

Jack Lindsay. Hogarth: His Art and His World. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co. 1979. 277 pp. and 50 illustrations. \$14.95.

Mr. Lindsay's study is readable and well documented, which comes as no surprise to readers familiar with his earlier biographies of Turner and Blake. Lindsay excels in description and characterization rather than in close iconographic or literary analysis; however, if he so chooses, he can manage the latter with considerable skill (see his chapter on The Analysis of Beauty, especially pp. 181 to 185). The chief virtue of this work resides in the author's careful placing of Hogarth in the context of his time, as the "anti-Establishment" artist par excellence. By contrast, the question of significant precursors or followers is given short shrift. However sui generis we may consider this artist, a good deal might have been said on those two heads: Mr. Lindsay, though well equipped for the task, decided not to say it. He may have been deterred, not unreasonably, by the fact that the matter had already been explored, with great brilliance, by Ronald Paulson; or he may have decided to exclude it for reasons of space. One respects such self-imposed limitations even while regretting them.

Did Hogarth make any impact on the Pre-Raphaelite movement? Though his name is rarely mentioned in the relevant literature, we know that he was held in considerable esteem by the Rossetti circle. (The Pre-Raphaelites belonged to the early Hogarth Club; William Morris grew a vine in his conservatory, Hammersmith House, from a cutting taken from Hogarth's Chiswick house, etc.) Yet it would be absurd to speak of his having influenced the Pre-Raphaelites' pictorial norms or practices. With, let me add, two possible exceptions: the figurative arrangements of Ford Madox Brown bear witness to his close study of Hogarth, while the ductus of his early semi-caricatural drawings (e.g. the King Lear series) shows the combined influence of Hogarth and the Nazarenes. Perhaps more strikingly, Frederick Shields' designs for Vanity Fair and The Plague of London call to mind Hogarth's crowding of the picture space and his extraordinary gift for subtle differentiation of "types" within a rather limited compass -- so radically at variance with Rowlandson's conception of human groupings, not to mention the differences of style and technical procedure found in the two earlier artists.