

It's a strange fact that I often wonder what a pre-Raphaelite rendering of pulpy erotica would read like. What if Ophelia had not only been under the precocious touch of Sir John Everett Millais' brush, but was a woman in waiting in the stale gaze of the river for some proverbial last moment of her life, in which her fate is sealed not in death, but as the French say, in le petite-mort—the throes of orgasm. Or if Aurelia (Fazio's Mistress), a wistful-looking lady filled with ennui and some sort of pervasive Victorian sadness, braided her hair only to suggest to some distant voyeur a dreamy eroticism, embodied in an act of self-absorbed passiveness that ultimately admits submission to the artist's gaze (and then some). Would Mariana have been weary, or Guenevere's aching left amongst the leaves?

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