

John Dixon Hunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination. (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1968) Reprint 1977. 262 pp. \$14.95.

This book is a reissue of an older book in the series called Landmark Editions published by the University of Nebraska Press for scholars and libraries.

John Dixon Hunt considers "the Pre-Raphaelite imagination" in terms of its effect on the Eighteen Nineties by noting "certain dominant characteristics of the 1890s" and then explores "their provenance in the Pre-Raphaelite movement."

He attempts to define what constituted this imagination and how it continued to operate, especially at the end of the century in the work of the writers of the nineties. Hunt's strength lies in his careful scrutiny of the stories, poetry and art as they appeared in the fin de siècle English journals: The Yellow Book, The Hobby Horse, The Savoy and The Dome. His quotations from many of these show forcefully, when placed side by side with the original Pre-Raphaelite poetry, stories, and art, how the Pre-Raphaelite point of view affected both the Symbolists and Realists of the nineties.

Hunt's initial task is to present the Pre-Raphaelite contribution to imaginative constructs: their belief in the reality of dreams and their heuristic powers; their rediscovery of Blake and the unity of Blake's plastic and verbal imagery. Citing Yeats as the conscious inheritor of such an "embroidery . . . out of old mythologies," Hunt retraces the sources that fed the Pre-Raphaelite mythology. These include Thorpe's Northern Mythology and medievalism, extending from the interest in medieval crafts as carried out in Morris's workshops to archaistic interests in poetic language. Hunt then goes on to show through an exhaustive excursion into the fiction and poetry of the journals mentioned above that they first imitated and later began to take an ironic stance towards the various facets of the Pre-Raphaelite imagination. "By the 1890's the medieval cult is as sharply rebuked as it is feebly practised" (58). What is interesting from his quotations is the influence of Beardsley's "Under the Hill", which appeared in the January and April, 1896, numbers of The Savoy. Hunt tells us that the tale is mimicked to some extent in Vernon Lee's "Prince Albert and the Snake Lady," which appeared in The Yellow Book for July 1896. He shows how superior Beardsley is to Lee since "he is sensitive to the impulses which produced Pre-Raphaelite art and literature and is well-informed, too, about their inspiration" (61). He documents this combination of inherited stimulus and subsequent