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## Horne's *Botticelli*: Pre-Raphaelite Modernity, Historiography and the Aesthetic of Intensity

"It is probable that many years must elapse before it is fully understood how great a man in his own line Mr. Horne was."

—Roger Fry, in Horne's obituary, *Burlington Magazine* 29 (May, 1916), 81.

"... the great man of the next generation, an architect, poet, painter, fine critic, and editor of the *Hobby Horse*."

—letter from Bernard Berenson to Senda Berenson, March, 1888

At the turn of the last century Pre-Raphaelitism underwent a series of redefinitions and historical re-evaluations in a variety of books: Percy Bate, *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters* (1899); Harry Quilter, *Preferences in Art, Life and Literature* (1892); John G. Millais's edition of his father's letters (1899); Ford Madox Hueffer's biography of Brown (1896); Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (1905); M. H. Spielmann's study of Millais (1898); W. M. Rossetti, *Pre-Raphaelite Diaries* (1900), among others. Debates raged about who started the movement, who strayed from and who stayed within its founding principles and what those principles were. The movement was becoming synonymous with British art's values and traditions in opposition to modern French or German schools of art.

In the catalogue for the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908, Spielmann argued that Pre-Raphaelitism was the foundation for a truly British art. His premise, however, was not aesthetic but nationalistic, commercial, and decidedly anti-French. His claims for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were inflated in

order to resist what he perceived as the decadence of French Impressionism:

Spielmann is interesting for his vision of Pre-Raphaelitism as the life force of British painting in 1908. Decoration was, he felt, the one element that the British used supremely well, and this would prove in the end to be the element that British modern art would advance through. The shortlived core Pre-Raphaelite movement triggered, he asserted, not only developments in British art in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but also in European art as well.<sup>1</sup>

The 1908 Exhibition officially validated British cultural and imperialist hegemony represented by patriotic, even chauvinistic, intentions and academic art. Spielmann's views were not accepted by all British artists represented at the Exhibition. Writing to *The Times*, several artists, many of whom were admirers of French Impressionism, protested the bias for official interests which skewed their intentions.<sup>2</sup>

While this division in art politics was played out in the English art world and art press, Herbert Percy Horne (1864-1916), once in the avant-garde of the Arts and Crafts movement and a late Pre-Raphaelite disciple of D. G. Rossetti, published his seminal monograph on Botticelli in 1908.<sup>3</sup> Horne's monograph has never been analyzed either for its aesthetic theory of art or in the context of the revisionist debate over the significance of Pre-Raphaelitism at the turn of the last century. Its contribution to Pre-Raphaelite studies lay in its thorough synthesis of the diverse contentions of popular realism and modernism, both of which