

The Pre-Raphaelites and the Imperfections of Goethe's Gretchen

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Overview

In Pre-Raphaelite art Goethe's Gretchen is a manifestation of:

- Tension between ideal vs. real
- Overlap of *Faust* and the Bible
- Human flaws

Key Findings

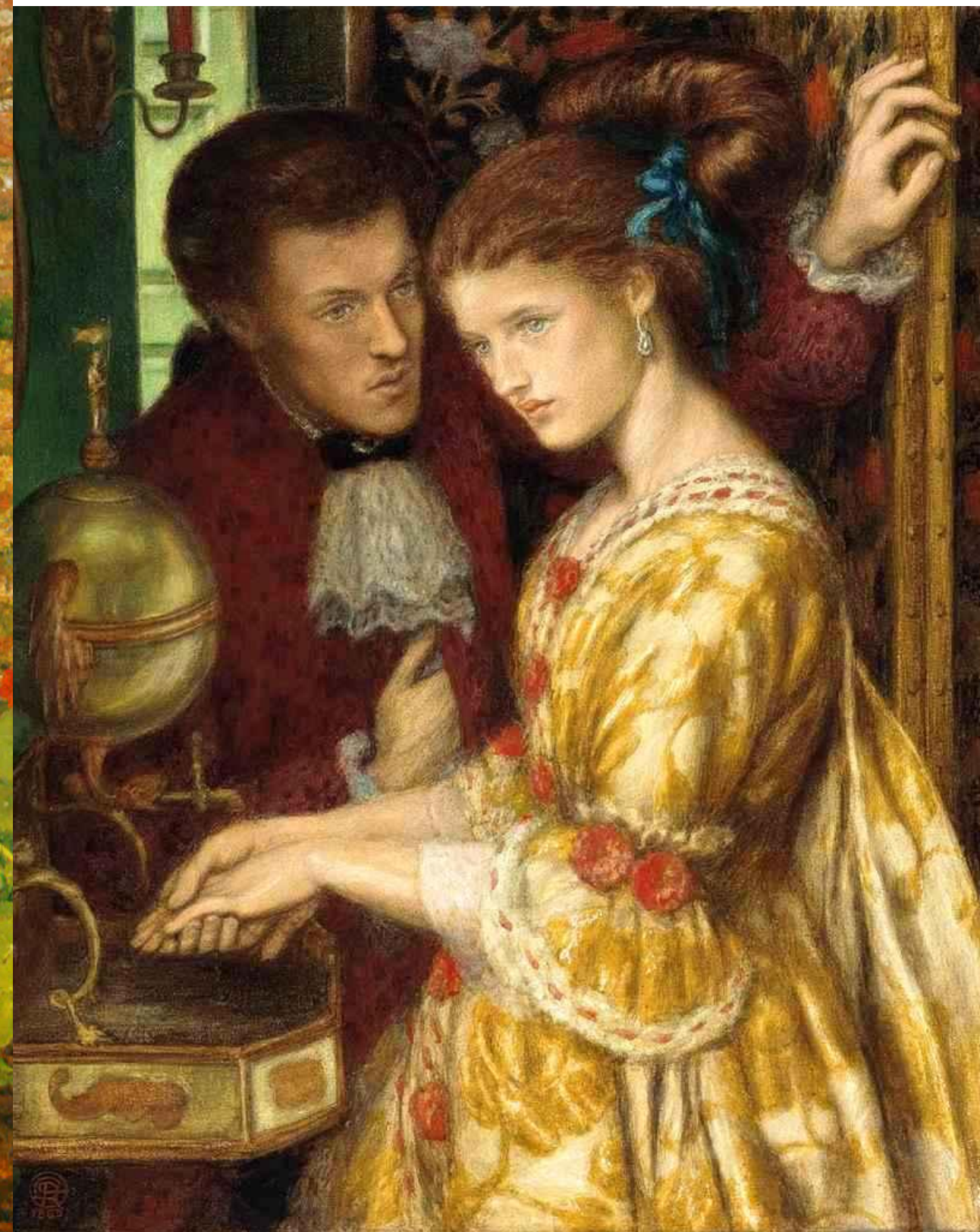
- The PRB identifies with Gretchen
- She is a symbol of religious pursuit and the flaws of human nature
- Gretchen is the key to the PRB



Burne-Jones, Hope, 1862



Millais, State of Soul, 1852



Rossetti, Washing Hands, 1865

Explanation

Inspired by a fusion of religious piety and literature, the Pre-Raphaelites identified with Gretchen's human flaws and quickly became infatuated with her virtue and tragedy. Her story can be found in the imagery of many Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

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