

“WHITE WEEDS WAVING WILDLY OVER FIELDS OF TEA.
WHAT A PRETTY THING TO SHOW TO P.R.B.”:
THE *INDO-MALAYAN MUSINGS IN VERSE* OF
CYRIL B. HOLMAN-HUNT

Aviv Ben Eliezer

It is a well-known story that Cyril Holman-Hunt's birth in Florence, Italy, on 26 October 1866 subsequently led to the death of his mother Fanny Waugh, who suffered from miliary fever and died less than a month later. In his grief, William Holman Hunt burdened the newborn with the middle name *Benoni*, “son of my sorrow” in Hebrew. The situation of the infant (who was born with a slight head injury from which he recovered, and was subject to neglect by two wet-nurses) seemingly improved after his father married Cyril's aunt Edith Waugh in 1875, granting the child with a family, which spent the last two decades of the nineteenth-century living on and off between London and Jerusalem.¹ Despite the familial stability, Cyril was the subject of resentment and somewhat hostility throughout his childhood by his stepmother, who was jealous of his relationship with his father, and, therefore, constantly and childishly struggled to win William's affection at Cyril's expense (Amor 227). Additionally, the birth of Cyril's step-siblings, Gladys (1876) and Hilary (1879), may have strengthened the alienation that Cyril must have felt within the family structure. All siblings, however, shared a joint mission of assisting their parents with their art, by modelling for several of Hunt's paintings, as Cyril (then as an only child) had also modelled as the main figure of Edith's *Interior of William and Edith Holman Hunt's House in the Street of the Prophets, Jerusalem* (1876-81), also known as *An English Home in Jerusalem*. In contrast to the Pre-Raphaelite habit of turning from an artist's model to an artist, Cyril at adolescence did not present any significant interests in the arts.² His path, however, had been paved for a career as a physician. He was educated at Harrow and at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took a three-year medical course, only to forsake the medical profession (much to his father's dismay) after working for twelve months at St. Thomas's Hospital (Wright 411; Venn 490). The next phase in Cyril's biography and career is a