

William Rossetti's Art Criticism: The Search for Truth in Victorian Art by Julie L'Enfant. Lanham, N.Y: University Press of America, 1998. xiii, 374 pp. 40 illus. ISBN 0-7618-12903-3. \$46.00.

This is, in many ways, a valuable book for those interested in nineteenth-century art criticism or William Michael Rossetti's career. Written as a doctoral dissertation and seemingly not revised greatly for book form, it has a wealth of research from archival material, especially from the extraordinary Angeli-Dennis papers in the University of British Columbia Special Collections. It also contains material from nineteenth-century periodicals not in Rossetti's *Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary* of 1867 nor reprinted anywhere else. To be of optimal value, this book should be read with William Rossetti's *Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary* and *Some Reminiscences* which fill in gaps in the information about Rossetti's art criticism and his activities.

William Rossetti's Art Criticism is organized chronologically with a brief introductory chapter on his life. Chapter 2, on his work as Pre-Raphaelite critic from 1850-56, is interesting and well documented with new material. Chapter 3 details the influence of International exhibitions 1855-62 and their relationships to "the British School." Chapter 4, although rather diffuse, is valuable for William's interest in Japanese art from 1863 on, possibly the first review in England on Japanese illustrated books and colour prints. Chapter 5, entitled "Rossetti and Revivalism," reveals William's attitude towards French painting, which, surprisingly enough, was admiring and laudatory. He considered it the best in the world, going so far as to say that most viewers see the French as superior in drawing but few realize that they are actually better in all aspects of painting. In this chapter William's views on Delacroix, the classical revival in England, and Gothic revivalism, especially that of the Pre-Raphaelites, are discussed. The concluding chapter on "Aesthetic Realism" gives excerpts of his reviews of the Grosvenor Gallery (1877-91) and the Dudley Gallery (1865-82). On the whole, while William admired the style of Burne-Jones and others, he felt that the works did not have sincere ideas to present or truth to nature, two important criteria in his judgement.

The main problem with *William Rossetti's Art Criticism* is that William's criticism is prosaic, pedestrian, and lacking in persuasive exposition, a fault it shares with the book itself. William was a fine and responsible individual who, from the age of fifteen, was the mainstay of the Rossetti family income. He worked at the Inland Revenue Office from 1845 until his retirement, certainly a prosaic, even numbing, occupation, and was the only member of the Rossetti family, with the possible exception of his mother, who had much common sense and a sense of financial responsibility. He met numerous crises of the family stolidly and solidly but lacked the imagination, wit, and inspired writing of both Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti. It is telling that when William wanted to publish a second volume of criticism with Macmillan they declined on the grounds that his first book