

The Art of Ford Madox Brown by Kenneth Bendiner. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998. 204 pp. 8 colour, 123 black-and-white illus. ISBN 0-271-01656-6. \$65.00.

Kenneth Bendiner's book is the first comprehensive study of the artist's work in over a century. It includes very useful appendices reprinting difficult to locate essays by the artist and the two essential primary documents of his career, Brown's own catalogue of his exhibition in 1865, including his sustained description of the painting *Work*--one of the most incisive and revealing literary documents of the age--and Brown's pamphlet on the Manchester Town Hall murals. The remainder of the book is comprised of Bendiner's thematic study of the artist's career in five chapters titled "Archaism," "Humor," "Realism," "Aestheticism," and "A Social Conscience."

The first chapter is concerned with what Bendiner calls the twin poles of early Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood practice, "Archaism" and realism, how they become fused in the artists' works of this period, and Brown's subsequent adoption of a PRB style as of 1851. Archaism is demonstrated to have resulted from Nazarene and early-Italian influences and was seen, circa 1848, as a stylistic trend against the post-Renaissance conventions of mainstream British art. It is through reading Ruskin and accessing archaistic works that the PRB married this anti-academic tendency to an interest in realism to arrive at their early style. Bendiner's idea is to use this new term "archaism" in place of "primitivism" to separate out a dependence on "the crude and unsophisticated" from the more precisely "old and antiquated" aspects of Brown's artistic leanings (2). While this may seem to be refreshingly novel in its smoking out of "primitivism" and the substantial baggage of impurities that this contested term has acquired, the results are uneven. Does it truly enhance our understanding of the period when the author refers to "Delacroix and other nonarchaistic masters" (11)?

But, the divestiture of the "crude and unsophisticated," while certainly a recognizable part of Nazarene practice, also seems an underhanded smack at tenets of Modernism in favour of historicism. To me, the problem seems to be that in attempting to use "archaism" to better define the eclectic revivalist style rising in the 1840s in Britain, Bendiner has chosen a term that is not Modernist, which is fine, but it is not modern either, as it implies something not only old and antiquated, but also not relevant. And there is no question that A.W.N. Pugin, J.R. Herbert, Brown, and others were interested in developing a style that was relevant and essential and modern. If we are to try to develop new terms for art history, especially terms not common in the parlance of the period in question, we must be aware of the present connotations of such expressions.

Bendiner finds that "the combination of anarchism and realism is troubling" in early PRB work (18). But why? This surely goes to the heart of the modernity of the PRB project, a willfully obtuse eclecticism that remains difficult to