

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

"The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood"

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies

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Submitted By:

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List of Illustration:

Rosseti

1. Paola and Francesca, detail, 1862;
2. The Wedding of St. George and Princess Sabra (1857);
3. The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary, 1845;
4. Dante's Amor, 1859;
5. Ecce Analla Domine, 1849-50;
6. Beata Beatrix, 1863;
7. Astarte Syriaca, 1877;
8. The Blessed Damozel, 1871-79;
9. Dante's Dream, 1871;
10. The Bower Meadow, 1872;
11. How they met themselves, 1851-60;
12. Found, 1854;

12. Millais;

13. Ophelia, 1851-52;
14. Christ in the House of his Parents, 1849-50;
15. The Boyhood of Raleigh, 1870;
16. The Race Meeting, 1853;
17. Autumn Leaves, 1856;
18. Vale of Rest, 1858-59;
19. Design for Gothic Window, 1853;
20. Ferdinand lured by Ariel, 1849;
21. John Ruskin, 1854;
22. Marianna, 1851;

23. Disentombment of Queen Matilda;
24. Christ in the House of his Parents, (drawing);
25. Isabella and Lorenzo;
Hunt.
26. Our English Coasts, 1852;
27. Claudio and Isabella, 1850;
28. A street scene in Cairo; the lanternmakers courtship, 1854;
29. The Hireling Shepherd, 1851;
30. The Light of the World, 1853-56;
31. The Awakening Conscience, 1852;
32. The Scapegoat, 1859;
33. "The Germ" front cover, 1850.
Ford Madox Brown
34. Work, 1852-56;
35. Last of England, 1855;
36. Take Your Son, Sir, 1857;
37. William Dyce, Titian first essay in colour, 1856;
38. Edward Burne Jones "The Beguiling of Merlin", 1874;
39. John Brett, the Stonebreaker, 1858;
40. John William Waterhouse -
"The Lady of Shalott, 1888.
41. Edward Burne Jones - "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, 1884;
42. Arthur Hughes, "April Love", 1855-6.
43. Dante drawing an ANGEL, 1849.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will concern itself with the events of pre-Raphaelitism from its emergence through its short existence to its final demise.

It will concentrate on the leading figures in its course of history Millais, Rossetti and Hunt with brief mention of Lord Madox Brown. The amount of space limits it to these painters even though there are many other who may be worthy of mention. By selecting the main figures it is hoped that there can be a more in-depth analysis of their respective works.

Chapter I deals with the breaking up of the group and its origins and possible causes for its emergence.

Chapter 2 deals with the group's first exposure to the public and its subsequent criticisms. Rossetti's, Hunt's and Millais's first exhibited works by pre-Raphaelite principles will also be discussed.

Finally Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will deal with the individual paths these painters took after the original Brotherhood dissolved.

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The writer will endeavour to be as critical as possible however much emphasis has been put on the series of events which took place throughout Pre-Raphaelitism.

Illustrations will be included of painters not always mentioned but it is hoped this will give a wider visual account of pre-Raphaelitism.

CHAPTER I

By September 1850 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was only two years old. It was, however, showing signs of internal conflict and gradual disintegration.

James Collinson had left the Brotherhood to join a fanatic religious sect congenial to his own fanatical religious attitude. His departure gave rise to the problem of filling the vacancy. It was felt it must be filled but the selection of another member led to more conflict and internal bickering. Walter Howell Deverell was the candidate and William Rossetti recorded in the P.R.B. journal of 1850, October 24th, "Deverell will worthily fill up the place left vacant by Collinson." However, Deverell's admission was not agreed upon by all members and William Rossetti later recorded "It could not be said that Deverell was ever absolutely a P.R.B."

Millais was eager for his colleague Charles Allston Collins to fill the vacant position believing that Collins held similar beliefs to the existing movement. However, his admission was bitterly opposed by Woolner, pointing out that Collins had, artistically, not real claim to Pre-Raphaelitism. This not only gave rise to further quarrels but also to artistic differences.

As the rift between its members deepened an important meeting was arranged for January 1851, with its main issue to discuss the problem of new members but more obviously to clear the air. On the issue of new members nothing was resolved and with a split inevitable there seemed to be mixed feelings on the continued existence of the group.

Millais still angry over Collins refusal, questioned the whole existence of the Brotherhood, asking if they had anything in common, and if so, what use was it to them. Yet on the other hand there seemed to be a determination to keep the movement together. They enforced ridiculous measures to ensure this including fines for non-attendance at meetings.

It was also decided that each member write a personal declaration stating why they should be a P.R. brother. Nobody bothered except William Rossetti but he lost his.

The further existence of the Brotherhood became more and more precarious. The sculptor, Thomas Woolner, was next to leave. Woolner, bitter, over his failure to obtain the Wordsworth Memorial Commission became increasingly disillusioned with art and emigrated to Australia.

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In 1853 having attained some measure of success, William Michael Rossetti wrote "Our position has greatly altered. We have emerged from reckless abuse to a position of general and high recognition concluding that the "very success of the Brotherhood has led to its dispersal".

By 1853 they had indeed achieved a considerable measure of success secured by Ruskin letter's defending them.

This success was more for the individuals rather than the group and the individual who received most of it was Millais. He no longer needed the group for confidence; he was drawing large crowds at the Royal Academy to view his "Huguenot" and with his election to the R.A. as an associate the original pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was finished. Holman Hunt left for the Holy Land, Stephens left to pursue a career as an art critic and Rossetti had now become obsessively involved with his model/mistress to the point of ignoring the group.

The life-span of the group was short, beginning in 1848 and ending two years later, it is difficult to determine if it failed or not. We can see how its initial success had led to its failure as a group but subsequently it was by its failure and the dispersal of its members that a whole series of events occurred, under the influence of its different members the most significant of whom was Rossetti and his association with Burne Jones, Morris and the arts and crafts movement.

Their reasons for failure are convincingly expressed in this quote:

"The pre-Raphaelites were integral artists like the Surrealists, they had a philosophy of life which embraced painting, poetry, philosophy and politics. They were convinced of the imbecility of most of their contemporaries and reacted in the strongest possible way to academic naturalism of the time, they were not afraid to experiment with their sensations, they acknowledged the primacy of the imagination - but they were incapable of a really comprehensive reaction - a revolution, they had no dialect, no scientific method, no real energy, in a way they were sentimentalists. They should have developed romanticism from the stage where Coleridge left it, but instead they developed nostalgia....."

Quote from Herbert Read "Philosophy of Modern Art" Chapter on Surrealism and The Romantic Principle".

We can also judge reasons for their failure in the courses they chose to follow and how they ignored much of what was achieved before them.

For instance, when Constable and Turner although completely dissimilar to the Pre-Raphaelites, died they left a legacy of landscape painting in England which might have been continued late into the 19th century by ~~the~~ painters of talent. They had, after all, opened up new ground for this. However they left no successor and all that was gained them was lost to France.

It was left to Delacroix, greatly influenced by Constable to carry on the English tradition which eventually manifested itself in the works of the impressionists in the late 1870s.

It is surprising how painters such as Millais and perhaps Brown, who had the necessary abilities seemed to shut their minds to the modern consciousness revealed in the works of Constable and Turner and escape into the "odd centuries of pedantry and snobbery" . (Herbert Read "Philosophy of Modern Art").

The Pre-Raphaelites chose a different direction. After the energy of Blake and Tuseli, subject painting, in its newer too popular form of History painting had worsened to the point of appalling.

This type of work had become visually dull, dark and concerned itself mainly with sentimental events of the trauma of everyday life. It was painters such as Wilkie and Laandseer who produced and filled the R.A. with this type of work. It was as a result of disgust and rejection of this type of history painting that the P.R.B. formed which is ironic as a great deal of the pre-Raphaelitism is as sentimental as it.

However, other factors may have contributed to the forming of the P.R.B. and they can only be dealt with briefly and in general. There was what they felt to be a decline in English painting and it seems to be the main contributing factor.

There was however a series of events occurring, at that time which helped the P.R.B. to form. It is important to realise that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was not a totally isolated artistic phenomenon, but part of and possibly influenced by a chain of widespread social and artistic dissatisfaction and change throughout Britain and Europe.

The first Chartist riots occurred in 1848, there was a revival of gothic architecture. The 19th century brought about taxonomy, the invention of photography and the acceleration of science.

The teachings of Carlyle and Kingsley were symptomatic of a rapidly changing society, and perhaps most dramatically the wheels of commerce were set rolling with the industrial revolution in which mass production was the order of the day.

Artistically a series of events had occurred in Europe and in particular Germany. A group of painters emerged calling themselves the Nazerenes. They included Overbeck, Cornelius, Tubrich, and Brochlin. They were producing Pre-Renaissance images mingling literary subject matter with a technique whose precision contradicts optical truth. Their Quattrocento mannerisms with flat simplified style of painting often led to confusion between the two groups. The Nazerenes declared principles limited themselves to the artistic forms of the past, forms which their principles would not permit them to change.

Although, denied by Hunt it is in his autobiography "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelites" it is obvious that the Nazerenes and particularly Dyce; who worked under them, were a considerable influence.

In 1848, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, three art students not yet in their twenties form the ill-conceived but ambitious movement; The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It was a movement which was more or less doomed from the start by containing itself too much within the fatal elements of Medievalism. The danger was recognised by Ruskin, who himself advocated a return to the past when he wrote: "if their sympathies with earlier artists lead them into Medievalism or Romanticism this, of course, will come to nothing."

It is important to realise the role Ruskin played at that time. He was, in fact, a guiding light in English art at that time; he had only to wonder why nobody painted apple blossoms and immediately the Royal Academy was full of them. Ruskin foresaw and encouraged "a patient observation of reality which would permit one to see beyond visible reality and so perceive the sublime mechanism of a universe created and ruled by god, discerning in the most humble objects the incessant working of the divine which embellishes and glorifies them" Quote from John Ruskin. John Ruskin was an important influence on the Pre-Raphaelites.

When Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais formed the initial group, they felt the need for more members. And it was to have, like any other "Pleid" have seven members. The selection of the remaining members was haphazard and careless.

Ford Madox Brown was an immediate choice. He had worked with Rossetti and was relatively talented and independent of the R.A. Most importantly he held similar ideas to them. However Brown declined the invitation to join, having no liking for such organisations and because of a bitterness existing between himself and Hunt over the tutelage of Rossetti.

The choice of the remaining members was based on friendships; Thomas Woolner, a sculptor of meagre talent, whose main claim to the Pre-Raphaelitism was the bitterness he held for the Royal Academy. Rossetti's brother, William Michael Rossetti, joined; he was not an artist but a civil servant, he did, however, keep a journal of the events of the movement which remain as an invaluable source of reference for historians.

Rossetti's final choice was James Collinson, a moderately successful Royal Academy painter, but it seems his only claim to P.R.B. was his intention to marry Rossetti's sister. Hunt's only choice was George Frederick Stephens, a student of the R.A. who had not progressed beyond its antique school and was yet to produce a painting, it seems his only claim was that he lived near by and it would be handy for meetings.

Their first meeting as a Brotherhood was held in September 1848. The relating of the events which occurred at this meeting may be considered trivia but they give us an insight into the attitudes of these innocent, childlike but enthusiastic young painters. Their principles and ideas show us just how innocent and inevitably doomed as a group they were.

They did not possess the fullness of historical knowledge and imagination that Ruskin did and they tried to assert their position as the contemporary heirs to what was good in the past by a random list of heroes. They called it their list of immortals, a natural term for revered historical figures with a continued relevance to their present.

It formed a pyramidal structure of five strata with Jesus Christ at the top, put there by the most religious of the group, Hunt. On the second level were Shakespeare, and the author of the book of Job. On the third layer were: Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Leonardo, Goethe, Keats, Shelly, King Alfred, Landor Thackeray, Washington and Browning. The remaining layers contained names of lesser importance.

It is said that Rossetti with his feeling for the Italian secret society or Cosa Nostra conceived the idea of the movement being kept secret, and all agreed to sign their paintings with the mysterious initials P.R.B.

When, as they were at that first meeting, the closest they ever were, they studied and discussed the engravings by Lasino of the Frescoes of the Campo Santo in Pisa. They reached a general sort of agreement that their own work should aim at a similar freshness, innocence and imagination. Ruskin had been previously thinking along similar lines.

They condemned Raphael's "Transfiguration" for its "Grandiose disregard of the simplicity of truth, the pompous posturing of the apostles and the unspiritual attitudinizing of the saviour".
Quote from Holman Hunts biography.

They adapted highly righteous and moralistic principles, though ironically, often swapping mistress for model among themselves. They set themselves strict rules of no smoking, drinking or swearing; these rules and principles seemed to be highly contradictory and absolutely childish. They adopted a maxim or motto: "death to slosh" (Joshua Reynolds) and set down their exact aims as a group.

They are as follows:

1. To have a genuine idea to express;
2. To study nature attentively so as to know how to express it;
3. To sympathise with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art to the exclusion of what is conventional and self paroding and learned by Rate.

4. To produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.

This was their considered manifest~~o~~ but it lacked any real intellectual content. They desired to turn away from their own age, which they considered banal and distasteful instead of gaining from it the wealth of resources it provided.

They decided in their "youthful enthusiasm" that all art from Raphael to their present day was "Rhetorical nonsense and that painters before Raphael were good and honest men and they resolved to emulate them.

Introduction

Chapter 2 will place particular emphasis on the events which affected the Brotherhood's initial launching into the art and social life of the Victorian age and the actual work they first exhibited.

The Spring following the formal creation of the Brotherhood saw their first paintings exhibited in public.

Hunt's painting was "Reinze vowing to obtain justice for the death of his younger brother slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and the Oreini factions" and was on an incident from the life of the 14th century Italian revolutionary, Cola Du Rienze.

Millais exhibited Lorenzo and Isabella taken from Keats "Pot of Basil".

Both were shown at the Royal Academy while Rossetti fearing rejection preferred to exhibit his "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary" at the Free Exhibition at Hyde Park Corner, where space could be bought.

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Millais produced the most significant painting of the three which was, as he stated, to be executed entirely on our new principles. The painting was conceived as a communal scheme where all the members contributed a design. The painting differs from many of its contemporaries at the time in respect to its use of new and almost daring compositional devices. Millais has taken many risks and ignored many precedents. It contains thirteen people around a table which equals a last supper which is something no other painter at this time would have dared to attempt. The visual and compositional devices, though awkward and stiff are ultimately effective; the viewer's eye is led completely around the painting, through a bumpy progression of portraits (the portraits are all of members of the Brotherhood. This was a practice very common to them). From the "loving couple" on the right and finally completing the circular composition with the gestural kicking of the dog by the man in the foreground. The painting is, however, full of contradictions; the motive of the leg stretched to kick the dog is both wilful and realistic yet it still remains contrived; the painting is both naturalistic and stylised but yet calculatedly fresh.

The obvious problem which confronted Millais in this piece are similar to Rossettis.

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The error occurs with the background perspective leaving the piece with an overall ambiguous feeling of space and flatness.

The symbolism and feeling of gestural movement of the diners activity is unconvincingly frozen; the servant on the right seems awkwardly caught between steps and the people are frozen in the activities of eating or drinking.

The expression of malice in the man who kicks the dogs contrasts greatly with the grace with which Isabella fondles it. These symbols of trivia and everyday existence strongly contrast against the symbolic acceptance by Isabella of the half blood orange from Lorenzo.

The technique was unusual and different though not entirely new.^{***} It involved the design being carefully drawn out on the canvas, then painted over with a thin film of white pigment and worked off with a dry brush to ensure evenness. The remaining outline would still be visible through the thin film; then the painting could commence. This would involve meticulous care and use of small brushes with only the smallest section completed in one sitting while the white pigment was still wet similar to fresco painting. This technique was slow but enabled them to achieve a minuteness of detail and brilliance of colour they required.

^{***}English art had become brighter especially after Turner visited Italy and in the 1820s William Mulready was developing a method to brighten and lighten the colours by painting thinly over a white ground giving an impression of luminosity.

They had only really popularised a technique which was gaining ground anyway.

Hunt's "Rienzo...." was clearly not as successful a piece as Millais. The areas where Millais encountered problems, Hunt had also, but in the extreme.

Natural posturing and gestural movements in Hunt's piece fail to convince the viewer. The work reads more like a stage set packed with actors than a naturalistic painting. Whereas Millais showed signs of a natural painter to whom things came easily Hunt showed all the signs of an exploratory painter.

The same problems existed for Rossetti, he, however, overcame them in different ways. Rossetti was the least skilled of the three and ironically this fact seemed to serve to his advantage later on.

"The girlhood of the Virgin Mary" reads as far more convincing than Hunt's painting maybe because it is a simpler work.

The same problems of perspective exist for Rossetti but there is more evidence of the influence of the Quattrocento style in his work which gives it that iconic and innocent feeling not seeking a true representation of naturalism like Hunt. Rossetti never had the patience to master perspective and consequently "The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary is flat; flatter than both Millais' and Hunt's works.

This inability to master the rudimentary of draughtmanship led to Rossetti characteristic style. Technically the painting seemed to be the weakest but it did not seem to matter much as it seemed to emerge as the strongest image of the three.

The Symbolism also was the strongest and most powerful which he felt necessary to explain by attaching a thrace of sonnets to the frame; the books represent virtue; the lily, innocence the seven thorned briar represents the Virgin's great sorrow. Though the painting is of a religious subject it does not read as a religious painting. All three paintings were signed with the mysterious initials P.R.B. All three received favourable reaction and consequently sold.

The group now, convinced and confident of their imminent success broadened their spectrum of activities. It was under the influence and inspiration of the literary minded Rossetti, that the publication of a magazine occurred. It was in many ways, more suitable to the other members of the group like Stephens, Woolner and William Rossetti who were not primarily painters. It would contain poetry, prose, articles and thoughts on their manifests. However, the magazine failed due to problems with printers and sales. However it was important for two reasons, it was one of the few occasions when the group were working as choesive and secondly it was the first magazine published by a self-consciously avant-garde artistic movement. They set a precedent for many similar movements which followed such as the Surrealists.

It also contributed to the development of the philosophy formulated by Horace, that painting and poetry are sister arts with the same function; a text can illustrate a painting and a painting can illustrate a text.

The publication of the magazine was significant in the fact that it exposed the group as a secret society and subsequently led to hostility from all quarters. The paintings exhibited by Rossetti, Hunt and Millais bore most of the criticism. Millais' "Christ in the House of His Parents" borrowed a great deal from Rossetti's "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary". Millais looked to Rossetti for symbolic content and imagination. The closeness of subject matter in "Christ in the House of his Parents" to Rossett's "Girlhood of Virgin Mary" shows how close the group were, at that time, as a real fraternity of spirit and in particular Rossetti and Millais. There is further evidence for this by comparing Rossetti's "Dante's drawing an angel on the first anniversary of the death of Beatrice and the drawing for "Christ in the House....." They both contain a very peculiar sense of organisation and poignantly awkward movements with a refined clumsiness which was to become a characteristic of the movement. It is odd and surprising that Millais, who did possess more talent than Rossetti and Hunt, should be influenced by such a beginner as Rossetti but he did however have a wealth of imagination. "Christ in the House of his Parents" was painted strictly adhering to the movement's principles of naturalism; the background being painted from a carpenter's

shop in Oxford, the sheep heads obtained from a butcher and in an effort to obtain absolute realism Millais' own father was used as a model for the carpenter but a real carpenter was used for the torso and arms. The symbolism is innocently straightforward; the child Christ has cut his hand on a nail and as he holds it up to his mother, the blood falls to his feet thus symbolising the stigmata. The dove in the centre representing the Holy Spirit while the carpenter's shop obviously stands for the church and perhaps the sheep as the congregation.

A preliminary drawing proves to be more daring in composition than the actual finished piece which contains far less than the drawing. The complete effect of Christ..... is no where as innovative as Isabella and Lorenzo and thus can be seen as Millais' first attempt to satisfy the tastes of the public and Academy.

However he did receive sharp criticism for this work and in particular a severely harsh criticism from the writer Charles Dickens, nevertheless, Christ in the house of his Parents" is basically a good Pre-Raphaelite painting. Rossetti too, received severe criticism for his "Ecce Ancilla Domine" (The Annunciation) as a result of which he vowed never to exhibit in public again. His painting was similar to his last but now more symplified. Although it contained considerably less than the "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary" it still gave him considerable technical problems. They are obvious in his failure to paint any convincing perspective and his unsuccessful

attempt to paint the fire around the angels feet. These failures, sometimes irritating the viewer, somehow serve to intensify the painting's real feeling of innocence.

These are the kind of flaws which mar most of Rossetti's work but somehow they rarely in this writer's opinion, lead to the failure of the painting but often add to the ironic and naive effect and emotional effect which makes his work effective. "The Annunciation" is a simple painting with a considerably unaffected tone and with its general whiteness of colour it becomes an almost timeless piece of art.

Undoubtedly the harsh criticism and hostility that the original Brotherhood met with had considerable effects on them individually and as a unit. It perhaps sowed the seeds of their dispersal as a group and more clearly marked the end of their early Christian era which eventually led them individually into other phases abandoning its romanism and historicism to become with Hunt and particularly Brown, a realist movement, and then under Rossetti and Burne Jones more escapist and utopian and with Millais a symbolist movement.



CHAPTER 3

Introduction:

Millais

This chapter will concern itself with the work of Millais. Only a selection of work shall be discussed which this writer feels to be the most important and possibly most well-known. It is hoped that the selection will be representative of his career. Illustrations will be included where possible though most of them will be in black and white.

The criticisms and assessments of the works are not definitive but merely this writer's views and observations of the work.

Finally the assessment will not go into any great depth in order to include as many pieces as possible.

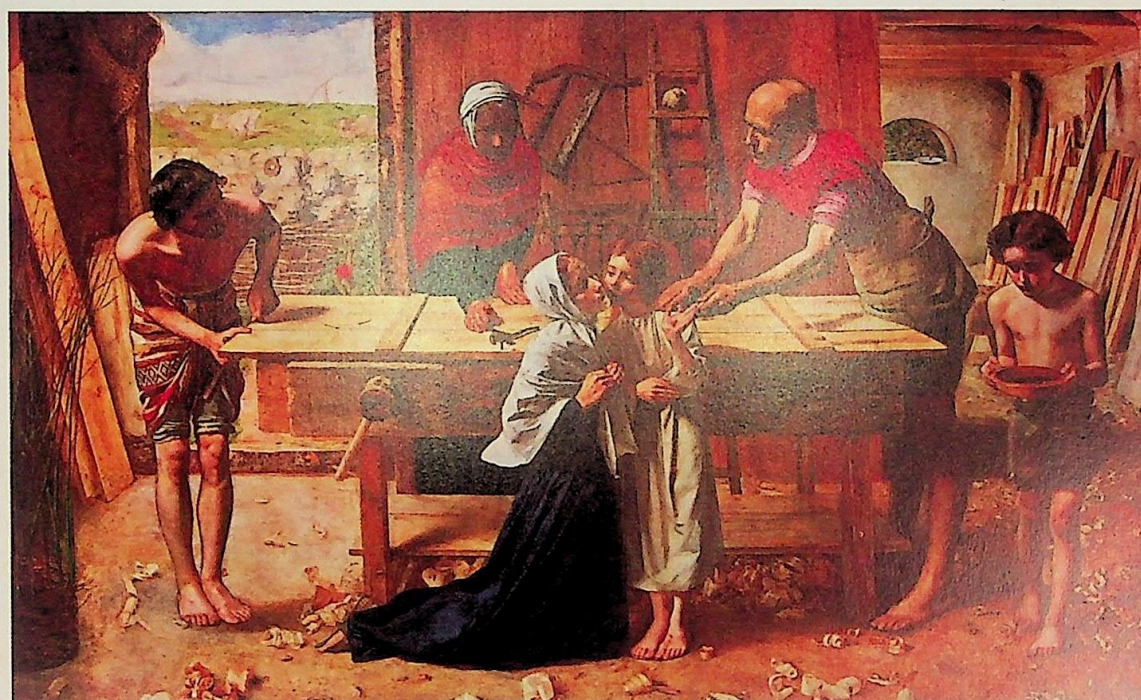
After "Christ in the House of his Parents" and perhaps as a result of the sharp criticism he received, Millais' work did change, though not considerably at this stage. Its content was now less overtly religious but more influenced by contemporary and past literature, in particular Shakespeare. Millais tended generally to select sentimental and isolated scenes from such sources. The course of Millais career is a curious one. He is often referred to as the most talented of

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Brotherhood's founding members and it has been said of him, that technically "he could out paint all of his contemporaries". Evidence to suggest that he did indeed hold an abundance of talent can be seen by comparison between him, Hunt and Rossetti in their first paintings. His work is confident and suggests that painting together with sure draughtsmanship came easy to him. It is paradoxical to trace that talent through its stages to its ultimate decline and to realise that Millais finished by painting the same type of work which the Brotherhood once abhorred.

There are numerous reasons why Millais took such a course into absolute sentimentality and banality which were so appealing to Victorian aesthetic sensibilities. Basically Millais can be seen as a clever failure, as an artist of talent looking around for something less demanding. There is another possible reason and one which has no justification in that he considered this type of work more commercially viable as he had already acquired a taste for "high living" and sought popularity. However there are more probably reasons for his failure in his lack of motivation and imagination. Who could he look to for inspiration?

Rossetti was a possibility and he had already given him an idea for "Christ in the house of his parents" from his own "Girlhood of the Virgin Mary". He never developed ideas to any great degree but possessed a restfulness and changefulness which served to his advantage earlier but had he considered them for longer they may have served him during his "dry periods".



He seems to have had no sense of history and he found no source of inspiration from old masters. His main source of inspiration came from the Pre-Renaissance painters but this was only through Rossetti, and this stage was short.

Unlike Turner and many others of any talent and at the incessant invitation of Ruskin he did not bother to visit Italy. He did not have any sense of artistic ambition thus his experimental work was brief. It was the caution and level-headedness of his character which led him to guard his gifts instead of exposing them to risk and subsequent unfavourable criticism.

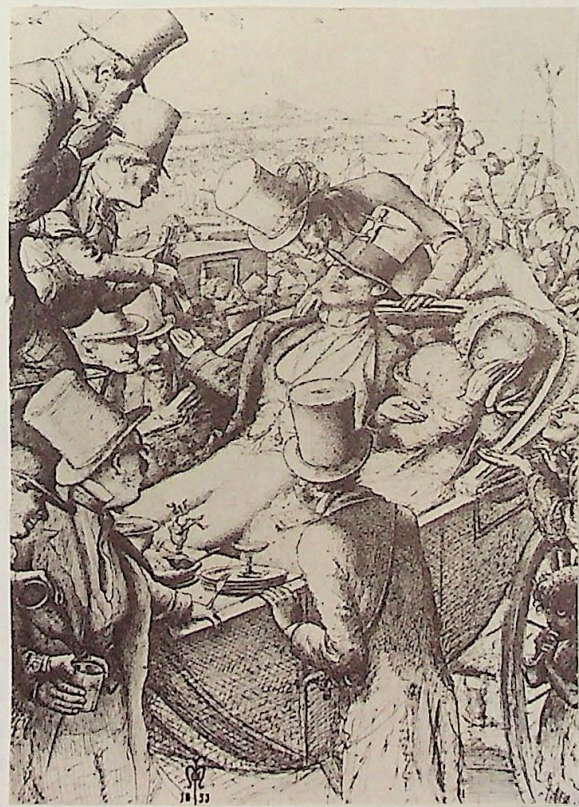
It was this very caution which deprived England of someone who could have been a very fine painter, consistently.

It is, therefore, only necessary to look at a few of Millais' paintings, the majority of which came from that brief period following the demise of the group to about 1857.

They include "Ophelia" perhaps the most important of his works, "Mariana", "The Return of the Dove to the Ark", "Ferdinand lured by Ariel" and his three final and almost proto symbolistic "Vale of Rest", "Autumn Leaves" and "Sir Isumbras at the Ford". (All of which are illustrated).



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His work changed from its christian era when he realised that with "the disentanglement of Queen Matilda" could only exist as a drawing as pre-Raphaelite compositions had now become too ambitious with its design and rigid with the inclusion of so many people. Thus "Queen Matilda" remained as a drawing. Millais most significant change came about as a result of this and he subsequently reduced the figures in any work to a minimum. The effect of this reduction led a more intensified emotional effect but it did however mean more emphasis on symbolic content.

"Mariana" is a prime example of this change. There are again strong influences from Rossetti^{*} particularly in the colouring.

Rossetti was, for this piece, Millais' essential link with the past.

"Mariana" is a full and very beautiful painting. Although it still has the clarity and precision of a typical Pre-Raphaelite work, Millais is now using a far richer range of colours and a much simpler design. The paint is handled with more voluptuousness and greater feeling.

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** Rossetti was fascinated by the sumptuous colouring of medieval manuscripts and with the paintings of Memling and Van Eyck.



The subject for "Mariana" is taken from some lines of Tennyson's poem and while the symbolism in it is less than in previous works there is a greater emphasis on emotional effect verging on sexuality. The symbolism in "Mariana" marks the beginning of Millais preoccupation with death.

We see through the stainglass window, the leaves falling and the coming of autumn, the leaves inside the room give the piece a very rich and textural quality. The awkward languid pose of "Mariana" though still echoing the peculiar posturing of the figures in "Isabella" or "Christ in the house of his parents", is now more relaxed and natural.

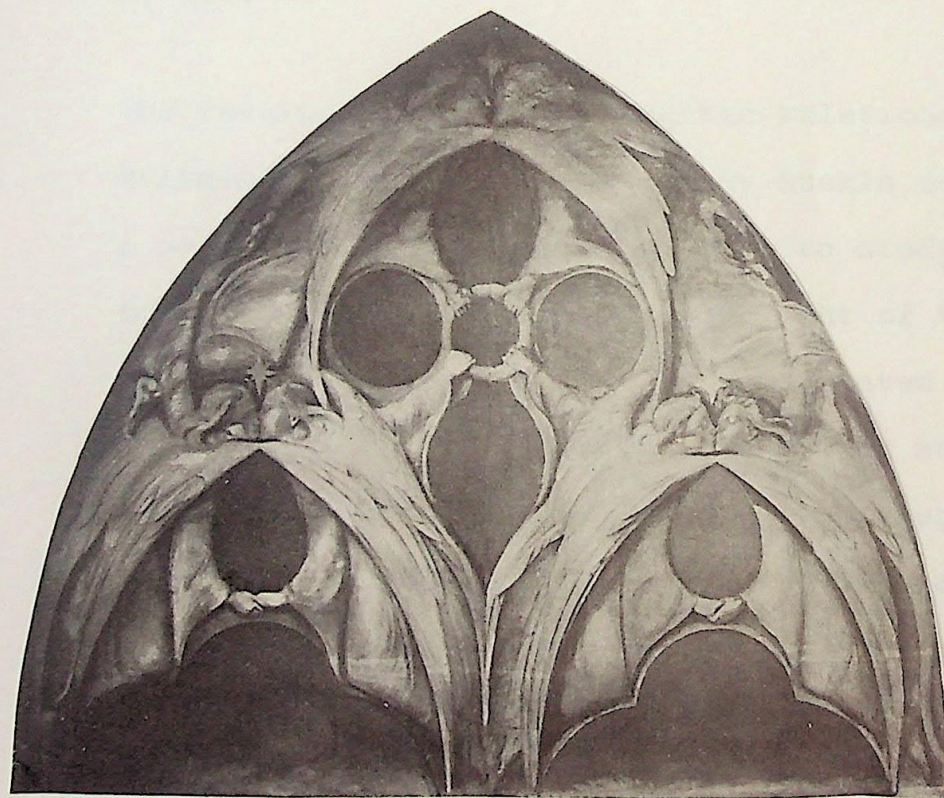
The piece shows that sense of boredom, expectancy and waiting expressed in the lines of the poem,**which inspired the painting.

There is also a feeling for the sexual and sensual in this work which so appealed to the Victorians almost perverse and unwholesome attitude to sex and sexuality. It is interesting to note that most of the Pre-Raphaelites, in some way or another catered for this victorian taste and perhaps most notable for this were Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

** She only said "my life is dreary, he cometh not", she said/she said "I am a weary weary, / I would that I were dead". Tennyson's Mariana.



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Millais exhibited "Mariana" at the Royal Academy in 1851 with Hunt, Collins and Brown. Yet again they received scathing criticism and it was only by the intervention of Ruskin that events did eventually swing in their favour.

It was through his letter that Ruskin established a link with the Pre-Raphaelites and especially Millais.

Ruskin saw in Millais the makings of another Turner and also fulfilment of his desire to constantly have proteges, through whom he could channel his own ideas and philosophies of art.

The result of this artist-critic relationship resulted in Millais being led to Scotland by Ruskin to paint not only a portrait of the critic but also to study the rock formations and water. Ruskin thought of Millais as a painter of talent who had not yet painted rock and water, an important factor in an artist's work according to Ruskin. The portrait was a peculiar Ruskian/Turnerian painting of the critic with special emphasis on rock and water, the two natural elements which moved the critic so much.

Ruskin also executed some studies of "Greiss Rock at Glenfinlas to help Millais and in his enthusiasm he envisaged Millais' portrait to Turners "St. Gothard", describing them as "two of the most wonderful torrents in the world".

It is intriguing to realise that this Ruskin influenced portrait is the reemergence of Ruskins own obsession for Turner materialising in the work of another painter: Millais.

This short lived alliance between the two was significant for two other events most notably Millais' involvement with Ruskin's wife Effie whom he married after a scandalous divorce.

Secondly, there was the series of designs Millais produced, under Ruskins influence. The most important of these being the design for a gothic window which incorporated cleverly inter-twined angels to form the window frame.

These designs, like the portrait were very Ruskinian and give us an insight into how certain aspects of pre-Raphaelitism were to influence greatly, "Art Nouveau Movement" that followed it.

"Ophelia" exists as the greatest evidence of Millais' considerable abilities in his early years. It is certainly among one of the most popular and well-known of pieces of Victorian art and yet it remains as the most risk-taking and innovative of Millais and possibly all pre-Raphaelite art. Millais had already become interested in illustrating Shakespeare as seen in Ferdinand lured by Ariel" but never before had the subject of the drowning of "Ophelia" been attempted.



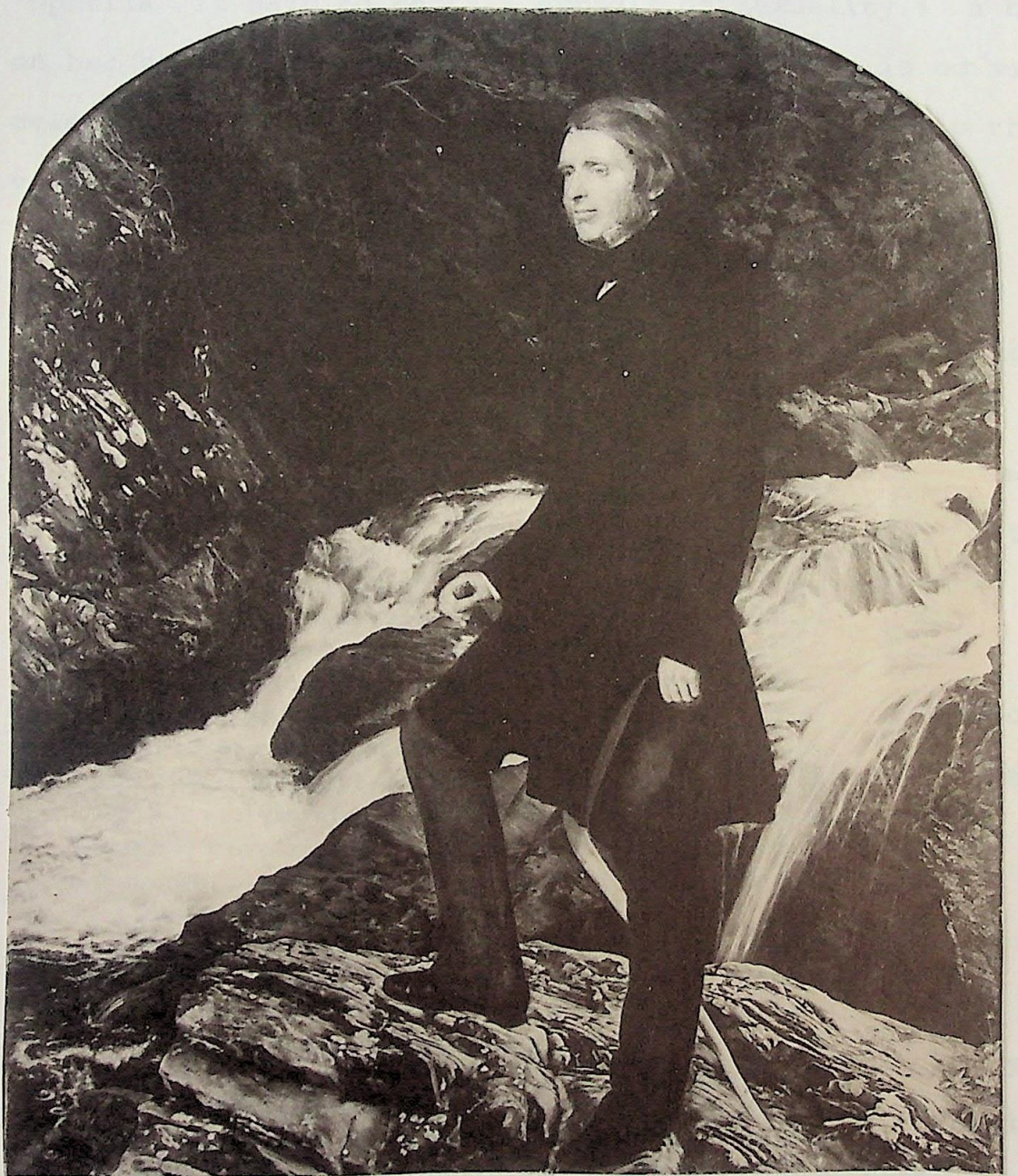
The subject gave him a chance to continue his experiments with posturing into something like "Ophelia" which lacked both grace and poise.***

"Ophelia" is painted, strictly adhering to pre-Raphaelite principles of execution, painted, as always, with the utmost attention to detail and natural realism. It is minutely painted from edge to edge with needle-point sharpness; every detail painted with equal clarity.

No colour perspective exists in "Ophelia" neither is there any linear perspective. Millais has got above his subject as, much as he dared, and cut out the horizon line and subsequently the sky. The sky blue patches appear on the surface of the water. It is possible that because of its strange perspective people wish to view the painting flat on a floor rather than on a wall. The strangely confined and limited space of "Ophelia" helps to intensify the emotional effect but also gives emphasis to what can be considered the first painting which attempts to extract natural beauty from English hedges and ditches.

"Ophelia" contains the usual symbols of death such as the robin in the left hand corner, which he seems to pay only lip service to. This maybe because "Ophelia" is not so much about the play but more about Millais experiments and ultimately limitations.

*** The model Lizzy Siddell posed in the bath for the part of "Ophelia".



Regarding such limitations, where "Ophelia" tends to fail is in its conviction. However risk-taking and original the composition is "Ophelia" still looks like Lizzy Suddell lying in a bath full of water.

"Ophelia" is said to contain symbols of sexuality : a bride on her back in her wedding dress, however there is not sufficient evidence to prove such a theory so it must be left to the viewer to formulate their own idea.

There is, however, evidence to suggest that Millais had become increasingly interested in sexuality in producing a number of drawings of very personal nature dramatising the effect of passion and sex on contemporary life. They include "Woman watching her former lover being married" and "Ghost at the Wedding Ceremony" and are quite similar to Rossetti's "the sleeper" mainly in its and their themes. There is also evidence of Millais' attempts though short lived, at social comments on contemporary life in the highly finished drawing "The Race Meeting" which is an extremely powerful image of ruin and the social problem of gambling and its often disastrous effects.

Millais, as always, did not pursue the social commentary theme very long and the greatest pre-Raphaelite painter in this mode was Madox Brown who shall be discussed later briefly.

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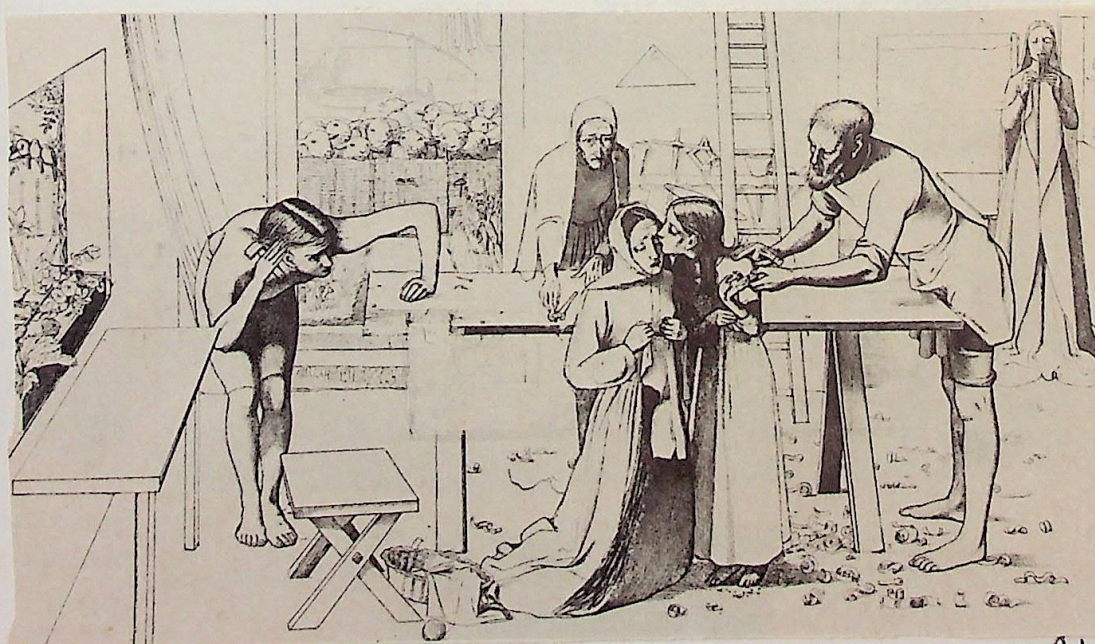
Before his ultimate decline, Millais was yet to paint three major works which by their very subject matter and more importantly, its execution, can be considered pre-Raphaelite. They are the final comment made by him in his pre-Raphaelite career. "The Vale of Rest", "Autumn Leaves" and "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" are all twilight scenes and concerned with death.

In "Sir Isumbras" and "Autumn Leaves" Millais has begun to use children as models, which is something which reached a high point later in his career with overt sentimentality and blandness. The symbolism in all three is striking. In "Autumn Leaves" we see the young and beautiful girls seeing but not fully understanding the certainty of transience. There is also symbolic reference to upper and lower classes in the wealthier and poorer girls and indicating that death and its resultant grief affects all.

The imagery of the darkened poplar trees against the dying light of the afternoon and the symbolic burning of the leaves contribute more to its haunting quality and genuine concern with grief than the overtly sad, pretty faces of the girls which tends to soften the effect towards the sentimental. "Autumn Leaves" is a strangely rapturous evocation of Autumn, which clearly illustrates another change in Millais' approach to his art. Though still adhering to pre-Raphaelite principles it is much freer with a bolder use of strong and clear colours.



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A more difficult painting to define symbolically is "Sir Isumbras at the Ford". It is obviously concerned with death but a fuller understanding may be obtained by reading Ruskin's *** criticism of it. Millais has again used children as models intensifying the emotional effect as we perceive on the children's faces a mixed expression of sentimental confusion and trust.

The same natural elements rescue in "Sir Isumbras" which were evident in "Autumn Leaves", the colour and feeling of gloom, black crows, dark trees against a twilight sky and this time the inclusion of two mysterious nunlike figures create the effect of impending death.

"Sir Isumbras" still stands as the most thoroughly mysterious painting of Millais proto symbolist stage.

His final painting of note is "Vale of Rest" which again is quite similar to the others. Now Millais is appealing to the nudging curiosity of Protestants about nuns and closed orders. The scene revolves around two nuns presumably digging their own graves - a subject which fascinated the Victorian Protestant.

*** Ruskin did speculate that it was "a fact or a type" which meant to convey a noble human life tried in all war and aged in all council and wisdom, and finding its crowning work at last - to be the bearer of children of poverty in its arms "he also thought of it as a pictorial realisation of the christian angel of death".

After these works Millais' art began to decline steadily and he proceeded to paint weak and sentimental pastiches of Reynolds' like the "Boyhood of Raleigh".

How much Millais actually needed the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is difficult to assess, nor can we determine how much he believed in its principles. However, had it not been for the corporate idealism of pre-Raphaelitism which gave him great support to his earlier enthusiasm, he would not have painted as well in his earlier years as he did.

Together with his restfulness and searching nature and talent we would have expected his work to reach higher goals but we may look at his last work of quality "Autumn Leaves" etc, and see Millais sowing some of the seeds for early European symbolism.

Painting of small children falling asleep at sermons, and two in particular "Cherry Ripe" and "Bubbles"^{**} represented Millais nadir. It is ironic how in exactly inverse proportion to his decline of his creative idealism the honours accumulated: he became a baronet in 1885 and was elected president of the Royal Academy in 1896, an establishment which he so adamantly despised in his youth and which sparked off the so-called pre-Raphaelite revolution.

^{**} "Bubbles" was used as the trade mark for Pears Soap ever since.





CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 will deal mainly with the work of Willima Holman Hunt but also, briefly, with Ford Madox Brown, though never a pre-Raphaelite brother became closely associated with them by the nature of his work.

The fact that William Holman Hunt emerges as the least dramatic of the three original members is presumably based on the fact that there is not great or considerable changes in his work throughout his career.

Hunt was alone in his conviction in pre-Raphaelitism and he stubbornly adhered to what he considered to be the "true principles of art" until his death in 1910.

Hunt's strident belief in pre-Raphaelitism can be seen in many ways in keeping with his character and his steely grasp of his own self-righteousness. A flaw which occurs often in Hunt's work is that the gritty seriousness of the social function of his art denies any real activity and feeling for painting.

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A glimpse at Hunt's character gives us real insight of why he created such work. He was harsh, strict, and held uncompromisingly high moralistic and self-righteous views. His character has often been referred to as being more congenial to "worrying sheep, prosecuting whores or grinding up granite". We can not condemn Hunt for his character but its subsequent intrusion into his work was hardly beneficial.

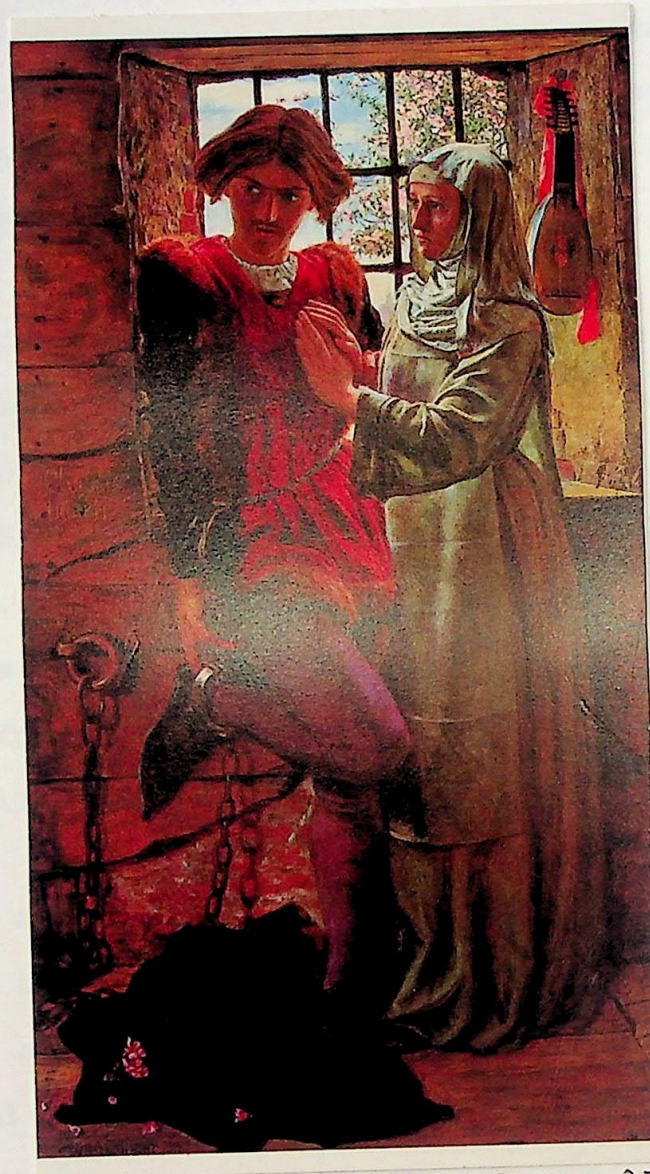
When pre-Raphaelitism went through the phase of commenting on contemporary and social problems Hunt assumed the role of great moralist.

In its religious and christian phase he produced the most sincere work of the group but it was because of Hunt's attitude that "art should serve Christ" that this is true.

Hunt's work never changed as dramatically as Millais or Rossetti and neither did it progress as much, it did remain more or less constant throughout his life.

His earlier work bears some similarity to Millais and to a lesser extent Rossetti. Millais may be seen as, technically, the guiding light of the group at the time. Also at this time (1847-50) the similarity between them was because it was the time when they were closest as a working group.

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In such early pieces as "a converted British family sheltering a priest from the Druids" the symbolic content is very much borrowed from Millais who in turn looked to Rossetti for such inspiration.

Images such as the corn and the vine in this piece symbolise the civilising influence of divine religion, whereas the fishing nets serve as double edge symbols: they appear in the Bible and also the fact that Druids hold fish to be sacred. The symbolism is awkward and naive and the work fails completely in its sense of action, which is non-existent for such an event. The work is, however, a successfully executed piece based on pre-Raphaelite principles.

Hunt held the same interest in Shakespeare as the rest of the group and, illustrated Shakespeare in "Claudio and Isabella" and Valentine rescuing Sylvia from Proteus". Hunt's and Millais' approaches to Shakespeare differed greatly. Millais' interest was in a new naturalism of approach, something which had been happening in the theatre where stylisation was being dropped for a more realistic representation of the original text with greater emphasis on archaeological accuracy. However, Hunt's interest lay in trying to dramatise, through Shakespeare certain types of moral problems.



We can see Hunt as either being preoccupied with sex and its subsequent guilt or just ogling at his own middle-class sexual hang-ups. The latter is possible the more probable.

Hunt scours through Shakespeare to find scenes which display sexual guilt and sin. Works such as Claudio and Isabella are not as romantic and poetic as it seems. The situation is not as innocent as it looks, as is always the case with Hunt. Claudio pleads with Isabella to exchange her virginity for his life and freedom.

The same set of circumstances reappear in "Valentine rescueing Sylvia" which is taken from one of Shakespeare's lesser known plays "The two Gentlemen of Verona" in which Hunt has searched out a passage which deals with his favourite subject, sex and guilt. In this piece the girl is just saved from rape by the rescuer's best friend but without the text of the play it is impossible to ascertain what exactly is happening.

The most significant event in Hunt's career was his departure to the Holy Land. His departure was based on his extreme belief that if his art was to serve Christ, he must be in the land where Christ had lived. It was his extreme quest for accurate naturalism that led him to the Holy Land.

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It is important now to consider his work before his departure, the bulk of which is still mainly gloomy guilt-ridden and moralistic. There are at least four pieces worth discussing of which the "Hireling Shepherd" and "Our English Coasts" can be considered the best. "The Light of the World" and the "Awakening Conscience" will also be taken into account.

"The Hireling Shepherd" once more depends on Shakespeare for its inspiration. It is based on a song by Edgar in the 3rd act of King Lear and like his other work it carried a moral message. This time the piece is set in a contemporary landscape setting. Hunt explained about the piece "Shakespeare's song represents a shepherd who is neglecting his duty of guarding the sheep.....- he is the type of muddle-headed pastors who instead of performing their services to the flock which is in constant peril, discuss vain questions of no value to any human soul..... I did not wish to force the moral and never did till now".

Quote from Hunt's autobiography "pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" 1905. The symbolism is obvious in this piece. The sheep neglected by their caretaker run havoc, eating green apples and generally ruining their health while the shepherd becomes involved in other matters. An important aspect of this piece is that Hunt shows the opposite to what was stated in previous landscape pieces of Samuel Palmer and John Linnell. They depicted a sense of



rustic harmony in which those who tended the land and animals were unaffected by basic human passions and desires.

Another important point emerges in the "Hireling Shepherd" in that of landscape. The Pre-Raphaelites were only incidentally landscape painters and a landscape was only to serve as a background to some moral tale. Where landscape is included, it is painted with superb attention to detail such as "Our English Coasts" or Inchbold "Early Spring" but where it fails is in its blandness and lack of colour perspective. *Ruskin did defend much of the clarity used in pre-Raphaelite landscapes.

Hung, in "Our English coasts" comes as near to pure landscape as any other pre-Raphaelite painter can. It is almost a continuation of the Hireling Shepherd and that the sheep have just strayed a little further from one scenario to another.

"Our English Coasts" is one of the few remarkable occasions where Hung is free from his gloom and guilt ridden morals. It is a wonderfully advanced exercise in prismatic colour which seems to free his spirit.

** Ruskin insisted that every element of landscape deserved equal attention and clarity as every part of it was lit equally by the sun.



The most important of Hunt's night pieces and possibly most well-known is "Light of the World" again it is full of symbolic meanings and carries with it a heavy sense of despair. The scheme of its symbolism separates mankind from its Saviour.

Hunt, consequently, painted "the awakening Conscience" as its material counterpart. The subject matter was found in Charles Dicken's "David Copperfield". The symbolism in this piece is so concerned with guilt that every detail however trivial and simple becomes a nasty symbol for something else. Hunt explained himself, how the wallpaper design was symbolic. The corn and the vine are left unguarded by the cupid watchers and the fruit is left to be preyed on by thievish birds" quote from Hunt's autobiography.

Ruskin observed that "there is not a single object in the room, common, modern or vulgar but it becomes tragical.

This is not a pleasant painting neither by its subject matter nor in its execution. The paint itself assumes a dryness and lack of feeling, quite the opposite to qualities of paint. It shows how Hunt had no feeling whatsoever for the actual qualities of paint, but was only preoccupied with the subject matter and its feeling of guilt.

Finally, this writer has selected two pieces which he feels to be representative of Hunt's work produced in the Holy Land.

Firstly, a "Street scene in Cairo" which shows that Hunt's attitude did not change, even slightly by exposure to a different culture. "A Street Scene in Cairo""A lantern makers Courtship" shows the harshness and Englishness of Hunt's inability to accept or adjust to foreign ideas. It is the complete opposite to the idea of romantic courtship so current in English at that time and Hunt again in his search for the sexual, has chosen a taboo subject. In Eastern countries it is forbidden to lift the veil of one's prospective bride. Hunt, in his sordid vision shows just that, showing the young arab trying to lift the veil. The painter seems to take particular delight in depicting the expression of sexual excitement on the faces of the couple involved. Hunt, now, did not have to look to Shakespeare for such subjects he saw it on the streets of Cairo in everyday life and perhaps this is why he returned again and again to the East.

Finally, "The Scape goat" which is perhaps the most unusual of Hunt's, if not all pre-Raphaelite works.

The "Scape Goat" was an uncompromisingly new type of painting. It is an animal painting, it is religious, symbolic and naturalistic, yet it is a lifeless, harsh and unsympathetic work whose



feeling of isolation is brightened by the use of the Dead Sea as its background.

The theme is the scape goat as being a kind of Saviour based on the Jewish tradition of driving a scape goat into the wilderness to take their sins into a place uninhabited and foresaken.

Hunt's contribution to the Pre-Raphaelitism can be judged only in relation to his relentless and dogmatic religious and often sordid guilt ridden moralistic vision, which has now become one of the many characteristics of Pre-Raphaelitism. He was the only one who really progressed much further than its restricting ideas and philosophies. A more comprehensive understanding of Hunt's character and ideals can be gained by reading his autobiography "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelites".



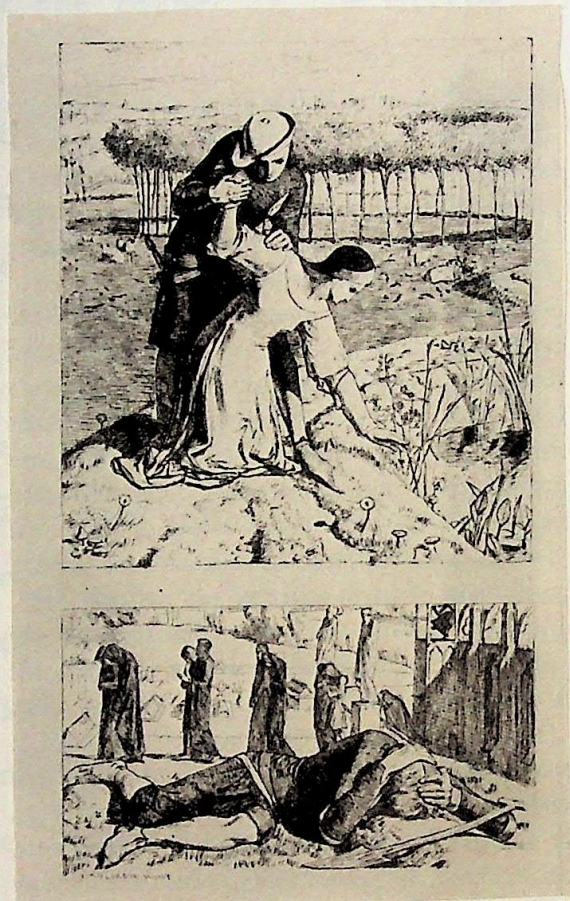
CHAPTER 4 - SECTION 2.

Ford Madox Brown.

Brown, though never a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (he declined an invitation to join) was closely associated with them for most of his career. He was a strong influence upon them, being older and having been exposed to the similar group "The Nazerenes" before them. It was by his association and knowledge of the Nazerenes that Brown had been formulating similar ideas and beliefs to the Pre-Raphaelites before they even emerged.

Brown's most important contribution to Pre-Raphaelitism was in the area of social and contemporary life. His work was the most socially motivated of the whole Pre-Raphaelite period. Brown seemed to possess a more down-to-earth attitude than his contemporaries and more than any of them, his work seems to reflect his acceptance of the age in which he lived; the industrial revolution.

His work, though, like the rest of the Pre-Raphaelites is uneven in quality, but his flaws seem to have more of a feeling of honesty and searching than the other Pre-Raphaelites.



Brown looks at personal shame in "Take Your Son, Sir" which is a bitter and uncompromising assault on illegitimacy. The emotion in this painting is primarily one of pride. We are face to face with the fallen woman and child and see the face of the father in the mirror. There is a feeling that this painting was not produced to be sold but as an exorcism of Brown's feeling on such matters. It does not contain the sentimentality of Millais nor the guilt or sordidness of Hunt but it is a presentation of life as it is.

Brown looks at the contemporary social problem of immigration in "The Last of England" in a thoroughly realist way. It was inspired by and dedicated to the departure of Woolner and his wife to Australia. It is a pitiful yet not sentimental painting with the utmost attention paid to naturalism. The disposition and careful painting of the middle-class shop-keeper type couple emphasise the straightforwardly honest aura of the work.

Brown's most important work is a piece actually called "Work". Work is the most important statement made by an artist in that period in which he lived: about the social climate and, the industrial revolution and its attitude to work.

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This work comes to terms with growing industrial life, commercialism and socialism more than any other Pre-Raphaelite work. It is a description of all elements of work, from the navvies to the thinkers and brain-workers, from beggars to philosophers (Carlyle and F.D. Maurice on the Righthand side). Other figures include the rich on horseback, their way barred by orphans, policemen and an election parade. This painting has a theme rather than a message but its final impression must be in its celebration of work.

There is a great similarity between "Work" and Raphael's "School of Athens" in its shape and composition and the piece only four and a half feet high fails only in its size; it cries out to be larger and deserves the scale of a Renaissance mural.

Brown's career followed a more or less uneventful course. He remained involved with the premises of art as work and began with Rossetti to give drawing classes at the working man's college, under the influence of Ruskinian philosophies on art. The latter part of his career was dominated by his work for Waterhouse's town hall in which he painted twelve large-scale scenes illustrative of the history of Manchester, which show an uneasy balance between heroic history and the small-time realism of local history and allowed him too much scope for his expression of the grotesque which was largely subdued in his earlier work.





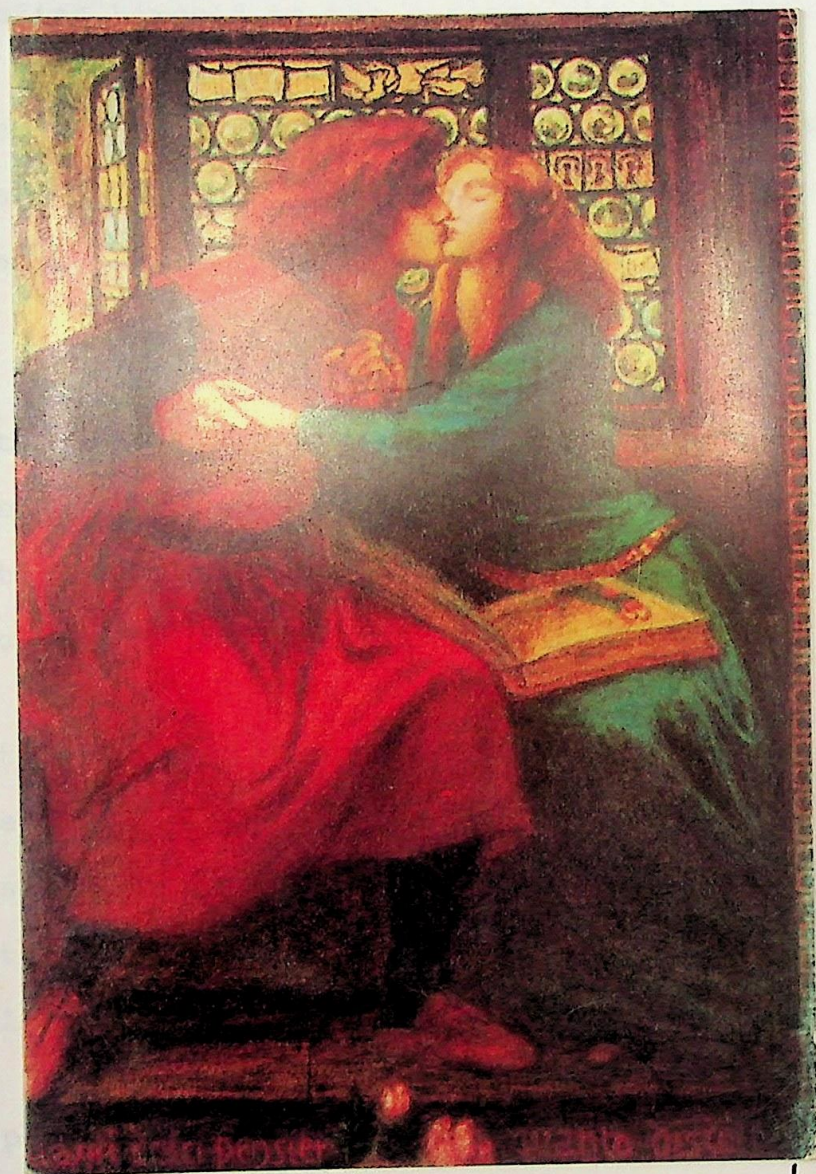
CHAPTER 5 - Rossetti.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was born in London in 1825. He was the son of an Italian poet and scholar who was forced to leave his native country because of his political activities. Living in London while his father taught at King's College, Rossetti was raised in a house with a great appreciation of the arts hence his direction into some area of arts was inevitable.

Although Rossetti was the least technically talented of the original P.R.B. he emerged after the break-up at the most prolific imaginative and visionary of them. He has emerged today as the most important and interesting figure of the whole Victorian era.

Rossetti was in many ways quite similar to Blake, who was a considerable influence on him in his formative years. Rossetti, like Blake, suffered from very evident technical weakness; Rossetti's like Blake's spectrum of activities embraced many facets of the arts, besides painting he was actively involved with poetry, prose and later illustration. Finally, like Blake, his vision was deep and almost mystical.

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Where Rossetti differed greatly from fellow P.R. Brothers was in their belief (not held by Rossetti) that their art should serve Christ, serve to force a moral and that by only close observation of nature could "good art" emerge.

Rossetti was far too emotional and lacking in patience to confine himself to the constraints that Ruskin advocated.

Though Rossetti's idea of art was far from Ruskin's proclaimed ideas he still found favour with the critic. Ruskin referring to his "The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" as a thoroughly glorious work.

Rossetti's main ingredient in his work was the intense and personal nature of his character. So basically what Rossetti lacked in technical abilities he made up for in emotional content so evident in his work.

To obtain a clearer picture of Rossetti's work, of why he painted what he did, we must look briefly at the events in his life, which more than any other artist of that time, affected his art. Rossetti is an artist whose life is closely tied and influential to his work.

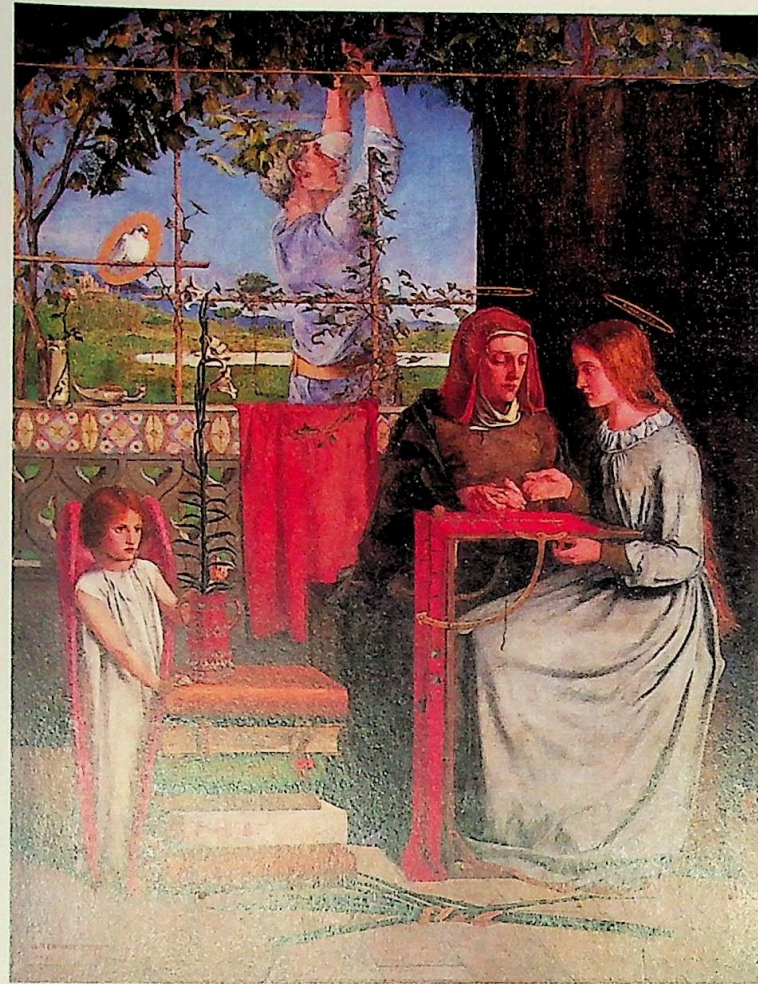
Perhaps the most important factor and subsequently influential event in his career was his affair and eventual marriage to Elizabeth Siddal. She was discovered by a brother working as a shop assistant in a milliner's in 1850 and soon became the favourite of the Pre-Raphaelite models.



When they met Rossetti was 23 and she was 17 and already terminally ill but he believed he found in her the image of his soul. She was to become with Jane Morris the epitomy of Pre-Raphaelite ideal of beauty appearing and re-appearing in many of their works. She lay in the bath full of flowers for Millais' "Ophelia".

During the twelve years that they lived together she became an obsession for Rossetti. He drew her in every movement, every poise producing scores and scores of drawings and watercolours, all original, all emotional records of his excitement. Their relationship grew increasingly stronger. She existed for him as an image of his soul and he dreamed of living the love that had only been symbolic for Dante and to paint those dreams which he saw reflected in the one he loved.

She had a dual role to play for him, whose requirements were conflicting, requiring from her both physical lover and unattainable dream. The latter was perhaps more easier for her as she is said to have been frigid and full of complexes. Her illness was her one control over him, and as it worsened he continued to paint endless portraits of her and continued to become more and more possessive.



However Rossetti had fallen in love again, this time with Jane Morris but felt tied to Lizzy with mixed feelings of emotion and guilt and finally, fearing her death, married her. In 1861 her delivery of a still born child led their relationship deeper into misery and oppression until finally in 1862 she died of an over-dose of a painkiller while Rossetti was out. Although the official verdict was accidental death, Rossetti was plagued by the obvious possibility of suicide, a thought that continued to haunt him for the rest of his life and as a gesture of guilt/love he placed the only manuscripts of his poems in the coffin to be buried with her.

In the years following Lizzy's death Rossetti worked in isolation, an isolation that characterised his art had now taken over his life. From this point on, also, his health began to decline steadily, he became more and more dependent on drink and in 1869 the act of exhuming his wife's grave to retrieve his manuscript for publication intensified his already growing guilt over his wife's death.

To gain relief from the insomnia and other consequences caused by his guilt, he began to take a new and powerful chloral hydrate and soon became addicted.

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Rossetti produced during his life a vast amount of work both good and bad in quality. As it would be impossible to deal in any great depth on the bulk of it, this writer will therefore concentrate on a selection of pieces, possibly his best known.

As I have dealt to some extent with his early Christian era work, the work discussed in this chapter will comprise of that produced before this involvement with the arts and crafts movement.

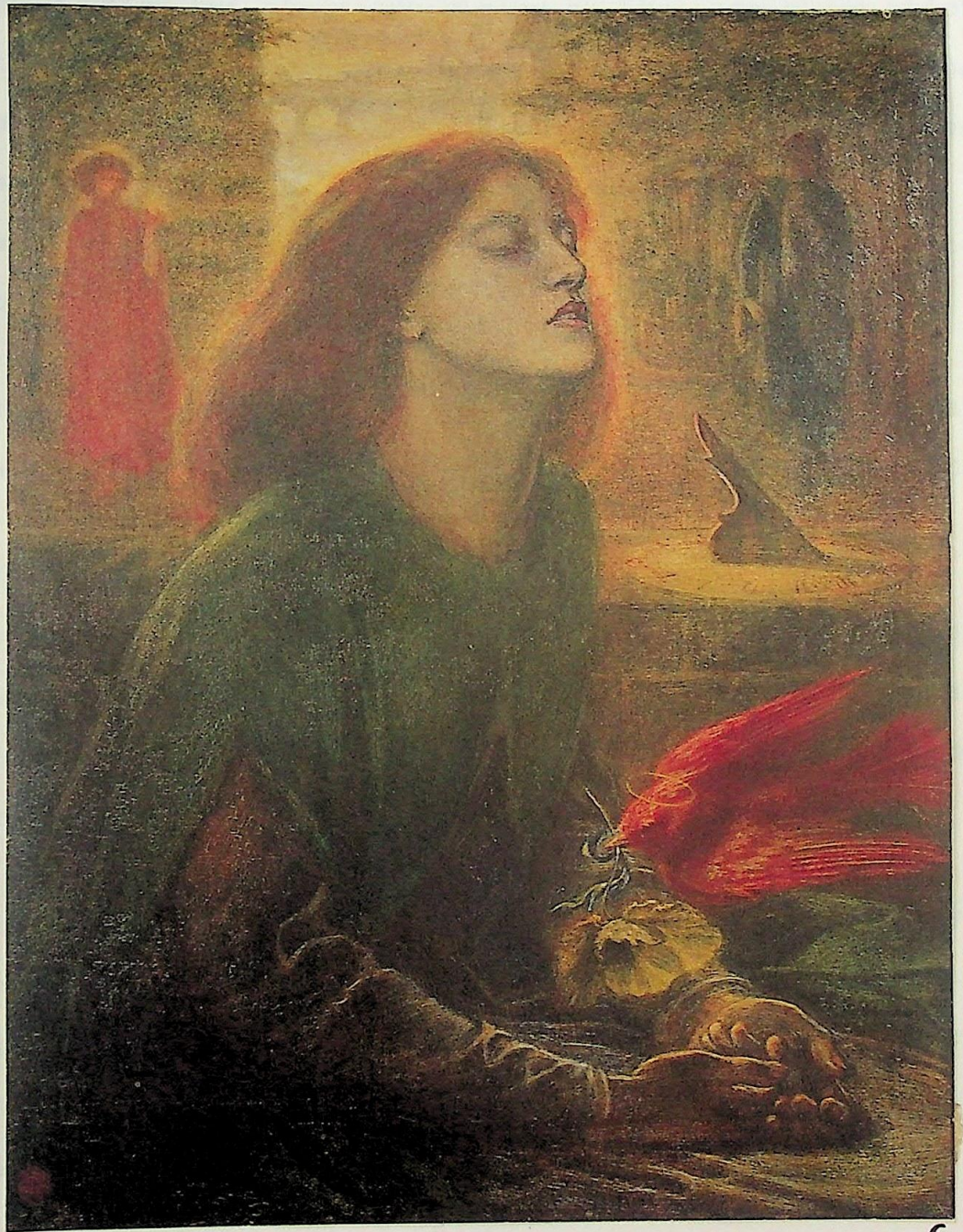
We may outline the major influences in his life as follows: William Blake, Dante and perhaps the most important contribution in his work came from the women in his life; Lizzy Siddel and Jane Morris appearing in many different guises.

Rossetti rarely, after his christian era, dwelt upon religious or moralistic issues as Hunt had done. His only example, of a social contemporary painting was "Found" concerning a country girl who comes to the city to eventually end up as a prostitute. He attempted, unsuccessfully, to paint it out-of-doors and the piece was never finished. Rossetti felt uncomfortable with such issues as he did also with oil paint lines of perspective and naturalism. He preferred to work almost spontaneously with greater emphasis on emotional content rather than accurate naturalism.



The twim aspirations of Dante and Lizzy Siddal occupied a large amount of his work and enabled him to dig deeper into his new and deeply personal field of art. We see in much of the work, Lizzy portrayed as Beatrice and this reached a climax at the death of Lizzy when he painted "Beata Beatrix". It is the piece that finally combines the two strains of Dante/Beatrice and Lizzy and himself. It was a powerful combination of Rossetti's long-standing identification of himself with Dante and Lizzy with Beatrice. It is Lizzy as Beatrice at the time of her death, but more than that, it is Rossetti's tombstone to his wife. It is a painter's alternative to a monument to honour the dead. It closely resembles the Italian tomb sculpture of the Renaissance more than English art. The expression of ecstasy on her face is as much sexual as religious echoing Bernini's 'St. Teresa'. Compositionally the painting has a closed and confined space which serves to intensify the emotion, the symbolism is powerful yet sparse; the flower in her hand, a poppy symbolises the drug from which Lizzy died. The colour in 'Beata Beatrix' is similar to that in 'Dante's Dream' which is the last in that particular series. The similarity of colour in both these pieces gives them a rich heavy atmosphere and with its thick luscious use of paint it is a very successful blending of the sensuous and the ethereal.

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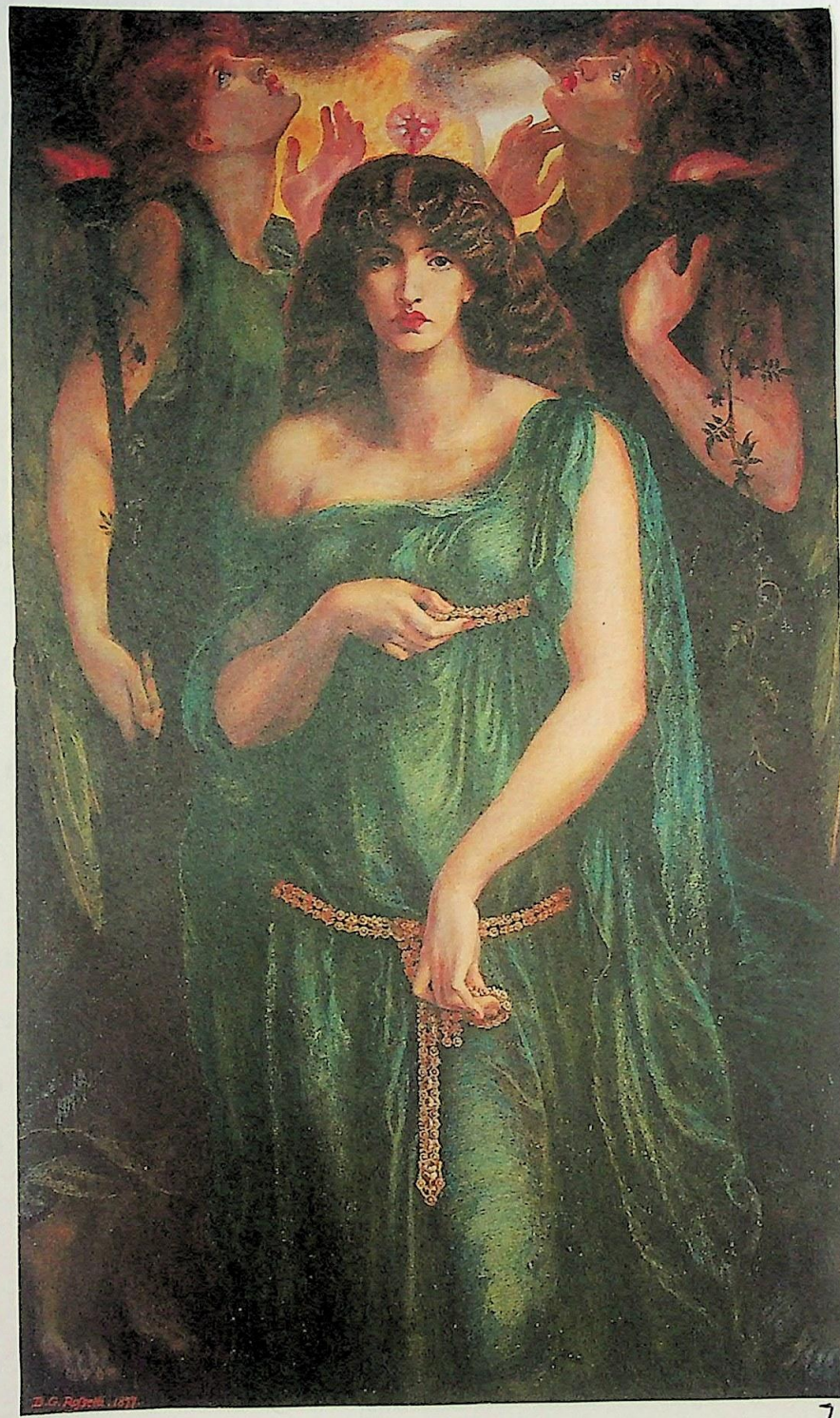


The use of space in these pieces remain as characteristic of Rossetti's work. Rossetti's use of space is unconventional take for example "Dante's Amor" and the "Wedding of St. George and Princess Sabra". "Dante's Amor" makes no attempt to show space but shows everything on the same plane which in this case is the surface of the painting and the inclusion of writing, which is a common occurrence in his work, only serves further to flatter the effect. "Dante's Amor" with its flatness and air of innocence becomes close to being an icon painting.

However, in "The Wedding of St. George and Princess Sabra" we see Rossetti attempting to show space though uncertain.

It does not contain a continuous spatial system but a series of boxes with vast differences of scale which only emphasise the discontinuity. The figures appear smaller and larger than they ought to be and pressed against the boxes of composition a very claustrophobic feeling occurs.

In most of Rossetti's work which features women, Lizzy Siddel or Jane Morris were the models. Jane Morris, in particular, appears in the same painting several times; "The Bower Meadows" and "The Blessed Damozel" and "Astarte Syriaca" are examples of this practice.

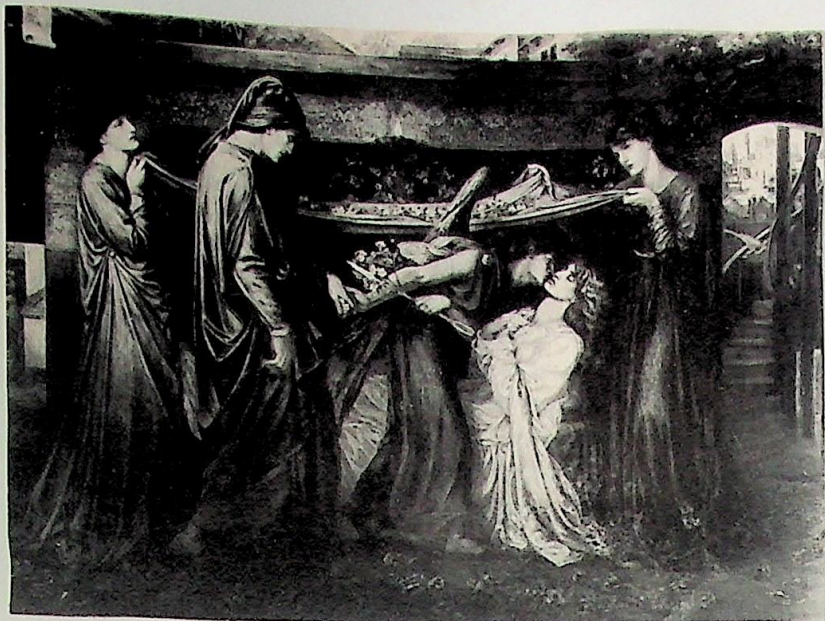


This work possessed an undercurrent of repressed sexuality. They became sombre, -coloured, emotionally claustrophobic vision of his womanly ideal. They are sensual, languid after voluptuous iconic images merging the features of all the women he ever loved and who continued to haunt him. They represent a great deal of Rossetti's work but it is important to realise he also worked in various other areas, though not always as successful.

In 1856 Pre-Raphaelitism took a decisive new turn when Rossetti met Bourne Jones and William Morris. Rossetti was at last able to exert the strongest influence of any of the original Brotherhood.

This new movement merged Rossetti's dreamlike type of Pre-Raphaelitism with the rigours of design to form the arts and crafts movement involved with furniture design, illustration, wallpaper design etc. while at the same time Burne Jones under Rossetti's influence continued working in his similar symbolic and sensual way producing eventually the early stages of the Art Nouveau movement.

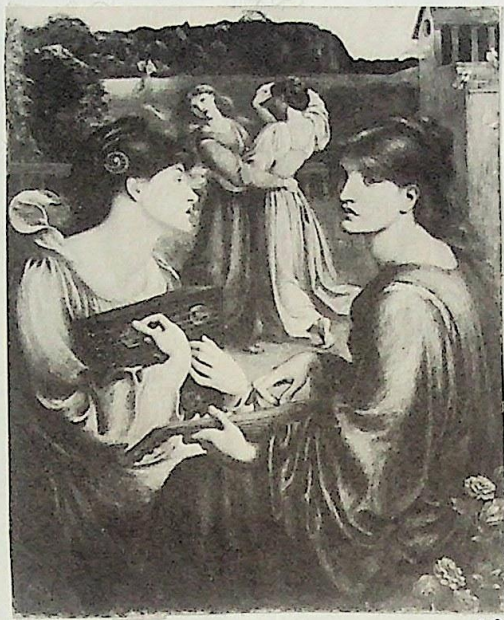
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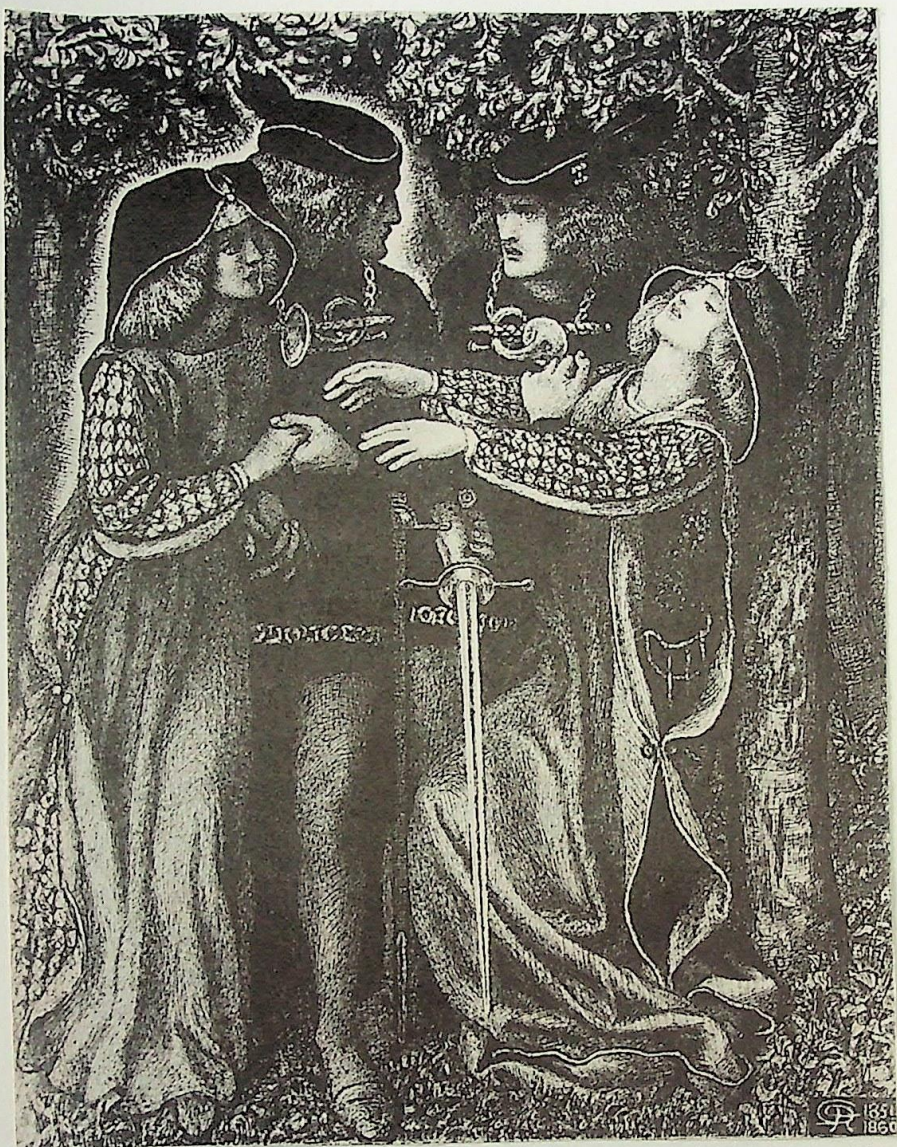


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CONCLUSION

Pre-Raphaelitism was not a revolution in art, it was a solidifying of ideals and philosophies prevalent at that time. It was a quirk in the Victorian age of art.

If we consider the Pre-Raphaelites an avant-garde group, we see that their circumstances relate to other avant-garde groups; their battle against the establishment, their idealism and bohemianism, the quick folding magazine and the one critic who defended them, however, the paintings they produced were on the whole not good. They were overtly sentimental and, often bland and coy.

They did, however, play a significant part in the history of art. They had, initially, a sense of bravery and adventure, which, as Pre-Raphaelitism went from stage to stage continued to be evident in at least some of its artists. In its many different waves, Pre-Raphaelitism from its initial historicism through, under Brown and Hunt, a realist stage and via Rossetti, Burne Jones and Morris in the direction of escapism and utopianism to eventually laying the foundations for European symbolism and art nouveau.

Individually the Pre-Raphaelites work was uneven and uninspiring but collectively, not just the original Brotherhood, but the successive waves of movements based on early Pre-Raphaelitism led to renewed and fresh approaches to many aspects of art.

Finally, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was significant in taking the onus off the previous buyers of art and began to interest a new art buying public; the merchants and industrial classes who were quickly acquiring wealth due to the revolution. Ultimately the new art produced, in turn, a new buyer for this art. In some way Pre-Raphaelitism in its freshness brought art to the ordinary people.

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