

“REPLETE WITH MEANING”:
THE EXHIBITION PAMPHLET FOR
W. HOLMAN HUNT’S *THE TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS*

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Dedication: to the memory of Frank Taylor and Mrs. Elizabeth Burt Tompkin.

Introduction

As I pointed out in the introduction to William Holman Hunt’s 1873 exhibition pamphlet for *The Shadow of Death*, which appeared in this journal with a transcription of the pamphlet five years ago (Landow and Landow 5), these introductions to Hunt’s single-painting exhibitions have great value for students of this artist, of Victorian painting, and of dealers like Ernest Gambart and Thomas Agnew, who found a way to create what was essentially a mass market for unique art objects. The fifteen-page pamphlet entitled *The Triumph of the Innocents* divides into two parts, the “Epitome” and “Description in Detail,” the second of which explains what the painter wanted his audience to understand about his work and his experience while painting it. Unlike his pamphlet for *The Shadow of Death*, the larger part of this one is written in the first person, making it explicitly autobiographical.

Unlike the earlier *The Shadow of Death*, a work of ethnographic realism combined with elaborate biblical symbolism, *The Triumph of the Innocents* does not simply rely on a realistic depiction of the objects and setting Hunt had experienced in the Holy land. In *The Shadow of Death*, Hunt’s use of biblical typology to “elevate materialism” combined spirituality with a realistic style of painting – a style, that is, whose details could be verified by comparison with actual objects – but the spirituality lay as it were beneath the