PRE-RAPHAELITES: THE FIRST DECADENTS

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The ephemeral life of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood belies the importance of an organization that grows from and transcends its originally limited aesthetic principles and circumscribed credo. The founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 really marks the beginning of a movement that metamorphizes into Aestheticism/Decadence. It is the purpose of this dissertation to demonstrate that, from its inception, Pre-Raphaelitism is the first English manifestation of Aestheticism/Decadence. Although the connection between Pre-Raphaelitism and the Aesthete/Decadent movement is proposed or mentioned by several writers, none has written a coherent justification for the viewing of Pre-Raphaelitism as the starting point for English Decadence. This dissertation attempts to establish the primacy of Pre-Raphaelitism in the development of Aestheticism/Decadence.

Despite the comments of such late nineteenth and twentieth century writers as Wilde, Yeats, Pater, Symons, and F. W. H. Myers, who all support the notion of the Pre-Raphaelitism—Aestheticism/Decadence continuum, the theory loses popularity after the First World War, and it is rare to find any writers or critics who come forth to make a case for the connection
between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence. For the most part critics deal with the two movements as separate phenomena. The occasional exceptions to the rule have not really violated it. For example, Lord David Cecil's statement that Rossetti "is indisputably the representative man of the Aesthetic movement . . ." is from a discussion about Rossetti as an individual artist. Cecil deals with Rossetti's later career and ideas as essentially separate from his earlier Pre-Raphaelite association.

Although a host of critics including Jerome Buckley, D. S. R. Welland, William Fredeman, Charles Spencer, Ruth Child, and several others, directly deny the development of Aestheticism/Decadence from Pre-Raphaelitism, a justification in this dissertation is built on a detailed analysis of the three phases of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic growth. The primary contention is that embryonic Decadent ideas and concepts are present in Pre-Raphaelite thinking in the earliest phase of the movement (1848-1856) and are given birth by the Rossetti circle of Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and Burne-Jones during the second phase (1857-1862). Special emphasis is placed on Rossetti and Pater as the crucial links in the evolution of Pre-Raphaelite ideas into the Aesthete/Decadent credo of Wilde, Beardsley, Symons, and Keats.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The question of defining Pre-Raphaelitism presents a recurring problem for literary historians. Timothy Hilton says flatly that Pre-Raphaelitism cannot be defined because it is too various.¹ Others, like Priscilla Roetzel² and G. H. Fleming,³ contend that the term Pre-Raphaelitism should refer only to the paintings, writings and principles produced by the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848-1854). This approach, though quite valid in a very restricted understanding of the movement, has not been widely accepted because the true impact of Pre-Raphaelitism goes far beyond the youthful rebellion of the initial Brotherhood.

Critics, like Graham Hough⁴ and John Dixon Hunt,⁵ take a broader view of the Pre-Raphaelites and their place in


²Priscilla Roetzel, Pre-Raphaelite Style in Painting and Poetry (Chapel Hill, 1973), p. 81.


literary and artistic history. These writers see the pluralistic nature of Pre-Raphaelite style and technique. Through the aid of their research and that of others, it is possible to see more clearly the twenty to thirty year evolution of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics.

However, even to say that there is an evolution in Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics is to acknowledge that an identifiable Pre-Raphaelite point of view exists through the period from the birth of the Brotherhood in 1848 to the death of Rossetti in 1882. This, of course, is the most controversial aspect of any discussion of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. It is certainly well documented that the Pre-Raphaelites reject the notion of codifying or dogmatizing their beliefs. In fact, it is necessary from the outset to reject William Michael Rossetti's pronunciamento on Pre-Raphaelite beliefs as being too narrow. William Rossetti acts as the unofficial historian, interpreter, and apologist for Pre-Raphaelitism. Starting with his very first analysis of the Pre-Raphaelite movement in 1851,6 William Rossetti emphasizes above all the Pre-Raphaelite truth to nature; yet mimesis is rarely a high Pre-Raphaelite priority in painting and almost never in poetry.

In fact, the most obstinate Pre-Raphaelite myth to dispel is the belief that the Pre-Raphaelites strive only to

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achieve truth to nature. The myth is legitimized by Ruskin in his original essay on Pre-Raphaelitism in 1851. Ruskin states unequivocally that "Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only." Yet again, the actual creative production of the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers does not substantiate this statement, as this dissertation documents.

Among the original seven in the Brotherhood, William Holman Hunt is the most obsessed with the doctrine he calls "childlike submission to nature." Hunt maintains his lifelong commitment to Pre-Raphaelite ideals based primarily on this particular doctrine, yet Hunt's own Pre-Raphaelite paintings do not demonstrate a large measure of verisimilitude to nature. In both color and content, Hunt takes the greatest liberties with reality.

With Ruskin, William Rossetti, and Holman Hunt at odds with actual Pre-Raphaelite practice on at least one major point, is it possible to make a clear and comprehensive statement of Pre-Raphaelite doctrine? Is there a consistent,

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8William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelites, (London, 1905), I, 132.
verifiable set of themes and ideas which transcend the individual convictions and prejudices of those within the movement? The answer is yes. A definable Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic does exist. Yet, in the end, the only reliable method by which a comprehensive statement of Pre-Raphaelite beliefs may be accurately made is to extract those themes and motives which are common to all periods of Pre-Raphaelite painting, poetry, and prose and let them stand alone as the basis of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic doctrine. This approach must of necessity acknowledge a broad scope and some internal inconsistencies like the somewhat different understandings of Pre-Raphaelitism that are evident between Rossetti and Holman Hunt. However, a consistent and comprehensive definition of Pre-Raphaelitism is possible with a high degree of reliability.

Having once established the general make-up and character of Pre-Raphaelite beliefs, this dissertation will show that, from its inception, Pre-Raphaelitism is the first English manifestation of Aestheticism/Decadence. Although this connection is proposed or mentioned by several writers, none has taken the opportunity to document or justify the allegation. For example, Walter Hamilton, writing in his 1882 The Aesthetic Movement in England, identifies the Pre-Raphaelites as part of the then emerging Aesthetic movement and uses the terms "Pre-Raphaelitism" and "Aestheticism"
interchangeably. However, while making the assumption of unification between the two movements, Hamilton gives no evidence or proof for his contention. Hamilton simply states Pre-Raphaelitism's place in Aestheticism as a given. Mary Eliza Haweis also in The Art of Beauty (1878) makes the same connection between the then emerging school of beauty (Aestheticism/Decadence) and the Pre-Raphaelites as the earlier apostles of beauty.9

The tendency to see Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism as one continuous movement with various phases is most evident in the 1880s when Aestheticism/Decadence is just emerging in the public eye. Oscar Wilde makes a significant statement to a correspondent in 1882, saying that his departure from the Pre-Raphaelites marks a new era in the Aesthetic movement.10 Considering Wilde's major role as an Aesthete/Decadent, this statement is significant in that Wilde identifies himself as a Pre-Raphaelite before 1882 and that Pre-Raphaelitism is part of the English Aesthetic movement.

Another major writer of the time who unconsciously accepts the interconnection between Pre-Raphaelitism and


10John Dixon Hunt, p. 7.
Aestheticism is W. B. Yeats. Yeats like Wilde identifies himself as Pre-Raphaelite in his early formative years by saying that between 1887 and 1891, he is "in all things Pre-Raphaelite." At about this same time Yeats' father is involved with a minor offshoot of Pre-Raphaelite painters whose work influences the younger Yeats. Later, Yeats will say of his father that "in literature he was always Pre-Raphaelite." Much later in an essay "Symbolism in Painting," Yeats relates the Pre-Raphaelites to the Continental symbolists Baudelaire and Verlaine.

Perhaps the most significant documentation of Pre-Raphaelite influence on and confluence with Aestheticism/Decadence is Walter Pater's use in 1888 of the standards established by Rossetti as a way of measuring the degree of artistic achievement by the Aesthete Arthur Symons. Pater paraphrases Rossetti in the following manner:

Rossetti, I believe, said that the value of every artistic product was in direct proportion to the amount of purely intellectual force that went to the initial conception of it. . . . in your pieces. . . . I find Rossetti's requirement fulfilled.

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12 Ibid., p. 54.
13 Ibid., p. 81.
In this statement Pater affirms that Symons demonstrates Rossetti's and the Pre-Raphaelite belief that the poem or painting must evolve from intellectual activity, that mental conception and preparation is essential to the creation of art. Pre-Raphaelitism--Aestheticism/Decadence is a break from the Romantic ideal of "spontaneous overflow of emotions," and Pater, using Rossetti as his authority, is idealizing an essentially classical, Platonic approach to the birth of an artistic idea. Certainly Pater's emphasis on Rossetti's principles in praising Symons' writing is critical to understanding the Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent unity.

A closer look at Symons' critical works indicates that Symons is deeply indebted to and in harmony with Pre-Raphaelite teachings through Rossetti. Symons speaks of Rossetti as a "man of supreme genius" and the poet who "for all that he wrote or said about Art has in it absolute rightness of judgment." In another essay Symons makes a direct connection between Rossetti and Baudelaire and Mallarme calling each "a personal force in literature."

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17 Ibid., p. 120.

Symons' feelings about his other Pre-Raphaelite contacts are similar. His essay on Swinburne laments England's lack of appreciation for "one of the greatest poets of this or any country" and makes the rather dramatic statement that "no English poet has ever shown so great and various a mastery over harmony in speech, and it is this lyrical quality which has given him a place among the great lyrical poets of England."  

In addition Symons writes an essay on the erstwhile Pre-Raphaelite William Morris which focuses on Morris' search for beauty (a major goal of the Aesthetes). Discussing Pre-Raphaelite painting, Symons talks about Rossetti's ability to fill his paintings with the "spiritual mysteries of passion" and the considerable contribution to art of the Pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones. Symons' Pre-Raphaelite associations along with Pater's are deep and abiding.  

Another important contemporary documentation in the 1880s of the connection between the Pre-Raphaelite and the  

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20 Ibid., p. 182.  
23 Ibid., p. 34.
then new Aesthete/Decadent movement is found in F. W. H. Myers' essay "Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty." Myers immediately identifies the poetry of Rossetti and Swinburne with the new "aesthetic movement." Even more important, Myers associates the phrase "religion of beauty" with the practices of those individuals in the second Pre-Raphaelite phase. This is a crucial insight in bonding together the fundamental belief system of the Pre-Raphaelites with that of the Aesthetes/Decadents.

However, despite the comments and practices of Wilde, Yeats, Pater, Symons, and Myers, and after the end of the Aesthete/Decadent movement around 1900, it is quite rare for any writer or critic to make a comment connecting Pre-Raphaelitism with Aestheticism/Decadence. For the most part critics deal with the two movements as separate phenomena. The occasional exceptions to that rule have not really violated it. Lord David Cecil's statement that Rossetti "is indisputably the representative man of the Aesthetic movement..." is from a discussion about Rossetti as an individual artist. Cecil deals with Rossetti's

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later career and ideas as essentially separate from his earlier Pre-Raphaelite association.

Elizabeth Aslin's statement that Pre-Raphaelitism is one of the two foundations of the Aesthetic movement is based entirely on the decorative aspects of Pre-Raphaelite art. She believes the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is a revolution in aesthetic principles, but to her the revolution is entirely artistic rather than literary.26

A writer on English literature who does accept a Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent bond is John Heath-Stubbs. Heath-Stubbs makes his basis of comparison the "dream-poetry" in the two movements. However, he does not concern himself with the painting or the evolutionary development.27

Lorentz Eckhoff's study of the Aesthetic movement in England includes two major Pre-Raphaelite personalities, Rossetti and Swinburne. But he, like Cecil, deals with these writers only as individual artists within the Aesthete/Decadent school, rather than part of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.28


The only recent critic to accept and document the interconnection between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence is John Dixon Hunt. Hunt's major study, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination 1848-1900*, carefully analyzes the modes of Pre-Raphaelite imagination including its enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, interest in the individual psyche, celebration of the intuitional world, fascination with the female form, and attempts at realistic description.\(^{29}\) The major significance of this approach is that Hunt connects each of these modes to the imaginative ideals of the 1890s, and, to quote Hunt directly, "All were initiated by the first Pre-Raphaelite Brothers and are equally integral parts of the imagination of the 1890s."\(^{30}\)

However, despite the magnificent contribution of Hunt's work, the limiting factor of his study is that it does not deal with the historical evolution of Pre-Raphaelite ideals into Aesthete/Decadent dogma. Hunt's focus is strictly thematic in that it shows the five points of Pre-Raphaelite imaginative theory. Of course, the confluence of Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence goes considerably beyond these five modes of imagination. This is not a criticism of Hunt's approach, but only a realization that

\(^{29}\)John Dixon Hunt, pp. xi-xii.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. xii.
he purposely circumscribes his field of vision in this particular study.

This dissertation accepts J. D. Hunt's thesis and documentation but moves beyond it to look at the larger historical process involved in the artistic/literary metamorphosis of Pre-Raphaelitism into Aestheticism/Decadence. Just as Hunt finds it necessary to limit his scope, this dissertation confines its attention to the main trail of Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent development. As individuals take a divergent path from the main line of the Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent continuum, as is the case with William Morris after 1856 and to a certain extent Swinburne in his later career, they are not considered as typically Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent. Naturally it is impossible to take account of all individual variations, but important deviations are noted in subsequent chapters.

Standing against those few critics (after 1900) who directly espouse or allude to a Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent fellowship are a large host of critics, many of whom are pre-eminent Pre-Raphaelite scholars, who do not accept the thesis that Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence are two phases of the same movement. These writers, for the most part, see the evolution of two separate schools in England during the second half of the
nineteenth century. They generally do not deny isolated points of contact and influence, but argue against the confluence of the two groups.

Timothy Hilton, a major Pre-Raphaelite interpreter, speaks to this attitude in his statement that "the history of aestheticism is not a part of the history of Pre-Raphaelitism, though it was thought to be so at the time . . . ."\(^{31}\) The latter part of Hilton's statement is a reference to those like Hamilton, Wilde, or Yeats who make no distinction between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence in the 1800s and 1890s. Although Hilton offers little defense for his position, he feels his understanding is self-evident.

Another of those who resists the "temptation" to establish any continuity between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence is Jerome Buckley. In his Victorian Temper, he goes to considerable trouble to maintain important "discriminations" between the two groups.\(^{32}\) These distinctions include Rossetti's supposed "contempt" for the "amoral apostles of art for art's sake";\(^{33}\)

\(^{31}\)Hilton, p. 207.


\(^{33}\)Ibid.
Swinburne's eventual hostility for the new Aestheticism; and Morris' resistance to any suggestion that some of his verse is Aesthetic. While Buckley's insights are significant, they tend to illustrate the surface conflict between major Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes/Decadents rather than differences of genuine belief or practice.

D. S. R. Welland's study of Pre-Raphaelitism not only concludes that there is no real connection between the Pre-Raphaelitism Brotherhood and Aestheticism/Decadence, but even goes further to repudiate any hint of association between Pre-Raphaelite artists and Aestheticism/Decadence. Welland maintains that "the aestheticism of Rossetti and Burne-Jones is not a creed of 'Art for art's sake'..." Again, Welland's point of view, like several others, is highly protective of the Pre-Raphaelite image. He seems concerned that Pre-Raphaelitism's status might be damaged by being affiliated with the later Decadents.

One of the strangest defenses of Pre-Raphaelitism and Rossetti in particular against the charge of espousing Aestheticism comes from Rossetti's one-time nemesis Robert Buchanan. Buchanan vigorously attacks both Swinburne and

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34 Ibid., p. 172.
Rossetti in his widely discussed 1871 collection of essays, *The Fleshly School of Poetry*. Later, Buchanan recants most of his statements about Rossetti as a "fleshly poet" and adds a noteworthy codicil that "those who assert he [Rossetti] loved Art 'for its own sake,' know nothing of his method." Buchanan comes to respect Rossetti, and his defense of him against his being identified with the Aesthetes is an attempt to shield Rossetti from being associated with the "dreaded" Aesthetes and Decadents.

A major recent study which questions the validity of any meaningful connection between the Pre-Raphaelites and the writers of the fin de siècle is William Fredeman's *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study*. Although Fredeman acknowledges surface similarities between the groups, he makes a case for the division and separate development, beginning with the unique aesthetic themes of Walter Pater. In addition, Fredeman sees Pre-Raphaelitism more as a throwback to Romanticism than as a unique movement which helps spawn Aestheticism. Specifically he says, "Pre-Raphaelitism is less closely related to Wilde than to Keats, for whom beauty in art finds its most complete expression in the sentimentalized symbols of Platonic idealism." Also,


Fredeman believes Pre-Raphaelitism "represents a middle frontier between the extremes of Victorian art morality and the Art for Art's Sake of the fin de siècle." Fredeman does not deny the importance of contributions made by Pre-Raphaelitism to Aestheticism/Decadence; he just does not believe they are organically tied together as one continuous movement.

In addition to the writers who deal mainly with Pre-Raphaelitism, there are also those critics and scholars who primarily focus on Aestheticism/Decadence and investigate its origins. Among this group of researchers is Charles Spencer, whose introduction to *The Aesthetic Movement 1869-1890* deals specifically with the question of Aestheticism's origins. Spencer concludes, rather surprisingly, that "its [Aestheticism's] roots lie in the moralistic questioning of art and society which stems initially from John Ruskin (1819-1900)." Next, Spencer proceeds to argue that although the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin are close together initially, the Pre-Raphaelites do not follow Ruskin's ideas but "degenerated into fancy-dress medievalism, comforted by predigested moral concepts which enabled them to act out

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39 Ibid., p. 5.

well intentioned roles in an evil world." After that point Spencer sees no relationship between the Pre-Raphaelites and Aestheticism.

Ruth Child in her study *The Aesthetic of Walter Pater* makes the common observation that Rossetti is the leader of the "aesthetic school of poetry" but makes no attempt to relate Rossetti's leadership in Aestheticism/Decadence to his central position in Pre-Raphaelitism. In *Lost on Both Sides*, Robert Cooper makes the same observation and comes to the same conclusion as Ruth Child that Rossetti is "... a veritable high priest of Art for Art's Sake." Again the emphasis is put upon the separate evolution of Rossetti away from Pre-Raphaelitism. Yet Rossetti's career is remarkably consistent, and the aesthetic revolution which reaches its critical mass in the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 is as evident in Rossetti's poetry and painting in the 1870s as in the 1840s.

In general, the approach of most writers has been to accept Rossetti's important role as an Aesthete/Decadent and separate him from his earlier Pre-Raphaelite involvement.

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41 Ibid.


However, Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism ultimately cannot be separated. Rossetti is true to Pre-Raphaelite principles throughout his life, or to put it another way, Rossetti's late aesthetic philosophy is in every important respect the same as the early Pre-Raphaelite doctrine. So why the need to distinguish between the early and later Rossetti; between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence? With the major exception of John Dixon Hunt's study, no twentieth-century critic has made a major case for the organic relationship between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence, and as mentioned earlier, Hunt's study does not focus on the historical fusion of the movements into one. Yet, the preponderance of evidence shows that from 1848 on the Pre-Raphaelites strive to maintain artistic values which lead in a straight line to the Aestheticism/Decadence of the 1880s and 1890s.

The justification for this view is demonstrated by a detailed analysis of the three phases of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic development. The first phase (1848-1856) centers on the short-lived Brotherhood in which painting is predominant. The second phase (1857-1862) focuses on the coterie which forms around Dante Gabriel Rossetti during and after the painting of the walls in the Oxford Debating Hall (1857). Morris, Swinburne, and Burne-Jones are the central personalities of this period along with Rossetti.
This phase is dominated by literature and from George Saintsbury gains the title of "The Second Poetical Period" in his *History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896).

The third phase (1863-1882) centers on Rossetti and how the Pre-Raphaelites influence such important aesthetic leaders as Pater, Wilde, Beardsley, and Symons. In this, the final Pre-Raphaelite stage, aesthetic doctrine predominates over a particular emphasis on art or literature.

In France the parallel movement to England's Aestheticism/Decadence is the Symbolist movement. There is no question that a considerable amount of cross-fertilization takes place between the two groups. That such French writers as Gautier, Verlaine, and Baudelaire had an influence on Swinburne, Rossetti, and other Pre-Raphaelites is not to be seriously doubted. The only point that needs to be documented in the following chapters is that the Pre-Raphaelites did not drop their Pre-Raphaelite ideals to accept the new French Aesthetic thinking and practice. Rather than conclude their Pre-Raphaelite association and join in a new movement, the Pre-Raphaelite writers and painters simply continue and expand their own ideas. French Symbolist doctrine is in all significant respects harmonious with and parallel to Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent teaching. Although the French influence on Pater, Swinburne, Wilde, Rossetti, and others is important, the line of direct
English development through the Pre-Raphaelites is of equal importance.

It is the primary contention of this dissertation that embryonic Decadent notions, concepts, and ideals are present in Pre-Raphaelite thinking in the earliest phase of the movement and are given birth by the Rossetti circle of Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and Burne-Jones in the second Pre-Raphaelite phase (1857-1862). Special emphasis is placed on Rossetti and Pater as the crucial links in the evolution of Pre-Raphaelite ideas into the Aesthete/Decadent credo of Wilde, Beardsley, Symons, and Yeats.

A minor premise of this dissertation is to show that because the Pre-Raphaelite role in the development of the Aesthete/Decadent movement is not completely understood, the importance of Pre-Raphaelitism in the evolution of Victorian aesthetics is not fully appreciated. Instead of being seen as a mid-century curiosity of modest consequence, it is more rightly to be viewed as a major nexus of Victorian aesthetics. Along with Arnold and others, Pre-Raphaelites share an important central role in the artistic attack on Philistinism. The connection between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence helps clarify this role and in so doing reveals the large degree to which Pre-Raphaelitism exercises its considerable influence on Victorian aesthetics.
Definition of Pre-Raphaelitism

Pre-Raphaelitism probably represents the only true cross-cultural, interdisciplinary movement of the Victorian age. From the very beginning it is an anomaly which does not fit neatly into any category or group. Even in the twentieth century, Pre-Raphaelitism is studied primarily by historians of literature who have difficulty integrating the artistic aspect of the movement into the literary. However, the avoidance of narrow specialization by the Pre-Raphaelites is tied to one of their most important and distinguishing characteristics, which is their insistence that art and literature should embrace and complement one another. Certainly this concept is in the broader Romantic tradition which culminates in Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, "Total Art Form," the idea that the individual arts should be integrated with, and complete, other art forms. The Pre-Raphaelites emphasize this integration when they change the name of their little journal from The Germ to Art and Poetry.

As a general statement, it is legitimate to say that the Pre-Raphaelites are anti-institutional in the best Romantic tradition. In fact, the whole cultish idea of worshipping at the altar of the original Pre-Raphaelites, like Botticelli, Fra Angelico, Masaccio, and Ghiberti is to espouse the work of non-professional, non-specialized
artists who paint without a catalogue of rules or without striving after a particular "school" style. Pater's first statement about the Pre-Raphaelite group in his essay on Rossetti is on their "deliberate use of the most direct and unconventional expression . . . no conventional standard . . . ."44

The Pre-Raphaelites look back to a golden age before strict rules and regulations about painting are laid down. Ironically, the Pre-Raphaelites would much rather seem naive, simplistic, and even crude, than appear imitative of a specific style. Their striving for "technicolor" effect in painting is an example of their rejection not only of long held principles of painting, but also of the somber and "moralist" coloring of much Victorian painting. Even over a hundred years later, the coloring carries the message of Pre-Raphaelite ideals far more than the content does.

One of their methods of avoiding programmed art and painting "by the book" is to promote the work of non-academically trained painters. The Pre-Raphaelites' attempt to discover the non-specialized artist is unique in the whole area of Victorian aesthetics. In seeking out the spontaneous creations of gifted amateurs (which many

of them are) over the crafted and "perfected works" of Sir Joshua Reynolds and the typical artist in the Royal Academy, Pre-Raphaelitism is searching for freedom from institutional control. The goal is nothing less than the creation of a new art which comes from the people naturally rather than from the schools.

An interesting example of this Pre-Raphaelite ideal of encouraging personal development over academic training is Rossetti's tenure at the Working Men's College in London. In an attempt to bypass professionally trained painters and work with amateurs, Rossetti spends a good deal of time at this school for the untutored and working-class men of England. Although some of the men are artistically talented, none has known the regime of academic training in art and certainly none has aspired to the Royal Academy. These are exactly the non-initiated which Rossetti seeks to encourage in the growth of their own individual styles. It is not surprising that "among these men of narrow and starved minds he was tremendously popular." It is important to note that Rossetti goes to the Working Men's College at the suggestion of Ruskin, who did so much writing on the virtues


of the medieval system in which every individual in the society feels pride in his own craft, while not feeling inferior to a special class of "artists." Rossetti and Ruskin are in harmony on the special value of encouraging common men and those classified as untrained to be involved in the process of trying to create art.

Another way in which the Pre-Raphaelites strive to change the aesthetic mores of the Victorian age is their quest to view art holistically. They do not want artists to become frozen in one art form. Let the artist develop in whatever direction his talent takes him. Again, the temptation to specialize and work exclusively in one area is resisted. The ideal is always freedom from artistic restrictions and laws generally.

Rossetti is the major Pre-Raphaelite example of this resistance to narrow specialization. He sees himself as a painter/poet or poet/painter but never as exclusively one. This fact is a puzzle to some critics who either cannot understand why Rossetti did both or want him to devote himself wholeheartedly to the writing of poetry. R. D. Warner remarks, in his study of Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel," that it is equal to Dante's Vita Nuova, but that there is no Divine Comedy which follows it to make Rossetti one of the great classic writers like Dante.47

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R. D. Warner's attitude reflects the idea that Rossetti should have developed his poetic gifts to their limit over his painting. This is precisely what Rossetti chooses not to do, because in order to do that, he would have had to give up not only his painting, but also his philosophy as to the interrelationship of the arts. The Pre-Raphaelite philosophy is based squarely on the doctrine that the arts should work together for an effect rather than independently of one another. The difference for Rossetti and Pater is that theirs is a religion of beauty, rather than medieval Christianity which uses beauty for worshipping God. For them beauty is the divine. As Grierson says "Art was their religion." Music, art, and poetry are not separate phenomena but all are part of the same phenomenon, which is man's attempt to create beauty.

Although this comprehensive ideal of art creation is only occasionally found in practice among the Pre-Raphaelites or the Aesthetes/Decadents, there are several important examples of Pre-Raphaelites breaking out of specialized roles. Rossetti, of course, paints and writes poetry. William Morris creates objects of functional arts and crafts and writes poetry and prose. F. G. Stephens paints The Proposal as well as writing the important Pre-Raphaelite document,

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"The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art." Millais composes a piece of fiction called Order of Release.49 Woolner and Collinson write pieces for The Germ even though they are primarily artists.50

This need to work simultaneously in several art forms is more important to Pre-Raphaelitism than a clearly defined style. Any critic who tries to find a consistent Pre-Raphaelite style, type, or technique will never be entirely successful because a uniform style or school is never a Pre-Raphaelite goal. In fact, it is argued by Quentin Bell that "Pre-Raphaelitism was above all anti-academic."51 This statement needs focusing in the sense that the Pre-Raphaelites are not so much anti-academic as they are anti-specialization, so often a tendency in academia.

As important as the artist's holistic role in the creation of art is the Pre-Raphaelite insistence on artistic freedom. In the beginning and in a narrow understanding of its goals, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is created as a mild institutional obstruction to the pervasive influence of the Royal Academy and in particular to Sir Joshua


Reynolds and the tradition of the "grand style." However, Pre-Raphaelitism soon rejects its own institutional structure exactly because these poets and painters want to avoid creating a specific style or type which would become associated with a school. This would have been antithetical to the true purpose of their philosophy.

It is important to understand that the five-year institutional life of the Brotherhood helps give security and support to some very young and largely unknown poets and painters. It needs to be remembered that at a very young age here are a group of untried artists and writers taking on the artistic establishment. Rossetti is twenty in 1848. Hunt is twenty-one. F. G. Stephens is twenty. Even during the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism, Morris gets involved at twenty-two and Swinburne at nineteen. The prevalence of youth lends credence to the idea that these advocates of artistic freedom need a little group support and encouragement before launching off on their own. Organizing collectively is a bold move which, in retrospect, may seem rather futile considering the fact that within a few years many in the Brotherhood are a part of the establishment or are working independently.

If the only purpose of Pre-Raphaelitism were to provide a vehicle to encourage the artistic development of Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne, its existence is more than
amply justified. However, Pre-Raphaelitism has a life and meaning largely independent from its individual members and associates. The fact that Pre-Raphaelitism gives very little formal structure to its beliefs and avoids all but the loosest confederation of individuals and styles is precisely the point. Freedom and structure for the Pre-Raphaelites work against each other, so the Pre-Raphaelites choose freedom. Rossetti, always the aesthetic leader of the movement, steadfastly refuses every attempt at codification or dogmatization of Pre-Raphaelite doctrines. W. Holman Hunt, who is most directly responsible for the initial and institutional creation of the Brotherhood and its most consistent defender after its demise, reaffirms over and over this movement toward artistic freedom in his retrospective *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, written some fifty-seven years later. Hunt specifically attacks Sir Joshua Reynolds's dictum that "rules were not the fetters of genius, but only of those who have no genius." In the same place and talking specifically about the need for a change, Hunt states that prescribed laws are what have crippled and paralyzed artistic development causing the necessity for a Pre-Raphaelite movement.

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53 Ibid.
One of the problems in defining Pre-Raphaelitism, since it establishes no definition of its own, is that there is a great deal of misunderstanding about a crucial Pre-Raphaelite teaching, and that is the concept of "truth to nature." Both Hunt and William M. Rossetti talk about the use of nature as their sole guide. The problem, of course, is that although the paintings and poems may appear superficially natural or naturalistic, they are in most cases quite affected by the individual author's or painter's intention.

In fact, this "truth to nature" conflict may be easily explained by referring to Rossetti's prose version of "Hand and Soul" in The Germ's first number. This is the story of an artist named Chiaro dell'Erma who becomes famous as an artist but is inwardly troubled. Finally an image comes to him and tells him to paint out of his individual and personal experience. The point is simply that "truth to nature" is fidelity to one's own inner experience. This is a subtle shift in emphasis from the Romantic truth to nature conception. Derek Stanford calls "Hand and Soul" the closest thing to a pronunciamento which the Pre-Raphaelites ever have.54 Earle Welby suggests that "Hand and Soul" contains

the "spiritual ideals of the movement." Rossetti describes the story as "intensely metaphysical."

This long-held myth about the Pre-Raphaelites' devotion to providing a true view of nature must be understood only as faithfulness to inner or subjective truth. Often, the near photographic quality of their paintings and poems belies the unrealistic nature of Pre-Raphaelite artistic or literary works. In the paintings, this may be seen in the brighter than natural hue. These bright colors, created by a special Pre-Raphaelite method of applying the paint directly on white canvas without first creating a neutral background, shows the high color saturation which gives the Pre-Raphaelite paintings one of their most distinctive characteristics, sometimes referred to as the "technicolor" effect, or, to use commercial jargon, "Kodacolor" instead of "Ektachrome." In the earliest Pre-Raphaelite paintings like Millais' Isabella (1849) or Ophelia (1851) or Hunt's Our English Coasts (1852) or Rossetti's Dantis Amor (1859), this quality is predominant. Even twenty to thirty years later, this quality is still present in paintings like Rossetti's Astarte Syriaca (1877) or Burne-Jones' The Beguiling of Merlin (1874).

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In poetry, this technicolour characteristic takes on a different aspect. In Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel," the over-rich word painting and artificial setting create a "heightened" effect:

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the Worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres. (lines 49-54)

Overall, richer than natural colors and brighter than natural hues are part of the Pre-Raphaelite interest in the theatrical and dramatic. It is almost as if young boys and girls have stage make-up on in a "natural" setting. No painting exemplifies this more than Hunt's The Hireling Shepherd (1851). The cheeks are too red, the complexion is too pure, the pose is too contrived. Another early example is Millais' Ferdinand Lured by Ariel in which the natural and supernatural seem to blend together.

The dramatic effect in Pre-Raphaelite poetry is pointed out by William Morris in his 1870 essay on Rossetti's poems. In discussing Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," which Morris thinks is the best poem of the collection, and other poems, Morris comments that "on the mystical and intensely lyrical side of the poems, they bear with them signs of the highest dramatic power." 57 Morris goes on to mention that

the dramatic power is in the external scenes as well as in the "ripeness of plan," "congruity of detail," and "imaginative qualities" of Rossetti's poetry.\textsuperscript{58} The Rossetti poems which according to Morris exhibit the most evidence of dramatic power include "Sister Helen," "Eden Bower," "The Last Confession," and "Song of the Bower."\textsuperscript{59}

Of course, it is evident that what Morris praises he also tries to emulate. In Morris' poems such as "The Haystack in the Flood," "The Defence of Guenevere," "The Life and Death of Jason," and many others, the attempt to achieve dramatic power is always Morris' aim. Morris concentrates on the rapid rendering of detail and the lucid portrayal of images which Walter Houghton and Robert Strange describe as the "Pre-Raphaelite tableau."\textsuperscript{60} This striving after a visual effect and dramatic presentation in poetry is particularly a Pre-Raphaelite trait. The cross-fertilization of art and poetry is partly responsible, but also the need of Pre-Raphaelites to give their poetry life so that it is not remote or academic or sterile.

This need to convey reality in their art causes the Pre-Raphaelites to follow another principle in their

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., pp. 104-105.

painting, which is the on-location and lifelike quality of many paintings. Whether the painting is from a scene out of Dante by Rossetti or one of Hunt's street scenes in Cairo, the viewer's sense of "being there" is quite pronounced. Again, the Pre-Raphaelite purpose is not to photograph a slice of reality but to heighten the viewer's feeling of participation in the art by effects which are both artificial and natural. The setting is natural, the color is not; the people and animals are natural, the pose is not. Of course, there are exceptions in the degree of reality in any particular painting. Those of Rossetti always run toward the metaphysical, while those of Hunt are more realistic. However, never are there abstract Romantic vistas in the manner of Turner, but always people and/or animals and a sense of "action." No bowls of fruit or still life paintings for the Pre-Raphaelites. The subject is always man and the human drama in all its aspects.

The one way the Pre-Raphaelites are more than Victorian humanists may be observed in the degree to which they put special emphasis in many of their paintings on the metaphysical dimension. Whereas a humanist might be accused of emphasizing and promoting man's "human" side, the Pre-Raphaelites are humanists who also recognize the spiritual and metaphysical aspect of man. As with all things Pre-Raphaelite, Rossetti is the innovator and leader, and in his paintings
such as Dantis Amor (1849), Beata Beatrix (1863), and The Blessed Damozel (1871), Rossetti strives to achieve a metaphysical plain. In other Pre-Raphaelite painters the attempt to elevate the painting to the metaphysical level is also present, but hardly ever does any Pre-Raphaelite painter attain Rossetti's intensity of metaphysical realization. In Holman Hunt's attempts such as The Light of the World (1856) and The Scapegoat (1854), the result is definitely earthbound. Hunt is in a conventional sense more religious than Rossetti yet his need to spiritualize his paintings is held down by theological and moral weight. Hunt's 1883 painting The Triumph of the Innocents is the most transcendental of all his paintings. Perhaps it takes Hunt much longer to achieve this major Pre-Raphaelite goal.

One of the most valuable ways to come to an understanding and definition of Pre-Raphaelitism is to look at its forerunners and see what kind of poetry and painting the Pre-Raphaelites sought to emulate. Some of the distant progenitors are self-evident, and would naturally include Botticelli, Dante, Fra Angelico, and Masaccio. However, it is not so readily apparent who are the immediate forebears of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Of course, John Ruskin is often the first name mentioned and, to be sure, his influence on the movement is quite profound. And yet, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter II, Ruskin's
contribution to Pre-Raphaelitism is tactical rather than ideological or philosophical. In fact, the case is later made that Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers are in basic disagreement on several key points, the most important of which is the central issue of art and morality. If the Pre-Raphaelites are then not drawing their main spiritual sustenance from Ruskin, from whom are they drawing their views?

The best case may be made for the general philosophical inspiration of Pre-Raphaelitism coming from Keats and Blake. The Pre-Raphaelite philosophy is probably closest to Keats' ideas, yet the influence of Blake is also significant.

A. C. Benson describes Keats as a "Pre-Raphaelite poet," and there is ample evidence for this testimony. Pre-Raphaelitism derives from Keats and other sources its most important element, namely its devotion to beauty. Keats' own worship of beauty in both poetry and letters is well known. What is less well known is the Pre-Raphaelite adoration of Keats' whole approach to art and life. This adherence to Keatsian views is dramatically expressed in several ways. This may be seen most evidently in paintings done by the Brothers directly on Keatsian themes. Probably the earliest Pre-Raphaelite painting is Holman Hunt's

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depiction of the escape of the lovers in Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes." This painting, which attempts to capture the essence of the poem, is followed some eight years later by the minor Pre-Raphaelite painter Arthur Hughes' excellent series of paintings on the "Eve of St. Agnes."

Perhaps the most significant testimony to Keats' influence on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is the fact that Holman Hunt's admiration for the then little-known Keats combined with Rossetti's, in fact, is a key ingredient in the Brotherhood. Rossetti sees Hunt's *Eve of St. Agnes* painting in 1848 and is so overwhelmed by it that he seeks out Hunt. This meeting leads within a few months to the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. As Hunt says, "Our common enthusiasm for Keats brought us into intimate relations." 62

The third member of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood nucleus, John Everett Millais, displays the same enthusiasm for Keats as Rossetti and Hunt. His 1849 painting *Lorenzo and Isabella* is from a scene in Keats' "Isabella." Holman Hunt also uses the theme of Keats' "Isabella" in his painting *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* (1868). Rossetti bases at least one painting (1855) on Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and more significantly to the original

Pre-Raphaelite influence, there is a record of an 1848 painting by Rossetti on the same subject which has now been lost.63

As a source of inspiration, it is clear that the early Pre-Raphaelites found Keats' material perfect for their pictorial work. This Keatsian influence on Pre-Raphaelitism is one of the main reasons Lorentz Eckhoff, in his *Aesthetic Movement in English Literature*, shows the origin of Aestheticicism as starting with Keats and developing through the Pre-Raphaelites to Pater and the later Aesthetes.64

Another documentation of Keats' importance to the Pre-Raphaelites is that he is on their exclusive list of "immortals," which includes such luminaries as Homer, Dante, Chaucer, and Goethe.65 In addition to the group approval, Keats receives Rossetti's personal endorsement in Rossetti's statement that Keats is "the great modern poet."66

The second generation of Pre-Raphaelite painters is also enthusiastic about Keats, particularly Burne-Jones and Morris,

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64 Eckhoff, p. 7.

65 Hilton, p. 34.

66 Ford, p. 93.
who are Keats' devotees after 1855. Curiously, they do not use Keats' poems as subject matter as the first generation had done, but instead use Keats as a source of inspiration.

Unfortunately, it is not so easy to show any direct Keatsian influence on Pre-Raphaelite poetry. George Ford, in his study *Keats and the Victorians*, devotes a whole chapter to Keats' influence on Rossetti and yet comes to the conclusion that "exact parallels" are absent even though there is the strong sense of influence. R. L. Knickerbocker tries to explain this absence of direct parallels between Keats and Rossetti with the statement that Rossetti is always extremely careful to avoid the charge or appearance of imitation.

The influence on the Pre-Raphaelite poets by Keats is the same as that on Rossetti. Both Morris and Swinburne are intimately knowledgeable about Keats' poetry and draw from its richness. Their devotion to Keats seems to be strongest at the very time they come into the Pre-Raphaelite fold. In

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68 Ford, p. 124.


70 Mackail, p. 72.
Swinburne's case particularly, there is a slavish imitation of Keats' style and technique which leaves its mark on all of Swinburne's work, even though Swinburne later comes to prefer Shelley over Keats. However, the inspiration that Keats gives Swinburne is as his model for the art for art's sake credo. Swinburne says that Keats is "the most exclusively aesthetic and the most absolutely non-moral of all serious writers on record."  

In the final analysis, Keats' most significant role is as a link and bond between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence. This role of Keats is clearly seen by Oscar Wilde in 1882, who says:

... it is in Keats that one discerns the artistic Renaissance of England. Byron was a rebel, and Shelley a dreamer; but in the calmness and clearness of his vision, his self-control, his winning sense of beauty, and his recognition of a separate realm for the imagination, Keats was the pure and severe artist, the forerunner of the Pre-Raphaelite school, and so of the great romantic movement of which I am to speak.

Wilde's "great romantic movement," of course, is the Aesthete/Decadent school, which is near its zenith, and Keats is apotheosized as one of its major prophets, being called

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by Wilde a "Priest of Beauty." It is this view of Keats which most clearly marks him as the aesthetic unifier of common spirits. Keats isolates himself in art and away from politics, science, or business in exactly the same way as Rossetti, the early Morris, Swinburne, Pater, and Wilde. There is a common brotherhood here which knows the creation of art as the only worldly activity worthy of complete devotion.

The impact of Blake on the Pre-Raphaelites is much different from that of Keats. Although the influence is in both painting and poetry, the main difference is that the Pre-Raphaelites seem to be much less conscious of their Blakean debt than they are of their Keatsian obligation. Yet, in many respects, Blake's impression on the Pre-Raphaelite is easier to document than Keats'. Perhaps the fact that Blake is both a painter and poet, in harmony with the Pre-Raphaelite ideal, accounts for the easy transferal of Blakean ideas and subject matter.

Examples of Pre-Raphaelite borrowings from and imitation of Blake may be catalogued with rather dependable regularity. Blake's painting *Pity* (1795), based on *Macbeth*, of a woman lying down and staring into space seems to be used as a model in Millais' 1851 painting, *Ophelia*, using

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subject matter from Hamlet. Rossetti's Paolo and Francesca (1855) has remarkable similarities to Blake's Circle of the Lustful-Paolo and Francesca. In fact Blake's greatest artistic project, the 102 pictures in the water-color series, are illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy. Not coincidentally, the Pre-Raphaelites choose Dante as one of their major mentors and the source for numerous poems and paintings.

Perhaps the Pre-Raphaelite artist most directly touched by Blake's style and energy is Edward Burne-Jones. In any number of paintings, the parallels between the two artists are remarkable. In Burne-Jones' 1880 painting The Golden Stairs, the theme, style, and content are so similar to Blake's Jacob's Ladder (1800) that one would suspect plagiarism if in fact Burne-Jones had not given the work his own fresh interpretation. In several other works, Burne-Jones' unique though parallel approach to similar material shows a debt without stealing. In Perseus Slaying the Sea Serpent (1875) and the Briar Rose series, Burne-Jones seems to have taken his inspiration directly from Blake's Europe, A Prophecy; Blighted Crops (1794) in which two sprites blast the earth's fertility and production with seeds of destruction.

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It is easy to see why Blake is admired among the Pre-Raphaelites. Blake's beliefs about the unification of the arts are in agreement with those of the Pre-Raphaelites, and more important, Blake, like Rossetti, articulates his vision in multiple ways. In addition, Blake is the archetypal "outsider" in the art world - the common man whose art and poetry follow the design of no school or regime. The Pre-Raphaelite appreciation for Blake takes tangible form beyond an admiration for Blake's rich artistic and poetic mythology. In 1863 Rossetti helps complete Gilchrist's Life of William Blake, with Selections from his Poems and Other Writings because of Gilchrist's death in 1861. Hall Caine remarks that Rossetti, already at the age of sixteen, is one of Blake's warmest admirers, and this is particularly interesting since in 1845 Blake is not well known or accepted by the British public. Caine also mentions that Rossetti comes into possession, for ten shillings, of one of Blake's original manuscript scrapbooks, which later became the most valuable Blakean literary relic extant. This is mentioned to emphasize the close personal contact which Rossetti has at an early age with Blake's poetry and sketches.


77 Ibid., pp. 192-193.
Rossetti's essay on Blake is illuminating on the similarities between Blake's and Rossetti's philosophies on the question of originality. Rossetti quotes Blake as saying, "First thoughts are best in art" and "Models are difficult—enslave one—efface from one's mind a conception or reminiscence which is better." This reaffirms Rossetti's and the Pre-Raphaelites' belief in the sanctity of the individual's artistic vision. In addition, Rossetti comments on Blake's powerful use of color, and in doing so helps explain his own distinctive use of color. "Blake's . . . system of colour, --in which tints laid on side by side, each in its utmost force, are made by masterly treatment to produce a startling and novel effect of truth." Rossetti's description applies as perfectly to himself as it does to Blake.

Rossetti goes on to acknowledge Blake as "the fore-runner of a style of execution now characterizing a whole new section of the English School." For Rossetti, Blake is the legitimate founder of the new artistic movement in England of which Pre-Raphaelitism is in the central position. Rossetti continues by documenting Blake's influence in both English painting and poetry and concludes with the


79Ibid., p. 445.

80Ibid.
particularly appropriate statement that "he [Blake] offers them [artists] the new strange fruits grown for himself in far-off gardens where he has dwelt alone, or pours for them the wines which he has learned to love in lands where they never travelled."81

In the end, Blake's attack on Titian, Correggio, Rembrandt, and Rubens is an attack on artificiality of emotion. Blake's call to follow the "wirey line of rectitude" could easily be the Pre-Raphaelite motto.82 Rubens is an "outrageous demon" and Correggio is a "cruel demon."83 "The unorganized Blots and Blurs of Rubens and Titian are not Art."84

F. L. Lucas makes perhaps the most perceptive comment about the Blake/Rossetti commonality when he says of Rossetti that "like Blake, he saw the world ablaze with all its colours, not as a colour-blind pattern of moral blacks and whites."85

81Ibid., p. 459.
83Ibid., p. 527.
84Ibid., p. 539.
William Rossetti acts as the editor of the 1874 Aldine edition of Blake's poetry, prompted perhaps by Swinburne's 1868 major study on Blake, dedicated to William Rossetti, which includes a biography and critical essay on each of the major works. Swinburne emphasizes the energy and passion Blake puts into his poetry, printing, and painting and speaks of the forcefulness of his creative will. In summarizing Blake's character Swinburne says, "Power of imaginative work and insight--'The Poetic Genius, as you now call it'--was in his [Blake's] mind, we shall soon have to see, 'the first principle' of all things moral or material . . ." This elevation of poetic genius to center stage is a major Pre-Raphaelite theme and is true, as a broad generalization, of the central Pre-Raphaelite figures, including Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and later Pater, Wilde, and Yeats.

The interest in Blake continues and grows as he is venerated by the Aesthetes/Decadents. Yeats is co-editor with Edwin Ellis in the 1893 three-volume edition of Blake's poetry, and in 1907 Symons writes a book on Blake which recapitulates his own career-long admiration of Blake's work. Symons' study speaks eloquently of the Pre-Raphaelites' debt to Blake in the realm of philosophy. In his introduction Symons calls particular attention to Blake's view of man.

86 Swinburne, The Complete Works of A. C. Swinburne, VI, 140.
as most powerful in music, poetry, and painting. Blake's contributions in poetry and painting are well known, but Symons adds that Blake sings his own songs to his own music and even composes a song to God and sings it on his death bed.87

One of the most enduring qualities of Pre-Raphaelitism which may be found in both poetry and painting, early and late, is a striving for the fusion of material form and spiritual values in artistic creations. This doctrine, not often brought to full realization by Pre-Raphaelite artists or writers, may very well have its origins in Ruskin's belief that art and architecture reflect the moral vigor or spiritual degeneracy of a particular people and/or state. In The Stones of Venice, Ruskin carefully catalogues the evolution of artistic and anti-intellectual development in Venice through the centuries and chronicles the moral rise and fall of Venetian civilization directly by the outward and inward appearance of its building. Or to put it more succinctly, a material creation may be an index of a state's spiritual and moral condition.

The difference between the fusion of materiality and spirituality of the Pre-Raphaelites and that of Ruskin may be found in three distinct ways. First, the Pre-Raphaelites are more interested in spirituality than they are in a

material creation. A work of art's first function in the
Pre-Raphaelite view is to transcend the mundane and strive
for the ethereal. Second, Pre-Raphaelite artists and poets
make more of a distinction between spirituality and morality
than Ruskin appears to make. Ruskin sees the role of the
artist as one of striving to present a moral message, since
for Ruskin art is not automatically moral. However, the
Pre-Raphaelite artists never show any interest in a people
as a group or a culture as a whole. Instead, Pre-Raphaelitism's
focus is always on the individual artist fulfilling his per-
sonal vision outside of any obligation to a group or insti-
tution.

However, despite these major differences, both Ruskin
and the Pre-Raphaelites emphasize the need for art to express
spiritual values. This is certainly one of the features
about Pre-Raphaelitism that attracted Ruskin's support for
the fledgling group in 1851. Though the Pre-Raphaelites
never go as far as Ruskin would have liked in subordinating
art to moral purpose, they certainly do accept the need for
spirituality in art.

To what extent, then, are Pre-Raphaelite artists suc-
cessful in their own attempt to fuse the material with the
spiritual? The answer to this question must be carefully

88Ruskin, "Pre-Raphaelitism," *Pre-Raphaelitism*, edited
by James Sambrook, pp. 92-104.
circumscribed. Probably only Rossetti, and later Yeats, realize the full measure of fusion. In his essay on Rossetti, Pater calls particular attention to this aspect of Rossetti's genius speaking specifically about Rossetti's "delight in concrete definition" and "materializing of abstractions." Pater remarks even more significantly when he talks of Rossetti's "highly pictorial genius . . . material loveliness, formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance, in a world where all beside might be but shadow." Here Pater elevates Rossetti's artistic creations as part of the only true "reality." This is the final Pre-Raphaelite metamorphosis. The material creation itself becomes a spiritual entity which is more real than the material substances out of which it is formed. John Buchan rather neatly captures Rossetti's particular ability to work with material and transform it when he says, "he wrote ballads, but he was not a ballad-maker, lyrics, but he was not a singer; he is always the artificer, working with arabesques and inlays and strange jewels and rich intractable substances." The point is that Rossetti is always trying to transform substances into art and, as such, something more.

89 Pater, Appreciations: With An Essay on Style, pp. 208-209.

90 Ibid., p. 213.

Pater recognizes Rossetti's unique gifts in this striving to achieve the spiritual ideal. Few other Pre-Raphaelites after Rossetti so completely achieve the goal of fusion although virtually all try. Morris certainly reveals a high level of fusion in poems like "The Blue Closet," "The Defence of Guenevere," and "The Haystack in the Floods." Swinburne is surely striving for the same effect in "A Match."

In the present century, Yeats, in particular, carries and realizes the Pre-Raphaelite theme of fusing the spiritual to the material. In "Sailing to Byzantium," for example, Yeats idealizes the material creation of the goldsmith for its spiritual values and wants to take his bodily form as a golden bird. The quality which, for Yeats and Rossetti, gives the material form its spirituality is art. The creation of artifice in its most perfect form is the transformation of the material into spiritualized physical form. The hand of the artist more perfectly or less perfectly accomplishes this metamorphosis through the degree of his or her devotion to the beauty of art.

Probably the only occasion when the Pre-Raphaelites attempt to define their movement is in the statement of purpose published on the back cover of the second number of The Germ and the fourth number of Art and Poetry. Although for the purpose of outlining the magazine's raison d'être,
this statement takes on importance because it is talking about Pre-Raphaelite beliefs generally. It is the only such Pre-Raphaelite declaration, and its display in such a prominent place is significant. In this credal proclamation (three paragraphs long) the first two paragraphs deal with the idea that most periodicals gather the thoughts of non-artists and critics, whereas this periodical will "obtain the thoughts of Artists," and it is for this reason that "this Periodical has been established."\(^{92}\)

The emphasis in such a credo on the thoughts of the artist is extremely important. It reiterates the Pre-Raphaelite devotion to the work of the practicing artist, particularly in art and poetry, and by omission is critical of those who write about art but do not create it. The Pre-Raphaelites primarily want artists writing about art in their journal. By way of emphasis, they put the phrase under the title, "Conducted Principally by Artists," as a way of stressing this point.\(^{93}\)

The third paragraph of the doctrine is perhaps the most important. Having established the authority of practicing artists over non-artists, the pronouncement concludes with the promise that "hence this work will contain such


\(^{93}\)Ibid., p. 1 and p. 46.
original Tales (in prose or verse), Poems, Essays, and the like as may seem conceived in the spirit, or with the intent, of exhibiting a pure and unaffected style . . . ."94 This is a most dramatic announcement, in the sense that it calls for the artist to work unhindered by schools or traditions but to create "a pure and unaffected style." It is a call for artistic freedom which will ring through the later Aesthete/Decadent writings as the ultimate goal of the movement. Artists must be allowed to develop their own styles. Pater later capsulizes this concept with his use of Georges Buffon's statement that "the style is the man."95 The idea that art and pure style are linked is one of Pre-Raphaelitism's most valuable contributions.

The Germ and Art and Poetry magazines also contain a sonnet by William Rossetti reproduced on every cover which talks about each man speaking the truth no matter how insignificant or unimportant it may seem to him. Later, in his introduction to the 1901 facsimile edition, William interprets this sonnet as follows:

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94 Ibid.
A writer ought to think out his subject honestly and personally, not imitatively, and ought to express it with directness and precision; if he does this, we should respect his performance as truthful, even though it may not be important. His indicated, for writers, much the same principle which the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood professed for painters, --individual genuineness of thought, reproductive genuineness in the presentment.\textsuperscript{96}

The key words here are "personally," and "individual."

If a person is truthful to self, his artistic creation must be accepted as genuine. There is no other standard for judging truth. Again, as with The Germ credo, the emphasis is squarely on individual development and personal freedom. If anything, the Pre-Raphaelites go out of their way to promote individuality in art which is rather quickly destructive of their own corporate identity. It is also relevant that William Rossetti is still articulating the basic Pre-Raphaelite principle of individual artistic freedom over fifty years after the original idea is set down.

\textbf{Definition of Aestheticism/Decadence in Relationship to Pre-Raphaelitism}

The terms Aestheticism and Decadence have a long history of close association, and finding clear distinctions between the two words is extremely frustrating. Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman in their \textit{A Handbook to Literature}\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., p. 16.
apply the term "decadence" to the entire second half of
the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth.\textsuperscript{97}
Such a broad definition of decadence weakens any specific
application to a particular group of writers. When Holman
later adds the word "Aestheticism" to the third edition,
he describes it as "a late nineteenth-century literary
movement that rested on the credo of 'Art for art's sake.'"\textsuperscript{98}
Holman then goes on to mention the "close kinship" of
Aestheticism to Pre-Raphaelitism and the dominant figures
of Aestheticism such as Wilde, Pater, and Dowson. Both
Wilde and Dowson are also defined later in the Handbook
as "decadents."\textsuperscript{99}

The problem for critics is that the two words "Aes-
theticism" and "Decadence" cannot be neatly separated and
probably should not be because of their overlapping
natures. The question then should be raised as to how
to handle these terms in a consistent way. Ruth Temple
in her article "Truth in Labelling: Pre-Raphaelitism,
Aestheticism, Decadence, Fin de Siècle," contends that
the misuse of the terms "constitutes a scandal in

\textsuperscript{97}William Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman,

\textsuperscript{98}C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 3rd

\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., p. 148.
literary history." She goes on to talk about the "rich chaos" of conflicting meanings. Temple's solution is to drop the term "aesthetic" altogether and use the term "decadent" or "decadence" exclusively for the movement in question. The problem with Ms. Temple's proposal is that the terms "Aestheticism," "Aesthete," and "Aesthetic Movement" are already in wide currency to describe the period in English literature from 1870-1900. A more consistent yet awkward way to deal with the problem is simply to combine Aestheticism/Decadence into a single term. Although this solution assumes the general interchangeability of the terms, it still preserves identity for what may be looked at as two aspects of the same movement. The joint term Aestheticism/Decadence is used here without prejudice to attempts by others at separate definitions and individual clarification.

The association of Aestheticism/Decadence with Pre-Raphaelitism may be found in its introduction to the English people. During 1861-62, at the very time Algernon Swinburne is most deeply involved with Pre-Raphaelitism, he discovers the French Aesthete/Decadent, Baudelaire. Swinburne is profoundly moved by Baudelaire and finds his


101 Ibid., p. 206.
ideas in harmony with much for which the Pre-Raphaelites stand. Swinburne's 1862 article on Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* marks the initial English introduction to the Frenchman's works.\(^{102}\) It is not surprising that Swinburne's enthusiastic response to Baudelaire's poetry helps it receive more immediate attention in England than it might otherwise have received.

Although the French Aesthete/Decadent movement is introduced to the English public by Swinburne, he does not play a large role in the development and definition of English Aestheticism/Decadence. The job of defining and perhaps even initiating a unique English Aesthete/Decadent school is left up to Walter Pater. Pater's work in this regard is central to understanding both the indigenous quality of English Aestheticism/Decadence growing directly out of Pre-Raphaelitism and the acceptance of foreign, primarily French, ideas, about the nature of aesthetic writing.

Although Pater's writing career starts after the first and second waves of Pre-Raphaelitism have passed, he is dramatically influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism and Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic ideas. For example, he specifically uses the term "aesthetic poetry" to refer to Pre-Raphaelite

poetry. In 1868 Pater writes an essay, "Poems by William Morris," and near the end of the essay uses terms and phrases which are forever after identified with Aestheticism, namely "to burn always with this hard gem-like flame," "desire of beauty," and "the love of art for art's sake." 104

It is highly significant that this critical work on the poetry of a Pre-Raphaelite writer should be one of the launching points for the Aesthete/Decadent movement and a major testament in the new religion of art and beauty starting with Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. Pater is not trying in the least to establish a new doctrine or formal school of thought, but instead is simply stating basic truths of artistic creation. He so forcefully enunciates his ideas in this document that nothing later will more clearly detail the Aesthete/Decadent point of view than key passages in this particular essay.

These central dicta of Pater's dogma could have as easily been written by Rossetti because of their similarity to Pre-Raphaelite teachings and beliefs. The statement, "To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life," appears in both Pater's


essay on the poetry of Morris and his Studies in the History of the Renaissance. This famous aphorism of Aestheticism needs to be understood within the context of its less familiar following line, which not only defines the metaphor "hard gem-like flame," but shows the uniformity of the philosophical position between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes. The next phrase is, "Failure is to form habits, for habit is relative to a stereotyped world." This concept is in complete harmony with the Pre-Raphaelites' rejection of rules and guidelines like those of the Royal Academy and Sir Joshua Reynolds. If there is a distinction between what Pater is saying and what the Pre-Raphaelites believe, it is that the Pre-Raphaelites tend to restrict their pronouncements to artistic theory, technique, and style, whereas Pater seems to expand his philosophy to include everyday living and personal conduct.

Pater sees life as a kind of interval of existence which may be more fully appreciated at the time through the proper understanding of art. "Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing


frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."107

Art, according to Pater, is able to intensify life, and therefore, art should be appreciated precisely for its own sake. In this sense, Pater is not saying anything radically different from the Pre-Raphaelites. He is just expanding Pre-Raphaelite principles to encompass all of life. Aestheticism/Decadence is a style of living as well as being a style of art. The Aesthetes are fundamentally more practical and thisworldly, while Pre-Raphaelitism is more purely spiritual and otherworldly.

Practical? It sounds strange to call such individuals as Wilde, Pater, or Beardsley practical; yet these leading Decadents and others of their kind who try to create a positive attitude toward the value of art and the art of living are neither otherworldly nor philistines. They are instead artists who want art to set its own standards unrelated to any other system or code. On this point they again harmonize with an outstanding Pre-Raphaelite goal, which is the repudiation of rules, systems, and structures. The freedom of the artist to create his own art is exactly what Pre-Raphaelitism strives to achieve.

107Ibid., p. 116.
Are the Decadents and Aesthetes also interested in the same integration of the arts which is so close to the hearts of the leading Pre-Raphaelites? The answer is yes if theory is viewed over practice. As a principle, the Aesthetes are writing about art in general. In practice they do not have a talented personality like Rossetti to execute their ideas in more than one medium.

Pater's essay on Rossetti is illuminating in this regard. Pater does not see things so much in terms of Rossetti's particular medium of expression but in higher terms. "To him [Rossetti], the vehement and impassioned heat of his conceptions, the material and spiritual are fused and blent; if the spiritual attains the definitive visibility of crystal, what the material loses is its earthiness and impurity." In other words, Pater believes Rossetti uses his art to achieve a higher level of understanding. The type of art is inconsequential in this regard.

The focus of Pater, as with Blake, Keats, Rossetti, and many other Romantics, is holistic in the largest possible philosophical sense, that is, in terms of the fusion of physical with metaphysical. This is consistent with Pater's concern and the general interest of the Aesthetes.

to move their understanding of art and literature to a higher philosophical plane. In this regard, Pater views Rossetti as a guide and leader; one of the few artists or poets who is able to transcend from the physical to the spiritual while at the same time unifying the two. And Rossetti does this, according to Pater, through the "impassioned heat of his conceptions."

This fire of imagination is among the primary reasons Lord David Cecil says that Rossetti is selected time and again as "indisputably the representative man of the Aesthetic movement and as probably the dominant English influence on the Decadence of the nineties."^{109}

This is not to say that Pre-Raphaelitism and its supreme representative, Rossetti, have an identical understanding of beauty and aesthetics with that of the Aesthetes/Decadents. The key distinction is that Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism move toward the metaphysical and spiritual, but represent only the starting point of Aestheticism/Decadence before complete fusion of physical and spiritual is reached. In Rossetti's early painting, there are religious subjects and themes, as in *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1849), but the pictures are conventionally spiritual.

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without being transcendentally metaphysical. However, by the time Rossetti paints *Astarte Syriaca* (1877), the summation and culmination of his career as a painter, the corporeal is now ethereal. Naturalism is infused with divinity to create an image of purest aesthetic pleasure. How strange that Robert Buchanan should charge Rossetti's paintings and poetry with being too fleshly in his famous 1871 series of essays called *The Fleshly School of Poetry*. Buchanan talks of "exquisite sensuality" and the "superfluity of extreme sensibility of delight in beautiful forms" in regard to Rossetti.110

It is ironic that Buchanan should attack Rossetti on this very point and at the very time when Rossetti is most completely expunging the physical, the carnal, the mundane from his painting and poetry and trying to move his art into the highest possible stage of spiritual consciousness and is certainly less earthbound than ever before. The Decadent, Arthur Symons, applies Pater's dictum about living in ecstasy and says of Rossetti that he tries "to maintain ecstasy" and that all his "energy is concentrated on one ecstasy," which is specifically "the desire of beauty."111


111 Symons, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Figures of Several Centuries*, p. 204.
Another point on which the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes/Decadents harmonize completely is on the point of truth to inner nature. A good exemplification of the Decadent view on this question may be found in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In this story, Gray is destroyed by his love for his own image. The view that love of external reality or outward form or, to use Yeatsian language, the individual mask, is destructive to the inner self is well exemplified by this story. Dorian Gray simply loses contact with his inner nature.

Wilde's personal style is extravagant and highly affected on purpose. He wears clothes and carries himself in a manner to suggest a pose, an overstatement on outward appearance as a facade. Wilde even takes to wearing a lily in his lapel, which becomes his trademark. Significantly, he gleans the lily motif, Ruskin's symbol for the beauty of womanhood, from Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel."112 Elizabeth Aslin even goes so far as to say about Wilde in 1878, "Wilde's tall, elegant figure and flowing hair made him the personification of a type of Pre-Raphaelite movement."113

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113 Aslin, p. 99.
These characteristics of Wilde are very much a part of another similarity with Pre-Raphaelitism, and that is their mutual interest in the theatrical in art and poetry and their need to emphasize the mask-like quality of Victorian life. There is no better example of this than Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This brilliant satire, which burlesques both Victorian theatre and Victorian morals, gives a clear insight into the frivolous mores of the day. This parody of bourgeois English life heightens the viewer's or reader's consciousness of the artificiality of Victorian society.

The extent of Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent mutual interrelationship may be found by looking at the number of ways in which the Aesthetes parallel or imitate the Pre-Raphaelites, as has just been done, or by documenting the degree to which the Pre-Raphaelites anticipate Aestheticism/Decadence. In this regard several valuable pieces of information are shown to document this anticipation.

In the tables of contents for *The Germ* and *Art and Poetry* magazines, the similarity of subjects between those in which the Pre-Raphaelites are interested in 1850 and those that later Aesthetes/Decadents discuss in the 1880s and 90s is remarkable. Without repeating each issue's contents, it is profitable to look at the first number of *The Germ* and see that the concentration on themes of beauty,
death, dreams, love, and self are repeated over and over. Thomas Woolner's "My Beautiful Lady" is a passionate medieval love ballad, and his other poem "Of My Lady in Death," explores the theme of death. F. Madox Brown's "Love of Beauty" is a sonnet about the worship of beauty. Ellen Alleyn's two poems, "Dream Land" and "An End," both deal with the themes of love and death, and in the first, the particular idea of death as a dream land is related. Finally, Rossetti's famous "Hand and Soul" is about the importance of an artist knowing himself.

All of these poems and stories contain themes in common use among the Aesthetes/Decadents. Certainly, it is more than chance that so much of the very first issue of The Germ is devoted to these particular concepts.

Another way in which The Germ/Art and Poetry shows Pre-Raphaelite cognizance of the major aesthetic issues and is prophetic of the Aesthete/Decadent movement may be seen in an article by John Orchard in the fourth number of Art and Poetry. The essay is called "A Dialogue on Art" and is a Socratic dialogue on the importance of morality in art. This particular dialogue was to have been the first in a series, but Mr. Orchard died even before the publication of the first installment. The two sides of the argument show that the Pre-Raphaelites are painfully aware of the "morality in art" issue. Of the several
speakers, Christian represents the need for morality in art, while Kalon stresses the importance of filling art with beauty and sensuousness. Although the dialogue has no winner or loser, the fact that the Pre-Raphaelites devote a considerable amount of space to this article in their small journal speaks to the importance in which they hold this debate. To oversimplify, it may be said that the history of Pre-Raphaelitism is a moving away from morality in art, a moving away from the Ruskinesque view of beauty toward a pure "aesthetic" view. This dialogue is prima facia evidence of the struggle with morality in art and the eventual movement away from it.
CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF PRE-RAPHAELITE AESTHETICS:

PHASE ONE (1848-1856)

Victorian Aesthetics

The leading themes of English aesthetic philosophy after the high tide of Romanticism in the 1820s and before the impact of the Pre-Raphaelites is felt in the 1850s and 60s are tied to such terms and phrases as "moral aesthetic," "utilitarian art," "empiricism," "positivism," "grand style," "authoritarianism," and "vitalism." All of these concepts and "issues" have one thing in common, which is, namely, that each implies that art points or directs the viewer or reader to some teaching or message outside the art being viewed or read. This tendency is nothing new in aesthetics, and it is perhaps natural that there would be an inevitable swing back to teaching over delighting after the Romantic era. Yet, the early Victorian writers take a special interest in the moral aspects of art, and these may be seen in paintings (notably the works coming out of the Royal Academy), essays (Ruskin, Arnold, Carlyle and Mill), and poetry (much of Tennyson, such as "Locksley Hall" and "Sir Galahad," and Browning's "Pippa Passes" and many of the poems in the 1842 Dramatic Lyrics).
The tenor of the time is of art for society's sake or art for teaching's sake.

Perhaps the most important of the morality-in-art teachers is John Ruskin. His emphasis on high moral consciousness in art reaches its climax in Ruskin's second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846). In it, Ruskin states flatly that art must be moral and that idealism of some kind must be the basis for any art to be truly visionary. Ruskin carries on his moral theme in his two other major works, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851), in which he attempts to establish a direct relationship between the quality of Venetian art and architecture and the state of Venetian morality. Certainly, Ruskin relates morality and art so closely together that it is impossible for him to understand any true art or architecture as being devoid of a moral or idealistic message.

Another of the leading prophets of this early Victorian period who is interested in moral teachings in art and literature is Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle's writing shows a steady movement away from Romantic and transcendental idealism toward authoritarianism and institutional structure. His break with J. Stuart Mill indicates his growing distrust of man's potential and also parallels the broader mid-century movement away from emphasis on human
perfectibility. However, whether the early more Romantic Carlyle or the later more autocratic Carlyle, the emphasis is always on moral themes. In Characteristics (1831), for example, there is an essay, "Literature is but a Branch of Religion." In this piece Carlyle argues that literature is the only branch of religion still alive. Carlyle sees religion and literature linked in the process of moralizing man through creative arts.

Certainly Carlyle's magnum opus, Sartor Resartus (1833), in which corporeal existence, rationalism, and scientific empiricism are denied, clearly affirms the divine energy underneath the surface of reality, which he calls vitalism. Art, as part of the material reality, must itself help men transcend into the true existence beneath. There is a divine cosmic plan, and man's artistic work should help lead other men to an understanding of it.

Another Victorian sage, John Stuart Mill, known as a supporter of empiricism, utilitarianism (his own type), and above all human freedom, also sees value in poetry beyond its ability to give delight and sheer aesthetic pleasure. Speaking of Wordsworth's short poems in his Autobiography, Mill says that the poems are a guide to
the "permanent happiness that abides in tranquil contemplation."\(^1\)

The poetry and prose of Matthew Arnold are extremely influential during the Victorian age, and he unquestionably believes in the moral power of poetry talking about the need for "high seriousness" in poetry, as he does in his famous essay "The Study of Poetry." Even though Arnold's writing career is parallel to that of the major Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters, he has an independent development. Arnold's stress on moral values such as stoicism in "Empedocles on Etna" and intellectual growth in "The Scholar Gipsy" clearly indicates the kind of poetry in which he believes. Although Arnold is an ally with the Pre-Raphaelites in their mutual struggle against philistinism, his heavy emphasis on moral teachings makes their ultimate artistic courses different.

Another way in which the early Victorian age expresses its new philosophy is in several types of movements, the most significant of which is the Utilitarian or Benthamite movement. The Utilitarian ethic of Jeremy Bentham, based on the desire to provide the greatest good to the greatest number of people, is especially appealing to the Victorian mind.\(^1\)

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The effect of Utilitarianism on Victorian literature is a major one. In broad terms there is a growth in "utility" literature, which means an increase in essays, articles and studies, and more novel writing than poetry, the former having more meaning or practical applicability to a greater number of people than the latter.

In fact, literature as a whole comes to be fundamentally distrusted by the practical-minded Benthamites of the day. It is a telling historical irony that the Westminster Review, an organ created for the expression of Benthamite attitudes, is born in the year of Byron's death, 1824. The Review comes to pronounce aesthetic judgment on various pieces of Victorian literature, using as its measure the bearing the piece in question might have on the happiness of the greatest number. One unnamed author in an article entitled "Present System of Education" (Vol. IV, July, 1825), seems to express the extreme of Benthamite philosophy about literature when he says, "Literature is a seducer: we had almost said a harlot. She may do to trifle with; but woe be to the state whose statesmen write verses, and whose lawyers read more in Tom Moore than in Brockton."\(^2\) After reading such a quote, one

is reminded of Charles Dickens' Gradgrind in *Hard Times* (1854), who wants utilitarian facts and has no time for art or creativity; there is no "profit" in it.

Besides utilitarianism, another Victorian crusade against Romantic ideals is the Oxford Movement. Beginning in 1833 with a sermon called "National Apostasy" by John Keble, the Movement gains force and prestige under the leadership of John Henry Newman, who is vicar of the university church in Oxford from 1828. Newman and his associates, R. H. Proude, Edward Pusey, and Keble, all view the liberalism spawned out of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods as a great danger. They want to return to traditionalism in religion and politics. In religion they believe in ritual, central authority, and a clear understanding of man's limitations and weaknesses and his absolute dependency on God. In politics, the Tractarians (as they are also called) oppose any increase in the suffrage and further involvement of the common people in the political process.

On a broader plain, Newman attacks the whole materialistic basis for Victorian society. His form of Christianity is otherworldly and uncompromisingly spiritual, with the church and its authority standing over individual freedom. It is not surprising that in 1845 Newman leaves the Church of England to become a Roman Catholic priest. What is
surprising is that in Newman's *The Idea of a University* (1852), he articulates the basis for a liberal arts education which in many ways is designed to foster individual thinking and growth. However, it must also be remembered that such a liberal arts curriculum of study by definition emphasizes rational and logical thought over emotional or aesthetic development. Newman's teachings represent really a third testament of Victorian values, which is based neither on practical utilitarianism nor Pre-Raphaelite aestheticism but on the rock of divine authority.

Perhaps the Victorian movement or set of movements which have had the greatest long-term influence are Darwinism and Social Darwinism. Whereas Benthamism and Tractarianism are of less consequence in the twentieth century, Darwin's ideas are still influential. Darwin's epic five-year voyage on H. M. S. *Beagle* and his discoveries about natural selection are "the" significant scientific events during the early Victorian period. Although Darwin's theories are well known, at the time, *Origin of the Species* is published in 1859, Darwin's concepts are only in the purview of the scientific community. This all changes when T. H. Huxley, who has a gift for explaining scientific ideas in layman's language, is deeply moved by *Origin of the Species* and decides to "preach" Darwinism to the English-speaking world. Huxley's intervention as spokesman on
behalf of Darwin is a crucial event, for it gives Darwin's research wide, popular exposure, which leads to both enthusiastic support and open hostility.

One of the problems of Huxley's energetic support of and identification with Darwin is that Darwinism and agnosticism become related in people's minds. This is not completely strange since Huxley is the coiner of the word "agnostic." Yet, Huxley's promotion of agnosticism along with Darwinism helps the two to be identified with one another and has the natural result of further separating science and faith. Even Huxley's kind word for Buddhist mysticism in *Ethics and Evolution* (1893) does not bridge the gulf created by the dichotomy between evolution and belief. Huxley puts his "faith" in science (specifically Darwinism) and sees religious teaching as debasing the scientific spirit.

That Huxley's Darwinism affects aesthetic thought in the second half of the nineteenth century is without question. The main result, in broad aesthetic terms, is to cause a reaction against the material emphasis and scientific theories of the Darwinian age. Pre-Raphaelitism--Aestheticism/Decadence are a part of the literary-artistic reaction against scienticism. A few writers of the time, like George Eliot and T.H. Huxley, in varying degrees, identify themselves with or against Darwinism, but others, like George Meredith and
Thomas Hardy, simply accept the passing of the old faith verities and search for a substitute. The later Victorian struggle against scienticism and materialism is not to repudiate Darwin but more basically to reestablish mysticism and spiritualism to their proper place. Rossetti, Pater, Symons, Wilde, and especially Yeats, all participate in this endeavor.

Social Darwinism is the name given to Darwinism as it is applied in an understanding of or explanation of social conditions and problems. The Social Darwinist takes as his point of departure Herbert Spencer's famous phrase, "survival of the fittest." Spencer equates social survival with social progress and optimistically assumes that mankind will eventually reach perfection. Social Darwinism always assumes progress.

Social Darwinism's popularity may be seen in such works as Walter Bagehot's Physics and Politics (1869), in which he examines the "evolution" of men in communities; or in the melioristic views of the novelists George Eliot, George Meredith, and even Thomas Hardy, whose surface fatalism covers up his belief in the ultimate melioristic power of the Immanent Will.

In short, Darwin and Social Darwinism both support Victorian notions about progress and destroy the traditional
structure of faith. The aesthetic implications are to cause a revival of interest in metaphysical speculation and mystical probing.

The Initial Impact of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The initial organizational structure of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood exists almost in name only. The first meeting of the Brotherhood, in September, 1848, is hardly more than a discussion session in which there is only a general sharing of philosophical purpose, technique, and stylistic approach to art. Although the Pre-Raphaelite ideology makes the group more than a clique, the fellowship and mutual support for one another is never translated into any real institutional form. The choice of the word "Brotherhood" is a highly conscious attempt to create a forum for their commonly held concepts about art and society, while not imposing too much group or school order on any of the Brothers.

The core group of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais really found the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Of these three, only Holman Hunt leaves a detailed though sometimes inconsistent account of the early days of the Brotherhood. In fact his two-volume study, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, traces Pre-Raphaelite history from 1847 to 1897, and despite the limitations and biases of Hunt's
personal perspective, his account stands as a valuable primary source for details about the earliest period of Pre-Raphaelitism.

From Hunt's account, the exact details of the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood are made clear. In 1847 Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais are members of the Cyclographic Club. Hunt and Millais are close friends but only know of Rossetti at a distance until some designs by Rossetti at a club showing catch their attention as being well above the usual fare. After a friendship is formed, Rossetti is quite taken by Hunt's picture based on Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes" and asks if he may study with Hunt. Rossetti tells Hunt of his dissatisfaction with Ford Madox Brown's teaching methods. At their first teaching session, Rossetti produces some of his poetry and discovers that Hunt also writes poetry. Soon Hunt and Rossetti decide to share a studio, and this association leads directly to the formation of the Brotherhood. Millais' close friendship with Hunt makes him a logical third member of what becomes the original nucleus of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

After the first loose association of Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti, and before any meetings are held, the three agree on other members of what they initially call "our Body." The four chosen are Thomas Woolner, James Collinson, Frederick

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4Ibid., pp. 110-111.
Stephens, and William Rossetti. The expansion of the group is in some respects quite illogical. Individuals become a part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood insofar as they have impressed one of the original three. James Collinson has been a fellow student with Hunt, and when Rossetti is introduced to him, Rossetti calls Collinson "a born stunner."\(^5\) The use of the word "stunner" here is unusual in that the term will later be applied to women of very special physical characteristics—long neck, wavy hair, and large lips.

Thomas Woolner's inclusion in the group comes after Hunt's visit to his sculpture studio. Hunt is impressed enough by Woolner's "burning ambition" and "strong poetic spirit" to accept Rossetti's recommendation of Woolner's membership.\(^6\)

William Rossetti comes into the Body largely on the strength of Rossetti's belief in his potential artistic future. F. G. Stephens is brought into the Brotherhood largely under the same circumstances as William Rossetti, namely great promise but little actual production.

The origin for the name Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is in doubt. Ford Madox Brown takes credit for the term

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 161.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 128.
"Pre-Raphaelite" as does Hunt. Hunt gives Rossetti credit in the same place for the term Brotherhood. Yet David Masson, writing in 1852, says that Rossetti favored the word "clique." However, there is no misunderstanding about the meaning behind the use of the terms Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood or Pre-Raphaelitism. Hunt speaks to this point when he says, "The name adopted by us negatived the suspicion of any servile antiquarianism. Pre-Raphaelitism is not Pre-Raphaelism. Raphael in his prime was an artist of the most independent and daring course as to convention."

In this statement Hunt is revealing a key ingredient in the nature of Pre-Raphaelitism, which is the emphasis the Brotherhood puts on individual freedom. The spirit of Raphael before he laid down any rules or established any mannerisms is what Pre-Raphaelitism is trying to foster. The real goal of the Pre-Raphaelites is to begin a new era of individual growth and personal development. It is not a call for artistic anarchy but for a period of sharing and support and always within the context of personal stylistic freedom.

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7 Hilton, p. 33.
8 William Holman Hunt, I, 140-141.
10 William Holman Hunt, I, 135.
One of the earliest agreed-upon principles of the Brothers is "to do battle with the frivolous art of the day" and avoid all imitation in art, whether of Michaelangelo, the Greeks, or contemporary German paintings. Or as Hunt puts it in another place, "the first principle of Pre-Raphaelitism was to eschew all that was conventional in contemporary art."

In fact, the Pre-Raphaelite disdain for art schools that foster the then-current trends in art is well documented in Rossetti's statement that such schools and teachers are "'of very little use in life.'" The Brotherhood agrees in the beginning to have monthly meetings held in turn at the studios of the various members. Although they do decide at one point to write down their beliefs in a cogent form, this is never done except for the credal statement in the second and fourth numbers of The Germ/Art and Poetry magazine. However, the meetings often deal with the need for a consistent ideology.

At the first meeting of all seven members held at Millais', the discussion turns to the misfortunes of the Germans as artists who turn too often to using systems and

11 Ibid., p. 142.
12 Ibid., p. 125.
13 Ibid., p. 142.
orders:

The result was an art sublimely intellectual in intention, but devoid of personal instinct and often bloodless and dead; but many book illustrations had in varying degrees dared to follow their own fancies, and had escaped the crippling yoke.\(^14\)

In this statement it may be seen that from the very first meeting in 1848, the Pre-Raphaelites are hostile to all systems and instead are promoters of individual style and development. The phrase "own fancies" implies rich personal freedom, while "escaped the crippling yoke" emphasizes their resistance to all "school" approaches. They go on to contrast Italian art with German by insisting "that the naive traits of frank expression and unaffected grace were what had made Italian art so essentially vigorous and progressive."\(^15\)

Finally, Hunt implies in his concluding statement about the first meeting that the new candidates, Woolner, Collinson, Stephens, and William Rossetti, are likely to create "unaffected art" in the fashion they have just been discussing.\(^16\) The group's rejection of known artists, most prominently Ford Madox Brown, is a conscious attempt to

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 130.\)

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. } 130-131.\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 131.\)
allow the growth of a new individual style not conditioned by past "acceptance" by the artistic establishment in England.

In the group, Dante Gabriel Rossetti very quickly takes on the role of spiritual and philosophical leader. One of his plans or dreams is that each individual in the Brotherhood would have a set of studios, some for working in "diverse branches of art," and some for "sharing our productions" with admirers. The essential points here are that the Brothers should ideally work alone and that they should work in several branches of art. This verifies that basic Pre-Raphaelite doctrine of independent development and multiple artistic production. A little farther on, Hunt mentions that at a studio conclave of the Brothers it is agreed that immortality is gained by a "man's own genius or heroism" and that they are determined "to respect no authority that stood in the way of fresh research in art." Again individualism and freedom are the two repeated motifs of Pre-Raphaelite dogma.

It is in this context of the discussion about freedom and independence that the Pre-Raphaelites establish their list of Immortals, individuals whom they idealize for
exemplifying the rejection of pre-existing patterns and working toward real personal style. The statement preceding the list is noteworthy, saying in part that this "list of Immortals constitutes the whole of our Creed, and that there exists no other Immortality than what is centered in their names . . . ." The phrase "whole of our creed" is crucial in that the Brothers do not want to make any ideological statement beyond the simple listing of names. This is certainly ample evidence of the Pre-Raphaelite desire to avoid comparison by association. In fact the list itself is quite random, placing as it does Columbus with Robert Browning and Joan of Arc with Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The entire list represents such a remarkable cross-section of humanity, including Jesus Christ, Spenser, Cervantes, Cromwell, and Poe among fifty-seven, that no common link may be found between them. Of course, this is exactly the Pre-Raphaelites' intention. They want heroes as models not to be worshipped but to give them as inspiration. One irony of the list is that Raphael is on it and even occupies a place of honor equal to Tennyson and Boccaccio. This is ironic because the name Pre-Raphaelite implies special interest by the Pre-Raphaelites in painters before Raphael.

The central point that needs to be made about this group of very young men (the oldest is only twenty-three)
is that they all are painters and sculptors, with the exception that the Rossetti brothers have in 1848 already demonstrated literary interest. What is remarkable about this collection of neophyte painters, who are primarily interested in changing the values of all English painters, is that they are also so deeply interested in literature and take time away from their painting to found the remarkable little literary periodical, The Germ, in January, 1850. The amount of energy they spend on the production of its four numbers is testified to by the fact that all contribute articles, sketches, and time except Millais. Although only four numbers of the journal are issued, the periodical has a wide impact. For the last two numbers the name is changed to Art and Poetry. The significance of the name change is that it shows the Pre-Raphaelite concern for creating a proper balance between art and poetry. From the very beginning Pre-Raphaelitism is a movement interested in the unification and interrelationship of all the fine arts.

The Germ/Art and Poetry represents the early literary side of the Brotherhood, while the 1849 exhibit of their painting reveals the first artistic consequence of their new ideology. That their interest in painting is greater in the beginning than their fascination with literature is not difficult to document. Yet, there is a noticeable increase in their cultivation of literature as time goes on.
By the beginning of the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism in 1857, this phase, which paradoxically starts through the project of painting the walls of the Oxford Debating Union, is predominated by growth in literary interest and evolution of literary style.

In discussing the specific Pre-Raphaelite style of painting during the first phase, it must be clear from the outset that there is no true Pre-Raphaelite style or styles. Although such Pre-Raphaelite characteristics as technicolor effect, dramatic heightening, devotion to Keats and Blake are uniformly present in Pre-Raphaelite painting, they are handled in such individualistic ways that they do not represent a common or standard style. Of course, this is the major Pre-Raphaelite intention and, in the main, considerable personal development is achieved. Comparing Millais' *Ophelia* (1852) and Hunt's *Our English Coast* (1852) shows that both have shared characteristics such as dramatic heightening, technicolor effect, and an on-location setting; yet Millais' painting is on a literary scene and is full of pathos, while Hunt's is devoid of emotion. Millais' is intended as literary commentary, while Hunt's is pastoral. There is more individual style than Pre-Raphaelite style, however, each painting may be readily identified as Pre-Raphaelite.
The closest the Pre-Raphaelites ever come to following a specific style is to "parrot" the works of Ford Madox Brown. This may be mostly because Brown is Rossetti's first important teacher of art, and, despite their personal conflicts, Rossetti carries on the greatest admiration for Brown's work. Yet Brown is specifically excluded from the Brotherhood at the insistence of Holman Hunt.  

Hunt's objection against Brown's 1847 painting Chaucer is that it "failed to represent the unaffected art of past time, and it stood before me as a recent mark of academic ingenuity which Pre-Raphaelitism in its larger power of enfranchisement was framed to overthrow."  

In general, it is true that Brown is much more committed to realistic/naturalistic paintings than the Brothers, but more importantly, Brown does not strive for the metaphysical content in his work which comes to be of such great importance to the Pre-Raphaelites.

On the other hand, Brown is almost always included in any anthology or collection of Pre-Raphaelite art. Also, there is a valid case that Brown should be included as a Pre-Raphaelite because one of his major goals is artistic freedom. The uniqueness of his style gives him the

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20 Hilton, p. 33.

21 William Holman Hunt, I, 126.
freshness which is the trademark of Pre-Raphaelitism. Perhaps the safest course is to acknowledge Brown as "the" major precursor of Pre-Raphaelite painting and one who is a model in the early years but not a part of the Body as such.

One of the important developments during the period of the Brotherhood is the appearance in 1850 of Elizabeth Siddal in Rossetti's life. Although the advent of Miss Siddal has little to do directly with the Brotherhood at first, her influence on Pre-Raphaelitism generally is a major one. Lizzie is the first and most important of the Pre-Raphaelite stunners.

The term "stunner" is coined by Rossetti and first used by him to describe someone of exceptional talent or beauty. However, the term comes to take on a highly specialized meaning among Pre-Raphaelite artists to refer to a female model who has ideal Pre-Raphaelite features. These include a long neck, voluptuously full lips, long flowing hair, straight nose, and, especially, deep piercing eyes. Contemporary photographs of the period indicate that Lizzie Siddal amply possesses these attributes. Why these particular features are viewed by the Pre-Raphaelite artists as indicating true beauty is impossible to say. It is perhaps feasible to conclude that Rossetti first falls in love with Elizabeth and then generalizes or idealizes
her particular features as the prototype of perfect feminine beauty. Whatever the reasons, the image of Elizabeth Siddal and her twin-like successors appears prominently in almost all the paintings of Rossetti after 1850, and in numerous pictorial works by Morris and Burne-Jones.

Elizabeth Siddal is introduced to Rossetti and Hunt by Walter Deverell, who had seen her quite by accident working in a milliner's workroom. Elizabeth sits for Deverell, and Rossetti meets her at Deverell's studio. Although it is over a year before Rossetti expresses any personal interest in Elizabeth, he is taken by her beauty from the very first meeting.

Lizzie first appears in Rossetti's watercolor Rossovestita (1850), and their relationship quickly reaches a high intensity. It is particularly significant that Rossetti discovers and cultivates Lizzie's natural gifts both for painting and poetry, and she becomes more than just a model. Perhaps it is not too extreme to say that Lizzie becomes a Pre-Raphaelite without being in the Brotherhood. Certainly her influence and that of some of the later stunners is a major one, particularly with regard to

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generating interest in feminine beauty, beauty which is at once sensual and spiritual, physical and intellectual.

Rossetti and Lizzie are engaged sometime in 1852 and by 1854 she is a permanent invalid. They are married in 1860, have a stillborn child in 1861, and Lizzie dies in 1862 of an overdose of laudanum. Elizabeth's death does prompt Rossetti to paint his most transcendent piece, the Beata Beatrix (1863). This painting is the apogee of Rossetti's metaphysical tendencies. Later paintings such as Lady Lilith (1864), Venus Verticordia (1864), and Monna Vanna (1866) return to his more common blend of spiritual and sensual aspects in his portrayal of feminine beauty. One of the possible reasons for his shift away from the spiritual to the physical is his new companion and stunner Fanny Cornforth. Fanny not only takes Lizzie's place as Rossetti's model and companion but inspires Rossetti to come alive artistically after the melancholy years of 1861-1862.

These events in Rossetti's personal life bear on the aesthetic history of Pre-Raphaelitism only insofar as they show that despite the flux of events in Rossetti's private life, the purity of Pre-Raphaelite ideology stays relatively constant. This may also be seen in Rossetti's poetry.
Probably the second most important creative influence on the first group of Pre-Raphaelites (after his painting) is Rossetti's poetry. However, one of the most curious paradoxes of Pre-Raphaelitism is that while the first Pre-Raphaelite period (1848-1856) is fundamentally a time of artistic creation, it is the time of Rossetti's fullest poetic development and conversely, during the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism which is marked by its literary dimension, Rossetti writes almost no poetry. If nothing else, this aberration is evidence that Pre-Raphaelitism is more than just a metaphor for Rossetti's personal style, as some critics have argued.

Within the Brotherhood, Rossetti is the only genuine poet. However, despite Rossetti's rather small poetic production during this time, his poems become a major part of the Pre-Raphaelite legacy. In general, the poems mark the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite escape from the didactic, moralizing, and aesthetically restrained poetry of the Victorian age.

Though far from his first poem, "The Blessed Damozel" (1847) represents both Rossetti's first major poetic success and the first poem to capture a partial vision of what becomes Pre-Raphaelite ideals. Much critical comment has been made about the poem surrounding what Harold
Weatherby calls the jumble of "supernatural machinery." The general complaint is that Rossetti's cosmology makes no sense. However, despite this legitimate criticism, it must be properly viewed as one of Rossetti's earliest attempts to transcend the terrestrial limitations of love. That the poem fails to provide a believable vision of the damozel is to a large degree rectified by Rossetti's painting of the same story. In the painting Rossetti is able to more easily connect the terrestrial and the celestial without violating the viewer's sense of verisimilitude. What Rossetti later is able to do so successfully, namely the creation of a spiritual being in physical form, is not at all successfully executed in the early poem.

In spite of his inability to achieve transcendence, Rossetti continues to work in poetry during the first Pre-Raphaelite period to perfect his earliest pieces. In "The Burden of Nineveh" (1850) Rossetti meditates on the fate of Nineveh. Above all else Nineveh's art becomes earthbound and prosaic. It does not aspire to a spiritual state. Rossetti studiously avoids moralizing about Nineveh, however, by using a rhetorical stance in the poem. It is only his purpose to inaugurate a higher spirituality in art.

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than that practiced by Nineveh. In describing the god of Nineveh, Rossetti says, "Its planted feet which trust the sod." This is a dramatic metaphor for Nineveh's lack of spiritual elevation.

In Rossetti's 1850 poem "The Last Confession" again the theme of transcendence is found in the deathbed confession of an Italian soldier to a priest. Despite the gross physical destruction on all sides, the soldier has a bright dream of heaven which is in marked contrast to the disintegrating material surroundings. Again the Pre-Raphaelite theme is that the "here and now" offers little security compared to spiritual reality. Far from being an orthodox appeal for belief in heaven, Rossetti's spiritual state is an abstract one in which love rules and knows no physical suffering. If this sounds like Gnosticism, it is because Rossetti espouses a kind of Gnostic aestheticism in his career-long attempt to escape from the corporeal in his art and poetry. However, despite Rossetti's intense spiritual nature, he always sees the possibility of coming to the metaphysical through the physical. Rossetti often uses the female body as the very symbol for spiritual transcendence into beauty.

Ruskin's Rescue and Influence

The fact of Ruskin's influence on the individual Pre-Raphaelite members is beyond question. Ruskin manages to involve himself in the personal lives of each of the major Pre-Raphaelite artists except Swinburne, and it is sometimes even unclear who is influencing whom. Ruskin actively pursues a friendship with Rossetti in 1854 which lasts over ten years. Millais spends a long holiday with Ruskin in 1853 and, despite Millais' "stealing" Mrs. Ruskin away from Ruskin in 1855, Ruskin is known to have continued his high praise of Millais' painting. Holman Hunt's friendship with Ruskin is parallel in time with that of Millais, and later, in Venice in 1869, Ruskin and Hunt meet and re-establish a close bond.

Ruskin takes the young Edward Burne-Jones into his personal mentorship and goes so far as to provide Burne-Jones and his wife with an "all-expenses-paid" trip to Italy in 1862. William Morris' relationship with Ruskin, though not so personal as that of Burne-Jones, is no less profound. Morris adopts Ruskin's view that brainwork and handwork must be done together and in harmony, and Morris gives Ruskin a good deal of the credit for his political

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views when he says that "The Nature of the Gothic" in The Stones of Venice is the basis for the true Socialism which Morris adopts.26

However, despite his close personal involvement in the lives of those prominent Pre-Raphaelite participants, and his vigorous defense and "rescue" of Pre-Raphaelitism in the crucial year of 1851, the case for Ruskin's influence on the Pre-Raphaelites is not at all obvious.

Those who accept the belief that Ruskin is primarily responsible for Pre-Raphaelitism essentially follow the argument that Timothy Hilton puts forth in his 1970 study, The Pre-Raphaelites. Hilton says that the history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement begins with Ruskin. He goes on to present a convincing case for Ruskin's authorship of the philosophical point of view which is taken up by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Specifically, Ruskin is both a painter and writer who, in enunciating his beliefs about beauty in Modern Painters (the first two volumes of which are available before 1848), directly attacks some aspects of late and post-Renaissance painting and even condemns Raphael directly, "the clear and tasteless poison of the art of Raphael."27 This concept strikes a responsive

26Ibid., p. 123.

cord with Rossetti, Millais, and Hunt even before they come together to form their movement.\textsuperscript{28}

In addition to their belief about the breakdown in art after the early Renaissance which is shared by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites and which is the key point of Hilton and those who believe in a major Ruskin influence on Pre-Raphaelitism, there is the practical matter of Ruskin's direct personal support of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the early days. First, Ruskin gives some financial support to Millais, Rossetti, and Lizzie through the purchase of paintings when few others would buy them. Second, in response to negative criticism in \textit{The Times}, 1851, Ruskin writes his famous letter of defense of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which is unique in that Ruskin attests that he does not agree with the principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood nor does he know any of the members, but that he does respect their return to archaic honesty which is not to be confused with a return to archaic art.\textsuperscript{29} A second letter the same year by Ruskin is even warmer to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{30} Later,

\textsuperscript{28} Johnston, pp. 23-25.


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
Pater emphasizes the same point about the Brotherhood but employs the word sincerity.

Third, Ruskin writes his 1851 essay entitled "Pre-Raphaelitism" in which he displays an amazing depth of understanding of the Pre-Raphaelites. In this essay, Ruskin dramatically shows the distinction between his own belief, as related in Modern Painters, that all art must be moral, and the position of the Pre-Raphaelites that the focus of art must shift to beauty. Two sentences of Ruskin's essay particularly illustrate this change:

When the entire purpose of art was moral teaching, it naturally took truth for its first object, and beauty, and the pleasure resulting from beauty, only for its second. But when it lost all purpose of moral teaching, it as naturally took beauty for its first object, and truth for its second.31

The Pre-Raphaelites are operating in an age when moral teaching is no longer the "entire purpose of art," and for that reason they may spend their energy with Ruskin's approval on the creation of beauty. Of course, this fact, namely the Pre-Raphaelite attention to beauty over moral teaching, is the most fundamental point which separates the Pre-Raphaelites from Ruskin. Ruskin is making an analysis of his age and critically commenting that Victorian artists have generally lost interest in using art

to teach morality. This being the case, the Pre-Raphaelites are following Ruskin's dictum that the question of beauty must be the artist's highest goal if moral teaching is not.

Ruskin charges that the arts began to decline with Raphael's emphasis on execution over thought and beauty of feature over truth. As art loses its moral purpose, so the culture is weakened according to Ruskin.\(^{32}\) He is not condemning the Pre-Raphaelites for their devotion to beauty but is condemning the society which gives them no other choice.

Ruskin also states the charge he has read that the Pre-Raphaelites try to copy photographs or exactly reproduce nature. He rejects this as blatantly absurd. Their truth to nature is not literal truth but symbolic truth. On this point Ruskin shows his truest insight about Pre-Raphaelitism in that he understands that the content or subject matter is subservient to the creation of beauty.\(^{33}\)

Unfortunately, Ruskin's association with the Pre-Raphaelites leads to a personal tragedy. Ruskin's friendship with Millais, who paints the most "truthful" picture of Ruskin, leads to Ruskin's wife leaving Ruskin for

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 97.
\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 99.
Millais. This tragic turn of events for Ruskin is rather ironic when it is remembered that Ruskin thought that Millais would ultimately be seen as Turner's successor.34

However, despite the similarities of views, deep support for the Brotherhood, and many personal points of contact, to say that Pre-Raphaelitism grows out of the teachings of Ruskin is probably incorrect. Ruskin certainly appreciates the late medieval-early Renaissance artists, but for basically different reasons than the Pre-Raphaelites do. Ruskin sees this period as a time of high correlation between art and morality. In retrospect, his support of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is both curious and gratuitous. He might have as easily condemned the goals of the Brotherhood as contrary in many respects to his own teachings. Yet, it is a tribute to Ruskin's broad-mindedness that he defends and supports a group which is not sympathetic to many of his views. Of course, it is also not correct to say that Pre-Raphaelites are anti-Ruskin. On this point they are tactfully neutral. However, Pre-Raphaelites have not been known to defend Ruskin. They appreciate his support while developing their own religion of beauty.

34Ibid.
Ruskin's early association with the Pre-Raphaelites is not a personal one. In 1851 he supports the group without knowing any of its members and only in 1854 does he become friends with Rossetti, having admired his painting for some time. And from Ruskin's very first letter to Rossetti in 1854, there is the sense of Ruskin's coming under Rossetti's mentorship rather than the other way around. The following passage in a Ruskin letter speaks to Rossetti's earlier and major position as a style setter and thought provoker: "I should deem it a great privilege if you [Dante Gabriel Rossetti] would sometimes allow me to have fellowship in your thoughts and sympathy with your purposes." The important phrase is "allow me to have fellowship in your thoughts." This shows both Ruskin's high view of Rossetti and Ruskin's lack of vanity and pretense.

Remarkably, Ruskin goes on to say, "I have ordered my bookseller to send you copies of all that I have written (though I know not of what use it can possibly be to you) . . . ." This is followed by the request for two Rossetti drawings which Ruskin declares will be among his "most precious possessions." In all, this first letter


36Ibid., pp. 2-3.
leaves the impression that Ruskin views Rossetti as his full equal and has gone out of his way to establish a deep and abiding relationship.

With regard to Rossetti's response, Ruskin's practice of not saving any of his letters constitutes a minor tragedy for literary history. Unfortunately, Rossetti's response to Ruskin must be ascertained indirectly through other correspondence. However, for his part, it is possible to surmise that Rossetti is both surprised and maybe even amused by Ruskin's attention. To William Allingham in 1854 he writes,

McRae of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about him remaining mine respectfully (!!) and wanting to call. I of course stroked him down in my answer, and yesterday he came. His manner was more agreeable than I had always expected, but in person he is an absolute Guy - worse than Patmore. However he seems in a mood to make my fortune.37

The patronizing tone of Rossetti's remarks may not truly reflect his attitude toward Ruskin. They spend a great deal of time together with Ruskin helping out financially, purchasing paintings from Rossetti and Lizzie and backing the 1860 publication of The Early Italian Poets.38

37Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, I, 185.

38Johnston, p. 47.
Ruskin and Rossetti's friendship lasts until July, 1865 when Rossetti feels that Ruskin is criticizing his painting *Venus Verticordia*. Ruskin later tries for a reconciliation, but he is unsuccessful.\(^\text{39}\)

Although it may be speculation, it is perhaps conceivable that Rossetti had a major influence on Ruskin. Since the Rossetti to Ruskin letters are gone, there is no way to know. Yet the association with the Pre-Raphaelites over such a long period of time is unquestionably a factor in Ruskin's philosophical development. Certainly Ruskin's realistic understanding of Pre-Raphaelitism, focusing as it does on beauty over morality in art, is not only a concession to the "times" but a genuine statement about the importance of following beauty.

**Break-Up of the Original Group**

The demise of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a meaningful entity starts in the second year of existence. The seven are never equally committed, and even the loosest confederation is too much of a restraint on several members. Collinson is the first to depart, in July, 1849, to enter the priesthood. Walter Deverell is the selection of the group to replace Collinson. However, William Rossetti later points out that "it could not be said that Deverell was ever

\(^{39}\text{Earland, p. 88.}\)
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absolutely a Pre-Raphaelite Brother." Other members are suggested but none is ever accepted.

In January, 1851, Millais questions the whole basis of the Brotherhood, pointing out that they seem to have very little in common. At that point, the group decides it is time for each individual to write a manifesto of beliefs of what the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood means. Only William Rossetti writes such a manifesto, and he later loses his copy. This lack of unanimity and failure to define a purpose is characteristic of the Brotherhood and does not reflect negatively on its goals or ideals which are so tied to the need for individual freedom.

Thomas Woolner leaves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in July, 1852, by sailing for Australia. Although he does not stay in Australia, his return to England does not bring a renewal of old Pre-Raphaelite associations. Woolner's contribution to the Brotherhood must be described as minimal, and his departure goes largely unnoticed.

By 1853, the regular monthly meetings are reduced to one yearly meeting. Millais is moving away from the Brotherhood by virtue of his academic artistic success and acceptance. In 1854 he is elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy, which naturally helps separate him from the

40 Hilton, p. 105.
others on account of the fact that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood has been founded in opposition to the painting style and philosophy of the Royal Academy. On hearing of Millais' election, Rossetti states, "... so now the whole Round Table is dissolved."

Hunt's vision of Pre-Raphaelitism gradually separates him from Rossetti and Millais. It is Hunt's view that more emphasis should be placed on religious art and metaphysical concepts in the Brotherhood. The desire to create art which will spiritually awaken the English people is a high Hunt priority. In the early days of their confederation, the Brothers are much more attuned to need for religiously meaningful art. It is no coincidence that while Hunt is painting *Christians Escaping from Persecuting Druids*, Rossetti is painting his moving *Annunciation* and Millais is finishing his much criticized *Christ in the House of His Parents* (Charles Dickens writes a particularly scurrilous article against this painting). In the end, however, the need to propagate religious truth is not a major Pre-Raphaelite concern. Yet, for Hunt, his personal commitment to communicating through religious art is a primary concern. He paints scores of religious pictures, including *The Beloved, Morning Prayers, The Scapegoat, The Triumph of the Innocents*,

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and his famous *Light of the World*, in an attempt to speak to the Victorian art lovers about Christian faith.

Hunt's special call to religious painting sends him on an eccentric mission to the Holy Land in 1854 to paint scenes of spiritual significance. Although the trip is an aesthetic failure in almost every way, its major consequence is that it marks the real end of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Even more than Millais' election to the Academy, Hunt's trip physically isolates him from the Brothers, and by the time of his return in 1856, the second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism in Oxford is forming. Ironically, Hunt is the most devoted member of the institutional Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, "The Body," and considers himself a Pre-Raphaelite throughout his life. Also, it is evident that Hunt becomes freer and less dogmatic in his art well into the 1880s, yet by comparison to the lightning development of Rossetti and Millais, Hunt's pace of aesthetic progress is as slow motion. Hunt is an extremely fine craftsman, but his metaphysical vision, unlike Rossetti's, is too often pedestrian and a vehicle for "high church" Victorian morality.

The fragmentation of the group and destruction of the last vestiges of institutional order after Hunt's departure in 1854 ends the Brotherhood. By 1858 Rossetti goes out of his way to avoid Millais and Hunt and has no interest in
re-establishing their earlier bond. Rossetti sees Millais and especially Hunt as denying the first Pre-Raphaelite principle of freedom from conventional and contemporary standards of art by giving in to orthodox standards, as in Millais' case or by giving in to excessive moralizing in art, as in Hunt's case. Rossetti now becomes the only true prophet and sustainer of Pre-Raphaelite dogma. Rossetti sees his mission as one of starting over and inculcating a new group with the truths of Pre-Raphaelite belief and ideals. For Rossetti, the task is to continue to move in the direction he has always moved, which is namely to pure aesthetic response. Rossetti's call is for beauty in art, shifting away from moralizing and teaching. He alone holds the keys to the kingdom of beauty, and he must now found a new religion on the rock of aesthetic freedom in the face of heretical schisms and false prophets.
CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION OF PRE-RAPHAELITE AESTHETICS:

PHASE TWO (1857-1862)

Development of the Oxford Circle

The second phase of the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic begins with the painting of the Oxford Union Debating Hall in 1857 with what Rossetti calls the "Jovial Campaign."¹ This second period of development, in which there is a shift to poetry over painting, marks the end of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The new Pre-Raphaelite group comes to include four individuals: Rossetti, William Morris, Algernon Swinburne, and Edward Burne-Jones. Like the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, they are all younger than twenty-three, except Rossetti, who is now twenty-eight and unquestionably the group's mentor. Interestingly enough, Morris and Burne-Jones are already part of an Oxford group called "The Brotherhood," which is deeply involved in the study of medieval illuminated manuscripts, architecture, woodcuts, and romance, and yet apparently they know nothing

¹Johnston, p. 29.
of the London Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood until the publication of Ruskin's Edinburgh Lectures.²

Morris first meets Rossetti at the Working Man's College in December, 1855, where Morris goes just to see the face of the now famous Rossetti.³ This is the time when the first number of The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine is going to press and Morris is already in his novitiate as a Pre-Raphaelite artist and writer. In a short time, through the agency of Morris, Burne-Jones also comes under Rossetti's influence, particularly in painting. Morris and Burne-Jones move to London in 1855, and Morris drops his architectural studies primarily to study painting.

The idea of painting a mural on the walls of the just-completed Oxford Union Debating Hall is given to Rossetti by a new friend, John Pollen, on a visit to Oxford by Rossetti. Rossetti gets so excited about the potential of his project that he forgets his other activities and starts work immediately. Morris and Burne-Jones are summoned to Oxford from London. The personality of Rossetti is immediately the drawing force, and, as Val Prinsep says, "... we sank our own individuality in the strong personality of our

²Hilton, pp. 161-162.

adored Gabriel." These events, better than any other, mark the beginning of the Rossetti's undisputed leadership of Pre-Raphaelitism.

It is during this Oxford summer that Rossetti and Morris meet one of the most important Pre-Raphaelite stunners. This is Jane Burden, who is persuaded to sit for them. Although Jane would be loved deeply by both Rossetti and Morris and is important in their personal lives, her major significance is that, along with Elizabeth Siddal, she contributes to a composite of the two women which represents the ultimate in feminine perfection in the Pre-Raphaelite religion of beauty. Later women are used as models, but all end up appearing similar to the Siddal/Burden image. Morris marries Jane Burden in 1859. Doughty indicates that Rossetti's love affair with Jane reaches its peak in 1869.

The other significant addition to this second Pre-Raphaelite circle in that fall of 1857 at Oxford is Algernon Swinburne. Swinburne comes deeply under the spell of Rossetti almost immediately and the company dubs him "Little Carrots." This is the beginning of a ten year (1857-1867) relationship between Rossetti and Swinburne, which Barbara

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Hilton, p. 164.

Charlesworth superbly characterizes with the comment:
"... [Swinburne] was proud to think of D. G. Rossetti as a
 captain, leading a charge of young recruits to battle
 against the philistines."\(^{6}\)

Swinburne's admiration of Rossetti is complete. These
lines by Swinburne about Rossetti's poetry leave little
doubt about the importance of that influence.

... Rossetti's golden affluence of
images and jewel-colored words ... never
once disguises the firm outline, the justice
and chastity of form. No nakedness could be
more harmonious, more consummate in its
fleshy sculpture, than the imperial array
and ornament of this august poetry. Mailed
in gold as of the morning and girdled with
gems of strange water, the beautiful body
as a carven goddess gleams through them
tangible and taintless, without spot or
default.\(^{7}\)

The energy of the second Pre-Raphaelite group is
equal to that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and may be
first seen in Morris' and Burne-Jones' successful attempt
to revive The Germ/Art and Poetry under the less poetic
title The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (1856). Morris
and Burne-Jones act as its editors in the beginning, but the
editorial job falls to William Fulford within a month.

\(^{6}\)Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages (Madison, 1965),
p. 35.

\(^{7}\)Algernon C. Swinburne, The Complete Works of Swinburne,
editors Edward Gross and T. J. Wise (New York, 1925-27), XV,
7-8
However, the potency of this new enterprise is probably somewhat less than that of *The Germ/Art and Poetry* magazine.

Curiously, none of the articles in the periodicals is signed (a concession to Morris' views on the need for anonymity among artists) and yet scholarship has revealed each article's author. More than half of the journal is made up of articles by Morris, Fulford, and Burne-Jones. Out of sixty-five articles, these three write thirty-five, which means that they are each contributing an article virtually every month. The depth of involvement by the three is significant and gives an important indication of the level of enthusiasm particularly toward Pre-Raphaelite principles. Although *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* is published before the formation of the Oxford Circle, Morris and Burne-Jones are aware of Rossetti and involved with Pre-Raphaelite ideals before 1856. Walter Graham even goes further to specifically identify Morris and Burne-Jones as Pre-Raphaelite at this early date and concludes that the energy and effort evident in *The Germ/Art and Poetry* is found to a large measure in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*.

The vigor of the journal may be seen in the variety of articles on such nineteenth-century English writers as

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Tennyson, Macaulay, Carlyle, Thackeray, Ruskin and earlier English writers like Sidney and Shakespeare. It is not easy to make any overall generalizations about the sixty-five articles except to quote Burne-Jones' statement of purposes about the magazine's aim, which is a "Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age . . . ." 10 The objective is to write about authors of whom these Pre-Raphaelites particularly approve and to set a higher standard of idealism in a society which is blind both to conditions of the poor and the intellectual/spiritual poverty of the middle class and aristocracy.

One aspect of The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine which is a departure from The Germ is its emphasis on ethical and social matters. The Germ/Art and Poetry is tuned more specifically to aesthetic concerns, while The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine shifts away from pure aesthetics to some degree. However, this distinction should not divert a reader from seeing a large measure of Pre-Raphaelite aestheticism in a good deal of the work such as the essay on Ruskin's aesthetics (no. 24), discussions of Tennyson's poetry (nos. 2, 10, 16), and, most important, pictures by Rossetti and Madox Brown (no. 45).

The pre-eminent difference between the two journals is that the first is a balance between critical and creative,

10 Mackail, I, 63.
whereas the latter is more strictly critical. Although
The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine follows Pre-Raphaelite
principles and is written by practicing artists, it lacks
the freshness and excitement of The Germ/Art and Poetry.
More important, The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine takes
no chances artistically. It is written from the stand-
point of building acceptance for the magazine and its
principles and is in no way avant-garde, as is the style of
The Germ/Art and Poetry. Certainly, it is unfortunate that
Morris and Burne-Jones restrict and circumscribe their
talent so much in this magazine. On the other hand, it is
their personal involvement with Rossetti in 1856 and 1857
that helps open their talent.

It is not possible to say that Rossetti's influence is
more literary than artistic from 1856 on, but it is with-
out question that Rossetti's mastery over the second wave
of Pre-Raphaelitism is absolute. Whereas Rossetti is
only a contributor to the original philosophy, he is the
unquestioned spokesman for Pre-Raphaelitism after 1856.
In fact, the danger is always present of too clearly iden-
tifying Pre-Raphaelitism with Rossetti's personal style
and beliefs after 1856. Yet, Pre-Raphaelitism is a con-
tinuing movement with diverse sides and various internal
variations. The key to understanding the movement as
different from the Brotherhood is to first understand Rossetti's
emerging role as Pre-Raphaelitism's chief mentor and style setter and then to record the individual mutations of Morris, Swinburne, and Burne-Jones in their own acceptance and rejection of Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism.

Despite the overall interest in poetry among Pre-Raphaelites during the second wave, paradoxically for Rossetti, the Oxford experience and the years following are a period of substantially decreased poetic production. A long interlude in Rossetti's poetic output through the Oxford phase and continuing until 1868 includes the period of Elizabeth's illness and death, burial of a poetry manuscript with Lizzie, and a turning to painting from 1862 through 1867. The only important new poem during this period is "Love's Nocturn" (1859-60). This poem shows a significant shift of Rossetti's thought to the freedom of dreams and the power of the unconscious state. The poem's theme is the power of Love, but the mood of the poem reflects a desire for an otherworldly reality in which the Soul is purified from thisworldly concerns. It is one of Rossetti's finest efforts and marks the clear passage from the physical reality of poems like "The Burden of Nineveh" (1850), "Jenny" (1847), and "Sister Helen" (1850) to otherworldly poems and paintings of Rossetti's later period like the sonnets "Love Enthroned" (1870), "Silent Noon" (1871), and "The Dark Glass" (1871) and the "stunner" paintings.
Another important literary event during the second Pre-Raphaelite period is Morris' rapid development, as shown in *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858). This book is described by one critic as "the best single volume of Pre-Raphaelite verse." It might be argued that Rossetti's *Poems* (1870) deserves this particular honor, but it is significant that this writer and others understand the prominent influence that Morris has on Pre-Raphaelitism in his own Pre-Raphaelite phase (1856-1865) and the significance Pre-Raphaelitism has on Morris' creative work.

All the poems in this volume, the first collected works, deal with Arthurian subjects and themes. The high seriousness and passion of the poems give them a dramatic character which harmonizes with all the Pre-Raphaelite paintings up to that date. Although Morris does paint an extremely fine *Queen Guenevere* (1858), his Pre-Raphaelite contributions at this point are primarily literary, whereas Rossetti creates a whole series of paintings based on Malory's version of the Arthurian legends.


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"The Blue Closet" calls for some comment in regard to its highly Aesthete/Decadent qualities as in:

... for dream on dream,
They float on in a happy stream;
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,
Float from open'd lips of Louise;

The message of the story (if there is one) seems inconsequential beside the mournful evocation of four women endlessly waiting for their once-a-year chance to sing their "laudate pervri" in the blue closet. They live only for the one moment of music; nothing else matters.

The poem demonstrates that even at this early date (the poem is written before 1858), Morris is capable of the most aesthetically intense writing. Its dreamy quality crosses the years which separate Morris from Wilde or Dowson.

In his 1891 lecture on Pre-Raphaelite painting, Morris makes the link between the Pre-Raphaelitism and the Aestheticism/Decadence of the 1880s and 1890s with the words "very great influence." Of course, Morris by 1891 does not want to be identified with the Decadents, but he cannot deny the evolutionary development between the two schools.

More important, however, Morris in this lecture clearly shows his understanding of Pre-Raphaelite art. In

talking about Pre-Raphaelite naturalism, he says, "... it is absolutely impossible to give a really literal transcript to nature."\textsuperscript{13} Morris understands that the Pre-Raphaelite ideal is not to reproduce nature (as is often stated by critics), but to imitate the beauty and truth in nature. On the beauty side, he recognizes Rossetti's contribution to Pre-Raphaelitism in terms of creating "... a definite, harmonious, conscious beauty."\textsuperscript{14} However, he places Burne-Jones even higher "... when the Pre-Raphaelite School was completed by this representative man ... ."\textsuperscript{15}

The only curious aspect of Morris' 1891 lecture on Pre-Raphaelite art is that he does not include himself among the members of the group. This is significant in that Morris sees Pre-Raphaelitism as essentially an artistic movement. Although he does some outstanding paintings in the Pre-Raphaelite manner, his contribution to Pre-Raphaelite art is tiny compared to Rossetti's or Burne-Jones'.

Another important document containing Morris' ideas on Pre-Raphaelitism is his 1870 review of Rossetti's Poems. The first vital aspect of the essay is Morris' extravagant

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 301.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 307.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
praise, even worship, of Rossetti's poetry some thirteen to fourteen years after their first meeting. This is a testimony to Rossetti's continuing influence on Morris and through Morris to others. To describe Rossetti's poetry, Morris uses phrases like "utmost depth of feeling and thought," "profoundly sweet and touching," "ripeness of plan," and "full of passion and melody." There is no question of Morris' continuing respect for and devotion to Rossetti.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 101-105.}

A second element of the essay is particularly revealing in terms of understanding Morris' views on Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism. In this rather brief article, Morris uses the words "mysticism" or "mystical" no less than six times to describe and unify the many themes of divergent poems. For example, Morris notes:

An original and subtle beauty of execution expresses the deep mysticism of thought . . . which in Mr. Rossetti's work is both great in degree and passionate in kind: nor in him has it any tendency to lose itself amid allegory or abstractions . . . .\footnote{Ibid., p. 101.}

What Morris calls "realizing mysticism," "peculiar mysticism," or "mystical feeling," are all different ways to express the theme that Rossetti's poetry transcends the physical, natural, and material realms. There is something
higher and spiritually significant in Rossetti's poetry without any sense of preaching or moralizing. For example, on Rossetti's "The Stream's Secret," Morris speaks of its "very high musical qualities . . . which coming among its real and deep feelings makes it very telling and impres-sive."18

This fusion of execution and thought which creates a mood that Morris variously describes as "dreamy" or "dream-like" may be seen as parallel to the Aesthete/Decadent desire to create an alternate reality in art as a replacement for the ordinary world, a dreamy, mystical, non-physical state in which the "truth of its passion" may be realized. Also, such poetry does not digress into moralizing: "... his protest against the hardness of nature and chance never makes him didactic . . . ."19

The most rapid development among those involved in the second Pre-Raphaelite period belongs to Swinburne. Only nine days after encountering the Pre-Raphaelites at Oxford, he begins writing *Queen Iseult* (1857), a Pre-Raphaelite poem in ten cantos (only six cantos are complete). Although the work fails to achieve distinction as an outstanding Pre-Raphaelite piece, it does have typical Pre-Raphaelite

18Ibid., p. 103.
19Ibid., p. 104.
vividness and does win "a willing suspension of disbelief" from the reader. However, neither does it nor subsequent poems such as "Lancelot" (1858), and "The Queen's Tragedy" (1859) inspire the reader to a metaphysical departure from the sordid world. Swinburne's early poems have the glittering veneer of Pre-Raphaelite themes and ideas without a transmutation to a higher sphere. Swinburne's rejection of the world is complete without a replacement suggested.

Swinburne's introduction into art for art's sake through Rossetti and his friendship with James McNeill Whistler marks the beginning of Swinburne's desire to be a more public advocate of artistic freedom than Rossetti or Morris. Whereas one of Pre-Raphaelitism's fundamental beliefs is artistic freedom, there is never a Pre-Raphaelite who wants to make it an issue for public polemical debate until Swinburne. In him the fire of missionary zeal burns intensely. Swinburne's letter to the Spectator, June 7, 1862, calls for freedom in poetic expression as is found in Meredith's Modern Love. Swinburne continues to support artistic freedom in his defense of Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal. Ironically, Swinburne condemns morality and didacticism in art, while at the same time being didactic and moralistic in this defense of Baudelaire. Whereas most Pre-Raphaelites choose to restrain their requests for

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20 Cassidy, p. 68.
artistic license, Swinburne wants to tear down all barriers and walls of custom and tradition. That Swinburne is the most literal interpreter of the Pre-Raphaelite doctrine of artistic freedom is without doubt. Unfortunately, Swinburne's extremism takes him away from Pre-Raphaelitism, which is first and last an aesthetic philosophy, not a political or social one.

The most shadowy figure of Pre-Raphaelitism's second phase is Edward Burne-Jones. Operating primarily as an artist, he does not conform to the Pre-Raphaelite preference for an artist/writer. Instead Burne-Jones is a gifted artist who within limits achieves Pre-Raphaelite ideals in ways quite different from Rossetti or Morris. Working with Morris and Rossetti in London in 1856 and with them in Oxford in 1857, Burne-Jones becomes intimately aware of Pre-Raphaelite goals and starts to evolve his own Pre-Raphaelite style. Although Burne-Jones separates his loyalty from Rossetti by following Morris and creating designs for Morris' firm, his aesthetic vision is much more in tune with Rossetti's than with Morris'. In fact Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and Swinburne are more faithful to the major tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism that become Aestheticism/Decadence than Morris. Although Morris creates a good deal of Aesthete/Decadent art, his commercial and political interests unquestionably color his aesthetic theories. On the other side,
the influence by Rossetti on Burne-Jones is deep and pervasive. In a letter Burne-Jones writes that,

He [Rossetti] taught me to have no fear or shame of my own ideas, to design perpetually, to seek no popularity, to be altogether myself . . . .  I remember that he discouraged me from the study of the antique—the classical antique—giving as his reason that such study came too early in a man's life and was apt to crush out individuality . . . .

Burne-Jones' remembrance of Rossetti is of someone who wants individual freedom of style which Burne-Jones goes on to provide in abundance.

**Blending of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthete/Decadent Principles**

The blending and fusion of Pre-Raphaelite principles with Aesthete/Decadent ideals takes place in the 1860s as the second period of Pre-Raphaelitism is coming to its conclusion and as the Aesthete/Decadent movement is in its embryo stage. As pointed out in Chapter One, the first Aesthete/Decadent "paper" is Walter Pater's 1868 essay on the poems of William Morris. Pater's highly personal re-statement of basic Pre-Raphaelite belief is both the main point of contact and the major point of separation. That Pater does not personally identify himself with Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, or any members of the Pre-Raphaelite clique, makes him an outsider speaking to a new generation.

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That Pater is a Pre-Raphaelite in his aesthetic disposition is shown in his essays. A key difference is that Pater is neither a painter nor a poet, and all the Pre-Raphaelite brothers of both the first and second period are clearly identified as practicing artists or poets or both.

However, in all truthfulness, Pater's position as a scholar rather than an artist is more symbolic than substantial. One of the founding principles of Pre-Raphaelitism is that all those involved be practicing artists, yet Pater is an artist of prose. Perhaps a more important distinction is that despite taking much of his inspiration and doctrine from Pre-Raphaelite teaching, Pater is avoiding any direct relationship with Pre-Raphaelitism so that his doctrines may stand on their own without prior association. The point to be remembered is that Aestheticism/Decadence has its own development, variations, and mutations of which Pre-Raphaelitism is only the first chapter.

There are several events which signal the full and complete maturation of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. These events designate both the end of Pre-Raphaelitism as an independent movement and its subsumption into Aestheticism/Decadence. The first of these is Morris' publication of *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858) along with his painting *Queen Guenevere* (1858). Second is Rossetti's final artistic shift to full transcendence of his subjects, using the physical
and sensuous to convey the ethereal and metaphysical. Third is Swinburne's 1862 defense of Baudelaire in *The Spectator*. Although these events have already been mentioned, it is important to emphasize here how they merge with the rise of Aestheticism/Decadence.

Morris' aesthetic verse in *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, "The Blue Closet," with its dreamy and romantic quality, marks the beginning of a unique kind of poetry for Morris. Jerome Buckley remarks that "The Defence" is "more deeply decadent in its own way than any work of Swinburne." Pater comments on the work, saying, "The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of 'scarlet lilies.' The influence of summer is like a poison in one's blood, with a sudden bewildering sickening of life and all things."

The change in Rossetti's painting is one of both content and style. The staid Holman Hunt remarks on the change in Rossetti's art form as moving from a "severity of style to a more sensuous manner." A painting like *Dantis Amor* (1859) stands as a major evolution in style. It still evokes

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24William Holman Hunt, II, 164.
a medieval theme; nevertheless, the color and movement in the picture constitute a large departure from conventional portraits of narrative painting from Dante or medieval legend. This period of Rossetti's development is fully mature by 1863 with the painting of Beata Beatrix. John Christian documents this fulfillment of Pre-Raphaelite style by including this work among the earliest examples of Decadent painting in his study Symbolists and Decadents.²⁵

As stated earlier, Rossetti's growth during the second Pre-Raphaelite phase is primarily artistic, and from 1863 until about his death, Rossetti experiences the golden era of his career as a painter. His interest in poetry returns around 1868, and there is a rich period of poetic growth from 1868-1872. In both poetry and painting he "perfects" his final Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent style well before the 1870s.

Swinburne's first devotion to Decadence through Pre-Raphaelitism begins in Oxford in 1857 and is expanded in 1859 on account of his visit to Rossetti in London. Swinburne learns the doctrine of "art for art's sake" directly from Rossetti and later in London from Rossetti's colleague, ²⁵John Christian, Symbolists and Decadents (New York, 1978), pp. 50-51.
James McNeill Whistler. Through Whistler, who is just returning from Paris, he learns of the French version of the new aesthetic theory as practiced by Gautier and Baudelaire. Swinburne reviews the 1861 version of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and establishes himself as a leading practitioner of the "art for art's sake" philosophy. In this, Swinburne becomes more closely related in the public mind with the new "Aesthetic Gospel" than Rossetti. Rossetti is always wary of identifying himself too publicly with any school or doctrine, even in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood days. Yet privately, Rossetti and Swinburne are in harmony on their aesthetic principles from 1857 to 1862. Rossetti, however, gradually loses influence over Swinburne to Lord Houghton, who is the major factor in Swinburne's life by 1865. Houghton's encouragement of Swinburne's sexual deviation and his perverse delight in the Marquis de Sade's writing, which he introduces to Swinburne, contribute to Swinburne's bad image in the public eye. Although Swinburne has a major conflict with Houghton in 1866, which cools their relationship, the damage is done to Swinburne and the "art for art's sake" movement. For many people, a direct connection is made between the new Aestheticism and moral depravity. Even though Swinburne moves away from

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28 Cassidy, pp. 74-79.
"art for art's sake" after 1868, he helps create a major negative image of the movement in England.

End of the Second Poetical Period

The second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism ends with the termination of the close aesthetic relationships among Rossetti and Swinburne, Morris and Burne-Jones. Like the breakup of the original Brotherhood, the demise of the second period is brought about by changes in personal artistic goals rather than any deep philosophical disagreements. Although the dissolution of the Oxford Circle is haphazard and unorganized with no clear conclusion point, each individual breaks with the others because even the slightest group association is too confining. With the exception of Burne-Jones' short tenure with Morris in his firm, the undeviating goal of each artist is independent development and the establishment of an individual style.

The one date that does stand out in the ending of the second period is the death of Elizabeth Siddal-Rossetti in 1862. This death is important historically because it ends the burden of Lizzie's illness, which has been present several years, and allows Rossetti the opportunity for great personal artistic development. In fact, the period of 1862-1867 is the time of Rossetti's greatest growth as a painter. Lizzie's death is significant also because it changes many of Rossetti's relationships with others. Swinburne is
Rossetti's closest associate and devotee in 1862, but by 1863 Rossetti asks Swinburne to leave Tudor House because Swinburne wants no part of a *ménage à trois* with Fanny Cornforth and Rossetti.²⁹

Although Morris and Rossetti continue a personal relationship until 1875, the marriage of Morris and Jane Burden in 1859 and the formation of Morris' firm in 1861 serve to separate the artistic development of the two men. Morris' Pre-Raphaelite vision becomes more and more a recharged medievalism, while Rossetti continues to purify aesthetically his paintings and poetry into spiritualized creations which do not try to imitate any period or style.

There is one important period of Swinburne-Rossetti cooperation before their final break. In 1869-1870, Swinburne helps Rossetti prepare the exhumed volume of poetry that Rossetti buried with his wife Elizabeth Siddal in 1862. Oddly, Swinburne and Rossetti add other pieces to the new collection which relate directly to Rossetti's affair with Jane Burden-Morris. However, by 1872 Rossetti's physical and mental condition is so poor that William Rossetti, who remains Swinburne's friend for many years, does not allow him to see his brother for fear of exciting Rossetti too much. Even though Rossetti does enjoy a slight recovery, Swinburne

²⁹Henderson, p. 74.
and Rossetti do not see or correspond with each other after 1872.

Burne-Jones chooses Morris over Rossetti as his artistic mentor and continues to work with and for Morris for a number of years. However, he continues close to Swinburne, and for some time Swinburne drops by to give Burne-Jones the first reading of his poetry. It is significant that Swinburne dedicates *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to Burne-Jones.

Swinburne's relationship with Morris is extremely deep during the Oxford phase and the early London period. In 1857 Swinburne declares that Morris is superior to Tennyson based on his poem "The Defence of Guenevere." Despite this, after 1862 almost nothing is heard of contact between Morris and Swinburne. This is curious, considering Swinburne's great admiration for Morris and "worship" of Jane Burden-Morris.

In the end the importance of the second period is the profound influence that Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, and

Burne-Jones have upon one another. It is, of course, problematic to what extent any of these individuals would have developed without the benefit of mutual support and encouragement. Only Rossetti is firmly established as an artist before 1856, and the leadership he attains in the second group is consequential in his own growth. The second phase is not a short-lived failure but the crucial period in Pre-Raphaelitism's growth to maturity. Pre-Raphaelitism later lives on through individual artistic endeavors, but even in the late 1850s, it still has a group or movement quality. Pre-Raphaelitism in the beginning never has much structure, and the spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism burns most strongly for the Oxford members as individuals. In support of this fact it may be seen that none of the major Pre-Raphaelites of the first or second period ever departs radically from the original goals and intentions of the Brotherhood. The pull of the original Pre-Raphaelite concepts exerts a lifelong influence on all those who at one time practiced them.
CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION OF PRE-RAPHAELITE AESTHETICS:

PHASE THREE (1863-1882)

Rossetti

Following the death in 1862 of Elizabeth, Rossetti lives on Cheyne Walk in London and becomes more and more of a recluse. It is during this twenty-year period between Lizzie's death and his own (1882) that Rossetti displays a persona that makes him the object of mild mythic admiration. It is also the period when Rossetti is most plagued by poor mental and physical health, caused largely by his excessive alcohol and chloral consumption. In addition to these physical addictions, Rossetti suffers under the personal attack of Robert Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (1871). According to Hall Caine, Buchanan's severe criticism is the primary cause of a curtailment in Rossetti's poetic output in the middle and late 70s.1 Ironically, Buchanan's critical comments help serve the purpose of identifying Rossetti in the popular mind as a leader of the Decadents.

It is on this point of Rossetti as a Decadent that a major link between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/

1Caine, pp. 52-56.
Decadence is to be found. Rossetti, always faithful to Pre-Raphaelite principles throughout his career, particularly in the last ten years of his life, is identified with the Aesthete/Decadent writers more than any other Pre-Raphaelite artist and poet. Already in the early 1880s, Rossetti is viewed by contemporary critics and writers as one of the fathers of the new Aestheticism. In 1882 Principal Shairp criticizes Rossetti for writing "aesthetic" poetry and like Buchanan, is not at all satisfied with the artistic quality of Rossetti's poetic works.2

Another early recognition of Rossetti's place as a primal force in the new Aestheticism is F.W.H. Myers', "Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty" (1885). Myers states that the most recent Rossetti paintings (on display during 1883 at Burlington House) represent "a new strain of thought and emotion."3 The fact that Rossetti has been working on these paintings and the concepts behind them in the early 1870s gives him an early and a prominent role in the opening phase of the Decadent movement along with Pater.

William Sharp at one point asks Rossetti how he would answer the statement that he is the leader of the "art for


art's sake" school. To this Rossetti replies that the statement was two-thirds absolutely correct and one-third essentially wrong. The one-third wrong is a reference to Rossetti's rejection of any schools or systems as antithetical to individual artistic freedom. The two-thirds correct is an acknowledgement that Rossetti views himself as being in harmony with the goals and stylistic tendencies of the Aesthetes/Decadents. Furthermore, in the love of beauty and search for love and beauty, Rossetti gives inspiration to the "art for art's sake" group. However, it is important to remember that Rossetti does not consider himself the leader of any movement. The public positions of leadership are taken at various points by Swinburne, Pater, Wilde, and others. Rossetti feels no need to be a missionary among the philistines. He takes a defensive position, especially in responding to Buchanan's attack. In fact, in his defense in "The Stealthy School of Criticism," Rossetti goes to considerable trouble to emphasize the spiritual aspect of his poetry against the charge of "fleshliness." Rossetti is also concerned about Buchanan's accusation that he stresses poetic expression over poetic thought. Against these indictments, Rossetti carefully gives evidence of their absurdity. In this negative way, Rossetti provides an indirect positive statement about his

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poetic views. In the following passage Rossetti documents his belief that material beauty is a proper vehicle for the expression of spiritual beauty:

That I may, nevertheless, take a wider view than some poets or critics, of how much, in the material conditions absolutely given to man to deal with as distinct from his spiritual aspirations, is admissible within the limits of Art,—this, I say, is possible enough: nor do I wish to shrink from such responsibility. But to state that I do so to the ignoring or overshadowing of spiritual beauty, is an absolute falsehood, impossible to be put forward except in the indulgence of prejudice or rancour.5

The key element here is Rossetti's concern for beauty and the clear articulation of the point that beauty is both physical and spiritual. This is also the closest Rossetti ever comes to making a prose credo of his artistic belief.

It is valuable to remember Pater's own acknowledgement of Rossetti's central place in the Aesthete pantheon when he says Rossetti is "the greatest man we have among us."6 Yet the influence of Rossetti on Pater and the other Aesthetes may never be separated from the fundamental principles of Pre-Raphaelitism. W. B. Yeats clearly shows the line of influence between Pre-Raphaelitism, Rossetti, and his own

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6Johnston, p. 137.
development when he says:

I had learned to think in the midst of the last phase of Pre-Raphaelitism and now I had come to Pre-Raphaelitism again and rediscovered my earliest thought . . . . I remembered that as a young man . . . I would be content to paint, like Burne-Jones and Morris under Rossetti's rule, the Union at Oxford, to set up there the traditional images most moving to young men while the adventure and uncommitted life can still change all to romance . . . .

Yeats' lifelong devotion to beauty is the clearest testimony to the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes/Decadents on his work.

Wilde's admiration for and inspiration from Rossetti are unequivocally stated in his 1887 essay on Rossetti entitled "A Cheap Edition of a Great Man." In attacking Joseph Knight's recent popular biography of Rossetti, which he thinks vulgarizes Rossetti, Wilde is extravagant in his praise of the poet-painter. He describes him as a "giant personality," "wonderful seer and singer," and a "true artist." However, Wilde's greatest adoration for Rossetti is his dedication to art only and his refusal to follow popular taste or whims or compromise his artistic vision,

A pillar of fire to the few who knew him, and a cloud to the many who knew him not, Dante Gabriel Rossetti lived apart from the gossip and tittle-tattle of a shallow age. He never trafficked with the merchants for his soul, nor brought his wares into the market-place for the idle to gape at. Passionate and romantic though he was, yet there was in his nature something of high austerity.9

This blend of passion and austerity appeals to Wilde's own sense of aesthetic balance and is perhaps the most accurate way of describing Rossetti's unique artistic sensibility. Certainly, there are few, if any, other poets which Wilde, the quintessential Decadent, identifies with in the way he does with Rossetti.

An important ingredient in causing Rossetti's popularity among the Aesthetes/Decadents is his wide range of themes, styles, and motifs which appeal to a broad variety of poets, painters, and critics. There is a smorgasbord of material, including religious, medieval, mythic, feminine themes among many others. However, Rossetti's unique contribution and his chief artistic gift is in his special ability to blend the spiritual and physical aspects of beauty into his poems and paintings. One has only to look at his finest artistic/poetic works like The Blessed Damozel, "The Blessed Damozel," Beata Beatrix, and especially Astarte Syriaca and "Astarte Syriaca" to be impressed by the intense spiritual

9Ibid., p. 52.
beauty he depicts through physical beauty. Certainly in this sense, Rossetti is largely successful in his attempt to revitalize a type of artistic fusion practiced and perfected in the early Renaissance by the original Pre-Raphaelites Michaelangelo and Botticelli. It is appropriate that the only two Renaissance painters about whom Rossetti writes sonnets are these two. And it is certainly clear that as Rossetti's career as a painter evolves and particularly in his last twenty years, he constantly strives to create art and literature in which the objective and subjective, nature and art, flesh and spirit, each harmonizes with its opposite and the balanced ideal is conceptualized.

There are many points in his poetry at which Rossetti realizes his goal of unity and balance. Obviously, it is not as easy to evoke the concreteness of his spiritual vision in poetry as it is in painting. Nevertheless, Rossetti relies on rich nature metaphors and similes to convey his ideas. In Sonnet XX, "Gracious Moonlight," from The House of Life, Rossetti blends nature, woman, and spiritual healing into one image:

Even as the moon grows queenlier in mid-space
When the sky darkens, and here cloud-rapt care
Thrills with intenser radiance from afar,—
So lambent, lady, beams they sovereign grace
When the drear soul desires thee. Of that face
What shall be said,—which, like a governing star,
Gathers and garners from all things that are
Their silent penetrative loveliness?
O'er water-daisies and wild waifs of Spring,
      There where the iris rears its gold-crowned sheaf
With flowering rush and sceptred arrow-leaf,
So have I marked Queen Dian, in bright ring
Of cloud above and wave below, take wing
      And chase night's gloom, as thou the spirit's grief.10

Rossetti is here, as in so many of his poems, striving for
a single picture, a unified portrait of his concept that
feminine loveliness has the power to dispel the spirit's
grief. Although the theme is similar to the belief expres-
sed by Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" that the beauties of
nature can lighten "the heavy and the weary weight of all
this unintelligible world," in the case of Rossetti's son-
net, the image is much more concrete and specific than
Wordsworth's broader image. It is Rossetti's intention
to summarize his whole belief about the power of feminine
beauty in this one sonnet.

Another respect in which Rossetti achieves the balance
of physical and metaphysical is in the conveying of content.
It is most instructive to look at those poems which have
also been visualized in paintings by Rossetti to see the
degree to which he is able to use content to create balance
rather than letting the context overbear. In "Astarte
Syriaca" and Astarte Syriaca there is again a conscious
attempt to sum up in one picture the power of love both

10Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Rossetti's Poems, edited by
physical and spiritual. Love, Astarte, and Nature are fused together as one and the same thing. The poem has a religious quality harking back to the Pre-Raphaelite interest in religious art that is at once physical and spiritual.

Mystery: lo! betwixt the sun and moon
Astarte of the Syrians: Venus Queen
Ere Aphrodite was. In silver sheen
Her twofold girdle clasps the infinite boon
Of bliss whereof the heaven and earth commune:
And from her neck's inclining flower-stem lean
Love-freighted lips and absolute eyes that wear
The pulse of hearts to the spheres' dominant tune.

Torch-bearing, her sweet ministers compel
All thrones of light beyond the sky and sea
The witness of Beauty's face to be:
That face, of Love's all-penetrative spell
Amulet, talisman, and oracle, --
Betwixt the sun and moon a mystery.11

In this poem-painting, sound, sight, and sense fuse. The love-through-beauty theme is as evident in the written version as in the visual, and it is impossible to say that sound is subservient to the sense or vice versa in the poetic version.

Another way in which Rossetti displays his striving after an ideal of balance is in the intense concentration on the feminine form in his painting and poetry. Without exception, all of Rossetti's memorable portraits are of women. From Ecce Ancilla Domini (1849) to Astarte Syriaca (1877), the vast majority of Rossetti's paintings are of the female form. Of course, some of the Dante series

11 Ibid., p. 260.
paintings are of men, but even in these works the men all reveal their feminine side. This perhaps indicates a searching on Rossetti's part for what Carl Jung calls the "Anima," the female aspect in every male. Perhaps like Blake's character Jerusalem, Rossetti has an internal drive to complete himself spiritually and physically. It may be extreme to say this drive for union represents an unconscious need on Rossetti's part, but his painting and versifying on so many females does indicate such an attempt at balance.

For example, in Dante Drawing an Angel on the Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice (1853), Dante's features are soft and hauntingly like Rossetti's painted women generally. Significantly, the only painting of a man who is not at least partially feminine in outward appearance is Rossetti's painting of himself in Rossetti Sitting to Miss Sidall (1853). This is a rather poignant statement, in the context of his other paintings. Perhaps Rossetti views himself as incomplete and in need of discovering his own anima.

A no more dramatic example of how Rossetti's poetry is imbued with the feminine principle is to be found than his sonnet sequence The House of Life. Of over one hundred sonnets, only a handful deal with anything other than love and female beauty. Although no sonnet is genuinely representative, Sonnet XXXIV, "The Dark Glass" clearly illustrates the power of love for Rossetti:
Not I myself know all my love for thee.
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray;
And shall my sense pierce love, --the last relay
And ultimate outpost of eternity?

Lo! what am I to Love, the lord of all?
One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand, --
One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call
And veriest touch of powers primordial
That any hour-girt life may understand.\textsuperscript{12}

The power of love to bring meaning and understanding to life is Rossetti's theme in "The Dark Glass." The deification and personification of Love in the poem mark the absolute subservience of the lover to Love. And the essential path to Love is through the female, as in the lines, "Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call/And veriest touch of powers primordial/That any hour-girt life may understand." It is a religious motif in which Love is the father who is reached through the daughter. Or to put it another way, union with Love is achieved through the female lover. The title of the sonnet, "The Dark Glass" may be a reference to the biblical phrase that "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face." (I Corinthians 13:12) The latter "face-to-face" is the lover's future meeting with love.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 222.
Rossetti's use of the feminine form and ideal is central to his poetry and painting. However, even its important place in his works should not obscure the fact that it is finally just a vehicle for the communication of some of Rossetti's deepest concepts. The higher truths of Rossetti's creative production are found in the transcendent power of love and beauty. Why is the female form rather than the male the conveyance for these truths? Again, it may have something to do with Rossetti's search for unity by fulfilling his need to find his own anima, or, it may be that the female form is itself a sort of shorthand for love and beauty. Whatever the purpose, Rossetti's career-long concentration on the feminine form is a remarkably sustained effort to achieve understanding and insight into the importance and nature of love and beauty.

An interesting sidelight on Rossetti's search for the feminine ideal is Burne-Jones' own quest. Curtis Coley comments that all of Burne-Jones' men display female qualities. Perhaps Burne-Jones is seeking the same Pre-Raphaelite union of the anima and animus that Rossetti is trying to achieve.\(^{13}\)

Although the *House of Life* is published in its final form in 1881, less than twenty percent of its material is

\(^{13}\)Curtis Coley, editor *Pre-Raphaelitism* (New York, 1963), p. 22.
written between 1873-1881. In fact, the only notable poetic pieces during this period, when Rossetti gives more and more energy to painting, are the two medieval narrative ballads "The White Ship" and "The King's Tragedy." According to Theodore Watts-Dutton, "The White Ship" is not written until 1880 and involves the theme of fate which may be weighing very heavily on Rossetti. It is a story that returns to original Pre-Raphaelite themes of medieval life with its struggle against nature and fate. One is reminded of Morris' "Haystack in the Flood." Oswald Doughty remarks that although the poem has dramatic vitality, it lacks subtlety of characterization and versification. "The King's Tragedy" (1881) is a medieval narrative on a larger scale than "The White Ship," but it also contains the same sense of doom. The significance of this, Rossetti's last major poem, is to be found not in the narrative but in the sense of tragedy that pervades the poem. Despite Rossetti's career-long interest in the power of love, in the end, he realizes that love's power is subservient to fate. One may find eternal refuge in love and beauty, but there is finally no temporal refuge in it.


Morris and Swinburne

The general tendency of Morris' thinking after his initial involvement with Pre-Raphaelitism is toward the medieval and especially centers on his intense interest in artistic development before the rise of the cult of the individual artist during the High Renaissance. As with all the Pre-Raphaelites, Morris looks back to the medieval age as a time when art comes from the people, when art is superior to the individual who makes it. According to Morris, works of art by the "people" should be encouraged. It is revealing that Morris' favorite contemporary novelists are Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, both of whom write about the "people" and specific social types who often represent a group rather than highly individualistic personalities. However, Morris is not particularly interested in the literature of his time, and his tastes are escapist in the extreme. In 1886 he contributes his list of fifty-four best books in an article for the Pall Mall Gazette. In it he favors all literature Gothic and Northern and rejects classicism, most notably Virgil and Ovid. His greatest praise for nineteenth-century writers is saved for the Grimm brothers, Carlyle, and Ruskin.  

\[17\] Ibid., p. 151.
likes writers who value the medieval period and idealize it as Ruskin and Carlyle do.

By 1861 the Oxford group has become the London group and centers around Morris' firm. Morris' creation of the firm, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company in 1861, is his first attempt to practice literally medieval principles through the creation of something like a medieval craft guild. Pre-Raphaelite dominance in this concept is obvious from examining the original partners, who include Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Madox Brown, besides Morris, who are all Pre-Raphaelites or closely associated with the movement, as is the case with Brown. The firm's primary purpose is to destroy the division of labor which has led by the nineteenth-century to a special artist class. The Pre-Raphaelites want to return to the primacy of the craftsman, whose contribution to art is both anonymous and unfettered.

The next major turning point in Morris' life after his first exposure to Pre-Raphaelitism and creation of the firm is his chance meeting with Eirikr Magnusson of Iceland in 1868. With the aid of Magnusson, Morris incorporates saga stories into his own writing. In 1869 Morris writes "The Loves of Gudrun" and includes it as one of the stories in *The Earthly Paradise*. In 1871 and 1873 Morris visits Iceland, and in 1875 a new austere style in his writing develops
from his experience there. Sigurd the Volsung stands as one of Morris' finest poetic achievements.

The firm's success under Morris' leadership is at least partial evidence that "art for the people" is not an empty Pre-Raphaelite dream but could touch artistically lives through wallpaper, home furnishings, and stained glass windows. To a large extent, Morris' hope that designs would be contributed and executed by unknown craftsmen is realized. Men like George Wardle, Warrington Taylor, Frederick Leach, Charles Faulkner, and others recreate the guild concept in a practical nineteenth-century form. In a sense, the firm accomplishes something the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood could not accomplish, namely the creation of art in the name of the group, the "people," rather than in the name of the individual, the ego. Ironically, the ideals of the Brotherhood are not realized because it is made up of so many strong and independent individuals, while Morris is successful because he does not base his production on the uncertain performance of individual artistic genius.

Unfortunately, Morris' success with the firm leads inevitably to his taking total control of the business. This takeover in 1875 causes the final break between Rossetti and Morris because Rossetti wants to continue as a partner in The Firm without materially contributing to its success. Although Morris' and Rossetti's relationship has ended
effectively a number of years before, it is tragic that the final conflict comes over the organization which accomplishes many of the original Pre-Raphaelite ideals.

The financial success of Morris and Company is well-documented and might lead one to believe that Morris moves away from being an artist to become another Victorian "Captain of Industry." This is not true. Morris' firm produces expensive and artistic articles of handicraft, which even when made by machinery, as in the case of wallpaper, are rarities. The fact that Morris makes money is a comment about his strict business practices more than on the viability of an enterprise operating to produce rare handicraft such as limited-run carpets or unique, one-of-a-kind stained glass windows.

Secondly, Morris is much more interested in socialism at this point in his career than in capitalism. In fact, the very year that Morris takes over The Firm, 1875, is exactly the time he becomes a spokesman for the "working men" against the conservative government of Disraeli. By 1883 he is a member of the only socialist group in England, the Democratic Federation, and in 1884 helps form the Socialist League. And yet during all this period, the work of The Firm goes on.

18 Ibid., p. 37.
In fact the adventure in politics for Morris is essentially a short-lived affair which he feels the "times" require of him. In the 1880s he returns to one of the original Pre-Raphaelite principles by producing literature and art simultaneously. The creation of the Kelmscott Press in 1890 is a magnificent testimony to the staying power of the concepts and theories of art which the Pre-Raphaelites evolve in the 1850s and which combine poetry and art work on the same page with printing done in ornate Gothic calligraphy. Today, the decorative qualities of the Kelmscott books make them collectors items and excellent examples of the late nineteenth-century revival in the art of fine printing.

The question of Morris' relationship to the Aesthete/Decadent movement in the 1880s and 1890s is an enigmatic one. Morris is primarily concerned with recreating a vision of life based on medieval, Gothic, and Northern models. Morris has little if any interest in the works of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Wilde, or Symons. Morris does criticize Swinburne's poetry, but at the same time he also attacks Tennyson and Browning. About the only poetry he feels any great sympathy for is Rossetti's, and that is before 1868.

However, despite Morris' medieval escapism and lack of interest in contemporary poetry, it should not be
automatically assumed that Morris is an antagonist of the Aesthetes. In fact, Morris' concept of the centrality of art in life, especially everyday life, makes him a co-conspirator and accomplice with the Decadents against the philistines. In many ways, his attempts to give practical modes for his own religion of beauty in The Firm and the Kelmscott Press are more successful than the worship of art according to the Aesthetic rite. Morris' approach is "low church" and utilitarian in his attempt to give art to the greatest number of people, whereas the Decadents' appeal is "high church," Newmanistic, and specifically for the chosen few. Both elevate art and attack the enemies of art, but their modus operandi is somewhat different.

In the early 1860s, Swinburne's relationship with Rossetti matures in a critical way. Already a complete Pre-Raphaelite devotee, Swinburne takes Pre-Raphaelite principles into a realm of ideological purity with which Rossetti comes to feel uncomfortable. In a word, Swinburne finds himself, if only for a time, in harmony with the doctrine in the art for art's sake philosophy as taught by Baudelaire, Gautier, and Pater. Of course, all the essentials of the art for art's sake philosophy are present in the original Pre-Raphaelite teachings and are given to Swinburne by Rossetti at Oxford. However, in 1862, when Swinburne meets James McNeill Whistler, who is just back
from Paris and is a friend of Rossetti, he shifts his interest to this new, emerging Aestheticism and away from the less structured and minimally ideological aestheticism of Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism. At the time of Swinburne's conversion to the new doctrine, he is living with Rossetti and George Meredith at Tudor House. It is not surprising that Swinburne's and Rossetti's relationship cools considerably after Swinburne's alliance with Whistler and the French Aesthetes.

Swinburne's first major statement on this new aesthetic approach comes in his positive review of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which is republished in England in 1862. Repeating the new French point of view, Swinburne preaches that art and morality have nothing to do with each other and goes on to praise Baudelaire as a "pure" artist. Swinburne justifies Baudelaire's philosophy of the beauty of evil, thinking that beauty is beauty despite its context, and, therefore, it should be appreciated wherever one finds it. This approach of Swinburne's differs from Pre-Raphaelitism only in its emphasis on the separation of art and morality. Pre-Raphaelitism is never doctrinaire on this point of separation and does not dwell upon it as the Aesthetes do. Ironically, Swinburne seems to be unsure of his own understanding of the separation and claims that all
the poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* have a "vivid background of morality . . . ." Baudelaire later writes Swinburne to disavow his writing as in any way moralistic. If Swinburne is classified as one of England's first art for art's sake devotees, he is certainly not its most perfect representative. Although Swinburne enunciates the art for art's sake credo before Pater, the real leader of English Aestheticism is Pater. Swinburne's interest in art for art's sake wanes by 1868, which is the same year Pater makes his first major pronouncement on the movement which will be at the center of his writing. For Swinburne, art for art's sake is an extension of his Pre-Raphaelite beliefs, whereas for Pater, it exists independently. Not that Pater is uninfluenced by the Pre-Raphaelites; he is, and especially by Morris. However, Pater is not part of either of the two major Pre-Raphaelite groups and develops his philosophy from a variety of sources.

Perhaps the best testimony to Swinburne's enduring Pre-Raphaelite point of view is his 1870 essay on the poems of Rossetti. Having helped Rossetti in preparing his *Poems* for publication, Swinburne is intimately familiar with Rossetti's most recent work. In this essay, Swinburne is lavish in his praise of Rossetti's writing. In describing

19 Cassidy, p. 68.
great poetry Swinburne says it must have the

... ardent harmony, heat of spiritual
life ... sweetness that cannot be weak
and force that will not be rough ... no
shortcoming or malformation of thought or
word ... no tract of any effort ... .
It must be serious, simple, perfect, and
it must be thus by evident and native
impulse . . . .

In all these points the style of Mr.
Rossetti excels that of any English poet
of our day. It is the fullest fervour
and fluency of impulse, and the impulse
is always towards harmony and perfection.20

This quotation is remarkable for three reasons. First,
it dramatically demonstrates, being written in 1870, the
large influence of Rossetti over the important early years
of Swinburne's artistic development. Swinburne is now in
his thirty-third year, and yet these statements occur after
his art for art's sake phase. Second, it is an essential
restatement of Pre-Raphaelite principles with its emphasis
on balance, spirituality, and sprezzatura and shows that
Swinburne is still devoted to these basic Pre-Raphaelite
values. Third, it helps place Rossetti over other English
poets in the creation of this style of poetry. In its to-
tality, such a decree, both powerful and eloquent, leaves
little doubt that Rossetti, despite many personal conflicts,
is Swinburne's most important mentor.

Swinburne's praise of Rossetti in this essay is so great
that it borders on hyperbole. Of the sonnets he says:

20Swinburne, The Complete Works of Algernon C. Swinburne,
V, 4-5.
There are no poems of the class in English --I doubt if there be any even Dante's Italian-- so rich at once and pure. Their golden affluence of images and jewel-coloured words never once disguises the firm outline, the justice and chastity of form. No nakedness could be more harmonious, more consummate in its fleshly sculpture, than the imperial array and ornament of this august poetry.21

And in comparing Rossetti's sonnets to Shakespeare's, Swinburne says that

Mr. Rossetti's have a nobler fulness of form, a more stately and shapely beauty of build; they are of a purer and less turbid water than the others are at times, and not less fervent when more severe than they; the subject-matter of them is sweet throughout, natural always and clear, however intense and fine in remote and delicate intricacy of spiritual stuff.22

Swinburne's paean is unrelenting. In discussing the opening cycle of twenty-eight sonnets, Swinburne uses Pre-Raphaelite terms and concepts as in the union of physical and the metaphysical or the religious dimension of his poetry:

No one till he has read these knows all of majesty and melody, all of energy and emotion, all of supple and significant loveliness, all of tender cunning and exquisite strength, which our language can show at need in proof of its power and uses. The birth of love, his eucharistic presence, his supreme vision, his utter union in flesh and spirit, the secret of the sanctuary of his heart, his louder music and his lower, his graver, his lighter seasons . . . .23

21 Ibid., p. 7.
22 Ibid., p. 8.
23 Ibid., p. 9.
Swinburne's ecstatic review runs along in this vein for over sixteen thousand words. However, the most significant statement of Rossetti's influence on Swinburne and Morris is found in Swinburne's comment that Rossetti is "the great artist by the light of whose genius and kindly guidance he [Morris] put forth the first fruits of his work, as I did afterwards."  

On his feelings for his other Pre-Raphaelite contemporary, Morris, Swinburne's pronouncements are almost as strong as those for Rossetti, if not as florid. In reviewing "The Life and Death of Jason" in 1867, Swinburne says:

... it resembles the work of Chaucer. Even against the great master his pupil may fairly be matched for simple sense of right, for grace and speed of step, for purity and justice of colour. In all the noble roll of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsody comparable to the first, till the advent of this one.  

This is followed by many complimentary comments such as:

It should now be clear, or never, that in this poem a new thing of great price has been cast into the English treasure-house. Nor is the cutting or the setting of the jewel unworthy of it; art and instinct have wrought hand in hand to its perfection. 

Rossetti holds the first place as Swinburne's major influence, but Morris shares an important role as a model and inspiration for Swinburne.

\[24\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 29.\]
\[25\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 56.\]
\[26\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 61.\]
In the fall of 1871, Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne suffer the violent attack of Robert Buchanan in his "The Fleshly School of Poetry." Buchanan accuses Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne of forming a "Mutual Admiration School" for the purpose of lauding one another's works. Buchanan particularly dislikes Swinburne's 1870 review of Rossetti's poems and uses Swinburne's term "fleshly" in the most negative way possible. Swinburne writes a stinging reply which touches off a long-running literary battle between Swinburne and Buchanan. Finally in 1876, Buchanan takes Swinburne and his publisher to trial for libel and wins.

The effect of the trial on Swinburne cannot be adequately measured, but by 1876 he is near death from alcoholism. Only through the patience, care, and attention of Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton does Swinburne survive. However, Swinburne becomes more and more of a recluse, and Watts-Dunton's control of his life is pronounced. Swinburne takes a very conservative view toward art and literature and comes even to repudiate "art for art's sake" in his essay of 1887, "Mr. Whistler's Lecture on Art."^27

Unfortunately, Swinburne also becomes very bitter toward Rossetti, and in 1882, Swinburne writes Theodore Watts-Dunton

^27Cassidy, pp. 148-149.
on October 31 to say about Rossetti,

... remembering the loyal, devoted, and unselfish affection which I lavished for fifteen years on the meanest, poorest, and most abject and unmanly nature of which any record remains in even literary history, I cannot say I wonder at the final upshot of our relations, but I can most truly say from the very depth of my heart and conscience, "I am ashamed through all my nature to have loved so vile a thing." 28

This rather pathetic statement is valuable only in that it clearly points out the extreme degree of Swinburne's and Rossetti's alienation in the end.

Pater

Pater's "appreciation" and recognition of Pre-Raphaelitism and its leader Rossetti could not be more complete. In Appreciations, Pater's collection of essays primarily on English writers, Rossetti shares Pater's attention along with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Browne, and Shakespeare. In the essay "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," Pater praises Rossetti in the highest terms, equating his poetry with that of Dante. Pater saves his most positive critical comments for Rossetti's ability to fuse materialism and spirituality and take the most ideal concept of love and give it "concrete definition" and for the "materialising of

abstraction." Pater goes on to speak of Rossetti's "grandeur of literary workmanship, to a great style."

The article spans Rossetti's career, starting with "The Blessed Damozel" (1847) and ending with Ballads and Sonnets (1881). Pater makes his comments about the totality of Rossetti's literary production and his special ability to be philosophic and yet sensuous. Rossetti is able to bring the clear conceptions of painting to literature. Pater, by way of introduction, mentions the role Rossetti plays in the Pre-Raphaelite school. Pater identifies the Poems (1870) as Pre-Raphaelite and other Rossetti poems from the very earliest as prefiguring Pre-Raphaelite concepts.

After this comment on Pre-Raphaelitism, Pater does not mention Pre-Raphaelitism again except to say that both Pre-Raphaelites and Rossetti are marked by their high level of sincerity. Specifically this sincerity comes in their conveying poetic sense in an unconventional way because that is the truest approach. However, the focus of the article is entirely on Rossetti. For Pater, Pre-Raphaelitism and Rossetti come to be one and the same thing. Pater would probably have agreed with Ifor Evans who says, "... the

30 Ibid., pp. 208-209.
31 Ibid., p. 206.
Pre-Raphaelite movement in poetry is little more than an inconvenient synonym for Rossetti's personal influence."\(^{32}\)

The direct and indirect influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Pater must, then, be seen through Rossetti. Pater starts his professional writing career in 1866 with his well-known essay on Coleridge, originally for the *Westminster Review*. This notable entry into the realms of professional criticism comes well after the first two flourishes of organized Pre-Raphaelitism. Had Pater been born ten years earlier and since he did go to Oxford, he might very well have been a Pre-Raphaelite in the strict sense. Instead, it must be sufficient to say that there is little if anything in Pater's values which is not amenable to Pre-Raphaelitism. Pater feels no personal tie or connection to Pre-Raphaelitism as a movement, but instead relates as an artist and an author to the major values of Pre-Raphaelitism and to Rossetti as an individual.

The relationship between Rossetti and Pater is an artistic rather than a personal one. Arthur Symons makes the connection between the two rather succinctly in his study of Pater. Talking about Leonardo da Vinci, Symons remarks:

Two men of genius, in our own generation, have revealed for all time the always inexplicable magic of Leonardo da Vinci; Walter Pater in his prose and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his sonnet.33

Pater verifies Rossetti's role as a "perfect model" as the poet of "the ideal intensity of love."34 And yet, Pater also praises Rossetti's detachment, which the Aesthetes value so highly:

Rossetti, indeed, with all his self-concentration upon his own peculiar aim, by no means ignored those general interests which are external to poetry as he conceived it; as he has shown here and there, in this poetic, as also in pictorial work. It was but that, in a life to be shorter even than the average, he found enough to occupy him in the fulfillment of a task, plainly "given him to do."35

To rather oversimplify, Pater sees Rossetti as a brother who is neither connected to the other through any brotherhood but only through the bonds of similar belief.

Another way in which the Pre-Raphaelites and Pater agree is in their broad holistic approach to the study of art and literature. Pater actively studies painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, Pater is intensely interested in the early Renaissance,


particularly Leonardo, Bottcelli, Winckelmann, and the School of Giorgione. His classic *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, according to Arthur Symons, is "... the most beautiful book of prose in our literature." Pater achieves in prose what the Pre-Raphaelites are trying to achieve in artistic and literary form, namely a new appreciation for the freedom and vitality of the early Renaissance.

For Pater and the Pre-Raphaelites, the Renaissance, particularly the early Renaissance, is a rich metaphor for a time when the religion of beauty is a dominant force in Western culture; when the creation of beauty is kin to an act of worship. They view it as a period of history in which art has devotees to itself first. For Pater it is a period of less specific style or moral purpose. In his essay on the Renaissance School of Giorgione, which is included in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater is extremely clear on this point:

Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material

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36Symons, A *Study of Walter Pater*, p. 46.
or subject no longer strikes the intellect only . . . .

Pater goes on to praise music as the ideal art form because of the perfect identification of matter and form. Pater's purpose is to find the most direct avenue to beauty. Poetry or painting which does not have the creation of beauty as its final purpose or which is used as propaganda is simply not art to Pater or at best, bad art.

Pater and Rossetti Against the Philistines

Neither Rossetti nor Pater has it in his personality to be vindictive or contrary. Even when he is violently attacked by Robert Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry," Rossetti's answer is mild and deals with Buchanan's misunderstanding of Rossetti's writing. Parenthetically, it might be added that Buchanan, in the end, retracts everything he says about Rossetti in this well-known essay. Pater, like Rossetti, rarely if ever attacks or vilifies those who disagree with him. In his most significant collection of essays, Appreciations, Pater primarily praises and extols the virtues of a particular author or idea. In Pater's view, every effort toward creating art is valuable and those individuals who have achieved something significant in art should receive a full measure of adoration. It is, therefore, ironic that Rossetti and Pater should be thought of, along

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with Arnold, Carlyle (somewhat earlier), Wilde (somewhat later) as the pre-eminent crusaders against philistinism in Victorian England, but this is essentially true. Although neither Pater nor Rossetti writes anything remotely as critical of the contemporary culture as Arnold's "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace," Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, or even Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, they both speak volumes of criticism of the age by their literary and artistic escape from it.

Significantly, the only contemporary writer whom Pater selects for discussion in Appreciations is Rossetti. Pater sees Rossetti's "abundant imagination" as the instrument of escape. Rossetti's creation of "material loveliness, formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance, in a world where all beside might be but shadow." In other words, aesthetic creation is the only "undeniable reality," and Rossetti is one of the few living creators of that reality. It is an artistic Platonism in which art and beauty take the place of the Platonic eidos, the ideal form which is the basis for all permanent reality. As A. C. Benson points out in talking about Pater's work Plato and Platonism, "It was beauty that seemed to him [Pater] the most significant thing in the world . . . ."  

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38 Pater, Appreciations: With an Essay on Style, p. 213.
Pater is using Platonic images and metaphors to talk about an aesthetic reality which is not only the true reality, but the only one men should acknowledge as real.

From Pater's and Rossetti's point of view then, they are not escaping into art and beauty, so much as they are looking at the insubstantial and ephemeral world around them from the vantage point of the only thing they know to be solid and permanent, namely beauty. The philistines are, by definition, those individuals who get caught up in the transience of the material world, those individuals who do not see the larger picture of order and structure. For this reason, Pater and Rossetti are both critics and non-participants in the various movements and trends of the period. Neither Pater nor Rossetti has anything to do with political movements or moral crusades. Their only crusade is for beauty.

Pater's and Rossetti's views are particularly appropriate in the 1850-1880 period, for this is the zenith of utilitarian sentiment in England. Jeremy Bentham's teaching reaches its greatest intellectual acceptance in John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1863). Although Mill modifies the doctrine somewhat, the major contribution of Mill is to turn utilitarianism into a kind of high ethical religion of moral rectitude. The emphasis is on Mill's view that Utilitarianism should be used to raise the general moral and
ethical standards of the people as a whole. To say that
Pater and Rossetti are against Mill's Utilitarianism or
Bentham's more general concept is not really correct. Both
are basically moral, even moralistic, men. The difference,
the cause of conflict, is in the placement of emphasis.
Pater and Rossetti wage a career-long struggle to get more
concentration on the fine arts and aesthetic values. They
are not amoral, but their sense of morality is something
that must be carefully counterbalanced against freedom.
Moral systems tend to restrict artistic freedom and growth.
It is not a question of doing without a moral system, but
a question of insuring freedom so that beauty might flourish.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Aestheticism/Decadence: Final Stage of Pre-Raphaelitism

Aestheticism/Decadence is the historical outcome and final stage of Pre-Raphaelitism. The cult of beauty which finds its origins in Pre-Raphaelite art and literature reaches its conclusion in the extremes of artifice as created by Wilde, Beardsley, and others. When W. B. Yeats speaks of the Pre-Raphaelite influence on his art in the late 1880s, he sees "its natural continuation in the poètes maudits of the nineties, Dowson and Lionel Johnson." It is perfectly legitimate to accept Yeats' lifelong devotion to beauty and particularly his inclination for art and artifice over physical reality as evolving from Pre-Raphaelite themes of love and beauty over literalism and for image and mood over exact reproduction. It is valuable to remember that while some Pre-Raphaelite artists are paying lip service to a "truth to nature" in the best Romantic tradition, they often violate realistic or naturalistic perspective. This contradiction between theory and

1 Hough, p. 217.
practice is of central importance in understanding why the Pre-Raphaelites are not identified with the Aesthetes/Decadents. For the most part, scholars give more weight to the stated theory than the actual Pre-Raphaelite practice in poetry and painting.

Pre-Raphaelitism is an artistic and literary movement which, except in isolated instances, rejects Realism and particularly the movement toward social realism during the second half of the nineteenth-century. What Pre-Raphaelite painters parallel the social realism of Daumier or Courbet, or what Pre-Raphaelite authors stress social consciousness in the manner of Dickens or George Eliot? Pre-Raphaelitism is an escapist movement which finds its refuge in beauty. This is also precisely what Decadence does.

That Pre-Raphaelitism is the foundation and basis for Aestheticism/Decadence is not to deny the importance of the influence by the French Aesthetes, but instead helps enforce it. It is important to remember that English readers are introduced to Baudelaire through the agency of Swinburne's study of the French Symbolist which lead to his unique views on the French writer. That Swinburne, at that time in the full bloom of Pre-Raphaelitism, is a natural receptacle for the new French thought, is a crucial link. Without Swinburne's advocacy of the French, English thinking might not have turned as favorably toward the new aesthetic
ideas. Swinburne, the Pre-Raphaelite, is helping to introduce a philosophy which harmonizes with and supports his own.

The metamorphosis of Pre-Raphaelitism into Aestheticism/Decadence may be most clearly witnessed by studying the artistic and literary career of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti is both a true Pre-Raphaelite and the first and founding Aesthete/Decadent. In general, critics see Rossetti as a Pre-Raphaelite, and a few, like Cecil, identify him as an Aesthete, but except for the work of John Dixon Hunt, there is no meaningful documentation of Rossetti's artistic/literary production reflecting Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence simultaneously. Yet a study of Rossetti's creative life clearly shows that his practice of Pre-Raphaelite ideals richly blooms into Aestheticism/Decadence. Rossetti's position is unique in that he is the only Pre-Raphaelite artist whose career spans Pre-Raphaelitism—Aestheticism/Decadence as a unified movement. Swinburne pulls away from Aestheticism quite early, and Morris' devotion to beauty is colored by his political and social ideology. Only in Rossetti's work may one witness the natural and sustained growth of Pre-Raphaelite concepts into Aesthete/Decadent art and literature.

Although Rossetti is the primary example of the Pre-Raphaelite—Aesthete/Decadent continuum, most critics have
not adopted the concept of creative continuity in Rossetti's career or between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence. David Cecil, Elizabeth Aslin, John Heath-Stubbs, Lorentz Eckhoff, Ruth Child, and Robert Cooper are representative of those critics who separate the Pre-Raphaelite—Aestheticism/Decadence into two distinct movements. They accept Rossetti as an Aesthete/Decadent and some points of influence by Pre-Raphaelitism on Aestheticism/Decadence, but they do not believe that the one movement comes out of the other or that Rossetti is still following Pre-Raphaelite principles later in his career when they identify him as an Aesthete/Decadent. Nevertheless, this is precisely what Rossetti does. The consistency of Rossetti's creative vision and artistic execution is remarkable. Although Rossetti's imaginative abilities grow and his style goes through subtle modifications, the artistic ideals of 1882 are essentially the same as those of 1848. Rossetti's purpose is always to create unfettered beauty for its own sake, with his own specific personal contribution to the body of creation through feminine beauty.

The documentation in this study is designed to emphasize the wholeness of the Pre-Raphaelite—Aestheticism/Decadence creative continuum between the 1840s and the 1880s in England. Certainly there are many side issues and personalities which detract from a clear view of the totality, but
the case for the direct association between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism/Decadence is clear and is to be seen by charting the unbroken chain of will and intension from the first Brotherhood meetings to the last creative acts of the Aesthetes/Decadents. Although it is impossible to show every connection and point of contact, the preponderance of evidence demonstrates the progression of Pre-Raphaelitism into Aestheticism/Decadence as distinctly and vividly as any artistic/literary movement. Pre-Raphaelitism moves inexorably toward Aestheticism/Decadence.

The Nexus of Victorian Artistic and Literary Values

Aesthetically, the two major events in England during the Victorian age are the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the evolution of the Aesthete/Decadent movement. No other group happenings, of an artistic or literary nature, so color the development of aesthetic principles during the second half of the nineteenth-century in England. Together (and they must naturally be viewed together), they mark a shift away from "school" art and literature. Individual artistic preference to a dictated style is paramount, and the purpose of artistic freedom is to allow the artist/writer to be unfettered in his creation of beauty and devotion to beauty.
Henry Beers, in his *A History of Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, calls the Pre-Raphaelite movement a revival of the Romantic movement in England. This is correct in the sense that Pre-Raphaelitism is rightly seen as a movement encouraging individual artistic development and freedom. In fact, it may be argued that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood does not survive institutionally because of the inbred bias against developing a group style. The most that may be safely said about Pre-Raphaelitism, in its various stages, is that it is an association of individuals who mutually encourage one another without strongly imposing their own values or style.

In this regard, Rossetti is the major example of the Pre-Raphaelite type. However, except in a broad sense, no one ever tries to imitate Rossetti's style or technique. Despite the fact that Rossetti's influence on Hunt, Morris, Swinburne, Burne-Jones, Whistler, and many more is well known, none of these individuals produces a painting or a poem unmistakably in the Rossetti manner. Rossetti always tries to bring out the intensely individualistic quality of his associates, and yet the only aspect of Rossetti's specific style which is transferred through his works is the Art Nouveau line. However, even here, it should be

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remembered that this particular stylistic technique is already imbedded in the artistic style of many Romantic painters, having originated in the independent artistic creations of William Blake.

Beer's conclusion that Pre-Raphaelitism is simply another manifestation of Romanticism, nevertheless, does present at least one major problem. The Romantic poets, as a group, are nature worshippers. However, for the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes/Decadents, art, love, and beauty replace nature as the center of their universe. The original Brotherhood does stress the value of "truth to nature," but this comes to mean truth to the artist's inner vision rather than a literal recreation of landscape and people. Unfortunately, some commentators talk about the photographic realism of Pre-Raphaelite painting, leaving the impression that Pre-Raphaelite painting is true to nature. In fact, virtually all the Pre-Raphaelite realistic painting is done by minor Pre-Raphaelite artists like Robert Martineau, William Burton, or the Pre-Raphaelite mentor, Ford Madox Brown. Neither Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones, nor the late-period Holman Hunt is interested in realistic painting or realism. Put bluntly, neither Pre-Raphaelite painting nor literature is ever true to nature in the strict sense of the phrase.
Despite all this, in another respect Pre-Raphaelitism--Aestheticism/Decadence is quite in harmony with and a natural outgrowth of the Romantic movement. In its rejection of the ugliness of modern life, this new approach is in total harmony with the original Romantic rejection of a bourgeois, industrial, technological society. The emphasis of these new anti-philistines is to return to the late medieval or early Renaissance periods. Their fascination with handcrafts, gothic architecture, feudalism, and feminine beauty are all part of an attempt to return to a simpler, purer life. Their special devotion to style over utility especially marks the Pre-Raphaelites--Aesthetes/Decadents as the enemies of contemporary Victorian social and artistic values.

Another departure from the moralistic, utilitarian principles of the Victorian age is the Pre-Raphaelite/Decadent focus on the feminine form. Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones, Millais, Solomon, and Beardsley all artistically worship the female figure and glorify the feminine ideal. The reason for this emphasis on female beauty is central to the uniqueness of the Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent ethos. It is an attention to the highest form of natural beauty which transcends mere physical loveliness. It is this spiritual quality in feminine beauty, which is a counter to the bourgeois materialism and nouveau riche utilitarianism of Victorian life, which these artists/writers seek to achieve.
Finally, the Pre-Raphaelite--Aesthete/Decadent continuum rests on their mutual bedrock belief that all artistic energy must go into the creation of beauty. Insofar as style, content, form, subject matter contribute to the presentation of beauty, they may be accepted. However, as soon as any technique or stylistic consideration limits or reduces the realization of beauty, it must be suppressed. From 1848 to 1890 beauty reigns supreme through this one joint movement and as such Pre-Raphaelite--Aestheticism/Decadence may be properly seen as the last and most important flowering of Romanticism's love of beauty.
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