

REVIEWS

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Rossetti and His Circle by MAX BEERBOHM. A New Edition with an Introduction by N. John Hall. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987. 128pp. + 36 illustrations, 30 in colour. ISBN 03986-7; \$19.50.

Rossetti and His Circle, originally published in 1922, recorded Max Beerbohm's love affair with Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites. Jack Hall's sumptuous new edition of Beerbohm's finest work, together with his 1985 illustrated edition of *Zuleika Dobson* (also published by Yale) and the Hunter College/Delaware Art Museum exhibition of Beerbohm's caricatures, *A Peep into the Past* (1987), which Hall curated, reflects his own love affair with Max.

The original edition of *Rossetti and His Circle*, though not a short-run book—it was published by Heinemann in 3000 copies (1000 for America) with a limited, signed edition of 300, bound in white buckram—has become increasingly scarce (and pricey), and students of Victorian art and literature will be grateful to Professor Hall and the Yale University Press for making available at a fraction of the cost of a first edition one of the most incisive commentaries on Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites ever published. Like Lawrence Danson's *Max Beerbohm and The Mirror of the Past* (Princeton University Library, 1982), this new edition is more a collaboration than a reprint. Besides the 38-page introduction and text, the volume contains two supplementary sections of Maximiliana entitled, after Max's own books, "More" and "And Even More." "More" reprints seven further caricatures by Max, three from *The Poet's Corner* (1904) and four from other sources, all reproduced in colour for the first time. "And Even More" consists of five appendices, the middle three from the Robert Taylor Collection at Princeton: 1) a series of four single and group photographs of Rossetti; 2) two illustrated leaves from the manuscript of *The Mirror of the Past* (one not in Danson); 3

& 4) two prose pieces, the first an anecdote by Sylvester Herringham on Morris as a decorator, which Max salvaged from *The Mirror of the Past* in "Hethway Speaking" (a 1955 BBC broadcast first printed in the 1957 revised edition of *Mainly on the Air* and reprinted in Danson), and the second an unpublished account by Viscount Morely of a meeting with Rossetti in the summer of 1871. Appendix 5, which concludes the book, is a bibliographical checklist of secondary sources paradoxically headed "Books Old and New." Even more important in establishing the primary status of this edition, however, is the fact that the original drawings in the Tate Gallery have all been re-photographed to capture more accurately the subtle colouration of Max's washes and printed as slightly enlarged, full-page plates rather than being tipped-in as in the 1922 edition.

In his introduction, which mirrors in the playfulness and urbanity of its style Max's own writing, Professor Hall draws on both genuine and apocryphal anecdotes recounted by William Michael Rossetti, Hall Caine, and other Pre-Raphaelite commentators as well as on the recollections and revelations of Sylvester Herringham and his magical mirror in Max's fragmentary manuscript novel *The Mirror of the Past* (roughly contemporaneous with *Rossetti and His Circle*, but not published until Danson's recreated "edition" in 1982) to weave a subtle knot of fact and fiction. "Life and art," Hall observes at the end of his brief prologue, "blend indistinguishably into each other." For aficionados of Rossetti and Beerbohm, the task of distinguishing the two will pose few problems. Other readers, however, may require more background on the inter-relationship between *Rossetti and His Circle* and the novel, for which, Hall observes, Max's drawings can "to some extent" be regarded as illustrations, especially since he does not in his contextual notes to the twenty-three drawings normally