

## SCHOLARLY RESOURCES: THE PRE-RAPHAELITES IN CANADA

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One of Max Beerbohm's most perceptive caricatures in *Rossetti and His Circle* (1922) depicts an obese Oscar Wilde, decked out in black plush knee britches, silk stockings and "low-water" shoes, and a coloured satin bow cravat – holding in his hand the conventional Aesthetic lily. Under the stolid scrutiny of a flag-bedecked portrait of Abraham Lincoln that adorns the wall on his right, Oscar addresses an assembly of dour farmers and country bumpkins, seated both behind him on stage and before him in the audience, who are hearing uttered for the first time in the western United States the name of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The verbal counterpart to this iconographic spoof is Justin McCarthy's article "The Pre-Raphaelites in England" that appeared in the *Argosy* in June 1876, in which McCarthy poses the single crucial, if facetious, question about the Pre-Raphaelites: "Who is Pre-Raphael?" In tandem, these two vignettes, have always epitomized for me the initial response I often received from fellow Americans and Canadians alike after I emigrated to this country in the mid-'50s whenever I revealed that my area of specialization was the Pre-Raphaelites: The WHO?

The above anecdote in no way implies that either the Pre-Raphaelites or the movement has been totally absent from the Canadian consciousness. As Charles F. Comfort, former Director of the National Gallery, pointed out in his foreword to the catalogue of the Gallery's loan exhibition of *Paintings and Drawings by Victorian Artists in England* (1965), it was Princess Louise, the daughter of Queen Victoria and wife of the Governor General of Canada, the Marquess of Lorne, who in the 1880s persuaded Watts, Millais, and Leighton to present their works to the newly formed National Gallery of Canada, all three of which were hung in the Victorian exhibition, along with the two other major Pre-Raphaelite works among the Gallery's treasures – Holman Hunt's *Portrait of Henry Wentworth Monk* (1858, acquired as early as 1911) and Rossetti's *The Salutation of Beatrice* (purchased in 1967). While Leighton's *Sansone* (c.1858, gifted in 1883) is a smallish, not particularly distinguished oil, Watts regarded *Time, Death, and Judgement*, one of his "pictures of ideas" (presented on the occasion of the Queen's Golden Jubilee),