

Pre-Raphaelites Re-viewed edited by Marcia Pointon. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989. ISBN 0-719028-20-5; \$55.00 (cloth); ISBN 0-719028-21-3; \$18.95 (paper).

This collection of eight essays maps a corrective course over the terrain of PRB scholarship. Faulting the many studies produced during the last three decades for being overly biographical and ahistorical, editor Pointon presents “innovative and original” and “theoretically rigorous” alternatives by seven authors (she has contributed two essays and an introduction). Textual analysis is emphasized—with the texts considered ranging from visual images to verbal expressions including poetry, letters, and both contemporary and modern critical essays. The authors all stress the notion that meaning is a function of overlapping and intersecting discursive practices. Intertextuality is a key concept, as is the notion that transcendent over-generalizations must give way to insights generated by the re-introduction of highly particularized contexts. Ultimately, by posing meaning as problematic, this collection enacts a transfer of authority from the artist (or omniscient biographer) to the reader. Engagement with Pre-Raphaelite work, this collection emphasizes, “is to be understood as an act with social, historical and theoretical consequences.”

Despite recent efforts by scholars to discredit the biographical mode of art history as inherently patriarchal and implicated in art market commodification, biography continues to galvanize Pre-Raphaelite scholarship. The essays by Laura Marcus, Marcia Pointon, and Lewis Johnson counter the prevailing notion that the individual genius is the ultimate measure of mean-

ing. Their essays focus instead on biography, autobiography, and portraiture as ideologically bound projects. Analyzing William Holman Hunt’s two-volume 1905 *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*—still overused as an “eyewitness account” of key Pre-Raphaelite events—Marcus concludes that despite its rambling structure and first person voice, this is a text carefully constructed to serve Hunt’s ego, air his nationalistic views, and elevate art to ahistorical transcendence. Pointon’s essay on Hunt takes up the meaning of the Biblical works, first by exploring the apparent links among the “truthful” autobiography, the “truth” of abundant descriptive detail in pictures, and the emergent “scientific” discipline of ethnography. She then turns to Hunt’s difficult project: the reinvigoration of religious art in a specifically Protestant manner. The spatial tension and ambiguity of *In the Shadow of Death* are read as indices of the anxiety attendant upon the representation of Christ in the non-European terms demanded by the new “truthful” ethnographic standards.

Pointon, Lindsay Smith, and Paul Barlow share the conviction that compositional strategies should be understood not just as solutions to technical problems but as ideological maneuvers. Barlow’s article “Pre-Raphaelitism and Post-Raphaelitism” explores the ethical consequences of awkward Pre-Raphaelite stylizations. In contrast to the apparently styleless naturalism of the keepsake-style picture which grants possession of the image to the spectator, the Pre-Raphaelite picture erects a barrier, through self-conscious invocation of style, between viewer and picture, thereby problematizing power relationships. Smith also stresses the “politics of space” in her analysis of Millais’s *Woods-*