

## REVIEWS

*Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* by Herbert Sussman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. ISBN 0-521-46571-0, \$57.95.

*The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* by J. B. Bullen. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998. ISBN 0-19-818257-0, \$65.

These two books approach art and literature in early Victorian England from the perspective of gender studies and body theory. Both are wide ranging and consist of four essays that revolve around a general theme but can be read separately. Both books attempt to enhance our understanding of the period and its artistic productions.

Herbert Sussman takes concepts of masculinities as his starting point for individual discussions of Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and Walter Pater. "Manhood" is the behavioral state of rigorously controlled and disciplined manliness achieved (but not necessarily continuously maintained) by the Victorian bourgeoisie through "arduous public and private ritual" (13). "Manliness" refers to contemporary social constructs, and "masculine poetics" similarly signifies a construction, as opposed to an essentialist idea of "male poetics" or related fantasies of "maleness." Manliness is concerned with containment of what was perceived as potentially destructive energy inherent in men, a kind of outwardly controlled stasis as defined in the early Victorian period. These distinctions are important and are precisely stated in the introduction. In fact, both books deal with the concept of masculinities in the nineteenth century, in terms of the implication of multiple forms of the masculine in the period, continuously marked by instability and fluidity. There is no one definition, and the implied opposition to femininities is here conceived not as a binary relationship (as it has been in much recent scholarship), but more productively as one in which the various slippages of meaning, definition, and representation of the two terms are more evocatively expressed. Sussman writes that "applying such typologies of Victorian manliness ['gentleman,' 'prophet-sage,' 'professional man'] to artists and writers productively complicates the pervasive academic model that situates nineteenth-century gender conflicts solely within the binary of masculine/feminine" (14). The results of this productive complication are formations that challenge the normative definitions of manliness in Britain.

Most essential for our purpose here is Sussman's chapter on the Pre-Raphaelites. It is the longest and most wide ranging in the book. His contention is that in their work as a group, the PRB encapsulated ideas of manhood in their religious pictures (and imaging of Christ), scenes of captive women, and depictions of the male rescuer, the eventual aim of each artist being the development of a