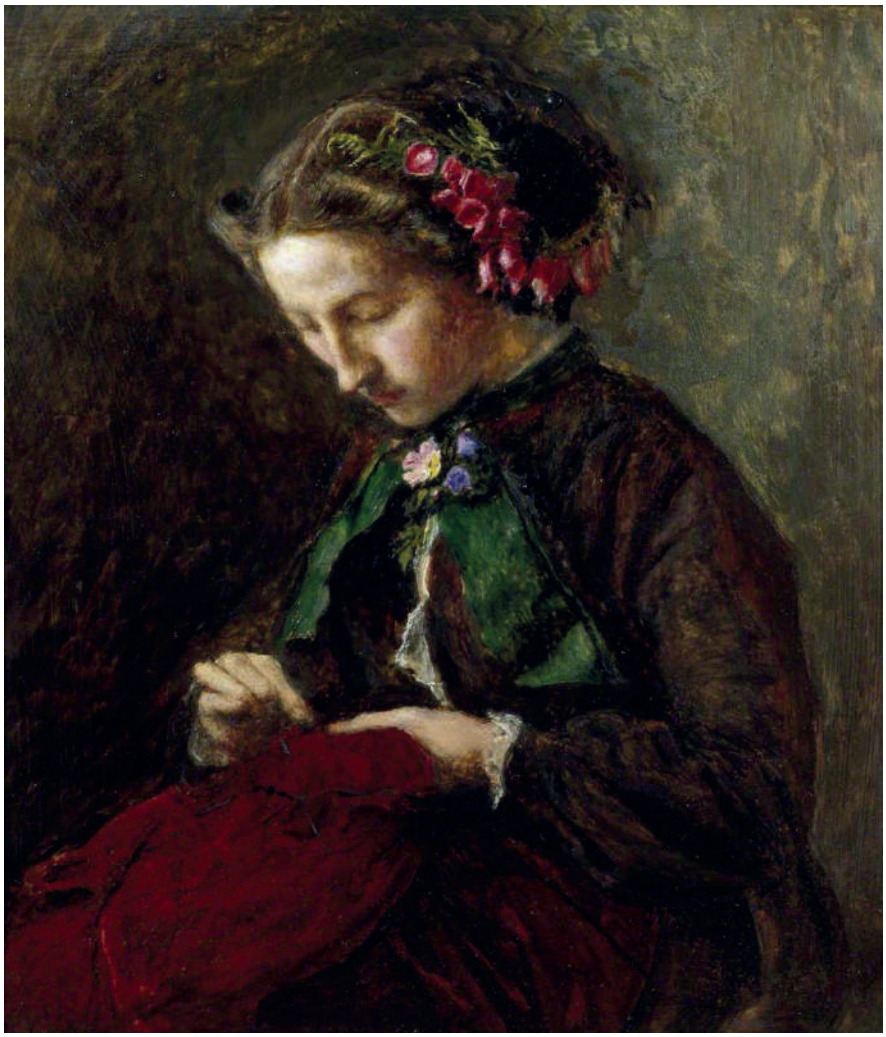


Fig. 7 John Everett Millais, *Effie with Foxgloves in Her Hair (The Foxgloves) (Euphemia 'Effie' Chalmers Gray, 1828–97, Mrs John Ruskin)*, 1853, 22.5 x 20.5 cm. (8⅞ x 8 in.), National Trust, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton.

Effie Gray (fig. 7) came from a Perthshire family wherein she was the eldest of eight. In addition, her mother had raised seven more children, none of whom lived past the age of six. Effie had been a second mother to her younger siblings: there was no question of her not having a family. She and John Everett Millais would have eight children. Everett Millais was born 30 May 1856, George Gray Millais arrived on 19 September 1857, Euphemia 'Effie' Gray Millais was born 28 November 1858, and Effie gave birth to Mary Hunt Millais on 13 May 1860. In May of 1861 Effie had a miscarriage, but on 10 April 1862, around the time Millais was conceiving *The Wolf's Den*, Alice Sophia Caroline Millais, known in the family as Carrie, appeared. Geoffroy William Millais was born 18 September 1863, John Guille Millais, the artist's eventual family biographer, on 24 March 1865, and finally Sophia Margaret Jameson on 15 June 1868. Eight children. Four boys and four girls. In less than twelve years. (For more information on Millais's children see chapter 5). John Everett Millais became a family man in a hurry. It was a role that he embraced with uncustomary public gusto for a male artist in the middle of Victoria's reign, as detailed in chapter 3.

Here are Millais's major works of the 1860s: *The Ransom*, 1860-2 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; fig. 8), *The Eve of St. Agnes*, 1862-3 (The Royal Collection; fig. 39), '*Leisure Hours'*, 1864 (Detroit Institute of Arts; fig. 15), *Esther*, 1865 (private collection), *Waking*, 1865 (Perth Museum and Art Gallery; fig. 11) and *Sleeping*, 1865-6 (private collection; fig. 13), *Jephthah*, 1867 (National Gallery of Wales, Cardiff),



Fig. 8 John Everett Millais, *The Ransom*, 1860-62, 134 × 115.9 cm. (52¾ × 45⅝ in.), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Souvenir of Velázquez, 1868 (Royal Academy; fig. 22), *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, 1869-70 (Tate, London), *Sisters*, 1868 (private collection; fig. 19), and, at the end of the decade, two works with which he established new benchmarks for realist outdoor landscape painting and full-length portraiture: *Chill October*, 1870 (Lord Lloyd-Webber Collection; fig. 9) and *The Marchioness of Huntly*, 1870 (private collection).

During this period, Millais was growing his business and his family, as well as establishing his London studio. He began the decade living in a rented dwelling at 45 Bedford Square, around the corner from where he had lived with his parents from late 1844 to April 1854 when he finished the Ruskin portrait at 83 Gower Street.[2] He then shared a studio and lodgings with his friend, the artist Joseph Middleton Jopling (1831-84), at 130 Piccadilly, while his family was up in Perth, before moving to a townhouse at 7 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, London, in late-November 1861. The Millaises would reside there for the next sixteen years, although they regularly spent much of the autumn and early winter in Scotland.

Thus, the decade of the 1860s for the artist, before 1869-70 when he began producing the large-scale *en plein air* landscapes of Scotland that would be the finest productions of his late career, were the Cromwell Place years. It was there that he and Effie raised all their children, and it was there, in his first substantial studio, that he painted the works of his early maturity. It was at Cromwell Place that Millais got down to the business of producing hundreds of designs for wood engravings that would form a parallel strand in his artistic production and endear his work to a broad, popular audience in Britain and America. It is interesting to compare the present locations of works from the 1850s detailed above with those of the 1860s. It reveals the traditional institutional and market bias towards Millais's Pre-Raphaelite years over his later aestheticist and realist works. Of the major pictures from the 1860s, during his development as a successful and lauded member of the Royal Academy and British art historical establishment, only one is at Tate, two are in American collections, and a number remain in private collections. However, the assessment of Millais as only a Pre-Raphaelite has been slowly shifting in recent publications and exhibitions on the artist, and there is great interest, now, in his post-1859 work.[3] That is one reason why the reappearance of *The Wolf's Den*, after an absence from the market of nearly one hundred years, is such a welcome development.



Fig. 9 John Everett Millais, *Chill October*, 1870, 141 × 186.7 cm. (55½ in × 73½ in.), Collection Lord Lloyd-Webber.

3. Family Man: 'The Wolf's Den' and John Everett Millais's Expressions of Paternal Affection in the 1860s

Dr Jason Rosenfeld



Fig. 10 John Everett Millais, *Spring*, 1856-9, 113 x 176.3 cm. (44½ x 69⅜ in.), National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

The Wolf's Den is one of only a handful of Millais pictures that have not been seen in public for decades. Its reappearance occasions a rethinking of Millais's work of the 1860s, a period of searching pictorial enquiry and ambitious exploration of the widest gamut of pictorial genres, while the artist continued his slow evolution away from the fine touch of Pre-Raphaelitism to the bravura brushwork of his maturity. This coincided with his maturing as a person, as a husband, and as a father, and the growth of his confidence as an artist to make vignettes of his home life the subject of his art, a novel gambit for a male artist in this period. The picture shows, from left to right, Effie, Everett, Mary, and George Millais playing at wild animals under the grand piano in the drawing room at Cromwell Place.[1] Effie lolls on her back and fiddles with a snowdrop in a flipped reprise of the pose of the young girl on the right in Millais's *Spring*, 1856-9 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery; fig. 10). Other cut flowers lie strewn around her head, a knowing nod to the painter's own *Ophelia*, 1851-2 (Tate; fig. 6), but both references are drained of their intimations of sexuality or mortality. This picture is light-hearted, though Everett, in the centre is most serious. He reaches out with a perfectly foreshortened right hand from under a great fur drape meant to be a wolf's skin, with a mesmeric glare on his perfectly ovoid face, his right eye emerging from shadow. As the eldest child, he is good at this game. On his left, little Mary peeks out from under his hirsute cape.



Fig. 11 John Everett Millais, *Waking*, 1865, 90.8 x 70.5 cm. (35¾ x 27¾ in.), Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Scotland.

She leans on a book and her cherubic face is recognisable from her similar appearance in *Waking*, 1865 (Perth Museum and Art Gallery; fig. 11). George steams into the picture on the far right, under a lighter coloured pelt, and his uncertain expression and glance towards his older brother reveals him to be seeking assurance that he is in proper lupine mode. Below him is a ceramic Chinese figurine.

The picture is instantly recognisable as Millais in the early 1860s, due to the palette, all scarlet and crimson and vermillion and maroon, as in *My First Sermon,* 1863 (fig. 38) and *My Second Sermon*, 1864 (both Guildhall Art Gallery, London) and the artist's increasingly deft and attractive manner of painting, from the assured touches, absent of hard drawing, in the portrait faces to the spectacularly bright edging of Everett's cloak against the dark void of his body. Millais's former Pre-Raphaelite brother, the critic F.G. Stephens, wrote of the picture in 1882 that one could almost hear the boys' growls, continuing that, 'The beauty of the children is worthy of the best art of the painter who rivals even Rubens, Velázquez, and Reynolds, the masters of childhood in art.'[2] However, *The Wolf's Den* communicates much more than Millais's project in the 1860s to develop a new kind of image of childhood: it is a picture of the personal.



Fig. 12 John Everett Millais, *The Minuet*, 1866, 110 x 85 cm. (43 ¼ x 33 ½ in.), Elton Hall Collection.

It is instructive to compare *The Wolf's Den* with Millais's oil painting of 1866, *The Minuet* (Elton Hall; fig. 12), which depicts a young girl curtseying to an unseen audience in advance of dancing a solo minuet. This type of painting, termed a 'fancy picture', was a genre popular in the mid-Victorian era and comprised portrait-like images of people, frequently children, in settings and costume dress that suggest stories and harkened back to Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and the Georgian age. This composition was painted speculatively to suit the market in the late 1860s – and an extant reduced watercolour version was probably commissioned once the oil painting sold at the Royal Academy.[3] Typical of Millais's practice since his earliest forays into exhibited work, he used family and friends as models: in this case his eldest daughter Effie, who was around nine years old, and his sister-in-law Alice Gray as the pianist. Such a picture represents the type of work Millais executed at that time for the broadening British art market, with its subject matter and revival of interest in eighteenth-century British art, as an adjunct to the Aesthetic Movement that he had helped to initiate, and reflects the particular way that Millais succeeded over all rivals in this pursuit. Yet it is also evocative of how Millais publicly presented his own fatherhood in his graphic work and paintings.

Singularly in Western art for a man of this period, Millais consistently revealed his evident adoration of his offspring in his work without resorting to self-portraiture or sentimentality, productively and movingly channelling his own experience to convey both authentic family dynamics and the inner and outer lives of his children. A picture such as *The Minuet,* like *The Wolf's Den,* is very much an expression of paternal affection, to the degree permissible in the upper-middle class Victorian world that Millais inhabited. It is paralleled by other novel Millais paintings that featured his children as models: *Sleeping* of 1865-6 (private collection; fig. 13) featuring his third daughter, two-year old Carrie,[4] or by more formal portraits such as



Fig. 13 John Everett Millais, *Sleeping*, 1865-6, 89 x 68.5 cm. (35 x 27 in.), private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

that of his second son George Gray Millais in 1875-6 at age eighteen. The element that distinguishes *Sleeping* and *The Wolf's Den* from works such as *The Minuet* is not their public presentation, for both *The Minuet* and *Sleeping* were hung at the summer exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1867, but one was a fancy picture, while *Sleeping* and *The Wolf's Den* were modern pictures, featuring contemporary costume and environs without being straight portraiture. In the 1860s, Millais continued a trend begun in the mid-1850s with *Autumn Leaves* (fig. 5), wherein the modern crept into his Pre-Raphaelite imagery (see p. 10). The key factor in this period was the way that Millais transformed his home life into contemporary subject matter that was both fit for exhibition and resonated with a growing appetite for art amongst the public.

The Wolf's Den is one of the finest expressions of this early impulse. It is decidedly not Georgian in its costume, class, or approach. It is a modern picture of a modern subject and a casual approach to childhood that operates both at the children's level, via the worm's eye view, and the family level, via the absorbed attention given to the faces of the protagonists in this imaginative game, and its insistent informality within the formal terms of painting in oils.

It is intriguing to think of Millais's repeated use of his many children as models in his pictures as more than just a convenient practice, but closer to the kind of intimate imaging of children in the paintings of Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) and Berthe Morisot (1841-95). Long praised as brazen in their realistic depictions of the bonds between mothers and their offspring, as rendered by female artists in an advanced Continental style, it may be instructive to see Millais as similarly exploring the endearments of fatherhood in a variety of different manners, and often using narrative subjects to comment on the growth of his children. This is another example of the modernity of Millais's practice and its exploration of



Fig. 14 Vincent Brooks (1814-1885), *Sir John Everett Millais, 1st Bt.*, chromolithograph after John Ballantyne, 1860s, 53.2 x 73 cm. (21 x 28¾ in.) National Portrait Gallery, London..

domesticity from a father's perspective is almost unique. Although artists over time had used their own children as ready models for their professional commissions – for example, the Flemish Baroque artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) often used his many portrait drawings of his children as models for his pictures.[5] However, no other male painter until Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was so penetratingly intent on documenting his own children in paint.[6] As with Rubens over two hundred years earlier, in Millais's time even the most superficial expressions of doting and loving fatherhood were masked within ostensibly professional activities. A good comparison may be Charles Darwin's article *A Biographical Sketch of an Infant*, 1877, an ostensibly scientific set of observations of a new-born, which, though clinical, clearly reveal the evolutionist's pleasure in observing his eldest child, Doddy (William Erasmus Darwin) four decades earlier.

There have been many recent studies on fatherhood in Victorian Britain, a subject usually demarcated by class distinctions. Drawing on memoirs, David Roberts in 'The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes', 1978, laid the groundwork in characterising the approach of men from that class as remote, sovereign, and benevolent.[7] The first quality, remoteness, faded as the century progressed, but was usually the product of travel and occupations resulting in physical separation from the family. Millais tried to keep his children close to him. His London residences expanded as his brood did, and when he went to Scotland for long periods in the autumn and winter, he and Effie would rent houses large enough to accommodate all the children. His labour transpired in the studio, and the studio was a part of the Gray Family home at Bowerswell in Perth, where they lived on and off with Effie's parents from when Everett, the eldest, was born on 30 May 1856, until late November 1861,



Fig. 15 John Everett Millais, '*Leisure Hours*', 1864, 88.9 × 118.1 cm. (35 × 46½ in.), Detroit Institute of Arts.

when they moved to 7 Cromwell Place, South Kensington,[8] where they lived as a family of ten.

Thus, in the 1860s, with a growing family, having secured the house at Cromwell Place, and with increased social and business obligations, Millais pursued a line of production that revealed him to have one eye trained on fine art in Britain and abroad, and the other on the popular market. Works such as *My First Sermon*, 1863 (fig. 38) and *My Second Sermon*, 1864, were calculated to please and starred young Effie as a model. There is a fine picture by the portraitist John Ballantyne (1815-97) of Millais in the tapestry-lined Cromwell Place studio painting Effie in *My Second Sermon*; it was reproduced as a successful chromolithograph by Vincent Brooks (1814-1885) (fig. 14). These pictures laid the groundwork for works such as the sparkling double portrait '*Leisure Hours*', 1864 (fig. 15) of the daughters of a Glaswegian textile merchant,[9] which reveal Millais's cultivation of a newly rich middle-class clientele for portraits, and his increased production of 'fancy pictures' for Academy exhibitions and print sales. Such concerns were paralleled in his contemporary life images designed for wood-engraved illustrations to Anthony Trollope novels in the period, such as *Orley Farm* of 1862; masterpieces of domestic realism.[10] These endeavours mark Millais out as an astute capitalist, finding subjects in his home life and tailoring his imagery for maximum financial return. He targeted his art at a new middle-class clientele, largely domestic bourgeois, who desired works of art for their homes at a lower cost than a painting or large format reproductive engraving, such as those produced after smash hits of the 1850s for example *A Huguenot* of 1851-2 (The Makins Collection).

In early 1877, the family moved into a palatial, custom-built residence at 2 Palace Gate, where Millais would live

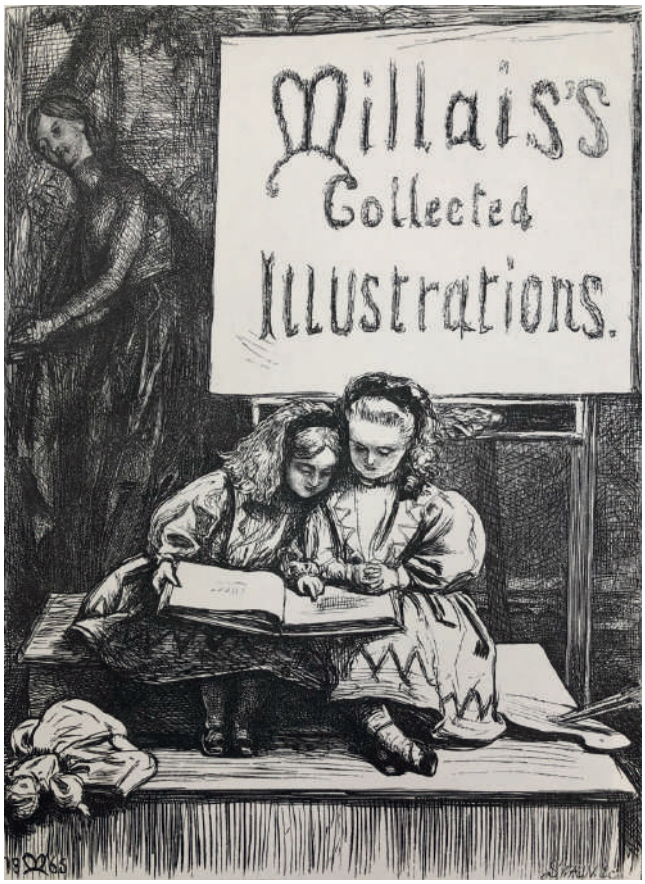


Fig. 16 After John Everett Millais, Joseph Swain, *Millais's Collected Illustrations*, 1866, title page, wood engraving, published by Alexander Strahan.

until his death in 1896. It was a residence commodious enough to house a family of ten. Eight children were a high number for the period. Roberts notes that around 1850 members of the peerage (Millais would become a Baronet in 1885) had 4.5 children in their families.[11] Effie was certainly inclined to have a large family. Her own mother, Sophia Gray, had given birth fifteen times in nearly twenty-seven years from Effie's arrival as the eldest Gray on 7 May 1828 to Everett Gray, born 19 March 1855, only two and a half years before the birth of his own nephew, Everett Millais! However, seven of Effie's siblings died in infancy, and the inscriptions in the graveyard in Old Kinnoull Churchyard, Perth, Scotland, make for grim reading. By the time Effie was twenty, six of her younger siblings had died. A large family was a bulwark against infant mortality, even for those with comfortable existences such as the Millaises, who had access to advanced medical treatment in London.

Millais took great pleasure in his family. He found his children to be more and more interesting as they grew up, and Mary, who never married, was ever his favourite. His letters to them are humorous, delightful, personal, and true. They became a welcome presence in both his world and his work. Images such as the title page for the publication in 1866 of *Millais's Collected Illustrations*, engraved by Joseph Swain (fig. 16), reveal this overlapping of realms. Here, two girls based on Effie and Mary, aged six and five, pore over the self-same publication, on the two-step sitter's dais in the studio at Cromwell Place that Effie posed on for *My Second Sermon* (see fig. 14), with the artist's palette and brushes on the right, and a cast aside doll on the lower left. The girls have literally put aside the nursery for the world of the studio and evolved imagination. The publication's title card occupies the easel, and in the densely crosshatched background on the left is



Fig. 17 After John Everett Millais, Joseph Swain, engraver, *Mr. Vandyke Brown, having left the Dress on the Lay Figure carefully arranged, goes out for his usual exercise, and this is how the Boys took advantage of his absence*, Punch Almanack, 1865, Punch Cartoon Library / TopFoto.

a lay figure, an artist's dummy, hanging creepily against a verdant tapestry on the wall. In this image Millais equated his own professional practice with the magical act of immersion that is reading, a shared occupation much more prevalent in the 1860s than today. On the left, the elder sister, Effie has her feet drawn together and reads to Mary whose legs are stretched out and crossed and whose hands are clasped. It is Millais at his realist observational finest, translating what he sees and feels and knows into the language of art.

The studio was, for a male artist, the equivalent to the study for the educated middle classes. Jane Hamlett has written about the separations in Victorian domestic spaces and material culture and notes that parental authority was evinced in the very layout of the home, in the spaces barred to children, or offered to them only at important moments of their maturation.[12] Yet, Millais delighted in the antics of the studio, and the overlapping, on occasion, with domestic spaces. This can be seen in another Swain engraving of his work, for the *Punch Almanack* of 1865 (fig. 17), in this case with the addition of George, aged eight wielding a mahl stick, and Everett aged nine, attacking a decapitated lay figure.[13] The accompanying quote reads: 'Mr. Vandyke Brown, having left the Dress on the Lay Figure carefully arranged, goes out for his usual exercise, and this is how the Boys took advantage of his absence.' Mary and Effie look on apprehensively from behind an easel on which rests *Trust Me*, 1862 (Forbes Collection, New York), a picture appropriate to the present subject.[14] This sourceless proto-problem picture relates to Millais's contemporaneous illustrations to Trollope's works: a father asks his daughter to show him a letter, with the assurance that he will accept its contents without judgement. In the engraving, the boys are very much not to be trusted, but the girls show good sense. The lay figure's head stares horrified from the lower step of the dais.



Fig. 18 John Everett Millais, *The Baby House*, 1872, 14.5 x 18.5 cm. (5¾ x 7¼ in.).

One reading of Millais's images of children is to view them as nostalgic visions recalling the painter's own adolescence, reflective of a general Victorian idea of childhood as fraught with peril and compounded by parental anxiety about infant mortality; thus portraits of children were seen by parents as pre-emptive keepsakes, in the event of tragedy.[15] Although parenthood might to some degree generate such impulses, it was more often the case that parents commissioned likenesses of their children rather than pictures which communicated affection. However, deep fondness suffuses Millais's images of his own children, from the tender image of Effie nursing Everett that served as the focus of his *The Young Mother*, an etching of 1857, to Carrie and Sophie in *The Baby House* of 1872 (fig. 18).[16] Such images found him working in a narrative mode but without an existing text; instead, they showed his enjoyment at being a father. Millais presented this joy in his art. His sense that the most beautiful of human faces was that of a child was married to his approach to art: to paint what he saw. It resulted in works that both connote their period and his sensitivity and tenderness, but without resorting to including himself in the compositions.

Although Millais did not portray himself with his children in his paintings or prints, his persistent focus on his children, and evident understanding both of their mindsets and proclivities, reads against what Claudia Nelson, in her study of the imaging of maternal fathers in British magazines, sees as 'men [who] appeared in the great majority of periodical nonfiction as mere amateurs of the home.'[17] Such men were the precursors to that common sitcom type: the clueless father. Millais did not pattern himself after the typical idea of a Victorian father. At the very least, by involving his children in his work, and looking closely at them for portraits, he spent a good deal of time in their presence.



Fig. 19 John Everett Millais, *Sisters*, 1868, 108 × 108 cm. (42.5 × 42.5 in.), private collection.

The Wolf's Den is, along with *Sisters* (private collection; fig. 19), the most important Millais painting to reappear in public over the past two decades. *Sisters* is a radiant and masterful picture of 1868 featuring Mary, Effie, and Carrie. It served as a statement of Millais's ability to work in an Aesthetic mode, his ability to convey fashion, beauty and the contemporary, and his consistent need to commemorate his daughters and their varying personalities, in this case in a formal way.[18] *The Wolf's Den* is far more personal and casual, with the Millais children role-playing under the drawing room piano at Cromwell Place. Here, Millais abjured the high-minded grand manner, casting aside the need for pictorial rigour and important subjects, and got down on the floor as perhaps no other painter-father had ever done, to understand children at their level.

Setting fatherhood aside, in her article, Nelson reveals how constructions in periodicals of Millais's close friend William Gladstone (1809-98) as a good grandfather translated to a judgement on his fitness to govern the nation as Prime Minister, concluding that 'mastery of this softer side of life only makes a man better able to succeed in the larger business of the nation.'[19] While Millais's portrait of Gladstone and his grandson of 1889-90 (private collection) was perhaps stiff and formal, one of his finest and most sensitive early portraits was of his early patron James Wyatt and his granddaughter Mary of 1849 (Lord Lloyd-Webber Collection).

It is possible that Millais's sympathetic portrayal of his children, and then his grandchildren in pictures such as *Bubbles* of 1886 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever



Fig. 20. John Everett Millais, *Bubbles*, 1886, 107.5 x 77.5 cm. (42⅜ x 30½ in.), National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

Art Gallery, Port Sunlight; fig. 20) and *The Little Speedwell's Darling Blue* of 1892-3 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) could be perceived as shows of strength, since critical notices of such popular fancy pictures invariably identified the sitters as his relations.

Millais's imposing physical presence, combined with the many biographical references to his stamina when working and reports of his prowess as a hunter and fisherman, enriched his reputation as an honourable father and family man, a strong and vital public person. This was enhanced by the many biographical articles written about him during his life and then posthumously, especially in his fourth son John Guille Millais's two-volume biography, which nonetheless, atypically for a 'life and letters', contains a chapter on 'The Man and His Home Life.' These modern constructions of masculinity reflected concepts of strength inherent in the major history paintings John Everett produced after his marriage – strong, heroic men, defined by their relationships with children, as in *The Ransom* of 1860-2 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; fig. 8) and *The North-West Passage* (1874, Tate, London). Thus, Millais lived out his fatherhood on many public levels – in exhibitions at the Royal Academy and Grosvenor Gallery, as well as in illustrations.

One final image from the literary world speaks to the sentiment evident in *The Wolf's Den*: an illustration after Millais engraved by Dalziel and published in *Once a Week* in 1860 (fig. 21).[20] The poem is titled 'Musa' and written by the unidentified 'E.M.B.' The vignette shows Sophie Gray, Millais's favourite sister-in-law, Everett, and a very young George. It reads: 'Away with you, baby, away to the garden,/And leave ugly Latin to Algernon, do:/He *must* learn the lesson, although it's a hard one,/But, darling, there's plenty of time before you.' It is appropriate that Millais produced this beautifully observed image for a poem whose narrator is a mother, tasked with teaching her children. It was a parallel way for him to convey something of himself to his progeny, not through words, but through a most devoted and novel form of paternal art. 'But darling, there's plenty of time before you' – that is Millais's approach to his children in a nutshell, his own nostalgia for the very fleeting present channelled into family portraiture for posterity. Within the slowly loosening parameters of public Victorian paternity, works like this and *The Wolf's Den* were Millais's public declarations of love. Scholarship on Victorian fatherhood is only just catching up with him.



Fig. 21 After John Everett Millais, wood engraving by the Dalziel Brothers, published *Once a Week*, 16 June 1860.



4. 'The Wolf's Den' and its artistic contexts

Dr Jessica Feather

Millais began painting *The Wolf's Den* in late 1862, at a moment when he had been brought within the fold of the art establishment: he had been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1853, and was to be elected to full membership in 1863. He was no longer the young, rebellious artist of a generation ago. He chose not to join the Hogarth Club, formed by Pre-Raphaelite artists in 1858 as an exhibiting society and social club for artists who stood outside or on the peripheries of the Royal Academy. As Jason Rosenfeld has discussed in chapter 3, this was the period when Millais's energies were devoted to his growing family. From 1856, when their first child Everett was born, Millais and his wife Effie spent long periods of the autumn and winter living in Scotland, returning to London early in the year to paint and to mediate the business of sales and commissions. It was not until 1861 that they moved into a large house at 7, Cromwell Place, South Kensington (see chapter 5).

These developments coincided with Millais's re-discovered interest in the Old Masters, a taste he was able to indulge not only through visits to the National Gallery but also through the burgeoning number of exhibitions of historical works in London.[1] As a boy, Millais and his elder brother William had frequented the National Gallery, making copies of the Titians and Rembrandts, but these youthful interests had been submerged in the years that followed.[2] In following Pre-Raphaelite principles, Millais and his fellow artists sought inspiration in the natural observation they saw in the art of the late medieval and early Renaissance, that is *before* the time of Raphael and the High Renaissance. However, following the gradual disbanding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood by 1853, Millais looked to a different set of artists for inspiration.

In addition to the paintings of the European Old Masters, Millais was influenced by those of the English School, taking particularly inspiration from the work of Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88) (a remarkable volte-face, considering the Pre-Raphaelites had previously ridiculed Reynolds's painterly technique labelling him 'Sir Sloshua'). Paintings by these English artists could have been seen by Millais at the Manchester *Art Treasures* exhibition in 1857 for example but he also had access to them at the homes of his patrons, many of whom collected historic art, and also through widely reproduced engravings.

These growing interests had an impact on the formal qualities of Millais's paintings by the time he produced *The Wolf's Den* in the early 1860s. The development becomes gradually more apparent in his works of the late 1860s but its beginnings are there in the earlier period. It can be observed in the general shift away from the hard-edged



Fig. 22 John Everett Millais, *Souvenir of Velázquez*, 1868, 102.7 x 82.4 cm (40½ x 32½ in., Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Fig. 23 John Everett Millais, *Cherry Ripe*, 1879, 134½ x 89 cm. (53 x 35 in.), private collection.



Fig. 24 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Penelope Boothby*, 1788, private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

linearity of the Pre-Raphaelite style towards more painterly brushwork and the use of a lower-toned colour palette. In some cases, Millais paid direct homage to a particular artist. His Diploma picture for the Royal Academy, *Souvenir of Velázquez*, 1868 (Royal Academy; fig. 22), for example, with its darkened background and pose recalling Velázquez's full-length portraits of the Infanta Margarita was a direct pictorial reference to the work of the Spanish artist.[3] In a similar vein, Millais's picture of a young girl in a mob-cap, *Cherry Ripe*, 1879 (private collection; fig. 23) is a direct quotation from Reynolds's portrait of *Penelope Boothby*, 1788 (private collection, currently on loan to Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; fig. 24), a work which Millais may well have seen as it was owned by one of his patrons Benjamin Godfrey Windus (1790-1867).

The Wolf's Den sits on the cusp of this period, with its formal qualities in fact revealing links with Millais's past but also projecting into the future. We cannot forget the residual influence of Pre-Raphaelite techniques with Millais's exquisite precision in his naturalistic detailing of the children's clothes and the scalloped edge of the fur covering worn by Everett Millais. However, the attention to formal, decorative qualities over and above literary and anecdotal meanings demonstrates Millais's Aesthetic interests, which became apparent in his paintings from the mid-1850s onwards.

It is no coincidence that the undulating forms of *The Wolf's Den* strongly mirror the grouping of figures in the earlier, more demonstrably Aesthetic painting *Spring*, 1858-9 (fig. 10). In both works, the frieze-like tableau of figures are pushed to the foreground of the picture, focusing the viewer's eyes on the action of its protagonists. *The Wolf's Den* is of course markedly different from *Spring* in other ways and exemplifies the developments in Millais's style over just a few years. In distinction from the high tone and multiple colour variations of the earlier picture, in *The Wolf's*



Fig. 25 John Phillip RA, (1817-67), *Partial copy of 'Las Meninas'*, 1862, 18.5 x 14.8 cm. (7⅜ x 5¾ in.), Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Den, Millais has been influenced by the palette of artists like Rembrandt and Velázquez, focusing on tonal contrasts of black, mahogany and deep reds, with brighter colours used solely as accents on the costume and accessories such as the flowers and Chinese porcelain figure.

The contemporary art critic F.G. Stephens wrote of *The Wolf's Den*: 'The beauty of the children is worthy of the best art of the painter who rivals even Rubens, Velázquez and Reynolds, the masters of childhood in art'.[5] Stephens' praise was in generalised terms, indicating not only the elevated esteem in which Millais was held but also the high status which Millais wished to claim for himself. It is certainly not hard to find comparisons to iconic paintings of which we know Millais was aware. He would have known Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, c. 1656 (The Prado, Madrid), a copy of which was produced by Millais's friend the artist John Phillip (1817-67) (fig. 25) on his 1860 visit to Spain and hung for a while in his studio before it transferred to the Diploma Rooms at the Royal Academy.[6] However, it is Millais's later child portraiture, for example *The Minuet*, 1866 (Elton Hall; fig. 12) – a portrait of his eldest daughter Effie Millais, stiffly posed and dressed up like a child Infanta – which pays direct homage to *Las Meninas*.



Fig. 26 John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, Duchess of Argyll*, albumen carte-de-visite, 1863, 9.1 x 5.9 cm. (3⅝ x 2⅜ in.), National Portrait Gallery, London.

In contrast to earlier paintings such as *Spring*, in *The Wolf's Den* Millais brings the viewer's full attention to the tactile qualities of the children's dress. Everett Millais in the centre wears a large fur carriage-rug; his younger brother George, to the right, crawls into the picture plane dressed in a lighter coloured fur mat.[7] The boys both wear fashionable velvet knickerbocker suits, while the girls – Effie to the left and Mary to the right – are resplendent in satin dresses. Although the attention paid to the detail of the costume might have come out of Millais's admiration for Titian or Van Dyck (artists he valued throughout his life), the children are wearing emphatically contemporary dress.

Effie's dress with its wide neckline and sleeves at the very edge of the shoulders was a fashionable style in this period, one that was worn by various young female members of the Royal family, for example, Princess Louise, 1863 (fig. 26). Photographs of the Royal Princesses also reveal similar stripes to those on Effie's dress: Millais would have known these images as they were widely circulated at the time (fig. 27).



Fig. 27 *Queen Victoria with her family* after John Jabez Edwin Mayall, albumen carte-de-visite, 1860s, 5.6 x 8.6 cm. (2¼ x 3⅜ in.), National Portrait Gallery, London.



Fig. 28 John Everett Millais, *Master Liddell, son of Charles Liddell Esq*., 1871, 161.3 x 105.4 cm. (63½ x 41½ in.), private collection.

The boys' knickerbocker suits are similar to those in a slightly later painting of the young Charles Liddell, (private collection; fig. 28)[8] of 1871. These are not the historical costumes belonging to another era and associated with other painters, whether that be the attire of Golden Age Spain or the eighteenth-century fancy dress seen in Reynolds's portraits. These children are not dressed in the historical costumes of the past but positioned firmly in the present.

Millais has carefully constructed a painting which firmly places the children within a fashionable, and wealthy mid-Victorian household. By 1861, the Millais family had moved into a house at 7 Cromwell Place, in the fashionable area of South Kensington, close to major cultural institutions like the South Kensington Museum. The piano was probably one of several Broadwood grand pianos which Millais bought or rented from the well-known English makers during the period 1861-3.[9] It may, for example, be the piano Millais bought for £186 in March 1862. J.G. Millais would note in his biography of the artist, that the piano was to be a fixture of the Cromwell Place studio.[10] It also appears in one of his commissioned portraits of the time, that of *Henry Lavallin Puxley and his daughter Molly*, 1862-4 (private collection).

It may be that the new piano gave rise to a novel game for his children, which inspired the present picture. We know that Millais began *The Wolf's Den* late in 1862, as he noted: 'Wolf's Den/Evie's head painted /in one hour'.[11] Millais was still working on it on 22 March 1863 when the artist George Price Boyce (1826-97) called on his friend, recording in his diary: 'He has in hand an excellent picture of his children playing at Wolf.'[12]

Other careful additions remind us that this is a contemporary and not historic painting. The younger daughter Mary leans on a volume of the illustrator and satirist John Leech's *Pictures of Life and Character from the Collection of Mr Punch*. With the founding of *Punch* magazine in 1841, Leech gradually established himself as one of the foremost artists of early Victorian pictorial satire. He was also Millais's close personal friend: the two men met in 1851 and spent much time shooting or riding together particularly in the years before Millais's marriage. Millais's inclusion of this volume is both a testament to the men's friendship but also a statement of his belief that illustrative work, which Millais himself was producing in the 1850s and 1860s, had much to teach the fine artist despite its inferior professional status.

On the bottom right edge of the painting, close to Mary's shoulder lies what appears to be a doll but is actually a porcelain Chinese figure of a popular god dressed in an adapted Chinese official's robe.[13] With the opening up of trade between China and Europe, these figures flooded onto the market between the period 1700 to 1842. The



Fig. 29 James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *At the Piano*, 1858, 67 x 91.6 cm. (26⅜ x 36⅛ in.), Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati.

inclusion of the Chinese figure in the painting makes a statement about the contemporaneity and fashionable nature of the Millais family, for whom such exotic props were an expression of their status. However, by the time of Millais's painting, China was no longer regarded as highly as before 1842, so the casual treatment of such an object as a plaything may be seen as a commentary on the political and cultural relationship between Great Britain and China after the Anglo-Chinese 'Opium Wars'.

In taking such an interest in the tactile and sensuous qualities of dress and the tonal and painterly qualities of his pictures, Millais was participating broadly in new developments in British painting of the 1860s surrounding the American expatriate artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Millais had met Whistler in London in the early part of this period: the two men were apparently introduced by their mutual friend, the draughtsman and cartoonist Charles Keene (1823-91).[14] It is interesting, given the proximity to the date of *The Wolf's Den* that Millais is reported to have expressed admiration for Whistler's painting *At The Piano*, 1858-9 (Taft Museum, Cincinnati; fig. 29), the artist's first exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1860. According to Whistler, Millais said when he met him: 'What! Mr Whistler! I am very happy to know – I never flatter but I will say that your picture is the finest piece of colour that has been on the walls of the Royal Academy for years'.[15] Although Millais's grand piano plays much less of a starring role than in Whistler's painting, the two works are unified by both artists' attentions to Aesthetic concerns.

In contrast to Whistler's *At the Piano* which is all about the formal qualities, Millais's *The Wolf's Den* is, overwhelmingly, a careful pictorial study of contemporary children playing in an entirely natural fashion. Millais does not judge his subjects, however. As befits a study of his own children and a changing mid-Victorian attitude to children, it is an

acutely observant and loving portrait of each individual child's traits and personality. It also distinguishes between the behaviour of the girls on the one hand, and the boys on the other, a theme seen in Millais's engravings of the same date, see p. 21 (fig. 17). On the left, the five-year old Effie lies nonchalantly on her back, disengaged from the game and lost in her own thoughts. Our eyes are drawn to her delicate white skin revealed by her fashionable off-the-shoulder dress, a suggestion both of innocence and future womanhood. She plays with a white snowdrop, a flower which in the mid-nineteenth century was described as one of the first flowers of spring and was often seen as a symbol of hope and innocence.[16] Behind her is a carefully placed sprig of yellow blossom, probably a member of the azalea family, which as another spring flower is also suggestive of anticipation mixed with purity. At the centre of the group is the eldest of Millais's children, Everett. Clearly, the ring-leader of the game, the wolf of the den, he stares mischievously at his audience, his hand outstretched in a claw-like pose. Hiding to Everett's left under his fur is his younger sister Mary, a relatively innocent bystander to the proceedings. To the right, George Millais, wearing his lupine fur crawls stealthily into the picture frame, taking the lead from his elder brother. Mid-Victorian attitudes towards childhood drew upon both an earlier belief that children were naturally corrupt and ripe for correction, as well as a growing, more celebratory belief in their innocence and purity.[17] In depicting both the innocence of the girls and the mischievousness of the boys, *The Wolf's Den* could be seen as testament to both these





prevailing attitudes. Nevertheless, in *The Wolf's Den*, there is little hint of anything really sinister: Millais's portrayal of his sons is gentle, almost comedic – they are lambs in wolves' clothing.

Despite stylistic comparisons to both historic and contemporary artistic developments, Millais's *The Wolf's Den* is in fact remarkable in its uniqueness. Few artists before Millais had depicted children with such affection, conveying such detailed psychological portraits of both family dynamics as well as the inner lives of each individual child.[18] And while comparisons can be made to the works of Old Masters as well as to contemporaries such as Whistler, Millais has here constructed his own individual approach. *The Wolf's Den* is a wonderful example of the artist's constantly evolving, always progressive approach. As Leonée Ormond has argued in relation to Millais and his contemporaries, he seems to have rejected the idea that he should be influenced by others, with his few statements about his own beliefs containing remarks suggesting his wish to do his own thing: 'faith in himself and his own opinions was his only guide in determining what was good or bad in a picture, whether his own or that of another artist'.[19] *The Wolf's Den* is such an example of Millais following his own unique path as an artist.

5. Home and family

Rosie Jarvie



Fig. 30 Charles Dodgson, *John Everett Millais and family*, 21 July 1865.

The early 1860s was very much a period of change for Millais, both artistically and personally. The setting for *The Wolf's Den* is 7 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, London, where Millais moved to in 1861 with his wife Effie and five of his eight children and where he lived and worked until 1878 before taking up residence in his purpose-built studio-house at 2 Palace Gate. This fashionable area took its name from the nearby gate into the grounds of Kensington Palace and was a street occupied by 'people of professional and social eminence.'[1]

Millais married Effie on 3 July 1855, following the annulment of her marriage to John Ruskin (1819-1900). In the early years, Millais and the family lived at Annat Lodge near Perth, while Millais kept a studio at Langham Studios, Langham Place, London. Their residency in Scotland may have partly been to avoid any scandal following the breakdown of Effie's marriage and also for economic reasons. However, as Millais's prospects improved and his career took off, the family moved permanently to London towards the end of 1861.

The Cromwell Road area of London was largely developed by speculative builder Charles James Freake (1814–84), who himself lived at no. 21 Cromwell Road from 1860 until his death. Freake was undoubtedly one of the most important builders operating in London during the middle years of the nineteenth century, employing, in 1867, nearly four hundred men. Millais was the first occupant of no. 7 Cromwell Place, a stucco-fronted four-storeyed terrace house. On 28 May 1861 Millais noted in his diary: 'I have heard nothing from Freake, but the studio is progressing.'[2] and J.G. Millais in his account of his father's life recorded that in 1861 'He had now bought No. 7 Cornwall [sic]



Fig. 31 Millais and his family 1873, courtesy of Geoffroy Millais.

Place, South Kensington, which, when remodelled under the direction of his architect, Mr. Freake, he used as the town house of himself and his family from the winter of 1862 [sic] to 1878, when they finally took possession of the large house that he bought at Palace Gate.'[3]

A contemporary record of the interior of Millais's studio at Cromwell Place is the picture by John Ballantyne, 1864 (fig. 14). It shows Millais painting *My Second Sermon*, 1864, a sequel to his hugely popular *My First Sermon*,1863. The studio was a large room hung with Flemish Tapestries, the standard decoration of artists' studios at that date. Another image of the Millais family at Cromwell Place is a photograph taken in 1865, by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-98), better known as Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which shows Millais, Effie and their daughters Effie and Mary at a first-floor landing window (fig. 30).

Millais was not the only aesthetically minded resident of in Cromwell Place at that time. Other residents included: Sir Coutts Lindsay, Bt. (1824-1913), future founder of the Grosvenor Gallery, Lord Somers, amateur artist-photographer, and E.W. Godwin (1833-86), editor of *The Builder,* who lived there from 1874 until his death in 1886. This area of London remained an artistic and cultural quarter well into the twentieth century and beyond. The Irish painter Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) was a resident at No. 5 Cromwell Place from 1899 to 1940 and Freake's house at No. 21 Cromwell Road later became the Royal College of Art School of Fashion and Design. Millais's own house had a similar artistic legacy and was subsequently occupied by the German-born photographer Emil Otto Hoppé (1878-72) while in 1943, the Irish-born painter Francis Bacon (1909-92) took the ground floor of 7 Cromwell Road with his patron and partner Eric Hall and lived and painted there. On 29 March 1993, the National Art Collections Fund completed the purchase of the house, by then known as Millais House, where they remained until 2014.

As we have seen in chapter 3, family was pivotal to Millais's life and work. He and Effie had a large family, 8 children in just over 12 years, four boys and four girls (fig. 31).



Fig. 32 Everett Millais, aged 10, courtesy of Geoffroy Millais



Fig. 33 George Millais, aged 8, courtesy of Geoffroy Millais



Fig. 34 Euphemia ‘Effie’ Millais, aged about 12, courtesy Geoffroy Millais



Fig. 35 Mary Millais, aged about 10, courtesy of Geoffroy Millais

Everett (1856-97) (fig. 32), the main protagonist in *The Wolf's Den*, was the eldest. He was born at Annat Lodge, Perth, Scotland, on 30 May 1856, the occasion recorded by Millais who wrote: 'I am the distinguished owner of a little gentleman. The nurse, of course, says it is like me, adding that it is an extremely handsome production!'.[4] Everett married Mary St Lawrence Hope-Vere in 1886 and became an authority on scientific dog breeding. Along with his brother George (also featured in *The Wolf's Den*) he modelled for *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, 1869-70 (Tate, London). He succeeded to the baronetcy that Queen Victoria had bestowed on Millais, however sadly died of pneumonia only a year after his father on 7 September 1897.

George Gray Millais (1857-78) (fig. 33) was born only sixteen months later on 19 September 1857 and named after his maternal grandfather. He was educated at Rugby School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he contracted typhoid fever. George was an active character who, like his father, enjoyed outdoor pursuits; he also had a reckless streak and while receiving treatment for typhoid went out snipe-shooting. After returning from Switzerland, where he visited for his health, he caught a chill, followed by consumption and tragically, aged only twenty, died at Bowerswell on 30 August 1878. Millais wrote: 'we have all had a very trying month for George went through great suffering and died hard. Wasting to a skeleton he lived on, maintaining his sense to within a day of his death. He was such a fine character … and the family feel they will never know anyone to supplant him. He was so wise, truthful and straightforward. I have loved and honoured him from his earliest days.'[5]

Euphemia (Effie) Gray Millais (1858-1911) (fig. 34) is the eldest girl in *The Wolf's Den* and was born 28 November 1858. She was Millais's favourite model amongst his own children and appeared in many works, including *My First Sermon*, 1863 (fig. 38), *My Second Sermon*, 1864 and *The Minuet,* 1866 (fig. 12). She married Lt. (later Major) William Christopher James of the Royal Scots Greys on 28 November 1879. She had four children, including Admiral Sir William Milbourne James GCB, CB (1881-1973), who



sat for one of Millais's most famous works, *Bubbles* of 1886 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight; fig. 20). Her life was blighted by tragedy: when she and her family were living in India in 1894, her husband committed suicide and one of her daughters died a few days later from a fatal illness.

Mary Hunt Millais (1860-1944) was born eighteen months after her sister on 13 May 1860 (fig. 35) and



Fig. 36 John Everett Millais, *The Bridesmaid* (Mary Hunt Millais), 1879, 58.5 x 44 cm. (23 x 17⅜ in.), private collection.

is seen peeping out from her brother's fur rug in *The Wolf's Den*. She posed for *Waking*, 1865 (Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council; fig. 11), *The Bridesmaid*, 1879 (private collection; fig. 36) which is a portrait of her at the wedding of her elder sister Effie and the poignant *The Last Rose of Summer*, 1888 (private collection). Mary was an inveterate traveller and remained unmarried, living with her parents at 2 Palace Gate and helping her father. She kept a cherished collection of her father's work and papers until her death on 17 January 1944, the last of Millais's eight children to pass away.

Millais and Effie's other four children, three of whom were born after *The Wolf's Den* was painted, were Alice Sophia Caroline (Carrie) (1862-1936) born on 10 April 1862, who married Charles Beilby Stuart-Wortley, MP, later Lord Stuart of Wortley on 6 January 1886. She posed for *Sleeping*, 1865 (private collection; fig. 13) and was a talented pianist and close friend of Edward Elgar (1857-1934) who dedicated his Violin Concerto in B Minor to her and who referred to her as his 'Windflower'.

Another eighteen months after Carrie's birth, Geoffroy William Millais (1863-1941) was born on 18 September 1863. Geoffroy succeeded to the baronetcy in 1920 after the death of his nephew, Sir John Everett Millais, 3rd Bt. Geoffroy was a traveller and photographer and illustrated Arthur Neve's book *Picturesque Kashmir*, 1899.

A fourth son, John Guille Millais (1865-1931) was born on 24 March 1865. He was best known for the two-volume account he wrote of his father's life, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, President of the Royal Academy*, 1899. He was also a naturalist and gardener.



Fig. 37 Millais's house at Palace Gate, Kensington, London.

Millais and Effie's last child Sophia Margaret Jameson Millais (1868-1907) was born on 15 June 1868 and named after her maternal grandmother. She married Captain (later Brigadier General) Douglas Lilburn MacEwen of the Cameron Highlanders on 9 December 1891.

With eight children arriving in close succession, by the 1870s Millais and his family had outgrown Cromwell Place and needed to move to a new residence large enough to accommodate both his family and his growing professional commitments. Millais wrote to William Holman Hunt: 'My new home shall be a Palace such as the Italian painters commonly used, but an eye opener to the public, as an attic is still associated with our craft'.[6] The architect for Millais's imposing mansion at 2 Palace Gate (fig. 37) was Philip Charles Hardwick (1822-92) and the builders Cubitt and Sons, the then leading London builder-developers. The plot cost £8,400 and the house was completed in early 1876. It attracted considerable contemporary interest and commentary: engravings of the celebrated new house appeared in *The Magazine of Art,* 1881, *The Art Annual*, 1885 and *Artists at Home*, 1884. The Palace Gate studio was still remarked on after Millais's death, being featured in the article, 'Artists' studios as they were and as they are', *The Magazine of Art,* July 1901.

The imposing style of Millais new house, suitable for his large family and increasing artistic status, is perhaps best captured in an anecdote relating to the historian and writer Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who was sitting for his portrait, the first to be painted in the new studio. Carlyle was accompanied to Millais's house by his niece, who was said to have asked, 'And does all this come from a paint pot?'[7]

6. Reports, reviews and a Royal Commission – 1863 at the Royal Academy

Rosie Jarvie

In 1863, the critical opinions received regarding the submissions to the Royal Academy's summer exhibition were of particular significance for the Academy itself and its young Associate, Millais, both of whom had received public criticism and were under close scrutiny.

Millais was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1853, yet in the subsequent years his paintings had not met with particularly favourable responses from either the critics or the hanging committee. In 1855, his submission *The Rescue*, 1855 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) was badly hung, despite Ruskin remarking in his *Academy Notes*: 'It is the only great picture this year, and it is very great'.[1] Millais remonstrated and insisted that it be lowered by three inches and tilted forward, threatening to resign when the hangers proposed moving it back to its original position. In 1856, *Peace Concluded*, *1856* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts) received some adverse criticism in the press despite being sold before the exhibition for the substantial figure of 900 guineas. Critical reaction was even harsher the following year when Millais exhibited *A Dream of the Past: Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight). The painting divided the critics and attracted the opprobrium of Ruskin,[2] who objected to nearly every aspect of Millais's painting and referred to it as 'a catastrophe'.[3] Millais refrained from exhibiting the following year in 1858 and was disheartened by the critical reaction to the change of style perceived in his three submissions of 1859, *Spring* (fig. 10), *The Vale of Rest* (Tate, London) and *The Love of James The First of Scotland* (private collection) which was much commented on and not altogether favourably. However, the following year, 1860, Millais exhibited a watershed work, *The Black Brunswicker* (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) to great acclaim and it was sold to the dealer Ernest Gambart for 1,000 guineas, the highest price a work of his had fetched to date. Millais did not exhibit in 1861, though he was back again in 1862 with four pictures.



Fig. 38 John Everett Millais, *My First Sermon*, 1863, 92 x 77 cm. (36¼ x 30⅜ in.), Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

In 1863, the role and remit of the conservative-natured Royal Academy itself was under examination. A Royal Commission had been set up to inquire into the position of the Academy in relation to the fine arts and to suggest measures which might render it more useful in promoting art and in improving and developing public taste.



Fig. 39 John Everett Millais, *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, 1863, 154.3 x 117.8 cm. (60¾ x 46⅜ in.), Royal Collection, UK.

Reports of the annual summer exhibition began with a commentary on the Academy's state of affairs: the *Art Journal* stated that 'The Royal Academy is now on its trial'[4] and *The Saturday Review* noted that:

'the Royal Academy has come to discharge its functions in a manner at which all who are within its scope feel very naturally aggrieved… A close, self-elected, irresponsible body has a natural tendency towards corruption … The result is that while each of the Royal Academicians individually may be all that an artist ought to be, yet in their collective capacity they appear before the public annually with a collection of badly arranged pictures; and that they do this at the cost of an amount of unfairness, jobbing, and favouritism on the one hand, and of discouragement, heart burnings, and animosity on the other, that must in the long run exercise the most fatal influence on the whole pictorial profession.'[5]

The Spectator wrote in acerbic tone:

'Of twenty-nine Academician painters, five send nothing; and several others should have been better advised than to send what they have sent. One cannot but wish that the list of "Honorary retired Academicians," which appears on the fly-leaf of the catalogue, had been much longer than it is.'[6]

Yet, despite the criticism levelled at the institution itself, the Royal Academy's summer exhibition was still keenly anticipated and perhaps even more so in 1863 when the Royal Academy and its members were under pressure. The pictures were reviewed and discussed in great detail over the ensuing weeks. Millais submitted three paintings in 1863: *My First Sermon* (7) (fig. 38), *The Wolf's Den* (498) and *The Eve of St Agnes* (287) (fig. 39), three pictures very different in character. Although somewhat over shadowed

by *My First Sermon*, upon which the critics lavished praise, the reviews of *The Wolf's Den* were certainly favourable, with critics noting Millais's skill not only as a painter of child portraits, but also in capturing and understanding the charm and innocence of childhood.

William Michael Rossetti writing in *Fraser's Magazine* praised the artist:

> 'And again Mr Millais is Millais the unapproachable in his quartet of gambolling [sic] children, 'The Wolf's Den', and in the single figure of a girl, 'My First Sermon.' There is no such painting as this to be got elsewhere in the United Kingdom … the girl in the pew as serious as a Veronese, and the children romping between the pianoforte legs grand like a Velasquez. None of the small points which could be picked out for animadversion in the pictures are worth mentioning here, in view of such a general result.'[7]

The critic of the *Art Journal* discussed and summarised the appeal of the two pictures, *The Wolf's Den* and *My First Sermon* as follows:

> 'For the sake of unity, we will take all Mr Millais' pictures together…One of the happiest works this artist has ever painted is called 'My First Sermon' (7). Nothing can be more delightfully simple or more thoroughly artistic than the face, attitude, and dress of this little girl seated in a church pew, eyes riveted on the preacher, her infant mind drinking in every word. Pointing to this picture, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his speech at the Academy dinner said, that the heart of all of us should grow enlarged and we should feel the happier "by the touching representations of the playfulness, the innocence, and might he not add (pointing to Millais' picture of 'My First Sermon'), the piety of childhood". The third contribution by Mr. Millais he has christened 'The Wolf's Den' (498). The wolf's den is in fact found in a drawing-room, the den itself being the recess or retreat formed by a grand piano, and the wolves nothing else than four children, who, having thrown on their backs rugs covered with the skins of wild animals, are playfully acting the wolf upon all fours, their hands clasped like claws, their brows knit savagely. …In these last two works of Mr. Millais, which we believe represent the artist's own children, all the world is recognising a truth, a charming simplicity, and a winning beauty'.[8]

In comparing Millais's contributions to those of his contemporary Frederic Leighton (1830-96), Francis Palgrave writing in *The Saturday Review* somewhat grudgingly acknowledged Millais's technical skill, but readily noted the popular appeal of his subjects, delighting in the sentiment and feelings that Millais has chosen to paint:

> 'If this painter's contributions [Leighton], in 1863, give him the right to the place of honour amongst those who devote themselves to figure-subjects, the place of popularity must be reserved for Mr Millais.'[9]

Although noting that some details were not completely satisfactory, with almost prophetic insight he wrote of *My First Sermon*, '…yet the life, and the earnestness and the simple beauty which he has thrown into the child's features render the little canvas one which we are long likely to remember with pleasure.' Regarding *The Wolf's Den*, he continued:

> 'One charm of this pleasing work is, in fact, the truth with which Millais has apprehended the inconsecutiveness of young children – their inability to act a part completely, or for more than a few moments – their deferential, but imperfect imitation of the eldest amongst them. Thus, here, the biggest boy is the Coryphaeus of the party, and the gradations of intelligence descend through the child who can only roar, to the child who has totally forgotten that she is in the Den at all, and may be even dimly conscious that "it is all nonsense." Child's play has been never more pleasingly represented than here'.[10]

Tom Taylor, art critic for *The Times*, relished Millais's depictions of childhood and astutely realised the commercial potential of these type of works. He wrote of *My First Sermon*: 'No more delicious and unaffected picture of childhood was ever painted …. No mother of a little girl

can look at it without wishing to have her child so painted'. In turning to discuss *The Wolf's Den*, he particularly noted Millais's skill in painting fabric and textiles, and contrasts the different sentiments depicted in the two pictures of children:

> 'The Wolf's Den (448), represents the painter's own four children playing at wolves under a grand piano. The leader, a boy of six, crouches under a carriage-rug of wolfskin, and protrudes a paw; another under a gray wolf-skin mat seems to envy the success of his brother's wolfish personation; a fair-haired toddler of two sprawls over a copy of Leech's Pictures from Punch, and a sweet little girl – the wolves' victim, we presume – lolls contentedly on her back balancing a snowdrop. This is childhood in its playfulness, as the other is childhood in its awe and seriousness.'[11]

F.G. Stephens, Millais's fellow Pre-Raphaelite, writing in the *Athenaeum* appreciated the sentiment conveyed in the childish scene:

> 'The Lion's Den [sic] shows some children playing at wild beasts. Three boys [sic] have efficiently wrapped themselves in skin mats; the eldest, with vigorous conception of his part, scowls prettily and makes claws of his little fingers; the younger is contented with a roar; a third crawls on his knees and hands, yowling as a bear. Self-centred, almost to selfishness, a little girl, fair-featured, but with vanity of those features written in every line, – a beautiful study of such a child, – lies upon her back, heedless of the boys and all about her, playing with a flower-bell. A solemn grand piano keeps them in, its legs are the sides of the lions' den.[12]

1863 was acknowledged as a strong year for Millais and a return to his previous form. Palgrave wrote: 'it will probably be agreed on all hands that the distinguished artist has, on the whole, made a nearer advance towards resumption of his earlier and more forceful style this year than in several preceding Exhibitions'.[13] Perhaps as a sop to the critical voices and acknowledging the popular appeal of the young artist's works, Millais was elected, at the relatively tender age of thirty-four to full membership of the Royal Academy by one vote, over the older marine painter Edward William Cooke (1811-80). As the art historian Laurel Bradley has written: 'The creation of Millais, Royal Academician coincided with the emergence of Millais, our popular painter.'[14]

The Royal Commission examining the Royal Academy failed to instigate substantive changes. It endeavoured to give the Academy a 'clear and definite public character' by suggesting a Royal Charter, an enlarged membership to include laymen and other reforms which would convert the Academy into an advisory body to the government, with a powerful central regulating influence. However, the Academy rejected such innovations and despite a few changes in management and a move to Burlington House in 1868, it continued in much the same vein, neither supporting the most progressive art or more advanced teaching, nor improving the standards of taste in the country. Millais, on the other hand, tapped into the contemporary zeitgeist for British Art which resonated with an art buying public.



7. Past Owners

Rosie Jarvie

The Wolf's Den was purchased directly from the artist by the dealers Thomas Agnew and Sons, at the beginning of April 1863, before its submission to the Royal Academy. Agnew's had established a London branch of their Manchester based dealership in 1860 and Thomas Agnew Senior retired from the business the following year, leaving his sons William and Thomas Junior to transform Agnew's into the leading art dealership of the nineteenth century, with a dominant role in the substantial growth of the market for contemporary British art in the second half of the nineteenth century. Agnew's had also purchased Millais's *My First Sermon* (fig. 38), exhibited at the Royal Academy the same year as *The Wolf's Den*. The purchase of these two pictures by Agnew's represented a 'watershed in Millais's patronage, the replacement of Gambart by Agnew's as his principle dealer.'[1] Agnew's sold *The Wolf's Den* on 10 August 1863, just four months later, to the merchant and art collector John Graham Senior (1797-1886).[2]

John Graham Senior founded the firm W. & J. Graham & Co. with his brother William Graham (1786-1854). The family firm, specialising in cotton-spinning and importing dry goods from India and the Continent, had its head office in Glasgow and branches in Bombay and Lisbon. In 1820



Fig. 40 Photograph of Skelmorlie Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland.

John Graham was based in Oporto, where he received twenty-seven pipes of port wine in settlement of a bad debt, he shipped them back to Glasgow and so began, almost by accident, the trade that was to make the firm's name.[3] John Graham's nephew, also William Graham (1817-85) was a notable patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones,[4] and the two men frequently admired the same paintings. William Graham, writing to Dante Gabriel Rossetti on 9 April 1868, referred to his uncle as 'a relative of larger fortune and smaller family than myself [who] buys very expensive pictures somewhat lavishly and if I feel too poor to keep the Dante which I hope may not be the case I know how to dispose of it'.[5]

Although John Graham bought mostly through William Agnew he was also well known in the salerooms. George Redford[6] described John Graham as 'a very well-known figure at Christie's for many years, a spare, contented-looking man in black frock coat and necktie, wearing a soft felt hat, always ready with his invitation, "Ye are welcome to Skelmorlie, happy to show ye 'the peectures'.[7]

John Graham resided at Skelmorlie Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland (fig. 40) from 1852 until his death and his collection was housed there.[8] He died on 4 October 1886, aged eighty-nine and his collection of ninety-four pictures, entitled 'The Highly Important Collection of Modern Pictures of John Graham Esq., Skelmorlie Castle, Ayrshire, Deceased' was sold at Christie's on 30 April 1887, realising £62,297. It included Millais's *Sir Isumbras at the Ford*, 1857 (National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight), Holman Hunt's *Finding of the Saviour in the Temple*, 1862-3, 1864, 1865 (National Museums Liverpool, Sudley House), Burne-Jones's *Fides*, 1871 (Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada) and *Sperantia,* 1871 (Dunedin Public Art Gallery), and three works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Venus Verticordia*, 1864-8 (Russell Cotes Art Gallery Bournemouth), *The Two Mothers*, 1852 (Walker

Art Gallery, Liverpool), and a pastel version of *Pandora,* 1871 (private collection).

The Wolf's Den was sold back to Agnew's within one year of being purchased by Graham, for an unknown reason. It was purchased on 16 October 1865 by another Scotsman with a mercantile background, Kirkman Finlay of Dunlossit House, Isle of Islay.

Kirkman Finlay was the grandson of Kirkman Finlay Senior[9] (1773-1842) of Castle Toward, who was Lord Provost of Glasgow, Member of Parliament and one of the leading merchants in Glasgow. The family business of James Finlay & Company was one of the largest textile manufacturers in Scotland and, like the Grahams, they were also East India merchants, trading with India and the Far East. In 1816, they were the first merchant house in Scotland to open up a direct connection with India. Kirkman Finlay the younger was a Justice of the Peace and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. He built Dunlossit House (fig. 41) in 1865 and it is possible that he bought *The Wolf's Den* in 1865 to hang in his new house.



Fig. 41 *Islay, Port Askaig, Dunlossit House. View of front from drive,* 1906, Canmore, National Record of the Historical Environment, Scotland.



Fig. 42 Childwall Hall, Liverpool, England.

However, on 22 March 1869 the picture was bought back again by Agnew's for Ralph Brocklebank (1803-92). He was typical of Agnew's clients, with his fortune being derived from industry and trade. Brocklebank was a partner in the Brocklebank shipping line, Chairman of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (1863-69) and a Justice of the Peace.

Brocklebank lived at Childwall Hall, near Liverpool where he housed his art collection (fig. 42). In addition to *The Wolf's Den* he also owned one of Millais's later child pictures, *Dropped from the Nest*, 1883 (private collection). His collection was large and varied and included a number of watercolours by J.M.W. Turner including *Marriage of the Adriatic*, *Ehrenbreitstein*, 1835, and illustrations to Sir Walter Scott's writings as well as works by Victorian stalwarts such as John Philip, Clarkson Stanfield, Thomas Faed and John Faed, Sir David Willkie, William Powell Frith, David Roberts and Sir Edwin Landseer, and a fine collection of English watercolours by other eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists such as David Cox, Peter de Wint and Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding.



Fig. 43 Photograph of Kōjirō Matsukata.
Image source: Gallica / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In 1891, *The Magazine of Art* published a feature on Brocklebank's collection, albeit with the qualification that 'an Enumeration of all the art-treasures of Childwall Hall would exceed the capacity of a single article'.[10] *The Wolf's Den* was illustrated with a wood-engraving by Paul Hermann Naumann with the writer noting that 'the odd juxtaposition of large spaces of scarlet and crimson is a characteristic peculiarity of colouring'.[11] Brocklebank died the following year and his executors arranged for his collection to be sold at Christie's in April 1893. At the auction *The Wolf's Den* was sold for 210 guineas to Stone, a dealer based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who handled many Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite works. Its whereabouts after this are unknown until the picture entered the collection of Kōjirō Matsukata during the 1920s.

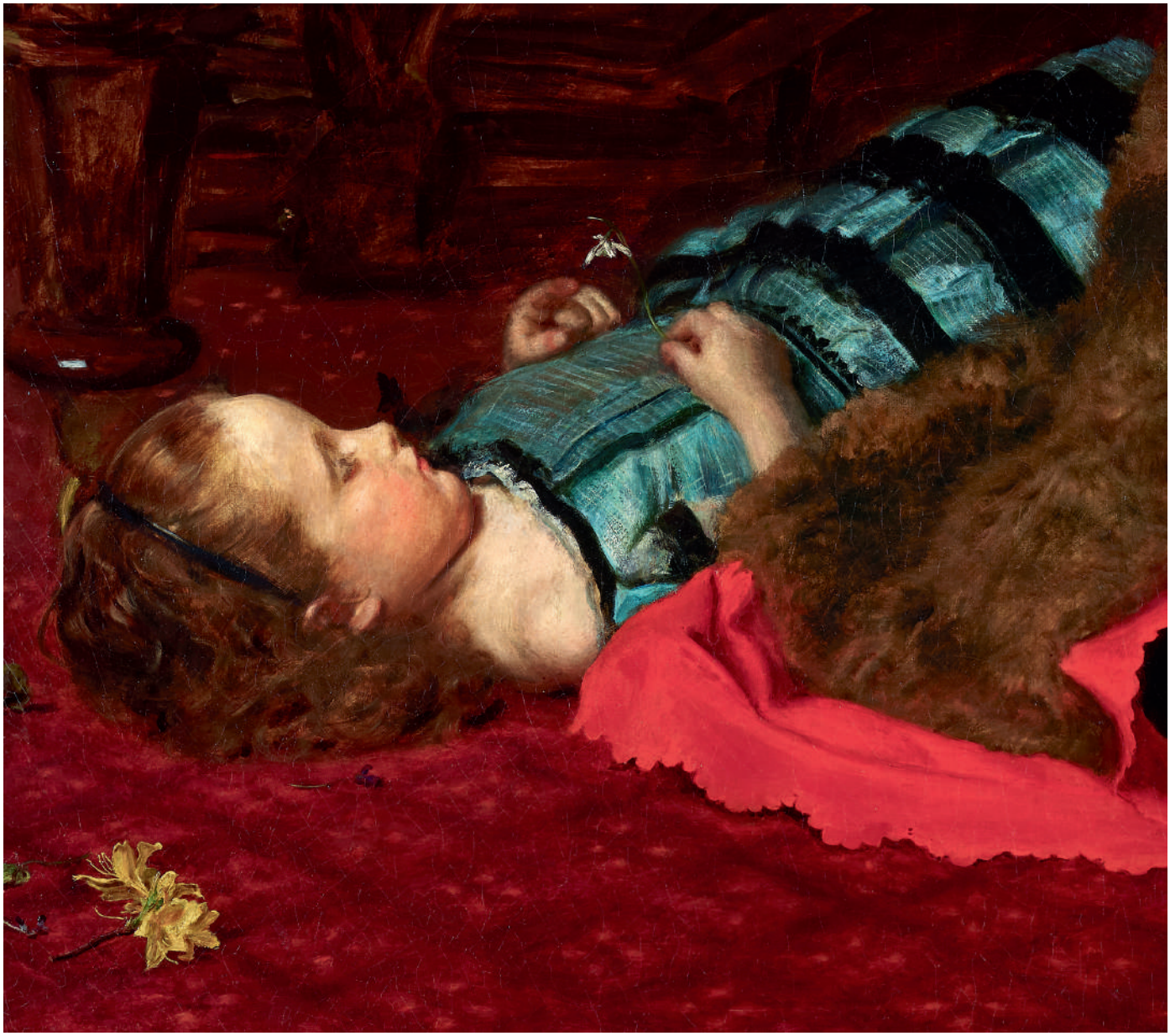
Kōjirō Matsukata (1865-1950) (fig. 43) devoted both his life and significant personal wealth to assembling a collection of Western art which he hoped would become the nucleus of a Japanese national museum focused particularly on masterworks of the Western art tradition.

Matsukata was the third son of Prince Matsukata Masayoshi (1835-1924), Prime Minister of Japan from 1891 to 1892 and 1896 to 1898. He was educated in America and spent time travelling through Europe enroute to Japan, where he acted as his father's official secretary for some time. He held several important positions in industry and commerce; he was at one time president of the Kobe Shimbun newspaper company and of the Kobe Gas Company and was later elected chairman of the Kobe Chamber of Commerce and served as a member of the Diet. In 1896 he became the first president of the Kawasaki Dockyard Co., Ltd. of Kobe: the outbreak of the First World War and the urgent demand for ships meant that Matsukata was able to amass a huge personal fortune.

In 1916, when Matsukata visited Britain, he was struck by a painting of dockyards by Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) and purchased his first piece of western art. Between 1916 and 1927 he used his fortune to purchase several thousand art works in both Paris and London. His collecting areas were broad and included many different periods, regions and genres. They included paintings by modern British painters, sculptures by Rodin, for example *The Gates of Hell* (Rodin Museum, Paris), medieval panel paintings and tapestries, as well as works by Gauguin, Van Gogh and Monet whom Matsukata befriended.[12] His entire collection was reputed to have totalled 10,000 works, including about 8,000 Japanese woodblock prints, which are now in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. However, the sole purpose of his passionate art collecting was to build an art museum in Tokyo where visitors could come into direct contact with western art and enjoy the same access to great art as the Parisians.

Some of Matsukata's artworks were shipped back to Japan and plans were commenced for the building of the museum to house his collection. He secured a site in the centre of Tokyo and entrusted the design of it to the British painter Frank Brangwyn, now a close friend and adviser. However, Matsukata's plans were disrupted by the economic crisis of 1927, in which the Kawasaki Dockyard's major bank collapsed. Matsukata resigned as president and was forced to dispose of his own property to sustain his company in the crisis; the artworks he had brought to Japan, including *The Wolf's Den*, were dispersed through a series of auctions in the following years.

A large number of Matsukata's artworks had remained in Europe but these were affected by the vagaries of World War Two. Those stored in a London warehouse were destroyed by fire in 1939 and much of what remained in Japan was destroyed by allied bombing during the Pacific War. Some 400 artworks which had been left in Paris were sequestrated by the French government towards the end of World War Two as enemy property, and allocated to France in 1951 as part of the San Francisco Peace Treaty agreement. Eventually, the French government returned 375 of those artworks to the Japanese government as a sign of the renewed amity between the two nations. These artworks, designated as the Matsukata Collection, were returned to Japan in 1959. The National Museum of Western Art was established in 1959 with the aim of housing and displaying those artworks from the Matsukata Collection returned to Japan by the French government. Finally, Matsukata's aim of establishing a museum of Western Art was realised.



8. Conclusion



The recent reappearance from obscurity of *The Wolf's Den* is a cause for celebration and an opportunity to reappraise its position amongst the artist's oeuvre. Executed at a key period in the artist's career when he continued his slow evolution away from the fine touch of Pre-Raphaelitism to the bravura brushwork of his maturity, it heralds his acclaimed repertoire of pictures of children, which became supremely popular and for which Millais is so well known. This development coincided with Millais maturing as a husband and father, and the growth of his confidence as an artist. *The Wolf's Den* exemplifies Millais's talent for encapsulating the charm and innocence of childhood and is one of the finest expressions of this impulse.

The Wolf's Den is one of the most important Millais paintings to reappear in public for over two decades and provides collectors with a rare opportunity to purchase not just one of Millais's child portraits, but a picture imbued with paternal pride and joy.

9. Endnotes

2: MILLAIS IN THE 1860s

1 William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, London and New York, 1905, I, p. 178.

2 Now 7 Gower Street and marked with a Blue Plaque.

3 See *Millais: Portraits*, 1999; Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett* Millais, Ashgate, 2005; Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith, *Millais*, Tate, 2007, hereafter 'Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007'; Jason Rosenfeld, *John Everett Millais*, London, 2012, hereafter 'Rosenfeld, 2012' ; and Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld, and Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian-Avant Garde*, Tate, 2012.

3: FAMILY MAN: *THE WOLF'S DEN* AND JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS'S EXPRESSIONS OF PATERNAL AFFECTION IN THE 1860s

1 J.G. Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, President of the Royal Academy*, London, 1899, II, p. 17. Hereafter 'Millais, 1899'.

2 [F. G. Stephens], 'The Private Collections of England. No. LXX.– Childwall Hall, Near Liverpool', *Athenaeum,* 80, no. 2865, 23 September 1882, pp. 408-10. Hereafter 'Athenaeum, 1882'.

3 *The Minuet*, c. 1866-67, watercolour, private collection, USA, sold Bonham's, London, 29 October 2008, lot 149. See Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 176.

4 On *Sleeping* and *Waking* see Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, pp. 174, and Rosenfeld, 2012, pp. 139-141.

5 See the beautiful drawing in the Albertina Museum, Vienna, of Nicolaas (1618-55) wearing a coral necklace (1619, inv. 17650) for the Christ child in the Kassel *Holy Family* at the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (1619, inv. GK119). While most of Rubens's family portraits were private studies, he occasionally used them for his oils.

6 In the twentieth century, Picasso's spate of images of his first child, his son with Olga Khokhlova, Paulo, born 4 February 1921, forms a remarkable display of paternal obsessiveness at the very time that he began to alienate his wife and thus his son. Unlike Millais, he was never a great father.

7 David Roberts, 'The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes', in Anthony S. Wohl (ed.), *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses*, New York, 1978, pp. 59-81. See p. 59. Hereafter 'Roberts, 1978'.

8 On Millais's residences see Jeremy Musson, "Has a Pot of Paint Done All This?: The Studio-House of Sir John Everett Millais, Bt," in Debra N. Mancoff, ed., *John Everett Millais: Beyond the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, New Haven and London, 2001, pp. 95-118. Hereafter 'Mancoff'.

9 On *'Leisure Hours'* see Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 144.

10 For Trollope's relationship with Millais see Millais, 1899, I, pp. 282-4, Jane Munro, *Tennyson and Trollope: Book Illustrations by John Everett Millais (1829-96)*, Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 1996 and John N. Hall, *Trollope and His Illustrators*, New York, 1980.

11 Roberts, 1978.

12 See Jane Hamlett, 'Tiresome trips downstairs: Middle-Class Domestic Space and Family Relationships in England', 1850-1910.' In Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, and Abigail Wills (eds.), *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 111-131.

13 Paul Goldman, *Beyond Decoration: The Illustrations of John Everett Millais*, London, 2005, pp. 62 and 314. Hereafter 'Goldman'.

14 *Trust Me* was sold in advance in 1861 to T.E. Plint. By 1865 it had changed hands another two times. If this is a scene from 1862 the children would have been c. 6, 5, 3, and 2 which is unlikely. There is no reference to another version – it is possible that Millais was working on it again in the studio. For this picture see Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 114, and Rosenfeld, 2012, pp. 122, 133-6, 146.

15 Malcolm Warner, 'Portraits of Children: The Pathos of Innocence', in Peter Funnell and Malcolm Warner, *Millais: Portraits*, London, 1999, pp. 103-135.

16 For *The Young Mother* see Goldman, pp. 39 and 83, and for *The Baby House* see Goldman, pp. 49 and 178.

17 Claudia Nelson, 'Deconstructing the Paterfamilias: British Magazine and the Imaging of the Maternal Father, 1850-1910', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 11, No. 3, Spring 2003, p. 293. Hereafter 'Nelson'.

18 For *Sisters* see Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 146, and Rosenfeld, 2012, pp. 123-126.

19 Nelson, p. 299.

20 16 June 1860, p. 598. See Goldman, pp. 58 and 271.

4: *THE WOLF'S DEN* AND ITS ARTISTIC CONTEXTS

1 The Manchester Art Treasures exhibition took place in 1857 and the South Kensington International exhibition took place in 1862. The Burlington Fine Arts Club, which held regular exhibitions of historical works was not founded until 1866 but its history goes back to 1856 when regular meetings were held at Marlborough House.

2 Leonée Ormond, 'Millais and contemporary artists', p. 23 in Mancoff.

3 There are three versions of these full-length portraits: In the Louvre, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna and the MFA. Boston.

4 Sold Sotheby's, London, 1 July 2004, lot 21.

5 *Athenaeum*, 1882, pp. 408-10.

6 Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 176.

7 We are grateful to Charlotte Gere for her helpful discussion of the children's dress.

8 Sold Sotheby's, London, June 2000, lot 43.

9 Information provided by email correspondence with Robert Simonson, Broadwood piano archive, Surrey History Centre.

10 Millais, 1899, II, p. 422.

11 see Mary Bennett, 'Footnotes to the Millais Exhibition', *Liverpool Bulletin*, 12, 1967, pp. 55-56.

12 Virginia Surtees, *The Diaries of George Price Boyce*, Norwich, 1980, p. 37.

13 We are grateful to Jessica Harrison-Hall at the British Museum for her help in identifying this.

14 Ormond, 'Millais and contemporary artists', p. 31 in Mancoff.

15 D. Du Maurier (ed.), *The Young George Du Maurier*, London, 1951, p. 4.

16 These meanings were commonly ascribed in mid-nineteenth-century flower books, see for example John Ingram, *Flora Symbolica, or The Language and Sentiment of Flowers*, London, 1869, p. 156. The snowdrop also features prominently in Millais's *Mariana*, 1851, Tate, London.

17 Jennifer Sattaur, *Perceptions of Childhood in the Victorian Fin-de-siècle*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2011, p. 5.

18 As Jason Rosenfield argues in chapter 3.

19 Ormond, 'Millais and contemporary artists', p. 22 in Mancoff.

5: HOME AND FAMILY

1 *The London Encyclopaedia*, 2008, p. 616.
2 Millais, 1899, I, p. 363.
3 *Ibid.*
4 *Life and Letters*, I, p. 305.
5 Letter to Thomas Oldham Barlow, 6 September 1878, G.R.E. Millais Collection, quoted in Rosenfeld and Smith, 2007, p. 200, no. 115.
6 Letter to Holman Hunt, 1877, Huntington Library, quoted in J. Musson, 'Has a Paint Pot Done All This? The Studio House of Sir John Everett Millais', p. 95 in Mancoff.
7 *Life and Letters*, II, p. 159.

6: REPORTS, REVIEWS AND ROYAL COMMISSION – 1863 AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

1 E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, *The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin*, 14, London, 1903–12, p. 22. Hereafter 'Cook and Wedderburn'.
2 His breach with the artist was permanent after the annulment of his marriage to Effie and her subsequent marriage to Millais on 3 July 1855.
3 Cook and Wedderburn, 14, p. 107.
4 *Art Journal*, 1 June 1963, p. 107.
5 *The Saturday Review,* 9 May 1863, p. 592.
6 *The Spectator*, 9 May 1863, p. 1980.
7 *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1863, pp. 791-2.
8 *Art Journal*, 1 June 1863, p. 109.
9 *The Saturday Review*, 16 May 1863, p. 628.
10 *Ibid*.
11 *The Times*, 2 May 1863, p. 11.
12 *Athenaeum*, 2 May 1863, p. 589.
13 *The Saturday Review*, 16 May 1863, p. 628.
14 Laurel Bradley, 'Millais, Our Popular Painter' p. 186 in Mancoff.

7: PAST OWNERS

1 Gambart bought *My First Sermon* for 400 guineas but Agnew's bought it from him immediately and paid the artist an additional £200 for the copyright, M. Warner, *The Professional Career of John Everett Millais to 1863 with a catalogue of his works to the same date,* Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1985, pp. 134-35.
2 Agnew's day books for this year have not survived, the picture is noted in the stock book as being sold to John Graham but with no further details. It seems probable that it was to John Graham Senior (1797-1886) who resided at Skelmorlie Castle, however his nephew, also John Graham (1817-94), was also a client of Agnew's and lived at Albert Gate. Although Horner, *Time Remembered*, 1933, p. 27 notes that William Graham Junior's brother John also had 'a small but very choice collection of water-colours' when his collection was sold at Christie's on 5 May 1894 it included Pre-Raphaelite paintings such as *Florence by night* and *Jerusalem* by Holman Hunt, *Music* and *The Building of the Brazen Tower* by Burne-Jones and *The Loving Cup* by Rossetti.
3 Graham's Port, still a well-known brand name today, was one of its most popular commodities.
4 William Graham (1817-85) Liberal MP for Glasgow, was a Scottish politician, wine merchant, cotton manufacturer and port shipper. He was an important patron of Pre-Raphaelite artists like Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and a collector of their works. Graham commissioned *The Blessed Damozel*, 1871 (Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University) from Dante Gabriel Rossetti and also owned *La Donna Della Finestra,* 1880 (Lord Lloyd-Webber Collection), *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary,* 1848-49 (Tate, London) and *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, 1849-50 (Tate, London). Graham also acquired many pieces from Burne-Jones: *Laus Veneris* (Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne) and *Chant d'Amour* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). The *Graham piano* was painted by Burne-Jones for Graham's daughter Frances (Mrs. Horner, later Lady Horner).
5 O. Garnett, *The Letters and Collection of William Graham*, Walpole Society, 62, London, 2000, p. 188.
6 Redford compiled a history of sales of pictures and other works of art.
7 W. Roberts, *Memorials of Christie's*, II, London, 1897, p. 122, quoting G. Redford, *Art Sales*, I, London, 1888, p. 446.
8 John Graham was a tenant of the castle and restored it with the permission of the Earl of Eglinton.
9 Kirkman Finlay the younger was the eldest son of James Finlay, himself the eldest son of Kirkman Finlay Senior.
10 E.R. Dibdin, 'Mr Brockbank's Collection at Childwall Hall', *The Magazine of Art*, 1891, pp. 89-92.
11 *Ibid*, p. 90.
12 Matsukata owned another work by Millais, *Ducklings*, 1889 (National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo).



Martin Beisly

Martin Beisly launched his art dealership in 2015 after over thirty years' experience in the auction world. As International Director of Victorian & 19th Century Pictures at Christie's, he established an impressive reputation for expertise, a keen understanding of the art market and a wealth of contacts with international collectors and curators. Under his leadership the Victorian department became market leader in the field. Martin was instrumental in restoring Farringford, Tennyson's home on the Isle of Wight and was a trustee of Juliet Margaret Cameron's house Dimbola. He is a trustee and also a member of Collections Committee of the Watts Gallery, Compton. Martin's gallery in St James's specialises in Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite painting and sculpture and holds a representative stock of Victorian art both owned outright and sold on behalf of collectors throughout the world.

Dr Jason Rosenfeld

Jason Rosenfeld, Ph.D., is Distinguished Chair and Professor of Art History at Marymount Manhattan College, New York, and a Senior Writer and Editor-at-Large at *The Brooklyn Rail*. His present curatorial project is a retrospective of the art of Andy Goldsworthy, originating at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, in 2024, and he is completing a book on Cecily Brown for Phaidon. He was curator of *Ben Wilson: From Social Realism to Abstraction*, at the George Segal Gallery, Montclair State University, New Jersey (2017); co-curator of the exhibition *River Crossings* at Cedar Grove, the Thomas Cole National Historical Site, in Catskill, New York, and Olana, in Hudson, New York (2015); co-curator of *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* at Tate Britain, London, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, the Mori Arts Center Gallery, Tokyo, and the Palazzo Chiablese, Turin (2012-2014); and co-curator of *John Everett Millais* at Tate Britain, the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, Fukuoka, and the Bunkamura Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2007-2008). He curated *Stephen Hannock: Moving Water, Fleeting Light* at Marlborough Fine Art, London (2014). He is the author of the monograph on *John Everett Millais* (Phaidon, 2012).

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Rosie Jarvie worked at Christie's as a specialist and Associate Director in the British Drawings and Watercolours Department for 20 years, before becoming a freelance art consultant. She writes, lectures and advises on many aspects of British art and the British art market for museums, auction houses and galleries.



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