CHAPTER 7

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Medea, Frederick Sandys, and the Aesthetic Moment[1]

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'She is singing some baneful spell, and the instruments of her magic are about her.'[2] So Sidney Colvin, art critic for the *Globe* newspaper, described Frederick Sandys's *Medea* (Figure 7.1) in response to its first public appearance at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, London, in 1869. Brief as it is, the description interprets the painting in a particular way: the present tense brings the figure vividly before us and the emphasis is on the occult aspect. 'She is singing some baneful spell' — we, who are uninitiated, know not which spell; we see a witch, with the instruments of her magic, delineated with utmost precision; and yet she remains unfathomable.

This passage, like other contemporary reviews of Sandys's painting, may be more complex than its plain language makes it seem at first. However, in very general terms Colvin's characterization accords with standard estimates of Sandys's work in the current art-historical literature. The painting is ordinarily seen as a particularly compelling, but nonetheless typical, example of the Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatale*: occult, in the sense both of 'sinister' and of 'secret', mesmerically enticing and yet not quite fathomable. Thus Sandys's witch might be compared to others from his immediate social circle, such as Edward Burne-Jones's watercolour *The Wine of Circe*, seen in the same exhibition season, 1869, at the Old Water-Colour Society (and portraying Medea's own aunt); or Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (Figure 7.2), representing the witch who was Adam's wife before the creation of Eve and, like Medea, a murderess of children.[3] Sandys was a lodger in Rossetti's house at the time he painted *Medea*, when Rossetti was working on *Lady Lilith*, and Sandys borrowed the basic composition from Rossetti, who had already made a number of similar paintings of half-length female figures: the ample, fleshy forms of the figure dominate a foreground that scarcely seems spacious enough to accommodate them and talismanic accessories are arrayed before and behind; the articles of Lilith's toilet play the same compositional role as Medea's magic instruments. The erotic address of such figures, startlingly close to the spectator, and the lush splendour of accoutrements only loosely related to the ostensible subject matter are invariably described as stock features of the Rossettian *femme fatale*. Does it matter, then, which witch this is; or is Sandys's *Medea* interchangeable with any of Rossetti's, or Burne-Jones's, *femmes fatales*? Rossetti took the latter view and in 1869 he accused Sandys of plagiarizing his work.[4] Subsequent estimates of Sandys have followed suit; thus *Medea* figures in the current art-historical literature, if at all, merely as

Fig. 7.1 (above). Frederick Sandys, *Medea* (1866–68), oil on wood, 61.2 × 45.6 cm; © Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery

Fig. 7.2 (below). Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith* (1866–68; altered 1872–73), oil on canvas, 96.5 × 85.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935

a particularly well-executed example of the Rossettian *femme fatale*. However, that view has tended to obscure, not only the distinctive qualities of Sandys's painting, but also its central role amidst a complex of experiments, involving the figure of Medea, in the artistic circle around Rossetti.

It is worth tracing the sequence of events, intricately intertwined in the work of the circle, through the second half of the 1860s. Sandys must have designed his painting by November 1866, when he offered to sell preparatory drawings for it to a friend, James Anderson Rose (solicitor for both Sandys and Rossetti).[5] In 1867 William Morris published his long narrative poem, *The Life and Death of Jason*; thus the painting and the poem were in progress simultaneously and it is inconceivable that either Morris or Sandys were unaware of one another's work, since both frequented Rossetti's house at the time (indeed, Burne-Jones's *The Wine of Circe* must also be tangentially related to Morris's poem, which includes a dramatic account of Medea's visit to her aunt). When Morris's poem was published, it was immediately reviewed by another intimate of the circle, the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, who saw the figure of Medea as the 'root of the romance': 'At her first entrance the poem takes new life and rises out of the atmosphere of mere adventure and incident.'[6] This comment may be placed in counterpoint with Swinburne's scathing estimate of the heroines in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which Swinburne regarded as pernicious in its simplistic morality; for Swinburne, Tennyson's Guenevere and Vivien were mere prostitutes, 'base and repulsive', 'loathsome' in their 'vulgarity': 'Nothing like it', he wrote, 'can be cited from the verse which embodies other poetic personations of unchaste women. [...] Those heroines of sin are evil, but noble in their evil way'.[7] His examples in this passage are the Cleopatra of Shakespeare and the Dalilah of Milton, but his earlier comments suggest that he would include the Medea of Morris among the women who are 'unchaste' and 'noble' at once.

Meanwhile Sandys had completed his painting of *Medea* in time for submission to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1868, when its fortunes were vexed and, indeed, have never been satisfactorily explained: it was apparently passed by the Selection Committee but not, in the event, displayed. It remains unclear whether the Academicians responsible for the hang thought it too shocking for public display, or whether they simply failed to find a suitable place for it. However this may have been, the London art critics were quick to seize on the incident as an example of academic censorship and the painting — though unseen — attracted considerable comment in the press. That summer Swinburne and William Michael Rossetti, the painter's brother, published a pamphlet reviewing the Royal Academy exhibition in which both of them took the opportunity to lament the exclusion of the picture.[8] Swinburne also wrote a stirring account of the picture, to which we shall return. Perhaps the press outcry was successful, for when Sandys resubmitted the painting for the next year's Royal Academy exhibition it was accepted and hung in a good position; and partly, no doubt, because of the notoriety it had attracted, the painting was extensively reviewed in the criticism of that year.

Between the two exhibition seasons, in the *Westminster Review* for October 1868, Walter Pater published his review of Morris's poetry, including *The Life*

and Death of Jason; Pater's criticism is always more understated than Swinburne's, but he too calls attention to the 'wise Medea' in his account of the poem.[9] Pater's essay also had strange fortunes. The final paragraphs, musings on the role of art in the modern world, were extracted from the essay and republished in 1873 as the 'Conclusion' to Pater's volume *The Renaissance*. In that context they became Pater's most controversial piece of writing, his aesthetic manifesto, widely interpreted as advocating a life of irresponsible hedonism; in the penultimate sentence he introduces the motto 'art for art's sake'. So scathing was the critical response that Pater voluntarily withdrew the 'Conclusion' from the second edition of *The Renaissance*.[10] However, the earlier part of the essay, the part that deals specifically with Morris's poetry, is of equal importance as a statement of aesthetic principle; here Pater explains how Morris's use of subjects and styles from the past can be seen as a vital kind of modern art — and I shall suggest that Sandys's painting involves exactly the same set of issues in visual form. When Pater reprinted the section on Morris in his volume *Appreciations*, of 1889, he re-titled it 'Aesthetic Poetry', hinting, perhaps, that its discussions had more general relevance to the artistic experiments of the period. However, he withdrew this essay, too, from the second edition of *Appreciations* in what seems another example of self-censorship: thus both parts of the Morris essay, virtually the only occasion on which Pater explicitly addressed the question of contemporary art, proved problematical.

Rossetti's paintings of half-length female figures, Morris's poetry, Swinburne's and Pater's criticism have always been recognized as crucial elements in a decisive reconfiguration of artistic practices at the end of the 1860s, when the motto 'art for art's sake' briefly served as the rallying-cry for artistic freedom.[11] This was the most dangerous moment, too, for the new artistic projects that would eventually be linked under the rubric 'Aestheticism': scholars have often enumerated the series of scandals over Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* of 1866, Rossetti's *Poems* of 1870 and Pater's 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance* of 1873; in 1870 Burne-Jones, too, was obliged to withdraw from public exhibition his watercolour *Phyllis and Demophoön* following objections to the fully nude male figure. These are familiar episodes in the early history of English Aestheticism. What has never been noted, however, is that the figure of Medea, and Sandys's painting *Medea*, played a distinctive role in the artistic experiments of this moment. Perhaps Swinburne, in his eagerness to find a *cause célèbre*, overdramatized the academic hostility to Sandys's painting. Nonetheless, it is necessary to look more closely at the painting, to ask how it became a focus of attention at this intriguing moment.

Clearly Sandys's starting point is the composition invented by Rossetti for a half-length female figure with gorgeous accessories. Yet it is immediately obvious that Sandys's painting technique effects a visual transformation to the Rossettian pictorial type: the exceptional precision of finish and detail in the Sandys lends a preternatural clarity to the forms of figure, background, and accessories alike — one might say an 'uncanny' clarity; and, indeed, the critic for *The Times* used the word, in inverted commas for emphasis: 'Nothing can exceed the weirdness of the conception or the consummate finish of execution in this "uncanny" picture.'[12] The sharp detail is of course a 'Pre-Raphaelite' characteristic and would perhaps have

looked doubly archaic by the end of the 1860s, when the original Pre-Raphaelite painters, including Rossetti, had moved to broader, looser styles. Sandys here refines and intensifies the earlier Pre-Raphaelite manner of the period around 1850; and through it he alludes to its stylistic point of reference, the art of the Northern Early Renaissance. Thus we can observe a kind of double refraction, looking back *through* the Pre-Raphaelitism of circa 1850, already old-fashioned by the late 1860s, to its prototypes in the so-called 'primitive' art of the fifteenth century. The critic for the *Illustrated London News* noted 'an exquisite finish of execution worthy of the greatest of the early Flemish masters' and mentioned van Eyck.[13] Indeed, the precision of detail is reminiscent of examples such as Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* of 1434, a work that had entered the National Gallery in 1842 and was certainly a prime inspiration for the early phase of Pre-Raphaelitism.[14] Comparable, for example, is the treatment of the white linen, the delicate white-on-white embroideries of Medea's gown and the lacy edge of the headdress in the van Eyck. This is a 'realism' of minute detail, of the finest possible brushstrokes, executed with the surest hand; it persuades us that it represents material 'reality' by leaving no chink or gap between strokes, so that we seem to see the object in its pristine perfection, with no distraction from the painter's mediating touch.

The 'uncanny' effect observed by critics is partly to do with this seamlessness, this realism that is almost too perfect for reality. However, it also involves the precision of detail over the entire picture surface, which rejects conventional techniques for indicating spatial recession by means of blurring or fading, or what is called 'atmospheric perspective': the gold background is as bright as the immediate foreground and as sharp in detail. Yet the painting nonetheless depends on a movement backwards into illusionistic depth, although this is indicated by less conventional means. It may, then, be appropriate to examine the painting by moving into its depth from the foreground, beginning with the 'magic instruments' that lie on the marble parapet immediately before us: here the precision of detail, together with the play of light, establishes an insistent three-dimensionality and the 'magic' or 'weird' character of the objects is expressed visually as a sequence of strange or irregular shapes. Starting at the left, there is a blue faience figurine, clearly Egyptian and reminiscent of a figure of Osiris, but with animal features borrowed from the iconography of other Egyptian divinities.[15] Like many details in the painting, this is an extremely early example of a kind of imagery that would become more familiar late in the nineteenth century, in this case imagery related to Egyptian mysticism, which would be taken up in the 1890s by secret societies such as the Order of the Golden Dawn, to which W. B. Yeats belonged.[16] One critic of 1869 noted the presence of 'precious little images, such as the benighted heathen make gods of, and often fetch high prices at Christie & Manson's',[17] but none of the critics were able specifically to identify the figurine. Next, moving to the right, are the pulpy leaves of a manuscript, inscribed with runic characters that seem to be indecipherable even with a magnifying glass. Resting on the pages are a spray of poisonous belladonna (deadly nightshade) with shiny black berries and a pair of copulating toads — a startling detail in a Victorian picture. It has been suggested that it was the toads that worried the Hanging Committee in 1868;[18] certainly they make a strange and

aberrant shape, yellow eyes winking at us and scaly limbs twined in convolutions. Next we have the desiccated skeleton of a stingray, a shape so eccentric that it may take the viewer several seconds to read it. Behind it is a small brazier, flaming, with a punctured design featuring a stylized salamander; the design has what may be a Celtic flavour, or perhaps is meant as an example of archaic Mediterranean metalwork. Next again, to the right, is an abalone shell, its iridescent interior catching the reflections of the flames and containing a red liquid that could be wine or blood.[19] Above is the strangest shape of all: the glass beaker in the figure's hand, seemingly distorted and twisted in the blowing process and translucent so that it glows in the firelight; its irregular forms contrast with the smooth flesh of the tapering fingers, each with its rosy fingernail. In shape, the beaker is reminiscent of a Bronze Age rhyton, but it is in glass, not bronze.[20] Thus it irresistibly, though anachronistically, recalls very late nineteenth-century experiments in art-glass, for example by Émile Gallé in France, Christopher Dresser in England or Louis Comfort Tiffany in America. Again the object seems to represent an inexplicably early occurrence of a design type that would not become familiar until decades later.

What is the import of this collection of magic instruments? In the first place, it does not correspond closely to descriptions of the ingredients of Medea's potions in ancient or medieval sources or in Morris's *Life and Death of Jason*. Toads are a fairly standard magic attribute; when the witches make their brew in *Macbeth* a toad is the first ingredient to go into the cauldron.[21] However, the other ingredients in the *Macbeth* witches' brew, again, fail to match those of Sandys, who seems to have invented his own collection of magic instruments. Sandys chose his objects at least partly for the complexity of their shapes and volumes; indeed, the compositional logic of the picture, as we shall see, requires the foreground objects to start into the most vivid three-dimensional immediacy. The light effect is crucial to creating the appearance of volume and is highly distinctive — again it is doubled, something that is beginning to seem characteristic of everything about the picture. Sandys uses the even, diffuse light, from an external source, not strongly directional, that is typical of Rossetti's pictures of this type; but he doubles this with the intense firelight emanating from the brazier *within* the picture and at its centre. This light illuminates the iridescent surfaces of the shell and glows through the translucent glass. It catches the highlights of the spherical berries and the eyes and scales of the toads, which prompted one critic to describe them as 'wearing jewels not only in their heads but all over them' (this is strangely reminiscent, again in anticipation, of the tortoise encrusted with jewels in the quintessential decadent novel of fifteen years later, J.-K. Huysmans's *A Rebours*).[22] The light is reflected, golden, in the folds of the white drapery worn by the figure and catches her exotic jewels: a bracelet made of ancient faience, seals and scarabs; two strings of faience beads and six of coral; and a metalwork headdress of intricate chains and beads, possibly ancient, or possibly Near Eastern or African (the white robe, too, may be an African one which Rossetti mentioned as a recent acquisition in a letter of 1865).[23] Most importantly, though, the firelight illuminates the face from below, a weird effect on which most of the critics of 1869 commented; in the *Godfather* films Marlon Brando's face was consistently lit from below to give a sinister effect. We now tend to see the face

of Medea simply as a late-Pre-Raphaelite beauty, but for contemporary critics the light effect produced a strange amalgam of beauty and horror: 'The blue fire of her chafing-dish lights into weird horror the beautiful lines of her features, pales her cheeks, whitens her lips, glistens in the keen spectra of her eyes'.[24] So wrote the critic for the *Illustrated London News*; the tetchier critic for the *Builder* regretted that 'the light reflected from her nefarious occupation is not a favourable one to regard her in'.[25] Tom Taylor, the critic for *The Times*, noted 'the baleful light of her chafing-dish playing in the folds of her robe, and making the pale cheeks look paler, and the ashy lips more ashy'.[26] F. G. Stephens, one of the original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, now art critic for the *Athenaeum*, wrote:

> [...] she is placed before a burning lamp, which casts its yellow light upon her face and form. Her expression is terrible and horrible, and lies in the withered, ivory-like look of her skin [...] — expression that deepens in force with the observer because of the beauty of the features, which are transformed but not debased.[27]

For these contemporary critics, then, there is something peculiarly disturbing about this figure, something that may be more difficult for us, in the twenty-first century, to discern, since the Rossettian type has become so familiar. However, the critics' comments suggest that it may be worth looking more carefully.

A number of the critics stress the pallor of the figure and particularly the way the magic light changes Medea's complexion. In this respect Sandys may be responding to the textual sources for the legend of Medea: both Apollonius Rhodius and Morris (who closely follows Apollonius for the general outline of the story) emphasize the way Medea's complexion changes with her emotions, her paleness and blushes; and so does Ovid: in *Metamorphoses* VII, for example, when Medea watches Jason battling on the field of Mars — she turns pale, bloodless, and chill.[28] However, in another respect Sandys departs sharply from the textual tradition: the Medeas of Apollonius and Morris are golden-haired, something that particularly in Morris's poem has some narrative importance; the golden hair also, of course, rhymes with the Golden Fleece. Sandys, as we shall see, has another use for gold, but his Medea is raven-haired. Moreover, the figure is a portrait of a particular individual, not a generalized representation of an artist's model. This portrait-like manner of representing a figure had been a salient characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite style since the earliest days; members of the Royal Academy audience who were unaware of the identity of the model would nonetheless have seen the face as a portrait of a specific individual.[29] In artistic circles, though, Sandys's model would have been instantly recognizable: she was called Keomi Gray and her face appears in numerous paintings by Sandys and Rossetti between about 1862 and 1868. Since she appears to have come from Norfolk, also Sandys's home, it is likely that he brought her to London and introduced her to Rossetti's artistic circle.[30] Like other models in this circle, her face is never a 'disappearing schema':[31] her distinctive appearance, and with it an element of her personality, become part of the images for which she posed and she seems also to have been the prototype for the Romany character, called Kiomi, in George Meredith's novel of 1871, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*. It is likely, then, that Keomi Gray was of Romany origin. Her dark complexion is particularly

evident in one of Rossetti's representations of her, as the figure on the right in *The Beloved* of 1865; Rossetti's subject is from the Song of Solomon and he includes an array of varying skin tones, perhaps with allusion to the famous line, 'Nigra sum, sed formosa' (Song of Solomon 1. 5).[32] Perhaps by using a Romany model Sandys is alluding to Medea's barbarian origin, something that is not emphasized in Morris's poetic treatment of the story, but which is important in ancient sources;[33] Ovid's Hypsipyle, for example, calls her 'barbara venefica' and 'barbara paelex', barbarian poisoner and barbarian prostitute; and in the *Metamorphoses* Medea muses on how she will exchange her barbarian origin for the civilized world of Jason.[34] In Sandys's *Medea* the weird light effect turns the dark complexion to pallor and this contributes to the disturbing expressiveness that the critics found in the figure.

The slightly opened mouth, the distracted glance of the eyes and the hand clawing the strings of beads may also have appeared indecorous, or even slightly horrifying, to the critics of 1869, accustomed to more submissive female figures. At this date none of Rossetti's pictures of female figures had appeared at public exhibition and the vivid, close-up presentation of the figure may have appeared startling or even menacing. The figure prompted one critic to a bizarre comparison: 'The artist [...] may have been impressed with the unwonted intensity of expression thrown into heads of Medusa by sculptors of classic epochs, and by Da Vinci and Carravaggio [*sic*] in the middle ages.'[35] This comparison is singular in several respects. In the first place it displaces the myth of Medea in favour of that of Medusa, a more grotesque story, at least visually. The sight of Medusa had the power to turn its observers to stone: the comparison suggests just how strong the impact of the figure was. Moreover, the comparison to Caravaggio is exceptionally unusual in the Victorian period, when Caravaggio's reputation was at its lowest ebb; on the exceedingly rare occasions that his name comes up at all in Victorian art criticism, it is only to deride what is seen as his squalid realism. Yet the critic's comment is acute. Caravaggio's *Medusa* (Figure 7.3) does make a compelling comparison with Sandys's figure: the two images share the opened mouth and the distracted glance to one side. Sandys could not have known the Caravaggio, unless he somehow came across a reproduction or artist's copy; he seems to have travelled abroad only once in his lifetime, and then to the Netherlands, so he never visited the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, where the Caravaggio hangs. By whatever occult means, he has managed, somehow, to recapture something of the intensity of Caravaggio's characterization of the Medusa.

Like both the Caravaggio and Rossetti's female figures, Sandys's figure of Medea starts out of the picture space in vivid, palpable three-dimensionality. However, let us move back into the picture one plane farther. Suddenly we are in a different world, a two-dimensional one: a world of allegory rather than realism, with schematic symbols on a flat gold ground. There is still the same preternatural clarity of delineation, but a wholly different style, one deliberately hieratic, in starkest contrast to the utterly persuasive realism of the foreground area and the figure of Medea herself. The picture is, literally, a 'goldback', the colloquial name given to religious paintings of the very Early Renaissance that place their figures on a ground of gold leaf. The picture type is strongly associated with religious subject matter; in

Fig. 7.3. Caravaggio, *Medusa* (*c.* 1598), oil on canvas on wooden shield, diameter 58 cm

this format Medea appears as a kind of occult version of the Virgin Mary.

Until now, we have seen very little in the picture that can definitely be associated with any of the versions of the mythological story of Medea, with the possible exception of her complexion. All the specific references to the story appear in symbolic form on the gold background. To the left is the Argo, floating on stylized waves like curlicues, with shields arrayed down its sides and huge eyes adorning the prow; these details correspond to Morris's poetic description of the Argo. To the right is the Golden Fleece, a schematic ram's head traced upon it, and hanging on an oak tree, as in Apollonius Rhodius: the depiction of the tree, again, is stylized or 'conceptual', with enormous acorns and leaves, far too big for the trunk and branches, but unmistakably signifying 'oak tree'. Underneath the tree are bushes of magic herbs, again with oversize leaves and flowers, which Swinburne in his review identified as henbane, aconite and nightshade; even the names have allegorical force, as emblems of magic. Just visible in the sky are the constellations, represented in the form of the signs of the Zodiac, that is, another kind of symbol or allegory.

Furthermore, and unexpectedly indeed, a bat flies before a full moon while white cranes wheel over the gold ground; these details seem to have been borrowed from the Japanese prints, screens and textiles that were just beginning to become fashionable in London at this date, after the opening of Japan to trade in the 1850s. On a parapet, apparently of open metalwork and separating the foreground space from the gold background, are Egyptian symbols: scarabs, owls, animal-headed creatures.

The gold background is sumptuous and its details are fascinating, like a secret code that awaits deciphering. Yet it was completely ignored by the art critics of 1869, even though many of them delighted in enumerating the various magical instruments in the foreground. A corollary is that none of these critics discussed the story of Medea. Clearly there is a chicken-and-egg problem here, since all of the overt references to the Medea myth are in the gold background. Were the critics avoiding discussion of the subject matter, from Medea's story, and thus found themselves unable to comment on the background imagery; or were they uncomfortable with the allegorical or conceptual mode of the background and therefore omitted any discussion of the motifs of the Fleece and the Argo? Did they, perhaps, find the background imagery difficult to 'read', since they were so accustomed to more realistic modes of representation?

These questions must be left open for the moment. There is something in the picture that we have not yet considered — something, again, that no critic seems to have noticed: the dragon, whose eyes and tusks can just be discerned in the gloom over the shoulder of Medea on the right and whose tail curls behind her other shoulder. The dragon seems at first to be part of the schematic, two-dimensional background. However, his nearer tusk just brushes against the white linen of Medea's shoulder and the farther one intertwines with strands of her hair. Thus the dragon seems to mediate between the three-dimensional foreground and the two-dimensional background; its position in space is ambiguous, something decidedly odd in a painting so precisely executed in every respect. Moreover, the dragon is also ambiguous in stylistic reference. Previous scholars have compared him to the emaciated, dragon-like Devil in Dürer's engraving of 1513, *Knight, Death, and the Devil*; the work of Dürer was a particular enthusiasm of the early Pre-Raphaelite circle.[36] However, the dragon also has a distinctly Far Eastern appearance. The curling tusks, shaggy eyes and three-clawed foot, as well as the way the dragon coils through the picture space, are strongly reminiscent of numerous examples from Hokusai's *Manga*, the vast drawing manuals that were just beginning to circulate in London at this date, following the first important display of Japanese objects in the International Exhibition at South Kensington in 1862.[37] Thus Sandys conflates a 'Pre-Raphaelite' visual reference with an 'Orientalist' one.

But what is the dragon's role in the picture? Dragons feature several times in the myth of Medea. First, there is the dragon that guards the Golden Fleece and that Medea (or, in some versions, Jason) must overcome by putting it to sleep. Then there are the dragons that draw the airborne chariot which provides Medea with a magical means of escape when she meets insoluble difficulties. It is difficult to decide between these narrative roles for the dragon in Sandys's painting; certainly he is in front of the Fleece, which might indicate that he is guarding it, yet he also

Fig. 7.4. Frederick Sandys, *Morgan le Fay* (1863–64), oil on panel, 61.8 × 47.7 cm; © Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery

seems to be in Medea's space, coiled protectively around her shoulders. Thus he may also read as the dragon that protects and rescues Medea, or even, more generally, as her witch's familiar.

The narrative ambiguity of the dragon leads to a question about the painting as a whole: which episode from the story of Medea does it represent? Recent sources state confidently that Medea is mixing the poison that will imbue the robe of Glauce and point to the red thread that winds twice around the brazier and then encircles the rest of the magic instruments on the parapet; this, it is claimed, is the thread from which Glauce's robe will be woven.[38] This interpretation has perhaps been suggested by analogy with an earlier painting by Sandys, *Morgan le Fay* (Figure 7.4), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1864. In the earlier work, the towering loom and the action of the figure, waving her flame before a decorated robe, make the narrative clear: Morgan le Fay is casting a spell on the robe she will send to King Arthur in an attempt to murder him. Clearly this painting, with its fascinating array of magic instruments, is an important precursor to *Medea*, but does the later painting convey a similar narrative? The red thread might simply represent a magic circle within which Medea mixes her potion. In Theocritus's second Idyll, the

'Pharmaceutria', the sorceress Simaetha directs her maid to '[w]reathe [...] the brazen bowl with crimson fillets of lamb's wool' and compares her potion to Circe's and Medea's.[39] If the red thread around Sandys's brazier recalls this famous passage, the implications are ambiguous: Simaetha's spell is designed either to draw her lover to her or, failing that, to destroy him.

Swinburne, the only contemporary to dwell on the mythological story in his criticism of the picture, associates it with an earlier moment in Medea's story, the time of her first love for Jason. He writes:

> Pale as from poison, with the blood drawn back from her very lips, agonized in face and limbs with the labour and the fierce contention of old love with new, of a daughter's love with a bride's, the fatal figure of Medea pauses a little on the funereal verge of the wood of death, in act to pour a blood-like liquid into the soft opal-coloured hollow of a shell. The future is hard upon her, as a cup of bitter poison set close to her mouth; the furies of Absyrtus, the furies of her children, rise up against her from the unrisen years; her eyes are hungry and helpless, full of a fierce and raging sorrow.[40]

Yet the shifting time frames in this passage, its web of proleptic and retrospective images, cast the scene as an epitome or summary of Medea's entire history; the complex expression of the figure, in Swinburne's interpretation, encompasses both memory and prophecy.

In very general terms, the main scene of Medea mixing her potion corresponds to the scene in Morris's *The Life and Death of Jason* in which Medea mixes her first potion for Jason, the one that will anoint him against the fire-breathing bulls and the earth-born army. However, the details do not correspond closely and perhaps it is important that Sandys is not painting a narrative scene: he is giving us the character of Medea, not her story. In this respect he departs abruptly from the representational tradition for painting Medea, which tends to emphasize stirring points in her story from an externalized point of view. There are numerous striking examples of this kind of approach from artistic milieux close to Sandys. A moody painting of 1838 by Eugène Delacroix, a painter much admired by Rossetti and his friends, shows Medea about to slay her children. In Anselm Feuerbach's painting of 1870 Medea appears with her children and the Nurse from Euripides's *Medea* as a group of mariners prepare the boat that will take her into exile (Figure 7.5). John William Waterhouse's *Jason and Medea* of 1907 presents the interaction between the lovers as Medea prepares a potion for Jason. Most dramatic of all is Herbert James Draper's *The Golden Fleece*, of 1904, where, in a vertiginous composition that places us aboard the tossing Argo, Medea directs a pair of burly Argonauts to throw the boyish white limbs of Absyrtus overboard as the oarsmen strain to pull away from the pursuing ship and Jason rages in the background, attired in a resplendent Golden Fleece.

These are magnificent, dramatic pictures, but Sandys is doing something altogether different. Rather than narrating Medea's story from an external perspective, he attempts to give insight into her complex character, vividly present as she faces us across the parapet. This brings us back, again, to Rossetti and to paintings such as *Lady Lilith* or *The Blue Bower* of 1865, in which the figure faces us over a parapet or shelf, with something of the same intensity as the Sandys.[41] In both cases the full

Fig. 7.5 (above). Anselm Feuerbach, *Abschied der Medea* (1870), oil on canvas, 198 × 395.5 cm, IV 9826, bpk Berlin / Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen — Neue Pinakothek München

Fig. 7.6 (below). Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Dominic* (*c.* 1515), oil on canvas, 63.9 × 49.5 cm; © The National Gallery, London

fleshiness of the figure is relieved against a flat background, although Rossetti's is more consistently realistic, with its pattern of flowers against blue-and-white tiles. The basic formula is drawn from Venetian Renaissance painting, as, for example, in Giovanni Bellini's *St Dominic* of about 1515 (Figure 7.6), which had entered the collection of the South Kensington Museum in 1856 and would certainly have been familiar to both Rossetti and Sandys.[42] Rossetti had been using the composition since 1859, with striking results, and Sandys certainly borrowed it for his *Medea*. However, the borrowing is not passive or inert, for Sandys gives it new meaning when he adapts it to the subject of Medea. He widens the visual contrast between the foreground and background spaces; at the same time he pulls them apart in time, or historical perspective. This, it may be argued, makes a visual parallel to Morris's experiment in historical representation in *The Life and Death of Jason*. We have seen that Sandys's painting does not dramatize Medea's narrative, as Morris does in his poem, but the painter does something more interesting, and more important for the aesthetic moment of the end of the 1860s: he finds a visual equivalent for Morris's exploration of historical distance.

Morris's innovation, in *The Life and Death of Jason*, was to tell a classical story in the style of late-medieval poetry; contemporary critics repeatedly compared his verse to that of Chaucer.[43] The technique reflects his fascination with medieval retellings of ancient myths, but it is not a pastiche or imitation of these. Pater puts this well at the beginning of his review:

> This poetry is neither a mere reproduction of Greek or mediaeval life or poetry, nor a disguised reflex of modern sentiment. [...] Greek poetry, mediaeval or modern poetry, projects above the realities of its time a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or 'earthly paradise.' It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal. Like some strange second flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but must not be confounded with it.[44]

This 'strange second flowering', or doubling of aesthetic and historical distance, is highly artificial, as Pater willingly admits: its artifice, indeed, prevents it from becoming a deceitful illusion, from pretending either to recreate the past 'as it really was' or to collapse the past into the present (what Pater calls 'a disguised reflex of modern sentiment'). Something similar can be said of Sandys's technique, which critics often thought artificial in its very perfection: this is a compelling realism, but it is a realism that constantly reminds us, not of nature, which we tend to see roughly, but of van Eyck or Bellini, who, like Sandys, give us more detail — more *accurate* detail, indeed — than the human eye normally takes in. Thus Sandys's technique, life-like as it is, does not pretend to give us unmediated 'reality'.

Moreover, the composition of the painting distances its content, not just once but twice: first in the leap over the parapet, with its magic instruments, to the figure of Medea; and again, behind her and beyond the Egyptian roundels, to the 'goldback' with its two-dimensional allegories. The mode of the figural representation might be called Renaissance in its volumetric amplitude, but in place of the naturalistic

backdrop of Renaissance paintings like Bellini's *St Dominic* Sandys moves back agai in time to the earlier visual mode of the 'goldback'. Moreover, it is there that we se the traces of the still more ancient myth, of which mere schematic outlines survive Thus Sandys preserves the format of the Rossettian picture in all its essentials, bu he gives it new meaning as a form of historical representation. Interestingly, th critics of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1869 seem to have been unwilling t follow Sandys in this historical experiment. They insisted on seeing the figure o Medea in the present tense, as if she were mixing her potion before their very eye but they were unwilling to venture an opinion on the strange, archaic background Again, only Swinburne was prepared to comment on this: 'Upon the golden groun behind is wrought in allegoric decoration the likeness of the ship Argo, with othe emblems of the tragic things of her life.'[45]

Swinburne's words — 'allegoric', 'likeness', 'emblems' and, most of all, 'decoratio — are of interest. Sandys is juxtaposing a 'fine art' representational mode in th foreground with the conventions of 'decorative art' in the background. The Japanese Chinese and Egyptian elements, too, are associated with the decorative art form of non-European traditions. This doubling of fine and decorative art is reminiscen of the art of the later generation of European Symbolists, for example of Odilo Redon or, especially, of Gustav Klimt. The paintings of Klimt's so-called 'Gol Period' juxtapose fully three-dimensional figures with flat gold elements to creat a new mode of expression for classical or mythological subject matter, as in his *Palla Athene* of 1898 or *Danaë* of a few years later. In *Danaë* the gold decorative element have an emblematic, rather than representational, relation to the shower of gol coins in the mythological story; and perhaps Sandys's gold background can be see similarly: the gold ground not only represents the Golden Fleece emblematically but also becomes the flat 'decorative' background for the whole picture. Sandys *Medea* may well have been better known in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Europe than it is now: it was exhibited in the great Universal Exposition of Paris in 1878 and Rome in 1911, and perhaps on other occasions, so its distinctiv blend of representation and ornament may well have been familiar to Klimt generation. Whether or not there was any direct influence, Sandys in *Medea* an Klimt in his 'Gold Period' paintings are exploring closely similar issues about ho to represent classical antiquity and mythology in modern art.[46] In both cases th 'decorative' gold elements equate to a movement *backwards* in history in the terms c nineteenth-century design theory, or in those of a Hegelian history of art, in whic an abstract or symbolic phase is necessarily antiquated in relation to a humanist an representational phase that must succeed it, in Hegel's relentless progressive logi Klimt and Sandys work against that logic — in the words of Walter Benjamin 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', they regard it as their task to 'brush histor against the grain'.[47]

Walter Pater in 1868, like Walter Benjamin in 1940, was thinking deeply abou the implications of a Hegelian historicism and both writers, while indebted to Heg in important ways, took serious issue with the ideology of progress embedded i Hegel's view of history. Thus Pater praises Morris for the discontinuous, double perspective of his exploration of the past and Benjamin creates his famous imag of the angel of history, whose face is turned towards the past while the stor

'irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned'. 'This storm', Benjamin writes, 'is what we call progress'.[48] For both writers, in their very different historical circumstances, it is equally disastrous to forget the past, or to homogenize it into a bland continuum. Both of them, accordingly, reject 'universal' history in favour of the singular, sharply focussed encounter with something in the past: 'Historicism gives the "eternal" image of the past', Benjamin writes, but 'historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past.'[49] Pater is less abrupt, but he too warns against any facile assimilation of the past into a false universalism: 'In handling a subject of Greek legend', he cautions, 'anything in the way of an actual revival must always be impossible.' We cannot simply obliterate the phases of history that distance us from the object of our contemplation:

> But though it is not possible to repress a single phase of that humanity, which, because we live and move and have our being in the life of humanity, makes us what we are; it is possible to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it [...].[50]

For Benjamin the encounter with the past is 'a shock' that can 'blast open the continuum of history';[51] for Pater it is a matter, instead, of a willed estrangement from the totalizing pressures of the present. For both writers, however, the past becomes fraudulent or authoritarian as soon as it is generalized or assimilated into some universal pattern: it is only in a singular, and precisely formulated, encounter with something from the past that the possibility of revolution, or redemption, may materialize.

Myth is routinely figured as timeless or universalizing and the figure of Medea is all too easily equated with the archetypal *femme fatale*. Morris, in Pater's account, avoids such generalization by relocating the classical story in the anachronistic context of a precisely characterized medieval world; thus Medea becomes, specifically, a medieval witch, whose characteristic epithet, throughout the poem, is 'wise', the word Pater himself picks up to describe her. Sandys ingeniously translates this doubled historical perspective into visual form, juxtaposing the modern 'realism' of the foreground with the archaic 'decorative' mode of the background. His raven-haired Medea, with the features of Keomi Gray, is unmistakeably a modern witch. And yet, with her Japanese dragon, her warped beaker, her faience jewellery and her 'goldback', she also invites us to an encounter with the ancient Medea that is unlike any other: a 'unique experience with the past', in Benjamin's words, that remains unfathomable.

List of Works Mentioned in Text

1. (Fig. 7.1.) Frederick Sandys, *Medea*, 1866–68, oil on wood, 61.2 x 45.6 cm, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery
2. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Wine of Circe*, 1863–69, watercolour and bodycolour, 70 x 101.5 cm, private collection
3. (Fig. 7.2.) Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1866–68, altered 1872–73, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 85.1 cm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington (Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935)
4. Edward Burne-Jones, *Phyllis and Demophoön*, 1870, watercolour and bodycolour, 91.5 x 45.8 cm, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery
5. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on panel, 81.8 x 59.7 cm, National Gallery, London

6. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Beloved*, 1865–66, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 76.2 cm, Tate, London
7. (Fig. 7.3.) Caravaggio, *Medusa*, *c.* 1598, oil on canvas on wooden shield, diameter 58 cm, Uffizi, Florence
8. Albrecht Dürer, *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, 1513, engraving, 24.6 x 19 cm, British Museum, London
9. (Fig. 7.4.) Frederick Sandys, *Morgan le Fay*, 1863–64, oil on panel, 61.8 x 47.7 cm, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery
10. Eugène Delacroix, *Medea*, 1838, oil on canvas, 260 x 165 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille
11. (Fig. 7.5) Anselm Feuerbach, *Abschied der Medea*, 1870, oil on canvas, 198 x 395.5 cm, IV 9826, bpk Berlin / Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen — Neue Pinakothek München
12. John William Waterhouse, *Jason and Medea*, 1907, oil on canvas, 131.4 x 105.4 cm, private collection
13. Herbert Draper, *The Golden Fleece*, 1904, oil on canvas, 155 x 272.5 cm, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford
14. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blue Bower*, 1865, oil on canvas, 84 x 70.9, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, The University of Birmingham
15. (Fig. 7.6.) Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Dominic*, *c.* 1515, oil on canvas, 63.9 x 49.5, National Gallery, London
16. Gustav Klimt, *Pallas Athene*, 1898, oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna
17. Gustav Klimt, *Danaë*, *c.* 1907–08, oil on canvas, 77 x 83 cm, private collection

Notes to Chapter 7

1. I would like to thank Craig Clunas, Catherine David, Bob Fowler, Ronald Hutton, Sally-Anne Huxtable, Anna Jackson, Ian Jenkins, Claire O'Mahony and Judy Rudoe for their invaluable help in deciphering the imagery of Sandys's painting; and Charles Martindale for helping to clarify the argument.
2. Sidney Colvin, *Notes on the Exhibitions of the Royal Academy and Old Water-Colour Society* (London: Macmillan, 1869), p. 22.
3. See Virginia M. Allen, '"One Strangling Golden Hair": Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*', *Art Bulletin*, 66, 2 (June 1984), 285–94.
4. Rossetti's accusation focused on one of Sandys's compositions of *Helen of Troy*; see Betty Elzea, *Frederick Sandys, 1829–1904: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 2001), p. 191 (cat. no. 2.A.103).
5. Elzea, n. 1 on pp. 184–86 (cat. no. 2.A.89).
6. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Morris's Life and Death of Jason', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), pp. 110–22 (p. 119) (first published *Fortnightly Review*, July 1867).
7. Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Under the Microscope* [1872], repr. in *Swinburne Replies*, ed. by Clyde Kenneth Hyder (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 59–60.
8. William Michael Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1868), pp. 25 (Rossetti), 43–44 (Swinburne).
9. Walter Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', *Westminster Review*, n.s. 34 (October 1868), 300–12 (p. 306).
10. See Lawrence F. Schuetz, 'The Suppressed "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* and Pater's Modern Image', *English Literature in Transition*, 17, 4 (1974), 251–58.
11. See Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
12. 'Exhibition of the Royal Academy, Burlington House', *The Times*, 1 May 1869, p. 12 (anonymous review, probably by Tom Taylor). A consistent vocabulary is found throughout the reviews and can refer either to the picture's high finish or to its magical associations (or both); as well as 'uncanny' and 'weirdness', *The Times* uses 'baleful', 'quaint' and 'strange' (repeated twice). Cf. for example 'Royal Academy Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 15 May 1869, p. 506 ('weird', 'quaint', 'strange' repeated three times); Colvin, *Notes*, p. 22 ('baneful', 'sinister'); 'The Royal Academy', *Saturday Review*, 5 June 1869, p. 744 ('abnormal', 'spasmodic').

13. *Illustrated London News*, 15 May 1869, p. 506 (the reference to van Eyck is apropos of a portrait exhibited by Sandys in the same exhibition, in close conjunction with the comparison of *Medea* to the 'early Flemish masters').
14. See Jane Langley, 'Pre-Raphaelites or ante-Dürerites?', *Burlington Magazine*, 137, no. 1109 (August 1995), pp. 501–08; Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), pp. 91–123.
15. Ronald Hutton suggests *per litteras* that the figurine is an artful composite with the ears of Bast, the face of Geb, and the posture of Osiris. I am also grateful to Professor Hutton for identifying the plant on the foreground parapet as belladonna.
16. The dramatic growth of occultism at the end of the nineteenth century has received little attention to date from art historians, although there have been influential recent studies in the areas of intellectual and literary history; see for example Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).
17. 'Royal Academy Exhibition', *Builder*, 29 May 1869, p. 420.
18. Douglas E. Schoenherr, 'The Spectacular Rise — and Sad Decline — of Frederick Sandys', in Elzea, *Frederick Sandys*, pp. 10–32 (p. 18).
19. Colvin, *Notes*, p. 22.
20. I am grateful to Judy Rudoe and Ian Jenkins of the British Museum for their examination of the beaker, for which there appears to be no precise prototype, either classical or more recent. Judy Rudoe suggests that it may have been inspired by German glass beakers with raised elements, or prunts, on the surface, a type much collected at the period, but there is no parallel for the irregular distortion of Sandys's glass.
21. Act IV, scene 1, ll. 6–9.
22. *Builder*, 29 May 1869, p. 420. *A Rebours* was first published in 1884; the tortoise appears in chapter IV.
23. Elzea, *Frederick Sandys*, n. 3 on p. 186. See Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Ford Madox Brown, *c.* September 1865, in *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. by William E. Fredeman, 9 vols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002–10), III, 326–27 (letter 65.132): 'I have also bought 2 very loose African men's woollen robes — very fine — one white embroidered with cream-coloured Silk the other grey with white pattern very slight here & there. Both have very wide hanging sleeves' (p. 327).
24. *Illustrated London News*, 15 May 1869, p. 506.
25. *Builder*, 29 May 1869, p. 420.
26. *The Times*, 1 May 1869, p. 12.
27. 'Royal Academy', *Athenaeum* no. 2168, 15 May 1869, p. 675.
28. 'palluit et subito sine sanguine frigida sedit' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII.136).
29. See Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Model', in *Model and Supermodel: The Artist's Model in British Art and Culture*, ed. by Jane Desmarais, Martin Postle and William Vaughan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 26–46.
30. See Elzea, *Frederick Sandys*, pp. 333–34 (p. 334) (Appendix 17, 'Models used by Sandys').
31. See the important theoretical discussion of the representation of the model, in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn, trans. by W. Glen-Doepel, revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989), pp. 134–59 (p. 145). First published as *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1960).
32. On *The Beloved* see my entry on the painting in Julian Treuherz, Elizabeth Prettejohn and Edwin Becker, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, exhibition catalogue (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers; London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), pp. 190–01 (cat. no. 106); *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art, 1800–1900*, ed. by Jan Marsh, exhibition catalogue (Manchester Art Gallery and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery; Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2005), p. 160 (cat. no. 83).
33. Medea's barbarian character was emphasized in Ernest Legouvé's modern version of Euripides's *Medea*, produced in London with Adelaide Ristori as Medea in 1856 and often revived thereafter (I am indebted to a lecture by Shanyn Fiske for this information). Legouvé's portrayal of Medea,

which might in modern parlance be described as both racist and misogynist, would very likely have been unpalatable to Morris, whose poem perhaps introduces a counter-interpretation of Medea, drawing on Apollonius rather than Euripides.

34. Ovid, *Heroides* VI.19, 81; *Metamorphoses* VII.53–61 ('nempe est mea barbara tellus', l. 53).
35. 'The London Art Season', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 106 (August 1869), 220–39 (p. 224; anonymous review, probably by Joseph Beavington Atkinson).
36. See John Christian, 'Early German Sources for Pre-Raphaelite Designs', *Art Quarterly*, 36 (1973), 56–83.
37. I am grateful to Anna Jackson and Catherine David of the Victoria and Albert Museum for the suggestion, and for searching through numerous volumes in the Museum's collection for comparable dragons by Hokusai; while it has not been possible to identify a specific prototype for Sandys's dragon, which (as Craig Clunas suggests *per litteras*) might also have been derived from a textile, the resemblances are close enough to suggest that Sandys must have been familiar with Japanese representations. Sandys's painting is contemporary with the earliest uses of the *Manga* in French art; see Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13, 27, and passim.
38. See for example the entry on the painting in *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860–1910*, ed. by Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), pp. 161–62 (p. 161) (cat. no. 47). The (generally excellent) catalogue raisonné of 2001, now the standard reference on Sandys, states as fact that Medea is seen poisoning the robe for Glauce, although it does not specifically link this to the red thread; see Elzea, p. 185.
39. Quoted from John Addington Symonds's annotated translation, 'The Second Idyl of Theocritus: "Incantations"', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 49 (April 1891), 545–52 (p. 548).
40. Rossetti and Swinburne, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868*, p. 44.
41. On Rossetti's use of an internalized perspective see Jerome McGann, 'D. G. Rossetti and the Art of the Inner Standing-Point', in *Outsiders Looking In: The Rossettis Then and Now*, ed. by David Clifford and Laurence Roussillon (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 171–87; ibid., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must Be Lost* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2000).
42. See Alastair Grieve, 'Rossetti and the scandal of art for art's sake in the early 1860s', in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, ed. by Elizabeth Prettejohn, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 17–35 (pp. 22–23).
43. See for example the reviews collected in *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Peter Faulkner (London and Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), especially pp. 56–66 (p. 60) (Swinburne; originally in the *Fortnightly Review*, July 1867, viii, 19–28); pp. 66–72 (p. 70) (Charles Eliot Norton; originally in *Nation*, 22 August 1867, v, 146–47); pp. 72–76 (p. 73) (Henry James: 'If Mr. Morris's poem may be said to remind us of the manner of any other writer, it is simply of that of Chaucer; and to resemble Chaucer is a great safeguard against resembling Swinburne'; originally in *North American Review*, October 1867, cvi, 688–92).
44. Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', p. 300.
45. Rossetti and Swinburne, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868*, p. 44.
46. See Lisa Florman, 'Gustav Klimt and the Precedent of Ancient Greece', *Art Bulletin*, 72, 2 (1990), 310–26.
47. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. by Harry Zohn, ed. and intro. by Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973), pp. 255–66. (p. 259). First published as *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961).
48. Ibid., pp. 259–60.
49. Ibid., p. 264.
50. Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', p. 307.
51. Benjamin, 'Theses', p. 264.

Unbinding Medea

Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Classical Myth from Antiquity to the 21st Century

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