

THE GREAT PRE-RAPHAELITE PAPER CHASE: A RETROSPECTIVE

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More than three decades have passed since I invented the field of Pre-Raphaelite studies, and I thought it might be appropriate in this keynote address to the Armstrong Browning Library conference on "The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle" to retrace for you some of the highlights of those years by way of a retrospective anecdotal account of my personal involvement with the Pre-Raphaelites: where I came from, where I am, and how I got here.

As a bibliographer, editor, and reluctant book collector, I have maintained a systematic watching brief on both the new directions and developments in Pre-Raphaelite criticism and scholarship that have won for the field a gradual, if sometimes grudging, academic respectability, and on the multifarious other activities, such as conferences, societies, serial publications, auction sales, exhibitions, booksellers' catalogues, and ephemera that reflect and promote the increasingly widespread popularity of the movement. The growth industry that I last surveyed in "Pre-Raphaelitism Revisited: Dr. Frankenstein Reprograms the Monster" at the *JPRAS* seminar at MLA in 1987 has since that date been steadily bullish: Pre-Raphaelite stock, as a recent *New Yorker* cartoon showing a TV news anchor reporting a 15% increase indicates, has never been higher, an assessment confirmed by the attendance at this conference.

Malcolm Warner, now keeper of Prints & Drawings at the San Diego Art Gallery, who has been engaged on a catalogue raisonnée of Millais for almost as long as I have been working on the new edition of Rossetti's letters, said to me when we first met in Chicago a few years ago, "It's like meeting Moses!" Modesty precludes my accepting his analogy, for, while on occasion, largely owing to a series of "Mack-the-knife" reviews for which I have become undeservedly famous, I may have served as the "Sorcerer's Apprentice," the Moses of the Movement was not I, but William Michael Rossetti, without whose contribution to Pre-Raphaelite scholarship none of us would be here this evening. I should like to dedicate this lecture to him. In another venue, I might propose a Bacchanalian toast to his memory; but on this occasion – here, at Baylor, where tamer libations prevail – I am constrained by Dionysus' incredulous response to his wife, Ariadne, in Garrison

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