The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel

Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries

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To Kitty and John Dunagan
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Triumphant yet saddened, defiant yet withdrawn, the gaze of the woman who rescues her husband from prison in John Everett Millais’s *Order of Release*, 1746 polarized critics when it first appeared in the Tate Gallery in 1853. Whereas some of them applauded the poignant expression of the emotional conflict registered in the rescuer’s face, others decried the transgression of conventional gender boundaries in this Pre-Raphaelite representation of a narrative scene in one of Walter Scott’s novels. The critic of *Fraser’s Magazine*, for instance, affirmed, “the picture is entitled to unqualified praise for the subtilty [sic] with which it seizes upon the conflict of feelings engaged in the moment of profound emotion it embodies. We still see in her eye the fear that has harassed her—she is not quite sure of his liberty—we read the whole story of her struggles, and sorrows, and heroic endurance, in that hectic flush mounting upon the pallid cheek.”1 John Eagles’s objections, on the other hand, echo those of contemporary critics who voiced anxieties over the Pre-Raphaelites’ destabilizations of gender constructs: “Instead of the eye dimmed even with a tear,” he protested, “it looks defiance, as if she had contested at some previous time the matter with the jailer, and looks a triumph, as much as to say, ‘I’ve won, and so pay me.’ ” Instead of displaying feminine tenderness, “she is the hardest looking creature you can imagine: Her under lip . . . is thrust out to a very disagreeable expression.” In conclusion, he regretted the reversal of conventional gender roles the painting represents: “[I]t is wrong so to exhibit the released man. The painter should have considered that he should be shown worthy a reprieve—that he was, after all, a fine manly fellow.”

Millais’s reconfiguration of a narrative scene into a painting is representative of the Pre-Raphaelites’ ability to express in pictorial form gender issues that continue to preoccupy us. Simultaneously *The Order of Release*, like numerous other Pre-Raphaelite paintings, depicts the coalescence of the verbal and the visual and the extension of temporal and spatial boundaries. The convergence of the verbal and the visual was not limited to Pre-Raphaelite painting or poetry but also transpired in yet
another important genre—the Victorian novel. The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel explores the coalescence of the visual and the verbal, that is, the reconfigurations of notable Pre-Raphaelite paintings within the Victorian novel and examines some of the most significant gender issues this convergence involves.

During the last four decades, we have witnessed a great deal of work in the area of gender. This work has taken place on political, legal, social, and cultural fronts. Among the many questions raised during this period is the question of definition. Many authors, scholars, activists, and reformers have argued that gender should not be defined once and for all. Rather, it should be rethought and renegotiated. The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel joins this argument but substantiates it historically and aesthetically. It shows that a great deal of what we have witnessed in recent decades has significant antecedents in the art of the Victorian period, specifically in the paintings of several prominent Pre-Raphaelites and the fiction of renowned Victorian novelists.

Very early versions of parts of the chapters that follow (in a completely different form) can be found in The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies (chapters 2 and 4), The Victorians Institute Journal (chapter 4), The Companion to the Victorian Novel, ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, and The Victorian Newsletter (chapter 3). I am grateful to the editors concerned for giving me the permission to rewrite the material.

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Introduction

When it comes to a sense of excitement, to making the heart beat faster, Pre-Raphaelitism ranks high among cultural phenomena and certainly has no equal in Victorian art. . . . It is a story with a strong element of romance, of youthful enthusiasm, opposition overcome, success beyond the wildest dreams of the original exponents. . . . The heady mixture of beauty, poetry, intellectual challenge and personal magnetism appeals today every bit as powerfully as it did during the movement's ascendancy, with the added edge that only nostalgia for a vanished age can give.¹

John Christian's succinct and exuberant comments on Pre-Raphaelitism explain only part of the fascination, excitement, and exquisite appeal that Pre-Raphaelite art generated in the past, continues to emanate in the present, and no doubt will stimulate in the future. Despite an initially hostile reception, that “heady mixture of beauty, poetry, intellectual challenge” gradually spread to all aspects of Victorian popular and high culture, including the novel. Reconfigured in diverse modes such as the sensation novels of Elizabeth Mary Braddon or the intellectual works of George Eliot, Pre-Raphaelite art became an integral part of most Victorian novels, conveying contemporary anxieties over various sociopolitical issues and capturing multiple perspectives on constructions of gender.

The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel explores the ways in which the Victorian novel was shaped by Pre-Raphaelite art. It focuses on the work of four prominent novelists, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, all successful in reaching a wide audience of diverse classes and therefore of varied educational achievement, aesthetic sensibility, and intellectual sophistication. The novels of these four authors reveal the rich and multifaceted complexity of the art of the Victorian novel, attested by innumerable scholarly works devoted to its interpretation. This book elucidates yet another facet of the exquisite intricacy of the Victorian novel, the
narrative reconfigurations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, understood and appreciated by Victorian readers in ways lost to us. Entries in the journals of these writers on Pre-Raphaelite art, as well as letters addressed to prominent Pre-Raphaelite artists or to other contemporary intellectuals, express these novelists’ great interest in and glorious delight over Pre-Raphaelite art. Although their comments differ considerably in scope and intensity, they all point to a common sense of excitement and awe at the sight of Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces. In a letter to Charles Norton in 1859, for instance, Elizabeth Gaskell, who crafted the intense emotions of her characters, is at a loss for words to express the overwhelming emotions and startling thoughts that William Holman Hunt’s and Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s paintings had stimulated in her: “I am not going to define & shape my feelings & thoughts at seeing either Rossetti’s or Hunt’s pictures into words; because I did feel them deeply, and after all words are coarse things.”

Like Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins was deeply affected by Pre-Raphaelite art throughout his career. Shortly after viewing Hunt’s exhibit in 1889, he burst into effusive praise in a letter to him, not merely admiring the beauty and splendor of his paintings but simultaneously underscoring his enormous appreciation of Hunt’s unique expression of human emotion, one of the principles that propelled the Pre-Raphaelite revolution against preestablished aesthetic notions: “As a painter of human expression, the most difficult of all achievements in your Art, there is not a man among your living English Colleagues . . . who is fit to be mentioned in the same breath with you.” As we shall see in chapter 3, Collins turned some of the most important Pre-Raphaelite painterly techniques he discusses in this letter into narrative strategies in his most successful novel, The Woman in White.

George Eliot’s response to the Pre-Raphaelites was even more complex than that of other Victorian novelists, the subject of chapter 4. “Art works for all whom it can touch,” she writes to Edward Burne-Jones after visiting his studio in 1873. “And I want in gratitude to tell you that your work makes life larger and more beautiful to me.” Fascination pervades a short entry in Thomas Hardy’s journal following his visit to the Grosvenor Gallery in 1878: “June 8. [1878]— To Grosvenor Gallery. Seemed to have left flesh behind, and entered a world of soul.” As these few short entries suggest, Pre-Raphaelite art captivated literary artists, inspired them, and compelled them to reconfigure some of the most notable and popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings in their own ways into narrative images of intense emotions, emotions that reflected multifarious cultural and social issues.

But besides these letters, contemporary reviews of Pre-Raphaelite paintings disclose the complexity of the issues Pre-Raphaelite art
involved and generated in British culture and society. Seemingly objections to the Pre-Raphaelites' defiance of the preestablished principles of art upheld by the Royal Academy, derogatory comments in these reviews often conceal and reveal anxieties about the Pre-Raphaelites' transgressions of conventional gender boundaries. Referring to the Pre-Raphaelite paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1850, the critic of Athenaeum, for instance, protested: “Abruptness, singularity, uncouthness are the counters with which they play for fame. Their trick is to defy the principles of beauty and the recognized axioms of taste.” In this respect this review was typical in interweaving without distinction aesthetic principles with representations of gender, subsumed under aesthetic categories such as beauty and taste.

In addition to new ways of representing gender, the revolutionary and innovative spirit of Pre-Raphaelite art initiated new approaches to perceptual and psychological realism, new ways of seeing, of feeling, of expressing emotions. By evoking popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings that readers had seen either in galleries or in engravings of illustrated magazines and newspapers, Victorian novelists established a common ground with them, interweaving the fictional with the actual in ways that often blurred the borderline between the two realms. At the site of these reconfigurations, where the fictional merged with the actual, readers were drawn into not merely hypothetical issues but also into questions confronting them in their quotidian lives.

In her recent work, Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Alison Byerly discusses several reasons for the nineteenth-century literary artists' fascination with the visual arts. By comparing landscapes to works of art, she points out, Romantic writers attempted to validate the status of poetry as art; by alluding to works of art, realist novelists established “an imaginative space where the fictional world and the real world came together” (121). Byerly's discussion of the relation of literature to the visual arts may explain one of the reasons for the Victorian novelists' tendency to reconfigure Pre-Raphaelite paintings in their novels.

Over the years the relation of literature to the visual arts has been extensively discussed. Yet the particular intersection of Pre-Raphaelite art and the Victorian novel has been noted in only a few brief studies. The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel focuses on this intersection exclusively, providing several reasons for this phenomenon, one of which is that the Pre-Raphaelites' aesthetic and sociopolitical concerns neatly dovetailed with those of the Victorian novelists. Rather than relying merely on ekphrasis, the novelists discussed in this book reconfigured popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings and in the process engaged their readers.
in contemporary debates on cultural and sociopolitical issues, more specifically on aesthetics, class, and gender.

A brief overview of Victorian reviews of literature or painting points to the contemporary bias for the amalgamation and expansion of the temporal and spatial arts rather than their separation and limitation, which Lessing had championed in his seminal *Laocoön*. In her recent work, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, Kate Flint shows that Victorian critics of painting tended to “read” paintings, relying mostly on verbal rather than on visual terms. This intersection of the spatial and temporal arts, however, was not limited to critical responses to painting but was also a common occurrence in reviews of the novel. Whereas reviewers early in the century drew rather general affinities between the novel and painting, later on they often sought in narratives techniques employed in the visual arts. Referring to the controversial subject of Gaskell’s *Ruth*, for instance, a critic contends that “the extent of the canvas should bear some proportion to the dimensions of the picture.” Yet another, speaking about the novelist’s obligation to represent life truthfully, applauds Gaskell’s realistic treatment of Ruth’s story: “The sadder you say the world is, the sadder I must paint it. Woe be indeed unto me, if for the paltry sake of artistical effect, I tamper with its sadness, darken its shadows, exaggerate its miseries, so that the original shall no more be recognized from the portrait.” In an article on Wilkie Collins, published in *Fortnightly Review* at the end of the century, A. C. Swinburne compares Collins’s novels to those of his godfather’s pictures: “All the works of Wilkie Collins which we remember with pleasure are works of art as true as his godfather’s pictures, and in their own line as complete.”

What often strikes us as paradoxical in some of these reviews is the critics’ objection to the novelists’ tendency to “merely” write, which is exactly what we assume they were to do. R. H. Hutton, for instance, reviewing *Daniel Deronda* in 1876, criticizes George Eliot for devoting a great part of her novel to studying rather than painting Daniel Deronda’s character: “[S]o much pain has been expended on studying rather than on painting him.” Similarly, W. H. Mallock objects to Eliot’s disinclination to “paint” her novel, protesting that she “has ceased to use her brush at all, and has left the whole in the condition of shadowy sketches.” A. V. Dicey further elaborates on this point, conjecturing that even Eliot herself was unhappy with her heavy reliance on a verbal rather than a visual representation of Daniel Deronda: “The author, too, is dissatisfied, and, returning again and again to the hero’s character, retouches a portrait which the very painter seems hardly to consider a likeness. When dealing with minor characters, or carried away by the stress of the drama, George Eliot falls back on artistic instinct and paints with a bold hand.”
From the beginning of his career, Thomas Hardy drew attention to the relation between the novel and the visual arts through his novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* with the subtitle “A Rural Painting of the Dutch School.” Certainly the reviewers followed his lead. *The Saturday Review*, for instance, notes that “the author has produced a series of rural pictures full of life and genuine colouring.”\(^\text{17}\) In a review of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the *Spectator* questions the verisimilitude of the novel, for it lacks a “picture of the scenery and ways of life” and a “picture of the human beings who give the chief interest to that scenery and those ways of life.”\(^\text{18}\) At the end of the century *The Savoy*, reviewing *Jude the Obscure*, discussed Hardy’s ability to paint nature and morals: “[I]t is clear how the artist who has trained himself to the finest observation of Nature cannot fail, as his art becomes more vital and profound, to paint morals. The fresher and more intimate his vision of Nature, the more startling his picture of morals.”\(^\text{19}\)

Clearly, contemporary reviews of the Victorian novel point to a set of pictorial demands placed on novelists, expected not only to be masters of the art of narrative but also to be familiar with the visual arts. Knowledge of classical or contemporary art was not enough; they were additionally expected to understand painterly techniques to such an extent as to be able to employ them in their narratives or, even further, to transform pictorial into narrative techniques. Under the circumstances, then, it was impossible for any writer to disregard the initial turmoil the Pre-Raphaelites engendered in British culture. Apart from their notoriety and later their popularity, which attracted critical and popular attention, the Pre-Raphaelites initiated unorthodox techniques and unconventional subjects extending aesthetic and social boundaries and creating a magnificent realm of beauty and splendor. Simultaneously they offered various ways to meet the contemporary demand and satisfy the longing for the visual in the verbal.

From the very beginning, Pre-Raphaelite art involved the interplay of poetry and painting, the verbal and the visual. The short-lived, Pre-Raphaelite publication, *The Germ*, highlighted its interdisciplinary nature in its subtitle, *Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art*. After the first two issues, the new title emphasized its intertextual nature: *Art and Poetry, Being Thoughts Towards Nature, Conducted Principally by Artists*. If we consider the critical response to the change of the original title, Lindsay Smith suggests, we may perceive the new title as an attempt to destabilize the categories of art and poetry: “It [the title] is a blatant advertisement for a radical intertextuality that presents the journal as questioning its categorization as discourse. And in this sense it may be regarded as, in effect, a self-parodic intervention into the rigidity
of genre division, and into the sister arts analogies of reviewers." The Pre-Raphaelites then from the beginning of the movement had emphasized the extension and intersection of spatial and temporal boundaries. In essays on history, aesthetics, literature, and art, as well as in poems that translated pictorial into verbal texts, *The Germ* thoroughly explored the relationship between visual art and literature. Rossetti's compositions in this journal, particularly his "Sonnets for Pictures," reflect his early attempts to translate painting into poetry and thus achieve not only a destabilization of hitherto established boundaries between visual and verbal texts but also new syntheses of the spatial and temporal arts.

The intertextual nature of subjects continued to distinguish Pre-Raphaelite paintings from the beginning of the movement to its very end. The Lady of Shalott, for instance, made her first appearance in the Moxon edition of Tennyson's poetry and continued to inspire Pre-Raphaelite painters like Waterhouse even as late as the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the "common enthusiasm" for John Keats's poetry, William Holman Hunt recalls, that brought the three founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood together and later served as the inspiration for several paintings. Contemporary critics such as John Ruskin and David Masson described the Pre-Raphaelites as poetical painters. Twentieth-century critics, like Stephen Spender, continued to see the Pre-Raphaelites as literary painters whose inspiration was mainly "verbal, literary, poetic, rather than painting." Although Spender's interpretation is quite restrictive, as Elizabeth Prettejohn has recently demonstrated, it is quite applicable to a large corpus of Pre-Raphaelite art. Vibrant, sensuous paintings such as Millais's *Mariana* and *Lorenzo and Isabella*, Arthur Hughes's *April Love*, Rossetti's *Blessed Damozel*, Holman Hunt's *Lady of Shalott*, to name but a few, originated in poetry and illustrated the Pre-Raphaelite painter's vision of a moment, a scene, or a theme. Such literary paintings may be seen as attempts to make palpable and tangible impalpable and intangible verbal expressions or as challenges to ideological representations of gender.

Yet Pre-Raphaelite art was not limited to the well-known and extensively documented amalgamation of the poetic and the painterly. The Pre-Raphaelite convergence of the verbal and the visual transpired in yet another significant contemporary genre—the Victorian novel. Novelists as diverse as Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, whose philosophical and literary perspectives differed considerably, were all fascinated by the Pre-Raphaelites, corresponded with them, visited their studios, and frequently commissioned them to illustrate their novels. But beyond explicit visual illustrations that accompanied the text, the Pre-
Raphaelites entered the Victorian novel in more subtle and implicit ways. It is interesting to note that the relationship between Victorian novelists and Pre-Raphaelite artists was reciprocal. Paintings such as Holman Hunt’s *Rienzi* and *The Awakening Conscience* were inspired respectively by Bulwer Lytton’s *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes* and Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*.

The affinities of the Victorian novel with the sister arts have been the subject of extensive scholarship, particularly that devoted to William Thackeray, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel extends this kind of scholarship and concentrates primarily on representations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Victorian novel. In textual redrawings of these paintings, novelists often engaged readers in questions over restrictive, conventional gender boundaries. Simultaneously, readers became involved in contemporary debates on gender issues, seeing the sociopolitical contradictions that governed constructions of gender in Victorian England.

Never just a sympathetic or mildly antagonistic response but intense emotions, ranging from anger or anxiety to praise or enchantment have governed the critical reception of the Pre-Raphaelites’ representations of gender through the years. Since its inception Pre-Raphaelite art has been the locus of impassioned debates. Vituperative critical attacks reached their culmination in 1850, when the meaning of the monogram PRB became known and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was seen by a few critics as yet another religious or political group with a subversive agenda at a time of tumultuous sociopolitical activities. That year, Charles Dickens’s sarcastic denigration of the Pre-Raphaelites in general and John Everett Millais’s *Christ in the House of His Parents* in particular is representative of the hostile reception the first Pre-Raphaelite paintings received: “Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles’s.” Aesthetics and gender politics were involved in the critical reception of Pre-Raphaelite art from its very beginning and continue to be the controversial subject of critical studies.

Over one hundred years after its inception, the Pre-Raphaelites’ representations of gender constructs once again elicited emotionally charged responses. In “Patriarchal Power and the Pre-Raphaelites,” Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock berate the art historians’ responses to the 1984 Pre-Raphaelite Tate exhibit, the first major Pre-Raphaelite exhibit since the 1961 exhibition at the Maas Gallery: “The exhibition at the Tate and its accompanying publications offer no suggestion that such work [on
the constitution and culture of the British bourgeoisie] will even be inti-
mated in its procedures. Indeed, class, race and gender are systematically
erased from a discourse which none the less provides an affirmation of
bourgeois, sexist and racist ideologies.”27 Cherry and Pollock’s emotionally
charged response is reminiscent of the emotional upheaval that Pre-
Raphaelite paintings generated in their earliest viewers.

Ironically, the Pre-Raphaelites have recently been censured not for
their subversion but for their endorsement of Victorian gender constructs.
Instead of upbraiding the Pre-Raphaelites for their unorthodox representa-
tion of gender constructs, as some of the early reviewers had done, crit-
ics such as Cherry and Pollock have decried their stereotypical
depictions. Similarly, critics like Jan Marsh in Pre-Raphaelite Women:
Images of Femininity have often discussed Pre-Raphaelite images in terms
of feminine stereotypes. Most likely, the Pre-Raphaelites, especially the
ey early ones, who perceived themselves as rebels fighting the artistic and
sociopolitical establishment, would have winced at such accusations.
These recent responses to the Pre-Raphaelites as well as hundreds of
books devoted to their art demonstrate the lasting quality of Pre-
Raphaelite art, which has survived the centuries and is still as dazzling and
bewildering today as it was in its very beginning.

Today the controversy surrounding the Pre-Raphaelites has not sub-
sided but has taken on our own sociopolitical preoccupations. Class, race,
and gender are the primary lenses through which recent critics scrutinize
Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Such perspectives, however, are as steeped in
ideological battles now as they were more than a hundred years ago. Yet,
as Elizabeth Prettejohn in her recent Art of the Pre-Raphaelites contends,
most often recent perspectives on the Pre-Raphaelites

have shifted the responsibility for patriarchal bias, comfortably, away
from ourselves and on to the Pre-Raphaelite pictures. By unmasking the
misogynistic implication of Pre-Raphaelite pictures of women, we can
rail against Victorian patriarchal presuppositions with a complacent
sense of our own superiority. Indeed the case with which we find our-
selves able to decode the misogynistic meanings of Pre-Raphaelite pic-
tures seems to prove that misogyny is their problem, not ours. (297)

By projecting our own anxieties onto the Pre-Raphaelites, Prettejohn
claims, we tend to distance ourselves from our own complicity with gen-
der inequities. In the process, Prettejohn points out, we tend to overlook
the Pre-Raphaelites’ astonishing contribution to art and culture, not
only in Great Britain but also throughout the world. Yet even those writ-
ers embroiled in controversial responses to Pre-Raphaelite representa-
tions of gender, I believe, would agree that the Pre-Raphaelites expanded the limits of rigid Victorian morality and transgressed established gender boundaries.

The Pre-Raphaelites' resistance to conventional gender constructs was quite often interwoven with an astute understanding of human psychology, at times captured in representations of subjects in emotional turmoil. Their treatment of psychological subjects in turn is reflected in the multifarious interpretations their paintings to this day have received. Recent art historians have unraveled the nuances of meaning that Pre-Raphaelite images convey, they themselves transgressing interpretive boundaries that confine their meaning within racist and misogynist classifications. In just the last few years critics such as J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body*, Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, and Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art 1840–1920* have pioneered discoveries moving our understanding beyond the hitherto established parameters of psychoanalysis, feminism, poststructuralism, and deconstructivism. Dominated by the forces of the marketplace, the Pre-Raphaelites, like Victorian novelists, quite often hovered over the hazy borderline between the conventional and the unconventional. The belligerent response to their first paintings compelled them to adjust the choice of their subjects to the expectations of their spectators. Nevertheless the Pre-Raphaelites remained throughout their careers more progressive and liberal than their contemporary counterparts. Chapter 1 explores this hazy borderline between the stereotypical or conventional and the unconventional or progressive. In the conflation of the sacred and the profane, the pure and the fallen, the Victorian binary opposites governing conventional representations of femininity, Pre-Raphaelites achieved the extension of gendered boundaries and simultaneously revealed the inherent contradictions in prevailing norms. In chapter 1 I also examine the affinities the Victorian novel and Pre-Raphaelite art shared, specifically in perceptual, psychological, and poetic realism. This chapter concludes with the gender politics governing ekphrasis.

Like the Pre-Raphaelites who challenged prevailing subjects of representation, Elizabeth Gaskell chose Ruth, an unmarried, teenaged woman, for the heroine of her eponymous novel. Most Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the early years of the movement were unorthodox representations of conventional subjects. In her textual redrawings of popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Gaskell explores this convergence of the unconventional with the conventional in her contentious *Ruth*, the subject of chapter 2. Her representations of Ruth, like those of the Pre-Raphaelites, involve the conflation of and challenge to a specific contemporary binary—the fallen
woman and the Virgin Mary. In her reconfigurations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings of idealized versions of feminine beauty, Gaskell demonstrates that prevalent notions of ideal femininity sustain conditions for victimization. Her concern with the social conditions of victimization may explain her reconfiguration of a notable Pre-Raphaelite painting such as Ophelia, which displays the tragedy of an innocent victim, blending youthful features and vibrant female beauty with the fragility of a tragically premature death. Her own representation of the relationship between innocence and victimization, however, does not focus so much on inevitable tragic fate as on social conditions that are situational and as such ought to be changed.

In Pre-Raphaelite art, Wilkie Collins found a unique amalgamation of two quintessential and distinctive qualities of his work—realism and sensationalism. In chapter 3 I explore Collins's new modes of perception developed in The Woman in White, initiated by Pre-Raphaelite art, in connection to landscapes, identity formation, and the extension of conventional gender boundaries. In addition to themes for his novel, Collins found in Pre-Raphaelite paintings his primary narrative technique—the treatment of light and shade. This chapter presents a brief overview of early reviews of Pre-Raphaelite exhibits concerned with the Pre-Raphaelites' departure from traditional perspective and treatment of light and shade. The Pre-Raphaelite naturalistic and egalitarian, rather than artificial and hierarchical, representation of life made new demands on spectators, compelling them to see what traditional modes of perception concealed. To Collins, the Pre-Raphaelites were engaged in new ways of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world. In The Woman in White Collins develops these new ways of interacting with the world. In particular he situates his characters in Pre-Raphaelite scenes partially lit and partially darkened, in the process-evoking states of consciousness between waking and dreaming and forms of knowledge between the real and the imaginative. The Woman in White orients us toward a new perspective on Collins's challenge to gender constructs, inextricably bound with modes of perception initiated by his Pre-Raphaelite friends.

In chapter 4 I argue that the Pre-Raphaelites' impact on George Eliot's Daniel Deronda is significantly different from that on her earlier novels. As with her previous novels, in Daniel Deronda Eliot derives from Pre-Raphaelite pictorial techniques sources for her narrative strategies and from their subjects inspirations for her literary portraits. I maintain, for instance, that while she initially was more interested in developing the Pre-Raphaelite notion of the germ into an aesthetic theory of narration, she gradually developed it into an aesthetic that integrated narrative technique with social critique. What is new about this stage of her writing is the level of complexity she introduces to her already successful ways
of merging literature and painting. The new direction Eliot’s reconfigurations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings takes in her last novel may be partly explained by the fact that she met Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones just a few years before the composition of her last novel. A letter occasioned by her visit to Burne-Jones’s studio in 1873 records the new perspective she began to form toward his work, the relation between great drama and historical understanding. Thus, I argue, Eliot’s understanding of Pre-Raphaelite art at the time affected her previous interest in the relation between literature and painting and extended it toward history. Edward Burne-Jones’s *Wheel of Fortune*, I demonstrate, is the locus of the Pre-Raphaelite presence in *Daniel Deronda*, a vibrant illustration of her critique of the British Empire. As the novel progresses, we become aware that Gwendolen’s gambling and the sense of supremacy it fuels in her is paradigmatic of the colonialist ideology dominating the mid-Victorian years.

*Daniel Deronda* reveals that Eliot was aware that the contemporary interest in classical Greece and Rome dovetailed with colonialist and patriarchal ideologies. At a time when women’s status was gradually improving through the women’s movement and legislative measures, the turn to classical gender constructs expressed the contemporary resistance to women’s evolving roles. Unlike contemporary, classical subject painters like Frederic Leighton, Rossetti questioned patriarchal interpretations of classical figures like Pandora, Proserpine, and Astarte Syriaca through the sonnets he wrote for these paintings. Eliot reconfigures Rossetti’s representations of these goddesses and further questions her culture’s insistence on the universal and natural status of woman as man’s inferior. In her notebooks for her last novel we find records of the sensational accounts of African explorers in the 1860s dwelling on “superstition,” “bewitchery,” and “childish passion.” As it happens, Eliot implies, such are the qualities we may also find in Rossetti’s and Burne-Jones’s Pre-Raphaelite stunners of the 1860s and 1870s, which she reconfigured into images of Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda*. In images of beauty, evil, and magic, Eliot, like Rossetti and Burne-Jones, blends images of the primitive and the demonic with the civilized, blurring the demarcation between categories considered distinct. But her goal in her last novel differs from that of the Pre-Raphaelites. Through the contradictory representations of Gwendolen, George Eliot articulates and criticizes contemporary anxieties over crucial events, namely the question of women’s suffrage and the expansion of the British Empire, which determined conflicting attitudes toward women, often seen as the other. In her last novel Eliot saw otherness as a critical domain from which to refigure the self.
In the latter part of the nineteenth century even hostile critics recognized the Pre-Raphaelites’ remarkable contribution to British art. Ironically, what early critics had decried as a distorted, unhealthy depiction of reality, those in the later part of the century lauded as the healthy, Pre-Raphaelite principles that they often contrasted with the decadent aestheticism of the second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism. Chapter 5 includes an overview of the critical reception of the second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism, the aesthetic movement, led by Edward Burne-Jones. Here I focus on prevailing apprehensions over the destabilization of established gender boundaries that his paintings generated during the second part of the nineteenth century. Like the reviewers of the early Pre-Raphaelite pictures, some critics of Edward Burne-Jones’s paintings relied on pathological terms to protest his representations of unconventional gender constructs, particularly his recurrent representation of androgyny. In his hazy distinctions of gender Burne-Jones engaged his viewers in more problematic and puzzling ways of understanding gender constructs than did his Pre-Raphaelite predecessors, in whose paintings gender identity was readily understood. In seductive dreamscapes that seem completely removed from the gender politics of his era, Burne-Jones problematized gender constructs in representations of indeterminate androgyny.

Through subtle reconfigurations of Edward Burne-Jones’s androgynous figures such as Nimue and Merlin, Cupid and Psyche, Thomas Hardy, I contend in chapter 5, participates in contemporary debates on the “new woman,” often labeled “the bachelor girl,” who distinguished herself in that era by her rejection of marriage and her demand for equal rights. Like Burne-Jones, who places his androgynous figures in dreamscapes that appear to be removed from the sociopolitical sphere, Thomas Hardy experimented with the suspension of gender boundaries in the “dreamy paradise” Sue and Jude conjure, until crass reality completely annihilates their dreams and their lives, compelling them to seek shelter within the enclosure of conventional gender boundaries they had once spurned. Nevertheless, unlike Burne-Jones, who destabilized gender constructs by representing men and women as androgynous, Hardy, in his reconfigurations of Burne-Jones’s paintings, represented only Sue as androgynous. Through the representation of Sue’s intellectual power and her depiction as an androgynous figure, Hardy sustained feminism; yet, in her stereotypically feminine breakdown and eventual capitulation to convention, he thoroughly subverted it. Hardy’s contradictory perspective on Sue and Jude captured unresolved and puzzling questions about constructions of gender that are characteristic of the Victorian era.

I have limited the scope of The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel to four prolific Victorian novelists, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins,
George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, and to the four, most prominent Pre-Raphaelite artists, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and Edward Burne-Jones. The works of these literary and painterly artists were widely disseminated and as such represented and shaped salient aspects of Victorian culture.
Conclusion

After an extensive and thorough discussion of Lessing’s *Laocoön*, a work which he deemed indispensable to an understanding of the distinctions between temporal and spatial arts, Walter Pater declares in his *Renaissance* that each art has “an untranslatable charm.” Carrying the debate over the distinctions of the arts even further than Lessing, Pater states that at times an art may “pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term an *Andersstreben*—a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other forces.” Pater’s definition of *Andersstreben* may also be applicable to the convergence of the spatial and temporal arts in the Victorian novel—the narrative redrawings of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Through their intersection, the novels and Pre-Raphaelite paintings extended their own boundaries, added dimensions to each other, and created possibilities that each art lacked. Thus within the temporal dimension of the novel, by means of their narrative redrawings, the subjects of Pre-Raphaelite art acquired a voice and quite often a subjectivity that the spatial essence of painting had denied them.

The verbal portraits or scenes of the novels, on the other hand, were endowed with color and depth. Defying the novel’s fictional or temporal constraints, fictional characters seemed to have once inhabited the real world of the galleries, where readers visiting exhibits had first become acquainted with them. Yet the expansion of verbal and visual boundaries, achieved through the coalescence of the two arts, was not merely confined to the aesthetic realm but extended to the social sphere as well. Through their pictorial reconfigurations, narratives obtained a realistic foundation and thus more readily engaged their readers in their construction, in the process involving them in actual, not fictional, sociopolitical concerns. Narrative redrawings of Pre-Raphaelite representations of gender, perhaps more so than their visual counterparts, raised questions over circumscribed conventional gender roles (no longer relevant to contemporary
needs), offered alternatives and possibilities (at the time unavailable in the readers' actual lives), and created the desire for change.

Victorian novelists and Pre-Raphaelite artists, as we have seen, were concerned with the constraining sociopolitical limitations imposed on gender roles and often attempted to extend conventional gender boundaries. Contemporary denunciation of unconventional, Pre-Raphaelite representations of gender revealed intense anxieties over transgressions of traditional gender boundaries, slowly eroding by social protests and legislative measures. Whereas most Victorian novelists approved of the Pre-Raphaelite extension of these boundaries, they also saw and criticized the limitations of their representations.

At times male and women novelists perceived and interpreted these limitations in completely different ways. Women novelists, as their letters and notebook entries reveal, had directly and painfully experienced the crushing effect of conventional gender boundaries. The narrative reconfiguration of Millais's Mariana may serve as a case in point. In Collins's *Woman in White* Mariana is redrawn as Marian when Walter first sees her standing by the window gazing outside; from a distance, after erotically appraising her figure, he eagerly anticipates seeing her beautiful face. Like contemporary reviewers responding to Millais's painting, Walter is initially repulsed by her unattractive appearance. In his representation of Marian as Mariana, Collins transforms the Pre-Raphaelite pictorial technique of light and shade into his successful narrative strategy. Though he develops Marian into a more complex individual than the subject of his Pre-Raphaelite friend, Collins in this case does not fundamentally change Millais's *Mariana*. Marian's valiant resistance to conventional femininity throughout the novel ends in a regrettable acquiescence to a conventionally subsidiary role, "the angel" in Laura's and Walter's house. Our last encounter with Marian is beset with regrets over her confinement within the domestic sphere, which deprives her of the affirmation of subjectivity and the opportunity to become an agent of social change.

For Elizabeth Gaskell, however, Millais's *Mariana* becomes the locus of contemporary questions about women's oppression and the role of literary history in contributing to their victimization by entrenching gender stereotypes, thus stifling their individuality and depriving them of possibilities for meaningful social roles and actions. Her choice of Pre-Raphaelite paintings is a deliberate attempt to give voice to figures whose painted silence has promoted stereotypically passive femininity. Unlike Collins, Gaskell does not contain the redrawing of Millais's *Mariana* within a single narrative scene, but brushstroke by brushstroke, as it were, she reconfigures this painting on numerous occasions in the novel, each time for a different purpose. At the very beginning, for instance, Ruth is
Mariana’s reflection when we first see her illuminated by the light filtered through the stained-glass window. Shortly after this scene, Ruth, like Mariana, stretches wearily, exhausted by the cruel working conditions imposed on her and her fellow workers. In this case, however, Ruth is not Millais’s middle-class Mariana luxuriating in a solipsistic cocoon; rather, she becomes representative of thousands of women, seamstresses struggling for a meager living in unbearable conditions, exploited by their employers.2

Later, in her transposition of Millais’s Mariana, Gaskell also alludes to Tennyson’s “Mariana,” a poem that casts her in the stereotypical role of the abandoned lover who sees death as the only alternative. Unlike either Millais’s or Tennyson’s Mariana, who would have welcomed the return of their love, Ruth rejects Bellingham’s offer of marriage when she meets him years later, overcomes the boundaries of the domestic sphere, even the more pernicious constraints of ostracism, and becomes an agent of social change, “the light of the world.” Gaskell does not reconfigure either Mariana or Ophelia merely to establish a rapport with her readers but does so in an attempt to bring to the foreground conditions that both the paintings and the poem conceal. In the process, she underscores obstacles and limitations that, if they were understood as detrimental to social progress, she suggests, they could and should be rectified, for they would benefit not only the victimized but the privileged as well. The typhoid fever that spreads through Eccleston, for instance, eliminates class distinctions and barriers; Ruth, hitherto an outcast, becomes Bellingham’s rescuer and is reinstated in the community. Certainly one could argue that Ruth’s death at the end of the novel eradicates the possibilities Gaskell has explored; simultaneously, however, we cannot deny that the emotional turmoil at the end implicates the sacrosanct or the complacent readers who, unlike Benson, refuse to make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged and the victimized. Undoubtedly the intense pain the reader experiences at the end of the novel is an unforgettable call for action.

In her reconfigurations of Rossetti’s and Burne-Jones’s mythological and legendary figures, Eliot, like Gaskell, traces the limitations that art and literature place upon women. Her choice of Rossetti’s paintings of women like Proserpine, Pia dé Tolomei, and Astarte Syriaca, at once attractive and lurid, feminine and masculine, as representations of Gwendolen, captures her culture’s incongruous perspectives on women, which deny them any possible empowerment. Thus Gwendolen, deprived of education, in a culture that worships beauty, relies on her striking appearance to rescue her family from poverty by marrying Grandcourt, a man she finds repulsive. By juxtaposing Deronda’s development with that
of Gwendolen’s, Eliot highlights the lack of opportunities available to women of her time and the limitations that propelled them to acts of desperation that often turned victims into victimizers. Surprisingly, Gwendolen, unlike Ruth, or Maggie in The Mill on the Floss, survives in spite of the transgressions she has incurred. Indeed Eliot’s response to the hostile critics of the Jewish element in Daniel Deronda could very well also serve as her justification for Gwendolen’s triumphant survival: “But I was happily independent in material things and felt no temptation to accommodate my writing to any standard except that of trying to do my best” (Letters 6: 301–302).

Though somewhat subdued and dispirited, Gwendolen is still a powerful figure by the end of the novel; the irresolution with which the novel ends, regarding Gwendolen’s life, leaves room for speculation. Sue, however, is completely broken when we meet her for the last time. After an intrepid struggle against conventional boundaries of femininity, she collapses into the conventional and the stereotypical—the hysterical, nonsensical woman. Knowledge in the hands of Burne-Jones’s Nimue becomes a weapon for Merlin’s demise. Similarly, Sue’s self-education and by extension education for women, intensely advocated and debated at the time, Hardy intimates, leads to the transgression of gender boundaries, and woman’s femininity turns into terrifying androgyny, a psychological aberration, the cause of men’s and women’s physical and psychological disintegration.

Women and male writers then reconfigured Pre-Raphaelite paintings for various and complex reasons as this study has demonstrated. However, whereas male writers like Collins and Hardy, through their narrative reconfigurations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, quite often emphasized limitations for women, Eliot and Gaskell frequently explored possibilities. Representations of (stereotypical) literary women by Pre-Raphaelite women artists also depict possibilities rather than limitations for women. I have already intimated the difference between Millais’s illustration of Mariana and that of Marie Spartali Stillman, whose wistful gaze, by her open window, signals the possibility for self-renewal and liberation, denied to either Millais’s or Rossetti’s Mariana, both claustrophobically enclosed within the domestic sphere. Likewise, Julia Margaret Cameron’s Mariana is self-possessed and rather irritated by the lengthy wait, somewhat determined to disengage herself from the long ordeal. Unlike Millais’s Ophelia, who is helplessly drowning, Cameron’s looks neither insane nor desperate but rather self-assured. Like women writers of the time, women Pre-Raphaelite artists undermined literary stereotypes and through their works expressed possibilities for women rather than the restrictions their male counterparts often preferred to depict—a subject worth further exploration.
In The Pre-Raphaelite Body J. B. Bullen demonstrates the tremendous impact of the Pre-Raphaelites in British art between 1850 and 1880, emphasizing their liberal perspectives on gender issues: “Though from this distance they appear to be quintessentially nineteenth-century in their ideas and attitudes, at the time each phase, in its different way, seemed strangely defiant, and to be perversely working against the grain of contemporary forward-looking, progressive ideology. This sense of shock was enhanced by the fact that their impact extended beyond the canvas and onto the page. The changes they represented had analogues in literature and criticism” (216).

Taking the Pre-Raphaelites’ often unconventional representations of gender as their point of departure, Victorian novelists further pursued alternative constructions of gender. Thus Pre-Raphaelite art became an integral part of the Victorian novel, but its presence did not cease at the end of the Victorian era. Modern novelists such as D. H. Lawrence and postmodern ones such as John Fowles and, most recently, Tracy Chevalier in Falling Angels have relied on Pre-Raphaelite representations of women to enrich and vivify their literary portraits, leaving indelible memories in the recesses of their readers’ imagination.

Like Victorian readers, we may still go beyond the temporal boundaries of the Victorian novel and see in galleries today pictorial versions of characters or scenes. Certainly the Victorian novel enjoys a vibrant, dazzling afterlife.

The ever-shifting perspectives Pre-Raphaelite paintings offer within various contexts partly explain their enduring appeal. Such striking renewals take place not only within the walls of galleries but also on the pages of novels as Pre-Raphaelite paintings slowly emerge through the novelists’ narrative redrawings. In the process, the Victorian novel, the reading of which is today often seen as a formidable task for postmodern students, acquires the lush colors, the enchanting hues and the mysterious, fascinating expressions of Pre-Raphaelite subjects. Recent film adaptations of Victorian novels continue to establish our connection to the Victorian era, highlighting our preoccupation with similar concerns—identity formation, gender issues, and postcolonialist aggression, to name but a few.

We often tend to overlook the fact that the Victorian era, like our own, was a highly visual culture. This book suggests ways of channeling the twenty-first-century desire for the visual into explorations of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Victorian novel.
Notes

Notes to Preface


Notes to Introduction

Art and Literature in Britain, 1760–1900 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985); Corrado Federici and Esther Raventos-Pons, eds., Literary Texts and the Arts: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).


18. The Spectator (December 19, 1874), cited in Thomas Hardy and His Readers, 26.

19. The Savoy (October 1896), cited in Thomas Hardy and His Readers, 142.


25. Reviewers did not object to the avant-garde qualities of the first Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Rossetti’s *Girlhood of Mary*, Hunt’s *Rienzi*, and Millais’s *Isabella*, which were exhibited in 1849 with the PRB initials. However, the following year, when the meaning of the initials was revealed, they became vituperative. Michael Rossetti recorded some of them and related the particulars of the divulgence of the PRB meaning. See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters and a Memoir by William Michael Rossetti*, 2 vols. (London, 1895; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970), 1:146, 161.


**Notes to Chapter One**


4. According to Elizabeth Prettejohn, Pre-Raphaelitism was the first avant-garde movement in British painting (18–19, 64).


8. Although Millais, Rossetti, and Holman Hunt were the dominant figures of this originally secret society, Thomas Woolner, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens, and William Michael Rossetti were also members. Years later Hunt recognized Rossetti and Millais only as the founding members of the Brotherhood. See Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism, 2:437.

At the time, the idea of a brotherhood was not new. Throughout Europe and America artists banded together as early as in the period following the French Revolution in order to limit the power of the academies. See Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan, eds., Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000). Over the years, several anecdotes have recounted the choice of the name “Pre-Raphaelite.” See Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism, 1:100, 101, 2:437. See also John Ruskin, The Works of John Ruskin (library edition), ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 12:321, 322, 357.


11. Though the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood lasted only until 1853, it continued to influence British art until the 1920s. See J. B. Bullen, The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.


14. Millais’s Christ in the House of His Parents became the subject of so many debates and disputes that its notoriety attracted the attention of even Queen Victoria, who had it removed from the exhibition and brought to her for a special viewing. See William Fredeman, ed., The P.R.B. Journal: William Rossetti’s Diary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 1849–1853 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 71.

Notes to Chapter One

22. Quoted by Gordon Haight, George Eliot: A Biography (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 107. It is interesting to note that John Ruskin had compared Dutch to Pre-Raphaelite art and deemed it inferior. The Dutch artists, unlike the Pre-Raphaelites, Ruskin pointed out in “Realistic Schools of Painting: D. G. Rossetti and W. Holman Hunt,” a lecture delivered at Oxford on March 9, 1883, failed to give “the life and beauty of little things in lower nature” (Works 33:290).
27. Like other contemporary critics of the novel, George Eliot also used terms borrowed from the visual arts when reviewing other novels. See “History, Biography, Voyages, and Travels,” Westminster Review 67 (January 1857): 175.
29. According to Prettejohn, Modern Painters “was the only substantial original work on art theory that had appeared in England for decades, and arguably since Reynolds’s Discourses of 1769–90” (58).
31. As Barringer and Prettejohn have already observed, Ruskin’s letters to the Times marked the turning point in the critical reception of Pre-Raphaelite art (Barringer, 61; Prettejohn, 59).


59. Ibid.

60. See Arthur Marks, “Ford Madox Brown’s Take Your Son, Sir!”


64. Cited by Faxon, 67.


68. Ruskin interprets in detail the symbolic realism of the visual signifiers in this painting. See Works 12:334–35.


71. In his discussion of Lessing’s distinction between poetry and painting, J. T. Mitchell demonstrates that “the most fundamental ideological basis for his [Lessing’s] laws of genre” is actually the “the laws of gender.” See Iconology, 109, 110, 112. On the same subject see also his Picture Theory and Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).


73. George Eliot, Middlemarch, introd. A. S. Byatt (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213. In Eliot’s view a verbal portrait empowers the subject of visual art by endowing it with a voice, a quality the pictorial by its nature must deny. Thus Eliot anticipates recent critics, such as James Hefferman and Murray Krieger, who treat the relation between literature and the visual arts as paragonal, a conflict for dominance between the word and the image.
Notes to Chapter Two

2. Deirdre D’Albertis, Dissembling Fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 177. Elizabeth Gaskell herself recognized her warring and irreconcilable attributes, often manifested in her fiction. We can see these oppositions in one of her letters to Eliza Fox, in which she describes with humor and piquancy her guilt over the impending purchase of their new house, 42 Plymouth Grove:

One of my mes is, I do believe, a true Christian—(only people call her socialist and communist), another of my mes is a wife and mother, and highly delighted at the delight of everyone else in the house, Meta and William most especially who are in full extasy [sic]. Now that’s my “social” self I suppose. Then again I’ve another self with a full taste for beauty and convenience whh [sic] is pleased on its own account. How am I to reconcile all these warring members? I try to drown myself (my first self,) by saying it’s Wm who is to decide on all these things, and his feeling it right ought to be my rule, and so it is—only that does not quite do. (Letters, 108; April 1850)

5. For references to Rossetti see 397, 444, 485, 484b (Letters). See also Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 199–201, 221 n. 1, 241–42 n. 2. For references to Millais see 155, 211, 234a (Letters); for those to Hunt see 386, 394, 444, 646 (Letters); 184 (Further Letters).
8. Not all reviews were negative, as Gaskell suggests; in fact, quite a few of them were positive. See the following, for instance: G. H. Lewes, “Review of Ruth and Villette,” Westminster Review 3 (April 1853): 245–54; “Review of Ruth,” North British Review 19 (1853): 151–74; “Review of Ruth,” Prospective Review 9 (May 1853): 222–47.
10. Felicia Bonaparte explains some of the reasons for Gaskell’s intense identification with Pasley. Whereas the two women’s situations were entirely different, their lives, she notes, shared remarkable similarities: “As Gaskell lost her mother in infan-
cy, so Miss Pasley lost her father. As Gaskell's father then remarried, so in Miss Pasley's case did the mother. Gaskell's father banished Elizabeth. Miss Pasley's mother banished her, sending her to an orphan school. . . . Miss Pasley's mother did not write or visit her while she was in school just as Gaskell's father did not. . . . Here in Miss Pasley, who shared her history, was the very incarnation of an image that had become, in her own imagination, one of the major representations of her own daemonic double.” See The Gypsy Bachelor of Manchester: The Life of Mrs. Gaskell's Demon (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 83.

11. Ruth, chapter VIII. All references to Gaskell's novels are to the Knutsford edition and are cited in the text by chapter numbers.


13. Alaistair Grieve in the Pre-Raphaelites catalog notes that Rossetti had inscribed on the original frame his sonnet explaining the symbolism, while a second sonnet, referring to the picture's subject, was printed in the catalogue of the Free Exhibition of 1849 (Parris, 65). This latter sonnet was revised for the 1870 edition of his poems. The lines I have quoted were changed to the following:

This is that blessed Mary, pre-elect . . .
Unto God's will she brought devout respect,
Profound simplicity of intellect,
And supreme patience. From her mother's knee
Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;
Strong in grave peace. (“Mary's Girlhood,” 1, 4–8)

14. Barringer notes the underlying sexual overtones of the Ecce Ancilla Domini: “The improbably small, haloed dove, representing the holy spirit, and the half-hearted fire burning at Gabriel’s heels, are not sufficient to convince the viewers that this is a spiritual, rather than a sexual, encounter” (42). As Gaskell’s redrawing of this painting indicates, she was aware of its erotic quality. Anna Unsworth notes Gaskell's unconventional acceptance of Ruth's sexuality: “The apparent contradiction in Ruth's character between her 'living with her lover in North Wales and positively enjoying it' compared with the nobility and spiritual maturity she later shows, without there having been any process of 're-adjustment,' still puzzles modern critics, as it enraged Mrs. Gaskell's contemporary critics.” See Mrs. Gaskell: An Independent Woman (Montreux, London, and Washington: Minerva Press, 1996), 89. Commenting on the same issue, Malcolm Pittock observes, “Mrs. Gaskell is undercutting the basis of that sexual morality which no doubt she believed herself to be upholding. For what she is implying is that sexual relations outside marriage are not innately sinful, it is only society which makes us think they are. . . . Perhaps the furore the novel aroused had a more complex origin than mere disapproval of its subject matter.” See “The Dove Ascending: The Case for Elizabeth Gaskell,” English Studies 81 (6) (2000): 537.


17. Hughes recalled that “on the morning of the varnishing, as I was going through the first room, before I knew where I was, Millais met me. . . . [H]e said he had just been up a ladder looking at my picture and that it gave him more pleasure than any picture there, but adding also very truly that I had not painted the right kind of stream.” John Guille Millais, The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais (London: Methuen, 1899), 1:146.


20. In her interpretation of Ruth, Kate Flint points out that the ending of the novel, rather than being didactic as various critics have assumed, is an attempt to turn the reader's disappointment into the motivation for challenging “the assumptions which lie behind such conventions.” See Elizabeth Gaskell (Plymouth: Northcote Publishers, 1995), 28.

21. Quoted by Uglow, 217; Thomas Carlyle to ECG, November 8, 1848, John Rylands, MS 730/14 (ibid., 642 n. 5).

Notes to Chapter Three

1. Wilkie Collins brought to literature his unique background in law and art. His very first work, his father's biography, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq. R.A. (1848), deals with the life and art of his father, a successful landscape painter. His godfather, Sir David Wilkie, R.A., was also a renowned painter. Wilkie Collins himself studied art for several years; as William Clarke has observed, he “would have found it as easy to drift into painting as into writing; and without his father's somewhat oppressive personality, and his own independent streak, he might have done so.” See The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 9.

As early as 1851 Collins wrote for Bentley's Miscellany pieces connected with the visual arts. See Catherine Peters, The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 102. The figure of the artist is a recurrent character in his short stories and novels. See, for instance, Hide and Seek (1854) and The Law and the Lady (1875).

In Collins's letters we perceive his active interest not only in his Pre-Raphaelite friends' paintings but also in the reception of their work as well. At times the same journals, like the Athenaeum, for instance, published reviews of books and paintings. In a letter to Edward Pigot, where he suggests altering the arrangement of The Leader to include more space for the fine arts, he comments regretfully that Millais “is cut up in last week's Athenaeum, along with me.” See Letters 1:80 (January 12, 1852). For additional references to Millais, see Letters, 1:xxvi, 77 and note, 116, 117, 135, 140 and note; to Hunt, see Letters 1:184, 185n, 192, 202, 218, 255–56, Letters 2:302, 307, 365, 366, 485–86, 518, 521–22, 534, 550.


5. The Pre-Raphaelite women in white must have been particularly significant to Wilkie Collins, who met his own woman in white, Caroline Graves, in circumstances as sensational and mysterious as those surrounding Hartright’s meeting with Anne Catherick. Ironically, Caroline Graves, who had Collins’s children out of wedlock, was also considered a fallen woman by Victorian standards of morality. In his father’s biography published in 1895, John Everitt Millais’s son relates the dramatic incident of Caroline’s sensational appearance (Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, 1:278–81).

Wilkie Collins’s early biographers, Nuel Pharr Davis and Kenneth Robinson, conjecture that Collins’s extraordinary meeting with Caroline Graves served as the germ for the novel. William Clarke, however, is more skeptical. Catherine Peters, on the other hand, suggests that Caroline’s double identity might have suggested to Collins the merging of Laura’s and Anne’s identities (219). Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 163; Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 131; Clarke, Secret Life of Wilkie Collins, 92.

6. Like his Pre-Raphaelite friends, Collins created and shaped fallen women as distinct, individual figures rather than as types, ranging from the unrepentant Margaret Sherwin to the victimized Mary Grice, the repentant Sarah Leeson, the bewildered Lydia Gwilt, and the respectable Mrs. Anne Catherick.


13. In The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine (London: Palgrave, 2001), Deborah Wynne points out that the serialization of The Woman in White underscored the intersection of the real and the fictional through the publication of sensational crimes along with the installments of the novel (54).
16. Critics were outraged by the representation of Christ as a common man rather than a glorified figure. The Eclectic Review, for instance, denounced the painting as an example of the Pre-Raphaelites’ “utter neglect of form and elevation of type; that preference, in fact, for the revolting” (8). For details regarding the composition of the

17. Balee considers the Crimean war as the cause of this popular demand for a new ideal of womanhood: “Sensation fiction, and Marian’s creation, had everything to do with a social dilemma that had begun in England in the 1850s. This dilemma centered on a proliferation of single women, who, as men emigrated to the colonies or were killed in the Crimea, would never find mates, would never have the chance to become those maternal angels beloved by Victorian iconography. Something had to be done for and about England’s ‘surplus women,’ and Collins began to do it in the medium most likely to influence the millions—the serial novel” (199).


19. In Telling Tales (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002) Elizabeth Langland points out that the very quality, “asexual childishness,” that leads to the idealization of Laura Fairlie also facilitates her condemnation as madwoman (74–75).


Notes to Chapter Four


3. The germs of her first two works, for instance, were based on indirect impressions, narratives she had heard. In retrospect, Eliot seemed to be dissatisfied with Scenes of Clerical Life, in which she fictionalized the lives of actual clergymen; see John W. Cross, ed., George Eliot’s Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals (New York: Harper, 1885), 2:85. Eliot traces the genesis of Adam Bede to another indirect experience, a narrative she had heard, which also conjured the image of woman torn by a “collision” (ibid., 2:48–49). The germs of Eliot’s later works, however, were not stories she had heard, and they did not come with ready-made plots. For the germinal image of Silas Marner see Letters 2:427. A vivid visual experience in the British Museum, some fragments of glass “with dyes of sunset in them” (ibid., 3:70) most likely served as the germ of Middlemarch; see Andres, “The Germ and the Picture in Middlemarch” in English Literary History 55 (1988). The germ of The Spanish Gypsy most directly demonstrates the amalgamation of the visual and the verbal, for, as Eliot recalls, the story originated in Titian’s “small picture” of the Annunciation in the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice (Cross 2:30).

4. Haight, in George Eliot: A Biography, notes that “the germ of Daniel Deronda,

5. Contemporary paintings reveal the extent of the Victorian interest in the young woman gambling. Three popular paintings may have confirmed for Eliot the germ’s popular appeal. See, for instance, Alfred Elmore’s On the Brink (1865), William Powell Frith’s The Salon d’Or, Homburg (1871), and Millais’s Hearts Are Trumps (1872).


9. This is Croesus’s advice to Cyrus, king of the Medes (Baker Notebooks 3:191). Croesus’s career is for Herodotus an illustration of “nemesis or divine retribution for pride over prosperity”; see Herodotus, trans. George Rawlinson (New York: Modern Library, 1921, xii). At the zenith of his power Croesus had a conversation with Solon, who warned him about the mutability of human happiness (ibid., 19). Disregarding Solon’s advice, Croesus attacked the Persians, was defeated and taken as Cyrus’s slave (ibid., 48). Cyrus, in turn, disregarded Croesus’s warnings, attacked the Messagetae, and was killed (ibid., 114).

10. Critics such as David, Linehan, and Meyer note Gwendolen’s and Grandcourt’s imperialist tendencies. Both Meyer and Linehan concentrate on Zionism and the gender politics in the novel. Neither writer, however, deals with the novel as George Eliot’s response to prevalent contemporary arguments on imperialism or as her attempt to interweave the sociopolitical and the artistic—one of the tasks of this chapter. Deirdre David, Fictions of Resolution in Three Victorian Novels: North and South, Our Mutual Friend, Daniel Deronda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, 176); Katherine Bailey Linehan, “Mixed Politics: The Critique of Imperialism in Daniel Deronda” in Texas Studies in Literature and Language 34 (Fall 1992): 324.

11. According to Rylance, Blacks were associated with subhumans like Caliban “and therefore the Eyre arguments touched scientific controversy in the context of the evolutionary debates.” Rick Rylance, Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850–1880 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 156).


14. In her recent work, George Eliot and the British Empire, Nancy Henry discusses Eliot’s reviews of travel and exploration narratives, including Burton’s work. Both Eliot and Lewes, according to Henry, through their reviews of such travel narratives, contributed to “the centralizing process by which information arrived from the margins of [the] empire to be assessed and assimilated as colonial knowledge” (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 35).


16. In her interpretation of the sonnet Rossetti wrote for this painting Faxon notes that the first word “mystery” also begins his sonnet “For a Virgin and Child: by Hans Memmelinck,” written in 1849 (194–95). Eliot also blurs the demarcation line between good and evil in her opening question referring to Gwendolen’s gaze: “Was the good or evil genius dominant in those beams?” (3).


18. Eliot’s fascination with the myth of Medusa is evident in her major novels, where she reinterprets it moving away from the conventional meaning adopted by other contemporary writers and painters. In Adam Bede, as in the myth of Medusa, the victim, Hetty, not the victimizer, Arthur, is punished for transgression of social boundaries (430). Dark skinned, with “gleaning black eyes,” the precocious young Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss, early on refuses to abide by Victorian standards of femininity by cutting her unruly hair, “looking like a small Medusa with snakes cropped” (161). Later in the novel, when the magnetism between Stephen and Maggie becomes overwhelming, Stephen attributes his attraction to the power of Maggie’s defiant look and relies on the conventional dominant/subordinate binaries of the gaze to reason his way out of the labyrinth of desire (489–90, 522–23). Even Dorothea becomes a Medusa figure in Casaubon’s eyes when she innocently asks him when he intends to publish his work (139).

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Christopher Wood notes that Edward Burne-Jones “could never really accept the aesthetic philosophy that art existed only for art’s sake, and for no other purpose” (*The Pre-Raphaelites*, 112). The term “aesthetic,” as Sussman succinctly defines it, describes “an art practice in which self-contained formal qualities are privileged over social and ethical signification”; see *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 175). In his review of the 1877 Grosvenor exhibit, Henry James, referring to Burne-Jones’s paintings, distinguishes between the mimetic and the aesthetic by underscoring the lack of realism in the latter; see “Picture Season in London, 1877,” in *The Painter’s Eye*, ed. John L. Sweeney (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956, 144).
7. According to Christopher Wood, “Androgynous, almost sexless figures were to become a feature of Burne-Jones’s mature style, so there can be no doubt that both Swinburne and Solomon influenced his work in this direction. Burne-Jones converted it into something quite different, and quite his own, but it is an important element in his highly complex, eclectic style”; see *Burne-Jones: The Life and Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1833–1898* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998, 41).
11. See, for instance, L. M. Findlay’s “D. G. Rossetti in *Jude the Obscure*” in *Pre-Raphaelite Review* 2 (1978). Winnifred J. Assmann notes that Fancy Day’s physical appearance in *Under the Greenwood Tree* resembles that of the women of Pre-Raphaelite art and concedes: “As a Pre-Raphaelite beauty in a painting of the Dutch school, however, she seems out of place”; see “A Pre-Raphaelite Beauty in ‘Rural Painting of the Dutch School’: The Characterization of Fancy Day,” *Thomas Hardy Year Book* 25 (1988, 4). In “Hardy’s Dutch Painting,” Norman Page also claims that Fancy Day’s representation “strongly recalls the kind of Pre-Raphaelite type of female beauty that Hardy might have encountered . . . on the canvases of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood”; see *Thomas Hardy Year Book* 5 (1975, 41). More recently, Bullen points out that Eustavia Vye’s appearance resembles that of Astarte Syriaca (*The Pre-Raphaelite Body* 170). Hardy also identifies Sue with early Pre-Raphaelite representations of women when he describes her on the morning she is to wed Phillotson: “The bride was waiting, ready; bonnet and all on. She had never in her life looked so much like the lily her name connoted as she did in that pallid morning light” (445).
12. Cox recognizes Havelock’s essay as the most important article written on Hardy before the publication of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* “and one of the most notable during his lifetime” (103).
13. In the 1903 and 1912 editions of the novel Hardy revised “female human” of the 1895 edition to “female animal.” Arabella in Jude’s eyes is below the human species, yet he marries her. Ironically, by the end of the novel, she appears more perceptive than Sue herself about the nature of Sue’s attachment to her cousin. When Mrs. Edin informs Arabella that Sue claims to have “found peace,” Arabella astutely responds, “‘She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she’s hoarse, but it won’t be true! . . . She’s never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she’s as he is now!’” (408).


16. Critics have long debated the question of whether Sue or Jude is the protagonist of the novel. Though the story is told from Jude’s perspective and we know Sue only through others’ observations, quite a few critics privilege Sue as the leading character. Hardy himself seemed to shift the focus of the work when in 1897 he chose the titles “The New Woman” and “A Woman with Ideas” for the dramatic version of the novel; see Millgate, Thomas Hardy: Career as a Novelist (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994, 312).

17. Dale Kramer explains Gosse’s comments in terms of Sue’s possible homosexuality: “With present-day awareness of the psychological anguish caused by suppression of homosexual feelings, this potential aspect of Sue’s situation will reward a more coherently addressed scrutiny than any I have seen yet”; see “Hardy and Readers: Jude the Obscure” in The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 173). Shanta Dutta, however, suggests that Hardy was probably aware that by the end of the century sexologists were defining the New Woman as lesbian, but he takes care “to protect Sue from the charge of lesbianism”; see Ambivalence in Hardy: A Study of His Attitude to Women (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin’s Press, 2000, 114).

18. Kevin Moore comments that in this scene “Sue characterizes herself as [an] Epipsychidion mother-wife figure from whom Jude drinks a nourishing intellectual beauty.” He also contends that Hardy casts Jude as a Shelleyan type, identifying him with Alastor and Prometheus. Considering the allusions to Cupid and Psyche, Shirley Stave’s arguments that in Jude the Obscure “the mystical glimpses into the other world which the other novels offered have disappeared” and that Sue lacks “mythic grandeur” do not seem valid. Moore, The Descent of the Imagination: Postromantic Culture in the Later Novels of Thomas Hardy (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), 229; Stave, The Decline of the Goddess: Nature, Culture, and Women in Thomas Hardy’s Fiction (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 123, 133.

19. The Cupid and Psyche series eventually became a mural frieze commissioned by George Howard for his new home at Kensington. The story of Cupid and Psyche was popular with late-Victorian artists, particularly with J. W. Waterhouse, but the themes Edward Burne-Jones represented are most closely related to the scenes in the novel. To my knowledge there are no references to Waterhouse in either Hardy’s letters or notebooks. See Stephen Wildman and John Christian, Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 122–27.

20. See Kestner (Mythology and Misogyny 91) for a detailed account of the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

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23. For an overview of the scholarly dispute over the novel’s temporal setting, see Kramer (“Hardy and Readers,” 169–71, 180). Whereas most critics argue for the 1860s or the 1890s as the temporal setting of the novel, Robert Gittings maintains that Sue is representative of the Comtean woman of the 1870s, not the feminist of the 1890s; see his *Young Thomas Hardy* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 93–95.

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3. Cameron’s Ophelia, Sylvia Wolf suggests, has a questioning rather than a crazed gaze. See *Julia Margaret Cameron’s Women* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1998), 49–50.

4. See Karen Z. Sproles, “D. H. Lawrence and the Pre-Raphaelites: ‘Love among the Ruins,’ ” *The D. H. Lawrence Review* 22 (3) (Fall 1990): 299–305; Margaret Bozenna Gosciłło, “John Fowles’s Pre-Raphaelite Woman: Interart Strategies and Gender Policies,” *Mosaic* 26 (1) (Spring 1993): 63–82. Chevalier’s *Falling Angels* is set in Edwardian London in the early years of the twentieth century, between 1901 and 1910, dates of the death of Queen Victoria and of her son Edward VII. Early in the novel the Colemans and the Waterhouses meet at the cemetery, where they have adjacent plots. The story revolves around Kitty Coleman and her daughter Maude and Gertrude Waterhouse and her daughter Lavinia. Whereas Kitty represents the New Woman, who desperately attempts to extricate herself from the stifling conventions of the Victorian age, Gertrude rigidly abides by its strictures. At the very beginning of the novel, Kitty, referring to her recent acquaintance with the Waterhouses, comments: “no relation to the painter . . . (Just as well—I want to scream when I see his overripe paintings at the Tate. The Lady of Shalott in her boat looks as if she has just taken opium)” (13). Like the Lady of Shalott, Kitty also dies when later on she ventures into the public sphere and joins the women’s movement. Rather than following a Sir Lancelot like her Pre-Raphaelite counterpart, Kitty becomes one of the leaders of (a fictional version of) the largest rally of the Women’s Social and Political Union, which took place in Hyde Park in 1908 and dies from the injuries she sustains when the horse she is leading, frightened by a firecracker, kicks her. For information about this historical meeting at Hyde Park, which was attended by a quarter-million people, see Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women’s Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain 1900–1918* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 38, 46.

5. In “Revisiting the Serial Format of Dickens’s Novels; or, *Little Dorrit* Goes a Long Way,” David Barndollar and Susan Schorn voice the concern of teachers of the Victorian novel over the reluctance of students to read these books. Phoebe Wray, who teaches in a private college of high standards, for instance, protests, “It’s as if these middle-class, rather privileged kids . . . are from the mines of the 19th century. They do not read. Some of them do not know how to read. They have not a clue about HOW to read in a close way.” See *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time*, ed. Christine Krueger (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 174.
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