THE CONTEMPORARY MORAL SUBJECT AND ITS ICONOGRAPHY IN VICTORIAN PAINTING

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

LINDA S. BAYLISS

1970

ABSTRACT

THE CONTEMPORARY MORAL SUBJECT
AND ITS ICONOGRAPHY IN
VICTORIAN PAINTING

By

Linda S. Bayliss

This paper is a study of the painters of contemporary moral subjects in Victorian England. It explores the influences that precipitated the advent of such painting and the chief characteristics of its style, illustrating through example the manner in which the precepts of the moral painter were carried to completion in their works.

The most important conclusions derived from this study are the recognition of the intimate relationship between Victorian painters and the class of patrons for whom they worked. Our understanding of these paintings is, in effect, dependent upon the understanding of the particular attributes of the society itself, specifically, its religion and the results of the Industrial Revolution, which raised the middle-class to its position of affluence.

THE CONTEMPORARY MORAL SUBJECT AND ITS ICONOGRAPHY IN VICTORIAN PAINTING

By

Linda S. Bayliss

A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art History

1970

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to thank Mr. Van Liere for advice, the loan of books, understanding, and patience in reading through some very "rough" drafts. Thanks also to my husband and son for their patience during many hours of typing and re-typing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

When Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, the industrial revolution had already effected sweeping changes in both the material and intellectual environments of England. The new prosperity of classes formerly sustained on merely a subsistence level provided a broader base for increased patronage of the arts and sciences. Inventions such as the steam-engine, the railroad, telegraph, and gas-lights were all perfected within a brief span of time. The modifications in the way of life precipitated by these revolutionary inventions, as well as the increased financial stability of the average middle-class family, engendered the pervasive sense of self-assurance which characterized this class. The resultant theory of progress, (best exemplified by Darwin's ideas about evolution), was inevitably extended to more theoretical areas:

> When wealth, inventions and commerce are increasing, it is hard not to believe that human nature and happiness are also improving at the same time. And in spite of their misgivings and yearnings, the Victorians did, on the whole, believe . . . that men were becoming less selfish, less unreasonable and less bellicose; that free trade would promote international understanding and banish war; that science and education would conquer error and superstition, and that in some not too distant future we should see "the Parliament of man," the federation of the world.[1]

Despite the scientific accomplishments of the age, there was no weakening of faith in the truths of God and the Bible. Religion was an excedingly powerful force in Victorian society, as evidenced by the various evangelical groups which rose to power during the nineteenth century. The middle classes had not forgotten the religion that played so important a role in their lives when they were not so well-off. In addition,

> family prayer and devotional reading and the common observance of Sunday were an important facet of family life . . . . "Nothing contributed so strongly to awaken my spiritual sensibilities," wrote one Victorian , "as the daily gathering at the family altar, which was regular as the morning family meal . . . The reality of our home religion made the unseen and eternal world as real to me as home itself.[2]

It was this confident faith in the Protestant ethic taught by the Church of England together with an accute materialism spawned by industrialization which set the stage for artistic developments in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I

THE STAGES IN THE EVOLUTION OF VICTORIAN MORAL ART

Victorian moral art was the product of the same material and sociological ferment that characterized the society in general. The demands of a newly-affluent middle class supported by burgeoning industrialization were countered by the ideals of a somewhat decadent aristocracy. The Royal Academy, which dominated the art world at the beginning of Victoria's reign, remained steeped in the aristocratic tradition of idealized images and grand historical "machines" advocated by its founder, Sir Joshua Reynolds. In a world that was becoming increasingly materialistic, the Academy's teachings lacked relevance. The moralistic art of the latter half of the century was developed to answer the need for an art that suited both the material and spiritual requirements of the Victorians. The influences on the painters who worked diligently to satisfy this desire are considerable, and they will be the concern of this first chapter.

The first of these influences was the change in the patronage of the arts. As the wealth began to sift down through the classes, more and more people demanded

the luxuries that had once been strictly the prerogative of the aristocracy. The self-made man was quick to acquire a taste for those objects he associated with the wealth and power formerly possessed only by the uppermost strata of society. Art, and especially painting, fell into this category from the outset.

Too often the taste for paintings on the walls of the suburban home was the result of anything but a love of fine painting. The purpose of the artwork was to impress one's visitors and contribute to the overly-sumptuous atmosphere already created by furnishings and draperies:

> The upholsterer, by embellishment of furniture and artistic hangings, sets up a fairyland to enchant the drabness of the industrial day.[1]

Because paintings were symbols of opulence, quantity was generally more important than quality. As W. P. Frith, himself an artist, tells us,

> but the wonder of it all is the downright vulgarian, who sometimes astonishes us in h-less English by his desire to collect works of art; he has risen from the gutter to the stucco palace, and he must pose as a connoisseur. He does not care for size or shape, he wants a speciman--a speciment, I think it was, he don't know nothing about pictures, but the 'ouse must be furnished. Mrs. G. don't care for pictures, but he says, says he: Black, the butterman, which rose from nothink has got a lot, and why shouldn't we?[2]

Despite their frequent lack of sound judgement, the public had taken an active interest in art, which was manifested

in several ways. The first of these was the heightened popularity of art exhibitions. It became an acceptable pastime for well-to-do Victorians to spend an afternoon in the art gallery. Exhibitions became social events and attracted increasing numbers of people. This, of course, resulted in the sale of a larger number of paintings and the support of a greater number of artists than ever before. In the second place, the growing demand for art, coupled with the improved means for reproduction of prints, resulted in the large-scale distribution of prints of the more popular paintings, both ancient and modern. Such prints provided increased income for artists who had produced the paintings from which prints were made. So even the family that could not afford to buy an original could purchase a reasonably good copy for their enjoyment. Certainly, these copies had their limitations. For the most part, they were in black-and-white, and such reproduction was not conducive to rendering subtle gradations of colour or texture. They were, however, most effective in conveying the subject matter of the painting to its audience. Undoubtedly, this helps to account for the increased importance of subject matter in the moral painting.

Ultimately, the print was completely popularized when Millais' painting, Bubbles,[3] of 1885 appeared in an advertisement for Pears' Soap. The rights to the

painting had been previously sold by the artist and were subsequently sold again to the soap company. Though this unconventional use of his painting was at first distasteful to Millais, he soon realized that he was uplifting advertisement more than degrading himself.

> Pears' Soap had shown that an advertisement need not be vulgar; that it might enlist the services of as great an artist as could be found.[4]

With the use of a recognized work of art in advertising, it became possible for a painting to be familiar to almost any man, woman, or child in Victorian society. This demonstrates the potential importance of the role played by an art that was reproduced on so large a scale.

The question of aesthetics was bound to occur in this context. Millais replied, "a painter must work for the taste of his own day."[5] This brings us to the second of the influences that led directly to the development of the moral painting. That was the decision on the part of the artists to create works that were meaningful and relevant to their own age. A dilemma, in itself moral, faced the painter in the early part of the Victorian era: should the artist follow public taste, or lead it? In nearly all cases, art of any great consequence tends to create public taste more than adhere to it. It is rarely easy for the public to accept a new style, even if there has been a corresponding

upheaval in society. Such was the case in Victorian England. When moral paintings first came into existence, they were greeted with ridicule and little understanding by the majority of the critics. But moralistic painting never was totally alienated from the Royal Academy, and by remaining in the good graces of that hallowed institution, it was able to gradually and peacefully usurp the leading role in English painting as the century progressed. The painter of moral subjects sought an art-form suitable for the ideals of the patrons of his era. In this, he was opposed to the artists who advocated "art for art's sake." The latter group, known as the "aesthetics," and led by Whistler and Pater, contended that true art was the expression of individual genius, irrespective of the buying public.[6] For the "aesthetics," art existed apart from the taste of the day; for the moral painters it was intimately related to that taste.

Among the painters who pioneered in the treatment of contemporary moral subjects, two important groups need to be considered. The first of these was the group of young artists who banded together as students in the Royal Academy to discuss art, mostly during the 1830's. Among the members were Augustus Leopold Egg, William Powell Frith, and the ill-fated Richard Dadd.[7] They met once a week, and, "their purpose seems primarily

to have been the selection of subjects to illustrate."[8] This in itself would have been of little consequence but for the fact that Egg and Frith were destined to become two of the leading moralistic painters of their day. Apparently, the young artists became aware of the needs of contemporary art which were not being met by the Academy. This failure on the Academy's part to produce an art relevant to the new age was noted by Waagen as early as 1838:

> English art long laboured under the fatal error, that the exact imitation of reality was inconsistent with the loftiest style of art; and that to create an ideal, the artist must form an abstraction from nature, not a union of its finest points.[9]

By 1848, the spirit of revolution was in the air, and the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in that year marked the beginning of a new era in British art. The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of seven young men, (only some of whom were actually artists), who advocated ennobling subjects like the Neo-Classicists, but went to nature as the greatest exemplar of perfection, rather than Platonic ideals.[10] They favoured a return to the simple and pious spirit in which the artists living prior to Raphael had created their works. They were fully aware of the technical defects of this art, but saw in it virtues which the High Renaissance lacked. In essence, they were opposed to the sort of pride which caused man to turn away from nature and rely on his own

rarefied ideas for the creation of works of art. As Pugin said,

> the finest productions of Christian art are the closest approximations to nature, and when they failed in proportion and anatomy, it was not a defect of principle, but of execution.[11]

It seemed that with the advanced techniques and knowledge of the nineteenth century, it was finally possible to combine the pious imitation of nature with a more accurate rendering of her many facets, fortified by the sciences of anatomy and perspective, to create the most perfect style of art that had ever been practiced! A resolve most worthy of the age of optimism.

And where did the Pre-Raphaelites discover such noble purposes? A young man of twenty-four, who had graduated from Oxford in 1843, had written a book entitled Modern Painters; originally a defense of the much-abused Turner. This book was to become, together with its author, one of the greatest influences on English art for the next fifty years. The writer was John Ruskin. The book, (which eventually ran to five volumnes), encompassed aesthetic theory and continually advised the would-be artist to "go to nature," for his inspiration. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the contribution of Ruskin in the formation of Victorian aesthetic theory. He dominated his age as the dictator of the taste of the times. While it would not be appropriate

here to thoroughly analyze Ruskin's concepts, it is necessary that the reader be aware of his influential position in the Victorian art world.[12] A few significant quotations may serve here to demonstrate some of Ruskin's basic assumptions which affected the moral painters.

On the theme of nature,

> There is room enough for invention in the pictorial treatment of what exists . . . All artists should be ashamed of themselves when they find they have not the power of being true . . .[13]

and concerning the importance of detail, Ruskin tells us,

> The work of the Great Spirit of nature is as deep and unapproachable in the lowest as in the noblest objects.[14]

> In landscape, botanical or geological, details are not to be given as a matter of curiosity, but as the ultimate elements of every species of expression and order of loveliness.[15]

But Ruskin's most important contribution, (and the one most often ridiculed today), was his thesis that the true worth of art lay in its moral values:

> The art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts the faculty by which it is received.[16]

> And I want you to think a little of the deep significance of this word, "taste," for no statement of mine has been more earnestly or oftener controverted than that good taste is essentially a moral quality.[17]

In order to understand Ruskin's concept of the "moral," we must not confuse it with the twentieth-century bias toward that word, for "Ruskin's 'moral,' was very close, in its theoretical context, to our term 'emotional.'"[18] Ladd sums up Ruskin's theories:

> Three significant conclusions outline the scope of his arguements: the artistic perception of truth is spontaneous and unified; beauty is an impression at once sensual and morally symbolical; style is the reflection of character in the fullest sense.[19]

Although Ruskin believed that art directed toward popular approval and commercial success was immoral in its motivation, the artists whom Ruskin championed generally became excedingly popular and wealthy. This would seem to indicate that the critic's own public esteem made it possible for him to mold the public taste.

One final contribution on the part of Ruskin is decidedly modern, though perfectly acceptable in his own day.

> Ruskin suggested that in the activity of art itself there lay the ultimate social value, the means to the end of good living. He . . . suggested that art was itself a good life. This was . . . the radical difference of his theory from all those preceding his which relegated art to pleasant but secondary ornamentations or esoteric elaborations of living.[20]

It is evident, then, just how important art had become to Ruskin and the society whose taste he led. The Victorian love of purpose and order in all things

lay behind Ruskin's own ideas. The morality he attached to both the creation and the enjoyment of works of art was the primary aspect of his aesthetics.

Though the Pre-Raphaelite painters were determined to follow the precepts of Ruskin, they were at first unable to win popular approval. Generations weaned on Sir Joshua Reynolds had no taste for the mundane and self-consciously-awkward scenes the Pre-Raphaelites took delight in. It required the intervention of Ruskin to stem the tide of negative public opinion by demonstrating to his loyal readers that the Pre-Raphaelites, far from undermining all that was virtuous in British art, were actually carrying out the very principles which Ruskin espoused! This recommendation was sufficient to insure the future prosperity of the young members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, especially John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt, all of whom we will have occasion to speak of in these pages. Not only were they successful, but, "there was scarcely a single English painter active in the next thirty years who was not to a greater or lesser degree touched by the flame of Pre-Raphaelitism."[21]

In addition to the changes in patronage and the aesthetic ideas of the artists, we must consider the devices that were employed ultimately by the painter to create the new type of moral painting. Ruskin emphasized

the importance of detail, and in moral painting detail assumes paramount importance. Details were meticulously rendered, not merely for the accurate recording of nature, but in order to convey an object's underlying significance. For behind every object there lurked a symbolic meaning. It was consequently important that details by treated carefully so that the viewer would have no difficulty in perceiving this concealed meaning. To the Victorians, as to nearly all other civilizations, symbols were a necessary part of life.

> In a Symbol there is concealment and yet revelation: here, therefore, by Silence and by Speech acting together, comes a double significance. And if both Speech be itself high, and the Silence fit and noble, how expressive will their union be! Thus in many a painted Device, or Simple Seal-emblem, the commonest truth stands out to us proclaimed with quite new emphasis.[22]

The moral implication of the use of symbols is clear: the good Christian must be able to see in material things the workings of God. Again, "it is in and through Symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works and has his being."[23] Carlyle was the author of these quotations, and although they sound remarkably close to the tenets of modern psychology, it is necessary to interpret them in terms of the Victorian religion in order to view them in their proper perspective. Since those things which an artist paints are by their very nature symbols of something else, the artist was

naturally concerned with symbolic meaning. As moral painting grew respectable and popular, however, it lost much of the depth of meaning that had marked the earlier attempts, and intricacy of meaning degenerated to the surface recording of detail.

At its best, however, the combination of realism and symbolism was perhaps the unique factor in the Victorian moral painting. This juxtaposition was tended to be an uncomfortable one even in its own era. Hunt's "concept of symbolism in an intensely realistic dress did not go uncriticized for its basic irrationality."[24] But despite the incongruities, or, perhaps, precisely because of the paradoxical nature of these works, they came to represent the dominant pictorial expression of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Because details assumed such importance, paintings could no longer be objects for brief and frivolous enjoyment or mere decorations. The viewer was asked to seriously "read" and contemplate the painting in order to extract the moral significance. "Scarcely any picture, scarcely even any series of pictures, tells its own story without the aid of an interpreter."[25] Or, conversely,

> All pictures should, as a rule, tell their own story without the aid of book or quotation, though in some instances, no doubt, quotation is necessary for the understanding of the picture.[26]

And Ruskin, writing in 1854 of a Pre-Raphaelite painting then gives this defense of the story-telling picture:

> It may, perhaps, be answered, that works of art ought not to stand in need of interpretation of this kind. Indeed, we have been so long accustomed to see pictures painted without any purpose or intention whatsoever, that the unexpected existence of meaning in a work of art may very naturally at first appear to us an unkind demand on the spectator's understanding. But . . . I hope the English public may be convinced of the simple truth, that neither a great fact, nor a great man, nor a great poem, nor a great picture, nor any other great thing, can be fathomed to the very bottom in a moment of time; and that no high enjoyment, either in picture-seeing or any other occupation, is consistent with a total lethargy of the powers of understanding.[27]

It is the message which a painting conveys that is of greatest value. Indeed, the message is the real subject of the painting. For example, William Holman Hunt's "purpose was to use realism and original imagery to express significant moral ideas . . . But while in youth a rebel with his fellow Pre-Raphaelites, in maturity his paintings came to epitomise for the Victorian the Christian ideal in understandable terms."[28]

And, finally, to summarize the aims of the Victorian moral painter, an excerpt from a letter concerning the Pre-Raphaelite artist, Charles Collins,[29] written by Millais.

> There are few so devotedly directed to the one thought of some day (through the medium of his art), turning the minds of men to good reflections and so heightening the profession as one of unworldly usefulness to mankind.[30]

The artist thus became the servant of mankind, to help man on his way to better deeds and thoughts, and, ultimately, to heaven. Such were the aims and purposes of the Victorian artists who dealt with the contemporary scene, injecting it with a high moral purpose, and whose works we will now consider individually.

CHAPTER II

THE HIRELING SHEPHERD: A VICTORIAN ALLEGORY

The painting that must necessarily rank as a masterpiece of Victorian moral art is William Holman Hunt's[1] The Hireling Shepherd,[2] (see Plate I), which was painted in 1851 and exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1852. All of the influences cited in the previous chapter contributed to the final effect of this work. As one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Hunt was one of the first conscious exponents of the symbolic moral style of art. Although an early example of this type of painting, The Hireling Shepherd epitomizes many of the characteristics which were present to a lesser extent in much of the subsequent moral painting. In addition, it goes further in its complexity of meaning than any other work of its type. It will be beneficial to consider this painting in depth, for both its goals and the manner in which they were achieved, for it is in many ways the finest exemplar of the Victorian contemporary moral painting.

Something of the nature of Hunt's technique in painting might be of use here, as indicative of the care that went into his canvases, and particularly pointing out that with such meticulous study of each and every

fragment of nature, it is hardly likely that the artist would not have been equally painstaking in the selection of appropriate accessories to enhance the symbolic suggestion of his painting. This work was begun in the summer of the year 1851 in the fields between Kingston and Ewell in Surrey, where Hunt, together with his friend, Millais, was staying. Hunt describes his search for a proper setting for the anticipated painting, and his finally settling upon a spot along the Ewell River.[3] He also notes the care that he and Millais practiced in maintaining the clarity of pigments through the use of white porcelain palettes. "We knew how impossible it was to give the purity and variety of nature's hues if we allowed our pigments to get sullied."[4] It was at this time that Hunt and Millais developed their use of the "wet white" technique as a method of rendering flowers accurately.[5] So it is apparent that the artists made every attempt to render nature as truthfully and exactingly as they could. The great row of elms that create the lane in the painting were not a part of the original scene, but were included when the pair took lodgings later in the year at Worchester Park Farm. One can see from this that the artist's intentions were not to render nature exactly as she was, but rather to treat those parts that were chosen as naturalistically as was feasible.

The young woman who posed for the shepherdess was Emma Watkins, a field-hand on the estate of Sir George Glynn at Ewell.[6] She came to London so that the portrait might be finished in the winter. The model for the shepherd is unknown. The composition itself is based on the sturdy pyramid formed by the two figures placed against the landscape background. Since the figures were painted in the studio, they are not completely congruous with their setting, so far as lighting is concerned. Hunt, however, has succeeded in making them fit quite convincingly, despite this difficulty. The lane of elms, which tends to funnel the eye back into the picture, but a judiciously-placed sheep halts the gaze and sends it back along the shepherd's hand to the main action of the painting.

On the surface, the meaning does not appear to be profound, in fact it rather seems so mundane as to be unworthy of so meticulous a treatment. It is a hot, late-summer's day, and a shepherd girl rests her feet in the cool water of a brook, while she feeds apples to a lamb on her lap. A young shepherd has brought a moth to show the girl, wondering if she thinks a death's-head moth to be an ill omen. We might also suspect that he is using this as an oppotunity to put his arm around the young woman. Of course, while the shepherd idles away his time, his sheep have strayed into a nearby wheat field.

In the exhibition catalogue accompanying the first showing of the painting, the following quotation appeared.

> Sleepest or wakest though, jolly shepherd?
> Thy sheep be in the corn;
> And for one blast of they minikin mouth,
> Thy sheep shall take no harm.[7]

Also in the catalogue was a statement which hinted at the work's symbolical meaning, "Mr. Holman Hunt painted his picture in rebuke of the sectarian vanities and vital negligence of the nation."[8] As Fleming points out in his analysis of the work, it would seem difficult to interpret the painting in Hunt's terms without the help of the catalogue, and even the catalogue does not help greatly.[9] Perhaps one must admit that the lush world so carefully rendered by the artist would itself have been a sufficient subject. Hunt, upon the purchase of this painting by the Manchester Art Gallery in 1897, gave a further explanation of his intentions:

> Shakespear's song represents a shepherd who is neglecting his real duty of guarding the sheep. . . . He was the type of muddle-headed pastors, who, instead of performing their services to the flock--which is in constant peril--discuss vain questions of no value to any human soul. . . . I did not wish to force the moral, and I never explained it till now. For its meaning was held in reserve for those who might be led to work it out."[10]

Still, it is difficult to relate this to the scene in question, and the meaning remains nebulous. It must, as Hunt tells us, be read.

It is apparent from the outset that the girl in her position and prominence can easily be interpreted as a sort of rustic madonna. This is confirmed by the yellow about her head. Apparently, it represents some type of head covering, (though her scarf is on her lap, covering the lamb). The visual effect of the yellow area is still that of a halo. As the central figure, she dominates the painting as any Renaissance madonna would. Her left hand, in fact, comes close to a gesture of blessing. But clearly, she is no madonna; not, at least, in the traditional sense.

If we now consider these observations in light of the professed subject, (the pastor who seeks out vain theological entities while his sheep are lost), it is more easily interpreted. At this time, England was quite thoroughly Protestant, and highly suspicious of anything that smacked of "papism." Hunt, too, was conscientiously concerned with religion; as evidenced by the number of his paintings in which Biblical subjects appear, and his journey to the Holy Land to verify the accuracy of his religious works. Since he was a Protestant, it is apparent that the madonna figure would represent for him the evils of Catholicism, not the heavenly mother who mediated at God's throne for man's sins which she represented in earlier times. Throughout the history of art, the madonna has been, symbolically the new Eve. As Eve brought about the fall, (death),

of man; the Virgin gave him new life. Thus, the fact that our "madonna" holds apples becomes much more meaningful. The lamb on her lap can represent none other than the Christ figure! And this Eve has been feeding him green apples, which have as disastrous an effect on lambs' stomachs as they do on humans'. So with the shepherdess as an incarnate Eve, (or perhaps a witch), we turn to the relative position of the shepherd.

We know that the shepherd has brought a death's-head moth to the shepherdess to ask her if she believes it to be an ill omen. With her gesture, she disregards it as meaningless. Perhaps, then, our clergyman is indulging in Scholasticism. He is concerned with theological and philosophical inquiry, (for which the Catolic church is famous), and not with the saving of souls. To be sure, the death's-head moth <u>is</u> an ill omen: an omen that should have warned him away from such vanities which serve only to advance his own ego; not to help men on earth attain heaven. The death's-head moth is still more interesting when we consider the common appearance of the skull, (the death's-head of Adam), beneath the cross of Christ, in Christian iconography. So our vain pastor, like Adam, will likewise be driven from Eden for listening to the advice of Eve.

In this context, it is easy to view the fertile setting as the paradisical Garden of Eden, bounded on the right by the rigid lane of elms, which it their turn refer to the Tree of Knowledge. The sensual beauty of the scene, with its absence of any signs of industrialization lends overtones of Rousseau to the symbolic meaning, and we know that the Pre-Raphaelites were in part rebelling against the industrial world they lived in. The fact that the land where the scene was originally painted did not possess this lane of elms and they were purposely added is also indicative of the intended symbolic content.

Surely, this is a painting that was both relevant and religious. It was a modern treatment of an ancient theme, and should have been ideal for the Victorians. Its highly-naturalistic effect gives it the solidity that Sunday-school pictures of Adam and Eve lacked. Its extensive symbolism required that it be read, and it was both contemporary and eternal in its theme.

But perhaps it was a bit too profound for the middle-class at the time it was first shown, for they wanted paintings readily understandable. The critics were not particularly kind, The Athenaeum claiming that Hunt, "carries anti-eclecticism to the absurd," and "revels in the repulsive."[11] William Rossetti, a member of the Pre-Raphaelites, wrote in favour of the work, commenting,

> 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.[12]

But on the whole, the painting was quite well received, and the British Quarterly Review said, "the picture is, in all respects, one of the best in the exhibition."[13]

Although the painting was not as well received as some we will subsequently consider, (and this could very well have been due to its comparitively early date), it was perhaps the most complete manifestation of the Victorian ideals of moral narrative art, as expressed by Ruskin and others, that arose from the great body of such paintings. Its highly allegorical content, coupled with a deliberate ambiguity of meaning, made it not only readable, but susceptable to a number of interpretations and to endless discussion, if one wished. Discussion was intended, for a whole series of sermons were preached on the meaning of the weeds in another of Hunt's works, The Light of the World.[14] We may well wonder how some few weeds could mean so much, but the popularity with Victorians of the "language of flowers" is indicative of their love for such symbols.[15] There are, no doubt, specific meanings attached to the sundry varieties of flora to be found in The Hireling Shepherd, as there are to other details which we have not considered. But many of these meanings would be of a theological nature and their significance lost in the twentieth century.

It is evident that Hunt left the surface meaning of his painting deliberately undefined, and consequently, the symbolic aspects of its treatment acquire increased significance. The sophisticated symbolism of the work was perhaps too profound for the average Victorian, and most later moral painters did not become so involved with the complicated harmonies of allusion that marked The Hireling Shepherd.

The subject of The Hireling Shepherd might easily be expressed as adultery. Adultery not in the usual sense, but the symbolic adultery of a pastor enamoured with theological speculation, and, ultimately, the adultery of Eve with the devil. For the Victorian patron, however, the theme of adultery in marriage was to prove a more feasible illustration of the fall of man, for it included the fall of the family, and we shall see how the concept of the family was the foundation of the society itself. Our next chapter will be concerned with works in which adultery and the immorality of women are utilized to demonstrate both the Christian ideas about sin and the Victorian concept of sin as the violation of family structure.

CHAPTER III

THE LESSONS OF ADULTERY

> The Victorian family won a reputation for itself as a noble social institution upon whose continuance depended all that was fine and stable in British civilisation.[1]

The family was, without a doubt, one of the more hallowed entities in Victorian society. The Royal Family was indeed its finest exemplar.

In the Victorian patriarchy, the father presided over his ample family in a manner not unlike that of a Mediaeval Lord over his serfs. His home was his castle and the unquestioning rule of the father was possible because it was deemed the proper situation according to Protestant religion and middle-class tradition. The family obeyed the father out of respect for his position, because God had so ordained it. Little wonder, then, that the Victorian was horrified at the mere mention of adultery, particularly if the offender were the wife. In the first place, this was due to the excessively idealized position occupied by the Victorian woman. Her real or supposed delicacy of health, coupled with the confining fashions of the day contributed to the image of woman as a fragile, pure, and ethereal creature,

incapable of performing any strenuous sort of work, but piously bearing children, confident in the judiciousness of her admittedly secondary role.

> Perhaps there was never another period in history when it would be true to say that a wife was considered theoretically an angel and practically a slave,[2]

and,

> In a word the nineteenth-century bourgeois wife was less useful to her husband than wives had ever been before--less practically useful, that is. Her function was to promote his egotism by her very dependency and also to serve as a status symbol, to prove to his neighbors that he could afford to give his wife a "lady's life."[3]

So it was even more unforgiveable for a woman to commit adultery inasmuch as it was a heinous violation of patrimonial authority, an assertion of power and independence on the part of the woman. A woman who denied her husband's autocratic rule threatened to destroy the very basis of society, became, like the shepherdess in Hunt's painting, a latter-day Eve.

Adultery on the part of the man was not so violently asocial. In fact, one might say that it was further proof of man's authority that he had a mistress as well as a wife. In part, at least, this was the result of another moral/social doctrine:

> Ladies were supposed to know nothing of the physical side of sex until they were married, and even then, to take no pleasure in it, but merely submit themselves as victims to the "animal passions" of their husbands. . . .

> this resulted in frustrations and tensions that went far to explain the neurotic frigidity of wives and the sad fact that so many husbands sought their sexual satisfaction elsewhere.[4]

Hence, prostitution was both wisespread and openly practiced, though, of course, never acknowledged by "gentle" folk.

The peculiarly sacred position of domesticity would, of course, not allow for a man to violate the sanctity of the family by marrying twice, (since divorce required an act of Parliment until 1865). This is the reason that the drawing of the "Man with Two Wives," (Plate IV, Fig. 2), which we will consider, falls into this category. By taking a second wife without a divorce, a man himself violated the bounds of patriarchal authority set up by the Victorians.

It is the strangely ambivalent position of women, though, that will be our chief concern in considering the painter of scenes of adultery and prostitution. The treatment of this subject in narrative painting borders upon the melodramatic in its presentation. For us, they may appear to be ludicrous and absurd, but for the Victorians the subject was far from humorous. The greatest care must be taken on the part of the artist to impress his viewers with the grave consequences of an adulterous relationship.

Perhaps the most eloquent example of a work involving a wife's unfaithfulness is the set of three paintings by Augustus Leopold Egg[5] known as Past and Present, (Plate II, Fig. 1; Plate III, Fig. 1 and 2), painted in 1858. When originally exhibited, the paintings bore no title, but were accompanied by this quotation in the catalogue.

> Aug. 4: Have just heard that B. has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last, near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head--what a fall hers has been![6]

Until the passage of the Married Woman's Property Act, which became law in 1862, a wife guilty of adultery could be turned penniless into the streets by her husband. Since this painting was done prior to that law, it must be understood in light of this situation.

In the first scene of the series, the man, his wife, and two young daughters are the principal actors in the pictorial drama. The setting is the interior of a well-furnished middle-class home. A table forms the focal point of the composition. To the right, the husband sits staring blankly into space in horror and disgust, his wife lying on the floor, sobbing, at his feet. In his hand, he holds a letter, evidently informing him of his wife's unfaithfulness. To the left, the daughters, who are building a house of cards on a chair look up from their play. Beyond the table is a

fireplace, and in the mirror above it we can glimpse an open door, perhaps the very door we are looking through. At each side of the fireplace are two framed pictures. Aside from its effective and dramatic presentation of the scene, this is excedingly rich in moral symbolism.

The consciousness of time is immediately apparent in this painting, and time is an important concern in nearly all Victorian moral painting.[7] It was not so important an element in The Hireling Shepherd because the scene was not itself a specific one. Here, however, the temporal elements are emphasized in obvious ways, the whole idea of the series of three paintings being to present the scenes in separate times and places. The cinematic format is heightened in effect by the impression of action present in the first scene. It is apparent that the artist's chosen scene is the immediate aftermath of a rather violent confrontation between husband and the wife he has discovered to be unfaithful. Since the older of the two daughters looks up, somewhat surprised, while the other has apparently not yet noticed what has happened, we can surmise that it was only a moment before that the husband entered the room with his condemming letter. This impression is further substantiated by his hat carelessly tossed on the table, and his

umbrella which lies carelessly tossed on a chair in the foreground. The open door in the mirror seems to indicate that in his fury he has left the door open, as he rushed into the room. The wife, who was peeling an apple, (probably for the little girls), has fallen to the floor, along with half the apple.

The reference to Eve that the apple would seem to indicate is further advanced by the pictures on the wall: at the left of the fireplace hangs the wife's portrait in an oval frame, beneath what appears to be a print in a larger frame. The print depicts the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden! The husband's framed portrait is square, (an analogy for his honesty?), and hangs beneath a reproduction of Clarkson Stanfield's picture of a shipwreck, entitled The Abandoned[8] referring, nodoubt, to the situation of the husband. Again, the open door could refer to the fate of the wife, while the umbrella might mean that life in the street is not so comfortable as in the suburban home. The girls play with a house of cards, probably to symbolize either the flimsiness of an adulterous relationship or the approaching fall of their own household. More pertinately, it represents society itself, which cannot exist, (in the Victorian sense at least), if such relationships (like card-houses) are its foundations. Symbolically, too, the knife left on the table stuck through the apple points significantly to the victim of Eve's sin: the husband.

The daughters seem to be included to increase pathos and invoke pity for their plight. They also could be used in order that other little girls might identify with them and perceive how sad is the situation of a family that is broken because of sin.

In the other two paintings in the set, we see the sequel to the first scene. Though not nearly so dramatic, and far less symbolic, they continue the moral lesson implied in the first, bringing it to its logical conclusion.

Years have passed and the daughters, now grown, sit in their room, the older gazing out the window at the moon, as she tries to comfort the younger. The father has died, and they are alone, wondering, no doubt, where their mother might be. The two framed pictures of mother and father hanging to either side of the window, give no specific moral reference this time, but carry out the theme of reverence for the family. Paired with this scene is the third painting: the other side of the picture, so to speak. The mother sits beneath the Adelphi arches, looking across the Thames, crouching miserably among rotting boats as she tries to comfort an illegitimate child beneath her shawl. She gazes at the same moon her daughter viewed, with remorse , and the rotting boat and basket symbolize her own ruined life, for indeed, she does not even have a

roof over her head. On the damp wall, posters proclaim, "Pleasure excursions to Paris," and "Victims" and other references to the state of the woman. The solitary word, "Return," may carry a glimmer of hope, a faint one indeed, but for those partial to happy endings, the solution is there. It would be most difficult for a fallen woman to resume her place intthe family structure.

Obviously, the first painting is the most interesting from the standpoint of dramatic symbolism, composition, and emotional impact on the viewer. In fact, it could easily stand alone, with the somewhat pathetic figure of the wife thrust uncompromisingly upon the view--and the moral consciousness--of the spectator. But it is still significant for our study that Egg thought the two other paintings necessary to complete the thought. This demonstrates both the consciousness on the artist's part of impressing the audience with the extent of the crime, as well as his particular interest in dramatic scenss. The latter interest must certainly be heightened by his own career as an amateur actor.[9]

The seeming heartlessness on the part of the Victorian man under such conditions is quite incomprehensible to us, but it was bound up with his moral duty and society. Sentimental as Victorians could be,

they could have little sympathy for the "Damned" in their society.

The woman of the streets, though depicted by Egg as a most wretched creature was in truth, not always so unhappy. Wealthy mistresses often married as they grew older and were submerged into respectable society:

> It is a vulgar error and a popular delusion that the life of a prostitute is as revolting to herself as it appears to the moralist sternly lamenting over the condition of the fallen. . . . Women who in youth have lost their virtue often contrive to retain their reputation; and even when this is not the case, frequently amalgamate imperceptibly with the purer portion of the population.[10]

So wrote a contemporary sociologist. It was complained that one could not distinguish the lady of the street from the Duchess by the cut of her clothes or her manners. Fine apparel, driving ponies, saddle horses, and a plush suburban home with elegant furnishings came to the more fortunate kept women.[11] Lest the lure of the streets be too great for the young girl destined for the near-slavery of the shops or the routine life of a governess or teacher, the painter joined in the admonition by denouncing the immoral life of the demi-monde.

Among the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, two of the best-known are works dealing with the kept woman: Found, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti,[12] (Plate IV,

Fig. 1); and The Awakening Conscience, (Plate V, Fig. 1), by Holman Hunt. Found was painted between 1853 and 1865, and was Rossetti's only attempt at painting the contemporary moral subject. It remains unfinished. The scene depicted is of a young farmer who has come to town to sell a calf at the market. As he passes a street corner, a young lady recognizes him as her once betrothed sweetheart and hides from him, for she has become a woman of the streets. But the young man has likewise recognized his former loved one, and here we see him in the act of pulling the girl's hands away from her face as she shuts her eyes and cringes in shame against the brick wall. The young man's expression betrays both disgust and pity for the fallen girl. Certainly, the calf led to slaughter in the city symbolizes the once-innocent young girl's symbolic death in the city.

As is the case with Egg's painting, the scene is highly dramatic, emotional, and instructional in its moral overtones. It has a similar sense of time, for we can sense that the incident has just occured. The juxtaposition of the plain, simple garb of the farmer with the gaudy and frivolous dress of the girl bespeaks something of the rough, but honest, countryman. As in The Hireling Shepherd, the painting hints at the evils of industrialization, but only in an oblique way.

Hunt's painting of a similar subject[13] in The Awakening Conscience is the most complete symbolic moral painting dealing with this subject. Typical of Hunt's style, there is not an object in the painting with out intentional moral implications. Originally, the painting was intended as a companion-piece to his work, The Light of the World, of 1851-1853, which portrays Christ knocking on a weed-covered door holding a lantern. The intent of The Awakening Conscience was to show how the light of God could penetrate to those who are lost in the depths of darkness. As Hunt put it,

> The pathetic verse in Proverbs, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart," had led me to this subject when thinking of a material interpretation of the idea in "The Light of the World." My desire was to show how the still small voice speaks to a human soul in the turmoil of life.[14]

The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854 with the following quotations in the catalogue.

> 'As of the green leaves on a thick tree, some fall and some grow; so is the generation of flesh and blood'--
> Ecclesiastes, xiv, 18.
>
> 'Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm ye the tottering knees; say ye to the faint hearted: Be ye strong; fear ye not; behold your God.'--
> Isaiah--Bishop Lowth's translation.[15]

It is interesting to note that Augustus Egg persuaded Thomas Fairburn to commission this painting, further evidence of the link between Egg and the Pre-Raphaelites.[16]

In the painting itself, we are presented with a young man and his mistress in her plush apartment. The young man is singing as he carelessly plays the piano, with his left hand, his right arm about his lady's waist. The woman has suddenly jumped up from his lap with a startled look. The intent is to show that the young man has unknowingly launched into a song which stirred long-suppressed emotions and awakens the conscience of the young woman to the evils of her present situation, inducing in her a moral resolve: to repent of her sins. As in our two preceding works, the sense of drama is intensified by the implied action of the scene. The conversion has just this moment taken place. The young man, still singing, does not yet realize that his companion is no longer of the same mind as he. The expression on the woman's face is the focal point of the painting, (though it was altered somewhat from its original state in 1856-7 when the owner complained that he found it painful to look at);[17] Behind the two chief figures, a mirror reflects the window that opens into the room, providing the spectator a logical means of access, just as did Egg's painting.

Due to some adverse criticism that the painting received when first exhibited, John Ruskin wrote to The Times clarifying Hunt's picture. Not that he found it difficult to understand himself, for,

"I am at a loss to know how the meaning could be rendered more distinctly."[18] But there seemed to be too great a profusion of symbolism for the average spectator to fathom. Ruskin explains the circumstances of the painting and the scene depicted, calling attention to the girl's face, and gives a most interesting explanation of the profusion of detail:

> Nothing is more notable than the way in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention of a mind which has been fevered by violent and distressful excitement. They thrust themselves forward with a ghastly and unendurable distinctness, as if they would compel the sufferer to count, or measure, or learn them by heart.[19]

Then Ruskin turns to an interpretation of some of these details:

> There is not a single object in all that room, common, modern, vulgar, . . . but it becomes tragical if rightly read. That furniture, so carefully painted even to the last vein of the rosewood--is there nothing to be learnt from that terrible lustre of it, from its fatal newness; nothing there that has the old thoughts of home upon it, or that is ever to become part of home? Those embossed books, vain and useless--they also new--marked with no happy wearing of beloved leaves; the torn and dying bird upon the floor; the gilded tapestry with the fowls of the air feeding on the ripened corn; the picture above the fireplace with its single drooping figure--the woman taken in adultery; nay the very hem of the poor girl's dress, which the painter has laboured so closely thread by thread, has a story in it, if we think how soon its pure whiteness may be soiled with dust and rain, her outcast feet failing in the street; and the fair garden flowers seen in the reflected sunshine of the mirror--these also have their language:

> Hope not to find delight in us, they say,
> For we are spotless, Jessy--we are pure[20]

The bird to which Ruskin refers appears beneath the table, molested by a large cat, certainly a metaphor for the couple's relationship. On the piano, the music sheet is entitled, Oft in the Stilly Night, the song which has stirred memories of home, mother, and father in the heart of the girl. On the floor in the immediate foreground is a copy of music by Edgar Lear to Tennyson's Tears, Idle Tears. On the table is a copy of a book identified as Noel Humphrey's The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing, first published in 1853. Tangled embroidering wools are strewn on the floor. The man's hat is on the table, giving the impression that he does not live there, and he still wears his left glove, while his right hand is ungloved, and the glove lies on the floor. The tapestry behind them has a deeper meaning, too.

> [In it] The corn and vine are left unguarded by the slumbering cupid watchers and the fruit is left to be preyed upon by thievish birds. . . The parallelism, it was hoped, might lead the spectator's mind to reflections beyond those suggested by the incidents connected with the scene portrayed.[21]

The beauty of the spring day reflected in the mirror contrasts with the darker room, and reminds one of the lantern carried by Christ in The Light of the World, though, of course, this scene takes place in the day. In his comments regarding this painting, Ruskin

acknowledged that some people might be distraught by the fact that the detail drew attention away from the subject. The earlier criticisms of the painting also pointed this out as one of its faults. It seems strange, though, that the critics were unable to see any meaning in the reflections in the mirror: "the complicated compound shadow in the mirror is also a mere piece of intricacy without any good or valuable effort."[22] It is obvious that she has her back against the light, indicating that she has formerly "turned her back on God's light," but she has now turned her back on her lover.

A wealth of other details in this painting are not without their symbolic meaning, but are less easy to decipher. They are afforded great prominence, but nowhere are they interpreted in allegorical terms. Again, we are faced with the necessity of more personal interpretation. As Hunt points out, we are supposed to learn a lesson from it that goes beyond the mere scene in the painting, and part of that lesson is wrapped up in our individual associations. For example, if we think that the embroidery wools are a comment on the leisurely life of the mistress, who would often employ herself with such handiwork while awaiting the whimsical arrival of her keeper; or if we chose to

interpret it as her tangled, disrupted life, the artist would probably feel that the symbol was equally successful, for the important thing was that the viewer had contemplated the meaning.

Concerning the moral value of this painting, Ruskin wrote:

> There will not be found one powerful as this to meet full in the front the moral evil of the age in which it is painted; to waken into mercy the cruel thoughtlessness of youth, and subdue the severities of judgement into the sanctity of compassion.[23]

The Awakening Conscience is an excellant demonstration of the manner in which the moral style of painting was adapted to the needs of middle-class morality. The theme here is simular in many ways to that of the Hireling Shepherd, though positive in its outlook. The tapestry theme is very much like the "strayed sheep" idea. But the difference is that the subject is much more specific, much more relevant on the surface level, as well as retaining symbolic meanings. Its positive outlook might also have been more amenable to the middle-class patron. So Hunt, too, appears to be working for the taste of the day.

Having considered three important Victorian works involving immoral women, we find that the number of works dealing specifically with a husband's adultery are considerably less. I know of no paintings

which make use of this theme, though it would not surprise me to discover one. A drawing in pen and ink by Sir John Everett Millais[24] will serve to illustrate the Victorian treatment of the subject. It would seem, though, as we shall see in the subsequent chapter that the Victorians preferred to consider gambling to be the evil that plagued men, rather than sexual immorality.

This drawing, entitled "The Man with two Wives," or "Retribution," (Plate IV, Fig. 2), was made in 1854. In the scene, a young man hangs his head and his new bride looks aghast as his former wife and children present themselves. The little daughter reaches joyfully for "daddy," while the son holds his mother's arm and pulls shyly away. Like the previous paintings, it is excedingly dramatic. It is also quite easy to grasp the circumstances immediately from the scene, but, perhaps, this is due to the fact that this is a drawing, not a painting, therefore much less finished in its treatment of detail. Certainly, the dramatic presentation of the scene with its emphasis upon the emotions of the five people appeals to one's sentiment. Again, there is the sense of immediacy--the woman has just been shown into the bridal chamber by the maid who appears in the doorway.

The characteristics, then, of the painting dealing with adultery or illicit sexual relations are a great sense of dramatic action coupled with horror

or dismay. The emotional conflict of the individuals involved is the real subject of each. The intent of the artist in all cases was to instruct. Just as the early Christian art was used to instruct the people, so this variety of moral art served a similar purpose: to teach lessons of morality to both young and old. This purpose was possible due mainly to the widespread use of prints which we have already noted.

So we may conclude, that in the case of this type of moral painting, the artist not only fulfilled his own moral obligation to society, by putting a lesson in the disasters of immorality before an increasingly large audience; he also furthered the cause of his own salvation through such missionary work. A child who grew up with Past and Present on the wall of her home would ideally not violate the family's sanctity in a similar manner, despite the impossibilities of divorce at the time.

CHAPTER IV

THE MISFORTUNES OF GAMBLERS

If well-to-do Victorian men spent much of their time with women of the demi-monde; it would appear that the rest of their time was spent at the race track.

> The man of pleasure, indeed, seems to have had only two passions: women and horses. . . . Certainly women and horses provided the best and quickest means of getting rid of even substantial fortunes.[1]

For the man with less than substantial means, the results of betting were even more disastrous. The inevitable loans and ultimate disgrace and poverty from losses at the track made life increasingly difficult for those dependent upon him. The vice of gambling knew no class boundaries, and was practiced by aristocrat and shop-worker alike. Worse still, it was known that the Prince of Wales himself was addicted to this dangerous sport, playing cards for money and betting on horses, though always on a moderate scale.[2]

The evils of gambling, then, certainly could not be overlooked as a subject for the painter of moral themes. As in the paintings dealing with adultery, the emphasis is on the lesson to be taught, and once

again the effect of the situation upon the family of the gambler is exploited by the artist to create a pathetic situation. Indeed, the attitude of the Victorian artist toward ganbling seems far more tolerant than his feeling toward adultery, but that would be expected in view of our comments on the position of man in society. Usually, the artist chooses to portray the gambler as a well-dressed and wealthy member of the upper stratum of society. A notable exception is found in W. P. Frith's [3] large painting, Derby Day, of 1856-1858[4] in which gamblers of the more vulgar type appear alongside those who are obviously wealthy. The many types of gambling practiced at the Derby are reproduced in this enormous canvas. Frith's first visit to the Derby in 1856 aroused his interest in painting the "kaleidoscopic aspect of the crowd,"[5] and he mentions, "gambling-tents and thimble-rigging, prick in the garter and the three-card trick, had not then been stopped by the police."[6] An analysis of the Derby Day, however, lies beyond the scope of our present subject, for it does not deal specifically with gambling as a lesson in morality. In the latter vein, however, Frith painted a series of five paintings in 1877, entitled The Road to Ruin (Plates VI and VII, and Plate VIII, Fig. 1). The detail in Frith's work tends to be far more literal than in those of Hunt or

Egg that we have considered. Rather than assigning specific symbolic meanings to details, Frith seems to prefer a wealth of objects which give further meaning to the story itself. In fact, this seems to be the method preferred by the majority of the artists who paint this type of subject. Thus, it is not necessary to search beyond detail for another, symbolic, meaning, though the artist has made that the viewer's option.

With this in mind, we can take a closer look at the five scenes Frith created. The first of these is almost entirely explained by the artist in this passage:

> I desired to trace the career of a youth from his college days to his ruin and death--a victim to one of the most fatal vices. In the first scene my hero is entertaining a party of friends in his college-room, who have played at cards all night. One of them, perhaps the youngest, has fallen asleep on a sofa while the rest are still engaged in furious play. The window-curtain is drawn aside by one of the non-players, and the dawn is evident by the lighting up of towers of an opposite college by the earliest rays of the sun. Another guest blows out a candle no longer needed.[7]

The drama continues with the second scene, in which,

> my youth has grown to manhood, and is engaged in far more dangerous play than three-card loo; for he is the centre of attraction in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot to a horde of betting-men, who are offering him chance after chance of immediate or prospective ruin.[8]

The "hero," dressed elegantly, naively writes checks while a friend presses his arm, trying in vain to save the young man from his fate. The painting is an excellant example of Frith's unique ability to put a crowd of people into a painting quite successfully. The large number of fashionably-attired ladies in the Royal Enclosure seems indicative of the fact that the man of pleasure's two favorite sports, gambling and women, were "strangely intertwined."[9]

In the third painting, we catch a glimpse of the upper-class home as,

> the young man is seen in his ancestral home--with his wife and children--in the hands of bailiffs who have arrested him for debt.[10]

The panelled interior is handsomely furnished, with a number of paintings on the walls. The gentleman, wearing a dressing gown over his trousers and waistcoat, leans nonchalantly against the fireplace, cigar in hand, as he gazes at the bailiff who presents the order for his arrest. The other bailiff looks to the man's family with pity, while the wife rises from her chair, in shock. The little boy looks with disbelief at his father, while the little girl continues to play with her doll, apparently oblivious to the situation. The wife and children are fashionably dressed as would befit an upper-class family. In the background, two servants

express their amazement over the incident.

A fairly long interval elapses between this and the fourth scene, and now we find the man,

> away from his native land endeavoring to earn a subsistence by writing plays; while his wife devotes herself to painting in water-colours in the hope of selling her work, and thus adding to their slender means. A French landlady presses for her rent, the wife appeals to the woman, and the husband is in despair.[11]

The meagre furnishings of the room attest to the poverty that now plagues the family. A new baby, (seen in the crib at far left beneath a crucifix), an added burden, has made the family's plight even more desperate. Mother, father, and children all appear thinner, and the daughter looks sickly and frail as she attempts to warm herself before the fire. The boy--grown somewhat taller now--tries to console the despairing father.

In the final scene,

> my luckless hero is seen in the fifth and last picture fastening the door of a miserable attic, with an expression on his face, that, assisted by the pistol ready to his hand, admits of but one interpretation--death by his own hand.[12]

In the decrepit garrett room, we find no clue as to where the family might be. A cupboard door thrown open reveals that it is pathetically empty. On the floor is a letter from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, rejecting a comedy the fallen man had written. Only

an empty wicker crib from which a blanket hangs, and a scattered toy or two attest to the fact that the family has been here. A woman's hatbox seems to hint at the possibility that the wife has just left, taking the children with her. This seems likely in view of the impression that the crib has only recently been deserted, the blanket left on its side, suggesting that the family might have left hurriedly.

Once again, then, we have a lesson by example of the perils that await the immoral person. A series of this type has all the effect of a full-scale drama, plus the advantage of being continually before the spectator, hence far less easily erased from the memory. Again, the presence of children gives it added impact in molding the moral configuration of the younger generation.

A painting which seems almost a part of the series is R. B. Martineau's[13] The Last Day in the Old Home, completed in 1862. The artist worked on the painting for almost ten years, and it is earlier than Frith's series, though there is no evidence that Frith was inspired by it specifically. The painting, (See Plate VIII, Fig. 2), depicts the selling of the family home to pay for debts incurred by the gambler. In the foreground, at the right, the father hoists a glass of liquor to toast the old home for the last

time. His hand is on the shoulder of his son, who is also drinking. The mother appears to plead with her husband not to teach the boy to follow in his footsteps by drinking and gambling. At the left, the old mother of the family makes arrangements with the bailiff for the sale. The bailiff looks as though he pities the plight of this family, and finds it an unpleasant duty to deprive them of their home because of the husband's foolish behavior. The young daughter plays with her doll in much the same manner as her counterpart in Frith's series. Lying on the floor is a sale catalogue, bearing the name of the home about to be put on the auction block: Hardham Court. Nearly all the articles in the room have been tagged with sale numbers, and two men in the background are completing the tagging of saleable objects. In the left foreground we see evidence of the type of gambling that brought this ruin: a painting of a race horse.

The husband here, as in Frith's work, seems so foolish as to be almost unaware of what the loss of his home means. He seems to be almost unconcerned, yet, surely, he should be concerned, and the expression on the man's face seems to indicate that he is not so composed as he appears to be.

One final work of the same type is the pen-and-ink drawing by Millais of 1853 entitled The Race

Meeting, (See Plate IX). Although this was completed at an earlier date than either of the previous works, it was never exhibited, and probably did not influence either of those works. Rather, it is representative of the moral consciousness of the period in regard to the "evils of gambling," which resulted in a large number of works of this type.

In this drawing, the combination of drinking and gambling is again exploited. The gentleman, who appears to have had a few more drinks than were necessary, is being accosted by a large group of men wanting to take bets from him. He has, of course, satisfied them all by his wholesale betting, and like vultures, they stand about hoping for a bit more, some holding out their hands, one whispering in his ear. The poor wife can hardly believe her eyes that her husband would allow this gang of scoundrels to strip him of all his money. Yet, this is indeed what has happened. Perhaps they have even persuaded him to borrow some money to stake on a "sure thing." Whatever the case, the lady covers her face in hopeless grief and the motley crowd decends upon the carriage. This drawing approaches caricature in the rendering of the faces of the betting-men, and seems reminiscent of the work of Hogarth. This may be due to the medium involved or an interest in Hogarth on Millais' part.[14]

The works on gambling differ, then, considerably from those dealing with adultery. While in both the situation was pathetic for the family involved, perhaps even for the sinner, in the paintings dealing with gambling, the attitude evoked by the artist toward the wrong-doer is totally different. In the case of the woman, we were given the analogy of Eve, the evil woman; here the man becomes Adam, the foolish man. He is treated almost as though he were possessed by a strange malady over which he had no control. Indeed the Victorian concept of the "animal passions" of men to which we have earlier referred[15] leads us to believe that men were unable to control themselves in certain situations. This is curious in light of the patriarchal ideals, but certainly it made it easier to explain why men did wrong.

It is notable, too, that these works all deal with upper-class men, <u>not</u> the middle-class. The purpose of this, we might assume is to pamper the middle-class patrons, who must have liked to think that the old aristocracy was degenerate, lazy, and sinful unlike the hard-working, honest, middle-classes. To have shown a middle-class gambler would have been to insinuate that there might be something wrong with the society in which the artist worked. To show an evil middle-class woman only confirmed the suspicions of the husband that the wife must be controlled firmly.

Because of the different position of man in the social structure, the paintings dealing with a vice specifically masculine in nature are handles with a more literal, straightforward approach, utilizing symbolism less frequently. The result is that the incident portrayed does not take on the ominous significance of a parable, but rather appears to be only a scene from life. There is no emphasis on emotional stress (except in the case of Frith's fifth scene), nor are there overtones of indecency and shame such as marked the adultery paintings. Surely, no one would have condoned the ruinous life of a gambler, but it was not accompanied by the blushing morality and the "conspiracy of silence" that marked matters involving sex. Thus, where the sins of men were concerned, there was a good deal more of understanding and compassion on the part of both artist and spectator, and never a reference to the patron-class. In this sense, also, The Hireling Shepherd avoided the middle class in its comment on the foolishness of man.

CHAPTER V

THE PATHETIC

By far the largest number of paintings dealing with moral subjects fall into the category we have entitled "the pathetic." They deal with situations intended to evoke pity and piety in the viewer. The number of works which fall into this category is enormous, and the treatment of them has been necessarily limited to a few examples in each of three broad categories, i. e.: (1), death and mourning; (2) the poor and destitute; and (3) sickness and invalids.

One has but to turn through the pages of any Victorian women's periodical to be convinced of the importance of the pathetic to the nineteenth century mind. There is an endless array of poems and stories about dead children, dying children, invalids, and other unfortunate people. It might appear to us to be an almost sadistic concern with such unhappy affairs, but if we believe this, we are no aware of the Victorian attitude toward the pathetic. To our minds the concern for such things is both morbid and maudlin. In our own society, we tend to avoid such unpleasantries

altogether, for we have hospitals and rest homes where people can die inconspicuously. But for the Victorian, when death came, as with birth, it was usually in the home, and, consequently, a much more immediate experience than it is in our own era. This goes far to explain the funeral portraits and photographs (of the dead person in his casket), that were commonplace decorations for the parlor wall.[1] Since both birth and death took place in the home, the Victorian was ever conscious of the Providence that gave, sustained, and took away the lives of loved ones. This intimacy with death made it more a part of everyday existence than it has been in the mid-twentieth century.

The sentimental concern with death was also responsible for the Victorians' fondness for passing a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the graveyard.[2] Their closeness to death, which helped to asuage their grief over the loss of a loved one, and their firm belief in the goodness of God (in whose care the dead now rested), made such Sunday outings more like family reunions than morbid setimentality over graves.

Two paintings which represent graveyard scenes will serve to demonstrate this aspect of moral painting. These are The Doubt: Can These Dry Bones Live? by Henry Alexander Bowler[3] (See Plate X, fig. 1) and Home From the Sea, or A Mother's Grave, (Plate X, Fig. 2), by Arthur Hughes, painted 1856-1863.[4]

In the first painting, we have a scene in a graveyard with a young woman leaning contemplatively over a tombstone, considering (as the title indicates), the wonders of Christian rebirth. The answer to her doubt appears in the forground. Another grave marker, bearing the word RESURGAM, has given root to a large horse-chestnut tree. The dry bones, evidenced by the skull at the left, are given further impetus by a bright blue butterfly perched there, the whole being a simple demonstration that indeed there is life in death. This work was painted in 1856, but it lacks the intricacy of most of our previous paintings. It demonstrates the use of the techniques developed by the Pre-Raphaelites to convey a message that is not particularly profound.

Although Bowler's painting teaches a moral (or perhaps we should say a religious)lesson , the second painting is much more effective in this respect. In Home From the Sea, the scene depicted is of a boy who has left his mother for the adventuresome life of the sea, and returns, only to find a newly-dug grave. Overcome by his grief, he lies sobbing at the side of the grave, remorseful and helpless, regreting that he could not have been with his mother in her last hours, perhaps feeling that had he stayed she would not have died. The girl next to the sailor, whom we might assume to be his sister, was added at the later date,

and did not constitute a part of the original composition.[5] Though the subject is as emotionally-loaded as a Victorian painter could have desired, Hughes' treatment has a surprising delicacy of feeling that tends to remove it from the exaggerated pathos of many similar works. The figure of the girl, solitary, monumental, and helpless, too, in consoling the boy's grief, has enhanced the original effect. The boy's hat and bundle have been thrown to the ground at the right. The details of the landscape background are carefully rendered in the Pre-Raphaelite manner. A heavy shadow across the grave reflects the mood of the young man, while the background is bathed in sunlight, and a lamb grazes among the tombstones. The light and the lamb might be overt references to religious ideas of resurrection but they are not specific enough to make it certain.

The pathetic is here heightened by the ambiguity of the boy's role: did he leave home of necessity or for the sake of adventure? If it were from necessity, then the tragedy is increased by the irony of the necessary leaving of home to help the family ending in the loss of the mother. On the other hand, it is also like a prodigal son motif, if the boy had left purely for the sake of the adventure. Once again, we have a painting that not only provokes pathetic emotions, but also teaches a lesson in morality.

Pathetic, too, were the scenes of persons grieving over the death of loved ones, not because of remorse, but simple because it was a sad thing to lose a relative. Our own reaction to hanging on the wall such a painting as Woman's Mission-Bad News, (Plate XI), by G. E. Hicks[6] would most certainly be negative. This work depicts a woman consoling her husband over a death in the family. In his hand, he holds the black-edged letter which informed him of the bereavement, and his wife tries to comfort him in his grief. It is as difficult to understand this as it is to understand portraits of the dead or flower-covered caskets. In each case, the intent was not morbid, but moral.

There was another aspect to the pathetic which is often overlooked, but of paramount importance to the morally-minded Victorian. This was the importance of the sentiment itself. Though the Victorian's idea of helping the indigent was to build more churches and contribute to the Society for the Prevention of Vice,[7] he was still expected to feel pity for those who were virtuous, but less fortunate than he. It was, in fact, immoral not to feel pity for those deserving of it. It is easy for us to view this show of pity as an outgrowth of guilt on the part of the wealthy Victorian who saw nothing immoral in accumulating

wealth at the expense of others. He felt greatest pity for the sick, the blind, the crippled, the grief-stricken parents of a dead child, or a high-born person forced into desperate poverty through no fault of his own. He felt it was the grace of God that kept him from similar circumstances, and instead of working to alleviate suffering, he thanked God that it was not his own lot in life. The strong sense of predestination; of a plan for the progress of society ordained by God, was one of the major factors inhibiting the passage of much social legislation, (such as laws prohibiting children under thirteen from working over forty-eight hours a week), until after 1866. It seems incredible to us that anyone who could oppose such legislation would be capable of pity, but on the other hand, it would be difficult to accuse the Victorians of lacking pity. The fault may lie in their religious reaction to bad conditions as part of the "vale of tears," that the Protestant believed the world was. It seems, however, that the middle-class had things a trifle better than the factory-working children and the slum-dwellers.

With these comments in mind, we turn to our second group of paintings, those concerned with the perils of poverty and failure. Three paintings which illustrate the concern over the predicament of the poor

are Richard Redgrave's[8] The Poor Teacher (Plate XII, Fig. 1) of 1844; Emily Mary Osborne's[9] Nameless and Friendless, (Plate XII, Fig. 2); of 1857; and Ford Madox Brown's[10] Last of England, (Plate XIII), 1855.

Redgrave's The Poor Teacher is described by Lister in this way:

> [It] is the narrative painting par excellance, telling a story, yet not telling all, for much is left to us to piece together. We are left in exquisite suspense.[11]

The painting represents the pitiful story of a young girl forced to work as a teacher, who has just received a letter telling her of a death in the family. She holds the letter on her lap. The plight of the working-girl was frightful to the Victorian, who considered it proper for his wife and daughters to do nothing,

> "My daughter, I am glad to say, has no need to work." In some such phrase must many a rising shop-keeper . . . have congratulated himself.[12]

Hemce, the story of the young girl's fate was viewed with genuine horror by the head of the middle-class Victorian family.

> In the governess, he saw, but for the grace of God, his own daughters.[13]

At this time, the roles of teacher and governess were practically interchangeable, and the lot of either left much to be desired.[14]

The young woman in the painting, not a great deal older than her pupils, wears a dark, high-necked gown in contrast to the light, low-necked, and short-sleeved ones of the girls. Still, as Ruth Green[15] points out, there are some incongruities in her attire. Her dress, with the puffed sleeves, is not so plain as might have been expected, and its cape or collar has no relevance to the cut of the dress, with the white collar above it. It seems that the young lady is making use of a dress from better days. Her hair style is likewise somewhat frivolous, with the curls at the sides, rather than pulled into a simple bun. These are clues that the woman has come from a reasonably good family, but for some reason has been forced to go to work. We might guess that the prolonged illness of the relative of whose death she has justed learned created the necessity for her present situation.

Other details in the painting include the music on the piano of "Home, Sweet, Home," referring, no doubt, to the young teacher's thoughts. The stack of books on the table verifies the fact that she is a teacher (rather than a governess), and the top one is laid open, as though she were reading it when she received her letter. On the table is a tea cup, indicative, perhaps, of her frugal repast. The seated girl gazes enviously at the two girls playing outside and the whole painting is divided into a dark side,

(occupied by the teacher), and a light side, where the younger girls are.

The tragedy is increased by the contrast between the lively young girls (girls such as she herself must have been a short while ago), and the mourning young woman, who has not only lost a loved one, but has also lost her chance of being placed in a "good" marriage by her family as these girls surely will be. The tragedy of the working girl was a lesson for the middle-class father more than for any other member of Victorian society. For him, it was a continual reminder of his own importance to his wife and daughters, and he must be thankful that Providence has made it possible for him to keep his own family in luxury. For the wives and daughters themselves, such a reminder was aimed at underlining the importance of the head of the household, and the fate of the woman without a male protector.

Nameless and Friendless is quite similar in content. Here, the woman, destitute, has come to one of the art dealers of the period to try to sell her watercolours. Since watercolours were a hobby of well-to-do women, we might suppose that she was once more fortunate. Now, ironically, she has only her slight talent in creating trivial scenes to save herself and children from starvation. The expression of the dealer is so readable that it needs no elucidation.

The woman herself, with a boy we may assume to be her son, stares bleakly at the floor, nervously playing with the wrapping string she holds between her hands. The boy looks at the older man almost defiantly. The woman, in this case, is probably a widow. At that time, women had almost no property rights, and a woman without a husband or father was unable to assume any respectable position in society, consequently forced to become a teacher, governess, or domestic servant--or a prostitute. Many women in this situation must have tried to use such mean skills as they had to remain respectable yet make a living. This painting is even more interesting when we realize that the artist was a woman. Perhaps she knew this situation all too well!

Of a somewhat different sentiment is Ford Madox Brown's Last of England. It was painted at a time when a close friend of the artist had emmigrated to Australia and Brown was tempted to follow. In fact, the man and wife in the painting are actually portraits of Brown himself and his wife, Emma.[16] The hand of a child that the wife grasps under her shawl was also painted from one of their own children. The artist wrote a sonnet about the emmigrants, beginning with these lines:

> The Last of England! O'er the sea, my dear
> Our homes to seek amid Australian fields,[17]

The sonnet describes the scene, ending with,

> She grips his listless hand and clasps her child,
> Through rainbow tears she sees a sunnier gleam,
> She cannot see a void where he will be.[18]

Aside from the excellent summary of the relationship between husband and wife, the sonnet demonstrates some of the ideas the artist was attempting to convey through the couple's expressions. Here is a man who, in a sense, has admitted defeat. His embittered expression shows that he feels betrayed by his native land, feels that it should not be necessary for him to leave his well-loved England in order to seek his fortune. The wife looks sad, but seems also firmly resolved that they will have a new life, and grips her husband's hand to demonstrate her confidence. In the background, "a reprobate shakes his fist with curses at the land of his birth . . . his old mother reproves him,"[19] A child stares bewilderedly next to its mother. The lifeboat in the background bears the name, "Eldorado."

Again, the theme that is exploited is appealing--or horrifying--as the case may be, to the middle-class gentleman of the day. As in the previous works, the idea of failure is impressed upon the viewer, though in this case the failure is accompanied by hope. All of the paintings seem to emphasize the tragedy of failure, and consequently effect a feeling of gratitude in the viewer that the grace of God is upon him. Like Mediaeval

carvings of the "Damned" suffering in hell, the pathetic painting taught Victorians to walk in the "ways of God."

Illness was an ever-present danger in the rapidly-industrializing England, and tuberculosis took an enormous number of young lives each year. Epidemics of many types were especially disastrous in the closely-packed tenements of the lower classes and factory workers. The inadequacies of Victorian medicine made it impossible to save the lives of more than a few of the stricken children and adults, and, of course, the lack of knowledge about T. B. caused an ever increasing number of invalids and deaths. This was coupled with the ideal of woman as a frail, white creature, who dared not go out in the sun for fear of the dreaded tanned skin of a worker. If the woman did not have tuberculosis, she must at least pretend to be fragile:

> Delicacy, as a sign of refinement, was widely upheld by polite fiction. To be put on a pedestal was apparently the only cure for a disease known as "decline," a disease which threatened the young women . . . and made an astonishing number of them helpless invalids for no manifest reason.[20]

Certainly, the gaunt, hollow-eyed creatures of Rossetti's dreamy vision are the product of this ideal.

Illness, then, was a constant companion of the Victorian, and a popular subject for painters. A painting that deals specifically with the ravaging effects of T. B. is Too Late (Plate XIV), by the Liverpool artist,

William Windus,[21] of 1859. The painting represents a woman, stricken with tuberculosis, and beyond help. Too late, her lover has returned and he covers his face with his arm in grief and remorse. The sentiment is close to that of Home From the Sea, in its emphasis upon the unconsolable sorrow of person who returns to a loved one to find that she is gone or wasted away. The invalid holds the back of a chair for support, and her thin face and emaciated condition reveals the advanced stage of the disease. The identity of the other woman, who helps the invalid, and the young girl staring at the returned lover, cannot be ascertained with certainty, but perhaps they are the sister and niece to the first woman. Though this painting is meticulously treated, it lacks the detail of many of its kind, and seems broader in its treatment, more in the Reynolds tradition than in the Pre-Raphaelite. This may be due to the provincial location of Windus.

The intent on the part of the artist is to evoke pity, quite simply, and no doubt he succeeded splendidly. The lack of any further meaning or detail make this work purely sentimental, and even the moral lesson it intends to convey about the returned lover is watered down by the maudlin emotional overtone and the emphasis on expressions of individuals, rather than the integration of symbolic and compositional devices to enhance the idea.

It is a well-known story that Windus himself was such a sensitive painter that when Ruskin severely criticized the morbid sentiment in Too Late, he gave up painting altogether.[22] Indeed the criticism was not entirely unjustified, but Ruskin was unusually violent, particularly in light of his praise of many Pre-Raphaelite paintings of similar content. It is difficult to understand why Home From the Sea did not similarly enrage the critic.

Like the chronically ill, the crippled and blind provided excellent pathetic subjects. Millais' The Blind Girl, (Plate XV), of 1854-1856 is one of the most touchingly beautiful in the Pre-Raphaelite mode. The blind girl, with the little girl who is her guide, has stopped to rest outside town, perhaps after begging there. Her monumental figure, so like a madonna, is poised against the sensuous green landscape. A rainstorm has just passed over, in the still-dark sky we can see a double-rainbow, and the landscape is rendered in the peculiarly intense yellow-green that appears against a stormy sky as in the Spring. All of this beauty brings home the pathos: the girl cannot see it. The little guide, sensing the beauty of the world about her, has pulled the blind girl's scarf over her own eyes to try to see what it would be like to be blind. Still more pitiful are the flowers by the blind girl's hand and the

brilliant butterfly that perches on her scarf. The girl's ragged clothes, the rather crude sign about t her neck, "Have Pity on the Blind, " and her firm but helpless grasp of the little guide-girl's hand lend credibility to the portrayal, as well as increasing the pathos.

In the Victorian world, a painting of this subject had universal appeal. Not a man, woman, or child could help but be reduced to tears before such a pitiful scene. This, of course, did not mean that they would immediately rush out to establish institutions for the blind, but certainly they would give thanks to Providence, which kept them from a similar fate.

Among other types of pathetic scenes, the most popular were those involving animals (such as dogs mourning over their master's grave)[23] and those dealing with unfullfilled or lost love.[24] The idea of romantic love was almost as dear to the Victorians as that of the family, perhaps because the two were so closely dependent upon each other.[25] Since marriages were based more upon social and economic connections of the pairs' respective families, it is unlikely that many middle-class matches were strictly the result of true love. But to consider these paintings would require a volumne in itself, so great was their number and their implications in society.

We have seen, then, that for the Victorians art was, as for Aristotle, a "catharsis of emotions."[26] But Aristotle was speaking of tragedy, and perhaps it becomes all the more pertinent that he was. Obviously, the effect of many of these paintings is very much like that of drama, even if it is of the soap-opera variety. Unlike drama, however, these works had the advantage of being ever-present. While the scenes in drama pass quickly, those in paintings may act to evoke their respective emotional responses whenever they are viewed.[27] Since the Victorians were largely families that had only recently risen to affluence, their affinity for more-or-less simple-minded paintings was predictable. Photographers joined in the profitable business by producing compositions very much like those in paintings. The photograph answered the desire for realism and detail in art so well that, "One might argue that photography was invented to meet an existing demand for records of visual fact."[28] The increasing availability of photographs, coupled with the widespread reproduction of paintings through prints (and later through photographs themselves) helped make it possible for almost every Victorian home to possess some of these pathetic moral paintings and photos.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

"The love of literalism and the love of exaggerated sentiment are two essential points for understanding Victorian art."[1] These two points have certainly been adequately illustrated in the foregoing discussion of individual works. In addition, the works were intended, "not merely to amuse, but to instruct, purify, and ennoble."[2] The characteristics and purposes of the Victorian contemporary moral painting are thus adequately summarized. It remains for us to speak of the role they actually played in their society and how they finally lost their prestige.

These works must be understood totally in the light of the environment that produced them. The morality of which they spoke was a strictly Victorian morality. They were in no sense reformers, and this is most clearly demonstrated by a painting not previously mentioned. This is Ford Madox Brown's Work[3] which was painted between 1852 and 1865. This is perhaps the only work in the realm of Victorian moral painting that even touches upon the question of social reform. And even then, it sadly lacks any real concern with the

plight of the working-class. In this painting, the workers are somewhat idealized, depicted as being noble and almost Neo-classical in their poses. The central core of workers excavated a street is surrounded by a sort of panorama of people. Included are a poor flower-girl in rags, a motherless group of children, some wealthy ladies, and the two social reformers of the day, F. D. Maurice and Carlyle. The inclusion of these men in the painting would seem to indicate that Brown was suggesting reform. Yet the treatment of the scene is far too casual and composed to hint at any really radical change. An advertisement for the Working Man's College, seen on a wall seems to be the answer to the working-man's depravity, at least the only answer that Brown is willing to suggest. The very lack of any reforming sentiment in this painting is indicative of the real concern of the moral painters: to please the middle-class patron. When Brown treated a subject so susceptible to reform overtones and allowed so little of the distress of the poor to show through, it is apparent that he approved on the whole of the conditions in nineteenth-cenury London.

The religious background which defied change in society and ideas about the virtues of work in the Protestant atmosphere led to the self-assurance which was as much a characteristic of the moral painters as

of their patrons. The pervasive belief that things were inevitably becoming better ironically made it difficult for reform measures to be passed. In painting, there were few artists who were willing to believe that there was something inherently wrong with the society. Even in literature, there was such a strong sense of propriety about presenting violent episodes, that rarely would a book advocating social reform dare to elaborate upon the conditions of the poor and working-classes of the period. Dickens himself was proper enough to be read by ladies.

The whole problem, then, in our own understanding of the Victorian moral painter, is to grasp these reasons for his avoiding the issues that would seem to have been so obviously worthy of his skill, and instead painting intricately-detailled masterpieces of symbolism, meant for intellectual discussion and occupying the time and thoughts of a household not yet possessed of television and radio. It is, perhaps, this very aspect that retains its relevance in our own age. Though we may find some works ludicrous, they often have a sense of mystery about them that makes them fascinating, and in this sense not unlike the highly symbolic works of Mediaeval and Renaissance artists.

Otherwise, they must be regarded as historical documents in the strictest sense of the word. Particularly, those in the category of the pathetic. A painting like The Hireling Shepherd is valuable both for its technical excellance and its complex symbolic and religious overtones. This can hardly be said of a work like Nameless and Friendless.

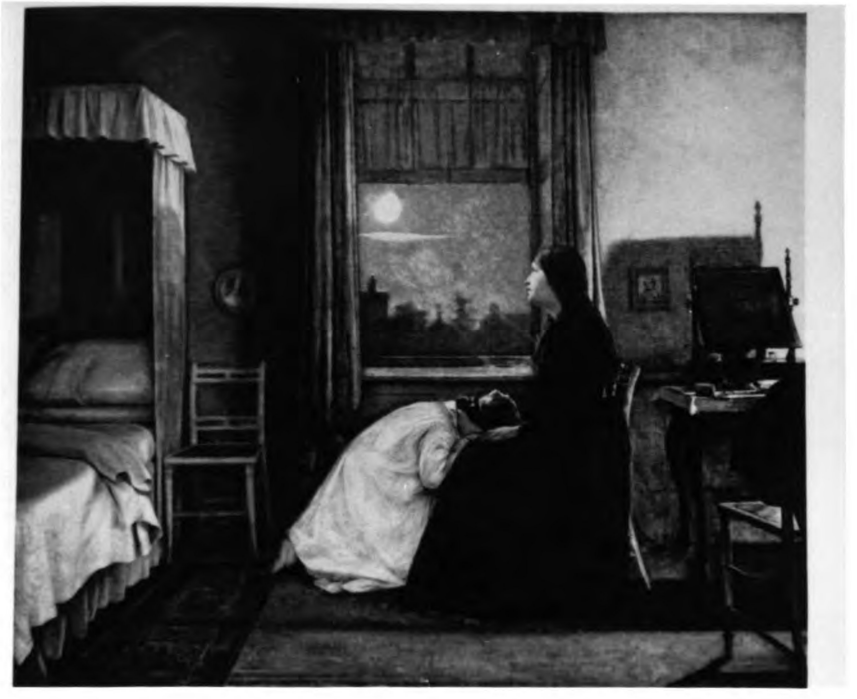
Since this style could only exist in the exact moral and social climate of middle-class Victorian England, it necessarily began to lose much of its impact with the approach of the twentieth century. The Aesthetic Movement led into Art Nouveau by the end of the century and subject matter began to loosen its hold on the painter.[4] The moral variety of painting became academic and lost much of the brilliancy lent it by Hunt and Millais in earlier years. Sir Edward Burne-Jones,[5] who continued to paint in the Pre-Raphaelite manner, never dealt with contemporary subjects at all. A somewhat perverted moralism was to mark the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley[6] who proved to be the last great artist in the tradition of the Pre-Raphaelite moral painters. As late as 1897, though, an art magazine contends,

> In the long run it is genuine power in expressing ideas worth expression that will survive. Techical shortcomings, such as those that cramped Rossetti, may not stand in the way of his assured position among masters.[7]

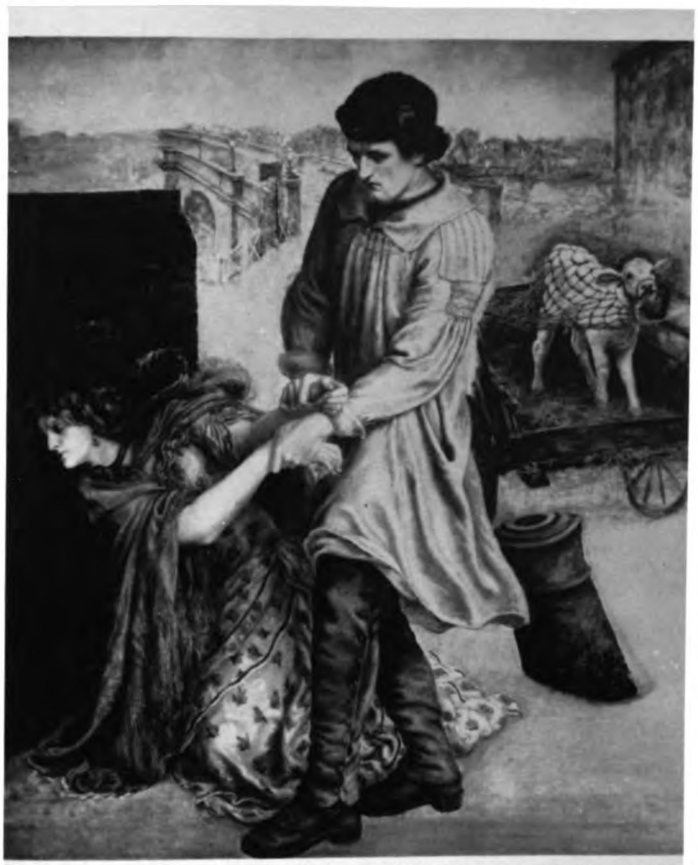
But long before this, the fatal doctrine of "Art for Art's Sake," had been propounded and was winning wider and wider acceptance. By the time of the outbreak of World War I, the disillusioned artists could no longer profess that the purpose of art was to instruct, for the lesson had done nothing to avert the catastrophic destruction in Europe. The moral painting assumed a minor position in illustrative work, and once more painting assumed a decorative or intellectual function. So ended the story of the Victorian moral painter.

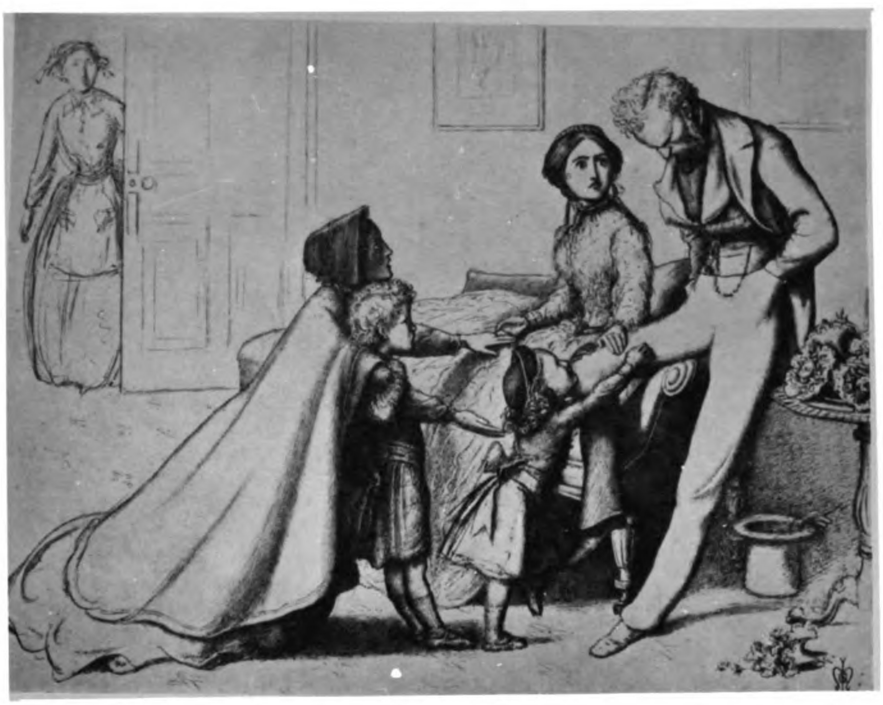
I. William Holman Hunt, The Hireling Shepherd, 1851.

II. Augustus Leopold Egg, Past and Present, I, 1858.



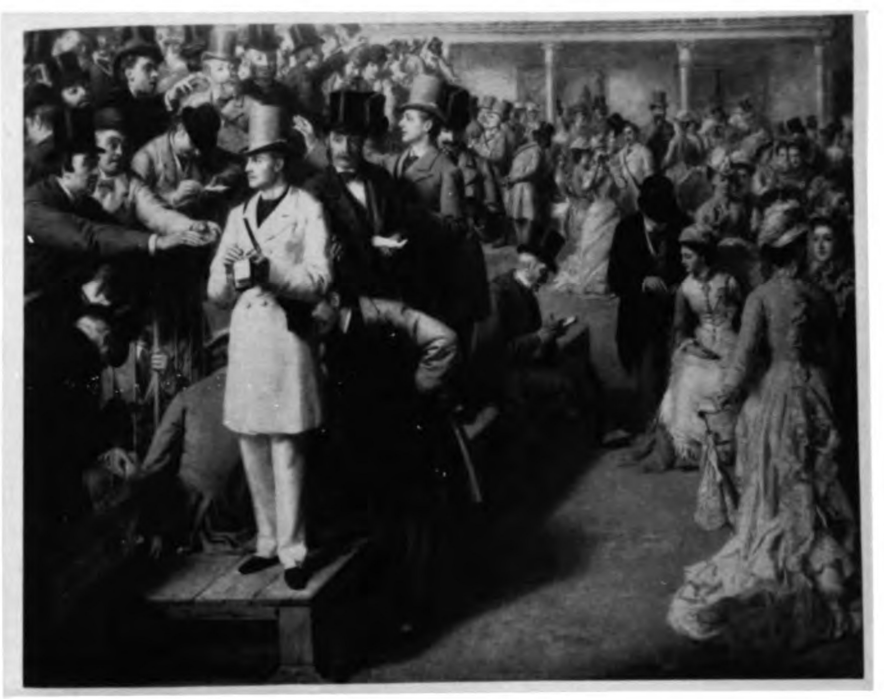
III. Augustus Leopold Egg, Past and Present, I, and II, 1858.



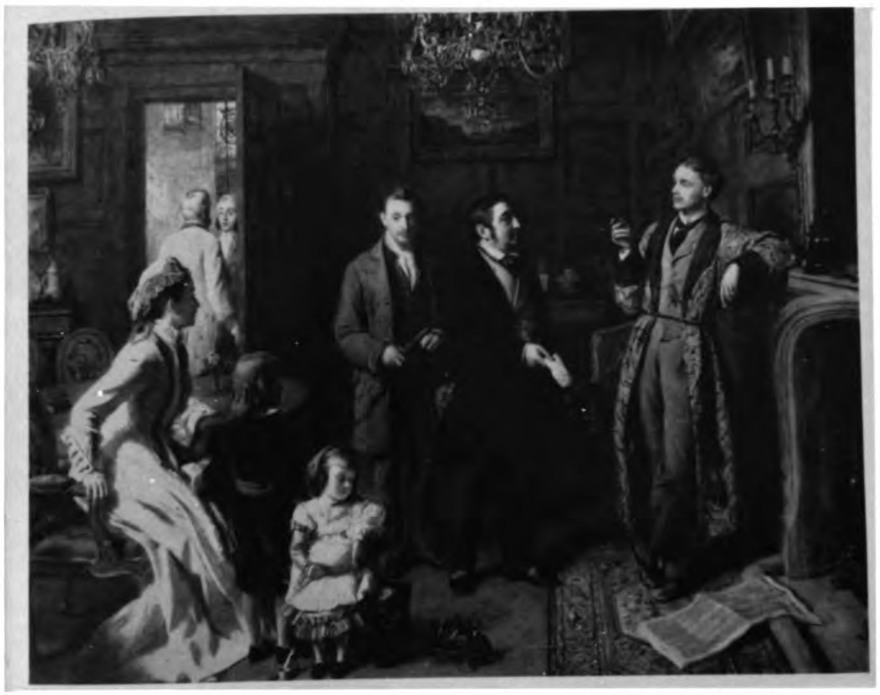


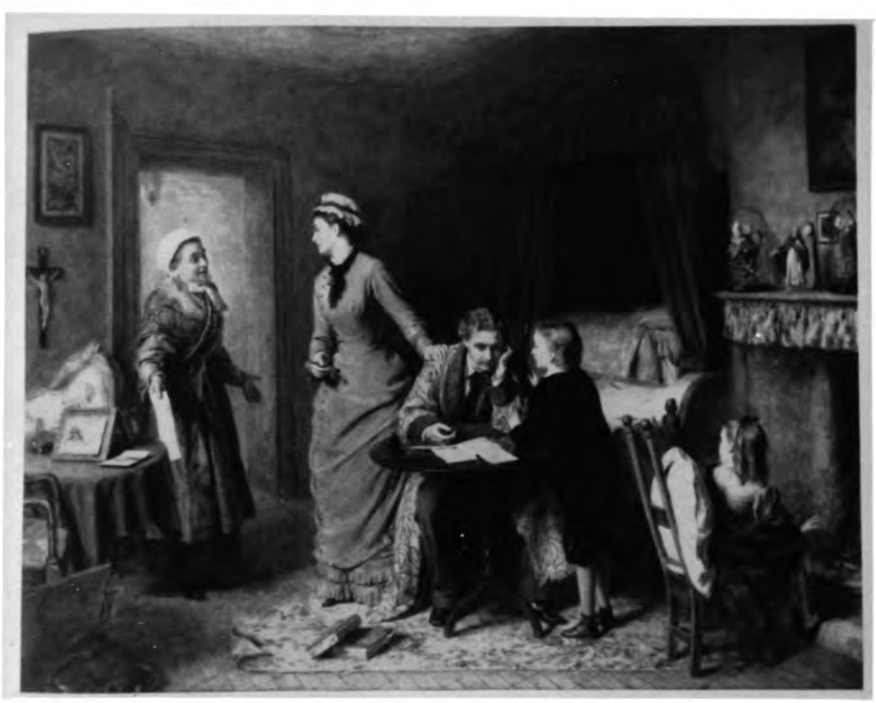
IV. Figure 1: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Found, 1853-1865.
Figure 2: John Everett Millais, Retribution, 1854.

V. William Holman Hunt, The Awakening Conscience, 1853.

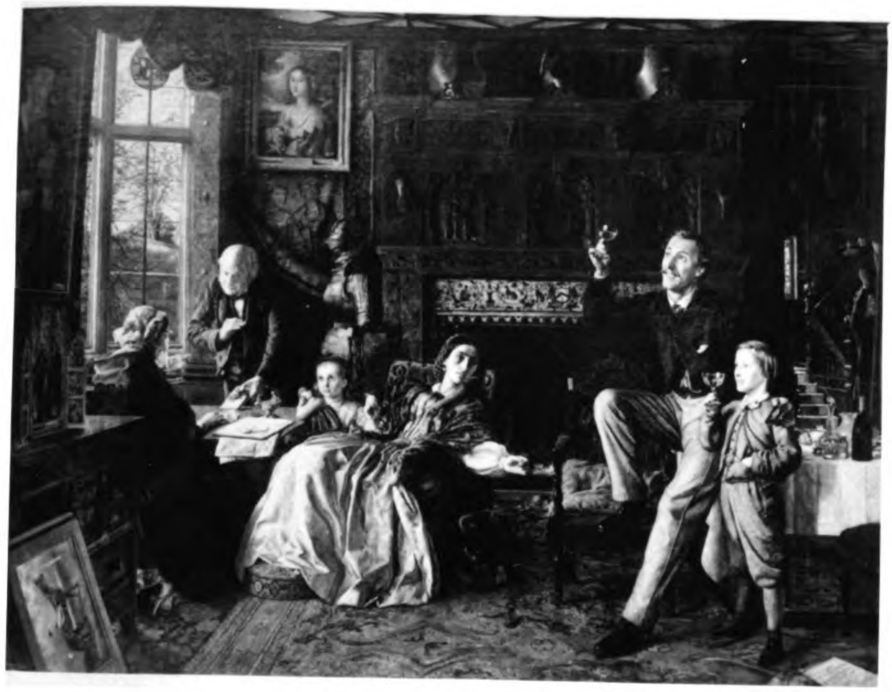


VI. William Powell Frith, The Road to Ruin, I and II, 1877.

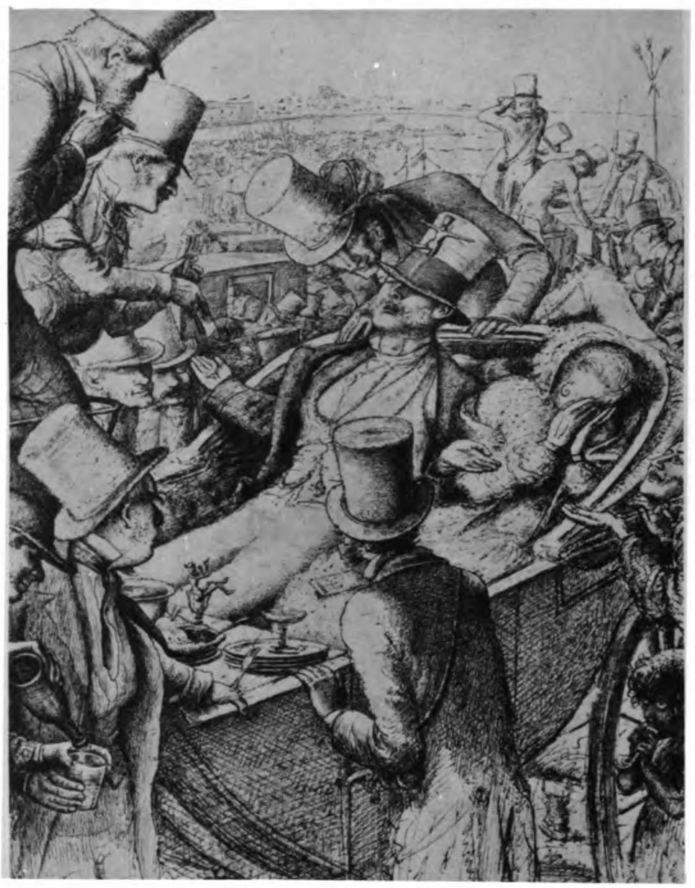




VII. The Road to Ruin, III and IV.



VIII. Figure 1: The Road to Ruin, V.
Figure 2: Robert Braithwaite Martineau, The Last Day in the Old Home, 1852-1862.

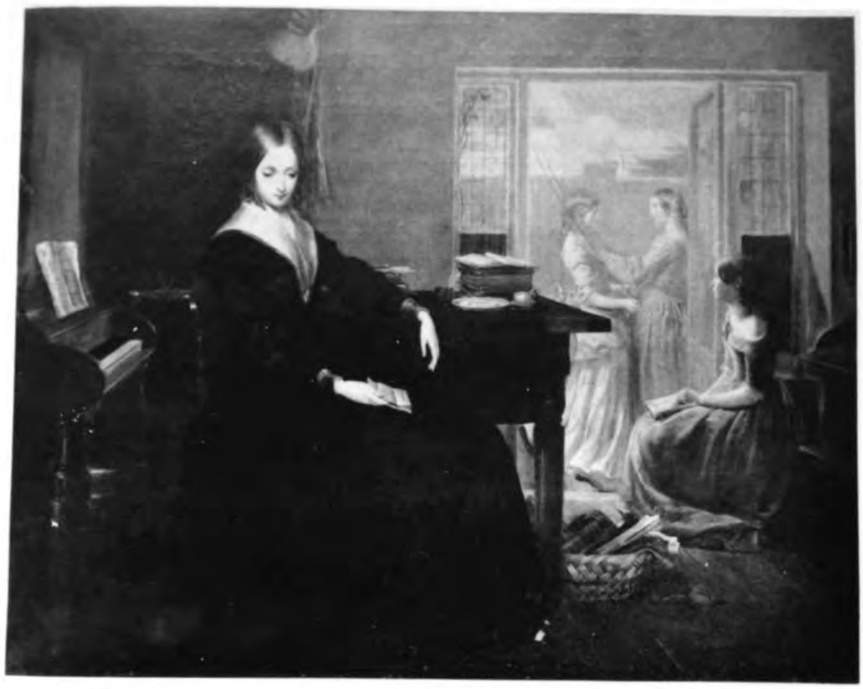


IX. The Race-Meeting, 1853, Millais.

X. Figure 1: Henry Alexander Bowler, The Doubt: Can These Dry Bones Live? 1856.
Figure 2: Arthur Hughes, Home From the Sea, 1856-63.

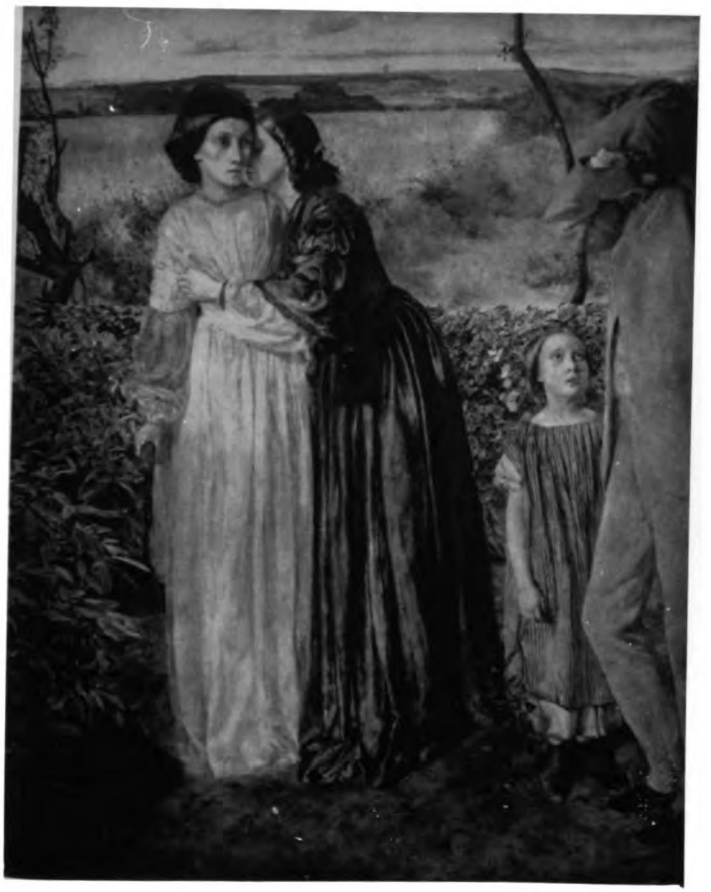
Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London

XI. George Elgar Hicks, Woman's Mission--Bad News, 1857.



XII. Figure 1: Richard Redgrave, The Poor Teacher, 1844.
Figure 2: Emily Mary Osborn, Nameless and friendless, 1857.

XIII. Ford Madox Brown, The Last of England, 1851-1855,



XIV. William Lindsay Windus, Too Late, 1859.

XV. Millais, The Blind Girl, 1854-1856.

NOTES

Introduction

[1]Basil Willey, "Origins and Development of the Idea of Progress," Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 45.

[2]Gordon Rupp, "Evangelicalism of the Nonconformists," Ideas, p. 108.

Chapter 1

[1]Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 364.

[2]W. P. Frith, My Autobiography and Reminiscences, Vol. I, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), p. 248.

[3]Collection of Pears' Soap Company.

[4]William Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Dream, (New York: Schoken, 1966), p. 197.

[5]John Everett Millet, quo. in ibid., p. 195.

[6]For an account of the Aesthetic Movement, see Gaunt, The Aesthetic Adventure, (New York: Schoken, 1967).

[7]Dadd went insane, and spent most of his life in istitutions, continuing to paint, however. His work is much more fantastic in its subject matter than Frith's or Egg's.

[8]Allen Staley, "William Powell Frith," Romantic Art in Britain (The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968), p. 293.

[9]Waagen, Edinburgh Review, quo. in G. H. Fleming, Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, (Great Britain: Western Printing Services, 1967), p. 49.

[10]For an account of the Pre-Raphaelites, see Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Dream; Fleming; or Robin Ironside and John Gere, Pre-Raphaelite Painters, (New York: Phaidon, 1948).

[11]Augustus Welby Pugin in The Builder, August, 1845, quo. in Quentin Bell, Victorian Artists, (London: Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1967), p. 21.

[12]For an excellant summary of Ruskin's aesthetic and position in Victorian society, see Henry Ladd, The Victorian Morality of Art, (New York: Ray Long & Richard Smith, Inc., 1932)

[13]John Ruskin, from Modern Painters, quo. in Fleming, p. 49-50.

[14]Ibid., p. 50.

[15]From Preface to Second Edition, ibid., p. 50.

[16]Ruskin, quo. in H. R. Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art Theories, (Amsterdam: Swet & Zeitinger, 1959), p. 56.

[17]Ruskin, quo. in R. L. Peters, Victorians on Literature and Art, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961), title page.

[18]Ladd, p. 329.

[19]Ibid., p. 330.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Jeremy Maas, Victorian Painters, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), p. 125.

[22]T. Carlyle, from Sartor Resartus, quo. in Peters, p. 12.

[23]Ibid., p. 14.

[24]Mary Bennet, William Holman Hunt Catalog, Walker Art Gallery,1969, p. 12.

[25]John Stuart Mill, quo. in Peters, p. 11.

[26]William Powell Frith, I, p. 304.

[27]Ruskin quo. in Linda Nochlin, Realism and Tradition in Art, 1848-1900, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 124-125.

[28]Bennet, p. 4.

[29]Charles Collins' best-known work is Convent Thoughts, of 1850, Tate Gallery.

[30]John Everett Millais, quo. Nochlin, p. 116.

Chapter II

[1]William Holman Hunt, (1827-1910). For most recent bibliography, see Bennett, pp. 17-18.

[2]City of Manchester Art Gallery.

[3]William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, I, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), pp. 262-263.

[4]Ibid, p. 264. [5]Ibid. [6]Bennett, p. 29.

[7]King Lear, Act III, scene vi, quo. Bennett, p. 29.

[8]Exhibition catalogue, quo. in Fleming, p. 182.

[9]Fleming, pp. 182-183. [10]Bennett, p. 29.

[11]The Athenaeum, May 22, 1852, quo. in Fleming, p. 183.

[12]William Rossetti, quo. in Bennett, p. 30.

[13]Bennett, p. 30.

[14]Keble College Collection, Oxford.

[15]For a discussion of this, see Humphrey House, "Man and Nature: Some Artists' Views," in Ideas, p. 227-228.

Chapter III

[1]H. L. Beales, "The Victorian Family," Ibid., 343.

[2]James Laver, Manners and Morals in the Age of Optimism, 1848-1914, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), P. 31.

[3]Ibid., p. 38. [4]Ibid., p. 197.

[5]Augustus Leopold Egg, (1816-1863). Most recent bibliography, Staley, "Augustus Leopold Egg," Romantic Art, pp. 283-284.

[6]Egg, quo. in Raymond Lister, Victorian Narrative Paintings, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1966), p. 54.

[7]House, p. 224. [8]Lister, p. 54.

[9]Staley, p. 283. [10]Mayhew, quo. Laver, p. 103.

[11]Laver, pp. 102-104.

[12]Dante Gabriel Rossetti, (1828-1882). See Staley, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti," Romantic Art, for Bibliography, p. 309.

[13]See Hunt, II, pp. 431-433, for a discussion of the relationship between the two paintings Found, and The Awakening Conscience.

[14]Ibid., I, p. 347. [15]Bennett, p. 35.

[16]Ibid. [17]Ibid., p. 37. [18]Ruskin quo. ibid., 36.

[19]Hunt, I, pp. 418-419. [20]Ibid., 419.

[21]Hunt, quo. Bennett, p. 36.

[22]Morning Chronicle, April 29, 1854, quo. in Hunt, I, p. 406.

[23]Ruskin, quo. in Nochlin, p. 127.

[24]Sir John Everett Millais, (1829-1896). Most recent Bibliography, Staley, "Sir John Everett Millais," Romantic Art, p. 316.

[25]

Chapter IV

[1]Laver, p. 78. [2]Ibid., p. 80.

[3]William Powell Frith, (1819-1909). Staley, "William Powell Frith," Romantic Art, p. 294.

[4]Tate Gallery, London.

[5]Frith, I, p. 293. [6]Ibid. [7]Ibid., p. 346.

[8]Ibid., pp. 346-347. [9]Laver, p. 78.

[10]Frith, p. 347.

[11]Ibid. [12]Ibid.

[13]Robert Braithwaite Martineau, (1826-1869). See Hunt, I, pp. 302, 320; II, pp. 308-309.

[14]Millais was a member of the Pre-Raphaelites, and Hogarth appeared on their list of "immortals" worthy of emulation.

[15]See page 27.

Chapter V

[1]A glance through any Victorian family photo album will verify this; some older people still indulge in this practice.

[2]See Ironside, Introduction.

[3]Henry Alexander Bowler, (1824-1903). For further information, see Maas.

[4]Arthur Hughes, (1832-1915). Most recent Bibliography, Staley, "Arthur Hughes," Romantic Art, p. 331.

[5]Lister, p. 60.

[6]George Elgar Hicks, (1824-1892). See Maas.

[7]On this, see Lord Lindsay of Birker, "The Social Conscience and the Ideas of Ruskin," Ideas, p. 277f.

[8]Richard Redgrave, (1804-1888). See Maas.

[9]Emily Mary Osborn, (1834-c.1885). See Maas.

[10]Ford Madox Brown, (1821-1893). See Staley, "Ford Madox Brown," Romantic Art, p. 296.

[11]Lister, p. 22 [12]Laver, p. 38. [13]Ibid., p. 92.

[14]Ibid., p. 92.

[15]Ruth M. Green, Appendix I, Lister.

[16]Ida Proctor, Masters of British Nineteenth-Century Art, (London: Dennis Dobson), p. 99.

[17]Brown quo. in ibid., p. 99.

[18]Ibid. [19]Ibid.

[20]Viola Klein, "The Emancipation of Women: Its Motives and Achievements," Ideas, pp. 264-265.

[21]William Lindsay Windus, (1822-1907). See Staley, "William Lindsay Windus," Romantic Art, p. 302.

[22]The entire story is cited by Gaunt, Pre-Raphaelite,

[23]See Lister for examples. [24]Ibid.

[25]See Ironside's Introduction for further explanation.

[26]Aristotle Politics VIII. 7. 1341[b] 35.

[27]There is reason to assume that a closer link survived between the Victorian narrative painting and the contemporary stage than has been established. The prominence of Egg, for example, as both actor and painter lends credibility to such an assumption. Such speculations are beyond the scope of the present study.

[28]House, p. 224.

Chapter VI

[1]Ibid., 223.

[2]Laver, p. 178.

[3]Manchester City Art Gallery.

[4]See Gaunt, Aesthetic.

[5]Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, (1833-1898), see Gaunt, Aesthetic and Pre-Raphaelite for the position of this artist.

[6]Aubrey Beardsley, see Gaunt, Aesthetic.

[7]Gleeson White, "The Work of Mr. Byam Shaw," The International Studio, I (June, 1897), p. 209.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bell, Quentin. Victorian Artists. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.

Bennett, Mary. William Holman Hunt. Walker Art Gallery, 1969.

Bentham, Jeremy, and John Stuart Mill, The Utilitarians, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. New York: Dolphin Books, 1961.

Fleming, G. H. Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Great Britain: Western Printing Services, 1967.

Frith, William Powell. My Autobiography and Reminiscences, three volumnes. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889.

Gaunt, William. The Aesthetic Adventure. New York: Schoken, 1967.

_____. The Pre-Raphaelite Dream. New York: Schoken, 1966.

_____. Victorian Olympus. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Giedion, Siegfried. Mechanization Takes Command. New York: Norton, 1969.

Hunt, William Holman. Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. London: Macmillan and Co., 1905.

Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1966.

Ironside, Robin, with John Gere. Pre-Raphaelite Painters. New York: Phaidon, 1948.

Ladd, Henry. The Victorian Morality of Art. New York: Ray Long & Richard Smith, Inc., 1932.

Laver, James. Manners and Morals in the Age of Optimism, 1848-1914. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Lister, Raymond. Victorian Narrative Paintings. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1966.

Maas, Jeremy. Victorian Painters. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969.

Millais, John Guille. The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, Bart, P. R. A. London: 1899, two volumnes.

"Millais." Masters in Art Series, IX (Part 107, Nov., 1908). Boston: Bate & Guild Co.

Morazé, Charles. The Triumph of the Middle Classes. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1966.

Nochlin, Linda. Realism and Tradition in Art, 1848-1900. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

Pelles, Geraldine. Art, Artists, & Society. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963.

Peters, Robert L. Victorians on Literature and Art. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961.

Pevsner, Nikolaus. The Englishness of English Art. Great Britain: Penguin, 1964.

Proctor, Ida. Masters of British Nineteenth Century Art London: Dennis Dobson, 1961.

Reynolds, Graham. Victorian Painting. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

Rookmaaker, H. R. Synthetist Art Theories. Amsterdam: Swet & Zeitinger, 1959.

Rosenblum, Robert, Frederick Cummings, and Allen Staley. Romantic Art in Britain, Paintings and Drawings, 1760-1860. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968.

Rossetti, William Michael. Ruskin: Rossetti: Pre-Raphaelitism, Papers 1854-1862. London: George Allen, 1899.

Ruskin, John. Pre-Raphaelitism. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1880.

Schmutzler, Robert. Art Nouveau-Jugendstil. Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1962.

Sitwell, Sacheverell. Narrative Pictures. London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1937.

Wingfield-Stratford, Esmé. The Victorian Cycle. New York: Wm. Morrow & Co., 1935.

White, Gleeson, "The Work of Mr. Byam Shaw." The International Studio, I (June, 1897) pp. 209-221.