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## “Hoping you will not think me too fastidious”: Pre-Raphaelite Artists and the Moxon *Tennyson*

The Lilly Library of Indiana University at Bloomington, USA, holds some previously unpublished correspondence from the young Pre-Raphaelite artists John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti to the engraver W. J. Linton, regarding the cutting of their woodblock designs for illustrations to Edward Moxon's edition of Tennyson's early *Poems*, published in 1857 and generally regarded as a landmark in nineteenth century book illustration.<sup>1</sup>

The correspondence reveals the artists' anxious—even neurotic—care over the execution of their work, perhaps caused as much by their inexperience of “drawing on the wood” as by the engraver's difficulties with the new and unfamiliar Pre-Raphaelite graphic style, which distinguished the three Pre-Raphaelite contributors—Millais, Rossetti and Holman Hunt—to what is now known as the Moxon *Tennyson* from the other, more established illustrators and artists, Maclise, Mulready, Creswick, Horsley and Stanfield. Over fifty illustrations were included in the volume.

William James Linton (1812-1897) was a wood-engraver and political activist of Chartist and republican persuasion living in the mid-1850s on the Brantwood property in Cumbria later acquired by John Ruskin. He and Moxon had been earlier associated through a trial for blasphemy arising from the publication of Shelley's *Queen Mab*.<sup>2</sup> Other engravers commissioned for this edition of Tennyson were the Dalziel brothers, C. T. Thompson, J. Thompson and C. Williams.

Pasted into the Lilly Library's copy of the Moxon *Tennyson*<sup>3</sup> are proofs of four of

Linton's engravings, lying alongside the final printed products; two more proofs are also in the Library but detached from the volume. Three of the pasted-in proofs are for illustrations by J. C. Horsley, depicting two scenes from “New Year's Eve” and one from “The May Queen.” The fourth is a proof of Millais's illustration of Cleopatra from “A Dream of Fair Women”;<sup>4</sup> this is the main item discussed in the accompanying correspondence. The second Millais illustration engraved by Linton, for “The Day-Dream,” is not accompanied by a proof. The two detached proofs are for Rossetti's illustrations of “Mariana in the South” and “Sir Galahad,” the latter being accompanied by detailed instructions on the margins of the proof itself.

Because of the nature of the corrections desired by the artists, the layout of their words to Linton is difficult to reproduce in textual form with a full indication of the appearance and disposition on the page, with sketches and insertions and afterthoughts; I have endeavoured to represent this with as much clarity as possible in the long quotations that follow.

Millais's first subject for Linton illustrates the following lines from “A Dream of Fair Women,” where the narrator describes his vision of Cleopatra:

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise  
One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd  
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black  
eyes  
Brow-bound with burning gold.

After relating her love for “my gallant An-