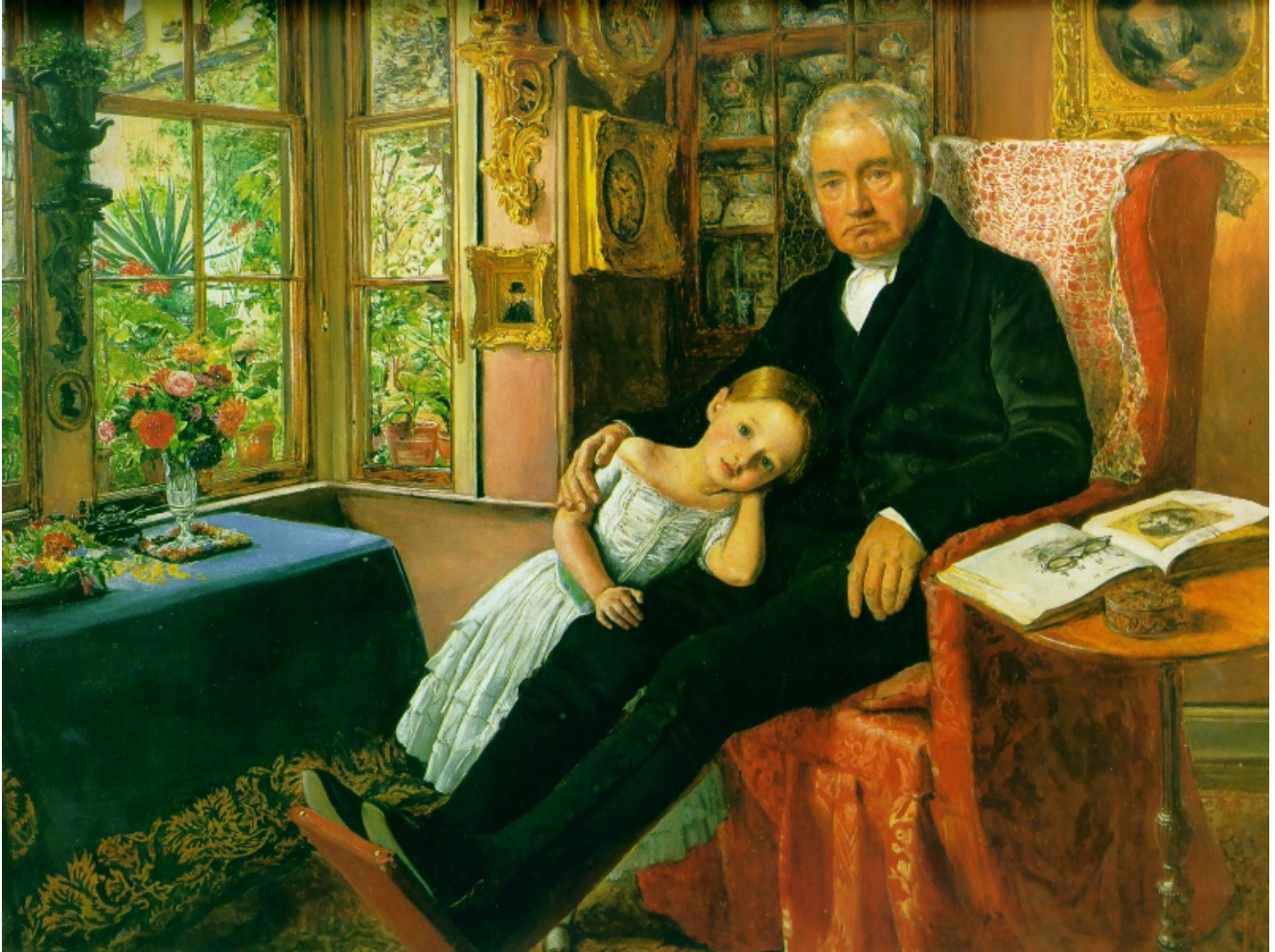


My Dad and my Daughter

by [Cristina Nehring](#) (February 2024)



James Wyatt and His Granddaughter Mary, John Everett Millais, 1849

My father is still on Facebook.
He died a decade ago.
The pictures on the page
Are all of an age
Where my daughter was two or three or four
He died before
She turned five.

My daddy was very vain
It caused him pain
To think that he was sufficiently old
To be told he had a grandchild.
A flirt, perhaps, and a lover,
But no grandfather;
The notion was noxious to him.
He was gallant; he was handsome,
He turned the heads of many ladies
And had no interest whatsoever in babies.
But what a sea-change!
He stepped out of his range.
The pictures of him and my child
Are wild
In their winsomeness
In their overarching affection.
The smile that for a long while
He reserved for his lovers
He lavished upon a toddler.
And it wasn't simple
My girl had a dimple
But she also had Down syndrome.
A situation by which
He would have been shocked
A few years ago.
To and fro, my father
Mastered—without any effort—
A love for his grandchild
That drove him quite crazy;
He looked into her hazel eyes
And all lies slipped away.
He loved her like mad
This man who didn't
Want to be a dad,
Not even that. A bachelor type,
A Casanova; the love of his life
Proved not his wife, nor his daughter

Nor his female friends
But his disabled grandchild.
What a rise to glory
What an improbable story
My father and my kid
He would never get rid
Of his passion for her.
I hope she knows
The total surrender
She unleashed in my dad.
If he died
It was because he tried
To cuddle her when she had a flu.
But it was he who was through,
Who caught her affliction
And there was no fiction
That he could ever recover.
Not her: She survived
And she thrived
And she kissed his moribund face.
Forever she'll remember
This gentleman so tender.
This man who loved her so much
That he was killed by a touch

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Cristina Nehring published *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility* on October 24, 2023. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as of two books in French. She writes for the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Paris with her daughter.

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