

Master Drawings

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Nineteenth-century Britain

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“The Interesting and Difficult Medium”: The Silverpoint Revival in Nineteenth-century Britain

STACEY SELL

The British silverpoint revival of the nineteenth century produced some of the most fascinating drawings of the period and profoundly affected the way we view the medium today.¹ Some of the pre-eminent artists of the time, including Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) and William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), experimented with silverpoint. Many of these artists, inspired by the Victorian wave of enthusiasm for Quattrocento art, looked to Italian Renaissance drawings for inspiration: from its function as a common drawing material in the fifteenth century, silverpoint had fallen out of widespread use. The resurgence of interest in the medium, almost entirely a British phenomenon, took place roughly over the second half of the nineteenth century. In the final decades of the century, artists and critics alike began to shape a new view of silverpoint. The most important figures of this second phase of the revival, P. G. Hamerton (1834–1894) and Charles Prosper Sainton (1861–1914), are hardly household names today. Nevertheless, their techniques, their preferences, and even their biases continue to influence twenty-first-century ideas about silverpoint.

To make a mark with a silverpoint, a draftsman must first coat the paper with a ground, traditionally made of materials such as powdered bone or white lead mixed with a binder. When the artist draws on this slightly abrasive surface with a silver stylus, a small amount of silver is deposited on this ground, leaving a gray line that later oxidizes to a warmer shade, often a golden

brown. Artists throughout history have drawn with a variety of metals, including lead, brass, and gold, and the difficulty of distinguishing between these with the naked eye demands the use of the more generic term “metalpoint” as the correct way to describe a drawing whose composition is unknown.² During most of the nineteenth century, however, silver was the main metal used for these drawings, and artists generally referred to both their metalpoints and those of their Renaissance predecessors as “silverpoints.” For this reason, I have here retained their term and have used “silverpoint” and “silverpoint revival” more generally than is dictated by modern usage.

Nineteenth-century London offered unprecedented opportunities for the study of Renaissance drawings, a development crucial to the silverpoint revival. The British Museum, of course, acquired major collections of Renaissance drawings throughout the century, mounting the first public display of its Old Master drawings in 1858.³ In addition to this and subsequent well-attended London exhibitions, many of the artists of the silverpoint revival traveled to Italy, where they saw some of the Uffizi’s most important Quattrocento drawings on permanent display after 1867.⁴ A surprising variety of photographs of Renaissance drawings was also readily available, as witnessed by Burne-Jones’s photograph collection, which included images of drawings in collections from all over Europe.⁵ In the 1840s, new translations of the treatises of Cennino Cennini (*c.* 1370–*c.* 1440)



Figure 1
WILLIAM DYCE
Figure Study
London, British
Museum

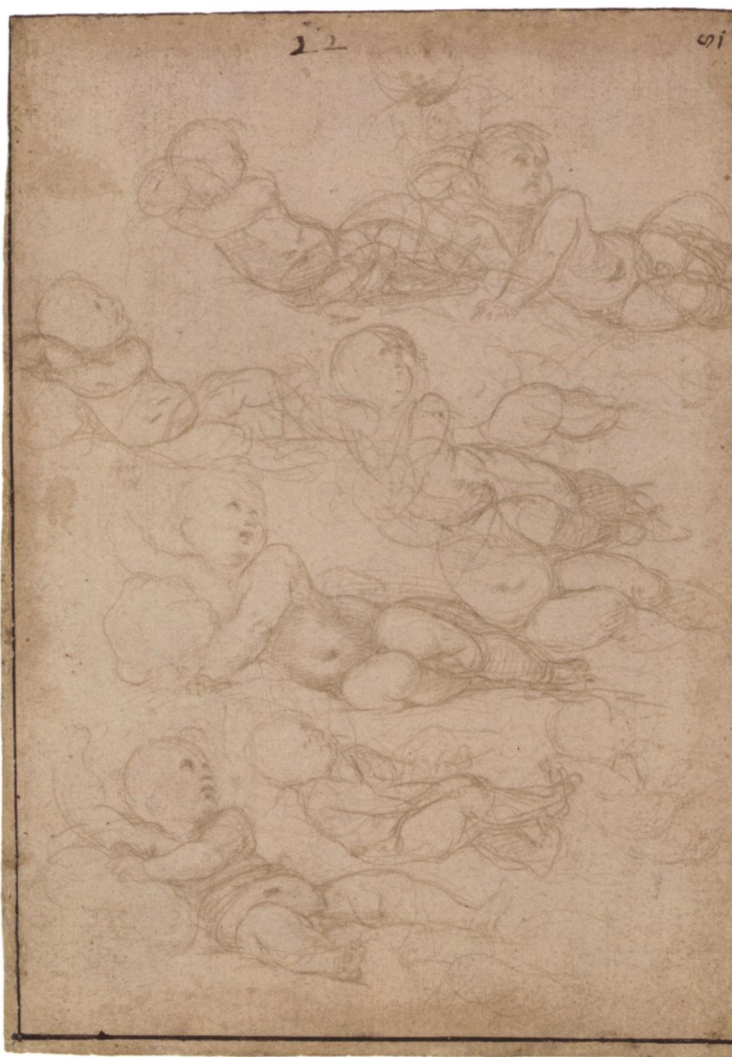


Figure 2
WILLIAM DYCE
Study of a Woman
Turned in Profile
to the Right
London, British
Museum

and Jehan Le Begue (1368–after 1431) provided instruction for British artists interested in trying metalpoint, a technique by this time unfamiliar even to some serious art scholars.⁶

William Dyce (1806–1864) was one of the earliest Victorian artists to experiment with metalpoint. He dated one of his metalpoints 1845, the *Figure Study* now in the British Museum (Fig. 1),⁷ which is also signed with the artist’s monogram. This rough sketch on lavender-gray prepared paper must have been one of the first metalpoints drawn after Cennini’s treatise became widely available in Britain in 1844. Given Dyce’s serious scholarly interest in historic techniques and materials, he must have been aware of the treatise. Three other figure studies, one also in the British Museum (Fig. 2),⁸ and two in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London⁹—all so similar to the 1845 work that they must date from about the same time—indicate that Dyce had a specific type of metalpoint drawing in mind when he experimented with the medium. All are simple, rough sketches, made with a rather blunt-tipped instrument on hand-grounded paper. The ground colors fall within the range of dusty roses and mauves, and all are freely applied, leaving obvious brushmarks. One of the V&A sheets, the *Seated Female Figure*, bears traces of white heightening.

One of the most striking similarities of Dyce’s drawings to their Renaissance counterparts is the idiosyncratic color range of the grounds. Dyce likely chose the muted pinks and grayed lilacs of these drawings because they found favor with Italian artists, especially Raphael (1483–1520) and Filippino Lippi (c. 1457–1504). Dyce certainly had access to drawings by such artists, though sometimes under different attributions, both in private collections and in the British Museum.¹⁰ At about the time that he made these drawings, Dyce immersed himself in the study of pigment and color in Italian frescoes: one of the foremost painters of the fresco revival in England, he traveled in September 1845 to Italy to study the subject.¹¹ Dyce could have drawn on this knowledge to use traditional colorants in his grounds. Moreover, the ground of the Victoria & Albert



Museum’s *Rear View of a Woman* bears traces of burnishing marks on the ground.¹² Dyce’s use of this technique strongly suggests that he was aware of Cennini’s advice to burnish the ground, as the marks on Renaissance drawings are not readily apparent to the casual observer. The spontaneous, almost sloppy application of the ground was probably inspired by similar brushwork on some Quattrocento drawings, while the general roughness and informality of these four drawings recall similar sketches by Italian Renaissance artists. Dyce certainly knew, for instance, the sheet from Raphael’s “Pink Sketchbook” filled with quick studies of the Infant Christ, which was already in the British Museum (Fig. 3).¹³ While Dyce may

Figure 3
RAPHAEL
Studies of the
Infant Christ
London, British
Museum

Figure 4

WILLIAM DYCE

Madonna and
Child

Edinburgh, Scottish
National Gallery



not have emulated any specific Italian draftsman, his general concept of silverpoint's purpose stemmed from his familiarity with Renaissance sketches of this type. His casual approach to the medium relates far more closely to the work of these draftsmen than to the reverent attitude of artists later in his own century. He also emulated Italian metalpoint draftsmanship in more specific ways, varying the lines both by applying more pressure to the stylus or by using a broader or narrower tip, and setting off his figures with parallel hatching in the background.

Dyce continued to make metalpoint drawings for at least a few more years. His *Virgin and Child*

of 1848, now in the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh (Fig. 4),¹⁴ is a more fully realized study, with a more advanced integration of metalpoint lines and white heightening than that of his earlier attempts. In its monumental composition as well as its technique, this drawing clearly reflects Dyce's study of Raphael.¹⁵ Dyce also may have used silverpoint mixed with graphite in a number of preparatory drawings for paintings around 1860.¹⁶

At least one other British artist was already experimenting with metalpoint around the same time. Like Dyce, the painter George Frederick Watts (1817–1904) was deeply influenced by Italian art and harbored a lifelong interest in

Renaissance techniques and materials. He surely knew of Renaissance precedents when he chose to use metalpoint sketchbooks around 1850.¹⁷ His friend Lucie, Lady Duff Gordon (1821–1869) imagined the young Raphael using just such a sketchbook in a story published in 1849: “Presently, Raphael drew from his pocket a book made of hard, coloured paper, and the blunted silver point which he had inherited from his father, in order to take a slight sketch....”¹⁸ Similarly, Watts’s wife described her husband’s habitual use of a metalpoint sketchbook:

*To be always at hand, he carried in his pocket a small notebook of indelible paper with a metal point in the sheath, and when his eye fell on any particularly beautiful arrangement in posture or line he would call out, with a gesture of his hand, “Oh, pray, stay where you are for a moment,” and the notebook was taken out to receive a monumental outline on the tiny page. These drawings, perhaps the least well known of his artistic expressions, may be placed, I venture to say, beside his greatest.*¹⁹

Watts may have shared her opinion, because he bequeathed seven of these sketches to the Royal Academy, London (e.g., Fig. 5),²⁰ while several intact “metallic” sketchbooks survive at the Watts Gallery, Guildford.²¹ In many of the drawings, the lines vary slightly in color from a warm gray to almost brown, suggesting that Watts tried out more than one type of metal and may have experimented with silver.

Metalpoint sketchbooks and notebooks, valued at some periods of history for their erasability and at times other for their indelibility, had a long history and played an important role in the silverpoint revival of the nineteenth century.²² Early in the nineteenth century, “metallic pencils” were valued for their permanence and were associated mainly with memorandum books or for technical use by astronomers, architects, or telegraph captains, though the term was also sometimes used to describe silverpoints.²³ During the first half of the nineteenth century, indelible notebooks or “metallic memorandum books” became widely available commercially. A number of firms adver-



tized aggressively in books and newspapers, boasting mainly of the indelibility of their products.²⁴ Henry Penny’s popular metallic notebooks were considered innovative enough to appear in the Great Exhibition of 1851.²⁵ Most of these small pads of commercially prepared paper came equipped with a stylus made mainly of lead.²⁶ The gray lines made with the stylus were very similar to graphite marks in appearance, but were permanent when made on the prepared paper. They resisted the fading that plagued some nineteenth-century inks as well as the smudging and transfer to the facing sheet typical of graphite.²⁷

Figure 5

GEORGE
FREDERICK
WATTS

Study of a Seated
Woman, Possibly
Lady Dalrymple

London, Royal
Academy of Arts

Figure 6

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

Study for the
Graham Piano

London, Victoria &
Albert Museum



Manufacturers marketed their indelible notebooks in particular to travelers, who would have valued the permanence of metalpoint as well as its convenience over bottled ink. Among the many artists who found indelible notebooks practical for travel was Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–1896), who used a metallic notebook, now in the Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, to make notes and sketches on a trip to Italy in the early 1870s.²⁸ A similar notebook, its date and manufacture unknown, survives in the collection of the Royal Academy of Arts, complete with its original metal stylus.²⁹ Like many artists, Leighton may have found these small pocket-sized books useful without necessarily viewing them as successors to Leonardo's metalpoint sketchbooks.³⁰ William Holman Hunt and Edward Burne-Jones also both used metallic notebooks. Like Watts, they experimented with metals other than the customary lead stylus, demonstrating their understanding that the notebooks worked on the same principle as the Renaissance silverpoint sketchbook. Hunt made dozens of little metalpoint sketches, beginning in 1869 with a rough *Study of a Gondola*, one of several metalpoint sketches originally part of four volumes in the Ashmolean

Museum, Oxford.³¹ Executed on prepared paper, these uniformly-sized sheets almost certainly came from a small metallic notebook, but the golden-brown color of most of the lines suggests that he used silverpoint rather than the usual metallic pencil. Like his friend Dyce, Hunt harbored a lifelong obsession with materials and an encyclopedic knowledge of Old Master techniques, and we can assume that his choice of stylus was deliberate. He was thoroughly familiar with Cennini's and Leonardo's treatises and certainly would have been well aware of the long history of the metalpoint sketchbook. As friends who often consulted about artistic materials, Burne-Jones and Hunt doubtless discussed their common interest in metalpoint.³² Like Hunt, Burne-Jones evidently experimented with silver in commercial metallic sketchbooks: one such notebook, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, contains drawings made with both a metallic pencil and a blunt instrument probably made of silver (e.g., Fig. 6).³³

Hunt and Burne-Jones, both extremely avid draftsmen, did not confine themselves to the use of silverpoint in sketchbooks: they used it for more finished drawings as well. At least some of Hunt's more thoroughly-worked silverpoints

Figure 7

WILLIAM
HOLMAN HUNT

Study of Edith
Holman Hunt

*Birmingham, AL,
Birmingham
Museum of Art*



originated in a larger-format sketchbook, which remained partially intact after the artist's death.³⁴ All of the known drawings in this format depict Hunt's wife and children, often signed with Hunt's monogram, dated, and/or labeled with the sitter's name. These studies of his family, all on white ground, range from quick sketches to highly finished portraits.³⁵ He left no record of his reasons for his choice of medium in these portraits,

but he must have viewed them as particularly successful: not only did he keep a group of three framed and hanging in his home, but he also chose to exhibit six of them several times over the remainder of his life.³⁶ Hunt often used family members as models, and several of these portraits also functioned as preparatory studies for paintings or prints: his drawing of his wife, now in the Birmingham Museum of Art (Fig. 7),³⁷ served as a



Figure 8

WILLIAM
HOLMAN HUNT

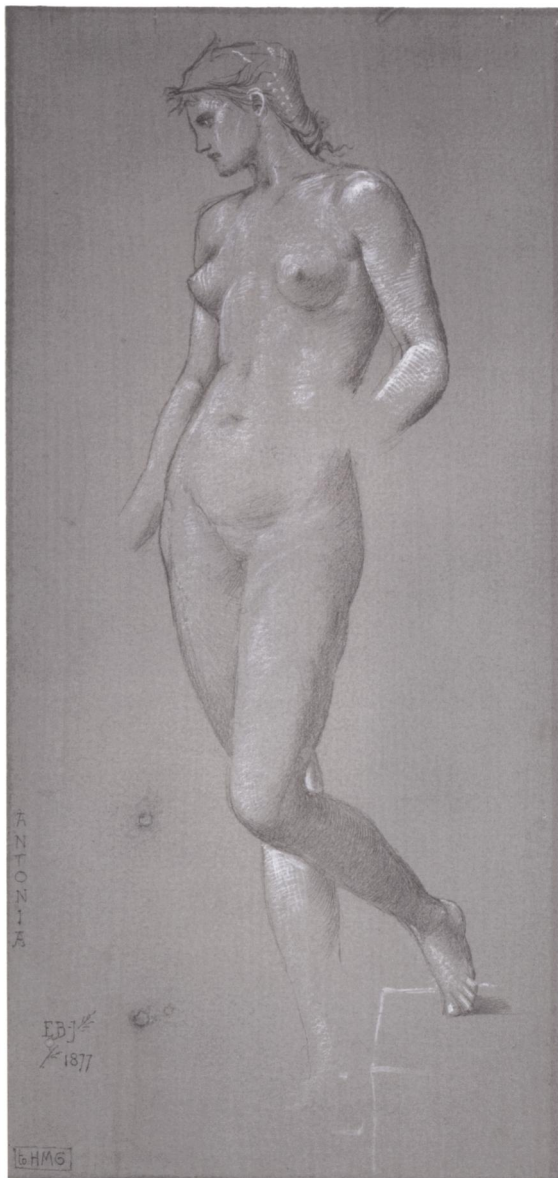
The Father's
Leave-taking

Hartford, Wadsworth
Atheneum

served as a study for the Virgin in his painting of the *Triumph of the Innocents*, now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.³⁸ Hunt also used silverpoint in a large, highly finished figure study in the British Museum³⁹ for the figure of St. Joseph in the same painting. The artist's choice of medium for this purpose is intriguing, given the extensive changes he made to his preparatory studies. He could erase only by disturbing the ground, with either moisture or scraping. At times, as in his study in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford (Fig. 8),⁴⁰ for the etching *The Father's Leave-taking*,⁴¹ he scraped away large areas of silverpoint and ground, leaving obvious *pentimenti*. In many of these studies, he used metalpoint combined with graphite. He may have had both aesthetic and practical reasons for mingling the two media, using graphite to create darker accents than he could achieve with silverpoint and to make corrections on spots where the silver would no longer mark the disturbed ground. The color difference between the two media, of course, would have been far less noticeable before the silverpoint lines oxidized to brown. Hunt viewed these as practical working

drawings, a far cry from the rarified objects that silverpoints would become later in the century. In his approach to the medium, though not, perhaps, in the appearance of the drawings, he placed himself squarely in the tradition of his Renaissance predecessors.

Burne-Jones also used silverpoint in preparatory studies in the mid-to-late 1870s, but his drawings are more clearly inspired by Quattrocento examples. The most famous of these, a *Nude Study of Antonia Caiva* now in the Ashmolean Museum (Fig. 9),⁴² for his painting of the *Golden Stairs* in Tate Britain, London,⁴³ is one of a group of metalpoint figure studies made around the mid-1870s. Nearly twenty years later, he presented this drawing to Helen Mary ("May") Gaskell (1859–1940). At that time, he wrote her a letter, offering a rare glimpse into the difficulties of obtaining silverpoint supplies in the 1870s: "I am so glad you liked the silverpoint on the grey ground heightened with white—I drew it with a sixpence made into a sharp point, and I might have been put in prison for defacing(?) the currency—& I laid the grey ground, too."⁴⁴ Burne-Jones may have grown frustrated with the



lack of contrast between the silverpoint lines and the dark gray ground, because he apparently worked over some areas with graphite or black chalk.

In its use of silverpoint on a carefully laid, opaque tinted ground, heightened with opaque white, *Antonia* resembles any of a large number of Quattrocento drawings that Burne-Jones could have studied during this period, the height of his interest in Italian Renaissance art. He made repeated visits to the British Museum, where he would have seen many relevant drawings, such as the *Studies for a Resurrection* by Raffaellino del

Garbo (c. 1466–1524), acquired in 1824 (Fig. 10),⁴⁵ and he could have seen drawings on display in the Uffizi, as well as in private collections in London. *Antonia* also recalls the Renaissance tradition in its function as a nude study of a single figure in a multi-figured composition. Burne-Jones made several other similar figure studies. A second study for the *Golden Stairs*, this one in the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto,⁴⁶ features a brown ground and more extensive white heightening. Two sketches in private collections for the *Passing of Venus* (c. 1876),⁴⁷ are both on gray grounds.⁴⁸ In both drawings, the fine, brownish lines suggestive of silverpoint are visible in background hatching and the figures themselves. As in the *Antonia*, these passages appear to be mingled with a black medium and heightened with opaque white. After this flurry of activity, Burne-Jones appears to have put aside his sharpened sixpence for a time.

Despite the growth of interest in Renaissance drawings during the 1870s, little evidence exists of a corresponding rise in the use of silverpoint. The successful painter William Blake Richmond (1842–



Figure 9
EDWARD BURNE-JONES
Nude Study of
Antonia Caiva
Oxford, Ashmolean
Museum

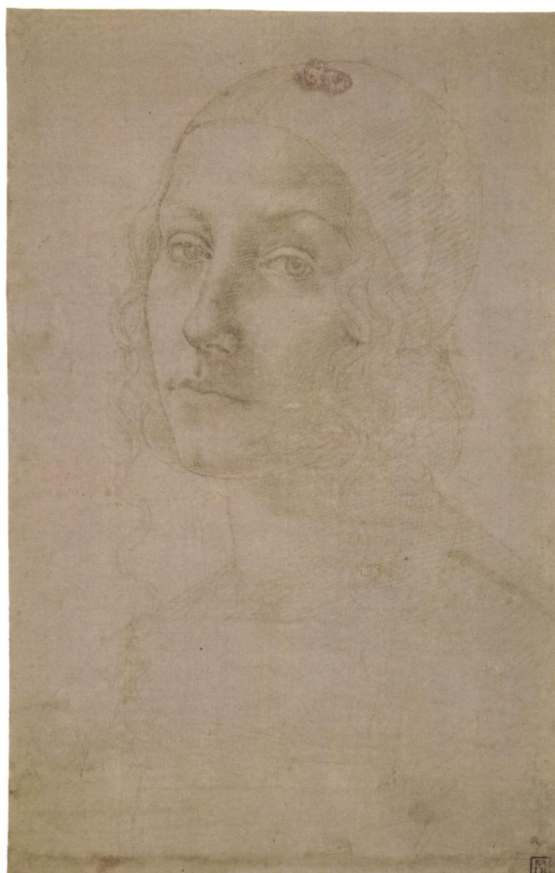
Figure 10
RAFFAELLINO
DEL GARBO
Studies for a
Resurrection
London, British
Museum

Figure 11

PIETRO
PERUGINO

Head and
Shoulders of a
Young Woman
Wearing a Cap

London, British
Museum



1921), another Victorian artist who sought inspiration in the Italian Renaissance, was one of the only artists to exhibit silverpoints during that decade. His drawings attracted mostly positive attention, though few are traceable today.⁴⁹

The 1880s, however, proved crucial to the development of the revival. In 1882, the artist and writer P. G. Hamerton published his groundbreaking book *The Graphic Arts*. Hamerton's central thesis—his assertion that artistic materials and techniques profoundly affect the appearance of finished prints and drawings—was as influential as the more practical information he offered. His chapter on silverpoint included the most complete discussion of the medium since Cennini. Hamerton spoke from experience: according to his wife, he learned to use every medium described in *The Graphic Arts*.⁵⁰ Although silverpoint tools were not widely available commercially in 1881, Hamerton suggested a more workable solution than cutting down a sixpence, describing a silverpoint as “a little rod of

pure silver” set into a wooden holder, much like an etching needle.⁵¹ The paper should be slightly rough, but not coarsely grained, and stretched as for a watercolor. A light layer of opaque white would serve as ground, if it were “laid evenly and rapidly with a broad camel-hair brush,” but the “old masters amused themselves by preparing papers with the most various tints,” and the modern draftsman might do the same.⁵² Rather than dwelling on the difficulties or limitations of silverpoint, he noted that the artist could achieve a variety of lines by using styluses of varying sharpness, or by turning the point, and praised silver's ability to maintain a fine point without constant sharpening.⁵³

In Hamerton's view, silverpoint's best qualities were its “exquisite clearness and delicacy.”⁵⁴ He did not, however, mention its indelibility, probably the quality most readily associated with the medium from the late nineteenth century to this day. Silverpoint's main drawbacks, its uniformity of line and limited tonal range, could be turned to strengths in the right hands.⁵⁵ Silverpoint was best used by “a very refined and sure draughtsman” able to convey forms through linear means. As for the artist who relied too heavily on chiaroscuro to convey form, there was, according to Hamerton, “no discipline better calculated to correct this error than the study of silver-point.”⁵⁶ Here, he was the first to introduce a concept that would have baffled Cennini: the idea that silverpoint was suited to a specific type of artist, who could cope with and even learn from its restrictions. This idea took hold and continued to influence not only Hamerton's contemporaries, but also their successors well into the following century.⁵⁷

Hamerton did not discuss any nineteenth-century drawings, but his descriptions of Old Master silverpoints reveal that he, too, had a specific type of drawing in mind as an ideal. Although during the Renaissance artists sometimes supplemented silverpoint with wash, ink, or chalk, Hamerton generally regretted this choice unless it was carried out with extreme delicacy.⁵⁸ In general, he was most impressed by drawings like a portrait in the British Museum (Fig. 11),⁵⁹ then attributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494), but now

Figure 12

FREDERIC
LEIGHTON

Head of Dorothy
Dene

London, Royal
Borough of
Kensington and
Chelsea, Leighton
House Museum



given to Pietro Perugino (c. 1450–1523), which was “delicately shaded in diagonal lines.”⁶⁰ These examples relied on the limited pale tones and the thin, clear line of the silver alone to convey form. The drawings he illustrated, a profile then attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)⁶¹ and a

head by Frederic Leighton, the *Head of Dorothy Dene* now in the collection of Leighton House, London (Fig. 12),⁶² conform to this preference. From this time onward, this type of drawing increasingly came to typify the silverpoint in the nineteenth-century British mind.

The Leighton drawing that Hamerton reproduced presents an interesting problem in its own right. It is currently catalogued as a graphite drawing rather than a silverpoint, but there is no question that this is the drawing reproduced in *The Graphic Arts*: not only does it match the published drawing line for line, including signature and date, but the calculations in the margins reflect the dimensions of the published reproduction. The drawing nevertheless bears no sign of the ground necessary, as Hamerton well knew, for silver to leave a mark on the paper. The gray color of the lines also argues against the use of silver, though only technical analysis can provide a definitive identification of medium. This is especially puzzling given the importance Hamerton assigned to this drawing: he commissioned it especially for the book and went to extraordinary lengths to reproduce it properly.⁶³ His letters reveal that he was willing to postpone publication of the entire volume in order to wait for a good reproduction of Leighton's drawing, which he had announced in early publicity materials for the book.⁶⁴ His earnestness in this endeavor and the level of frustration expressed in his letters leave no question that he believed the drawing was a silverpoint, but it seems unlikely that Leighton knowingly misrepresented a graphite drawing to Hamerton. The entire episode remains one of the most perplexing chapters of the silverpoint revival.

Whatever the medium, the study published in *The Graphic Arts* received a great deal of attention and helped to establish Leighton's reputation as a silverpoint draftsman, a distinction he retains to this day.⁶⁵ His precise role in the revival, however, remains elusive. In her biography of Leighton, his friend and fellow artist Emilie Barrington (1841–1933) mentioned “exquisite drawings of flowers and leaves which he made in pencil and silver point between the years 1852 and 1860;” she also recalled him making silverpoint sketches of the Umbrian landscape in the 1870s.⁶⁶ Leighton's most famous “silverpoint” was the *Lemon Tree* of 1859, now in a private collection.⁶⁷ Admired by John Ruskin (1819–1900) and exhibited multiple times during the artist's lifetime, the

drawing was almost invariably described as in graphite until after Leighton's death in 1896—and is still regarded as such.⁶⁸ He does not, in fact, seem to have exhibited silverpoints at any point in his career, so his reputation as a silverpoint artist seems to have been founded mainly on the basis of the *Head of Dorothy Dene*.

The major silverpoint exponent to emerge from the 1880s was Alphonse Legros (1837–1911), a French painter, etcher, and medalist who moved permanently to England in 1863. Most of his metalpoints are undated, but he evidently began working with silverpoint sometime in the early-to-mid 1880s.⁶⁹ He exhibited groups of silverpoint drawings at the New Gallery, London, in 1888 and 1889 to general critical approval. By 1891, one critic had declared him “without a rival at the present time” in his accomplishments as a silverpoint artist.⁷⁰ Legros left little indication what he hoped to achieve in his metalpoint drawings, but Charles Holroyd (1861–1917), one of his most faithful pupils, recalled that his teacher's metalpoint style was based on the “head studies of Lorenzo di Credi and the pupils of Verrocchio.”⁷¹ Indeed, as seen in the *Head of a Man Looking up to the Right* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (Fig. 13),⁷² Legros' distinctive diagonal hatching resembles the Leonardesque modeling that Hamerton so admired. Like many of his Renaissance predecessors, Legros also reinforced the main contours of his metalpoint drawings, bearing down harder on the point and drawing over the same line several times.

In other ways, however, Legros made unexpected choices for an artist steeped in the past. Although he sometimes prepared his own laid paper, more often than not he chose slick, commercially prepared paper. This smooth, even card gives his drawings a distinctive appearance: the point glided over the surface, depositing only a very fine, thin layer of metal. This emphasizes certain qualities of metalpoint, most notably the delicacy and pale uniformity of the lines. In addition to this innovation, Legros used goldpoint as well as silverpoint. Renaissance artists very occasionally drew with gold,⁷³ but there is little evi-



Figure 13

ALPHONSE
LEGROS

Head of a Man
Looking up to the
Right

Washington, DC,
National Gallery of
Art

dence that Legros or his fellow artists knew that this had been attempted before, and some of his contemporaries credited him with its invention. He may have adopted goldpoint for aesthetic reasons, which were largely lost on his audience, as one critic recounts:

The gentleman in charge at the Legros exhibition in Albemarle Street asked me, the other day, if I could tell

him the difference between a drawing in gold point and a drawing in silver point. Several visitors had inquired, he said, and he had had to confess that he could not tell them. The distinction is a fine one and of such recent discovery that no one need be ashamed of not knowing it. Professor Legros himself was the first to employ the gold point, and he told me that he had adopted it because he found that drawings he made with it did not oxidise on coming in contact with the atmosphere, as



Figure 14

CHARLES
PROSPER
SAINTON

Ballerina

London, Victoria &
Albert Museum

*some of those did which he had made in silver point. So far as I can see, the quality of the line is identical.*⁷⁴

Legros's innovations profoundly influenced his contemporaries' views on silverpoint. He exhibited his metalpoints widely from the 1880s until his death. He often submitted a group of silver or goldpoints to a single exhibition, where they usually attracted positive attention.⁷⁵ The vast major-

ity of his metalpoints were portraits or head studies, though he also made a number of drawings after Old Master art, including figures from the Parthenon frieze and from the Sistine Ceiling, and figure studies from the live model.⁷⁶ His ethereal portraits, on their smooth supports, represented for many people the pinnacle of achievement in metalpoint and influenced for decades artists' ideas about how the medium should be used.

In addition to exhibiting his own drawings, Legros shaped the nineteenth-century view of metalpoint through his teaching activities at the Slade School, where he became a professor in 1876. His adoption of silverpoint in the first place was certainly an outgrowth of his desire to impart Renaissance traditions to his pupils. In fact, Holroyd noted, "It is verily the traditions of this school of Verrocchio, from which Leonardo and many of the most intellectual of the Florentine masters proceeded, that Legros taught so consistently during the seventeen years of his professorship at the Slade School."⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Holroyd remarked, "He made students draw in the manner of Leonardo and Raphael, a manner that was ridiculed as 'Slade Shading'; it was much older than the Slade."⁷⁸ The web of diagonal shading so characteristic of Legros's own silver- and goldpoints certainly reappeared in the drawings of his pupils, not only during their student days but sometimes, as in the case of the painter-printmaker William Strang (1859–1921), for many years after they moved on to pursue their own careers.

The work of Legros and Hamerton prepared the way for the 1890s, the height of the silverpoint revival in Britain. It was from this point that awareness of the medium flooded popular culture for the next few decades: references to silverpoint appeared not only in art journals but also in general interest magazines and fiction, where the medium often served as a metaphor for refinement and cultivation.⁷⁹ By the end of the century, Frederick Wedmore (1844–1921) could grumpily describe silverpoint as "the interesting and difficult medium, the employment of which threatens to become a label of the cultivated."⁸⁰ Alexandra, Princess of Wales (1844–1925), growing increas-

ingly deaf, consoled herself by learning to make silverpoint drawings.⁸¹ She was not alone in her efforts: armed with instructions from sources such as *The Girl's Own Paper*, amateurs purchased silverpoint kits, instruments, and specially prepared paper from Winsor and Newton and Charles Roberson & Co.⁸² Affairs reached such an alarming state that one critic grumbled that silverpoint was “now often absurdly misapplied by the beginner, in whose hands so delicate a weapon must needs be a weapon of offence.”⁸³ As the decade progressed, artists and critics repeatedly stressed the difficulty, delicacy, and inflexibility of the medium, surrounding a material once valued for its practicality with a mystique that it still retains.

The key figure in this transition was Charles Prosper Sainton, a minor pupil of Alphonse Legros. Almost forgotten today, this one-man publicity machine began exhibiting silverpoints in the late 1880s,⁸⁴ but the success of his 1892 exhibition *The Ballet and Fancy Subjects* made him a public figure. Shown at the Burlington Gallery, London, the drawings attracted the attention of the Prince and Princess of Wales, who purchased some of Sainton's work.⁸⁵ Soon Sainton was selling reproductions of his drawings, which depicted not only ballerinas (e.g., Fig. 14),⁸⁶ but a wide variety of female nudes such as floating nymphs (e.g., Fig. 15),⁸⁷ allegorical figures, and fairies. He became such a household name, and his reproductions so widely distributed, that he even made a (misspelled) appearance in a comic poem:

*With silver-point Stantons in airy attire
The walls of the bath-room will cheerfully smile.*⁸⁸

In the wave of publicity, silverpoint emerged as a material very different from the stylus used for Dyce's rough sketches less than fifty years earlier, let alone the Quattrocento working drawings that inspired them. Sainton repeatedly emphasized the difficulty of silverpoint, noting, for example, that changes were

impossible, as the surface of the paper forbids any alteration. If, for example, a wet hand should touch the



*paper, the line drawn by the silver-point becomes broken and loses its charm, and should any erasure be attempted, the chalk surface is removed and the silver-point will no longer mark...the most difficult thing in silver-point is to get the half-tints and gradations from the light to the dark; any over-pressure, however light, being unalterable, and only disguised by all the drawing being worked up to the tone of this accident.*⁸⁹

Indeed, silverpoint could be not only demanding but even dangerous: at the height of his pop-

Figure 15

CHARLES
PROSPER
SAINTON

The Stars

London, Victoria &
Albert Museum

ularity in 1894, Sinton announced that he was retiring as a silverpoint artist, finding the medium “too trying for his eyes.”⁹⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly, he recovered a short time later. A profile of the artist in 1897 elaborated on the difficulties he suffered in pursuit of his art: “So exhausting, however, is the mere mechanical labor of point work, that the freedom and ease of water colour are absolutely necessary for rest, and it would be impossible for any artist, however gifted, to give his sole attention to the former study.”⁹¹ The stress of working in silverpoint contributed to his exhaustion. The same article, noting the permanence of every line, described “the frightful anxiety felt by the artist when the greater part of an elaborate drawing is completed and he fears by a false irreparable stroke to spoil it all. So great is the anxious tension at such a moment that absolute and undisturbed quiet, and even artificial means of steadying hand and nerve, must be adopted lest failure should ensue.”⁹² He claimed he made multiple failed attempts for each successful drawing.⁹³

Sinton reportedly used a magnifying glass to carry out his daintiest work. Although he noted that a dull point or the flat side of a silverpoint could make a broad mark, the artist disdained this method. Instead, he built up his shadows from a network of lines—“each line laid against its fellow so closely as to resemble engravers’ hatching and to need a powerful glass under which to work”—a method he repeatedly brought to the public’s attention.⁹⁴ His technique of working without contour was also a source of pride. Despite his emphasis on the nerve-racking permanence of silverpoint, Sinton made changes and fixed errors in his drawings, carefully scraping away excess medium to create highlights or soften areas that had grown too dark, as witnessed by the two metalpoints at the Victoria & Albert Museum reproduced here as Figures 14 and 15.⁹⁵ The naturally limited range of tones possible with metalpoint was further reduced by Sinton’s use of slick, commercially-coated paper: as in the drawings of Legros, this resulted in a particularly fine and pale line. Sinton, like Legros, sometimes turned to goldpoint, though again this experimentation was

greeted with confusion by his audience, who variously noted its “deeper purple,” “purplish or greenish shade,” or “greenish yellow hue.”⁹⁶

Despite their lack of appeal to twenty-first-century eyes, Sinton’s silverpoints proved highly influential in Britain and later America, where the artist eventually died.⁹⁷ The delicacy of his technique struck a chord with the taste for the hyper-refined that characterized the final years of the Aesthetic Movement. Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851–1938) was among the Americans to adapt and improve on Sinton’s refined mesh of hatching, producing over a dozen evanescent silverpoint portraits of women (e.g., Fig. 16).⁹⁸ By the turn of the century, silverpoint was considered effeminate, an ideal medium for the depiction of women and children in particular.⁹⁹ Sinton himself encouraged the view of silverpoint as a feminine medium, exhibiting his ballerinas in white frames on walls “hung with a gauzy pink material.”¹⁰⁰

Perhaps encouraged by public enthusiasm but certainly overshadowed by Sinton, other artists continued to make silverpoints during the last years of the century. After abandoning the medium for some time, Burne-Jones apparently returned to it in the late 1880s or 1890s: reviewers mention silverpoints among the drawings he exhibited on at least three different occasions.¹⁰¹ He also purchased two silverpoints and a sketchbook of prepared paper from Roberson in 1892.¹⁰² Few, if any, of these drawings are known today. Possibly many remain in private collections: the popular fascination with silverpoint made the drawings appealing gifts from artists, treasured as heirlooms for decades afterwards.¹⁰³ Alternatively, the number of silverpoints made by Burne-Jones may have been exaggerated by his contemporaries, who could easily have mistaken his delicate graphite drawings for silverpoints: the pale gray lines of his hard pencil closely approach the gray strokes of an unoxidized silverpoint, and his Leonardesque manner of parallel hatching would have enhanced the effect.¹⁰⁴ To further compound the confusion, exhibition catalogues of the time often did not list medium. In any case, though his name was linked with silverpoint many times near

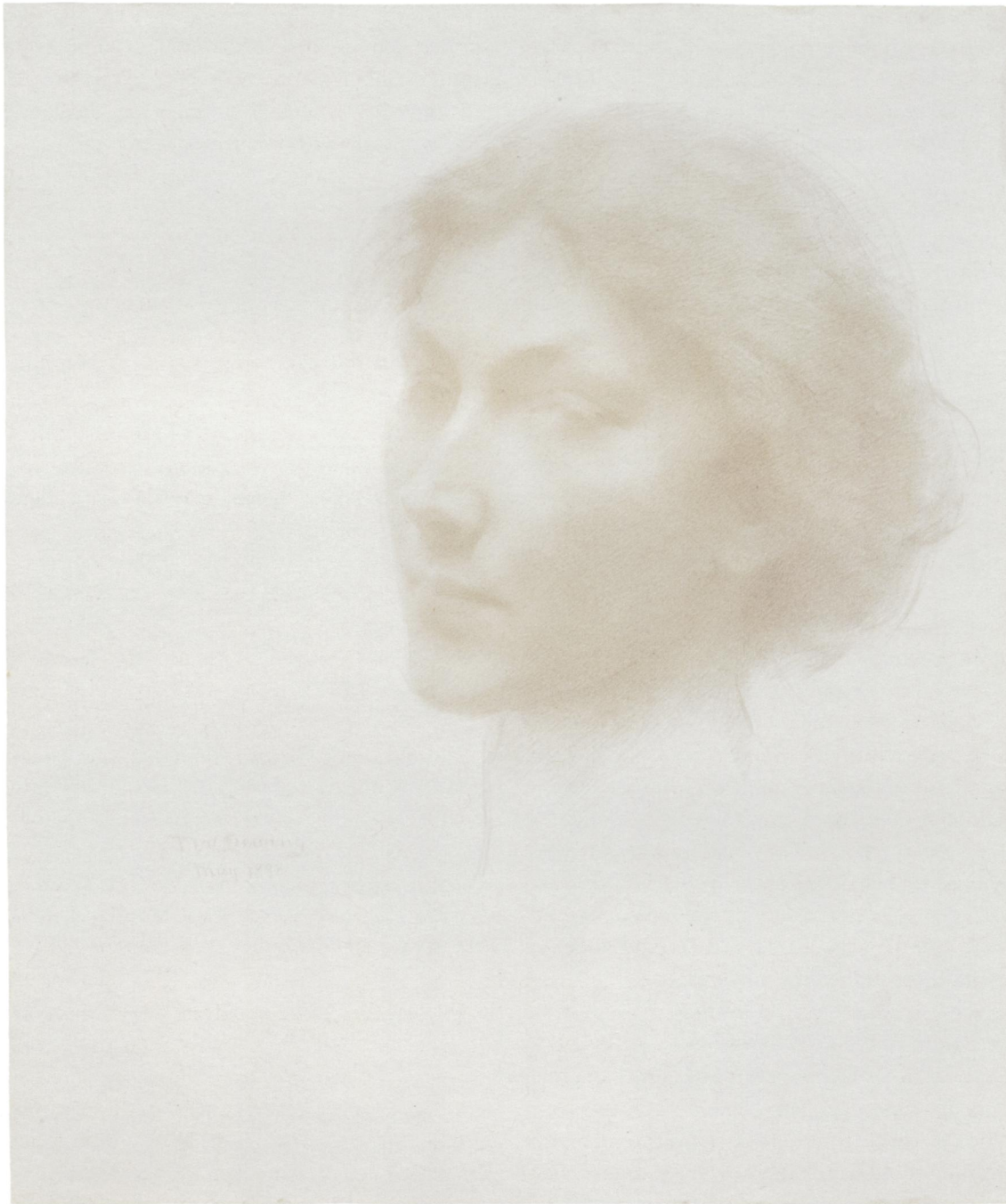


Figure 16

THOMAS
WILMER DEWING

Study of a Head

Washington, DC,
Smithsonian
Institution, Freer
Gallery of
Art/Arthur M.
Sackler Gallery

the end of his life and for years afterwards, the only Burne-Jones silverpoints known today are the examples from the 1870s. These few studies, with their complex mixture of media, can hardly have been terribly influential in the revival. Hunt returned to silverpoint with a spectacular drawing made c. 1890 as a book illustration: *Pearl*, an elab-

orate silverpoint recently on the London art market,¹⁰⁵ appears to have been an isolated case. Although Hunt exhibited and published the drawing, no artists followed suit with similar uses of the medium.

Legros's pupils, such as Charles Holroyd and William Strang, and their own students maintained

the metalpoint tradition at the Slade School, retaining as well his reliance on the manner of Leonardo and his circle.¹⁰⁶ Outside the Slade, some artists were apparently attracted by the element of craftsmanship inherent in the medium: Joseph Southall (1861–1944), for instance, is known mainly for his pioneering role in the revival of tempera, but he also made a number of silver- and goldpoint drawings. His painstaking research into the techniques of traditional tempera painting demonstrates the thoroughness with which he also approached his metalpoints.¹⁰⁷ The little-known painter Alfred Fahey (*fl.* 1902–9) found silver- and goldpoint the perfect vehicles for recording his impressions of vanishing ancient architecture, both for their delicacy and for their associations with northern Renaissance art.¹⁰⁸

The most enduring development of the 1890s, however, was the powerful hold silverpoint had taken on the popular imagination. Its reputation as an unforgivingly indelible and demanding medium, capable only of the most delicate effects, has become the standard lens through which we often view metalpoints from every era. These are the aspects of the medium that remain foremost in the minds of art historians, from the undergraduate to the curator, and have colored modern perceptions of metalpoint. When we marvel at the boldness of Filippino Lippi's spontaneous silverpoint drawings, or suggest that Hendrik Goltzius (1558–1617) pushed the medium to its limits with his virtuoso sketches, we are thinking about the metalpoint in a way that Old Master artists themselves did not. Over a century after his death, long after his fairy drawings have disappeared from notice, Charles Sainton and his contemporaries continue to influence the way art historians view silverpoint.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I would like to thank Margaret Morgan Grasselli, Jonathan Bober, Carmen Bambach, Greg Jecmen, and especially Kimberly Schenck for their help and encouragement with this article.

NOTES

1. For earlier accounts of the British silverpoint revival, see James Watrous, *The Craft of Old-Master Drawings*, Madison, WI, 1957, p. 8; Bruce Weber, *The Fine Line: Drawing with Silver in America*, exh. cat., West Palm Beach, FL, Norton Gallery and School of Art, and elsewhere, 1985, p. 27, n. 8; and Douglas E. Schoenherr, *British Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada*, exh. cat., Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, and elsewhere, 2005, pp. 152–53. Thea Burns, *The Luminous Trace: Drawing and Writing in Metalpoint*, London (forthcoming in February 2013), will also contain a section on the nineteenth-century revival.
2. It is important to note that only technical analysis can determine for certain the composition of any metalpoint drawing.
3. See William Hookham Carpenter, *A Guide to the Drawings and Prints Exhibited to the Public in the King's Library*, exh. cat., London, British Museum, 1858. For an overview of the Victorian interest in Renaissance drawings, see Colin Cruise, *Pre-Raphaelite Drawing*, London, 2011, pp. 187–92. This enthusiasm extended to northern as well as Italian drawings: a major exhibition of Old Master drawings held at the Grosvenor Gallery, London, included many northern as well as Italian metalpoint drawings; see J. Comyns Carr, *Winter Exhibition (1877–1878) of Drawings by the Old Masters, and Water-Colour Drawings by Deceased Artists of the British School*, exh. cat., London, Grosvenor Gallery, 1877, esp. p. xxviii.
4. See Maria Elena de Luca, “History of the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi,” in Hugo Chapman and Marzia Faietti, *Fra Angelico to Leonardo: Italian Renaissance Drawings*, exh. cat., London, British Museum, and Florence, Uffizi, 2010–11, p. 83.
5. One volume of Burne-Jones's photograph collection was entirely devoted to Italian Renaissance drawings, including examples from the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the Biblioteca Reale, Turin, purchased from suppliers such as Alinari and Charles Marville. The albums are now part of the collection of University College, London.
6. The anonymous author of a review of the first Italian edition of Cennini's *Trattato della pittura* (see “Cennino Cennini's Treatise on Painting,” *New Monthly Magazine*, 10, July–December 1825, p. 567) appears never to have heard of a metalpoint drawing, despite an impressive familiarity with other treatises and artistic practices.

- Listing the drawing media described by Cennini, he marveled, “some of these are curious: a style of silver, or of copper with a silver point, is recommended to draw with on wooden tables prepared with calcined bones.” For the first English translations of important texts on metalpoint, see Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, *A Treatise on Painting Written by Cennino Cennini*, London, 1844, and eadem, *Original Treatises, Dating from the XIIth to XVIIIth Centuries in the Arts of Painting*, 2 vols., London, 1849, vol. 1, p. 274. Most of the artists discussed in this article were proficient in Italian and other languages, but the new translations undoubtedly increased awareness of the early treatises.
7. Inv. no. 1889,0724.73. Metalpoint on lavender-gray prepared paper, 119 x 165 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org.
 8. Inv. no. 1889,0724.74. Metalpoint on rose prepared paper, 147 x 110 mm; see *ibid.*
 9. Inv. nos. 4334 (*Seated Female Figure*; metalpoint, with white heightening, on rose prepared paper; 116 x 116 mm) and 4375 (*Rear View of a Woman*; metalpoint on pink prepared paper; 152 x 50 mm).
 10. For instance, Dyce was well acquainted with the collection of Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830), who owned a metalpoint sketch by Filippino on lavender-gray ground in the British Museum (inv. no. 1860,0616.64; 237 x 177 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org). The British Museum already owned similar works, such as Filippino’s *Head of a Woman* (inv. no. T,13.18; metalpoint, heightened with white, on mauve-gray prepared paper; diam.: 70 mm; see *ibid.*). Dyce himself owned at least one Renaissance metalpoint sketch, the anonymous *Head of a Child*, also now in the British Museum (inv. no. 1895,0915.625; metalpoint on gray prepared paper; 107 x 89 mm; see *ibid.*).
 11. See William Dyce, “Observations on Fresco-painting,” *Sixth Report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts*, London, 1846, appendix IV; and Marcia Pointon, *William Dyce (1806–1864): A Critical Biography*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 89–91 and 101–4.
 12. I would like to thank Kimberly Schenck for pointing out the burnishing.
 13. Inv. no. Pp,1.72. Metalpoint on pale pink prepared paper; 167 x 119 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org. This drawing arrived at the British Museum in 1824 as part of the Payne Knight Bequest.
 14. Inv. no. D 4097. Metalpoint, with white heightening, on pink prepared paper; 216 x 194 mm; see Pointon 1979, fig. 94.
 15. The bravura zigzags of white gouache defining the folds of the Virgin’s sleeve, for instance, appear in similar drawings by Raphael.
 16. See Pointon 1979, p. 208.
 17. Watts made more finished metalpoint drawings as well; see, for instance, the *Portrait of Virginia Pattle*, now in the Watts Gallery, Guildford (inv. no. COMWG2007.701; metalpoint and graphite?; 230 x 165 mm; see G. F. Watts *Portraits: Fame and Beauty in Victorian Society*, exh. cat., London, National Portrait Gallery, 2004, no. 19, repr. [in color]). This drawing was described as a silverpoint by Watts’s wife (see Mary Seton Watts, *George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist’s Life*, 3 vols., London, 1912, vol. 1, p. 123). He may have made several other silverpoints around this time (see *Exhibition of Works by the Late George Frederick Watts*, exh. cat., London, Royal Academy, 1905, nos. 113, 115, and 122 [dated 1889]).
 18. See Lady Duff Gordon, “The Apprenticeship of Raphael Santi of Urbino,” *Bentley’s Miscellany*, 19, 1849, p. 474.
 19. See Watts 1912, vol. 1, p. 157.
 20. Inv. no. 02/1059. Metalpoint on prepared paper; 128 x 84 mm; see www.racollection.org.uk. The others, ranging in size from 76 x 116 mm to 134 x 84 mm, are inv. nos. 02/1060–03/1063. PHOTOGRAPH: John Hammond.
 21. At the Watts Gallery, see especially the Halicarnassus Sketchbook (inv. no. 2007.204; metalpoint on prepared paper; 95 x 155 mm). I would like to thank Mark Bills, Curator at the Watts Gallery, for his thoughts on these notebooks.
 22. See Peter Stallybrass *et al.*, “Hamlet’s Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55, no. 4, 2004, pp. 379–419; and H. R. Woudhuysen, “Writing-tables and Table-books,” *Electronic British Library Journal*, 2004, article 3 (see www.bl.uk/ebj/2004articles/article3.html). In the sixteenth century, metalpoint notebooks were valued for their erasability: the artist or writer could pass a wet finger or brush over the notations, removing the marks along with a thin layer of ground. Nineteenth-century art historians knew of a number of artists, including Dürer and Holbein, who used metalpoint sketchbooks (see, for example, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Handbook of Painting: The German, Flemish, and Dutch Schools*, Eng. trans. by Franz Kugler, London, 1860, p. 202, and Moriz Thausing, *Dürer: His Life and Works*, Eng. trans and ed. by Fred A. Eaton, 2 vols., London, 1882, vol. 2, p. 175; for Leonardo da Vinci [1452–1519], see Carlo Amoretti, ed., *Trattato della pittura di Lionardo da Vinci*, Milan, 1804, pp. 57 and 137).
 23. For example, the author of an article in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Arts*, 27, 1809, advised captains of telegraph stations to use “a velvet paper book, or journal, and a metallic pencil, to take down signals; these are much to be preferred to pen and ink, as the writing cannot be effaced, and one pencil will serve 12 months.” For Leonardo’s drawings in “metallic pencil,” see Henry

- Revelery, *Notices Illustrative of the Drawings and Sketches of Some of the Most Distinguished Masters in all the Principal Schools of Design*, London, 1820, p. 2.
24. One advertisement in the *Morning Post* for 8 December 1858 went well beyond claims of practicality: "Messr. DeLaRue's Diaries for the new year really deserve to be classified among the elegancies of highly civilized life. What between their lustrous and indelible paper, their blue and red typography, their rich gildings, their satin linings, and their bindings of Russia leather, which emit a delicate perfume, these beautiful manuals are quite gratifying to the senses." Other popular companies manufacturing metallic notebooks include Schlesinger & Co., T. J. and J. Smith, and Harwood.
 25. See Royal Commission for the Great Exhibition, *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, London, 1851, p. 539. Penny's metallic books took pride of place beside other recent breakthroughs in modern stationery, including gummed envelopes.
 26. The lead was normally combined with bismuth and sometimes tin (see Louis Edgar Andés, *The Treatment of Paper for Special Purposes*, Eng. trans. by Charles Salter, London, 1907, p. 197, and Thomas Gill, ed., *The Technical Repository*, 11 vols., London, 1822, vol. 1, p. 349).
 27. See *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 352.
 28. Inv. no. 1946.35.1–62. Metalpoint on prepared paper; 72 x 123 mm. Among the other artists to carry the notebooks on trips were Frederick Goodall (1822–1904; see his Harwood metallic notebook used on an Egyptian voyage of 1870 in the British Museum [inv. no. 1911,1116.1.1–77]) and Henry Wallis (1830–1916), whose Henry Penny notebook of 1869, containing nudes and British landscapes, is in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (MS. Eng. E. 3414).
 29. Inv. no. LEI/29; 06/2955. Metalpoint on prepared paper; 133 x 88 mm. Leighton used this notebook more locally, filling it with lists of Old Master paintings and artists' names, reminders to himself about tasks such as seeing to an injured horse, and sketches of birds. He seems to have used a metalpoint stylus for most of his notes and sketches in both this and the Fogg sketchbook, though some pages display smudging or shinier, grayer lines that might indicate that he sometimes switched to graphite.
 30. Among the other artists to use metalpoint notebooks as sketchbooks were Walter Crane (1845–1915; see the example of 1865 in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, inv. no. Typ 8300.65) and Edward William Godwin (1833–1886; by whom there are two surviving examples in the V&A, inv. nos. E. 232–1963 and E.255–1963, along with many other Godwin sketchbooks in the same collection).
 31. Inv. nos. 2007.6–10 (acquired from the Pollitt Collection). Silverpoint(?) on prepared paper; 113 x 152 mm; see Bronkhurst 2006, no. P14. Hunt acknowledged elsewhere that he used silverpoint, identifying the medium in one of the drawings he reproduced in his memoirs (see William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols., London, 1906, vol. 2, p. 323). For Hunt's relationship with Dyce, see Poynton 1979, esp. pp. 142–54.
 32. See Frank C. Sharp, "Crossing the Generation Gap: The Relationship of William Holman Hunt with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris," *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 100, 1994, pp. 25–33.
 33. Inv. no. E.7–1955. Leadpoint and silverpoint(?) on prepared paper; 101 x 178 mm. A second metallic notebook, also at the V&A (inv. no. E.9–1955; metalpoint and graphite?) on prepared paper; 102 x 172), datable by the contents to the 1880s, contains only drawings in various shades of gray, suggesting that Burne-Jones used the sketchbook's metallic pencil, possibly in combination with graphite.
 34. See Bronkhurst 2006, no. L130 (as location unknown).
 35. See *ibid.*, nos. D325, D329, D334, D335, L109, L110, L120, and L125, repr. (all in private collections; likely silverpoint on prepared paper; c. 250 x 200 mm). Bronkhurst 2006, no. L121, repr., *The Infant Gladys Holman Hunt Seated at a Piano*, is now in the Delaware Art Museum (inv. no. DAM 1982-62; silverpoint on prepared paper, 254 x 200 mm).
 36. An anonymous reviewer disapproved of the portraits, commenting that the silverpoints "exhibit his peculiar affectations and his most narrow views of draughtsmanship" (see "The Society of Painters in Water Colours, Winter Exhibition: First Notice," *The Athenaeum*, no. 3397, 3 December 1892, p. 786). Hunt also chose a number of the portraits to illustrate *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*; see, for example, the portraits of Edith, Cyril, and Gladys (Bronkhurst 2006, nos. D331, 329 and L110, described in Note 35 above.).
 37. Inv. no. 2007.89. Silverpoint on prepared paper; 255 x 197 mm; see *ibid.*, no. D331. See also *One Touch of Nature* (Bronkhurst 2006, no. 342, repr.); although Bronkhurst described this drawing as pen, pencil, and wash, it was identified as a silverpoint with touches of graphite when it sold at Bonham's, London, 1 March 2011, lot 102, repr. (in color).
 38. Inv. no. 2115 (oil on canvas; 157.5 x 247.7 cm); see Bronkhurst 2006, no. 126.
 39. Inv. no. 1927,0312.2. Silverpoint and graphite on prepared paper; 478 x 297 mm; see *ibid.*, no. D320; and www.britishmuseum.org. Although Hunt reproduced a number of his silverpoints in his memoirs, this is the only

- one that he identified by medium (see Note 31).
40. Inv. no. 1989.23. Silverpoint and graphite on prepared paper; 200 x 254 mm; see Bronkhurst 2006, no. D336. PHOTOGRAPH: Art Resource, New York.
 41. Etching; 185 x 250 mm; see *ibid.*, no. App. B-26, repr.
 42. Inv. no. 1939.15. Silverpoint and graphite(?), with white heightening, on gray prepared paper; 325 x 159 mm; see Stephen Wildman and John Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, exh. cat., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and elsewhere, 1998–99, no. 110, repr. PHOTOGRAPH: Art Archive of Art Resource, New York.
 43. Inv. no. N04005 (oil on canvas; 2.69 x 1.17 m); see *ibid.*, no. 109, repr. (in color).
 44. London, British Library, Add MS 54217, letter dated (by Gaskell?) January 1893. If Burne-Jones had not left this account, *Antonia* would likely have escaped notice as a silverpoint. The medium, perhaps partly because the ground is a dark gray, appears black rather than the golden brown more characteristic of an oxidized silverpoint line. On close inspection, some passages, such as the head, do appear warmer in color than others, such as the dedication to Gaskell added twenty years later, which is probably in graphite.
 45. Inv. no. Pp,1.32. Silverpoint, with white heightening over stylus indentations, on gray prepared paper; 378 x 255 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org.
 46. Inv. no. AGOID 71135. Silverpoint(?), with white heightening, on brown prepared paper; 252 x 150 mm; see Katherine A. Lochnan *et al.*, *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections*, exh. cat., Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1993, no. A38, repr. (in color). I would like to thank Douglas Schoenherr for his thoughts on Burne-Jones's metalpoints from this period.
 47. For the long and complicated history of this composition and its many versions, see New York and elsewhere 1998–99, p. 236.
 48. Both were exhibited in *Ottawa Collects Edward Burne-Jones*, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 2010. I would like to thank John Collins, formerly assistant curator, and Geoffrey Morrow, paper conservator, for their observations on these drawings.
 49. A portrait of the artist's son Phil, of c. 1875, now in a private collection (305 x 229 mm), was recently published as a silverpoint (see Christofer Conrad *et al.*, *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise*, exh. cat., Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie, and Bern, Kunstmuseum, 2009–10, no. 16, repr.), though it was described as a pencil drawing when it sold at auction several years ago (sale, New York, Sotheby's, 26 October 2004, lot 120, repr. [in color]).
 50. See, for instance, "The Grosvenor Gallery," *The Builder*, 41, 10 January 1880, pp. 32–33, which praises at length the "beauty and delicacy" of Richmond's silverpoints. He exhibited another group of silverpoints in 1889 ("An Artists' Exhibition," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 November 1889, p. 2). A metalpoint *Study of a Nude*, dated 1875, (metalpoint on gray prepared paper; 254 x 191 mm.) was in the collection of Julius Held and sold at Christie's, New York, 30 January 2009, lot 298, repr. (in color). Metalpoint sketches survive in the British Museum (*Study of a Female Figure*, inv. no. 1921,0409.7, probably silverpoint on prepared paper, 252 x 151 mm; and *Study of Hands*, inv. no. 1921,0409.8, probably silverpoint on prepared paper, 202 x 189 mm; for both, see www.britishmuseum.org) and a small sketchbook from 1872–73 in the Royal Academy (inv. no. 10/2274, silverpoint[?] on prepared paper; 100 x 177 mm), but the more elaborate studies described in exhibition reviews are unlocated; see also Simon Reynolds, *William Blake Richmond: An Artist's Life (1842–1921)*, London, 1995, pp. 352–53 and 363.
 51. See Eugenie Hamerton and Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *Philip Gilbert Hamerton: Autobiography (1834–1858) and a Memoir by His Wife (1858–1894)*, London, 1897, p. 47.
 52. See Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *The Graphic Arts: A Treatise on the Varieties of Drawing, Painting, and Engraving*, New York, 1882, p. 93.
 53. See Hamerton 1882, pp. 94–95.
 54. See *ibid.*, p. 96.
 55. See *ibid.*, p. 93.
 56. See *ibid.*, p. 96: "There is no more lovely drawing in the world than that of some thoroughly accomplished master when he is confined to pale tones, because he gets relief and projection by delicate skill and not by main force."
 57. See *ibid.*, pp. 97–98.
 58. See, for example, Joseph Stella's statement that he used metalpoint to help him avoid "careless facility" (quoted in Irma B. Jaffe, *Joseph Stella*, Cambridge, MA, 1970, p. 91).
 59. Inv. no. Pp,1.26. Metalpoint on gray prepared paper; 377 x 242 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org.
 60. Hamerton 1882, p. 95.
 61. The "Leonardo" drawing, the *Head of a Youth Crowned with Oak Leaves*, is in the Louvre, Paris (inv. no. 2251; metalpoint, with wash, on gray prepared paper; 184 x 123; see <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr>), where it is now attributed to Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (1466/67–1516).
 62. Inv. no. LHO/D/1039. Graphite; 228 x 174 mm; see Charlotte Gere *et al.*, *A Victorian Master: Drawings by Frederic, Lord Leighton*, exh. cat., London, Leighton House

- Museum, and elsewhere, 2006–8, no. 52, repr. (in color). I would like to thank Philippa Martin, Daniel Robbins (Senior Curator at Leighton House Museum), and Kimberly Schenck for their thoughts on this drawing.
63. By 1881, Leighton was working almost entirely in black and white chalk, as an unsigned article in *Portfolio* explained (“Gypsy: A Study by Sir Frederic Leighton, PRA,” *Portfolio*, 20, January 1889, p. 103): “Indeed he is so accustomed to those materials that he leaves them most unwillingly for any others... The beautiful head in silver-point which appeared in ‘The Graphic Arts’ was a most rare exception to the rule, and was executed expressly for that work in deference to the example of the old masters who used silver-point so much.” As editor of *Portfolio*, Hamerton himself was likely the author of this article. Several years later, he recalled the great pains that he and the firm of Messrs. Goupil took to reproduce accurately the special qualities of Leighton’s silverpoint, a drawing “so delicate that it seemed almost beyond the powers of reproduction.” The first attempt, a photogravure, captured “the delicacy of the silver-point, but lacked its firmness,” and Hamerton eventually selected an autotype reproduction instead. A third attempt was made even later, though never published (see P. G. Hamerton, “The Poor Collector,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 35, September 1885, p. 493).
 64. London, British Library, Add. MS. 55225, letters no. 188 (17 November 1881) and no. 191 (19 November 1881). The Leighton drawing attracted a great deal of attention from reviewers after the book’s publication; see, for instance, “Fine Arts,” *The Athenaeum*, no. 2872, 11 November 1882, pp. 632–33; and Cosmo Monkhouse, “Hamerton’s Graphic Arts,” *The Academy*, no. 525, 27 May 1882, p. 383. Monkhouse pointed out that only recent advances in printing allowed the publication of such fine reproductions, noting in particular their success with “the delicate lines of Leighton’s silverpoint.” Advertisements from the book quoted from Monkhouse’s review, again drawing attention to the Leighton drawing (advertisement printed in *The Athenaeum*, no. 2850, 10 June 1882, p. 719).
 65. Even the briefest discussions of the British silverpoint revival often mention Leighton; see, for instance, Watrous 1957, p. 8; and the entry “Metalpoint,” in Gerald W. R. Ward, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art*, New York, 2008, p. 392.
 66. See Mrs. Russell Barrington, *The Life, Letters, and Work of Frederic Leighton*, 2 vols., New York, 1906, vol. 1, p. 197, and vol. 2, p. 19.
 67. Graphite; 534 x 394 mm; see “The Study of a Lemon Tree,” *Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, 3, 1894, pp. 24–27; “Notes on Art and Archaeology,” *The Academy*, no. 468, 23 April 1881, p. 307; and “The Classic School of Painting,” *The Architect*, 2 June 1883, p. 366. Leighton exhibited *The Lemon Tree* to great acclaim at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1880; reviews of the exhibition refer to the drawing as a pencil study (“The Grosvenor Gallery—1,” *The Architect*, 23, 10 January 1880, p. 18), if they mention the medium of the individual items at all.
 68. London and elsewhere, 2006–8, no. 2.8 (with earlier bibliog.), repr. (in color).
 69. Two articles written in the early 1880s discuss his draftsmanship in detail without mentioning his silverpoints, but in 1886, he gave one of his metalpoint drawings to the British Museum (inv. no. 1886.0903.16), followed by a number of others in later years. W. E. Henley, “Alphonse Legros,” *Art Journal*, 43, 1881, p. 296, gives a list of media in which Legros has distinguished himself without mentioning silverpoint; see also Cosmo Monkhouse, “Professor Legros,” *The Magazine of Art*, 5, January 1882, pp. 327–34.
 70. “From Our London Correspondent,” *The Guardian*, 15 June 1891, p. 5.
 71. See Sir Charles Holroyd, “The Drawings of Alphonse Legros,” *Arts and Crafts Magazine*, 1, September 1904, p. 163.
 72. Inv. no. 1946.4.1. Silverpoint(?) on prepared paper; 321 x 239 mm; see www.nga.gov/search.
 73. See Thomas Ketelsen *et al.*, “New Information on Jan van Eyck’s Portrait Drawing in Dresden,” *Burlington Magazine*, 147, no. 1224, 2005, p. 173. In 1398, Jacob Cona noted that artists used “stile of gold, silver, bronze, or brass”; this information was transcribed by Jehan Le Begue in his *Alcherius de colonibus diversis* and translated in Merrifield 1849, p. 274.
 74. See “The Editor’s Note Book, 3,” *Arts and Crafts Magazine*, 1, 1904, p. 104.
 75. At the New Gallery’s Summer Exhibition in 1889, for instance, Legros exhibited twenty-three silverpoints (see *The New Gallery, 1889: An Illustrated Catalogue of the Summer Exhibition*, exh. cat., London, New Gallery, 1889, nos. 324–46). Typical reviews include Arsène Alexandre’s praise for “those magnificent drawings in gold point which will remain among the most precious relics of our day” (see Arsène Alexandre, “Alphonse Legros,” *Art Journal*, 59, 1897, p. 215). An unidentified reviewer asserted that “nothing can equal the wonderful precision and beauty of Mr. Legros’s silver-points” (see “The Grafton Gallery,” *The Guardian*, 13 November 1896, p. 6).
 76. See the following examples at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC: the *Head of a Horse* (inv. no. 1943.3.5487; goldpoint on card; 240 x 293 mm), after the Elgin Marbles, and the *Study of Delphic Sibyl; Head of a Man* (inv. no. 1946.4.2, metalpoint on card; 300 x 231 mm), after Michelangelo.

77. See Holroyd 1904, p. 163.
78. See Sir Charles Holroyd, "Alphonse Legros: Some Personal Reminiscences," *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 20, no. 107, 1912, pp. 272–76 (esp. p. 274).
79. See, for example, I. Zangwill, "S. Cohn & Son, or 'Anglicisation,'" *Pall Mall Magazine*, 26, January–April 1902, p. 170: "In the presence of Lucy's artistic knowledge Simon was at once abashed and stimulated. She moved in a delicate world of symphonies and silver-point drawings of whose very existence he had been unaware..."; and Constance Elizabeth Maud, *A Daughter of France*, London, 1908, p. 81: "Why, O God, should his masterful, rough hands have been permitted to pluck this priceless bloom! It was like tearing up a Burne-Jones silverpoint to light the fire!"
80. See Sir Frederick Wedmore, *On Books and Arts*, London, 1899, p. 275.
81. See A.J., "Royal Artists," *Art Record*, 5 October 1901, p. 514.
82. See Ernest Jessop, "Silver Point Drawing," *The Girl's Own Paper*, 5 November 1898, no. 984, pp. 84–86. Jessop was known for his silverpoint portraits of the royal pets.
83. See "Notes on Art and Archaeology," *The Academy*, 39, no. 993, 16 May 1891, p. 473.
84. See "Notes on Exhibitions," *The British Architect*, 13 December 1889, p. 420.
85. See "Silver-points by Mr Charles Sainton, at the Burlington Gallery," *The Studio*, 2, 1894, p. 72. Most articles about Sainton mentioned this royal connection.
86. London, V&A, inv. no. E. 1234-1948. Silverpoint[?] on card; 292 x 166 mm.
87. London, V&A, inv. no. E. 1232-1948. Silverpoint[?] on card; 575 x 420 mm; see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>.
88. See John W. Houghton, "A Black (and White) Look Out!" *Judy: The London Serio-Comic Journal*, 11 May 1904, p. 851.
89. See Charles Sainton, quoted in "Silver-point," *The Magazine of Art*, 16, November 1892, p. v.
90. See "Art Exhibitions," *The Times*, 6 November 1894, p. 12.
91. See "Charles P. Sainton," *The Artist*, 20, September 1897, p. 417.
92. See *ibid.*, p. 418.
93. See *ibid.*
94. See *ibid.*; and "The Art of the Age: An Artist in Silver-point—The Life-Work of a Great Painter," *Pearson's Magazine*, 15, no. 85, 1903, p. 4; and "Our London Correspondence," *The Glasgow Herald*, 1 November 1892, no. 262, p. 7.
95. Of the two V&A sheets reproduced here, Sainton scraped out areas around the dancer's leg and the top of her skirt to delineate her more clearly from the background in Fig. 14 and scratched out the stars in Fig. 15.
96. See *The Studio*, 2, 1894, pp. 72–73; *The Artist*, 20, 1897, p. 418; *The Glasgow Herald*, no. 262, 1892, p. 7.
97. See "Saturday Review of Books and Art," *New York Times*, 7 July 1900, p. BR 10; and "Charles P. Sainton Dead," *New York Times*, 5 December 1914, p. 20.
98. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, inv. no. F1906.99a–b (Gift of Charles Lang Freer). Silverpoint on prepared paper; 302 x 253 mm.
99. Conversely, a reviewer in *The Guardian* praised Legros for his ability to make "even silver point masculine" ("The Society of Twelve," *The Guardian*, 26 January 1912, p. 9). The feminine nature of silverpoint was certainly a notion that took hold in America and persisted for decades; see West Palm Beach and elsewhere 1985, p. 20.
100. The same critic who noted this clearly thought Sainton was treading on the dangerous ground of "prettiness," suggesting doubtfully, "Probably he braces himself with robust studies, which he may not think fitted to the character of this exhibition" (see R.A.M.S., "Charles Sainton," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 November 1883, p. 3). A second critic felt Sainton's talents would be "better displayed upon subjects of greater dignity and of treatment less namby-pamby and effeminate," finding his drawings "pretty to the extent of silliness" (*The Guardian*, 13 July 1897, p. 12).
101. See "The Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours," *The Saturday Review*, 21 December 1889, p. 706; "The New Gallery," *The Athenaeum*, no. 3211, 11 May 1889, p. 606; and "The Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, Winter Exhibition," *The Athenaeum*, no. 3345, 5 December 1891, p. 767. The catalogue for the last exhibition lists a *Study of a Head in Silver Point* by Burne-Jones (see Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, *Winter Exhibition of Sketches and Studies*, London, 1891, no. 380), though for the most part media are not described.
102. Burne-Jones's accounts are searchable as a preliminary demonstration of the Roberson online archives project (www-hki.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/archives/roberson/concept.html). The artist purchased "2 silverpoints" and one "silver point sk bk" on 10 June 1892.
103. In addition to the twenty-year-old silverpoint of Antonia Caiva that Burne-Jones presented to May Gaskell in January 1893 (see Note 42 above), he apparently gave a silverpoint to Lady Layard in 1893, fulfilling an earlier promise to her husband; see the entry for 15 July 1893 in Lady Layard's journal (accessible online as part of *The*

- Brownings: A Research Guide*, at Baylor University; www.browningguide.org/browningscircle.php): "...I drove down to Kensington to see Mr Burne Jones & to get the silver point drawing which he promised to give Henry last year. Burne Jones brought out several lovely drawings from which we chose a female head forshortened & carried it home in triumph." The artist may also have presented the Gaskell family with other silverpoints (see Josceline Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, New York, 2004, pp. 207–8); thanks to Josceline Dimbleby for her thoughts on these drawings. Arthur Hughes (1832–1915) and Charles Holroyd (1861–1917) were among the other artists to make gifts of this type: the former, for instance, gave a silverpoint to friends on their silver anniversary (private collection; silverpoint on prepared paper; 240 x 175 mm, inscribed, *To Harry Orrinsmith and his wife on their 25th Wedding Day; This Silver point with all good wishes from Arthur Hughes*; see Leonard Roberts, *Arthur Hughes: His Life and Works*, London, 1997, no. 312 and p. 286, repr.). Holroyd made a pair of portraits of Edmond Houghton and Mary Martha Belcher to commemorate their wedding day (both London, V&A, inv. nos. E.2283–1948 and 2284–1948; silverpoint on prepared paper; 143 x 130 and 152 x 112 mm, respectively).
104. For example, three drawings in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle catalogued as silverpoints appear to be graphite on unprepared paper (see Delia Millar, *The Victorian Watercolours and Drawings in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, 2 vols., London, 1995, vol. 1, nos. 579–81). Burne-Jones's *Portrait of Ignace Paderewski* of 1892, made famous through reproductions and now in the National Museum, Warsaw (inv. no. Rys.Pol.885; 347 x 310 mm; see www.cyfrowmnu.art.pl), was long considered a silverpoint, partly through Paderewski's own account of its creation (see Ignace Jan Paderewski, *The Paderewski Memoirs*, ed. by Mary Lawton, New York, 1980, pp. 175–77). The artist's wife, however, described it as a pencil drawing (see Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2 vols., London, 1904, vol. 2, p. 207), and she was apparently right, for it is now catalogued as a graphite drawing.
105. Silverpoint, heightened with white and yellow and with scratching out, on brown prepared paper; 438 x 279 mm; sale, London, Christie's, 31 May 2012, lot 10, repr. (in color); see also Bronkhurst 2006, no. D382, repr.
106. For example, see the metalpoint *Self-portrait* by Slade pupil C.R.W. Nevinson (1889–1946) in the British Museum (inv. no. 1994,0618.8; metalpoint on prepared paper; 275 x 225 mm; see www.britishmuseum.org).
107. As a young man, Southall made several visits to Burne-Jones, showing him at least one recently finished silverpoint drawing and delighting in the older artist's praise; see George Breeze *et al.*, *Joseph Southall (1861–1944): Artist–Craftsman*, exh. cat., Birmingham, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1980, no. E7, repr.; sold, New York, Christie's, 27 January 2009, lot 20, repr. (in color).
108. A reviewer of Fahey's work noted that the artist chose metalpoint, "used by the masterly hand of Holbein," for various reasons. For example, he wished his detailed drawings "to be permanent records of the buildings as they stood at the period he made the studies" (see "A Metal Point Draughtsman: Mr Aelfred Fahey," *The Magazine of Art*, 1, 1903, pp. 143–45).