At the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1850, Millais's *Carpenter's Shop* was hung directly above Hunt's entry, *A Converted British Family sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids*. This physical juxtaposition indicates their theoretic continuity. If *The Carpenter's Shop* shows the typical quality of domestic events in the life of the holy family, Hunt's painting suggests the equally typical quality of events after the time of Christ. And if Millais's work derives from Ruskin's suggestions in *Modern Painters* II for a new biblical art, Hunt's painting continues the efforts of both Ruskin and Carlyle as historians to show that human history after the time of Christ continues to follow providential patterns. More specifically, *A Converted British Family* presents a visual analogue to *Past and Present* in using correspondences to traditional iconography in order to suggest that the history of England follows the sacred purposes figured in the scriptural narrative.

Like Carlyle, and like Millais, Hunt works in an intensely historicist mode. Quite self-consciously, Hunt saw his archaeological methods as manifesting the true spirit of his own age: "Antiquarianism in its historic sense . . . made thus a radical distinction between all illustrations by the old masters and those of modern art; to the former the costume, the type of features, and architecture were the same whether the subject were in ancient Egypt or imperial Rome. When a modern artist, influenced by the new learning, had settled upon a subject . . . his further consideration was what character of costume and accessories it would require; he worked thus to give discriminating truth to his representation" (Hunt, 1:176). His description of the painting sent to Thomas Combe, its first owner, indicates Hunt's concern with maintaining historical probability.¹ To defend himself against criticism that the work "had been designed in disregard to historical evidence," he argues in a convoluted fashion that the "druidical system" had been subject to the work of Christian missionaries in the first century, the date of the painting. He also asserts that the objects in the painting are not introduced merely for their symbolic reference, but are historically consistent. The vine is not an "anachronism," but "more [71]
than probable" as having been introduced from Gaul. As in other Brotherhood works, form emphasizes historicity. As in *The Carpenter's Shop*, a three-sided room is used to give the viewer the sense of being an unobserved witness to an actual event. The landscape was painted out-of-doors at an actual marsh, and such objects as the beech-column supporting the shed were painted from actual specimens.

Within Hunt’s scheme, this historical accuracy becomes not an end in itself but a means of demonstrating providence continuing to act within human history even after the Incarnation. In his remarks to Combe, Hunt is explicit about the fusion of historicism with religious purpose through the figural mode: “Thus it was certainly possible for the incident to have occurred, and so that it does not contend with history, and it is a fulfilment of the texts quoted in connection with the picture, and others in which the persecutions to which the disciples were subjected are prefigured.”* The scriptural quotations on the frame, then, urge the viewer to read the painting in as typological a manner as he would the events of Scripture, to see the events in the Bible of history as fulfilling patterns prefigured in the time of Christ. And the painting itself emphasizes this parallel between the difficulties encountered by the early missionaries to England and the persecution of Christ and His Disciples. In his account to Combe, Hunt explains that the missionaries, having converted at least one “aboriginal family,” have gone to the “druidical temple to make known the Lord publically.” In the background, the druid priest, a type of the Jewish opponents of Jesus, stands at the temple exhorting his people to capture the missionary of the new religion. In the foreground, the rescued priest is being sheltered by his disciples, who are fishermen.

This continuance of eternal patterns through historical time is reinforced by correspondences between traditional iconography and events within the converted family’s household. A girl removes from the priest’s robe a thorn that has pierced his feet. The young boy on the left is dressed in a fur loincloth, the traditional sign of John the Baptist, and, like the similarly dressed figure in *The Carpenter’s Shop*, offers a healing liquid, the juice of freshly squeezed grapes. Another girl wipes the priest’s face with a sponge. Other allusions are purely formal;

*On the original frame were inscribed the texts, “The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God a service / Their feet are swift to shed blood / For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say to you, he shall not lose his reward / I was a stranger and ye took me in.”*
the slumping priest backed by an older and a younger woman assumes the pose of a Pietà. It is most likely such evident visual parallels that Hunt, in his note to Combe, considers as having a meaning “too simple and evident to require pointing out.” Yet he is emphatic in noting that reference to such traditional symbols is consistent with the painting as historical narrative: “They in no wise interfere with the dramatic unity of the design.”

Of this picture, Hunt said in 1855, “I would as soon rely on that to express my idea of Pre-Raphaelitism as any picture I ever painted.” He is correct, but for reasons that he does not acknowledge. In history painting, as in biblical painting, the effort to combine historical accuracy with sacred significance leads toward obscurity and private meaning. Like Millais in The Carpenter’s Shop, Hunt seeks to create the feeling of historicity by presenting the multitudinous detail of any directly observed event. To Hunt’s authentically figural imagination, these separate facts each bear a sacred meaning; but, as in the biblical companion piece, such significance can be conveyed only by correspondence to traditional iconography. Material outside this scheme of correspondences remains opaque, and Hunt here is forced to communicate the full range of his sacred vision not through the canvas itself but through a separate verbal gloss. The exegesis sent to Combe reveals a highly private set of symbolic meanings. Hunt notes, for example, that the vine and corn, which he is at great pains to justify on historical grounds, were introduced “to exhibit the civilizing effect of the divine religion which the missionaries had taught to the occupiers of the hut.” Or he states of the net hanging at the corner of the shed that it is “suggestive of Christianity from two causes, first, as being a figure under which the Christian Church is typified in the Scriptures, and, again, from the fact that the Druids held fish to be sacred and forbade the catching of them.”

In the Royal Academy Exhibition of the previous year, Hunt had exhibited another painting that illustrates equally well the Brotherhood effort to show divine purpose in postbiblical history. Rienzi vowing to obtain justice for the death of his young brother, slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and the Orsini factions (R.A., 1849) is, in one sense, a literary painting since it illustrates a scene from Bulwer-Lytton’s Rienzi, The Last of the Tribunes, first published in 1835 but reissued in 1848 with a new preface that stressed its topical relation to the revolutions in Italy. Hunt was drawn to the work for its use of the literary-historical mode. Drawing upon the same impulses of the 1830s
PLATE 13. Holman Hunt, Rienzi vowing to obtain justice for the death of his young brother, slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and the Orsini factions. Courtesy of Sotheby’s Belgravia.
and 1840s as Carlyle and the Brotherhood, the novel purports to show the past as it actually occurred;\(^3\) as Bulwer notes in the 1848 preface, "Its interest is rather drawn from a faithful narration of historical facts than from the inventions of fancy."\(^4\) In characteristic Brotherhood fashion, Hunt prefers his history mediated through literature. Just as Brotherhood scriptural paintings are visual translations of events in the biblical narrative, so Rienzi, as history painting, presents an event described in a historical novel that claims to be a historical documentary. To set the work in a specific time and place in the past, Hunt did what he calls "research" for the costumes and for the architecture of the castle in the right background (Hunt, 1:115); the shield upon which the fallen brother lies and the spears of the retreating soldiers were drawn from specimens at the Tower of London.

For Bulwer, writing in the preface of 1848, the events of the Roman past described in the novel appear significant as prefiguring the present struggle for independence in Italy: "In preparing for the Press this edition of a work illustrative of the exertions of a Roman, in advance of his time, for the political freedom of his country, and of those struggles between contending principles, of which Italy was the most stirring field in the Middle Ages, it is not out of place or season to add a few sober words whether as a student of the Italian Past, or an observer, with some experience of the social elements of Italy as it now exists, upon the state of affairs in that country."\(^5\) Hunt was attracted by the political message of the novel articulated in the 1848 preface, and saw his own canvas, as Bulwer did his novel, as a statement of support for the libertarian movements in Italy. Of the year 1848, when he moved within Italian émigré society at the Rossettis, Hunt says: "Like most young men, I was stirred by the spirit of freedom of the passing revolutionary time. The appeal to Heaven against the tyranny exercised over the poor and helpless seemed well fitted for pictorial treatment. 'How long, O Lord! many bleeding souls were crying at that time'" (Hunt, 1:114).\(^6\)

The biblical allusions in Hunt's comment point to the sacramental scheme that underlies his "pictorial treatment" of Italian history. Bulwer's prefigurative reading of the Roman past was undoubtedly attractive to Hunt, but Bulwer's vision is secular in seeing the political life of a country as repeating similar patterns through historical time. Hunt's conception is sacramental; history is providential in continuously bodying forth the principles—here the divinely sent hero struggling for the oppressed—that are prefigured in Scripture. Within the canvas, the composition centers upon Rienzi with a constellation of
visual allusions—the dead youth with a fallen crown of flowers and surrounded by a mourning group resembling a Pietà, the mother holding a child in the far-left background with a crescent moon suggesting her association with the Virgin, two Roman soldiers observing the corpse—that, as in the Converted British Family, suggest a metaphysically real correspondence between the events of postbiblical history and the life of Christ. In its reference to the transcendent, then, the painting can be seen as a visual analogue to Past and Present, published only six years earlier, not only in its longing for the reappearance of a Christlike hero, but also in its use of figural form to comment upon contemporary revolutionary events.

Unlike Hunt, Millais had little interest in turning history painting into social commentary. Instead, his one painting of post-scriptural history executed during the Brotherhood period, A Huguenot, on St. Bartholomew's Day, refusing to shield himself from danger by wearing the Roman Catholic badge (R.A. 1852), illustrates how uncongenial the moralization of history was to his imagination. While working in the country on Ophelia, Millais had sketched a subject from Tennyson, an illustration of the line “Two lovers whispering by an orchard wall” from the poem “Circumstance” in the 1830 volume. Hunt wanted Millais to moralize the picture of two lovers by using a historical context to transform them into types of general ethical principles:

Tennyson in the poem makes it merely a step in the progress of two honest lives; your illustration of “Two Lovers whispering by a Garden Wall” would have neither prelude nor sequel in the drama of life. It may be a crotchet of mine, but I have none but passing interest in pictures of lovers when they are merely this with no external interest. . . . I should have liked you to be engaged on a picture with the dramatis personae actuated by generous thought of a larger world. I think lovers with only personal interest should not be represented for public attention, even when they are not (as often they are) of sickly sentiment. (Hunt, 1:285)

Although, according to Hunt, Millais replied, “I understand your position now . . . I quite agree with you about maudlin sentiment” (Hunt, 1:285) and was later to say that “the subject . . . contains the highest moral,”7 the divergence of the painting itself from Brotherhood principles indicates how minimally Hunt’s idea of figural history controlled Millais’s occupation with sentimentalized eroticism. Although rendered in the brick-by-brick manner of the Brotherhood, the wall appears only as a theatrical backdrop against which are posed the two lovers. There is little sense of an accidentally observed event. Similarly,
the abandonment of uniform illumination for a chiaroscuro focus on the girl’s face, as well as the posing of the faces gazing at each other, draws attention inward to personal relationships rather than, as Hunt wanted, outward to public significance. With no correspondence between particularized details and iconographic traditions to connect this specific incident to time­less moral patterns, the historical treatment becomes mere costuming and the painting, as Hunt warned, a work of mere “sickly sentiment.”

It is in the Academy entry of the next year, The Order of Release, 1746 (R.A., 1853) that Millais’s occupation with the easy evocation of feeling, as well as with his personal erotic concerns, finally breaks free from the constraints of figural methods. The divergence of this painting from Brotherhood principles was clear to contemporary viewers. The Athenaeum praised the painter for having “so completely escaped from the trammels of the school which he founded,”8 while William Michael Rossetti spoke more in sorrow at Millais’s apostasy: “In choice of subject and in some points of treatment, Mr. Millais has here met the opponents of Praeraphaelitism half-way; to his great gain in popular recognition, although not, as we think, to his own true progression” (Fine Art, 211–12).

As the critics perceived, the work differs from Brotherhood history painting in that its purpose is to evoke feeling, rather than figure the transcendent. Instead of the characteristic Brotherhood composition that, as in the Huguenot, orders the historical actors into moral conflict, such as between love and duty, this painting presents only the moment of resolution in the too easy victory of domestic virtue. Rather than stimulating moral thought, the painting calls up only a slosh of feeling. As William Michael Rossetti notes, it is this rejection of a typicality in which particularized historical action manifests timeless ethical principles that separates this work from true Brotherhood productions: “With all our admiration of the feeling of this picture, it appears to us to partake more of the sentimental, and by so much to derogate from the nobly universal tone of the Huguenot subject of last year” (Fine Art, 213).

“Paltering with the decried Praeraphaelite doctrine of absolute undeviating truth” (Fine Art, 212), Millais loses the detailed materiality that marks his Brotherhood manner. If in the Huguenot the minutely observed brick wall remains, if only as a backdrop, here walls have entirely vanished: “There is no background properly so called, but merely a laying of dark colour, which may be supposed to stand instead of, but cannot be admit­
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ted to stand for, the shadowed prison-wall" (Fine Art, 212). The Brotherhood’s historical, scientific manner dramatizes the severe principle that ethical choices must be made in the difficult, tangible world of fact. The theatricality of this work, its failure to place the domestic loyalty of the wife in the world of fact, then, shows the exercise of virtue as divorced from the daily experience of the viewer. This vitiation of ethical force in the painting only bears out the Ruskinian principle that in art moral truth depends upon visual truth.

As William Michael Rossetti caustically notes, “The wife’s feet are preternaturally delicate and unsoiled for one who has been walking barefoot” (Fine Art, 213). With all suggestion of ugliness or dirt removed, the soldier’s wife appears not as she might have in a Brotherhood treatment, a dignified member of the lower classes who figures the divine principle of fidelity, but exactly as what she is, Effie Gray Ruskin, a middle-class woman, posing in Highland dress. With the omission of any suggestion of the impoverished actuality of lower-cass life, the middle-class audience can freely allow themselves to be touched, for a moment, by the simple virtues of the idealized poor.

The sentimental form that brought the work great popularity coexists with a wholly private, perhaps unconscious, significance. When Effie Ruskin sat as model for the Highlander’s wife through March of 1853, only a few months before the summer at Glenfinlas, Millais, who had already known the Ruskins for two years, must have already felt an attraction to this handsome, unhappy young woman. His rejection of his original title, The Proscribed Royalist, suggests how the painting could become the vehicle for erotic fantasy, a projection of his desire for an order of release from his own sexual constraints. The main figure, a muscular young man whose facial features are hidden, whose right arm is bound and impotent, and who can win release from imprisonment only through the exertions of a woman, appears to embody Millais’s sense of his present condition. The physical union with the woman, cast into a domestic tableau including child and faithful dog, might be said to anticipate, even to prefigure, the conventional domestic life finally achieved by Millais and Effie.

Historical subjects set in moments of political and social crisis held no attraction for Rossetti. With the exception of his illustrations of Dante, his treatments of life after the time of Christ focus on the present. Here, his artistic sources are not the early Italians but the Flemish painters Hans Memling and Jan Van Eyck that he and Hunt so admired on their 1849 trip to the low countries.
His major Brotherhood poem on a genre subject, "My Sister's Sleep," as printed under the heading "Songs of One Household, No. 1" in *The Germ*, draws upon, in particular, Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*, a work the Brothers knew in the National Gallery (Letters, 1:84), to suggest the fusion of the sacred and the domestic that occupied him in his treatment of the life of Mary.* William Michael Rossetti properly states of this poem that it demonstrates "in an eminent degree one of the influences which guided that [Pre-Raphaelite] movement: the intimate intertexture of a spiritual sense with a material form; small actualities made vocal of lofty meanings" (D&W, 127). As in "Ave," Rossetti suggests this sacramental quality of daily life by organizing the poem as a painting in which there is a visual correspondence between the precisely rendered domestic details and Christian iconography.9

As twelve strikes, bringing in Christmas morn, the mother rises, "Her needles, as she laid them down, / Met lightly" (10;8). Within the pictorial conception, the needles on the table form a cross, just as in *The Girlhood* the domestic detail of the vine-covered trellis in the background is given this shape. The "candle" on her "work-table" (3;3) figures faith; the "mirror," in its "clearness" (5;5), an allusion to the *Arnolfini Wedding*, symbolizes virginal purity.11 As the poem moves into Christmas morn, the scene is gradually composed into the traditional pictorial configuration of an Adoration. The mother says, "Glory unto the Newly Born!" (11;9) and the brother silently repeats the words. The speaker then notes, "Just then in the room over us / There was a pushing back of chairs" (14;10). As consistent as this detail may be with the crowded life of urban tenements, it also furthers the visual correspondence to an Adoration. Traditionally, angels are placed above, observing events in the manger below. In Rossetti's own Adoration, the center panel of the triptych *The Seed of David* (1858–64, no. 105) done for the Llandaff Cathedral, angels watch from a loft above the stable.

The final tableau shows the mother and brother kneeling before the child. If the mother is likened earlier to an angel providing the exclamation of joy at Christ's birth, "'Glory unto the Newly Born' / So, as said angels, she did say" (11;9), the brother, who has not yet achieved the religious vision of the mother, corresponds to the shepherd of the traditional scene. As in the Llandaff triptych, angel and shepherd, mother and

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*The text of the *Germ* version is printed in Appendix 1.
brother kneel before the “newly born” (19;15), the Christ Child in swaddling clothes, the sister dressed in “all white” (18;14).
Rossetti’s desire to have the scene read typologically appears in specific glosses within the *Germ* text. In stanzas seven and eight, for example, the speaker gives an explicitly transcendental explanation of the events:

Silence was speaking at my side
With an exceedingly clear voice:
I knew the calm as of a choice
Made in God for me, to abide.

I said, “Full knowledge does not grieve:
This which upon my spirit dwells
Perhaps would have been sorrow else:
But I am glad ’tis Christmas Eve.”

Yet, these glosses that in the Brotherhood version evoke the sacramental significance of domestic event were omitted when Rossetti revised the poem for his 1870 edition. These post-Brotherhood revisions, which clearly indicate Rossetti’s “dis­taste” (*Germ*, 18) for his youthful religious manner, primarily operate to free the occupation with physical and mental sensa­tion already present in the *Germ* version from the figural scheme. To liberate these aesthetic qualities, Rossetti alters the essen­tial mode of the poem from the pictorial and painterly to the evocative and psychological. For example, stanza one in *The Germ* reads:

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
Upon her eyes’ most patient calms
The lids were shut; her uplaid arms
Covered her bosom, I believe.

For the 1870 edition, the stanza was changed to:

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve:
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids overweigh’d
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

If the first is a painter’s representation of the sister as effigy, the second is more inward, more empathic. The 1870 text describes not how she looked but how she felt with words such as “weary” and “pain.”

This stylistic shift from a verbal pictorialism indicates a deeper rejection of the entire figural vision. For no longer does the artist see a phenomenal world as separate and distinct from the perceiving mind, as a world in which objects have an intrinsic
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divine meaning that inevitably emerges from their precise representation.

With the elimination of the references to the transcendent in the Germ version, domestic details no longer function as transcendental signs, but only as stimuli for sensations. In lines that remain unchanged in each version, the narrator tells how his "tired mind . . . / Like a sharp strengthening wine . . . drank / The stillness and the broken lights" (6;6). With the omission of stanzas seven and eight of the Germ, these lines are immediately followed by the words "Twelve struck" (9;7). With the reference to religious experience removed, the sounds of the bell become merely sounds, mere sensations rather than figures of God's providence bringing a new day and a new birth. Similarly, with the rejection of Germ stanzas 12 and 13 describing the mother's prayer as a truly religious act in which, as if impelled by a power outside himself, he must join, the sensibility of the narrator becomes purely aesthetic, drinking in the sound of silence, acutely aware of the distinct sounds made by his mother's needles and her settling gown (10;8). If in the Brotherhood text the intensity of sense perception strengthens the ability to discover divine meaning within the events of everyday life, with the abandonment of figural purpose in the 1870 text, the same intense perception of the physical world only subverts whatever sense of the sacred is called up by iconographic associations.

During his Brotherhood period, Rossetti made one other major effort to sacramentalize events of contemporary life. Found (no. 64) follows one of the chief Brotherhood aims—to endow the "low" subjects of genre painting with "high" moral seriousness through figural treatment. In its first sketch in 1853 (no. 64B), the subject is conceived as typical, as the manifestation in present time of a transcendent moral principle prefigured in the Old Testament narrative. To emphasize this reading, Rossetti includes in the original design a gloss from the Old Testament, "I remember thee—the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal" (Jer. 2:2). The completed portions of the work are done with a scientific realism, the wall from a specific specimen at Chiswick and the calf with great difficulty from an actual netted calf. Characteristically, these natural facts are set into configurations that point to the event as typifying a more general principle, here the hope of divine redemption as still present in contemporary life. A modern critic can hardly improve on the figural reading provided by Rossetti's Brotherhood col-
league, Stephens: "The girl crouches against the wall of a churchyard—'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest'; that the brightening dawn symbolizes, as it may be, peace (with forgiveness) on earth, or in Heaven, after sorrow; while the calf trammelled in the net, and, helpless, carried in the cart to his death, points to the past and present life of the girl" (Stephens, DGR, 38–39).

The history of the work amply illustrates how ambivalent Rossetti was, even during his Brotherhood period, to this fusion of moralism and naturalism. As with "My Sister's Sleep," his revisions subvert the original figural plan. The gravestone in the earliest sketch (no. 64B) has legible scriptural tags enforcing the typological conception: "There is joy . . . the Angels in he . . . one sinner that. . . ." In the next sketch, done in 1855 (no. 64A), the writing on the gravestone has become merely decorative lines; and in the final painting, the graveyard has entirely disappeared. But Stephens's comment that Rossetti was "over-scornful of didactic art, and thoroughly indisposed towards attempts to ameliorate anybody's condition by means of pictures" (Stephens, DGR, 37) needs qualification. Rossetti's inability to finish the work certainly suggests that as he drew away from the Brotherhood, he found this modern moral subject uncongenial. But it must be emphasized that not only was the work conceived in 1853 in accord with the Brotherhood program but that he overtly endorsed the Brotherhood aim of transforming genre painting into high art. In 1855, he wrote to Hunt in Palestine to note that the conception for Found was not borrowed from The Awakening Conscience, exhibited in 1854. As he tells Hunt of the "most lovely motto from Jeremiah" that his sister Maria has found and the calf as a "beautiful and suggestive part of the thing,"12 the subdued, friendly tone and the implicit admiration of The Awakening Conscience, speak of a shared purpose in representing the situation of the Victorian fallen woman with sympathy and dignity through figural treatment.

The most successful product of the Brotherhood desire to create a new illustrated Bible of contemporary life is Hunt's Hireling Shepherd (R.A., 1852), a work consistent in its figural scheme, orthodox in its moral meaning, and democratic in its implications.

Although exhibited with a quotation from Edgar's song in King Lear,

Sleepest or wakest though, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;

[87]
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
Thy sheep shall take no harm.

the work is only tangentially a literary painting. Edgar's song calls up in Hunt a personal response, a vision of moral conflict that exists in the life of all men. In an important letter of 1897 to J. Ernest Pythian aimed at "unravelling the symbolism of the picture" on its acquisition by the Manchester City Art Gallery, Hunt says: "Shakespeare's song represents a Shepherd who is neglecting his real duty of guarding the sheep: instead of using his voice in truthfully performing his duty, he is using his 'minikin mouth' in some idle way. He was a type thus of other muddle headed pastors who instead of performing their services to their flock, which is in constant peril—discuss vain questions of no value to any human soul." Hunt's use of the word "type" indicates his overtly sacramental aim, his Carlylean purpose of showing the supernatural principles prefigured in Scripture being manifested in contemporary life. The necessity of such a reading is emphasized by the title with its readily available allusion to Christ's parable of the Hireling Shepherd (John, 10:11-14).

It is for this ethically serious treatment of a genre subject that Hunt is praised by his Brotherhood colleagues. Writing in 1852, William Michael Rossetti says that the "moral is expressed in the words 'The Hireling Shepherd.' . . . It is evident from Mr. Hunt's title that the seemingly unimportant incident of the old song has been treated not merely as a casual episode of shepherd life, but with a view to its moral suggestiveness" (Fine Art, 235). Stephens describes the work in the morally resonant language of Victorian art criticism: "It represents a shepherd who has neglected his charge, to make love to a girl of his class. . . . Thus, while their guardian busied himself with idle fears, his duty was neglected, and the flock got into real trouble" (Stephens, Hunt, 20-21).

For Hunt, as for Carlyle, moral purpose demands faithful observation of life on the lowest economic levels of contemporary England. As Hunt states in his 1897 letter, his "first object as an artist was to paint not dresden china bergers, but a real Shepherd, and a real Shepherdess." But the "genuine thought" of the work (Stephens, Hunt, 19) lies in its success in ordering this accurately represented scene into parallels with traditional iconography so as to communicate a sense of sacred meaning. The shepherd disregarding his flock, who have become "blown" by eating the grain, has the evident suggestion of neglected duty. Similarly, Hunt's Strayed Sheep of the same year, although
lacking in human incident, takes on the quality of parable through its allusion to the same iconographic tradition. In *The Hireling Shepherd*, the lush setting, the isolated couple, and the half-eaten apple on the girl's lap provide a clear reference to Adam and Eve, thus transforming the agricultural laborers into types of sexual temptation. So too, the death's-head moth and the "miry places" (Stephens, *Hunt*, 20) at the girl's feet are natural symbols of the judgment of God.

In the treatment of landscape itself, the work exemplifies the Ruskinian idea of Truth in which the faithful representation of the visible world leads to sacramental significance. Indeed, Hunt notes in the letter to Pythian that his purpose was not only to see the moral significance of pastoral life anew, but, in the manner of the artists before Raphael, as well as in the manner of the experimental scientist, to confront the natural world directly, without preconceived theories. He says that his "object as an artist was to paint . . . a landscape in full sunlight, with all the color of luscious summer, without the faintest fear of the precedents of any landscape painters who had rendered Nature before." Not only through the glowing, colored shadows or the reflection of light on water but through the luminous quality achieved by the Brotherhood method of white underpainting, the outdoor scene is infused by light. But this concern for the scientifically accurate rendering of optical effects is not merely mimetic. For Hunt, as for Turner, the sun is God; the atmospheric effects show God's light permeating the world and offering to this couple, as to the kept woman in *The Awakening Conscience*, the hope of redemption from sexual sin.

This figural treatment of rural landscape and rustic characters marks a sharp break with much mid-century artistic practice. By giving a high religious significance to a low subject treated with the particularization associated with genre painting, Hunt violates the Academic decorum of linking noble themes only with high subjects treated with Raphaelite idealization. This moral elevation of genre painting is as much an expression of Hunt's democratic ideals in the years immediately following 1848 as his own more overtly political *Rienzi*. The serious treatment of genre material transcends the demeaning vision of much Academic genre painting that sees the lower classes as fit objects for charity by their betters or as an inferior species participating in quaint customs for the amusement of middle-class observers. Like George Eliot in *Adam Bede*, who also links the detailed observation of Dutch genre painting with moral seriousness (chap. 17), Hunt shows rural workers as engaged in the patterns of tempta-
tion and salvation that have engaged people of all classes through historical time. For Hunt, then, as for Carlyle, the figural mode provides a means of resolving one of the great dilemmas confronting mid-Victorian art and literature—how to ennoble and give significance to contemporary life.  

1. “Some remarks on the Subject of the picture entitled ‘A Converted British Family sheltering a Christian Missionary from the persecution of the Druids,’” MS for Thomas Combe (1851), Ashmolean Museum. The following quotations are from this MS.


5. Rienzi, p. viii.


10. The first number in parentheses gives the stanza in the Germ text, the second the stanza in the 1870 text.


13. MS letter of 21 January 1897 to J. Ernest Pythian, Manchester City Art Gallery. Quoted here with the permission of the City of Manchester Art Galleries.


15. As examples, see William Collins, Rustic Civility (1833) or Thomas Webster, A Village Choir (1847), both in the Victoria and Albert Museum and conveniently reproduced in Raymond Lister, Victorian Narrative Paintings (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1966).
