

Pre-Raphaelite Art in Its European Context, edited by Susan P. Casteras and Alicia Craig Faxon. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1995. 241 pp., 113 illus. ISBN 0-8386-3539-3, \$80.

This handsome collection of twelve essays attempts to correct the xenophobic focus of Pre-Raphaelite studies by delving into links with the Continent. The volume is divided into four sections: 1) Pre-Raphaelite influences on European art and taste; 2) European influences on Pre-Raphaelite art; 3) European connections with Pre-Raphaelitism; and 4) continuations of the Pre-Raphaelite tradition. Collectively, these essays present a fascinating insight into Anglo-European culture at a time of unparalleled travel and intellectual exchange, especially between England and France.

After an initial period of hostility following the Napoleonic Wars, relations between the two countries reached a peak of amicability during the Third Republic. Matilda Betham-Edwards, an Englishwoman who spent eight years in France during this period, recorded that “never in the history of the two countries did the two nations see so much of each other,” adding that the “system of associated travel, cheapened locomotion, and other causes have enormously swelled the sum-total of Anglo-French tourists” (Betham-Edwards 303). Even earlier, Lady Morgan was able to report in her book, *France in 1829-30*, that “English fashions and uses are the vogue,” to the extent that French bakeries sold plum-cakes and apple dumplings to serve at mock English teas (Morgan, cited in Richardson, 55). While instances of Anglophilia abounded, they are particularly telling in Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* where Odette, dressed in Pre-Raphaelite-inspired gowns, serves English tea and has calling cards made for her husband on which she replaces “Monsieur” with “Mr.” (Proust, 1:592ff). The receptivity of the French to English manners, customs, and fashion is a rich topic which warrants a separate study. Fortunately the same can no longer be said for the visual arts now that *Pre-Raphaelite Art in Its European Context* has appeared.

The editors announce that the essays present “a revisionist view of Pre-Raphaelite art—a view that does not treat such art as a separate entity or as an exotic offshoot of British Culture” (9). While their “revisionist” contention is supported by the European contacts described in the articles they commissioned, their assertion should not be misconstrued as a promise to present a postmodern analysis. The essays are shaped by standard research methods, rather than by a critique of the institutional or power structures which caused Pre-Raphaelite art briefly to resemble its European counterparts before its artists withdrew from the rush toward abstraction. Abiding by the sensible principle that it is first necessary to construct before one can deconstruct, the twelve contributors to this volume have paved the way for future analyses by providing a wealth of primary sources on the topic of English-European artistic relations in the second half of the nineteenth century. This text will undoubtedly be mined for years to come by scholars intent