

# DOWNLOAD PDF EVELYN PICKERING DE MORGAN AND THE ALLEGORICAL BODY

## Chapter 1 : The Love Potion | The De Morgan Foundation

*"This is the first comprehensive study of the paintings of one of the most significant and prolific Victorian women artists, Evelyn Pickering De Morgan ().*

The woman in her brilliant golden dress seems to represent a bygone time; perhaps her attire suggests a medieval connection. Looking out the window, we see two minuscule figures. A knight in armor and a woman dressed in white. This scene holds different meanings for me. At first, I thought that the woman in gold was mixing a potion to give to the knight, so as to steal his love away from the woman in white. Then, I thought maybe she was mixing the potion for the lady in white, so as to gain his attraction. If this is the case, it shows the woman in white getting what she wants. One last idea I had, was that the woman in gold concocted the elixir for the knight, and the scene outside the window shows the lady in gold now dressed in white, reaping the benefits of the potion. Looking around the room I notice a collection of books stored beneath the window. Perhaps these are spell books or poetry on courtly love? To the left of the woman, a couple of books haven't fallen down and they are unmarked unlike the other books that have titles. Could these be the books she was reading that inspired her to use a love potion? Laying next to her is a white cloth. Originally, I thought it was a handkerchief that she had been using to wipe her eyes after crying. Carved into the bottom portion of the bench she sits on are multiple panels with figures in outdoor settings. These remind me of courtly love scenes where lovers are secretly meeting because the visible panels display couples that are embracing. The woman adding the potion to the goblet is totally focused on her task at hand. However, her black cat stares intently back at the viewer, aware of our intrusion on this private scene. Returning to the room, the curtains hanging beside the open window have stylized lions and trees. To me, the lions look like they were painted after bestiary animals and for that matter, the trees look like they were taken from a manuscript too. Looking closely at the stylized pattern on the trees, I realized it looks very similar to the detail on her head scarf. Both have a scale-like effect. However, on her scarf, the fabric almost looks like red snake skin with golden and green iridescent accents. Looking outside, rolling hills are bathed in light produced by the setting sun. A castle is barely visible in the horizon. Perhaps the setting sun suggests that at last the couple is together and they are ready to pursue the next stage of life together. After doing some research into the painting, I discovered that *The Love Potion* belongs to a group of thematically related works, including *Medea*, and *Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund*. London, De Morgan Foundation. In *The Love Potion*, the woman is represented as a civilized scholar rather than a creepy, disheveled witch active late at night. Portrayed in her study, she represents an alchemist or sorcerer rather than a witch. Two of her leather-bound books *Artis Magi* and *Iamblicus* are placed next to each other and likely refer to the work of Iamblichus, a Syrian Neoplatonist who promoted the magic of theurgy. *De Occulta Philosophia* can be connected to the physician and philosopher Agrippa von Nettesheim from the sixteenth-century. Another volume labeled *Paracelsus* contains the work of Paracelsus, a contemporary of Agrippa, and was best known for his studies in medical, chemical, and alchemical areas. The landscape is reminiscent of her work. However, she has removed the woman from the secondary role, and instills her with authority within her painting. *Smith* Cats were also associated as being unpredictable, cunning, and as aggressively sexual. Dating back to at least the sixteenth-century, cats symbolized prostitution. De Morgan surely was taking the image of the cat and changing its perception, much in the same way that she was tackling the social roles for women. *Smith* De Morgan also chose her colors for this painting with the upmost care. The four stages that marked the transitions towards the ultimate spiritual enlightenment were black, which is the color of Prime Matter, guilt, sin, and death, white representing the early stages of purification, and then red and yellow the final stages towards the purity of gold. *Smith* With this information in mind, the black cat symbolizes the soul in transition towards purification. The progression to spiritual enlightenment can be seen in the spiral shape from the black cat, to the white cloth, to the red lions and cushions, and finally to the brilliant gold of her dress. *Smith* Works Cited *Smith*, Elise Lawton. Fairleigh

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*Evelyn De Morgan, (30 August - 2 May ) was an English painter whose works were influenced by the style of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. She was a follower of Pre-Raphaelist Edward Burne-Jones.*

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