

Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity. Dianne Sachko Macleod. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 530 pp. 74 illus. ISBN 0-521-55090-4, \$95./£65.

The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910. Ed. Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone. London: Tate Gallery, 1997. 304 pp. ISBN 2-08-013643-7, \$55.

A highly original and important topic, without equal or competition among existing books, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class* marks an important stage in the evolution of Victorian scholarship as well. Twenty years ago few scholars were interested in the subject of patronage, while today it is rightly one of the hottest subjects in the field. Macleod devoted several years of arduous research to this book, and her diligence is self-evident, e.g., in her prodigious culling of archival sources of different types--from the more predictable libraries, city registers, and gallery or museum files to obscure pharmaceutical and business directories, society minutes, and other records. Hers is a bold as well as fresh approach to the interconnections between culture and its commodification of objects, thereby inextricably linking the fates of artists, buyers, and dealers. Her data and analyses of about a hundred collectors are ground-breaking, and she skilfully interweaves recent scholarly writings and theories (from Foucault to Codell) into her own rich tapestry of ideas and issues about the social backgrounds of collectors, their relationships with artists, and the constant redefinitions of taste and cultural norms during the long Victorian period. In doing so she refutes many commonly held stereotypes about Victorian collectors, e.g., as always first-generation, self-made men who were bourgeois and ill-educated. The lack of homogeneity among middle-class art buyers is a primary discovery well supported by demonstrations of how different periods (mid-century vs. late) constantly reformed identities of the middle-classes *vis-a-vis* art.

The first chapter is devoted to nouveaux riches vs. the new order, examining several early Victorian collectors such as Jacob Bell, Robert Vernon, John Allnutt, and others in a combination of intellectual biography and cultural profile. Macleod ponders how one of their key artistic preferences--narrative pictures--reflected their common interest in the subject of the virtues of modern life. Macleod argues that there is a certain self-recognition factor in such subjects that added to the appeal of the paintings' labour-intensive technique. She introduces salient issues of how supply and demand began to dictate a growing market for artists' replicas of their own work, a theme continued in later chapters, along with artists' growing participation in the commodification and commercialization of their own work.

Chapter Two assesses the distinctive "personalities" and cultural attributes of two very Victorian metropolises: Birmingham and Manchester. Using the landmark Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 as a partial yardstick, Macleod highlights how the