• The painting could be read as a comment on female sexual temptation; she was punished for giving into her desire and turning round to see the handsome Sir Lancelot. Comment that a woman should stay in her place in society?

• The background is rendered in a highly naturalistic way – showing the artists interest in botany, although the setting is not identified. Waterhouse used his wife as his model showing the Pre Raphaelites interest in realism, everything in this painting could have actually happened – although he is depicting a myth the naturalistic rendering makes the story relatable and believable.

William Holman Hunt “The Lady of Shalott”

• The lady of Shalott was a prominent depiction in Pre Raphaelite arts repertoire – Hunts was made as an illustration for Moxon’s edition of Tennyson’s poems.

• It can be read as a comment on femininity – the lady of Shalott was a symbol of purity before she gave in to sin. Victorian women in the 1800s were expected to be seen and not heard. They were expected to devote themselves to marriage and motherhood, they had restrictive routines and uphold moral values being faithful to their purity.

• The Lady goes against this expectation of women in Victorian society by looking at Sir Lancelot and is therefore punished with death – maybe a warning to women of what could happen if they go against societies expectations of them.

‘The lady of Shalott’ shows a pure and good women corrupted by sexual desire and punished by death for it, whereas ‘The Awakening Conscience’ shows a corrupt escort who would have been revered by society, enlightened to her sinful ways in a moment of realization. Both are moral comments on gender expectations in Victorian England.