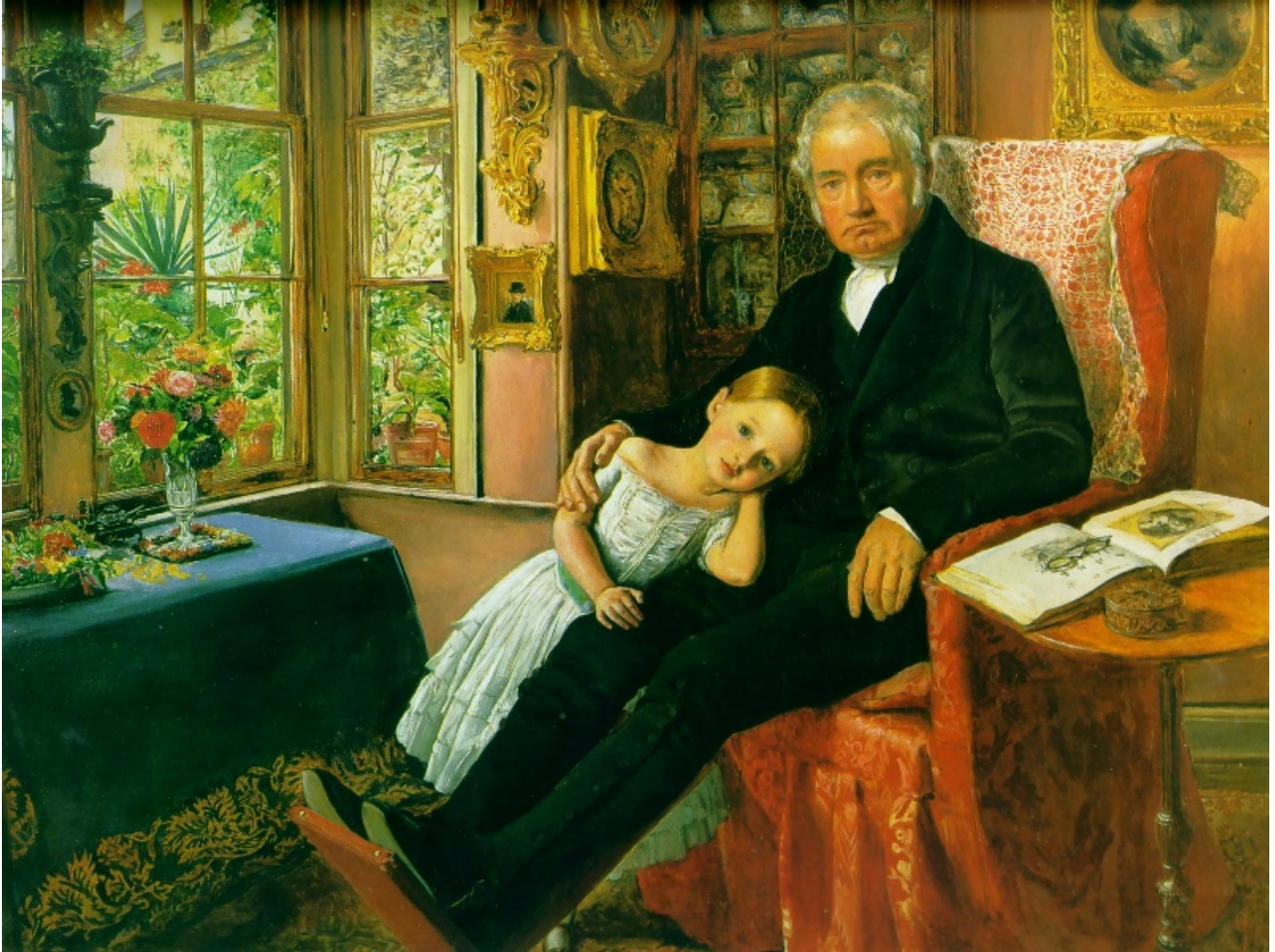


# My Dad and my Daughter

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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