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A CRITICAL STUDY OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM AND ROSSETTI'S DIVERGENCE FROM ITS ORIGINAL DOCTRINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

FOREWORD iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1
The Problem of Pre-Raphaelitism
Purpose of the Thesis

II. THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM 5
Various Critics' Views Concerning its Importance
Status of British Art at the Year 1848
The Birth of Pre-Raphaelite Doctrine

III. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM 11
Hunt's Acquaintance with Rossetti
Origin of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
The Work of the Brotherhood
Ruskin's and Brown's Connection
The Germ

IV. THE CRITICAL AESTHETIQUE OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM . . . 20
Pre-Raphaelitism, A Revolt
Sir Joshua Reynold's Discourses
Raphael's Connection
Realism and Truth--Essence of Pre-Raphaelitism
Examples of Pre-Raphaelite Realism

V. W. H. HUNT AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT 40
Hunt, the True Pre-Raphaelite
Hunt's Art Theories
Examples of His Realism
Aesthetic Implications and Complications in Hunt's Art

VI. E. MILLAIS AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT 58
Millais, a Staunch Pre-Raphaelite
A comparison Between Hunt and Millais
Examples of Realism in His Art

VII. ROSSETTI AND PRE-RAPHAELITISM 66
The Hunt-Rossetti Controversy
Rossetti not the Instigator of Pre-Raphaelitism
Rossetti not a True Pre-Raphaelite
The Decadent Note in Rossetti

VIII. THE OUTCOME OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM UNDER ROSSETTI . . . 97
Rossetti's Influence
Rossetti's Disciples
The Nineties, and the Decay of Romanticism

IX. RETROSPECTION AND CONCLUSION 130
Summary of the Important Aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism
Hunt's Possible Influence on the Realistic Movement

BIBLIOGRAPHY 139

FOREWORD

THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY RESEARCH

The inscription which blazes the title page of this thesis contains in it all the argumentative venom which any literary enthusiast might beg. The topic itself is imbued with a variety of conflicting colors, painted and portrayed very often by critics who deliberately have abandoned all truths concerning the matter. But then, this situation is always existent to some degree, in all types of secondary research.

Generally speaking, the student of any serious literary research has a field of infinitude. This is particularly true in the realm of criticism where a great many secondary, yet significant problems attach themselves very vitally and definitely to the major issue. No matter how specific, how narrow and limited the particular problem seems to appear on first consideration, any effort which attempts to cover the topic, at all adequately, tends to expand over a great variety of important points. Each one must be explained; quite often thoroughly elucidated upon; and almost always definitely decided upon as to importance and value in the light of the issue under consideration. This many-sidedness of critical and aesthetic literary research is not without reasonable justification, since literature, itself, is so broad in scope. It not only touches upon all of human nature, even in its most illusive aspects, but is inextricably bound up with all the arts and sciences. Add to this the critical aspect, which

probes into vital philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic questions, and the complex difficulties become quite evident.

Together with the above situation, there exists a great body of criticism which comes from the pens of literary connoisseurs--each a law unto himself--who attempt to solve for us so readily and prettily this great jumbled literary aesthetique. Is it any wonder that misinterpretation, misunderstanding, false theorizing, and argument without end are inevitable occurrences. There is no doubt that a great deal of this so-called criticism tends to reduce itself to merely another pseudo-critic's noisy dictum. Then too, many of the over-enthusiasts, who come under this heading, carry their literary and aesthetic doctrines to the bounds of absurdity. Their exploitations and ultimate conclusions are very often so notorious, that it would be most disingenuous, in the majority of cases, to call their real purpose truly and sincerely literary. They are the youthful super-aesthetes, who, as a rule, grow more sensible and sane in judgment after passing the critical age of literary puberty. Their super-abundant radicalism seems to mellow somewhat with age, experience, and mature thinking. Their empty violence tones down to a softer and more meaningful art philosophy. This last point is by no means negligible in a discussion of this kind, since it accounts very often for the inconsistencies and discernable flaws in many of our literary critics and writers of aesthetic criticism. It also enters quite appropriately into many of the situations which arise in the attempted thesis of this paper.

It is most obvious, then, that the literary novice has a host of disturbing factors in his modest attempt to cope with any selected literary or aesthetic problem. After dispensing with the creative work of the artist; and secondly, with the sound and authentic critic's evaluation of the subject, there still remains the problem of the "popular" critic, so to speak--this ardent summarizer, who attempts to facilitate and popularize the understanding of art and literature, commenting most wisely and assuredly upon the artist's true purpose in creating his piece of artistry. He dissects, at will, all of the aesthetic principles which the true critic has built up, and substitutes his own, in order to clarify the hazy spots and obscurities which the ordinary literary student encounters. He attempts to simplify for all mankind the sum total of difficulties which arise in any literary situation.

And so it is, because of all these forces which tend to curb and distort artistic creations in every possible shape and form, that a great diverse, yet not entirely uninteresting, body of opinions exist concerning various literary and aesthetic movements.

Perhaps all the aforesaid seems a bit foreign to the problems as specifically stated on the title page. However, there is a most vital and definite connection. First of all, such a preliminary discussion serves as an introduction to any literary consideration or problem. It challenges the omnipotent egoist, so thoroughly convinced of his righteousness; and defends the more timid, modest thinker--the one who is not so ready to say, "I know." Then, too, it leads to a

sympathetic bond between writer and reader, pointing out, and justifiably so, the infinite difficulties which are wont to challenge the amateur literati.

Pre-Raphaelitism serves as an excellent illustration of precisely what the writer has been attempting to say in the preceding paragraphs. It is one of those fascinating movements in literature and art which gave us much valuable creative work; boasts a body of criticism which includes a definite theory of art; and introduces a number of tremendously interesting men who made the movement possible. Then, too, there exists this great group of literary clarifiers, who have interpreted the entire movement, each according to his own understanding, with the express purpose of enlightening the curious-minded. As in every field of endeavor, some of their ideas are of value, others must be taken with a grain of salt.

And so it is that the author has attempted to utilize, as a sound basis for discussion, chiefly such material as comes directly from the men concerned with the movement under consideration; or that matter which exists as a result of the research of the most reliable authorities on this particular phase of literary interest. References and quotations from lesser sources will be employed only to enrich and reinforce any of the fundamental authentic material.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM

Pre-Raphaelitism has a deeper significance and a fuller connotation in the field of art and literature than any one thesis can hope to reveal and evaluate. Explanations concerning the word alone have been many and varied, indeed. Reputable critics have quibbled about its etymological definition as well as its fuller, inclusive and exclusive significance since its origin. The term has, perhaps, suffered much from the tendency of human beings "to define a thing in order to save the trouble of understanding it," as someone has very cleverly stated. Because of all these innumerable and contradictory definitions and explanations which have been formulated, it has been held responsible for all kinds of artistic sins, and also credited with a high degree of virtue that it cannot rightfully claim. Hence, it is evident, that a mere cursory study of the movement, or a meager introduction to some of its principles, as is generally achieved by the majority of art and literary students, is not only inadequate, but very often leads to an inaccurate and incorrect understanding of its real significance.

There are many important questionable and unsettled phases of Pre-Raphaelitism, which, as a general rule, most teachers of literature and aesthetic criticism, as well as text-books with hasty summaries, disregard entirely. For example, Holman Hunt, who is a decidedly significant figure, is either neglected altogether, or unfairly represented;

while Rossetti is designated as the one and only really great Pre-Raphaelite--the only excuse for such a conclusion being that the entire falsity rests on a misunderstanding concerning the two men and the meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism. The fact that Hunt, in reality, originated much of the essential and fundamental doctrine which Rossetti incorporated into his early work is not even referred to. Also, and of utmost importance, as we shall discover later, Hunt is in reality much more representative of the true Pre-Raphaelite principles and spirit than is Rossetti. Rossetti led the fundamental and original Pre-Raphaelite doctrine into foreign channels. He incorporated strictly "Rossettian" ideals into his creations, which caused them to change decidedly as he matured in his artistic thinking and practice from Pre-Raphaelite products to something entirely outside of this realm.

In truth, then, Hunt and Millais were the only really great true Pre-Raphaelites. However, since Rossetti was the chief literary exponent of this group, we shall attempt to discuss his importance in the light of Pre-Raphaelitism. Then too, in the course of this paper, an endeavor shall be made to properly establish a sound, unbiased position concerning Hunt and Rossetti--to interpret them both in their correct settings.

Besides the point of misunderstanding just referred to, there exist a number of other conflicting notions concerning the doctrine under consideration. There are quite a number of extremists who would allege for the Pre-Raphaelite movement all sorts of exaggerated and unfounded claims. For example, this movement, when interpreted correctly, was not the undisputed beginning of

the Aesthetic School in England, as one writer would have us believe.[1] Neither was it the beginning of stark naturalism as other authors so readily insist. By no means was Pre-Raphaelitism the worthless literary spurt that Clive Bell so boldly announces in one of his articles.[2] Each critic forgets the other's point of view. Perhaps, all are correct to some extent; Pre-Raphaelitism contained the seeds of various later artistic and literary maturations.

And so it is the good purpose of this paper to accomplish three definite ends: First, to explain the origin and meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism in its correct denotation; second, to single out of this particular movement its contribution to aesthetic practice and criticism; and third, to determine, in a minor degree, the ultimate outcome of Pre-Raphaelitism, including its influence on later aesthetic and literary developments. The thesis will concern itself chiefly with point two, point one acting as a necessary corrective to any pre-conceived false notions concerning the movement, as well as a convenient introduction to point two. Part three, although by no means intended to be treated in a complete and exhaustive manner, will be of interest in deciding the ultimate importance and aesthetic value of such a movement in the light of later artistic and literary developments--whether the whole thing was merely a phosphoric aesthetic spurt, a fatal literary morning-glory, so to speak. It is evident that the last point might well be chosen as a complete topic for a thesis in itself; it is by no means a minor phase of Pre-Raphaelite importance;

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[1] W. Hamilton, The Aesthetic Movement in England

[2] Clive Bell, "The Pre-Raphaelites," The New Republic, XLIV (October, 1925), 251-253.

but, by far, too extensive to deal with in a paper which chooses for its major issue the singling out of a body of criticism, which includes such a very definite and important aesthetique. And, it might be added here, by the term criticism is meant its broadest interpretation; namely, the beliefs, ideals, and practices which the men who figured in the movement upheld in their creative work--their aesthetic dogma, so to speak.

Before proceeding to the major issues of this thesis, it might be well to remark that at this particular moment in the history of aesthetic development, there existed a great bond between painting and literature. Some of the greatest participators were both great artists in the pictoral as well as the literary sense. One phase of artistry tended to inspire the other. Hence, throughout this discussion, our interests will necessarily tend to oscillate from one to the other. Generally speaking, in any critical aesthetic consideration this condition exists.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM

In a newly attempted explanation of the origin and meaning, as well as the importance, of Pre-Raphaelitism, one has an unlimited number of precedents from which to select a starting point. Depending upon the particular point of view chosen, one may discover in the movement, either, the conscious creation of an important, influential artistic creed, based upon a framework of loftiest aesthetic principles; or, one may see in the movement merely an exuberant "arty" outburst of a group of impulsive, high-spirited youths, whose enthusiastic fire soon died, leaving but a flimsy ashen residue, which has long since been scattered and almost completely dissolved by the winds of time.

Ample authority might well be quoted on both sides. For instance, there are critics who believe with Clive Bell that Pre-Raphaelitism was just another passing craze; and if it exerted any influence at all, it was of the kind that put on the wrong track a number of promising young painters.[1] One author cynically remarks that the brotherhood which formulated all these lofty principles was little more than a band of a few enthusiastic young men, who had eager minds, interesting ideas to express, and great determination.[2]

On the other hand, many of the shrewder critics are disposed to regard the Pre-Raphaelite contribution as a greater national asset to Great Britain than the succeeding generation

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[1] Clive Bell, op. cit.

[2] E. L. Cary, "Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites," The Critic, XXXVII (July-December, 1930)

of nineteenth century British painters, who, falling under the influence of French painting, became much less national and independent as a result. One eminent art critic has stated:

> "the movement associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood stands as a landmark in the modern history of our school, nor has it been without lasting influence upon the art of Europe."[1]

Another says:

> "A visit to the Tate Gallery (where Hunt is not yet adequately represented) will show two things: first, what a large number of the best pictures in that gallery are by men who belong to the Pre-Raphaelite school or its lineage; and, secondly, how much the other schools owe what is best in them to the effects of the explosion of 1850."[2]

Esther Wood, who has written quite an informative as well as interesting book concerning the Pre-Raphaelite movement, says:

> "For the Pre-Raphaelite movement was much more than a revolution in the ideals and methods of painting. It was a single wave in a great reactionary tide--the ever rising protest and rebellion of our century against artificial authority, against tradition and convention in every department of life."[3]

And in another section of her book she states:

> "It must be remembered that the Pre-Raphaelite movement presents a combination of the highest poetry with the highest pictoral and decorative art incomparable with anything since the days of Michaelangelo."[4]

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[1] J. C. Carr, "The English School of Painting at the Roman Exhibition," The Fortnightly Review, XC (July, 1911).
[2] P. Dermer, "Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement," The Contemporary Review, CXXXIV (July, 1928).
[3] E. Wood, Dante Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, 9.
[4] Ibid.

Not a mean compliment, to be sure.

Percy Bate has an especially fine tribute to pay to this ardent group of artists. He says:

> "There is no contemporary school of painting, no modern movement in art, that commands even now more profound attention or retains more completely the interest of the public than that splendid and daring rebellion of half a century ago, which has exercised so great an influence on the painting of the world."[1]

It is evident, then, as the above smatterings of random quotations points out, that the notions concerning the ultimate importance of the Pre-Raphaelites are much diversified; although most of the renowned critics, who think on a sound, intelligent basis, estimate their importance as not only an established fact, but one not to be neglected or studied half-heartedly.

After the above introductory words, then, let us proceed to a cursory historical survey of Pre-Raphaelitism, gathering our material chiefly from primary sources, so as to make the survey more reliable. We shall attempt to utilize especially such evidence found in the letters and diaries written by the very men who figured in the movement.

Precisely who the originator of Pre-Raphaelitism was, has been a literary bone of contention. Some authorities give the sole credit to Holman Hunt, while others name Rossetti as its instigator. Still others make Millais the essential figure--all of which proves quite obviously that all three men were important in its birth and development. Each, as we shall see later on, played his especial role in the development of the movement. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood really originated

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[1] P. H. Bate, "The English Pre-Raphaelites," The Magazine of Art, XXIV (January), 125-128.

as a revolt against existing conditions in the field of painting during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Hence, it was this common impulse, primarily artistic, not literary, which drew these three geniuses together.

If we should survey the field of English art at this particular moment, we would discover, at once, what it was that created this mutual impulse. The painting situation was practically moribund. William M. Rossetti, one of the Brotherhood, as well as one of the most eminent critics on this point, tells us in his Introduction to The Germ:

> "In 1848 the British School of Painting was in anything but a vital or a lively condition. One very great and incomparable genius, Turner, belonged to it. He was old and past his executive prime. There were some other highly able men--Etty and David Scott, then both very near their death; Maclise, Dyce, Cope, Mulready, Linnell, Poole, William Henry Hunt, Landseer, Leslie, Watts, Cox, J. F. Lewis, and some others. There were also some distinctly clever men, such as Ward, Frith, and Egg. Paton, Gilbert, Ford Madox Brown, Mark Anthony, had given sufficient indication of their powers, but were all in an early stage. On the whole the school had sunk very far below what it had been in the days of Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Blake, and its ordinary average had come to be something for which commonplace is a laudatory term, and imbecility a not excessive one."[1]

Not a very complimentary acknowledgment.

Cosmo Monkhouse, in his article on Pre-Raphaelitism, paints a picture, quite in harmony with the one above. He says:

> "The lights of the art-firmament were few in those days. We had seen the last wild flash of Turner's genius, and the Academy grew duller year by year. Its certain pleasure could be counted on the fingers. We were sure of some agreeable work by Stanfield,

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[1] W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to The Germ, 5.

> Creswick, and Cooke; we were tolerant but tired of Cooper's cows; we had little else in which to trust. A Landseer perhaps--not; a Maclise possibly, or one of the sweet-coloured over-refined heads of Sir Charles Eastlake; now and then a Mulready or a Webster--these were the strongest excitements to be looked for in Trafalgar Square."[1]

So we see, it was with Turner that the old school of English painting was about to die. Simpering portraits, faded landscapes, tame groups of theatrical figures, all of them drawn and colored after one set of hacknied models, wearied the eye that looked for more inspiring things from the countrymen of Wilson, Reynolds, and Hogarth. Painting after nature had come to mean painting after some received tradition. There existed a certain range of subjects, and a specific set of rules for handling them, formulated chiefly from the principles set down by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his famous Discourses. These principles were of a highly technical nature, which, as we shall see, infringed quite definitely upon the freedom of the artist as well as tended to direct the art product away from the real truth.

Not only was the technical side of painting definitely outlined and thoroughly established by Reynold's art dictum, but the choice of subjects was also limited, as already has been intimated. It seemed a kind of heresy to paint scenes not found in the traditional Goldsmith, or landscapes wearing other hues save those of autumn. Views of particular known places were made as carefully unlike the originals, as portraits of ugly people usually are. Just as long as the final artistic product was smooth and well finished--pleasing to the eye--it seemed to

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[1] C. Monkhouse, "A Pre-Raphaelite Collection," The Magazine of Art, VI (January, 1883), 62-70.

matter not in the least how much it lacked in freshness, or real truth, or poetic power and inspirational value.

This mediocrity existed not only in the field of painting, but in other branches of art, as well. Percy Dermer voices this idea for us in one of his articles:

> "...but painting had settled down into an indescribable condition of dull incompetence. Ruskin was awake, but others were blind to the values of great art--as never before since art grew up in the palaeolithic age; a cruel and criminal ugliness was triumphant and complacent in architecture, furniture, costume, sculpture, and in painting. The destruction of Europe's old buildings under the guise of restoration had begun, and the new buildings were growing worse and worse. Men were everywhere leveling down the civilization of their ancestors; and the mean streets of Manchester were expressing the new commercialism, as Venice and Antwerp had typified the old."[1]

It is quite evident, then, that in the year, 1848, the outlook for painting and art in general, was not at all encouraging. The waning accomplishment of men who had passed their prime, cried aloud for the need of a new return to Nature; and the accepted, outworn conventions of style, enfeebled and grown old, left the hour ripe for the advent of some group of gifted young men to set the situation aright.[2] And fortunately, such a group of men were present to carry out this much needed remedial work--a group of young, fresh enthusiasts; yet not too utterly radical or insanely foolish in their ideas and course of procedure.

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[1]P. Dermer, op. cit., The Contemporary Review, CXXIV (July,1928).
[2]J. C. Carr, op. cit., The Fortnightly Review, XC (July, 1911).

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM

In order that the doctrine of Pre-Raphaelitism be more acutely comprehended a brief historical sketch would seem of value. This survey will draw its material solely from William Holman Hunt's autobiography and William Rossetti's volume containing the diaries and letters of the men who figured in the movement.

The origin of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood came about in a most natural way. In 1848 there existed a small group of men at the British Academy whose common interests in art brought them together in all sorts of serious discussions on the subject. William Holman Hunt and Everett Millais were especially drawn together by their ardent admiration for the poet Keats, and resolved to begin a series of illustrations and designs dealing with Keat's poetry. Hunt, upon submitting his "Eve of St. Agnes," was fortunate, indeed, in having it chosen by the Academy Committee to be hung--a very distinguished honor, to be sure. Rossetti, noticing the picture, passed it, loudly proclaiming it the best in the collection. After some discussion between the two men, it was arranged to have Rossetti come to visit Hunt at his studio. Because of their common enthusiasm for Keats they soon became fast friends, and worked side by side for years to come, Hunt acting as a guide to Rossetti in these first years.

Before his contact with Hunt, Rossetti had studied under Ford Maddox Brown, but complained of the strict discipline which Brown had demanded of the student in his paintings.

For instance, Rossetti rebelled against Brown's insistence on studying still life from a group of bottles and other objects which happened to be lying about in the studio. In fact, this so disheartened the young lad that he gave up painting for the time and turned for counsel to Leigh Hunt, asking him to read and criticize his small collection of poems, as well as advise him as to the possibility of his relying solely upon poetry for his bread. Leigh Hunt advised Rossetti to go on with his painting, since the fortunes of an unfriended poet in modern days were too pitiable to be risked.

Hence, his acquaintanceship with William Holman Hunt made things appear a bit brighter for the all-too-sensitive Rossetti. This alliance led to other important happenings. Through Hunt, Rossetti became acquainted with Millais, and joined the "Cyclographic Society" to which Hunt and Millais together with several other members belonged. The scheme embarked upon was for members to contribute drawings to a portfolio which was sent around for all the other members to criticize. The Society it seems, enjoyed only a very brief existence yet was of valuable service in weeding out those who did not sympathize with the new ideas which were maturing in the minds of Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais.

This trio, then, proceeded on a serious study and discussion concerning the art of the day. We have already pointed out the degenerate status of aesthetic principles in the field of painting at this particular time; and so can readily sympathize with their viewpoint. Hence, they decided to form a Brotherhood, to enroll sympathetic fellow-members, and work together in order to bring art back to its former status.

The title "Pre-Raphaelite" was adopted, but not from any serious intent, as we discover upon a reading of Hunt's volume.[1] It was really a term of reproach invented by their enemies. Even before Hunt's close friendship with Rossetti, we find the title "Pre-Raphaelite" being used to designate a particular group of men, of whom Hunt and Millais were foremost, who revealed their critical ideas on art to other students in the Academy. The account which Hunt himself gives us explains this quite adequately:

> "Often when standing before them we had talked over Raphael's cartoons; now we again reviewed our judgment of these noble designs. We did so fearlessly, but even when most daring we never forgot their claim to be honoured; we did not bow to the chorus of the blind, for when we advanced to our judgment on 'The Transfiguration' we condemned it for its grandiose disregard of the simplicity of truth, the pompous posturing of the Apostles, and the unspiritual attitudinising of the Saviour.....In our final estimation this picture was a signal step in the decadence of Italian art. When we had advanced this opinion to other students, they as a reductio ad absurdam had said, 'Then you are Pre-Raphaelite.' Referring to this as we worked side by side, Millais and I laughingly agreed that the designation must be accepted."[2]

We shall not at the present point discuss the significance of the title any further. The term "Pre-Raphaelite" does have a decided bearing on, and a definite relationship to, the critical doctrines of the Brotherhood; however, the point will be fully exhausted at a later turn in this discussion.

Besides the three founders of the Brotherhood, four more

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, I, Chapter 5.
[2] Ibid, 100.

adherents were enlisted. Hunt introduced F. G. Stephens, who at that time was a painter, but very soon abandoned art for criticism. Woolner, the sculptor, whose contributions to the movement were mainly poetical, was introduced by Millais; and James Collinson, a painter, and William M. Rossetti, a critic, were introduced by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The Brotherhood met regularly, kept a complete record and diary of their meetings, of which Wm. M. Rossetti was the secretary. At first there were regular occurrences and weekly meetings, but these became quite irregular by December, 1850. The Brotherhood, while it existed in organized form, worked very hard, each member contributing some definite piece of work from time to time. A few of the members were fortunate enough to have some of their paintings exhibited at various Academy showings. Incidentally, it might be mentioned here, it was strongly held by this group of artists that "purity of mind and heart was a necessary condition for good work, and all that was gross or sensual was strictly tabooed." In other words, this band of young men were not the usual type of "Bohemian-minded" radicals who so often burst into the art-world; but rather a serious-minded group of young men with definite constructive ideas to offer, as we shall readily discover.

As has been stated, the Brotherhood gradually became irregular in its meetings and discussions. An attempt was made to revive the old spirit in January, 1851, but without effect. Millais' election to the Academy in 1853 gave a final quietus to the organization, which for some time previously had already ceased to exist, save in name. In addition to Collinson, it had lost Woolner, who went to Australia when the emigration craze was at its height. To replace the former, a young

painter, Walter Howell Deverell, had been nominated; but his election was regarded as invalid, and so he was not accepted. Also, at this time, Hunt left the group to migrate to the Far East in order to carry out his artistic-religious mission more accurately. Although physically disbanded, the ideals of the group did not cease to operate. Already their notions concerning art had spread, and in some cases, had taken on new aspects.

There are many other figures who are usually connected with the Pre-Raphaelite movement which have not been referred to in the above historical sketch; purposely, however, since these men are comparatively unimportant in the light of the more outstanding ones who held dominant sway throughout the entire Pre-Raphaelite development. Nevertheless, Ford Maddox Brown and Ruskin should, perhaps, be named here; since, although they were both only indirectly connected with the main current of the movement, and never enrolled as members, they did play particularly vital roles as stimulators and upholders of this new artistic revival. Brown had been an intimate of Rossetti since 1848, and he sympathized "fully as much as any of these younger men, with some old-world developments of art preceding its ripeness or over-ripeness; but he had no inclination to join any organization for protest or reform; and he followed his own course--more influenced, for four or five years ensuing, by what the P. R. B.'s were doing than influencing them."[1]

As for Ruskin, we learn from William Rossetti that in the beginning, he "was wholly unknown to them personally, and

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[1]W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to The Germ, 7.

in his writings was probably known only to Holman Hunt." By this time (1848), he had published only the first two volumes of Modern Painters. There is no doubt, however, that Ruskin did inspire and stimulate the group to some extent with his famous volumes. They struck the keynote of the coming change. Then too, we know, at this particular moment in literary history, Ruskin was hailed as the great authority and critic. Hence, his defense of the Brotherhood and their ideas was of significant importance to the literary and artistic world; as well as greatly appreciated by the much ridiculed artists. Especially was his ardent comment to The Times graciously regarded by the group, who had been so mercilessly denounced by the assailant newspaper critics. This really constituted the first public and authoritative vindication of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. An interesting account of the incident is given by Hunt:

> "In the midst of this helplessness came thunder as out of a clear sky--a letter from Ruskin in The Times in our defence. The critic in that paper had denounced our works as false to all good principles of taste, and also as wrong in linear and aerial perspective;..... Ruskin's letters here follow:--
>
> 'Putting aside the small Mulready, and the works of Thorburn and Sir W. Ross, there is not a single study of drapery, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truty, power, and finish could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture; or with the white draperies on the table of Mr. Millais' "Mariana," and of the right-hand figure in the same painter's "Dove Returning to the Ark." And, further, that as studies both of drapery and of every minor detail, there has been nothing in art so earnest or so complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Durer. This I

assert generally and fearlessly....' "[1]

Hunt also includes Ruskin's second letter to The Times, which is also a very direct defence of the principles of the Brotherhood. We shall quote just a portion of this letter here:

> "And so I wish them (The Pre-Raphaelites) all, heartily, good speed, believing, in sincerity, that if they temper the courage and energy which they have shown in the adoption of their system with patience and discretion in framing it, and if they do not suffer themselves to be driven by harsh or careless criticism into rejection of the ordinary means of obtaining influence over the minds of others, they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of Art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years."[2]

We see, then, Ruskin heartily endorsed the work of the Brotherhood. However, we must not be too prone to accept his statements as absolutely final, without flaw or questioning; since many of his comments concerning art quite often sound inharmonious notes. An example of such inconsistency of ideas is evident in comparing his remarks on Pre-Raphaelitism with those found in his Stones of Venice where he says:

> "We are to remember in the first place, that the arrangement of colors and tones is an art analogous to the composition of music, and entirely independent of the representation of facts."

Far removed from the Pre-Raphaelite creed, to be sure--decidedly different from the comments found in other sections of his lectures. Then, too, the man is inclined to exaggerate very often to a degree of absurdity. In spots we find him giving to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement a far

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., I. 254.
[2] Ibid, 255.

vaster meaning than even it claimed for itself. In the main, he was a stimulant rather than a guide; and perhaps the greatest benefit, of all the brothers, to Rossetti, whom he encouraged during a very critical period in his early years.

One other item enters into a historical survey of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. So far, no specific mention has been made of the literary aspect of this group of young men. We have learned that the chief exponents of Pre-Raphaelitism were artists--that Pre-Raphaelitism was essentially a movement in painting. However, there is yet another aspect of importance connected with the movement. The Brotherhood, we know, was founded in September, 1848, and the members exhibited in the year 1849 their works of art conceived in the new spirit. The creations were received very unfavorably, however, by the critics, as well as the public, who were as yet, quite unacquainted with this new idea in art. Hence, it was after the exhibitions in 1849 that the idea of bringing out a magazine to explain their work, came to be discussed. William Rossetti names his brother Dante Gabriel as the author of the project, since "he alone among the P. R. B.'s had already cultivated the art of writing in verse and in prose to some noticeable extent, and he was better acquainted than any other member with British and foreign literature."[1] At least, none of the others, as yet, had done any writing that was anything worth commenting upon. After some discussion as to the name of the magazine, The Germ was finally decided upon,

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[1]W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to The Germ, 8,

with its sub-title, Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art. The magazine, which contained poetry, criticism, and etchings of the members and of those artists and poets who were related with the movement, was not very long-lived. People simply would not buy the paper, and would scarcely consent to know of its existence, according to William Rossetti. So the magazine, after only a brief existence of three issues, breathed its last; its debts, materially exceeding its assets. The magazine, with its most modest s span of existence, did excite a great amount of literary attention nevertheless. Some magazines and papers lauded it to the skies; some praised it only half-heartedly; while others condemned it unfairly to death.[1] In a later section of this thesis, which deals specifically with the aesthetic criticism of the group, we shall refer from time to time to the important articles and poetry, as well as drawings, which made up the contents of the Germ. The most important of these will be seen in the person of Rossetti, who became the chief literary personage in this connection.

So much for the purely historical data of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood--which has been brief and even quite deficient in spots--but for a pre-conceived reason; namely, because the adequate treatment of point two, which follows immediately, and deals with the specific criticism of the Brotherhood, necessarily incorporates much of the historical element into its discussion.

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[1] W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to the Germ, 12-16.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRITICAL AESTHETIQUE OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM

The daring rebellion of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was essentially a revolt of naturalism against convention, of sincerity against affectation. The British School of Painting, as we have already seen, was in anything but a vital or lively state. This existent condition undoubtedly had its roots in the development of art four centuries earlier. Upon close examination of the painting technique since the latter fifteenth century, we discover almost immediately that the great artists have, for the most part, held up Raphael between themselves and nature; interposed certain intellectual phantasms of ideal beauty between their eyes and the literal forms of God's world. Just so it was with the age of which we are treating. It seemed to be dominated by a set of cut-and-dry rules enunciated by a school of artists who worshipped the technique of Raphael with a fervor which threatened their own individual originality. The immediate source of these cut-and-dry rules was chiefly the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds who very conveniently formulated a definite Code for artists to follow. Let us examine some of the passages against which Pre-Raphaelitism is most distinctly a rebellion, in order to comprehend more readily the artistic principles which this revolting group objected to, and those which they upheld.

In the Fourth Discourse we read:

> "How much the great style exacts from its professors to conceive and represent their

> subjects in a poetical manner, not confined to mere matter of fact, may be seen in the cartoons of Raffaelle. In all the pictures in which the painter has represented the apostles he had drawn them with great nobleness; he has given them as much dignity as the human figure is capable of receiving; yet we are expressly told in Scripture they had no such respectable appearance; and of St. Paul, in particular, we are told by himself that his bodily presence was mean. Alexander is said to have been of a low stature; a painter ought not so to represent him. Agesilaus was low, lame, and of mean appearance: none of these defects ought to appear in a piece of which he is the hero. All this is not falsifying any fact; it is taking an allowed poetical licence."

In the Seventh Discourse we discern how Reynold's art notions in relation to nature were decidedly more general than those which the Pre-Raphaelites held. He says:

> "My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organization, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination. The terms beauty or nature, which are general ideas, are but different modes of expressing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or pictures.....This general idea, therefore, ought to be called nature, and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to the name."

The following is taken from the Eleventh Discourse:

> "A landscape painter certainly ought to study anatomically, (if I may use the expression,) all the objects which he paints; but when he is to turn his studies to use, his skill, as a man of genius, will be displayed in showing the general effect, preserving the same degree of hardness or softness which the objects have in nature;.....when he knows his subject, he will know not only what to describe, but what to omit; and this skill in leaving out, is, in all things, a great part of knowledge and wisdom."

There are certain portions of the Third and Fourth Discourses especially that the Pre-Raphaelites objected to so violently. In the latter one, we see quite distinctly, that real truth, truth according to nature, is entirely a matter of the artist's discrimination. If he chooses to omit a certain parts, or change others according to his desires, he is perfectly at liberty to do so. Also, it is in the above two discourses that he expounds his favorite theory, the one for which he has been so often criticized; namely, that "perfect form is produced by leaving out particularities, and retaining only general ideas." He thoroughly deprecates too rigorous attention to detail. In portraits, the grace and likeness, he contends, consist more in taking the general air, than in observing the exact similitude of every feature.

Then, too, in his Fifth Discourse he lauds Raphael to the plane of a God, proclaiming that he had a greater combination of the higher qualities of art than any other man. We are not disputing this greatness, neither are we deprecating Raphael's high position in art. It is the fact that this blind worship of the man hampered the real progress of the individual artist that causes us to posit our objections.

So far it would seem that the principles which Reynolds upheld are not very modest and rigid in their demands of the artist. However, we have not, as yet, cited any of the most stringent passages which deal so exactly with the technical side of painting; those which tend to place all creative work in a definite mold, turning it out according to one specific pattern. The Eighth Discourse is a good example of some of these fine technical points which the artist is required to

fellow. One section of it reads:

> "It ought to be indispensably observed, that the masses of light in a picture be always of a warm, mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white; and that the blue, the grey, or the green colours be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and be used only to support and set off these warm colours; and for this purpose a small proportion of cold colours will be sufficient."

What could be more absurd than to say, that a picture being the rendering of a scene or a natural object, every picture must contain two-thirds of shadows, or four-fifths, or nine-tenths; that the light must begin in a triangular wedge at the bottom right-hand corner of the picture, and must be painted upon a dark brown ground? Yet, all these "musts" then ruled the artist and his creations; or, should we say, aided him in producing mediocre works.

Hunt says in connection with Reynold's dogma:

> "Reynold's dogma was accepted for control of imaginative liberty; it was at that we rebelled. When scaffolding had been of use at first, it had done its work, and we required that it should be put aside as in no sense belonging to the permanent structure of Art. The windows of the edifice should be opened to the purity of the azure sky, the primatic sweetness of the distant hills, the gaiety of hue in the spreading landscape, and the infinite richness of vegetation, we undertook to show that the rendering of new delights in Nature was not incompatible with the dignity of the highest art."[1]

Throughout his entire discourses, Sir Joshua Reynolds continually uses Michael Angelo and Raphael, as has already been intimated, for examples of perfect painters; and advises all who would become great in the field of art to study them closely, and hail them as their masters.

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[1]W. H. Hunt, op. cit., I, 379.

It would be a sad mistake to suppose that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood seriously disliked the works produced by Raphael; but, rather, they "disliked the works produced by Raphael's uninspired satellites," and determined to discover, by personal observation, study, and practice, what their own faculties and talents might produce, without being bound by rules founded upon the performances of Raphael and his ardent disciples. Their minds were to furnish them with subjects for works of art; and with the general scheme of treatment, Nature was to be their one storehouse of materials for the objects to be represented. "The study of her was to be deep, and the representation (at any rate in the earlier stages of self-discipline and work) in the highest degree exact; executive methods were to be learned partly from precept and example, but most essentially from practice and experiment."[1]

The chief reason that the Pre-Raphaelites chose for their serious study the period which preceded Raphael, was that Raphael represents the moment when the conventional classic influence was just mastering and enslaving the simple, noble, and natural sincerity of the earlier school. The early Italian painters were mighty realists, whose decisive step was to return to the actuality of Nature. Throughout this Pre-Raphaelite epoch, from Cimabue (1240) to Perugini, the master of Raphael (1446), the impulse of naturalism and realism is seen adjusting itself. The artists reproduced the men and women which they selected to paint just as they were. They gave up the conventional, the frozen, ideal forms of saints and martyrs, and painted thoughts and passions of the people

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[1]W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to the Germ, 6.

as they saw them written in the faces around them. These early Renaissance painters humanized, in conception and presentation, the virgins and the venerable mother-saints of Christendom; but sadly enough their imagination never concerned itself with what may be termed the independent humanity of womanhood. Herein lay one of the reasons for their ultimate downfall, as one author so truthfully states:

> "This limitation, unfortunate for art, instead of being removed by a further broadening of thought and vision as the Renaissance proceeded, was emphasized in the fifteenth century by the influence of Raphael, who cultivated and stereotyped his own ideal of the 'for-ever-motherly' until--so subtle is the influence of fixed types in pictoral art upon the current standards of truth and beauty--the maternal function came to be regarded as the sole and sufficient object of a woman's existence; and the conventional Madonna-face of Raphael became a bondage from which Christianity has taken more than three centuries to set itself free."[1]

The advent of Raphael into Italian art, then, marked the beginning of the degradation of the pure and wholesome naturalism achieved in the Renaissance. It might truly be said that "the greatness of Raphael was the weakness of modern art." The disciples of Raphael, counting him to have achieved the highest perfection, modelled themselves after his manner; and thence after his mannerisms, without question or reserve; just as, in metaphysics and philosophy, the schoolmen upheld Aristotle, without any reference to the external world in which they were living. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it is generally a fatal hindrance to progress.[2]

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[1] E. Wood, op. cit., 51.
[2] Ibid, 52-54.

As Ruskin so appropriately states:

> "All that is highest in art, all that is creative and imaginative, is formed and created by every great master for himself, and cannot be repeated or imitated by others."[1]

And so it is that Raphael, first-hand, was always great, often sublime. However, "Raphael second-hand,--stereotyped, formalized, degraded by three centuries of imitations, each more laboured than the last,--became vapid, artificial, meaningless. The original inspiration was destroyed. Art lost its hold on Nature; and, severed from that sole source of power, fell into inevitable decay."[2]

It was precisely such a decadent condition that confronted this spirited, serious-minded group of painters, of which Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti were the greatest. And it was their most sacred mission to rescue art from this degenerating state of affairs. They strove to restore manhood to art. They did not look for their inspiration to the material splendors of Raphael's creations; nor did they find consolation in the stolid classicism of the later Renaissance--but rather discovered that which they were seeking in the pristine freshness of nature, as the older and original Pre-Raphaelites had done.

The Pre-Raphaelite code, as William Rossetti records it was specifically this: They were (1) to have genuine ideas to express; (2) to study nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; (3) to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art to the exclusion

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[1]E. Wood, op. cit., 54.
[2]Ibid, 54.

of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; (4) most indispensible of all, they were to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues. In other words, the Brotherhood disliked the lack of ideas and character in art; and secondly, they insisted upon having no master except their own powers of mind and hand, and their own first-hand study of nature.

Essentially then, Pre-Raphaelitism was a kind of realism, the representation of things as they are, of nature as it is. Every human figure was to be painted from a living person in the attitude which that person assumed and with the garb which it then wore; every room was to be the portrait of a room, which, indeed, one might arrange or decorate for the purpose, but which must be there in its solid capacity. Every tree or wayside flower must be the portrait of the living plant; every landscape must be painted without selection and without rejection of painting from memory, or from a mental modification of a visible effect, tended also to make the painters realistic in their conception of the scene; so that sincere effort was made to imagine the action, the gesture, and the pose of man and woman, as it would have been under the circumstances, without an attempt to spoil the sharpness and verisimilitude of it by a search for grace either of movement or of grouping.[1]

If these artists were to paint a tree as part of a picture, then, instead of attempting to put down, according to Sir Joshua Reynold's prescription, something that might stand as an ideal tree, the general conception of individual trees, their notion was that they should go to nature for

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[1]Russell Sturgis, "The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Influence," The Independent, LII (January 18-25, 1900), 181-249.

an actual tree, and paint that. So, also, if they were to paint a brick wall as part of the background of a picture, their notion was that they should not paint such a wall as they could put together mentally out of their past recollection of all the brick walls they had seen; but that they should take some actual brick wall and paint it exactly as it was, with all its seams, lichens, and weatherstains. So, also, in painting the human figure, their notion was that they should not follow any conventional idea of corporeal beauty; but should take some actual man or woman, and reproduce his or her features with the smallest possible deviation consistent with the purpose of the picture. In a historical picture, their notion was that there should be not an effort, primarily, at least, after what Sir Joshua calls the grand style; but the most faithful study of truth in detail, truth in costume, truth in the portraiture of the personages introduced--truth in all the contemporary circumstances of the action represented. Their notion in painting a St. Paul, would have been, undoubtedly, not to have idealized him, as Sir Joshua affirms that Raphael has done; but actually to have exhibited him as he was, a man in whom a great soul was shrined in a mean and contemptible body presence.[1]

In The Germ, the literary organ of the Brotherhood, we find embodied in various of the critical articles the exact notions concerning art, which we have designated in the above outline. For example, the article entitled "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art," by F. G. Stephens, has for

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[1] Article VII, British Quarterly Review, XVI, 197-220.

its aim the enforcement of the independent endeavor of the artist, based upon a close study of Nature. It also illustrates the like qualities found in the earlier school of art.

The article by John L. Tupper, which bears the title "The Subject in Art," contains similar points of importance: (1) that the subject in a work of art affects the beholder in the same sort of way as the same subject, occurring as a fact or aspect of Nature, affects him; and thus whatever in Nature excites the mental and moral emotion of man is a right subject for fine art; and (2), that subjects of our own day should not be discarded in favour of those of a past time.[1]

John Orchard contributed an article entitled "A Dialogue on Art" which voices the ideas of purism or puritanism. The notion here is possibly a bit more extreme than that which the Pre-Raphaelites held in general; but it illustrates quite properly the high purpose which art should maintain according to Pre-Raphaelite standards. Then, too, in the Dialogue the writer upholds those painters who preceded Raphael as the best men for nurturing new and noble developments of art.

Besides the articles mentioned, the remaining literary contents of The Germ, of any importance, consisted almost entirely of the seven poems by Christina Rossetti, and the eleven poetical pieces by D. G. Rossetti, as well as the beautiful, critical prose work "Hand and Soul." This latter work is a very definite expression of the author's notions on art as we shall see more specifically in a later section of this paper which is devoted solely to Rossetti and his

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[1]W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to the Germ, 16.

place in Pre-Raphaelite art.

Let us examine some of the specific works of the Pre-Raphaelites in order that we might see illustrated some of these principles of realism and naturalism which the Pre-Raphaelites upheld in their artistic creations.

"Ferdinand Lured by Ariel," which was the first landscape produced by the Brotherhood, is representative of their theoretical doctrine of art. It was painted exactly according to principle, directly from nature. Miss Wood describes the situation quite interestingly:

> "The background was taken from a spot in a park attached to Shotover House, near Oxford, where Millais was staying as the guest of Mr. Drury. A lady who saw the young artist at work upon this subject distinctly recalls his application of a magnifying-glass to the branch of a tree he was painting, in order to study closely the veins of the leaves. This was a literal following of the patient Pre-Raphaelites, and is especially noticeable in the early landscapes of Leonardo da Vinci; though he departed in his maturity from his former love of detail, and began to conventionalize items into generalities. Even the lizards in the foreground of "Ferdinand and Ariel" were faithful portraits of certain small favourites brought by Millais from Jersey to serve their turn among his sitters."[1]

Hunt's autobiography is overflowing with examples which illustrate this very meticulous practice of realism on the part of the Brotherhood. At a random opening of the book, we find:

> "Millais agreed with me that for the subject of 'Ophelia in the Stream,' which he had settled upon, and made a hasty sketch for, and for mine of 'The Hireling Shepherd,' there was good probability of finding backgrounds along the banks of the little stream

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[1] E. Wood, op. cit., 77-78.

> taking its rise and giving its name to our favourite haunt, Ewell; accordingly we gave a day to the exploration. Descending the stream for a mile from its source, I soon found all the material I wanted for my landscape composition, but we looked in vain during a long tracing of the changing water, walking along beaten lanes, and jumping over ditches and ruts in turn, without lighting upon a point that would suit my companion. Many fresh hopes were shattered, until he well-nigh felt despair, but round a turn in the meadows at Cuddington we pursued the crystal driven weeds with reawakening faith, when suddenly the 'Millais luck' presented him with the exact composition of arboreal and floral richness he had dreamed of, so that he pointed exultantly, saying, 'Look! could anything be more perfect?'"[1]

Hunt then goes on to describe how very carefully he placed upon the canvas the features of the landscape he had chosen.

Opening the volume to another page we find Hunt discussing with a friend the possibility of painting in a studio from mere skeleton outlines. Hunt did not approve of such a line of procedure, at which the friend seemed dismayed and knew not what to do. Hunt describes what he told his friend:

> "'Let us consider a particular one,' and took up a drawing of 'The Quarries of Syracuse.' I said, 'Now the rocks forming this were, you tell me, of limestone. Without going back to Sicily you would have to find some weather-worn escarpments of this particular stone, and choose a place where figs grow, for on your drawing you have written over the foreground, 'figs.' Under the open sky, with the sun shining, you would have little difficulty in giving an air of reality to this part of the scene. For distant fields and hills again you could easily find Nature near at hand, only these would have to be adapted to suit the form given to your outlines. Nature would in the summer soon supply clouds and azure firmament for your sky without calling too much on your memory. What more do

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[1] W. H. Hunt, op. cit., I, 262-63.

> you want? You have indicated the presence of innumerable rooks. These you could easily paint in the open air without leaving England.'"[1]

In searching for a background for "The Hireling Shepherd," Hunt says:

> ".....accordingly we gave a day to the exploration. Descending the stream for a mile from its source, I soon found all the material I wanted for my landscape composition, but we looked in vain during a long tracing of the changing water, walking along beaten lanes, and jumping over ditches and ruts in turn, without lighting upon a point....."[2]

In painting "The Light of the World," one of Hunt's best pictures, we read, again, how very particular he was in securing the exact spot and perfect condition, for carrying out his ideas. He labored to get every detail exact--the leaves, bushes, and blades of grass. We read[3] that the moonlight effect was secured by steady work on moonlight nights from the window of a London lodging. The background was painted from the orchard of a farmhouse in Surrey, at which place, incidentally, Millais was painting the background for his "Ophelia."

And so, one could go on indefinitely, reading from the pages of Hunt's book, and citing examples of the Pre-Raphaelites very meticulous care in choosing the exact background and models for each particular painting; and then, as accurately as possible, transferring them to their canvases.

Rossetti, too, especially in the beginning, laid particular emphasis on this point of realism. An illustration of this is seen in one of his earlier paintings, "Found." The picture

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[1] W. H. Hunt, op. cit., I, 328.
[2] Ibid, I, 262.
[3] Ibid, I, 346.

shows a cobbled street of a market town at dawn, a small cart and a calf in it, in a rope-netting. The young man, dressed as a farm-worker in smock and gaiters, who was driving the cart, has come to the pavement edge and is trying to raise up a kneeling woman, who strives to turn her face from him in agony of shame. Evidently, he is the man she was once engaged to marry.[1]

How very accurate Rossetti was in securing the most perfect situations for the painting of this picture is evidenced in a letter which he wrote to his mother at Frome in September, 1853, where he refers to his intention of painting such a picture:

> "I believe I shall be wanting to paint a brick wall, and a white heifer tied to a cart going to market. Such things are supposed to be had at Frome, and it has occurred to me that I should like if possible to come and paint them there. There is a cattle-market, is there not? Have you ever seen such an article as the heifer in question, and have you or Christina any recollection of an eligible and accessible wall? I should want to get up and paint it early in the mornings, as the light ought to be that of dawn. It should not be too countrified (yet beautiful in color), as it is to represent a city-wall. A certain modicum of moss would therefore be admissible, but no prodigicality of grass, weeds, ivy, etc. Can you give any information on these heads?"[2]

On first appearances it would seem that the Pre-Raphaelites over-emphasized this realism to the extent of absurdity. However, their very meticulous technique was not without spiritual realism and exactitude. These painters were prophets as well as painters.....They escaped the blase artists' vice of caring for nothing but their art, for

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[1]R. L. Megroz, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 154.
[2]Ibid, 155.

nothing but mere color and design. They did not "cruise in the secluded lakes of artistic repose, nor dally in the still waters of mere aesthetic content." They seemed to have attempted to balance the "form and content" formula over which there always arises so very much dissension and diversion of opinion in aesthetic criticism. They not only insisted on accuracy of delineation, and simple direct truth; but also on the spirit manifested through these qualities--in the thought, purpose, or inner intention. Few artists have conceived more intimately and more fully than they, that the forms and colors of nature are but the language of the painter, the symbols through which he expresses meanings of his own mind; and consequently in absolute examination of any picture, the question as to the value of grandeur of the meaning expressed must take precedence over the question concerning the excellence of the expression itself. These artists believed that beyond the painter was the man, who was great or little, not alone in virtue of his skill in faithful execution, but in virtue also of the nature of the thoughts of which his pictures are the conveyance. The advice, then, of the Pre-Raphaelites, to return to the faithful study of nature, was not, essentially, therefore, an attempt to lead art in any one particular direction; but that all painters universally should cultivate the habit and possess the faculty of painting things with literal truth.[1]

Hence, to suppose, as is very often intimated that the Pre-Raphaelite Movement means only photographic accuracy of detail is quite a vulgar error. Such art is not genius.

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[1]Article VII, British Quarterly Review, XVI, 1852, 197-220.

Hunt, in the latter part of his volume on Pre-Raphaelitism certainly establishes this idea. Here we find him commenting upon the fact that there exist many painters who pose as Pre-Raphaelites, but in reality are not true disciples of this group. We read:

> "It was apparent, however, that many who deluded themselves that they were adopting P. R. ideals went out to the fields, and sitting down transcribed chance scenes touch by touch without recognizing that art is not prosaic reproduction, these were 'Realists.' Every hour, a view indoors or outdoors, near or far, changes its phase, and the artist must capture that which best reflects the heavens. The dull man does not discern the image of the celestial in earthly things, his work may be deservedly admired for its care and delicacy, but the spectator passes by and forgets it. Yet the painters of such works were often cited as masters of the purest Pre-Raphaelitism."[1]

Certainly this would tend to show that even Hunt, who was the staunchest Pre-Raphaelite, stressed something else in art, besides mere prosaic realism--realism devoid of truth--the artist's truth, so to speak.

Again we read:

> "The assumption that what we did was mere prosaic imitation, within the range of common workmen, is best met by comparing Pre-Raphaelite work with that of some dull imitators destitute of poetic discrimination. Certain examples of these attempts, prominent at the time, have now disappeared. With some later prosaic transcripts of Nature by shortsighted converts an effort was made to lead the world to think them more faithful than ours, the outlines of small forms being trivially and mathematically cut out, but we saw that in Nature contours are found and lost, and what in one point is trenchant, in another melts its form into dazzling light or untraceable gloom, and that there is infinite delight to the mind in playing upon the changes between one extreme characteristic and another. It was in such subtle obser-

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[1] W. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 298.

> vations and renderings that men could afford to smile at adverse critics when they said that the profound following out of Nature was fatal to poetry. Adherents to our reform in the true spirit and not in the dead letter have proved that poetry in painting is not destroyed by the close pursuit of Nature's beauty. Let men who want to understand the truth compare the painting of the bricks and mortar in the 'Huguenots' with the brick wall in the picture of 'The Barrack Yard' by Meissonier--who is regarded as a painter of miraculous finish--and they will soon be able to estimate the difference between the perception of infinite variety and mere regard for geometrical precision."[1]

We understand quite precisely that Hunt regarded Pre-Raphaelitism as something decidedly different from extreme naturalism, or mere photographic reproduction, on the part of the artist. So, also, he believed it to be something more than geometric precision, or mere perfection of artistic form or language, as Ruskin would have called it; mere delight in strong and full utterance for its own sake. In the last named procedure there lurks the danger of too great an emphasis on technique which might tend to lead art in a decadent path. We see an excellent illustration of the very thing in the life of the earlier Venetian School. With all its glow and glory of natural life, this school which was primarily decorative in character, merged the more readily into the gradual substitution of form for matter; fostered the general deterioration of naturalism into sensuality, which overtook Italian art after the decadence of Raphael.[2]

There is a strange parallel between this phenomenom and the nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelites; since this is precisely what happened to one stream of Pre-Raphaelitism when

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[1] W. H. Hunt, op. cit. II, 332.
[2] E. Wood, op. cit., 50.

Rossetti steered it off its original course into strange channels. We shall see this more fully in the discussion concerned primarily with Rossetti.[1]

In order to establish more definitely and thoroughly the entire doctrine of Pre-Raphaelitism, with all its significances and inter-related complications, it will be necessary to consider individually the men who figured in the importance of the movement. It is only be doing this that a real understanding of the problem shall be properly established and some of the most important truths realized. Then, too, by such a procedure likenesses and differences of the opinions of these men will also be made obvious.

As has been already indicated, Holman Hunt, D. G. Rossetti, and Everett Millais were in reality the Pre-Raphaelite Movement; Hunt being the leader, as we shall discern. Although a great number of minor figures aided in carrying out the principles of this new revival in art, it is utterly impossible to discuss each one of these men fully, if at all, in a thesis of limited length and purpose. Hence, since the really important work comes from the triumverate just named--since they were the real influential figures who established and directed the new art theories--we shall attempt to deal only with their contributions to the movement, deciding afterward the upshot of the whole thing, as we interpret it from our knowledge of these individuals and their work.

It would be difficult to find three painters of equal power whose art was so differently inspired and whose achievement was destined to take such separate and widely divergent

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[1]See Chapter VII of this Thesis.

forms as Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais. Yet, their efforts were bound together by one common purpose, at least, a protest against the fetters imposed upon them by traditional rules of painting. In the beginning, all three started out with the same principles concerning art; namely, the adherence to nature. Their individual personalities needed one another. As one writer says, "Hunt supplied the purpose, the weight, and the science; Rossetti the imaginary geius; and Millais his own marvellous inventiveness, and technical skill."[1] Had these qualities been combined in one man, or had they been able to keep together in their boyish brotherhood, the early works might have been excelled and an English tradition formed comparable to that of the Italian Cinquecento. But it could not be. Rossetti was an individual at heart, and played for his own hand; Millais was drawn by success into paths where his own wonderful facility had full scope; Hunt had supplied the solid intellectual foundation, but he perhaps also suffered when the more subtle and agile elements were withdrawn.[2]

It is almost sure there would have been no revolution if the three had not come together while they were still young and had these common interests which brought about the great protest in the art world; and, in turn, had an important influence in the history of aesthetic criticism. Let us see more precisely, then, these three individuals as individuals, so as to gain better insight into their artistic beliefs and their specific differences; since it is only be gaining knowledge of each man's particular point of view that we

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[1] P. Dearmer, op. cit., 74-81.
[2] F. M. Hueffer, "William Holman Hunt, O. M.," Fortnightly Review, LXXXVIII, (October, 1910), 651-65.

realize and appreciate the critical problems which arose--aesthetic problems as old as Plato and Aristotle.

CHAPTER V

W. H. HUNT AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT

We shall begin with Hunt, since his views were those held by the Pre-Raphaelites in their early and original stages--those views rightfully called Pre-Raphaelite. Of all the Brothers, this man "was the only one who fully understood, who fully carried out, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer the canons of Pre-Raphaelitism."[1] Hunt never deviated a jot from the line he had set out to follow. On this particular point, practically all writers are agreed. One author says:

> "The work of Holman Hunt, among all the Pre-Raphaelite painters, has remained the most consistent and exclusive in its aims and methods, and the least affected by surrounding influences, either from his comrades or from the critical world. His artistic development has been the most faithful to its origins, and has presented the most unbroken continuity of thought and sentiment in its progress from the first 'note of resistance and defiance' to the larger harmony of maturer years."[2]

Hunt was typical of the unresting, pioneering energy of these men; of the high seriousness and unflinching moral purpose which gave to the Victorian era a solidity in enduring contrast alike with its precursor, the Age of Dandies, and its successor, the Age of the Decadents.[3]

As has been intimated, the Pre-Raphaelites liked noble subjects, and Hunt felt that his mission in art was a religious one; not only in the narrow, biblical sense of

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[1] F. M. Hueffer, op. cit.
[2] E. Wood, op. cit., 149.
[3] P. Dearmer, op. cit.

the term, but in the broader sense which includes all of life and the real meaning of truth. He was inspired with this ardent desire of the ascetic for the rendering of truth--and truth was religion to him. To him Beauty was Truth enjoyed--a dictum which throws us at once into the roiled waters of aesthetic criticism. Hunt's works are all morally and intellectually true; have high and noble artistic qualities; have a universal appeal indeed, since they are profoundly human, and all because of this passionate love of Truth. But are they essentially works of art, for these reasons? Is the purpose of art to teach, to instruct, to preach moral lessons, principally? Plato has answered this question from one aspect. Hundreds since have answered it from other aspects, arguing the ground over and over again. Percy Dearmer has a valuable bit of information on this point, and quite sensible, it would seem:

> "It is true, of course, that a fine subject does not turn a bad picture into a good one; true that a good painter can make a fine picture out of a common or a base subject--out of a carcass in a butcher's shop or a London slum, for instance--and true, therefore, that the excellence of a picture lies not in its subject but in the painting of it. Yes, is the subject of a picture nothing to the painter, or to us? Would Michelangelo's ceiling be quite the same if--instead of Adam and the Sybils--it was covered with African Ju-Jus or with washerwomen yawning? Degas could paint a washerwoman magnificently, when he tore himself away from his pathetic ballet-dancers; but would he not have been a finer artist still if he had been more interested in other things? And would it not be better for us all? There is a place for uglisness in art--even perhaps on occasion for the uglification of things naturally fair--just as there is a place in nature for the wart-hog; but I like Giorgione the better for having tried to make his women and men as beautiful as he could; I would not change

> Titian's divinities for dowdies or for apaches; and I am glad that El Greco did not devote his life to painting plates of apples....other things being equal, it is better to paint a good subject, as indeed it is more difficult; and the fact that in this way many people come to like pictures who are not naturally endowed with what I believe I ought to call the true aesthetic reaction--this fact is surely all to the good. We want as many people as possible to like pictures...and to learn to appreciate them better. There are few things about Holman Hunt and his Pre-Raphaelite followers more striking than the way in which reproductions of their pictures came to fill the rooms of cultivated people....The whole educated world became interested in painting; and I cannot help thinking that this was a great achievement; for I would rather painting was enjoyed by all, even if not for all the best reasons, than confined to a tiny faction barking about their plastic sensibilities or melting in ecstasy before the volume and mass of the rotund abdomen of an African fetish."[1]

At least the above quotation is food for thought, acting as a challenge to the super-aesthete, whose sole purpose lies in the "Art for art's sake" doctrine. Surely when art is reduced to mere dilettantism, it is of little spiritual worth to man. When the artist's appeal is no longer simple, it ceases to be real art. Hence, it would seem that true artistic productions must exhibit externally, but also contain within their very being a meaningful and high worthiness. They must carry from the artist, the creator, something of value and beauty to all mankind. All the greatest art seems to substantiate such a notion, without a doubt.

We are told that art cannot be didactic--a rather flimsy philosophy, it would seem. After all, the net result

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[1]P. Dearmer, op. cit.

of art upon the world is education; not without aesthetic pleasure, however. All the most valuable spiritual possessions of civilized man are the results and efforts of poets and artists. True, a mere didactic person is no artist. But if a good artist has fine ideas to express, he will necessarily educate, in the broader sense of the term; and not only be didactic, for the sake of mere moral instruction. If his emotions are noble and profound, they will necessarily color his art.

Just so it was in the case of Hunt's artistic endeavors. His critical views concerning the purpose of art tally very accurately with those just related. In the final chapter of his volume on Pre-Raphaelitism he insists emphatically that the purpose of art is of decided importance. Let us quote some of these ideas in order to establish our point more emphatically:

> "It is one of the objects of this book to lead artists to recognize the necessity of sitting in judgment on the fashion of the day, throwing away that which is wanting in health and high purpose. The temper of theorists has led them very generally of late to pronounce without limitation that art has no connection with morals. They forget that it was the craving of man to acknowledge the virtue of his ancestors and the beneficence of his gods, which claimed art as its servant in its best days, and that in the refinement of later ages, art deviated from such adoring attitude only to express larger sympathy with the trials of fellow humanity."[1]

Farther on we read:

> "'That morality need have nothing to do with art' is to proclaim the undeniable, but the latitudinarian application of this statement is altogether false to the ex-

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, Vol. II, 360.

amples of antiquity. Art from the beginning served for the higher development of man's mind, and for the fostering of sublime imaginings, and as it worked in old time, so it will do in the time to come if it is nourished by an elevating spirit.

"Undoubtedly the art of design has at times been prostituted to immoral purpose, even as have poetry and literature; neither is free from the canker of unwholesome pathos or fevered sentiment that threaten them; that danger they share with all human effort, but where indulged in it precipitates to ruin."[1]

The following paragraph contains a nugget of wisdom also:

"'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.' Refinement should perfect virtue, even as polish does when laid over good workmanship, while yet it has no proper place when concealing underlying rottenness. It is on such grounds that I plead for the responsible use of all art. I am now concerned with the temper in which Pre-Raphaelitism instinctly treated this question. It has been seen how in a quite childlike way we at the beginning set ourselves to be connected with the pathetic, the honest, the laudable, and the sublime. When we treated of vicious power triumphant, it was to excite honest pity for the victims, and indignation towards arrogant vice. Some honest men that I have met have asked me with unaffected concern whether artists paint their subjects with conviction, or merely as a bid for popular favor. The answer is 'Sincerity.' Take Millais as a fair exponent of our standard; he but rarely painted so-called religious subjects, but he loved to illustrate what may justly be looked upon as sacred themes. The story of Lorenzo and Isabella, considered on moral grounds, is thoroughly healthy and sound in its claim to human sympathy and interest; their affections were obnoxious to no righteous judgment, but only inimical to greed and vanity. In his picture 'L'Enfan du Regiment,' the child sleeping on the warrior's tomb, contrasted with surrounding violence and bloodshed, typifies the trustful peace which the building was originally intended to inspire. Although the work is not labelled religious, it may be regarded as a Christian homily. His 'Blind

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., 360.

> Girl,' moreover, is a heartfelt appeal to commiseration. 'The Rescuing Fireman' provokes expansive recognition of the Divine in unpretending humanity. Rossetti's early designs were pronouncedly religious, and his picture of 'Found' was, in the just sense, intrinsically so. These pictures by my two companions should be enough to prove that our purpose accepted the principle that 'Art is Love.' Still let it be said we did not label our pictures as 'having a moral,' for we knew that beauty in itself alone invites to innocent joy, with persuasion to purify and sweetness, and the painter's service in simply portraying it may be as exalted as that performed when the intent to teach is added thereto."[1]

Hunt continues, in a long discussion on this particular point bearing on the true purpose of art. We shall cite just one more important and rather pointed remark, and then proceed to other considerations. Hunt insists:

> "The eternal test of good art is the influence it is calculated to have on the world, and, when actuated by patriotism, all propagandists will consider first the influence of their teaching upon their own nation. What the people are led to admire, that they will infallibly become....., and if principles of moral conduct are not respected in art, the ties of social life will be relaxed, and.....children will grow up with loosened ideals of family honour. It is the acceptance of irresponsibility that the foundations of a nation are sapped, it becomes effete, and drifts to the cataract of destruction. Man sees other men in the mirror of his own character, and every unit has its power in society either to build up with integrity or to disintegrate with guile. Refusing one's own strength for combination to hold up the pillars of the State saps Society, until the cry, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' brings about its downfall. The dissolution of a people's strength begins with a sickly literature and base art. We may admit brilliancy in the gift that uses its tinsel to make men jeer at self-government and honour, and encourage amusing reversals of justice, making disorder pass for the only gaiety of life,

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., Vol. II, 361-362.

> but we must count the fact that trees
> bear their own fruit, and no other;
> thoughts are the parents of words, and
> words of acts, and we must not lose sight
> of the co-relation of consequences with
> the habitual complexion of our inmost dreams."[1]

This is not thoroughly different from the old Platonic ideals. Essentially, then, Hunt had a high and noble purpose in all his art. Together with this purpose, he insisted upon absolute realistic portrayal of detail at all times. Illustrations of this we have seen in some of the instances cited in a foregoing section of this discussion.

If space and time allowed, it might be interesting to go over, in detailed fashion, all of Hunt's paintings, pointing out specifically how each measures up to his theoretical art doctrines. However, such a procedure would be utterly impossible. Hence, let us suffice in mentioning just a few of his greatest works, in which we at once evidence this strict employment of Pre-Raphaelite principles.

His earlier works include figures of medieval and Shakespearean characters as well as religious subjects. Then, too, we find characters represented from Keats and Tennyson, figures which carried with them a definite story and implication of value. Besides his famous "Light of the World," we find listed in this group, his equally famous "Hireling Shepherd," "The Awakened Conscience," "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Claudia and Isabella," "Rienzi," "Christians Escaping from Persecuting the Druids," "The Lady of Shalott," "Valentine and Sylvia," and also a number of portraits of Rossetti, Collins, Millais, and Deverell.

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., Vol. II, 372-73.

As is obviously indicated from the titles alone, Hunt's paintings all have definite content value, all have a story, or meaningful experience back of their lines and colors--no "symphonies in blue" do we find here--never a mere abstraction, or a sensual, fleshy one in the lot. The figures in his pictures are all completely natural, each one painted very meticulously from a living model, with garb exactly according to historical reference. In his volume he tells us of the many experiences he had in securing the correct background and models for his subjects; sometimes weeks and months were spent in searching.

Hunt became dissatisfied, around the year 1854, with the conditions in Europe, for executing paintings which related to Christ and his country. His ardent passion for perfect realism, for natural and true historical representation--perhaps a bit too strong and exaggerated--led him to journey to the Far East. His destination was Palestine, where he made a crusade, so to speak, in search of that historical truth which undoubtedly aided in giving such historical truth to his later religious pictures. He went that he might represent these scenes as they occurred during Christ's life. In his autobiography, he explains his point of view in making such a journey--one which might seem a bit foolish to the casual observer. We read, in a discussion which he is having with his friend Egg, on the subject:

> "To Egg's argument that I should go only for a few months to make sketches, and come back to paint these, I demurred that others had done this; Roberts, for example, and Wilkie had intended to do so, that I was convinced the sketches by the latter would have had no great service for pictures had he lived to make use of them. Confessing to Egg that my project of going to

> Syria had originated when I was a boy at school when the lessons from the New Testament were read, I added, that although the science, and more transiently the conclusions drawn from these by theorists and commentators, had often compelled me to reconsider my earlier understanding of the story, yet the doings of that Divine Master in Syria never ceased to claim my homage. The pursuit of painting only gave my childish Palestine project distincter purpose. 'The gain in thoughtfully spent life is,' I said, 'the continual disturbance of obsolete convictions; at such tremulation of ideas one is tempted to shoot off to any extreme harbour of rest, and to violently denounce all others..... my desire is strong to use my powers to make more tangible Jesus Christ's history and teaching. Art has often illustrated the theme, but it has surrounded it with many enervating fables, and perverted the heroic drama with feeble interpretation. We have every reason to believe that the Father of all, demands that every generation should contribute its quota of knowledge and wisdom to attain the final purpose, and, however small my mite may be, I wish to do my poor part, and in pursuing this aim I ought not surely to serve art less perfectly.' At which Egg yielded the point, saying, 'Well, perhaps you're right.'"[1]

At the end of his volume, Hunt again refers to his trip to the East, justifying his stand in undertaking the journey. He asserts:

> "I am persuaded that my decision to realize my purpose of painting in the East, at whatever cost it might be, was no rash one. It was certain that the time had come when others in the world of thought besides myself were moved by the new spirit, which could not allow the highest of all interests to remain as an uninvestigated revelation. From the beginning of my attempt till this time many thinkers of various schools have devoted themselves to elucidate anew the history treated in the gospels, and the desire for further light cannot be quenched. The conviction I started with, that

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, Vol. I, 348-49.

> much of the teaching of Christ's life is lost by history being overlaid with sacerdotal gloss, is widely shared by others.....I have established my claim as a pioneer for English art in study of historic truth, which artists of other nations in their own ways have followed."[1]

We cannot fail to note the utter sincerity in Hunt's expedition to Christ's country. He went in order that he might carry out more accurately what he so ardently believed--a reason enough for doing anything, it would seem.

His experiences in the far land fill pages and pages of interesting detail. Again, and again we see how he laboured to secure correct backgrounds and suitable models for his pictures. He would journey for weeks and weeks with his guide's aid, in search of these perfect features. Sometimes the mere absence of the correct herbage caused delay on the part of the execution of the picture. Hunt tells us that while he was in Jerusalem, after traveling about Syria, he wanted a young white goat as a model for his completion of "The Temple." An Arab undertook to get one for him. He relates:

> "Having until January searched in vain, he delighted me after two or three days by appearing with a model which was nigh perfect; the price was a fancy one, the animal was tired with his journey, and it was petted in every degree as a precious possession, but the next day it died before I could do a touch from it. I then had to send off two venturesome lads for another, and in a week, in the middle of February, they returned with a kid without trace of brown or black on his coat, save for a patch on the off side. This animal served me to the end of my stay....."[2]

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 337-38.

[2] Ibid, Vol. I, Chapter XIII.

Hunt painted many scenes of the country, including "The Plain of Rephaim from Mount Zion," "Nazareth," "Lake of Tiberias," "Jordan," and a host of others. Probably his most famous picture done in this period is the "Scapegoat." "The Miracle of Sacred Fire," a piece of work which was done in the Church of the Sepulchre, Jerusalem, is without a doubt, one of Hunt's most difficult paintings. It contains hundreds and hundreds of figures, and the details of architecture in the church are excellently portrayed in realistic splendour.

And so we could go on and on in great length, describing Hunt's paintings, and the interesting experiences connected with them. For a further discussion on the subject, the reader is referred to Hunt's very complete volumes.[1]

Ford Maddox Hueffer, one of Hunt's capable critics, has undoubtedly written some very valuable information concerning the work of this artist; especially relating to his purpose in art. He says:

> "Inspired with the intense, unreasoning faith of the ascetic for the mysteries of revealed religion--inspired, too, with the intense and unreasoning desire of the ascetic for the rendering of truth, since he believed that truth and revealed religion were as much identical as are the one in three of the Trinity, so Mr. Holman Hunt supported the fiery suns of the desert, the thirsts of the day, the rigours of the night, the contempt of his compatriots, and the scorn of his time, in the endeavour to prove that Our Lord was a Semitic boy or an adult Jew inspired with the ecstasy of a modern French anarchist; that His Mother was a Bedouin woman of no particular distinction, or that the elders in the Temple were a set of Semitic sheiks dressed in aniline

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism, Vol. I, II.

> dyed burnouses, packed together in wooden tabernacles, beneath a remorseless sun. This was the message of Mr. Holman Hunt to his generation, a message surely very salutary and very useful. For of its kind, and as far as it went, it meant clearness of thought, and clearness of thought in any department of life is the most valuable thing that a man can give to his day."[1]

Gathering from the content of the article, Hueffer believes that not only was Pre-Raphaelitism, as represented by Hunt, important to modern art, but essentially important to the development of modern thought, as well:

> "This religiosity which Mr. Holman Hunt, before even Darwin, Huxley, and other Victorian figures, so effectively destroyed, was one of the scourges of the dismal period which today we call the Victorian era. And if Mr. Hunt destroyed the image of Simon Peter as the sort of artist's model that you see on the steps of Calabrian churches, ...if Mr. Hunt destroyed this figure, with its attitudes learnt on the operatic stage, its blanket revealing opulently moulded forms, and its huge property keys extended towards a neo-Gothic Heaven--if Mr. Hunt gave us instead (I don't know that he ever did, but he may have done) a Jewish fisherman pulling up dirty-looking fish on the shores of a salt-encrusted and desolate lake--then Mr. Hunt, in the realms of modern thought, enormously aided in the discovery of wireless telegraphy, and in no way damaged the prestige of the occupant of St. Peter's Chair. This truism may appear a paradox. And yet nothing is more true than that clearness of thought in one department of life stimulates clearness of thought in another. The great material developments of the end of the last century did not only succeed the great realistic developments that had preceded them in the arts. The one was the logical corollary of the other. Just as you cannot have a healthy body in which one of the members is unsound, so you cannot have a healthy national life in the realms of thought unless in

> all the departments of life you have sincere thinkers, and this is what Mr. Hunt undoubtedly was--a sincere thinker."[1]

Certainly this criticism is sound on the part of Hueffer, and a decided compliment to Mr. Hunt. It is true, the technical side of Hunt's work is often questioned because of its lack of perfection in some instances. We know that his paintings were not always flawless from the point of view of perspective, proportion, and coloring--but, they have more than this; they express a depth and sincerity of purpose and truth which reach beyond technicalities, and impress the deeper side of man's nature.

The question nevertheless persists in arising in the realm of criticism: Which is more important from the artistic and aesthetic point of view, form or content? To which no surer answer may be pronounced than the one which rests on a solid and safe middle ground; namely, a true balance between the two.

Critics also maintain, at least a certain group of them, that Hunt, in his conscientiousness for realism, often reproduced a mere union of details instead of the large vision of a complete whole; hence some of his works are prone to be harsh in detail as well as color. However, if in the opinion of some, Hunt's procedure was not the line of the very finest beauty and artistic perfection, they must yet concede it was that of scrupulous tenacity and sincerity, which had a distinct virtue in the purification of art as it was before the daring revolt. He was a seer who led the way in freeing modern artistic creation from mere imitativeness--a sheer,

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[1] F. M. Hueffer, ibid.

empty traditional art shell.

Certainly Hunt does not lack in universal appeal. Probably no English painter within the last half of the nineteenth century has been so widely known as he; because no painter has, to so great an extent, held "one picture shows" all over the country.

So far then, we gather from the above survey of Hunt's purpose and accomplishment, that Pre-Raphaelitism was primarily and essentially realism in art; or better, perhaps, truth. We are convinced, however, that it was not stark naturalism, in the general understanding of the term. Hunt saves it from this extreme, in that he still selected--he chose his subject from the higher side of life, never specializing in the grim, the horrible, the grotesque, as the extreme naturalist is want to do. He painted a man as a real human being. He portrayed a goat as a real goat, ugly, and according to its nature. He painted his religious pictures from life itself; and according to one of his patrons, pictures of real situations, in place of the traditional, pretty religious picture, "with epicene angels, curled golden hair and long night-gowns." Hunt's doctrine was realism based on truth; but realism with poetic choice. He, himself makes this perfectly clear when he says:

> ".....a man's work must be the reflex of a living image in his own mind, and not the icy double of the facts themselves. It will be seen that we were never realists. I think art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any of us had the object been only to make a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact in nature. Independently of the conviction that such a system would put out of

> operation the faculty making a man "like a God," it was apparent that a mere imitator gradually comes to see nature claylike and finite, as it seems when illness brings a cloud before the eyes. Art dominated by this spirit makes us esteem the world as without design or finish, unbalanced, unfitting, and unlovely, not interpreted into beauty as true art makes it."[1]

For those who would tend to insist that Hunt was a painter of only stark realism, a realism without poetry in its soul, certainly the above quotation, and a glance at any one of his pictures would convince them of their error almost at once.

From the above account of Hunt and his notions and practices concerning artistic creations and art theories let us summarize, then, very briefly, exactly what Pre-Raphaelitism means. First of all, we are wont to conclude that his theory concerning art was realism on the technical side, which includes form and the procedure of the artist; and truth on the content side. In other words, his creation was to be the exact portrayal of what the eye of the artist saw, in order to keep the imagination from intruding where the hand is supposed to work. The idea should be supreme, absolutely the important issue of the artistic creation--not overshadowed by empty lines or portrayal of color harmony, without meaning or significance. The idea should be great, beautifully conceived, not base or sordid or meaningless, in the mind and imagination of the poet or artist. It should be true to life and universal experience; but its portrayal should be clearly defined, and always guided by nature and truth.

One other point remains to be made before leaving this particular man. Hunt might be credited with the honor of bringing the English art tradition back to its former basis

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[1] W. H. Hunt, op. cit., I, 150.

of beauty. We read in the latter portion of his work on Pre-Raphaelitism, where he discusses the importance and significance of the Movement, that it was a Movement

> "which strove to bring greater healthiness and integrity to all branches of formative art which are devoted to making dumb materials speak of life and beauty. In the effort to purge our art of what was in the nature of pathos, affected in sentiment and unworthy according to wholesome English tradition, we were emulous of the example of reigning poets, manly in their vindication of virtue, although some spoke in an over-feminine tone; our exemplars in letters had been in accord to prune English imagination of unwholesome foreign precedent, tawdry glitter, theatrical pomposity and such corruptions, they had already revived the robust interest in humanity exercised by British men of genius in past centuries."[1]

In speaking of the Continental art, Hunt says:

> "Of late years Continental taste has been asserting itself injuriously amongst us not only in art and literature, but upon the stage; and themes based upon moral turpitude, which our standard fathers of the drama rejected are presented in spectacular form (that readiest in power of appeal), making familiar and commonplace what else was outlandish and abhorrent to the inheritors of healthy and sturdy English tradition."[1]

Commenting upon the extravagances of the Continental principles of art, Hunt is especially intolerant of the School of Impressionists. He exclaims:

> "I cannot accept the correctness of the term Impressionist representing the paramount end of art. Undoubtedly many of the works classed by the public as impressionistic have no evidence of sober common sense; they are without perspective, correct form, or any signs of patient drilling and scholarship. They suggest suspicion that the workman never duly submitted himself to persistent tuition or patient practice, and not seldom on inquiry it will be found that he took

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 363.

> up the pursuit of art so late in life as to prove that he had no imperative call from her; and he covers his inability to conquer the besetting sins which every tyro must eradicate from his uncultivated disposition, by fine names and theories. In any case as a beginning to an art career such loose practice is most damaging, and even at the best it is liable to lead capable manipulators to a system of work representing the outside of things only, and to the immortalizing of accidental points tending to caricature, so that the soul of a subject is lost. Whether it be right to catalogue the hideous canvases often appearing in exhibitions in recent days, chaotic in form and of sullied pigment plastered on offensively, both as to tint and texture, as Impressionist and to class as Impressionist sculptures of evil-proportioned humanity desplaying a series of monstrous developments in lieu of divinely designed muscles, I will not determine; but their makers are now the nucleus of an obtrusive party in the art world, and being a standing peril to honest and honourable art, it behooves us to find out from what source these degrading pretensions arise. Such art is the product solely of modern days, formerly students were taught to be reverent and careful in their beginnings..... Seeing that an artist must by his work represent the Nature dear to his own heart, it is incumbent upon all lovers of her, having the interest of students in mind, to investigate how this poisonous influence has been fostered, and what is the environment which tends to form the character of those exposed to it."[1]

Certainly this matter of art was a very meaningful business for the poet and the painter, according to Hunt. It was more than the mere illusive wandering of poetic imagination. It was a serious and important mission. Art, according to him, should "perform a wholesome and divine service to humanity."

Hunt's last paragraph is fitting and proper at this particular turn. He ends his book with these words:

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 364.

"The purpose of Art is, love of guileless Beauty, leading man to distinguish between that which, being pure in spirit, is productive of Virtue, and that which being flaunting and meretricious is productive of ruin to a Nation."[1]

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 379.

CHAPTER VI

EVERETT MILLAIS AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT

Millais, as already has been intimated, was, next to Hunt, the only other true Pre-Raphaelite, true to the very end of his career--never swerving in principle and practice from the original purpose of the Brotherhood. For a complete as well as interesting and authentic record of his life and work in the field of artistic creation, the reader is referred to The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, his biography, written by his son, John Quille Millais.

Upon analysis, Millais' beliefs and art practices tally precisely with those of Hunt, in all important respects. However, his paintings are, perhaps, of greater value as far as artistic perfection is concerned. They are undoubtedly considered in all of their total aspects the greatest of all the Pre-Raphaelite contributions to the realm of art.

In technique and execution Millais surpassed Hunt--this fact is quite evident. His realism was most perfectly balanced with poetic imagination. Never once did he allow the latter to subdue the former, as was the case of his colleague, Rossetti. His son says of him in his biography:

> "United with a highly poetic instinct and a romantic spirit that I have often compared to that of Keats, Millais had an abundance of common-sense and a love of accuracy which might have injured his poetical faculty if that had not been in the first place pre-eminent."[1]

In connection with Hunt, it might be claimed that Hunt was the greater Pre-Raphaelite--the more sturdy pioneer--but not as great an artist, everything considered, as was the

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[1]E. Millais, The Life and Letters, II, 441.

man, Millais. The two men were the greatest of friends all through life.[1] Even while Hunt was in the Far East they corresponded regularly, keeping each other posted on their individual progress.

Millais' pictures demonstrate the same careful meticulous work which is evident in the creations of Hunt. His first picture bearing the Pre-Raphaelite signature, namely, "Claudio and Isabella," is an example of this. The drawing is taken from Keat's quaint, charming, and pathetic poem, "Isabella." During its exhibit, which was held some time after its production, Mr. Stephens in the Grosvenor Gallery catalogue of the year 1886 wrote of it:

> "Every detail, tint, surface texture, and substance, all the flesh, all the minutiae of the accessories were offered to the exquisitely keen sight, indefatigable fingers, unchangeable skill, and indomitable patience of one of the most energetic of painters. Such tenacity and technical powers were never, since the German followers of Durer adopted Italian principles of working, exercised on a single picture. Van Eyck did not study details of 'the life' more unflinchingly than Millais in this case. The flesh of some of the heads, except so far as the face of 'Ferdinand' and some parts of Holman Hunt's contemporaneous 'Rienzi,' were concerned, remained beyond comparison in finish and solidity until Millais painted the hands in 'The Return of the Dove to the Ark.'"[2]

The artist's famous "Christ in the House of His Parents," better known as "The Carpenter's Shop" (1850) is a splendid example of his realism and careful, scrupulous technique so characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite ideals. The picture is too well known to demand a detailed description here. The child

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[1] E. Millais, op. cit., I, Chapter XI.

[2] Ibid, 73.

Christ is seen in His father's workshop with blood flowing from His hand, the result of a recent wound; while His mother waits upon Him with sympathetic and loving understanding. Underneath the picture Millais inscribed this title, a quotation from Zechariah XIII, 6:

> "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

Hence, the symbolism of the picture is at once obvious; strictly and sincerely religious in sentiment. Yet, we can readily see how a public, educated in the traditional principles, were disturbed by this kind of artistic practice. Imagine the people's horror when Millais exhibited a picture showing the "House of Christ's Parents as a wooden shed, strewn with shavings and hung with tools. The young Christ has torn his hand on a nail, and St. Joseph, turning from his bench, holds up the wounded palm, which Mary hastens to bind with a linen cloth. John the Baptist brings water to bathe the hurt before she covers it, and the elder woman bends forward to remove the tools with which the boy, perhaps, has carelessly played." The whole thing was blasphemous! To think of these sacred personages as real human beings. No one really liked to think about the Redeemer as Man; and Millais, in all complaisance, showed them the Virgin kissing her Son!

The critics fell upon Millais as the prime mover in the rebellion against established precedent. In the words of one critic:

> "Men who knew nothing of Art reviled Millais because he was not of the art artistic. Dilettanti who could not draw a fingertip scolded one of the most accomplished

> draughtsmen of the age because he delineated what he saw. Cognoscenti who could not paint rebuked the most brilliant gold medal student of the Royal Academy on account of his technical proceedings. Critics of the most rigid views belaboured and shrieked at an original genius, whose struggles and whose efforts they could not understand. Intolerant and tyrannical commentators condemned the youth of twenty because he dared to think for himself; and, to sum up the burden of the chorus of shame and false judgment, there was hardly a whisper of faith or hope, or even of charity--nay, not a sound of the commonest and poorest courtesy--vouchsafed to the painter of 'The Carpenter's Shop," as, in utter scorn, this picture was originally and contumiliously called."[1]

Certainly Millais and the artists who painted like material in the religious vein, have not secularized the highest things, but have sanctified the lower; "have pierced to the common sources of religious thought and feeling, and have brought into the labour of the present hour the wide and eternal meanings of the past."

Millais' other early works, all of the same realistic calibre, include: "Ferdinand Lured by Ariel," "The Huguenot," "The Eve of St. Agnes," "The Blind Girl," "The Return of the Dove," "The Royalist," "The Order of Release," "Sir Isumbras." All these paintings are essentially realistic in essence. The subjects, as in the case of Hunt, are all selected from religious or poetical sources, or based on modern incidents. Perhaps Millais might be marked as choosing more of his subjects from modern, everyday experiences than did Hunt--Hunt being primarily religious and historical in motive.

We read of "The Order of Release," one of his best pieces, and decidedly representative of realistic endeavor:

> "As a piece of realistic painting, it may challenge comparison with anything else in the world. The scene takes place..... in a bare waiting-room, into which the young clansman has been ushered to his wife, while his gaoler takes 'The Order of Release,' which will have to be verified by his superior before it can result in final liberty. The stamp of actual truth is on it; and if ever such an event happened, if ever a Highlander's wife brought a pardon for her husband to a reluctant turnkey, things must have occurred thus. The work is saved by expression and colour from the realism of a photograph. The woman's shrewd, triumphant air is wonderfully caught, though the face of the pardoned man is concealed.....The good dog seems actually alive. The child in the woman's arms is uncompromisingly 'Hieland.' The flesh painting, as of the child's bare legs, is wonderfully real;..... As a matter of truthful detail, observe the keys in the gaoler's hand, the clear steel shining through a touch of rust. The subject and the sentiment, no less than the treatment, made this picture a complete success."[1]

Spielmann has an interesting note on this particular picture also. He says:

> "So great was Millais' passion for accuracy, that he obtained a genuine order of release, signed by Sir Hildegrave Turner, when, during the war, he was Governor of Elizabeth Castle in Jersey, and so faithfully did he copy it that the late Colonel Turner, the Governor's son, who knew nothing of the matter, recognized with surprise his father's signature in the picture, as he walked through the gallery in which it was exhibited."[2]

In some notes on Millais written by H. W. B. Davis, R. A., we find the same type of expression concerning the painter's supreme realistic art products. Let us quote just a few remarks of the highly complimentary dissertation. In speaking of "The Blind Girl," he says:

> "The picture is, indeed, to my mind, a marvel among pictures--even among Millais', considering at what an early stage in his

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[1] E. Millais, op. cit., I, 180.
[2] Ibid, 183.

> career it was produced--for, putting aside for the moment the main subject of the picture--its great pathos, its remarkable realistic drawing, and the vigour of painting and colour in the figures--and looking upon the work in the sense of a landscape alone, it is, with its power and brilliancy as such, simply astonishing. A piece of great landscape painting is there, though on a scale so small that the hand might suffice to cover the surface of the whole background, and replete with detail of extraordinary minuteness; one of his few, too, dealing with a transient effect of Nature.
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> "The sun shines out, after the rain, in all its lustre upon the green grass and wet landscape, and brightens the trees, the buildings, and all the details of the background with a vividness, a freshness, and a reality that are amazing.
>
> "What an effect its appearance must have had upon the Art world of the day--what a revelation to earnest students of out-door Nature! I recollect its exhibition at the Royal Academy, though too inexperienced at the time to appreciate its dazzling merits. It did have its effect, for I was not so young that I did not perceive its immediate influence--upon landscape painting particularly--in inculcating a more searching study of, a constant reference to, Nature herself for her facts, and a truer reverence for them, and refusing to be satisfied with the mere superficial cleverness and artificiality too prevalent at the time."[1]

And so, as in the case of Hunt, one could go on indefinitely, enumerating and discussing the many artistic creations of Millais, pointing out in each instance the same perfect realism and exact minuteness of detail. However, the few examples just referred to are sufficient to point out the kind of work which the artist upheld and produced. Both he and Hunt were true to their purpose; always painting from real subjects and real backgrounds; never allowing their artistry to

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[1] E. Millais, op. cit., II, 450.

develop solely from figments of fragile and illusive imaginations.

It might be well to mention, before disposing of Millais, that biographers of the artist generally agree that after the year 1867 there is some evidence of transition in the man's paintings. Lest this seemingly inconsistent notion (inconsistent in the light of what has been said about the permanency of Millais' Pre-Raphaelite art practices) confuse the reader, some comment should be offered at this time.

It is obvious in Millais' more mature works that we find evidence of a broader stroke being employed. For instance, in his "Rosalind and Celia" (1867) "two or three broad streaks of the brush express exactly a fallen leaf which a few years before would have been highly worked up." And yet, nothing seems to be lost--the illusion is perfect. Let the reader not confuse this kind of painting with the careless impressionistic work which was so prevalent at that particular date. Millais' technique was nothing of this kind. It simply had the earmarks of a painter, matured in his art. Most of the artist's later works are still excellent representations of the early Millais'--Millais, the true Pre-Raphaelite. These paintings include such works as "A Widow's Mite," "Flood," "Over the Hills," and "The Northwest Passage." The last named was, perhaps, the most popular at this particular period.

If we should compare "The Deserted Village," which is one of his later compositions, with his early paintings, we should see little difference in technique, as far as meticulous and detailed labour is concerned. The old ideals which Millais upheld in his earlier practice are still as evident as ever.

He is always Millais, the staunch Pre-Raphaelite, as sure of his touch and stroke as he was in earlier years. We know from his writings that perfection of art began with perfection of meticulous drawing. He emphasized this fact to the end of his career. The line must be perfect and exact, drawn only from nature. His son says of this particular aspect:

> "The intricacies--infinite--of Nature seem to have had a special charm for him; such intricacy of detail, or suggested detail, as other and less gifted men would hardly dare to face or venture to attack, he achieved, and with a success, in his own manner, that has never been attained by any other hand.....Millais' art is distinct from all others in its vivid and sincere realism of intricate detail."

Again, we read:

> "This passionate love of sincerity was in his very soul--was of the essence of the character of the man as of his art; and he could forgive no departure from this sincerity of purpose, no deviation from this strict path of rectitude, as he considered, in any work of Art."[1]

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[1]J. Millais, op. cit., II, 373-374.

CHAPTER VII

ROSSETTI AND PRE-RAPHAELITISM

In attempting an adequate portrayal of Rossetti and his place in the field of art and literature, one has an almost impossible task to perform in a limited discussion of this kind. First of all, he was both an accomplished artist and literary man. He combined the art of painting with that of poetry, so to speak. A whole group of his sonnets are illustrative of his pictures. We might say his pictures are poems of color and line; while his poetry, a great deal of it at least, is colorful painting. Secondly, his creative endeavors and artistic ideals were altered so radically as he matured, that a complete analysis and definite conclusion concerning his art theories are rather fleeting and difficult to entrap in the nets of Pre-Raphaelitism. Thirdly, his intense erratic personality and colorful character, steeped in Italian background, add a touch of illusiveness and obscurity to the man, and hinder decidedly any effort to pin him down concretely in the realm of objective art.

At any rate, even with the above hazards, we shall attempt to single out of the artist and his work only his especial relationship to Pre-Raphaelite art--including in this endeavor other considerations solely for the purpose of clarifying this particular slant on the man. And, as we shall discover, before conpleting our problem, Rossetti will shine forth not the great Pre-Raphaelite which biographers and critics have always named him, but rather be a planet unto himself. We shall see Rossetti, the great artist and poet,

perhaps, but not Rossetti, the great Pre-Raphaelite.

Let it be fully understood, from the very outset, it is not the aim of this discussion to push Rossetti from his already established high literary pedestal. Rather shall his greatness and individual artistry be conceded without further questioning;--however, only in the guise of his own genius, and not in the name of Pre-Raphaelitism. This great movement in art was something distinctly different from Rossettian artistic principles, as we shall attempt to point out.

In this discussion, then, we shall make an effort to prove the following points: 1. Rossetti was not the instigator of Pre-Raphaelitism. This phase in his art career was merely a fleeting one. 2. Rossetti was not a Pre-Raphaelite in the true sense of the term in his artistic endeavors throughout the main course of his career. 3. Rossetti carried Pre-Raphaelitism into decadent channels.

Rossetti, as we have already pointed out in the historical sketch of this paper, began his serious study of art as a staunch Pre-Raphaelite, under the personal direction of William Holman Hunt. Before this acquaintanceship with Hunt, we know that he was a pupil of Ford Maddox Brown, who guided him very meticulously under his own personal direction. His style was strictly Overbeckian at that time, since Brown was a staunch follower of this principle in the execution of his art. Perhaps an explanation of this style might prove helpful as well as aid in clearing up another point of controversy which will arise later on.

At this particular time in history, there existed a clique called the German Pre-Raphaelites--a distinct and

different body from the English Pre-Raphaelites. Perhaps their other name is more fitting--the Nazarenes or Christian art practitioners. These men were living semi-monastic lives in Rome under the leadership of Cornelius and Overbeck. We might rightfully say that their revolt was one, rather of sentiment, than technique. They painted Bible stories timidly, with no particular sincerity, except of cult. They imitated not the aesthetic spirit, but the religious frame of mind of the painters before Raphael. They worked in cells, fasted, and avoided all fleshiness. They upheld the doctrine that no human models might be employed in their work.

We see almost at once how this style is diametrically opposed to that of Hunt and the other true English Pre-Raphaelites. Yet, we find Rossetti a willing and anxious convert to Hunt's art principles. His beliefs, at least superficially, as we gather from the account in Hunt's autobiography as well as his own letters, tally precisely with those of Hunt and Millais, at the time of his early relationship with these men. The letter which we have quoted in part[1] concerning the painting, "Found" points out conclusively that he put into practice, first-rate, Pre-Raphaelite principles, which meant relying solely on nature for every single detail. With utter sincerity do we find him working in this spirit in the beginning of his brief Pre-Raphaelite career. Hunt, as well as a majority of critics agree that this work "Found"--if it had ever been wholly completed--had the greatest possibility of any of his pictures. Certainly Rossetti's anxious

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[1]See page 33 of this Thesis.

remarks in this letter concerning the picture are sufficient proof of his whole-heartedness in Huntian Pre-Raphaelite principles. That it was Hunt who guided him, who was entirely responsible for Rossetti's acceptance of these ideals, is a point of controversy. And it is precisely here that the great argument surges. Authors name Rossetti as being alone the instigator of the new movement, and claim that Hunt and Millais were followers--even go so far as to build the entire notion of Pre-Raphaelitism around him and his procedure.

It is not a difficult task to show that the above claim is entirely incorrect, and that it is this misconstruction that is responsible for the reading of false notions into the theory of Pre-Raphaelitism.

Exactly how Rossetti came to be named the originator of Pre-Raphaelitism is explained by Hunt. He says:

> "It is enough however, to point to the plain facts which show that Millais and I could not have been in 1848 the followers of a young man of whom we scarcely knew, who some months afterwards I was teaching to paint in my study.....
>
> "The rumours of Rossetti's leadership in our reform were first circulated about 1856, but as they were not traceable to any one with a right to claim authority, neither Millais nor I regarded them as deserving attention. We still felt this, even after Ruskin had in one of his Oxford lectures said: 'I believe Rossetti's name should be placed first on the list of men, within my own range of knowledge, who have raised and changed the spirit of modern art, raised in absolute attainment, changed in direction of temper.' And again: 'Rossetti was the chief intellectual force in the establishment of the Modern Romantic School in England.' (A statement, by the way, which might apply to Rossetti as a writer.)
>
> "We heard of all this only at second-hand, and as we both felt that the author had arrived at his conviction on independent

> grounds, he was in his just province as a critic in forming his opinion, and we were the last men called upon to remonstrate. The case is different now that W. M. Rossetti has declared that his brother before he entered my Cleveland Street Studio had in his essays at design become distinctly Pre-Raphaelite; he asserts also that his brother always assumed the place of priority in every company, but he altogether ignores the teaching and help which Gabriel acquired from my guidance and constant attention during the progress of 'The Girlhood and the Virgin' I must remind my readers.....that he certainly could not, without my supervision, have had any painting ready for exhibition in 1849."[1]

Hunt claims, then, that the foundation of the whole myth seems to have been a letter of Ruskin's, wherein he implies that either one of the three might equally claim the originatorship of the doctrine of Pre-Raphaelitism. But then, Ruskin is not always reliable, as has already been shown. Here again we see illustrated just another one of his loose statements. His letter together with the over-anxious and ardent claims which W. M. Rossetti always makes for his brother seem to have caused all the misunderstanding.

Hunt goes on to say:

> "Brown's Diary candidly examined proves to be an enlightening confirmation of other evidence that neither Rossetti nor Brown were originators in our Reform. If Rossetti had, whilst participating in our close alliance, once indulged the ambition to play the part of leader with which his brother credits him, there would have been instantly a dissolution of the active members of our Brotherhood. The comparison of dates with the evidence from Brown's Diary should convince any one who cares to arrive at the truth as to the order in which the members of our circle influenced one another."[2]

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 344-345.

[2]Ibid, II, 350.

A chronological study of the two men's dates shows that Hunt's interest in Pre-Raphaelitism ante-dated Rossetti's, without a shadow of a doubt. We read[1] how Rossetti, when he first visited Hunt, was shown the latter's first picture, "Rienzi," "executed in the new spirit," as Hunt states in his book. Rossetti had not even become acquainted with Pre-Raphaelite principles up to that point. Only after Hunt's direction and advice did he begin his painting "Found," his first solely Pre-Raphaelite picture.

We read in Hunt's volume:

> "In 1851 Millais had painted his century-seasoned wall in "The Huguenot." Up to 1853 Rossetti had not done anything in strict accordance with our exact study of outdoor nature. He had not even attempted it. The first indication of such a desire is in a letter to his mother, then staying at Frome, which shows a sudden resolve to follow Nature without any compromise, in the details of his picture of 'Found'--
>
> Letter to His Mother
>
> 'September 30, 1853
>
> 'Have you or Christina any recollection of an eligible and accessible brick wall? I should want to get up and paint it early in the mornings, as the light ought to be that of dawn. It should be not too countrified (yet beautiful in colour,) as it is to represent a city wall. A certain modicum of moss would therefore be admissible, but no prodigality of grass, weeds, ivy, etc....'"[2]

Let us note at once the date of the letter, which indicates quite explicitly that the picture was only just anticipated in 1853. Hence, the claim, which is also made by some authors, that Hunt's "Awakened Conscience," in notion similar to the theme of "Found," was conceived only after Rossetti originated the idea of his painting "Found"--that Hunt actually

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., I, 107.
[2] Ibid, II, 347-348.

stole the idea from Rossetti--is absolutely absurd. Hunt's work was finished in January and exhibited in May, 1854,[1] before Rossetti's painting was even begun. Brown too, in his Diary, November 1, of 1854, indicates evidence identical with the above claim, and shows distinctly that "Found" was only just begun[2] at this particular time.

We read in Hunt in relation to this point:

> "Extracts from the diary kept by Brown at Finchley in the last months of 1854 prove that the suggestion made by Gabriel and his brother that the former had anticipated the fundamental idea of my 'Awakened Conscience' is an evident romance--
>
> November 1, 1854.--We went after his calf, and succeeded to a miracle.
>
> November 12, 1854.--Gabriel gone to town to see Miss Siddal. Getting on slowly with his calf. He paints it in all like Albert Durer, hair by hair, and seems incapable of any breadth; but this he will get by going over it from feeling at home.....
>
> November 27, 1854.--Saw Gabriel's calf; very beautiful, but takes a long time. Endless emendations; no perceptible progress from day to day....."[3]

By the reading of Brown's Diary and weighing all the evidences available, it is obvious that Rossetti was at this time painting in a manner foreign to the one prescribed by Brown, his former teacher. Hunt goes on:

> "The latter's influence (meaning Brown's) was put aside in the direction which Millais and I had been condemned for taking five years before. From whom else had Rossetti obtained the resolution to go to Nature for every feature of a picture, and to paint it in the most direct and finished manner? It was precisely what I had tried to induce him

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 348.
[2] Life of W. Bell Scott, I, 324. W. Minto, Editor, Harper 1892.
[3] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 349.

to do in my studio in 1849, and again at Sevenoaks in 1850.

> "When Rossetti first came to be taught by me, the background of my 'Rienzi' had all its landscape painted from Nature; and, as I proceeded, Brown on his visits often uttered satirical pleasantries on the 'microscopic' vegetation, and also on the armour and details. The scrupulous humility with which Millais and I had enforced attention to it in all our exhibited works. Either Rossetti derived his manner from us, or, if he invented it, it was five years after the practice had been inaugurated by us."[1]

And so, it seems perfectly ridiculour to accept without question all these falsities which authors have so boldly flaunted before us, claiming for Rossetti the honor of being the instigator of the new spirit in art, when all evidences point distinctly to Holman Hunt. The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais substantiate this same idea,[2] even more emphatically, perhaps. To quote from them here would merely be repetition of what has already been stated from Hunt's volumes. However, there is an interesting comment which we are tempted to include here, since it proves quite thoroughly that Millais was absolutely unmoved and uninfluenced by Rossetti at any time. We read:

> "And now perhaps I may as well give my father's version of the matter as gathered from his own lips in 1896, the year when he was elected as President of the Royal Academy. At that time the papers of course, had much to say about his art life; and, finding that some of them referred pointedly to D. G. Rossetti's influence on the style and character of his work, I asked him to tell me exactly what were his relations with Rossetti, and how far these comments were correct.

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[1] Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 349.

[2] E. Millais, op. cit., I, 50-62.

"'I doubt very much,' he said, 'whether any man ever gets the credit of being quite square and above-board about his life and work.....The papers are good enough to speak of me as a typical English artist; but because in my early days I saw a good deal of Rossetti--the mysterious and un-English Rossetti--they assume that my Pre-Raphaelite impulses in pursuit of light and truth were due to him. All nonsense! My pictures would have been exactly the same if I had never seen or heard of Rossetti. I liked him very much when we first met, believing him to be (as perhaps he was) sincere in his desire to further our aims--Hunt's and mine--but I always liked his brother William much better. D. G. Rossetti, you must understand, was a queer fellow, and impossible as a boon companion--so dogmatic and so irritable when opposed. His aims and ideals in art were also widely different from ours, and it was not long before he drifted away from us to follow his own peculiar fancies. What they were may be seen from his subsequent works. They were highly imaginative and original and not without elements of beauty, but they were not Nature. At last, when he presented for our admiration the young women which have since become the type of Rossettianism, the public opened their eyes in amazement, "And this," they said, "is Pre-Raphaelitism!" It was nothing of the sort. The Pre-Raphaelites had but one idea--to present on canvas what they saw in Nature; and such productions as these were absolutely foreign to the spirit of their work.

".....It was Hunt--not Rossetti--whom I habitually consulted in case of doubt."[1]

What could more clearly define the position of Millais concerning the Rossetti-Hunt conflict than the above quotation.

It may seem rather insignificant to quibble about such a point as who the originator was of a particular idea in art. Whether the ideas and principles were of value, and what particular influence they exerted would seem of greater significance. On this point, let us quote Hunt, once again, for

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[1]E. Millais, op. cit., I, 56.

it seems he justifies his stand in so doing, and quite rightfully too. For he says:

> "Indeed, I should not now argue the point, for it is a matter of small importance which of the three of us was the originator of our Movement, proveded that the desired object was attained. But what makes the question vital is, whether Rossetti's inspiration of ideals and manner of work did represent the original distinct, unwavering, objects of pure Pre-Raphaelitism from its beginning. In this saying I do not in the slightest degree disparage the genius that Rossetti showed both in his painting and in his poetry."[1]

And it is the point that Hunt makes here concerning Rossetti's right claim even to being called a true Pre-Raphaelite that we shall now challenge, and attempt to explain.

After disposing, then, with the problems relating to the authentic authorship of Pre-Raphaelitism, let us proceed to a discussion on the disputed point which claims that Rossetti is a rightful Pre-Raphaelite in every sense of the term. Here again, Hunt proves conclusively, as well as does the biographer of Millais, that Rossetti has not only claimed false ownership to the title of the founder of Pre-Raphaelitism; but that in reality Rossetti was not even a true and real Pre-Raphaelite, except in the very beginning of his relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers. Hunt feels it his duty to elucidate on this particular matter in most careful detail,[2] since writers handle this point of controversy so indiscriminately.

We shall attempt, then, to show how Rossetti and his practices and art theories differed essentially from true Pre-Raphaelitism, how the character of his work was distinctly

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 127.
[2]Ibid, II, Chapters XV, XVI, XVII.

different from Hunt's and Millais' after his very short-lived Pre-Raphaelite practice--we shall see all the more readily how the possibility of his exerting any influence on Hunt or Millais is absolutely absurd. Both Hunt's and Millais' account agree most emphatically that Rossetti had no influence on them, in any degree, whatsoever. But rather, as we have pointed out already, Hunt exerted a great deal of influence on Rossetti. The whole misunderstanding seems to have had its roots in the popularization of a false interpretation of Pre-Raphaelitism.

Such men as Hueffer, F. G. Stephens, Sharp, W. B. Scott, and others in this same class, have done much to confuse the meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism with medievalism. Hunt says:

> "Mr. Hueffer follows in the steps of Mr. F. G. Stephens in the pronouncement (which has misled foreign writers) that Pre-Raphaelitism was meant to imply submission to mediaevalism."
>
> "M. de la Sizeranne (one of the foreign critics who misinterpreted the notion of Pre-Raphaelitism) could not, of course, be expected to know the relative value of the writers he quotes. Two of them only have any sort of original value, Mr. W. Bell Scott and Mr. F. G. Stephens. The others derive their knowledge from more or less acquaintanceship with Rossetti late in his life or from the printed writings of W. M. Rossetti. Certainly William Rossetti had an inner position from which he watched the Movement, and he has ever been a most conscientious reporter of those facts which passed under his eyes, but it may be understood that he had never advanced enough in the practice of arts to note the difference between the aim of F. Maddox Brown and his brother and those of Millais and myself. F. G. Stephens, although an original member of the seven, did not follow art long enough to satisfy his position amongst us in anything but the nominal fashion of those of the seven who never were practical artists. Mr. Knight would be the last to claim for his casual pronouncement on Rossetti any authority.....Mr. Wm. Sharp only knew Rossetti in his later stages and reported the legend current in the Rossetti circle

> at a time when we and others pursuing the original idea had long ago marked our separation from the mediaevalism which Rossetti had confused with Pre-Raphaelitism."[1]

We read in Hunt specifically that, when Rossetti first came to him, his work was, under Brown's direction, of the true German Revivalist style, and Hunt adds that this characteristic was, in his own words, "one of the mannerisms which Millais and I had set ourselves directly to oppose."[2] We know from Hunt's autobiography that this medieval element was strictly shunned by the true Pre-Raphaelite. "There was," wrote Hunt, "a constant negation of mediaevalism in every point of our work." He regarded the so-called Gothic Revival as "a deadly blight," causing "the destructions of edifices of vital beauty, and paralysing the inventive genius" of artists. Sham Gothic was to him, "the danger of the time," and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood tried to check both this and the following of Overbeck by a "child-like submission to nature."[3] Hence this element which crops out, over and over again, in Rossetti's paintings was really foreign to the original nature of Pre-Raphaelitism, and not intended as a Pre-Raphaelite principle at all--as so many books and authors would have us believe.

William Rossetti has done as much as any one to help popularize the wrong idea concerning Pre-Raphaelitism. He writes:

> "One of the original drawings and slight paintings done under Brown's eye by D. G. Rossetti early in 1848, and already referred to as a drawing of a long narrow shape, in body colour barely a little tinted, with a plain gilt ground, represents a young woman,

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 343.
[2]Ibid, II, 354.
[3]Ibid, 354.

> auburn-haired, standing with joined hands. The face seems to be a reminiscence of Christina Rossetti, but the nose is unduly long: the drapery is delicately felt and done, and the whole thing has a forecast of the Pre-Raphaelite manner."[1]

It is this last sentence to which Hunt objects so strenuously; and which is, in reality, false. William Rossetti boldly goes on to say that "Hunt's pictures as yet had no distinctly Pre-Raphaelite quality." To this Hunt says that he should have added to his judgment that "Hunt, however much he may be thought wanting in this respect, never did at any later time work in the spirit which W. M. Rossetti styles Pre-Raphaelite; neither did Millais, as any discriminating painter must see."[2] Hunt tells us this specifically in the following quotation:

> "When Gabriel came to paint with me in 1848, if Millais and I had changed our spirit of work in the direction of Overbeckism, then Rossetti's priority in the Movement would have been beyond question. But it will be seen we never swerved from our worship of the new regions of Nature which we had already begun to penetrate. We may ask now, where did Gabriel get the "Quattrocento Exotic style which he was then cherishing? It is unquestioned that when he came under Brown's influence, the latter was playing with the mediaeval fancy adopted after his visit to Overbeck's studio in Rome as narrated by Hueffer."[3]

It would seem, then, that Rossetti brought to Pre-Raphaelitism an element which was distinctly foreign to the very essence and nature of the movement. Although he did not inculcate this element into his Pre-Raphaelite pictures in all distinctness while under the guidance of Hunt; it was there, nevertheless, in his unconscious mind. We even single out sub-

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[1]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., 353.
[2]Ibid, 354.
[3]Ibid, 354.

dued tones of over-Beckianism in two of these paintings, if we decided to analyze them most accurately. He, without a doubt, made a noble attempt in the picture "Found" to turn entirely Pre-Raphaelite, both in subject-matter and technique; yet his nobility was not a lasting one; it did not come strictly from the heart; but was only a passing fancy. The moment he allowed himself free Rossettian rein, the moment he allowed himself to be honestly and sincerely Rossetti at hear, that moment we discern characteristics creeping into his art as un-Pre-Raphaelite as were the German Revivalists in their art.

Perhaps the three best examples which are characteristic of the Huntian, Pre-Raphaelite influence, done between the period of 1843 and 1857, roughly speaking, are "The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary," the "Ancilla Domini," and "Found." Mr. Cook, in the National Gallery Handbook says of the first two:

> "In 1849 he (Rossetti) exhibited his first oil picture, 'The Girlhood of the Virgin,' and in the following year he painted 'Ancilla Domini.' His picture is admirably illustrated in its simplicity of the aims of the Pre-Raphaelite School, whilst at the same time it is wholly free from the affectations peculiar to Rossetti which characterise his later works---."

For a description of "The Girlhood of the Virgin" let us go to Marillier. He says of it:

> "The scene shown is a room in the Virgin's home, with an open carved balcony at which her father, St. Joachim, is tending a symbolically fruitful vine. On the right of the picture, shown against an olive-green curtain, are the figures of the Virgin and her mother seated an an embroidery frame. The young girl, a most untypical Madonna, in simple gray dress with pale green at the wrists, pauses with a needle in her hand, and gazes with a rapt ascetic look at the room before her, where,

> as if visible to her eyes, a child-angel is tending a tall white lily. Beneath the pot in which the lily grows are six large books in heavy bindings, bearing the names of the six cardinal virtues. These, and a white dove perching on the trellis, are amongst the peaceful symbols of the picture, whilst the tragedy also is foreshadowed in a figure of the cross formed by the young vine-tendrils and in some strips of palm and 'seven-thorned brier' laid across the floor."[1]

The same simplicity which is evident in this picture just described, is also characteristic of his "Ancilla Domini." The painting, as the title obviously indicates, portrays the ancient and much used theme of the "Annunciation." The Virgin, most simply clothed in a white night gown, is aroused from her sleep by the gentlest voice of the archangel. How decidedly different does Rossetti relate his picture story from the old method of the great masters; such men as Del Sarto, Raphael, Tintoret, or Durer. There is nothing stately or majestic about the simple human story--no crowned Queen of Heaven; no mighty, glorious, winged angel, with vast pinions glittering in gold, azure, and vermillion--only a stalwart, wingless harbinger, simply clad in white from head to foot, with a lily in hand, to replace the great and mighty sceptre. He approaches her with a calm and passionless face, without the usual traditional thundering voice.

True, on close scrutiny, one can discover earmarks of Overbeckian characteristics. Both pictures contain a rich symbolism, over which there hovers a certain mystical element. This is the more evident when comparing these religious paintings with any of the same type executed by Hunt or Millais. On the whole, though, his method in this period of his work was Pre-Raphaelite; he employed only living models, and went to

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[1] H. C. Marillier, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 18.

nature for his detail.

The third mentioned picture of this particular period, namely, "Found," has already been adequately described in a former section of this paper.[1] The story is strictly modern. It has a definite moral implication, to be sure. It seems rather unfortunate that Rossetti did not ever finish the noble beginning. However, we may infer from his neglect of it that the stringency of such naturalistic painting was not altogether suited to his later mood and experience. He drifted away from his original intention.

After this first spasm of religious painting, it seems that Rossetti altered his subject-matter. Perhaps the failure of the "Ecce Ancilla Domini," as interpreted by the biased art critics of that day, caused him to abandon the semi-religious picture for another type. His love for romance, at any rate, led him to undertake subjects from Browning, Dante, and Keats. However, this phenomenom was not at all unusual, since both Hunt and Millais had done likewise. But it was Rossetti's allowance of this peculiar medieval quality to dominate him almost completely that led him into questionable artistic paths. Together with this, he also tended to develop from simplicity and concreteness to the complicated and mystical, both in painting and poetry alike. This point shall be exhausted quite thoroughly in our discussion of his later works, which will follow directly.

What happened to Rossetti was not at all unnatural, if we examine the situation more closely. His Italian background, his ardent love for Dante, his queer romantic temperament, together with his Overbeckian influence, exerted by Brown in

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[1] See page33 of this thesis.

his early impressionable stage--all aid in producing in the man a strangeness very different from Pre-Raphaelitism in its original and correct significance. Then too, his close study of the paintings executed before Raphael, aided in leading him into mystical, medieval lines of thought. Whether this element, then, crept into his art incidentally, is difficult to ascertain; but that it appeared, and remained with him to the very end, is a certainty.

It is in this second period, after his association with the Brotherhood, that we find him exposing his true Rossetti nature. Those pictures which are most characteristic of this period, so to speak, are those which have for their themes Dante and his famous characters. Perhaps his "Beata Beatrix" is the most famous ofthis "Dantesque group." Two other famous ones are "Dante's Dream," and "The Blessed Damozel." The latter mentioned is not fundamentally Dante, but the subject was inspired by him, we know. The famous poem bearing the same title is also fittingly mentioned at this point.

It is in this "Dantesque group" particularly that we see the artist as an Englishman, by birth, only; his blood was Italian, and his spirit of the fifteenth century, of that point we are convinced. He looked at life through Gothic windows, stained with the symbolism, romance, and legends of the dark ages. He painted facts as faithfully as his nature would allow him; but they magically became transfigured, by his glamorous fancy, into visions not synonymous with the impression which others received from them. In these designs Rossetti has restored the medieval thought, pure and simple;

but he has enriched it with a whole wealth of psycho-sensuous beauty brought over from the region of romance.[1] Yes, true, he painted a rose in all its fresh realism and individuality--he gave vivid and real presentations of existing objects--yet always he threw a spell of enchantment over all, which is perfectly acceptable up to a certain point; but becomes a bane to the real purpose of art, when pushed to the bounds of infinite vagueness.

Besides the above mentioned themes obtained from the inspiration of Dante and his work, we find Rossetti creating a number of pictures based upon legends of the Arthurian cycle, as well as incidents taken from the poetry of Keats. These themes are mostly romantic and dashed with mysticism; and they frequently treat of incidents, "the too-often, dry bones and rickety whimsicalities of which Rossetti never failed to vivify, while he gloried them with light and color." One of the paintings we might mention as belonging to this group is "The Laboratory," an incident taken from Browning.

The poetry of the same period just treated above includes the already mentioned "Blessed Damozel," "A Last Confession," "Sister Helen," Translations of the Italians, e. g.: "The New Life," and his prose piece, "Hand and Soul."

In his later period, which is the one we shall be most vitally interested in for purposes of proving our much disputed point, we find such pictures as "Bocca Baciata," "Fazio's Mistress," "Lady Lilith," "Venus Verticordia," "Joli Coeur," "Rosa Triplex," "Proserpine," and "Astarte Syriaca." The poetry includes such works as "The House of

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[1]E. Wood, op. cit., 257.

Life" (two-thirds of it), "Jenny," "Eden Bower," "Insomnia," "The White Ship," "The King's Tragedy," and "Rose Mary."

It is quite obvious that a complete analysis of Rossetti's poems and paintings and their especial significance is an utter impossibility as well as quite outside the realm of this particular thesis. Critics and biographers have done this very exhaustively.[1] However, taken as a whole, we see at once, that the predominating note in the first period, after his partial abandonment of Pre-Raphaelite ideals, seems to be romance, or romantic archaism, as one author has called it.[2] This group of artistic productions which tends to deal with subjects of a romantic and poetic literary nature certainly does not assume the decadent note that his later creations seem to reveal. It is quite difficult to say just exactly where the so-called dangerous note begins to sound in the artist's work. The whole thing was a gradual process, as are all processes of this sort. Yet we are definitely conscious of this peculiar sensuous phase, which "savoured somewhat of hothouse culture," as Hunt[3] so well describes it, in Rossetti's later artistic development.

This latter period, which includes the list of productions, both paintings and poetry cited above, is certainly distinguished by eroticism and extreme sensual feeling. For example, "Troy Town" and "Nuptual Sleep" certainly exhibit a taint of fleshliness. "Jenny" also contains questionable elements. This generalization does not include every poem

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[1]The reader is referred to Megroz, Wood, Marillier, Stephens, Hueffer.

[2]R. L. Megroz, op. cit., 295.

[3]Wm. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 351

and painting, to be sure; but, taken as a whole, the characteristics referred to are certainly very definitely outstanding. In this latter group, the mystical vision is also more prominent than the romantic element, which colors his earlier poetry.

In a consideration of his painting, "The Beloved," "Monna Vanna," "Veronica Veronese," and "Lady Lilith" are typical, and incidentally, excellent illustrations of this later central development of eroticism. These pictures, as well as "Hesterna Rosa," "Rosa triplex," "Proserpine" and a host of others are all paintings of women of a particular kind, which later came to be termed the typical "Rossettian feminine type." All have sensuous, full-formed lips, great masses of hair, bulbous throats, deep-set, dreamy eyes, flowing low-necked gowns. They are all moody, passionate creatures, playing no especial role of greatness in life or art, except "to live and be beautiful" perhaps.

In The House of Life, one of Rossetti's greatest poetical sequences, we see reflected at once this extreme sensuous note, with strong overtones of mysticism, which are also quite prevalent in the paintings just referred to. In some of this verse, the erotic feeling seems too strong for the word medium, and tends to produce an over-emphasis on the "imitative function of verbal music." The whole thing, as readers of Rossetti know, deals with love, which to him is the sole make-up of life. According to Arthur Symons, Rossetti calls "what is really the House of Love, The House of Life, and this is because the house of love was literally to him the house of life.--There is no mystic to whom love has not seemed to be

the essence or ultimate expression of the soul." Too often, in this famous collection of love sonnets do we find him adhering to the subjective mood, as when he contemplates "the soul's sphere of infinite images" and "that last wild pageant of the accumulated past that clangs and flashes for a drowning man."[1]

Rossetti probably maintains himself most securely in the world shared by the waking minds of others. His dramatic poetry, such as "A Last Confession," as well as his popular ballads, "Sister Helen," and "The King's Tragedy" illustrate this. Here there seems to be a sympathetic bond with elemental emotions.[2] He is undoubtedly at his best in such poems which leave out the intense subjective element--in such works where the thought of self merges in the full and immense life of humanity.

True, Rossetti demonstrated his mastery over technique in almost all his verse. He was the greatest master of the Italian Sonnet; in him it reaches the highest perfection. This is not so true in his paintings. He was not always entirely sure of his technique; here rich color combinations tend to take precedence over line. But in his poetry, we must concede his greatness in technique, his ofttime unsurpassed beauty of sound and effect. But this greatness becomes much disturbed at times. We find a tendency towards decadence creeping in, quite unobtrusively at first, but nevertheless, quite securely planted, in a final analysis of his work. To term this quality decadence is not without justification, since it contained elements which resolved themselves into "the overlaborious and

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[1]D. G. Rossetti, The House of Life, Sonnet 62.
[2]R. L. Megroz, op. cit., 252.

the obscure." His beauty of language, symbolic, transcendental, and mystical, tends very frequently to lapse into a redundant verbiage and sensuous imagry. The sensation such verse produces in the reader is too much language; it often "goes drunk on polysyllables." Its intricacy and delicate subtlty become somewhat disturbing. There is nothing of great thought behind all of this. It is an empty shell, so to speak.

And so it is that The House of Life which is "so abstract in thought and ornate in structure," as William Michael Rossetti is even wont to admit,[1] is not an easy task to analyze. Any one who has read it is at once overcome by its beauty and queer mystical abstract quality. Even his brother, who has made a rather brave attempt at analyzing the entire work, is baffled time and time again by the real meaning of some of the sonnets. We read in his study of Rossetti:

> "Of all the sonnets in the House of Life, this (number 79--"The Monochord") is the one which seems to me most obscure. In fact I do not think that its meaning can be seized by a reader unfurnished with some information which the sonnet itself does not supply....."[2]

Again we read on a further page, where William Michael attempts to analyze the sonnet (number 87) which begins: "When first that horse within whose populous womb:"

> "The application of this sonnet is not entirely clear to me. It will be observed that, except for its last two lines, the sonnet consists entirely of a reference to two acts of heroic self-discipline recorded of Ulysses. Then in the last two lines comes the application. This application, as I apprehend it, is an appeal of the Poet to his own moral conscience, and relates to the question of a noble or degrading tone in the poetry which he affects, as

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[1] W. M. Rossetti, Rossetti, 181.

[2] Ibid, 240.

writer or reader."[1]

It is evident from the above citations that William Rossetti admits, in all earnestness, the vagueness and obscurity which dominated some of his brother's sonnets.

A complete reading and study of the House of Life is sufficient evidence for any one that the entire imagry is for the most part sensuous, fervid, and almost tropical in colour and atmosphere. Here are a crowd of variously portentious spirits:[2]

> ....."fame, whose loud wings fan the
> ashen Past
> To signal fires;"
>
> ....."Song, whose hair
> Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;"
>
> ....."Love, smiling to receive
> Along his eddying plumes the auroral wind;"

We follow the soul of the lover---

> ....."Where wan water trembles in the grove,
> And the wan moon is all the light thereof,"
>
> ....."o'er the sea of love's tumultuous trance,"
>
> "Upon the devious coverts of dismay"
> across "death's haggard hills;" among
>
> "Shadows and shoals that edge eternity,"
> and through
>
> ....."that last
> Wild pageant of the accumulated past
> That clangs and flashes for a drowning man."

We see, at once, that the entire thing is far too personal, too subjective; yet it reflects exactly Rossetti's notions and ideals concerning the purpose of poetry, for we read in William Michael's account of his brother's sonnet on "Transfigured Life" (number 60):

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[1] W. M. Rossetti, Rossetti., 247.

[2] E. Wood, op. cit., 277-278.

> "This sonnet sets forth (what Rossetti profoundly believed to be the truth concerning good poetry) that 'the song'--i. e., a poem--is the 'transfigured life' of its author; his essential self developed into words under the control of art."

Certainly this conception is far too personal to admit any real definition of the purpose of poetry and art in general. There is no objective element here, nothing to pin down to a firm and sensible explanation. Welby[1] states that this poetry is without relief--oppressive in the highest degree.

Let us return, for the moment, once again to Rossetti's paintings, for the purpose of final comparison and judgment concerning his art. On looking over the collection,--and it might be added incidentally, the writer regrets the impossibility of being able to include illustrations of the pictures here referred to--we find, as we have already stated at an earlier point in this section, that the subject-matter seems to be almost solely women, heads and bodies of luxurious women, sumptuously gowned, for the most part--products of a dreamy sensuality. The paintings seem to suggest a mania, on the part of the artist, for mere physical beauty.

Arthur Symons comments on these figures:

> ".....Some of them are posing in Eastern garments, with caskets in their hands and flames about them, looking out with unsearchable eyes. His colors, before they began to have, like his forms, an exaggeration, a blurred vision which gave him the need of repainting, of depriving his figures of life, were as if charmed into their own places; they took on at times some strange and stealthy and startling ardors of paint, with a subtle fury."[2]

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[1] E. T. Welby, The Victorian Romantics, 32.

[2] A. Symons, Dramatis Personae, 129.

For example, "Lilith" is a representative illustration. Here we see a beautiful blonde woman (the same sitter as in "Bocca Baciata" and "The Blue Bower") combing out her hair; the accessories are those of a modern tiring-chamber. There is nothing especially in the picture that connects it with the story of Lilith and the first serpent-bride of Adam; nor is there any deep or occult meaning of any kind indicated in any way to the onlooker. There is certainly no high or noble purpose connected with the painting. Rossetti probably intended us to gain from it the mere idea of "Body Beauty" in contrast to "Soul Beauty" which he gave us--or at least attempted to do so--in one of his other pictures. And so it is with most of the pictures of this particular period. There is nothing outstandingly uplifting in any of them--very much, simply pictures of sensuous feminine beauty, painted by one who seemed utterly obsessed with this notion.

J. Comyns Carr, in his Papers on Art, gives us some rather valuable remarks on this period in Rossetti's art career. Since he summarizes so perfectly and adequately the point which the writer wishes to make in this connection with Rossetti, we shall take the liberty to quote him, even though the quotation be somewhat lengthy. In speaking of the period, which we have already named as including such works as "The Loving Cup," "Monna Vanna," "The Blue Bower," "Lady Lilith," and various others of this type, he says:

> "Gradually--at first, indeed almost imperceptably--the individual qualities of the model gain a more complete ascendency over his imagination. He begins to concentrate his forces upon the interpretation of distinct types of beauty, no longer using nature as the material out of which he

might carve his own invention, but accepting what it offers as the determining motive of his work. In the frontispiece to The Italian Poets the sentiment of design is still uppermost in the artist's mind; nature has been used and even carefully studied, but it has been used to assist and confirm a settled and preconceived idea of poetical beauty. The "Lady Lilith" on the contrary, starts from the conception of portraiture, and the ideal suggestion, whatever may be its force and fascination, only follows and does not directly inspire, the reality.

"If Rossetti had been content to accept the temper as well as the means that belong to realistic painting, this change in the direction of his art might not have affected its value. There are many men in art as in literature who only win the highest triumphs when they have rid themselves of the kind of poetic ambition that haunts the season of youth, and in its place have learned to be content with the realities of nature. Some of the noblest painting that remains to us is frankly founded upon the direct and simple observation either of the truths of human character or of the beauty of the outward world, and it therefore implies no reproach against a painter that he should elect in later life to put aside the fanciful ideals that had tempted the vision of a boy. But the course of Rossetti's art tells a different story. He was a poet to the end of his days, and though he might seek to divert the strong imaginative impulse with which he had set out upon his career, he could not escape its influence. And so the change that comes over his art was not helpful but hurtful; for the poet's vision, no longer finding for itself the earlier form of utterance, left him still unsatisfied with the kind of beauty that might have contented a different order of mind. The individual forms and faces that he chose to present did not now suffice for the purpose for which he sought to employ them. Unconsciously, perhaps, he began to force and exaggerate the reality he was no longer able to control, and it sometimes happened that the result was far removed alike from the intricate beauty of his early design and from the simplicity and truth of portraiture.....It is the penalty

> which natures such as this have to pay, that their art and their life are closely interwoven and cannot by any means be divorced."[1]

Hence we see that a decided change, although quite imperceptibly brought about at first, takes place in the artistic creations of the poet and artist, Rossetti. True, his earlier paintings and poetry contain some pure gem-like tints of color; but his later ones tend to become tarnished by the obscurity of tone; they are shrouded with shadows of mysticism and unreality.

Then too, upon careful examination of some of his later works, we find Rossetti incorporating a great deal of unnatural and unessential bric-a-brac. In one of his letters referring to this particular practice we read:

> ".....It was done at a time when I had a mania for buying bricabrac, and used to stick it into my pictures."[2]

This practice tended very much to produce an unnaturalness and ornateness distinctly different from nature in all her freshness.

Another phase of Rossetti's practice which we should not fail to mention is the fact that he did not carry out in all earnestness the conscientious effort of reproducing faithfully every single detail in nature. His models and backgrounds were very often more the product of his fancy, at least certain elements of them.

> "For the subject as presented to him by nature he had no respect. He would isolate that in it which appealed to his poetic imagination and he would then surround

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[1] J. C. Carr, Papers on Art.
[2] W. M. Rossetti, Rossetti, 69.

> it with accessories of his own, imported no matter whence, and charged with a significance that the natural, accidental accessories had not possessed.....he instinctively and deliberately made prominent what painters had long made subsidiary, the pattern.....A great many of his paintings, and more of his drawings are like sonnets: spaced out in octave and sextet, with visible rhymes at the appointed places."[1]

We read in the introduction to the Germ, in respect to this, an interesting comment made by William Rossetti:

> ".....and Collinson seem to have regarded it as quite superfluous to look into a map, and see whether Nazareth was near the sea or not. Or possibly he trusted to Dante Rossetti's poem 'Ave,' in which likewise Nazareth is a marine town. My brother advisedly stuck to this in 1869, when I pointed out the error to him; he replied, 'I fear the sea must remain at Nazareth: you know an old painter would have made no bones if he wanted it for his background.'"[2]

This looseness in carrying out Pre-Raphaelite ideals is again evidenced in a statement of his own, even after he claimed that "it is equally or still more imperative that immediate study of nature should pervade the whole completed work." He says later on, contradictory to this above:

> "Tenderness, the constant unison of wonder and familiarity so mysteriousness allied in nature, the sense of fullness and abundance such as we feel in a field, not because we pry into it all, but because it is all there: these are the inestimable prizes to be secured only by such study (of nature) in the painter's every picture."[3]

Certainly this is a very definite parting with Holman Hunt who "would take an inventory of God's plenty where Rossetti

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 16.
[2] W. M. Rossetti, Introduction to the Germ, 21.
[3] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 101.

bids us refrain from prying into it all."

In William Rossetti's work[1] on his brother, we find references from time to time, where Dante Gabriel Rossetti very often changed parts of his painting from the original model--hair, flesh coloring, etc. Or perhaps left out or added something in the background, which would tend to make the effect more imaginative and less realistic.

It is quite obvious then, upon even such a sketchy and hasty summary of the man, to realize certain conclusions concerning Rossetti and his creations. He undoubtedly proceeded from the realistically romantic to the purely mystical, sensual, and even highly exotic, in some instances. Or we might say, he tended to develop from simplicity and concreteness to the complicated and mystical. And there is a decided parallel here in his paintings and in his poetry. Never once in his life do we find him concerned with society and its moral, economic, political or social aspects--these were farthest from his mind. To him art and beauty was entirely divorced from them; we might say divorced from life itself, which is truth and reality. "In his verse there is no thought as such; it is all pure art. He had no cause to serve, no doctrine to inculcate." Rossetti was essentially artistic with such a singleness of mind that we see in him the beginning of an art, absolutely untramelled and unmodified by philosophy or science. Some critics have called him the instigator of the new Aesthetic School in England.[2]

How utterly different from the doctrine of Pre-Raphaelitism. How essentially unlike the artistry of Hunt

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[1] W. M. Rossetti, Rossetti, 72, 72, 118.
[2] W. Hamilton, op. cit.

and Millais, whose deeply religious purposing caused them to believe that Pre-Raphaelitism should foster only the greatest in art, which to them was also the greatest in life.

Although Rossetti was a great poet, and a charming and colorful artist, he certainly neglected with indifference the robust, out-of-door growth of native Pre-Raphaelitism. Is it a wonder that Hunt so violently attempts to correct the false interpretation which most critics have adopted concerning the doctrine. Certainly it was not medievalism; nor did it resort to mysticism or highly imaginative fancies, divorced from truth and nature. Decoration was not to be employed extraneous and foreign to the nature of the painting.

After seeing how completely different Rossetti's whole art career was from that of a true Pre-Raphaelite, does it not seem absurd to name him as the instigator and great promoter of the movement. It is not a question of who was the greatest genius of the three men who figured so essentially in this movement of Pre-Raphaelitism; but who was the greatest Pre-Raphaelite; and even perhaps, although only incidentally, who was the noblest and greatest artist.

Hunt feels expressly responsible for explaining and clearing up the situation, for he says:

> "My business is to have proved that what Rossetti did was a divergence from the aim of Pre-Raphaelitism."
>
> "The character of the evidence given by both the inside and multitudinous outside writers, who have rushed forward with such eager readiness to instruct the public, can now be judged, and no one will wonder that I felt so long disinclined to cleanse out the Augean stable they had filled up. I think any one who really wishes to know the facts will be satisfied with evidence I have given,

and will understand finally that Pre-Raphaelitism did not begin with Maddox Brown, nor with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and that it was not antiquarianism or quattrocentism in any sense; and this last is the really vital point.

"It cannot be too clearly reasserted that Pre-Raphaelitism in its purity was the frank worship of Nature, kept in check by selection and directed by the spirit of imaginative purpose. Only an inability to discern glaring differences of style, or a perverse disregard of dates, could allow contrary conclusions."[1]

In conclusion he exclaims:

"For the consideration of those who come after us, ere I give up my record of our Pre-Raphaelite purpose, I must reiterate that our determination in our reform was to abjure alliance with a moribund neo-classicism, to avoid revived quattro-or cinque-centism, already powerfully represented in England, and to supplant the lifeless dogma founded on these fashions, by devoting our allegiance to Nature for further inspiration as did those early masters."

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[1]W. H. Hunt, op. cit., II, 357.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OUTCOME OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM UNDER ROSSETTI

Let us abandon the controversial aspect of this paper, then, and proceed to some kind of definite conclusion concerning Rossetti's entanglement in Pre-Raphaelite affairs. We shall attempt to show the outcome of this artist's responsibility in leading Pre-Raphaelitism into strange channels. The discussion, as promised in a former section of this thesis, shall be as brief and to the point, as possible. The preliminary discussion which would ordinarily preface such an undertaking, including all details of biographical and historical background, will of necessity be dispensed with. Our purpose here shall be mainly to point out those threads of Rossettian influence which carried on through the artistic creations of Rossetti's followers, and finally aided in bringing about the decadent period, at the end of the century.

Let it be fully understood that the writer realizes he is treading on the ground of another and very important and lengthy master's thesis; however, he is quite willing to outline, in a sketchy, although never un-authentic or careless fashion, the main trend of this rather dynamic figure's artistic principles and practices. Let it be remembered, "Influences and counter-influences in all ages of literature are such subtle vermin to ferret out." In tracing them, and any particular streams of thought which pervade certain periods of art and literature, we must keep in mind that the influence is not always obvious, on first glance. Sometimes, it is only the artist's peculiar spirit which the clever disciple captures;

sometimes it is his specific principle of art which he borrows and utilizes--but to the destruction of the original master, since he very often misconstrues it to the point of obscurity.

In the particular case, with which we are dealing, however, we need not fear the possibility of reading into the situation anything which is not actually present in reality. The evidence concerning the influence of such a man as Rossetti is quite obvious and easily discernable, even to the amateur. That he exercised a commanding power is undeniable. His strange artistic creations, both poems and paintings, exercised a particular fascination on a group of men who, in turn, carried on this peculiar strain, even to dangerous ends. Rossetti had that casual, compelling authority, easy dominating way with men--a supreme leader; but whether it was for the good of art and literature, we shall attempt to ascertain.

The chief regret with such a man as the one we are concerned with here, is that we cannot single out of his contribution to art that portion only which is fine, excellent, and wholesome in every respect; but are forced to accept all his questionable contributions as well--those infested with the germ of danger and decadence. Since it is precisely here that his influence reeked its ultimate ends. There are special reasons, outside of his very unorthodox method of technique, why the man is a rather dangerous guide. This fact is quite evident, after the discussion on his artistry in chapter VII of this paper. The hothouse richness of his imagination and his warm Italian temperament led him along peaks of poetic imagination and fancy where danger lurks for the ordinary mortal and poet.

Many of Rossetti's most characteristic poems, those that are of this "overwrought and luscious nature," as Hugh Walker describes them, are the ones that have been the chief attraction for his disciples. Some of those chargeable with this particular quality are, "The Bride's Prelude," "The Stream's Secret," and many from his House of Life. Even "The Blessed Damozel," as attractive as it is to most readers, is not free from this characteristic. Undoubtedly this creature of heaven was "the most fleshy being ever transported into Paradise." There is certainly nothing spiritual or ethereal about her.

Hugh Walker so aptly describes the situation which prevails in Rossettian poetry:

> "The sense of the sultry noonday heat and stillness is perfectly rendered in "The Bride's Prelude;" and the bride's 'tiring-chamber is described with the rich suggestiveness of a Pre-Raphaelite picture..... The air is heavy with scent and heat; the poet has produced exactly the impression he wished to produce, and he deserves the praise due to success. But it is an air not wholesome to breathe long, and there is too much of it in Rossetti's poetry. The luscious sonnets of The House of Life, beautiful individually, form together a poem from which many readers are glad to escape. Take for example Sonnet XXIII, Love's Baubles.....The thing is so beautifully done as almost to disarm criticism; and yet it is like an excessively rich food, of which a very little satisfies.....the sonnets of the House of Life are unnerving. They are frequently fanciful rather than imaginative, they tremble on the verge of conceits, they are full of literary artifice sometimes degenerating into literary trickery, the alliteration is excessive, the diction occasionally recalls the worst faults of the eighteenth century style. Thus, 'the smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair,' which means, in plain language, the ink used in writing a love-letter, is at least as bad as the 'plumy people' and the 'bleating kind,' and the other peri-phrases which,

> a century and a half ago, were supposed to translate plain prose into poetry."[1]

Walker is quite severe on Rossetti, to be sure, yet what he says is not a falsehood. And it was this decadent strain which attracted so strangely some of his ardent imitators, who utilized it to such dangerous ends. We might say the exotic, dangerous germ, born and partially developed in Rossetti, was allowed to mature in the hands of his disciples, which finally festered under their indiscreet hothouse supervision, and aided decidedly in bringing about the final Decadence of the "Nineties." We say aided, since we are fully aware of the French influence which also cropped up at this particular moment, as we shall see more in detail later in the course of this discussion. The mixture of the two was the fatality of the great Romantic Movement in English literature.

Let us attempt to single out, then, with specific examples, exactly the trend which Rossetti's power established; and precisely how it acted in bringing about this unhealthful aesthetic situation at the end of the century.

We might say in a rather hasty, incomplete fashion that the trend of Rossettian ideals and principles moved from Ross, Swinburne, Morris, Burne-Jones, and Pater, through Solomon, Sandys, O'Shaughnessy, Marston, and a number of others in this class; and finally culminated in such men as Beardsley, Thompson, Dowson, and Wilde--not to mention the many others of the fin de siecle period.

We note, at once, that many of the intermediate men, those who came between the first and the last group, are comparatively unimportant in the light of the greatest English poets.

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[1]Hugh Walker, The Literature of the Victorian Era, 496-97.

Yet, it was partially their mishandling and careless distortion, their extreme false emphasis on certain of the incidentals which Rossetti inculcated into art, that ultimately strengthened the possibility of an early death for the Victorian Romantic element in art and literature.

Before proceeding to our purpose in tracing this pseudo-Pre-Raphaelite influence in Decadent art, it might be well to define, in a very cursory fashion, the term Decadence, as it is generally understood in art and literary criticism. The reader may then discern more readily the exact relationship existing in the problem with which we are attempting to wrestle.

The Decadent Movement is associated with a group of men who were responsible for the notorious "Nineties." They were talented, witty, original, fascinating; but extremely unhealthful in their artistic creations. The movement chose to startle; its appeal was only to the haughty few. Wilde, Symons, Beardsley, Huysmans, Moore, are some of the representative figures of this period.

The literature which these super-aesthetes produced is typical of a "civilization grown over-luxurious, over-injuring, too languid for the relief of action." There is an unstable, unsafe equilibrium, to be sure--a morbid intensity in the seeing and relating of things. There is a search after "l'image peinte, l'epithete rare;" a search after harmony of phrase for its own sake--yes, a decided and desperate endeavor to give sensation, at any cost. There is an undercurrent of satanic and glorified evil. In fact, all the qualities which marked the end of the great Greek and Latin periods--those which culminated in their decadence and downfall, are evident here; namely,

"an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilizing refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity."[1] The qualities which are inherent in the classic, and those which determine the supreme in art, as simplicity, perfect sanity, perfect proportion, are all sadly lacking. The whole period is like an interesting, fascinating event, like a "new and beautiful disease."

Verlaine, one of the French disciples of this movement has given us a definition of his ideal of poetic art, which seems to strike the keynote of the situation quite appropriately. He insists that it must be music, first of all; then, la nuance; and last, fine shade. Poetry is to be something vague, intangible, evanescent, "a winged soul in flight toward other skies and other loves."

For this poet, then, (and the idea is common among all the men of the "Nineties") poetry must always be in excess, furiously sensual, subjective, and purely egocentric. Symons says of the situation:

> "To fix the last fine shade, the quintessence of things; to fix it fleetingly; to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul; that is the ideal of Decadence, and it is what Paul Verlaine has achieved."[2]

In Huysmans we note this same delight in le style tachete et faisande. It is highly flavored and spotted with corruption. It is fascinating, to be sure; yet so strikingly repellent. The whole thing sounds an artificial note, and possibly represents, as no other writer of this period, the main elements and chief results of the Decadent Movement in literature.

So much for the introduction to our chief consideration, then, which shall attempt to show the relationship of this

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[1] A. Symons, op. cit.
[2] Ibid.

Decadent age to Rossetti and his group--falsely designated as the Pre-Raphaelites--and how they carried this once respectable and sincere "Nature" movement, of a sane and healthy calibre, into foreign atmospheres, those tainted with artificiality and decay.

Already, with just the briefest introductory words concerning the literature of the "Nineties," we are able to discern striking resemblances and elements of similarity between Rossettian principles and those which marked the essential peculiarities of the Decadent period. It is not difficult to understand how a generation, which had its suggestions of feminine beauty from Rossetti, from Simeon Solomon's half-realized dreams of figures that combine so fascinatingly the symbols of sanctity and lust, might very easily distort the whole thing just a bit more, and finally push it quite unconsciously into the abyss of corruption.

More specifically then, let us proceed on our way. We cannot fully pry into the creations of each and everyone of the individuals who were either directly or indirectly influenced by Rossetti--such a performance is the task of a complete volume. However, we shall attempt to point out elements along the way which persisted to the end of the Romantic period; taking on, in some instances, new aspects, or becoming unseemingly distorted by an over-emphasis on only certain of the original and essential component parts--resulting in a lop-sided portrayal of the original intention.

The three men who were most intimately connected with Rossetti in this particular phase which we are considering, and who aided as much as anyone in spreading his artistic and

aesthetic spirit, are Swinburne, Morris, and Burne-Jones. That all three were deeply marked with the stamp of Rossetti is at once evident upon examination of their work. They all but worshipped the artist's genius. In the case of Swinburne, it was an inspiration; in the case of Morris it was, to some extent, a misleading fire.[1]

Burne-Jones, who became a serious painter, after his acquaintanceship with Rossetti, at once adopted the man as his chief guide. This adoption of Rossettian principles was all the more easy for Jones since he loved the Middle Ages most passionately, even before meeting the great genius. His paintings are very suggestive of Rossetti in certain respects, even if we examine them only casually. He loved rich color; delicate and elaborate and fanciful creations were his chief delight. His subject-matter, at least, much of it, was drawn from the same sources as Rossetti's. His beautiful picturizations of the Arthurian legend remind us very much of the painter whom he loved so dearly. Both, quite frequently, used the same women models. Burne-Jones' figures are very often more fragile and pale in appearance, hollow of cheeks. They eke of spiritual and physical sickliness at times. Welby says of the artist's work:

> "The picture, beautifully conceived in other terms, has all that draughtmanship applied to it, with a piety one must respect, with a certain incidental success, but after all without necessity. At best, the draughtmanship gives one a separable pleasure; often it is a sheer irrelevancy. And all that loving care to make each square inch of canvas charming in colour and surface, excellent as is its motive and pleasing as is usually the result, betrays a misunderstanding, we need

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[1]H. Walker, op. cit., 494.

> not say of art, but at least of his own genius. For Burne-Jones was not of those, not all of them great masters, with whom line and colour and surface can be adequate ly eloquent. He had an angel as some have had a devil; an angel, somewhat ineffectual as the robust may think, without any urgent or indeed very specific message, and his true success was but to make us aware of that gracious presence, a presence, not a power, at pause, and so pure as to be almost devoid of character."[1]

It seems then, that although his artistic productions are not without colorful loveliness, they lack in poetic greatness and real thought. They are sadly devoid of those characteristics which are essential in the greatest masterpieces. Superficial charm, attractive hues of color are their sole worth.

In Morris we see the Rossettian influence acting quite decidedly in certain of his creations. Walker tells us:

> "It was not till 1854 that he knew even the name of Rossetti, who for a time swept him off his feet and whirled him away in the stream of Pre-Raphaelitism. Previous to the full development of the Rossetti influence Morris had taken the momentous decision to be an artist. The art he chose was architecture; but Rossetti lured him temporarily to painting; and a strong disapproval of the processes of 'restoration' permanently alienated him from architecture as the profession of his life, though he continued to be deeply interested in it."[2]

If we compare Morris's earlier volume of The Defence of Guenevere with his later work we see almost immediately that his old characteristic merits have disappeared. The characters have become hazy, indefinite figures, which move before an elaborately wrought and colorful background. There is a strange distortion of natural things, "the trees of the conventional landscape twisted by an evil wind, the hills heaped

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 60-61.

[2] H. Walker, op. cit., 529.

up and dwindled as in a brain-sick traveller's changing fancies, almost all things brought too near or removed to a terrifying distance, the very sun swung out of its course and the moon became a menace." The burden of the Rossettian symbolism cumbers his faculty for narrative throughout the verse.

The entire body of his work is genuinely and profoundly medieval. Welby says of his work, The Earthly Paradise:

> "It is not exactly a poet who addresses us in The Earthly Paradise, rather a worker of tapestry who has taken verse for his medium. The craftsmanship is, in its sort, perfect, with an instinctive subdual of the separate line lest it should stand out excessively in the pattern. But this is not, in the full sense, creation; it is the leisurely, unemphatic display of figures no more real than those on tapestry."[1]

Every student of literature is already aware of Morris's practical artistic accomplishment, which aimed to unite modern industrialism with art, and based entirely upon the medieval system. We shall not go into the matter here, since it in no way aids in accomplishing our primary purpose. We do know, however, that the imagination had "begun to leave the studio and the library, and to step down into the life of the time. There were stirrings of an aesthetic movement, as people, with Morris' chintzes at their call, began to dress like the women in Pre-Raphaelite pictures, and to adorn their rooms and houses with blue china, and anything that they could find in the East or West that was not machine-made."[2]

Although much of Morris's artistic work is of interest and value to the art student, and anyone attracted by strange and

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 46.

[2] Osbert Burdett, The Beardsley Period, pp. 53-54.

unique poetic effects, it is true, as it is also in the case of Rossetti and Swinburne, something went out of his poetry with the passing of not many years. The qualities of intensity and truth and greatness seem to have disappeared.

In Swinburne's Poems and Ballads Rossettian Pre-Raphaelite influence is conspicuous, indeed. This deep sensuousness which is so dominant in Rossetti is noticeable in some of Swinburne's pieces of poetry. The element of romance is predominant throughout; although, whereas in Rossetti we find it turning to medievalism, in Swinburne it turns to France, and sometimes to Greece. Swinburne was greatly attracted by the French literature of this time; and he incorporated some of that spirit together with Rossetti's ideals in his verse, which made it distinctly Swinburnian and original in its combination; yet never devoid of those fundamentals which mark Rossettian Pre-Raphaelitism.

In Poems and Ballads he pays perfunctory obeisance to the middle ages in some of his subjects. Rosamonde is heavily encrusted with Rossettian Pre-Raphaelitism. On the whole, the poet never allows himself to be completely dominated by Rossetti; yet there is, to a certain extent, "the dim lights and perfume-laden air" element in very much of his work.

Swinburne, in Chastelard, revived with exquisite fidelity the fantastic and suicidal ardour of a mode of love well understood by choice spirits of the Renaissance. No wonder he is often accused of gratuitously dabbling in insane sensuality. Another creation which might well illustrate how, at times, he forecasted the "Nineties" spirit, is his poem "Cleopatra,"

that minor masterpiece of decadent verse, which he wrote for a drawing by Frederick Sandys, bearing the same title.

If we compare Rossetti's prose with that of Swinburne's, we find a very definite resemblance. Both of their writings on Blake as a painter and designer are most nearly alike. Their common attempt "to expound painters of a peculiarly imaginative quality from within, to collaborate with them, to translate their work into words, produces with such writers, marked as are their differences, something that might be called a common language."[1]

On the whole, then, there is a definite influence of Rossetti on the poet Swinburne; although in his later work, it dies out to some extent. Nevertheless, his importance lay in linking Victorian Romanticism, developed so thoroughly by Rossetti, with the slightly earlier French Romanticism of Hugo. He was the earliest English admirer of Baudelaire and Gautier, and brought their spirit into English literature and art, which later on helped to develop the Decadent element of the "Nineties." Already French literature had taken on a peculiar exotic garb. Both this and that strange mixture of Rossettian ideals led English artistic development into even more dangerous channels.

Through Swinburne, the influence of Rossetti passed to another poet; namely, John Buyrne Leicester Warren, Lord de Tabley (1835-1895). Many of this poet's finest pieces were undoubtedly inspired by Rossetti and Swinburne; and in his later years, they became his steadfast models. Certainly the Rossettian note is quite obvious in such gorgeously beautiful

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[1]E. T. Welby, op. cit., 134-144.

poems as the "Hymn to Astarte," and his "Sire of the Rising Day." The opening of "Orpheus in Hades" is a specimen of this elaborate style suggested by Rossetti. It opens:

> "Ruler and regent, to whose dread domain
> The mighty flood of life and human woe
> Sends down the immeasurable drift of souls,
> As silted sands are rolled to Neptune's deep,
> I, even I, approach your awful realms,
> Queen of oblivion, lady of Acheron,
> To crave one captive."

In this poem "An Ocean Grave" we see somewhat the same note struck. "Jael," which some critics consider the "most precious jewel in his collection," is an excellent example of his magnificance of style:

> "Regent of love and pain,
> Before whose ageless eyes
> The nations pass like rain,
> And thou abidest, wise,
> As dewdrops in a cup
> To drink thy children up."

Besides DeTabley, several other poets might be mentioned here as being exponents of the influence of Rossetti's volume, Poems (1870), Swinburne's volume entitled Poems and Ballads, and some of Morris's poetry. They include such names as Arthur O'Shaughnessy, Philip Marston, and Frederick Myers. These names, together with some others, although not among the greatest in the history of poetry; nevertheless aided in carrying on the spirit of their masters, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris.

O'Shaughnessy's Epic on Women, Music and Moonlight and the Songs of a Worker, are all characteristic of the work of a man of sensitive nature and poetic temperament rather than a man of great poetic power. Someone has called him a "secondhand Swinburne"--perhaps not so utterly wrong. Many

of the man's poems resemble those of Rossetti. Their charm is the fluency and sweetness of the verse, their defect is the absence of a proportionate weight of thought.[1]

Frederick Myers (1843-1901) is another one who took a distinct colour from the Rossettian Pre-Raphaelite temper. He infrequently falls into the error of adopting a style somewhat too high-pitched for the thought. This same criticism might be made of the verse of Philip Bourke Marston. His Song-Tide and other Poems, All in All, and Wind Voices are all very graceful and beautifully melodious, but decidedly thin and transparent.

One could go on naming others who fit into this same category of poets--all emphasizing form, color, beauty of sound, cleverness of diction; but neglecting quite definitely content or greatness of thought. It is this latter requisite, that one, which the early and true Pre-Raphaelites emphasized so particularly, which is absolutely neglected in the case of the poets just referred to. The tendency in their creations has been to over-value emotion and to disparage thought. These poets followed too blindly the spirit of Rossetti; they exaggerated too boldly his faults, failing very often to capture together with this questionable element the higher beauties, when they did make themselves felt. This practice, obviously, led art into detrimental paths.

Some of the artists who adopted the highly colored style of Rossetti are Stanhope, Strudwick, Solomon, and Sandys. The artist in this group who illustrates this downward trend in painting, perhaps better than any other, following exactly in the steps of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, is Simeon Solomon. The

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[1]H. Walker, op. cit., 566.

decadent spirit is definitely foreshadowed in his work. Although primarily a painter, he was also a poet, as well as a writer of prose. He inspired some of the poems of Swinburne; "Erotion" being an excellent example. The author himself is the authority for such a conclusion. All his paintings are on the same order as Rossetti's later ones--very colorful, and overwrought to the point of sensuality.

Swinburne, who wrote a criticism of Solomon in the Dark Blue, makes some interesting comments on his one essay in literature, "Vision of Love." He remarks of the essay that "read by itself as a fragment of spiritual allegory, this written 'Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep' seems to want even that much coherence which is requisite to keep symbolic or allegorical art from absolute dissolution or collapse." Certainly Solomon's work must have been might frail to call forth suxh a criticism from Swinburne, a poet quite in sympathy with this pseudo-Pre-Raphaelite spirit.

In Simeon Solomon, then, a Bohemian, who allowed drink and dissipation to aid in his ruination, the decadence in painting, as well as poetical prose, has definitely begun. The symbols in his artistry seem at one moment "those of sanctity and at another those of lust." Besides pictures of this type, Solomon has reproduced the stolid, sombre faces of rabbis or Greek priests intent on their ritual, and others in which "ritual is rendered with a decadent appreciation and in which he becomes almost an illustrator for some of the Roman Catholic poems of Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson. But the final choice of what was most significant in this artist, we may well select those designs in which weary, lovely faces yearn to each other

with epicene passion in some moment of wakening or relapse into sleep."[1] One of the best examples of this type of pictures is his "The Two Sleepers" and the "One that Watcheth." It is Rossetti grown weaker and more fragile--decadent, without true poetic blood. Throughout his art, then, we find those "subtle conspiracies of good with evil" which are so characteristic of decadent art.

Frederick Sandys is another artist who foot-stepped into the path of Rossetti. His "Cleopatra" is a thing of beauty. Fragile decadent beauty, and of considerable importance in the evolution of the unhealthful art of the "Nineties." According to Welby, there is no doubt that this painting is the model which Oscar Wilde used for his poem "The Sphinx." It also gave some hint to Walter Pater for the most famous, if not the most characteristic, passage of his prose; as well as prepare a decided atmosphere for the men of the "Nineties."

The entire group, associated so strongly with Rossetti and his influences, relied for their high artistic value on the exotic, the antique, and the mystical. These accessories, to be sure, are quite exquisite, but extremely dangerous to men who have nothing more than these. They served beauty, outside beauty, too exclusively. Herein there is just as great peril for the livelihood of art as there is in using it exclusively for the direct magnification of God. In the great majority of cases, we discover that these followers of Rossetti, as well as Rossetti, himself, concentrated on the purely aesthetic. They contributed to the new ideal of artistic perfection, or a purified and self-sufficing beauty--"Beauty herself, inutile,

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 60.

disengaged from all the moral and social conditions." The vital element in their poetry and paintings is only secondary. This importance of "full life," a characteristic of all the great art, is sadly lacking.

Walker says of the situation, and quite significantly:

> "It is strange that a movement which professed to be a new return to nature, and proclaimed as its principle minute and painstaking fidelity to her, should, upon the whole, leave the impression of the highest sophistication. The "nature" of the Pre-Raphaelites, in poetry, is not really nature, but art or artifice. There is little of the spirit of Wordsworth in them; indeed there is comparatively little of external nature at all. Rossetti especially showed a marked alienation from external nature.....Neither is their humanity in the best sense natural. There is something strained and forced in the very earnestness which painters and poets alike strive to delineate. Upon their men and women there seems to rest the weight of centuries and millenniums of life and death; they scarcely ever exhibit the simple joy of living.....the Pre-Raphaelite seems to feel that heart and soul and sense must be absorbed in the struggle with forces too strong for them, and the spirit crushed beneath burdens too heavy to be borne. He has fin de siecle written legibly over all his work; and it is doubtless for this reason that he has proved an unfortunate though a potent attraction."[1]

This group of artists and poets, then, seemed, in all respects, to be forecasting a doom for true Romantic poetry. They subtracted nature from it, and in turn added their hot-house, artificial note. Welby echoes this idea when he says:

> "In one way or another, these poets seem destined to a less satisfying or less enduring relationship between their poetry and normal human experience than we find in most of the very greatest. Perhaps it is the destiny of Romanticism, the price it must pay for its peculiar successes, more valuable to the modern spirit, certainly,

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[1] H. Walker, op. cit., 566-67.

> than classic successes, that it should be in some such precarious relationship. Or, to speak more carefully, perhaps it is the destiny of a thoroughly conscious Romanticism."[1]

Victorian Romanticism, of which Rossetti was the greatest figure, seems hopelessly condemned to death, soon after 1870, according to Welby. The decline began with the later work of the master, and was carried on by such men as Swinburne, Morris, O'Shaughnessy, Marston, Burne-Jones, Solomon, and Sandys. In poetry we see a decided thinning of the substance; it "becomes tenuous not so much through spiritualization as through lack of blood." A good deal of it is only superficially Rossettian and Swinburnian. Much of the fundamental brainwork and "mental cartooning" which is often evident in the masters is gone. Already the note of perversion is struck, to be carried to its ultimate end by a group of men who followed close in the footsteps of the men just discussed.

The marked perversion just referred to in the above paragraph comes about, first of all, in technique; later on it works itself into content, as well. Diction becomes too poetic to be the vehicle of the really finest poetry. It appears stilted and artificial. Two of the poets who are illustrations of this perversity are James Thomson and W. E. Henley.

James Thomson has been fittingly described as a poet of whims. He tries very strenuously to be casual and modern. Henley, who appears on this scene later on, acts as a link between the so-called Pre-Raphaelite, or aesthetic, bric-a-brac group, and the pure decadents. In all his poetry he is extremely, yes, pathologically personal.

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 42.

Dobson and Lang should also be mentioned here as exhibiting a tinge of Pre-Raphaelite (Rossettian Pre-Raphaelite) color. With this they combine in their work a French hue, just as Swinburne did. They show a distinct influence which comes from Baudelaire and Gautier, and the strange paradoxes of Whistler.

One other poet should certainly be named here, and one of no small importance; namely, Francis Thompson. He was considered by some critics the most decadent of writers--decadent, because of his "learned corruption of language." His style is heavy, much in the spirit of Sir Thomas Browne. He indulged in gorgeous play on words and extravagance of style. Many of his lines are very decidedly reminiscent of Rossetti. Often we discover parts whose sources could hardly have been otherwise. Such lines as:

> "Yea, in that ultimate heart's occult abode
> To lie as in an oubliette of God."

Or these:

> "All the fair
> Frequence swayed in irised wavers"

There is a gorgeous, unusual quality of diction--one of exuberance and fervor of mood, which often gets quite artificial and verbose in spots. The so-called genius of Francis Thompson was oriental, exuberant in color, woven into elaborate patterns. In The Hound of Heaven we feel "the harmonies of a symphony." There are "delicacies among its splendors, and, among instants of falsely fanciful sentiments." The whole thing is an elaborate pageant of his own life. As in the case of Rossetti, the poet is extremely personal in all his work. Then too, a strong note of mysticism pervades all his verse. The prose of Thompson may rightfully be called poetical prose.

He colored his prose with that same ardour which we evidence in his verses.

Perhaps the reader has been wondering about Walter Pater--the place he fills in this rather confusing scheme of things. Pater undoubtedly was caught in the spirit of Rossettian power. The reason for evading him thus far has been, frankly, because the man is a thesis unto himself. To merely light upon his contributions to the art world would be an injustice to his genius. So again, in his case, we shall touch only partially on the man, stressing simply those aspects of his genius which relate to the special problem under consideration.

On the whole, his work, although admirable for the end in view, carries quite unmistakably the marks of decadence. In his famous series of essays we see parallel instances with those notions found in Rossetti's prose work, "Hand and Soul." Just as Swinburne affected the character of Rossetti's art ideas in his essays, so Pater also used for his model many of the sentences found in the poet's important prose-work. Welby tells us:

> "A comparison of passages in Rossetti's criticism of Blake, Swinburne's book on Blake and his essay on drawings by Old Masters at Florence, and the prose of Pater's Renaissance, will yield some curious results."[1]

Rossetti points out, in a letter to Swinburne, that Pater had a hint for the style of his essay on Leonardo from Swinburne's earlier published essay on drawing by Old Masters at Florence.[2] These three men, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Pater, by their poetic, imaginative quality which they inculcated

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[1]E. T. Welby, op. cit., 133.
[2]Ibid, 134-135.

into their art criticism, tended to produce a profound change in the prose of the period which was immediately to follow. Here were men whose passion was for beauty simply as such, "who valued in art what was most strictly artistic, and who immortalized their experiences of beauty with as much ardour as ever went into the poetic memorial of a personal passion."

To return to Pater's strictly decadent character and influence, then. We find the man admiring most ardently the "Bacchus" of Soloman, a decided decadent work.[1] We have already stated, in an earlier place, that Sandys' "Cleopatra," painted in the very exotic spirit of the decadents, gave some hint to Pater for some of his most characteristic passages. Throughout his work we find a very close sympathy with the whole so-called decadent "Aesthetic Movement."

Pater, as in the case of Rossetti, is decidedly subjective in all his creative work. In his Imaginary Portraits, The Child in the House, Emerald Uthward, and Marius the Epicurean, we find him holding up a mirror to nature which reflects only himself. His entire work all centers around his own life; under mask, yes, but not so much, so as not to recognize the man himself. The elaborate passage in which he describes the effect of Oxford upon Uthwart is a sure transcript from his own experience. Uthwart cares for the beauties of Oxford more in retrospect than when he is among them in the flesh. In such a citation as the following we see illustrated the point we are attempting to make:

> "It was almost retrospect even now, with an anticipation of regret, in rare moments of solitude perhaps, when the oars splashed far up the narrow streamlets through the

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 59.

> fields on May evenings among the fritillaries--does the reader know them? that strange remnant just here of a richer extinct flora--dry flowers, though with a drop of dubious honey in each. Snake's heads, the rude call them, for their shape, scale-marked too, and in colour like rusted blood, as if they grew from some forgotten battle-field, the bodies, the rotten armour--yet delicate, beautiful, waving proudly."[1]

The passage is typical of the man's imaginary powers; and contains both his merits and defects, it would seem. "There is a kind of uncanniness in it, as there is sometimes in Hawthorne, and in spite of its beauty the reader is tempted to ask whether it is altogether wholesome. This certainly would hardly do for 'human nature's daily food.' It is the product of highly artificial, perhaps a decadent, life, it is the air of the hothouse, to be breathed now and then for the sake of the strange and beautiful flowers that grow there, but whence the escape into the free air of heaven is a joy and relief."[2]

In Pater's famous work, Renaissance, published in 1873, we discover a comparatively new attitude; namely, that of an epicurean philosophy. Such an attitude already, no doubt, had had its germ in the beliefs and practices of the man Rossetti. However, in Pater, we see the idea enunciated boldly and clearly. The pursuit of beauty is now completely divorced from religion or any moral obligation on the part of the artist. Beauty is self-sufficing; it needs no hand-maiden. the essay illustrates what Pater brought to prose-literature--that charming illusive beauty, which ends with form and words. Let us quote a bit of what Burdett so pointedly says of the artist's essay:

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[1] W. Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, 231.

[2] H. Walker, op. cit., 1022.

> "There came an air of wonder and surprise at epithets and collocations somewhat funereal and strange, but full of colour and suggestion. The prose was like a tapestry in rich and sombre hues, flecked with gilt and purple threads, and approaching as far as might be to the quality of music.....Pater's criticism was the translation into prose of the emotion aroused in himself by the works that he was criticising.....his analysis is often subtle, if elusive. Sometimes it reflects more truly his own response than the virtue of the art that he is considering."[1]

In Pater's "Postscript" we read a typical passage which illustrates his ideas as to what he believed constituted art. We shall quote only here and there, in order to give the reader some notion as to his vague and strange conception, of the thing as well as illustrate the beautiful way in which he expresses his ideas. He says:

> "It is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art; and the desire of beauty being a fixed element in every artistic organization, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty that constitutes the romantic temper.....if the union of strangeness and beauty, under very difficult and complex conditions, be a successful one, if the union be entire, then the resultant beauty is very exquisite, very attractive. With a passionate care for beauty the romantic spirit refuses to have it, unless the condition of strangeness be first fulfilled. Its desire is for a beauty form of unlikely elements, by a profound alchemy, by a difficult initiation, by the charm which brings it out even of terrible things; and a trace of distortion, of the grotesque, may perhaps linger, as an additional element of expression, about its ultimate grace....."

And so we could go on quoting at great length from any of his essays, all illustrative of this same vague, poetic, tapestry-like prose. That the man was a great influence on the period which earned for itself the name "decadent" is

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[1] O. Burdett, op. cit., 54-55.

without doubt. Qualities quite similar to those found in Pater are noticeable in the prose of the "Nineties." He was the forerunner of such men as Symonds, Wilde, and Lionel Johnson.

In 1875 the first volume of J. A. Symonds' History of the Italian Renaissance was published, in which the writer's debt to Ruskin and to Pater is most apparent. The subject and the temperament of all three are the same. In Symonds' verse, too, we find incorporated that same illusive element which is contained in his prose; just as we find in the case of Pater, his master. Being a typical Bohemian of the period, he reveals in his poetry a certain looseness, a singular eroticism, which he and his colleagues practiced in their verse. One verse from a lyric which he wrote illustrates this attitude:

"We smoke, to fancy that we dream,
And drink, a moment's joy to prove,
And fain would live, and only seem
To love because we cannot love."

"The egoism, the sensuality, the resulting disillusion here record themselves wearily." We see the result of a group of men, who have turned their backs on the realities of life. The only realities for them are found in their sickly, disillusioned art.

Lionel Johnson, too, came under the influence of Pater at Oxford. We discover in his work, the same gracile lucidity that we found in Pater. "Cloistral mysticism" seems to be the key-chord of his two volumes of poetry (1895 and 1897). Johnson is a rather pathetic figure, as were most of the men of this period. His cravings for drink, his indulgence in mere physical pleasure were the cause of his downfall, perhaps; as was

the case of so many of these ardent "super-aesthetes." Religion, sincerely held, could not save him. "His moments of perception were followed by their moments of eclipse. He suffered from a malady of the will, and was deprived of unity because he mistook the tree of Knowledge for the tree of Life. In this confusion his virtues became dangerous to him, and he too is typical of the characteristic antithesis that divided the energies of the time."[1] The man was caught at the debatable moment of a tide at its extreme ebb, as were so many of the other sensitive art-worshippers of this period.

Oscar Wilde--that strange, absolutely unmoral, lawless, intellectual eccentric. At Oxford he invented a life in which the aesthetic theory could be put into practice, challenging all heretofore Victorian ideals. He assumed the role of a poet who echoed, superficially at least, the effects of Milton, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Baudelaire, according to one critic. In his plays as well as his novels we discern the note of decadence quite pronouncedly. His novel Dorian Gray created quite a sensation. One critic says of the book and its author:

> "The progress of the undefined corruption of the hero is more insidious in its effect on the imagination than any stated deed, and the author deliberately makes the most of it. He delineated a man whose insolent luxury of life is an affront to all that desire to enjoy luxury without identifying themselves with Tiberius at Capri or Caligula at Rome.....Of character and humanity it has almost as little as Wilde's verses have of poetry or genuine feeling. The book is a sensational novel written by a man of imagination, enormously susceptible to effects of language, who mistakes technical dexterity for the substance of beauty,

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[1] O. Burdett, op. cit., 55-57.

> and prefers rhetoric to sincerity, and the stylish to style."[1]

In this last sentence is summarized exactly what is so characteristic in all of Wilde. He always achieves an effect; but the whole thing lacks in depth or real thought. The gem is paste underneath; "the glitter and the setting are excellent examples of rococo." He was not able to distinguish the ornate from the grand style. He is in his decorative manner, "the Bernini of borrowed plumes, the peacock of prose-writers," as one author has so descriptively called him.

In him, then, we find the epitome of decadent literary maturation. He was content and even preferred the effect of beauty, superficial beauty, to reality in art. He had a decided weakness for the meretricious. His decorative element is always theatrical, echoing the influence of the French. Although fascinating, as were so many of the writers in his class, he is detrimental to the reader, decidedly unhealthful. His work echoes the strange satanic note of a glorious decadence. None of his poems are of particular great poetic value. They are charming; but all indicate that he was more interested in form than the substance of the thing, "in pitch than in quality, in surface than sincerity, in effect than in truth."

Burdett says of him, and quite truthfully:

> "His career was the epitome of the decade, as his fall was its climax. In its lights and shadows, its colour, all that it offers to appreciation and distaste, it is symbolic. He had little new to say, but he said it vividly; and what seemed new was really the last flicker of an exhausted impulse, in which the Romantic movement,

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[1] O. Burdett, op. cit., 136-137.

> seeking throughout the century to escape the Victorian convention, rent at last its respectable robes, to release the human spirit for the building of some new synthesis on the ruins of forsaken formulae. Disillusion had followed illusion to corruption....."[1]

Perhaps one more of the decadents should be mentioned, in order to show how the influence of Rossetti and his group spread to the bounds of danger and decay. The man is Laurence Housman, perhaps one of the best figures to illustrate the very thing we are attempting to show. He was more akin to the Pre-Raphaelites (those of Rossettian color) than any of the aforementioned decadents. Like Rossetti and Morris, Housman was not satisfied with one art. He wrote poems and fairy-tales and made charming pictures to illustrate them. His book-plates and covers and title-pages all aid in linking the nineties with the sixties, by carrying on the same tradition. "In the poems a casuistry of feeling, devotion and disillusion are found together, so that we are forced, despite the art displayed, to see in the devotion mainly an aesthetic motive."

In Housman's poetry we find that same haunting pathos which is evident in much of the verse of Rossetti and Morris--"it lingers like a faint perfume." Poems like "The Cornkeeper" give one the same feeling of fatality which one gets upon reading some of the verse of the other two mentioned poets. In his rhythms we see the influence of Swinburne. In all his verses he is decidedly in sympathy with exactly the same thing that the older pseudo-Pre-Raphaelite poets entertained.

So far, no mention has been made of the notorious Yellow Book, that book which was the mouthpiece of the decadents.

1o. Burdett, op. cit., 153.

In it the writers and artists placed all their artistic productions--poetry and criticism, as well as illustrations and drawings. The most representative artist of the group, who contributed quite a number of pieces to the book, is Aubrey Beardsley. And of him we shall treat next, since he was the outstanding artist who carried on the Rossetti tradition in painting; but distorted it to such ends so as to land it into the realm of perdition.

Beardsley, then, is the Rossetti of the "Nineties," so to speak. In his work we discern a marked likeness to the pictures of Rossetti, and especially Burne-Jones, as well as some of the later followers of Burne-Jones. His designs for Morte d'Arthur contain decorative resemblances to the older painter. Morris's flowery influence also plays a part in his design. Upon glancing at the vignettes that decorate the vacant corners of the Morte d'Arthur we observe a similar treatment to that of Morris and Jones. There is a difference, however, and it becomes quite evident, upon close scrutinization; namely, a difference of suggestion. As one author says:

> "There had been a fragile innocence in Burne-Jone's figures; a spiritual refinement had paled their faces and hollowed their cheeks, but in Beardsley's the very children were living in an age of experience, and his figures suffer from their souls as from a malady of the nerves. The flowers and trees have undergone a similar intensification, as if consumed by the energy of their own sap, and no branch or spray but is alive with the consciousness of its own beauty and aware of its own place in the design."[1]

Beardsley later designs, done in black and white, produce an uncanny effect. The decorative sense was his mater-gift; form, flower, figure, are all created but with secondary

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[1]O. Burdett, op. cit., 104.

consideration. His whole artistic production slips into a decidedly abnormal state. In his later designs and drawings, among them his famous Salome, we see some very startling illustrations of art. After 1893, the influences of Burne-Jones seem to be modified to a certain degree; although the Salome drawings still belong to that "cadaverous, lean and hungry world" of the older artist from which Beardsley had not completely rescued himself. It seems that the artist's restless personality accepted not only one, but many influences, at the same time, from anywhere and everywhere--a most eclectic figure, to be sure. As welby so descriptively says of him, he was a conglomeration of Burne-Jones, Pollaiuolo, Japanese Prints, Greek vase designs, contemporary French posters, and Charles Conder. Robert Ross echoes this same idea when he says of him:

> "He sums up all the delightful manias,
> all that is best in modern appreciation--
> Greek vases, Italian primitives, the
> 'Hypnerotomachia,' Chinese porcelain,
> Japanese kakemonos, Renaissance frieses,
> old French and English furniture, rare
> enamels, medieval illumination, the
> debonnaire master's of the eighteenth
> century, the English Pre-Raphaelites."

Beardsley's imagination went to the bounds of sheer extravagance in many instances. The element of playfulness seems to dominate the whole setting; there is nothing profound or inspiring in any of it. Too many times do his subjects become symbols of human appetite or passion, or human beings which typify the corruption of human souls. There appears the same diabolical manifestations as is noticeable in the poetry of the time. He concentrated his artistic efforts on the hidden and the evil in life. He aimed to shock the ordinary lover of art. He depicted the corruption of the soul as in a horrible

nightmare.[1]

So we see in Beardsley's style a depiction of an underlying corruption. We are told that after these drawings appeared, people professed to see Beardsley faces in the streets, just as they had previously seen Rossetti ones. A characteristic whim of the age was that life seemed to copy art, instead of the opposite procedure. His influence, brought about by his strange paintings and drawings, led the entire art world into a ruinous decadence.

And so one could go on and on, giving instances of this strange Rossettian influence gone to seed--both in painting and poetry--an influence which, although at first not so dangerous, carried to excess, became a deadly blight on Romantic art. The whole age took unto itself these traces of artistic impulse originated by Rossetti and his crowd; add to this the French influence, as well as the characteristic looseness of the Bohemian atmosphere which attracted this band of artists, and the outcome is inevitable. The whole age was an age of nerves; there was a keen, over-keen sensitiveness to certain feelings pulsating in all of art. The bizarre, exotic, was the predominant note, to be sure. Honey, roses, white breasts, golden hair, with fierce passion and indolent languor are the chords of their verses. The whole thing breathes an unhealthy, over-perfumed, air; an air whose elements are paralyzed by an underlying satanic power. Dowson's cry for "madder music and for stronger wine" is typical of the group. His utterly foolish aesthetic theories, which embraced such notions as the letter "v" being the most beautiful of the letters, is another

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[1] O. Burdett, op. cit., 106-120.

example of the false emphasis which they placed upon various aspects of art. Davidson, in The Ballad of a Nun, remarks so flippantly:

> "I care not for my broken vow,
> Though God should come in thunder soon,
> I am sister to the mountains now,
> And sister to the sun and moon."

Not so utterly divorced from the note struck in "The Blessed Damozel" of Rossetti; and quite illustrative of the unmoral, carefree, irresponsible, daring note, so prevalent in the poetry of the age. The group had no life, no love, no interests, but their art. Religion, God, Nature, unselfish love, and all the other important issues bound up so closely with life and true art are entirely missing in their creative work.

According to William Archer, "Poetry has the religion of the future in its hands," and "in the like manner must the religion of the future spring from some body of poetry potent enough to give the spirit of man a new elevation and a larger outlook upon nature and destiny." According to this, the peculiar poetry of the "Nineties" fails most certainly. This period derived its spirit from the group associated with Rossetti; which, as we have seen, attempted to recapture the mood of the Middle Ages. However, these men underneath their art were skeptics; and they allowed this element of despair to seep through their creative works. They escaped from the present into a "world of beautiful regrets. Their dreams were troubled by the modern mood of disillusion, but had the memory and desire for a beauty that had perished from the world." The pictures which they painted illustrated to perfection this lost, utterly hopeless, spirit. Sometimes they were like

"dreams painted between sleeping and waking, sometimes attempts to infuse contemporary subjects with the feeling of an earlier age and to impose the elder pictorial pattern upon them." The figures seemed to be shadows in a land where only color seemed to be a reality, and "haunted by tragic or imperfectly realized memories."

> "Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among a people of remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail androgynous, the light almost shining through them."

Hence we see how natural it was for the men along the way to capture this hopeless, disillusioned spirit; then add their elements of decay, which they borrowed in part from the French Romantics, and march the entire movement on to its ultimate destruction.

Artistically, the period of the decadents, then, is seen to be the expression of a finally exhausting impulse. It became, therefore, "the poetry of an age which, having lost its convictions, was asserting the rights of the only entity left, the ego, to develop itself in any direction without heed to existing conventions." Such a despairing art philosophy without moral or intellectual stamina, hysterical, as it were, is bound to land all of art into a hopeless solipsism. And this is exactly what happened.

Our aim in this chapter has been to show how the peculiar elements which Rossetti had inculcated into art and poetry--juggled and twisted by ardent, indiscreet disciples, because of their essential nature--aided in bringing about the decadent art of the "Nineties." Although the subject has been

only virtually touched upon, sufficient material has been offered to establish the point. Instances have been given to prove quite conclusively that Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris, as well as Pater, played a great part in bringing about the situation which arose in the last part of the nineteenth century. They were, in some degree responsible for Romanticism ending "in a distinguished perversity, in a kind of languid fete galante." Welby gives us an excellent picture of the whole situation, and with it let us close this particular chapter:

> "It (Victorian Romanticism) preserves some attitudes and costumes from the Rossetti period, it has some properties from Whistler, it has taken fans from Austin Dobson and masks from the earlier Verlaine and borrowed frippery in bulk from France, but its atmosphere, with that 'forgotten censer' of Baudelaire perfuming it secretly, is its own. Qualis artifex! Victorian Romanticism is acutely aware that its end is at hand, and to be met in the spirit of the artist. Fin de siecle is murmured everywhere. All the books have been read, all the forbidden fruit eaten, and there is no need of Mallarme to explain that the flesh is sad. But the final entertainment, religious in a way, has its carefully respected ritual. A great energy has been exhausted; there remain these rites, performed, for a change welcome to the weary epicures of sensation, a rebours. But the service of the Devil demands at least as much energy as the service of God, and only Beardsley seems to have known that truth."[1]

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[1] E. T. Welby, op. cit., 98-99.

CHAPTER IX

RETROSPECTION AND CONCLUSION

After wading through the roiled waters of Pre-Raphaelitism, and realizing all its many and complicated currents, it is rather a challenge to embark upon any definite line of conclusion. Perhaps a re-reading of the entire thesis might prove a more valuable end, than any piece-meal summary which we might offer here. We can but recapitulate what has already been stated; summarize the essential aspects of the paper; and leave the subject, hoping that our modest endeavor has not been entirely in vain.

We have learned, then, in the progress of our discussion, that Pre-Raphaelitism started out as a sane, healthy, corrective movement in the realm of art. It was a noble attempt to rejuvenate and re-vitalize an art which had been sufficated by the bonds of tradition and out-worn convention. The chief pioneer in the Movement was William Holman Hunt, whom we have found to be the most courageous and the most loyal to the real purpose of Pre-Raphaelitism. It was his aim in art, to choose the highest in nature, and to express it as nature deemed it should be expressed. He believed the vital ambition of the artist was to serve as "high priest and expounder of the excellence of the works of the Creator." He held that the artist was not only accountable to the outside phases of his art; but to God and all mankind--a noble aim, to be sure. His emphasis on high, worthy content, as well as realistic execution of form, sounded a new, yet ever old, note in the realm of art--namely, whether

its chief aim consists in its content or in its form. And such a question must still be left unsettled, to be ever wrangled over, just as it always has been. All we can venture to say, with any degree of certainty at all, is that a vein of true purpose runs through nearly all high art and literature. Plato was decidedly convinced that it ought to do so, even to the point of neglecting the "form" element. We know that "all art from the beginning served for the higher development of men's minds. It has been valued as good to sustain strength for noble resolves."

Let us not become confused in thinking that all art must necessarily be religious or essentially didactic. We know that Hunt was absolutely averse to this idea. We find him painting, by no means, only religious subjects, or pictures dealing particularly with biblical scenes. He painted many of his very popular canvases from literary subjects. However, in these pictures, as we see illustrated in two specific examples, "Two Gentlemen of Verona" and "Measure for Measure," there is always an indication of man's deeper, spiritual nature which shines through the surface of the story embodied in the painting. The great noble virtues of forgiveness, love, hospitality, and so forth, are underlying all the subject-matter of his pictures.

Lest the reader dismiss this discussion with the idea that Hunt was only, or primarily, interested in content, we have certainly proved otherwise in the chapter relating specifically to him and his contribution to Pre-Raphaelite art. He was an ardent upholder of technique, but always from the standpoint of being realistically portrayed and executed. Never was realism, which is truth and nature, to be swallowed up by an

imagination which knows no bounds. Nature must afford all artistic inspiration and guidance. The Movement, in Huntian light, was one in which the realistic and the poetic met on an equal footing.

It is to be much regretted that the poet of great power who associated himself with the cause of Pre-Raphaelitism, namely, Rossetti, did not carry on the great purpose of Pre-Raphaelitism all through his work, to the very end. If there had existed a poet, who had followed religiously in the footsteps of the rightful interpretation of the great movement in artistic thinking and practice, he would doubtlessly have given us a poetry much in the vein of Wordsworth, who was Pre-Raphaelite in a sense, in that he believed Nature to be the only guide for poetic fancy.

But Rossetti, fundamentally un-English, gave to the spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism another atmosphere, as we have attempted to point out. He carried the fundamental Pre-Raphaelite doctrine off on a strange tangent. True, he was Pre-Raphaelite, in that he executed his pictures with meticulous care, in that he was willing to be minute and particular, especially in the beginning. But his underlying motive was different from the true Pre-Raphaelite. Then, too, he added elements of medievalism and mysticism, elements which over-emphasized the sensual in art, which Hunt and Millais objected to so strenuously--elements which were strictly taboo in true Pre-Raphaelite art. We have seen how, in his later work, he became more abstract and vague, more subjective, more exquisitely emotional. Amid all his "affluence of jewel-coloured words," there lurked a dangerous note. And, because of his dominating and colorful

personality, he executed a more direct and far-reaching influence on art and literature than either Millais or Hunt, at least on the surface. This strange note, for which he was responsible, was carried on by a band of gullible disciples, where it became exaggerated, unduly emphasized, distorted to the point of artistic decadence. Poetry became thin, decidedly transparent, and lacking in poetic virility. Extreme sensibility, mere delight in beautiful forms, hues, tints, with a deep-seated indifference to all forces and agencies which make up the thunderous stress of life--all aided in bringing about the condition which meant doom for the "Nineties." The men of this period, then, not yet satisfied, thinned the whole thing even more, until there finally remained only an empty art-shell, which sang within its hollow confines, "Art for Art's sake."

We realize that the public was wrong, of course, in calling Rossetti the typical Pre-Raphaelite. Yet nothing was more natural. What men did was simply to take the most poetic member of a movement, and infer from his work that Pre-Raphaelitism was based on a love for the mystical and the vaguely poetic, instead of being primarily a movement for truth against conventionality.

To conclude that the sane, healthy influence of Hunt merely passed into nothingness, would not be relating the entire situation correctly. True, we might venture upon a long dissertation, attempting to point out how the spirit of Huntian realism and truth to nature was infused into the great moving spirit of the day, and carried on by another faction of artists and writers--those not overcome by Rossettian suffication. However,

to superimpose upon the man a high degree of unfounded credit would merely be defeating the very purpose of literary research. Nevertheless, there is certainly nothing unethical about making some suggestions concerning the possibility of the man's influence, and his power in inculcating an ideal which aided in bringing about a new spirit in art and literature; namely, the spirit of realism. These suggestions are not the brain-children of any unfounded thinking, or far-fetched calculations on the part of the writer; but rather arose as a result of an effort to link the great piece of work begun by Hunt with a movement which seemed to be the outcome of the very spirit which we find embodied in his work.

We know that about the same time, or soon after, Hunt embarked upon his art reform, this spirit of realism began to take hold in another sphere of Victorian literature. There appeared, on the scene, a group of novelists who attempted to portray in their books life and human beings as they really existed in every-day life, not frail, transparent, cellophane creatures, the ghosts and shadows of another world. We know the characters of these stories as real people, who live on our earth, and breathe an air of freshness and purity. Such men as Blackmore, Hardy, Meredith, Thackeray, Reade, Eliot, and a host of others in this same class, all paint their scenery faithfully and meticulously from nature itself. They do not attempt to palm off on their readers any general and unmeaning descriptions. In them we discover no drop scene effects; their "flowers bloom at the right season, and the leaf of each tree has, even in its fading, its proper color. In this way, indeed, such men have learned the best educational

lessons of Pre-Raphaelitism....."[1] These novelists are never extreme naturalists, however, devoid of poetic beauty; but never once do they allow their imaginations to overpower the realistic truth found in a close pursuit of nature.

Certainly, we can say, in all truth that the novel of contemporary life is the natural outcome of this spirit of realism, which was, in part, due to the action of Hunt. The novel of purpose, which also sprang into existence about this time, and is decidedly anathema to the champions of "art for art's sake," is also in definite relation to the work and spirit fostered by Hunt.

We see then, that Hunt's way of thinking was very much along the same line that one faction of Victorianism was developing at this particular time. This spirit of revolt which seized all walks of Victorian life--in part, a return to external nature--was also carried out in music, philosophy, and scientific endeavor. Hueffer credits Hunt with a great deal of influence in creating this new spirit of realism. He says:

> "If Mr. Hunt destroyed the image of Simon Peter as the sort of artist's model that you see on the steps of Calabrian churches, ...if Mr. Hunt destroyed this figure, with its attitudes learnt on the operatic stage, its blanket revealing opulently moulded forms, and its huge property keys extended towards a new-Gothic Heaven--if Mr. Hunt gave us instead (I don't know that he ever did, but he may have done) a Jewish fisherman pulling up dirty-looking fish on the shores of a salt-encrusted and desolate lake--then Mr. Hunt, in the realms of modern thought, enormously aided in the discovery of wireless telegraphy, and in no way damaged the prestige of the occupant of St. Peter's chair.
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> "This truism may appear a paradox. And

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[1] J. McCarthy, "The Pre-Raphaelites in England," The Galaxy, XXI (June, 1876), 725-32.

> yet nothing is more true than that clearness of thought in one department of life, stimulates clearness of thought in another. The great material developments of the end of the last century did not only succeed the great realistic developments that had preceded them in the arts. The one was the logical corollary of the other. Just as you cannot have a healthy body in which one of the members is unsound, so you cannot have a healthy national life in the realms of thought unless in all the departments of life you have sincere thinkers, and this is what Mr. Hunt undoubtedly was--a sincer thinker."[1]

Hunt was a great prophet, as well as an artist, then. His position was important in the entire scheme of things. He aided in bringing about a revolt in life as well as in artistic realms. Besides his connection with the spirit of realism developed in the novel, there was also a certain strain in painting which carried on in the tradition of Hunt; although a bit overshadowed by the new intrusion of impressionism into art. Dearmer believes that when the reactionary craze of impressionism has come to an end, English painting will undoubtedly return with full force to this Huntian tradition of painting nature in all sincerity, as it should be; and contemporary life and people as they really are, even in Biblical or other historical pictures. He also states that Mr. Stanley Spencer owed a great deal of his success in his work (1927) to the recovery of the Pre-Raphaelite spirit; and that he was not alone in this debt, to be sure.[2]

Even if we should become skeptical about Hunt's influence, as we have attempted to show it here--even if we were to disregard this phase of the man entirely--we cannot pass on without pointing out the inherent value of his art, in and by itself.

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[1] F. M. Hueffer, "William Holman Hunt, O. M., "Fortnightly Review, LXXXVIII (October, 1910), 657-65.

[2] P. Dearmer, op. cit.

It undoubtedly exists as another solid pillar in the building of a great national British art. He was intensely English in all his work and thinking, and aided in bringing art back to its former national standing--a healthy and virulent condition. It was always believed that art, in order to be great, must borrow from foreign sources--particularly from the French, at this time in the history of art. Hunt proved just the opposite. His doctrine, which emphasized turning to Nature only for guidance, destroyed any cause for reliance on foreign models.

Hunt's art contributions alone put him in a high place in the realm of English art. Few pictures are better known in England than his, and the titles of some of them have become household words. His appeal is to all of mankind, not to a strict narrow super-aesthetic group, as in the case of Rossetti and his followers. Hundreds look at his paintings all the time, and love them. "He intended those works to convey to his fellow-men the great ideals and lofty aspirations which possessed him."

Critics who are prone to disregard his work because it lacks somewhat in sheer aesthetic powers, should beware of undervaluing those intentions which are more noble than mere aesthetic "hodge-podge." Hunt was a painter but also a man who belonged to the school of prophets as Michelangelo and Rembrandt did. "And is it not true that every painter is a prophet not of beauty only, but of that truth and goodness also which are of the very nature of things and the ultimate values of life."[1]

Hence, we see how this movement of Pre-Raphaelitism, which began with such well-defined aims, was carried on by two distinct factions, and passed into two utterly opposed realms of

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[1]P. Dermer, op. cit.

art and life. The result, paradoxical though it seems, was both a purification of and a blight on English art.

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