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## Crossing the Generation Gap: The Relationship of William Holman Hunt With Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, Dante Gabriel Rossetti has been seen as the main, if not the sole, force behind the genesis of the second generation of Pre-Raphaelitism. He has been characterized as the "link man of the two movements" (Mander, 170), and interpretations of the relationship between the two generations of Pre-Raphaelites have generally been framed in terms of Rossetti's effect on Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.<sup>2</sup> However, the interactions between Burne-Jones and Morris and the three most prominent members of the original Brotherhood, Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, are highly complex. Although Rossetti's role was crucial in Morris's and Burne-Jones's artistic development, William Holman Hunt was an early hero of the younger men and continued to have contacts with, and influence on, them throughout their careers. An examination of the extent of these contacts and their repercussions will be the focus of this paper.

The standard scholarly treatment of relations between the two generations of Pre-Raphaelites is to depict Burne-Jones and Morris as "acolytes" of Rossetti (Doughty, 203). One biography of Rossetti goes so far as to describe the younger artists' work as "the first wave of Rossetti-ism" (Dobbs, 124). The catalogue for the 1984 Pre-Raphaelite Exhibit at the Tate Gallery refers to the second generation as the "Rossetti inspired phase of Pre-Raphaelitism," and states that it "excluded Hunt and Millais" (Tate Gallery, 157 and 23). Most works on Morris and Burne-Jones follow this general line.

The explanation for this attitude is complicated. In part it is due to the overwhelming primacy of Rossetti in Pre-Raphaelite scholarship. The comparative paucity of discussions of Hunt's and Millais's work has allowed them to be generally ignored after the breakup of the original Brotherhood. Furthermore, the paint-

ing of the Oxford Union murals, which was organized and led by Rossetti, has commonly been described as the starting point of the second generation. This event provides a colorful and convenient way to introduce Morris and Burne-Jones into Pre-Raphaelite studies and, of course, in doing this, Rossetti's influence is given prominence. In addition, a large amount of primary material pertaining to the relations between Burne-Jones and Morris and Hunt has not survived or is scattered in collections throughout Britain and the United States.

The sources which do still exist, however, give us a very different picture of the interaction between the two Pre-Raphaelite groups. While Rossetti was indeed highly influential, Hunt had a close relationship both socially and professionally with Burne-Jones and Morris for over forty years. Morris and Burne-Jones first became aware of the Pre-Raphaelites while students at Oxford. Even before they had seen any of these painters' work, they had been excited by John Ruskin's descriptions of it in his Edinburgh Lectures. Morris discovered the lectures and "for many days we talked of little else but paintings which we had never seen" (*Memorials*, vol. I, 99). In the lectures, Ruskin, although mentioning Rossetti, concentrated on Hunt's and Millais's work. Thus, their initial introduction to the Pre-Raphaelites focused on Hunt and Millais.

Burne-Jones's and Morris's first direct contacts with Pre-Raphaelite art were also with paintings by Hunt and Millais. The work of the two painters was immediately admired by the younger men, and they avidly sought out examples of their work. The first Pre-Raphaelite painting they actually saw was Millais's *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, which was shown in the window of an Oxford art dealer in 1854. This painting had an enormous impact upon them (*Memorials*, vol. I, 99).