

THE VICTORIAN ART WORLD AND THE BEGINNINGS  
OF THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the late 1870's English society witnessed the rise of the aesthetic movement, a phenomenon which affected the art and literary worlds and which was characterized then and later as the pursuit of art for art's sake. The notoriety of the movement at the time obscured its exact limits and the origins of its ideas and values. The intellectual and literary side of the movement, especially the ideology of art for art's sake, attracted most notice and comment, yet the plastic arts of painting and industrial design were crucial to the theories of aestheticism and its impact on Victorian culture. This thesis examines those plastic arts, and the social and economic contexts in which they had a place, and their relationship to the aesthetic movement. The aim of this thesis is to describe the cultural context in which the aesthetic movement in the arts developed.

The aesthetic movement came at a time when most critics would agree that Victorian design in the fine and industrial arts was at a low point, and did much to stimulate higher standards in both fields. The reasons for this failure and subsequent recovery have been incompletely researched and, I think as a result, incompletely understood. The social and economic changes in the fine and industrial art worlds form a large part of this study out of necessity and in dealing with the mechanism of the art markets, the changing status of the painter, the rise of the industrial designer and the growing activity of the middle-classes in the art world, I have attempted to demonstrate that the aesthetic movement was merely an offshoot of a larger cultural problem, a problem which the Victorians could not solve.

Behind the aesthetic movement was the problem of reconciling the mechanism and mechanistic rhythms of modern society with art and the values which art represented, especially individualism, humanism and the knowledge of life sprung of faith rather than science. The solutions and compromises which earlier Victorians had accepted were no longer possible to many people in the 1870's.

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The greatest difficulty which confronts a student of the aesthetic movement in Victorian England is coming to grips with it as a movement and understanding the essential coherence which that term implies. The histories of the movement with their various approaches do not describe the same ideals, people or events, so that there is no precise and recognizable phenomenon to begin researching. The earliest historians of the movement, Oscar Wilde ("The English Renaissance of Art," Works, Vol. 1, 1908, pp. 243-277.) and Walter Hamilton (The Aesthetic Movement in England, 1882.) were first published in 1882 when aestheticism was the object of ridicule and the fashion of the day.<sup>1</sup> Both were eager to emphasize the positive and reasonable side of aestheticism and they concentrated on the English traditions which seemed to support their view of art for art's sake. Wilde invoked Shelley and Keats as well as Ruskin, and Hamilton looked to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Ruskin, and the fleshly poets, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris and A. C. Swinburne. Yet their interpretations of art for art's sake, for all its ambiguity, did include an attack on Philistinism, the narrow utilitarianism and materialism of the middle-classes. They both included Ruskin in their histories and praised him for his passionate crusade for art. Their histories show an aesthetic creed of art as a conquering force which, at that time, was beginning to transfigure the dull artifacts of modern life with a hopeful and happy beauty. The foundation of their new art world was essentially democratic, in that art was a popular concern, and, indeed, how could it be otherwise with Wilde who related his history to the towns of the American West?<sup>2</sup> After 1882 the character of this artistic

revival changed and in 1892, Theodore Child, in an American book on art declared, "What does democracy care about art?"<sup>3</sup>

In the twentieth century, histories of the aesthetic movement have emphasized three closely related aspects of it: the ideology of art for art's sake, the strong French influence, and the literary aestheticism of English poets and critics. Of these works perhaps the best is Albert J. Farmer's Le mouvement esthetique et decadent en Angleterre, 1873-1900 (1931) which covers the field carefully, although concentrating on the intellectual and literary sides of the movement. The idea of art for art's sake and its development in philosophy and literature is the subject of two studies, Rose Francis Egan's The Genesis of the Theory of 'Art for Art's Sake' in Germany and in England (1921) and Louise Rosenblatt's L'Idee de l'art pour l'art dans la litterature anglaise pendant la periode victorienne (1931). These studies focus of the development of the idea in philosophy and literature that art is separate from and superior to life. The direct influence of French thought on English aestheticism was explored briefly by James K. Robinson in "A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism," PMLA LXVIII (1853), 733-54. The contact between English authors and critics and the French decadent poets in the 1860's and 1870's was crucial according to Robinson. The most entertaining history of the movement is William Gaunt's The Aesthetic Adventure (1945) which suffers from the obvious faults of a history that strives to entertain. It is episodic and emphasizes personality to the point of obscuring less colorful events and relationships. The latest study of aestheticism, Robert

Vincent Johnson's Aestheticism (1969) is a summary of art for art's sake as a principle of literary criticism.

All of these studies contribute to an understanding of aestheticism as an ideological reaction against the restrictive, materialistic society of the commercially motivated bourgeoisie. This reaction occurred in England, France and Germany, although the most extreme examples of aestheticism were generally French, and the one acknowledged movement was in England. All these works emphasize the intellectual and literary life of the societies they analyze and their preoccupation with literature tends to overshadow developments in the art world. The vision of art triumphant, reconstructing the outward countenance of modern life as well as its reading matter, so evident in Wilde and Hamilton, is almost buried. The attention paid to the ideology of the movement explains this seeming neglect as the development of Victorian art was not a reflection of the broader intellectual life of the nation, nor do works of art generally adequately express intellectual concerns.

The latest histories of the movement have approached the problem differently. Elizabeth Aslin's The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau (1969) was an attempt to demonstrate that the designers of the 1890's were building on a tradition which stretched back to the 1870's. In doing so she emphasized the plastic arts, especially industrial design. Robin Spencer's The Aesthetic Movement (1972) owes much to Aslin's definition of the era's style. The revival of interest in Victorian art has led to countless exhibitions of paintings

and decorative arts, one of which gathered some of the major artifacts of the movement at the Camden Arts Centre. The catalogue of the exhibition, The Aesthetic Movement (1973), contains an interesting but too brief introduction by Charles Spencer. These studies considerably extend our understanding of aestheticism by including more artists and designers in the movement and by extensively analysing works in the fine and manufactured arts. They temper their consideration of ideology with an examination of the practicalities of artistic production. Their histories are more comprehensive than earlier ones because they attempt to go deeper into the social and economic relationships which produced aestheticism. Yet their studies do confuse the issue considerably, for by extending the range of activities of the movement, the character of the movement is even more vague.

After considering these histories of the movement, the student attacks the problem of defining the aesthetic movement and organizing an attack on the historical problems it poses. A few general outlines of the movement seem clear enough. It began in the 1870's and grew out of such events as Whistler's artistic experiments in the later 1860's, Charles Eastlake's publication of Hints on Household Taste in 1867, Pater's essay on William Morris in the Westminster Review in 1868 and his publication of Studies in the History of the Renaissance in 1873, and even the Pre-Raphaelite experiment of the early 1850's. Even at first glance it is an odd assembly of events but on closer scrutiny, the problem of dating a movement are greater still. One cannot simply say that the decade or more between the appearance

of these preliminary events and the movement itself was to allow "development"; why then the delay in the coalition of ideas, activities and behavior into a movement? The movement's ambiguous character and its lack of any sure leadership or creed, such as had marked the Pre-Raphaelite, contributes to this confusion. It is clear that the movement was both literary and artistic; artists, poets and critics all contributed to its peculiar view of reality and the movement reflected that view back into the art and literature of the period. Yet the actual relationship between art and literature remains indistinct for although the "oneness" of all the arts was a tenet of aestheticism, most contributors to the movement concentrated on one art. Of the two men who were capable artists and poets (for poetry was the acknowledged literary art), D. G. Rossetti produced few works during the later 1870's and William Morris was decidedly hostile to the movement. A clearer relationship existed between the fine arts of painting and architecture, and the manufactured arts or textile and furniture design. Many artists worked in both fields and a strong stylistic relationship grew up between the fields.

Another recognized characteristic of the aesthetic movement is its close relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of the late 1840's and early 1850's. The key figure in this connection is D. G. Rossetti, a founding member of the Brotherhood, whose friendships with Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris and James Whistler involved him in a circle of aesthetic artists. But Rossetti was only one line of Pre-Raphaelite influence. John Millais and Ford Madox

Brown each influenced, by reputation and example, the later generation of artists, though in very different ways. The vitality of Pre-Raphaelite ideals was so generally recognized and so patently misunderstood in the 1870's that W. H. Mallock, in his New Republic, referred to the caricature of Walter Pater as Mr. Rose, the Pre-Raphaelite.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons for this confusion was the common enemy shared by Pre-Raphaelites and aesthetes—bourgeois Philistinism which championed the materialistic and utilitarian outlook. The battle which Ruskin began in The Stones of Venice against artistic Philistinism and insensitive materialism was carried on in two ways: first, by William Morris who attacked the economic and social foundations of capitalist society, and second, by Edward Burne-Jones who criticized the ugly and false in modern productions but who sought a solution in limited perfection through his art work, and in the preservation of art from the contamination of bourgeois values. Most artists took sides with Burne-Jones, including James Whistler, in that they rejected the validity of bourgeois principles and values in art, but they could not, like Morris, reject their utility in everyday life. Morris turned Ruskin's attack into a crusade to reconstruct society, while other artists aimed to reform taste and to fix art in a sphere superior to and free from materialism and utilitarianism. These two approaches to the reform of art were not mutually exclusive as the latter necessarily followed from the former. But they often worked from distinct and contradictory assumptions about art and society. The legal conflict between Ruskin and Whistler in

1878 dramatically illuminated this conflict within the art world. Indeed the conflicts between the two camps of art partisans were sharper and more explicit than the deep but impotent hatred of Philistinism.

Yet all these characteristics fail to give an adequate definition of aestheticism and bring us no closer to an understanding of the aesthetic movement and its place in the development of Victorian culture. The histories of the movement have accepted too readily the significance of the colorful and the eccentric and have failed to work out systematically the relationships between men and groups and ideas. Therefore important questions have been left unanswered despite the scholarly work done on the problem. Chief among these questions is what in fact was the aesthetic movement and how could it become so notorious in the late 1870's and early 1880's without leadership, in the face of much hostility and seemingly containing numerous contradictions? If it was in fact a "movement", what was its part in Victorian culture and what meaning did it have for those who knew it? None of these issues have been explained in a way that contributes to our more complete understanding of the Victorian past.

The student is only slightly less confused about the ideals of the movement after consulting the histories than he was before, and cursory research into the Victorian art world poses serious problems indeed. Relationships especially are truly bewildering. That James Whistler and W. P. Frith should be on opposite sides is not surprising but the rest of the witnesses in the Whistler vs. Ruskin trial are

more perplexing. Why were W. M. Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones on opposite sides and why were they both such reluctant witnesses?<sup>5</sup> What was the position of Frederic Leighton, then newly elected President of the Royal Academy who was to be called in as a witness for Whistler, but excused himself, pleading an appointment with the Queen to be knighted?<sup>6</sup> Surely the trial was much more than a battle for art for art's sake, but what other issues concerned the witnesses has never been closely examined. And in the more complex world of the manufactured arts, problems of relationship are equally difficult. William Morris, Lazenby Liberty and Christopher Dresser all catered to the new aesthetic market in manufactured articles and yet their commercial and artistic styles had almost nothing in common. Dresser's shop, where attendants wore "aesthetic" costumes, was not a success.<sup>7</sup> Morris and Liberty were successful commercially but Morris was a painstaking craftsman and Liberty was a knowledgeable and skillful dealer in manufactured arts. How could observers in the 1870's, and historians of aestheticism, accept them all equally as dealers in art manufactures, as if their great differences meant less than this superficial similarity of occupation. It would appear that for the sake of an ideological or stylistic unity, a reasonable aim in these histories, cultural issues of more general significance have been neglected.

If these histories of the aesthetic movement do not dispel the confusion surrounding certain events and people in Victorian culture, it must be acknowledged that such was not their intent. Their approaches



limited them to an examination of aestheticism which they generally defined "a priori" as the avowal of art for art's sake, and the confusion arises not so much from the movement itself but from its relationship to the cultural life of the period. The key to understanding this relationship lies in the material which the histories largely ignore. It is in order to understand this aspect of the aesthetic movement that I have undertaken this study. I have restricted myself to an examination of the development of the aesthetic art movement and its relationship to the Victorian art world in general. The most effective method of investigating this relationship was to examine the Victorian art world first and to understand its workings. Only with this foundation laid did the rising aestheticism in art make sense. In order to manage this study, I ignored the problem of French influence except in one specific case. The French influences have already been adequately catalogued in earlier histories and I am not here concerned with the philosophy of art for art's sake and its European character, but rather with the traditions in the English art consciousness which contributed to the movement. Influence, after all, is two-faced; it has to be accepted as well as given. I have ignored the literary side of the movement completely for the sake of manageability and because literature in society poses different problems and requires a different approach than does art in society.<sup>8</sup> Architecture, too, has its own peculiar problems and has therefore, regretfully, been excluded. The role of architecture in the art theory of the period and the importance of architectural societies in the organi-

zation of the art world were crucial to the art consciousness of the era and to the development of professional relationships between artist and client. I have avoided the field chiefly for the sake of simplicity and coherence, and because it would not substantially alter the direction or conclusions of this work. My study is not, therefore, a history of the aesthetic movement or a complete view of the Victorian art world in the 1870's.

For the purpose of organization and analysis, I have dealt with the two major parts of the art world separately—the fine arts and the manufactured arts. I begin by examining the fine arts and the development of institutions and relationships among artists and their patrons. Central to this discussion is the Royal Academy, the most powerful institution concerned with the fine arts, and its successes and failures in protecting art from practices, people and ideas which were perceived as threatening. The problems which existed in the fine arts had become so critical by the 1870's as to interfere with accepted relationships and behavior. This crisis is examined in the second chapter. The last chapter examines the manufactured arts and the problems peculiar to them as commercial enterprises as well as the effects of the crisis in the Victorian art consciousness on them.

The major force affecting the Victorian art world was the pressure exerted by the principles of commercial and industrial practice, notably the operations of the art market. The antagonism between the commercial and art worlds stemmed from the clash of values operative in these worlds. Such was the conflict which Ruskin recognized be-

tween the inhuman and impersonal economic motivations which political economists ascribed to humans and the qualities of compassion and sacrifice which art had ever championed; these views of the essential character of human nature were irreconcilable. This conflict between mechanism and humanism occupied many battlefields in the Victorian world, but in the world of art the issue was fought with a peculiarly impotent fierceness. The hatred of mechanism was tempered by a recognition that the new organization of society and its new goals were not completely inimical to the quality of life, or to the artist and his livelihood. By the 1870's artists could no longer hope to reconstruct the world into their image of an art-loving age and were instead fighting for the vitality and preservation of art. Although the great enemy was Philistinism, much of the controversy in the art world of the 1870's arose from conflicts between artists over the true role of art in modern life, and art's essential nature.

The love of art promoted an impulse to reform and reconstruct the outward form of things, of behavior and relationships as well as architectural facades and interior decoration. This brought about a curious mixture of practical and perversely impractical proposals for reform. As well as resisting utilitarianism and the characteristic dulness of modern existence, art-lovers grappled with specific aesthetic travesties which called for practical measures such as the training of industrial designers. These measures had the benefit of utilitarian as well as artistic judgments. Art, attempting to be in the world but not of it, proved to be a perverse goddess and her

devotees were torn by a creed which contradicted itself. These paradoxes were accentuated by the new forces of democracy, of the masses and their aspirations towards equality. By the middle of the 1870's democracy was no longer merely a theoretical problem but a rising presence making new and forceful demands. The orientations of the masses to art and of artists to the masses were ones of cautious suspicion. The artistic tradition had had, after all, a close relationship with the aristocracy, and in the rule of wealth in the art world of the 1860's and 1870's, the lower-classes had few openings and no power. Artists also feared the masses for their ignorance, their chaotic tastes and their dependence upon the materialism of the period. Yet their very facelessness, their being an unknown quantity, gave hope that they might yet revive the natural and free humanism in which artists believed.

All these developments combined in the late 1860's and early 1870's to precipitate a crisis in the Victorian art consciousness, that awareness of art which exists only collectively like the discipline of history. In the years following the Pre-Raphaelite rebellion and the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Victorian art world managed to balance these forces. But the breakdown of the mid-Victorian solutions in the face of mounting criticism and dissatisfaction caused a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of relationships and art's meaning and role in society. In its first bloom this new art consciousness was hopeful and energetic. But after several years, when art's position in society was not fundamentally changed, anxiety became more marked and another

crisis and resolution were imminent. In the 1890's, threatened by the growing demands of democracy which was on one hand urging radical social reform and yet on the other was buried in concerns of materialism, many Victorian artists and art-lovers rejected the democratic alliance. This second resolution, deeper and more final in its consequences, brought about the later phase of the aesthetic movement, the "decadent nineties," and it marked the end of the strong traditional identification of art and humanism in English culture.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, Works (London, 1908), I, 242.

<sup>2</sup> Wilde's American tour of 1882 is the subject of Lloyd Lewis' Oscar Wilde Discovers America (New York, 1936).

<sup>3</sup> Art and Criticism (New York, 1892), 340.

<sup>4</sup> The New Republic, or Culture, Faith, and Philosophy in an English Country House (London, 1878), 15.

<sup>5</sup> For Burne-Jones' feelings about his role in the trial see Georgiana, Lady Burne-Jones, Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones (New York and London, 1904), II, 87. W. M. Rossetti described his position in his Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti (London, 1906), I, 182-3.

<sup>6</sup> This is the version given in Stanley Weintraub, Whistler: A Biography (New York, 1974), 199. The Pennells, however, mention letters by Edward Poynter, then Director of the South Kensington Museum, and Burton, the Director of the National Gallery, as well as by Leighton, which contained praise for Whistler's work, see E. R. and J. Pennell, The Life of James McNeill Whistler (London, 1925), 178-9. Mrs. Russell Barrington, The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Leighton (New York, 1906), 2 vols. mentions neither, but her biography has many gaps and is not entirely trustworthy. The Pennells' version is the more likely of the two, for Leighton certainly admired aspects of Whistler's work, but it is unlikely that that painfully tactful man would have risked antagonizing his new constituents in the Academy by publicly praising Whistler's work.

<sup>7</sup> anon., "The Work of Christopher Dresser," The Studio, XV (1899), 112.

<sup>8</sup> The ideological problems of artists and writers were similar but the social and institutional framework in which they moved was not. Compare Geraldine Pelles, Art, Artists and Society: Origins of a Modern Dilemma (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963) and Cesar Grana, Modernity and its Discontents: French Society and the French Man of Letters in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1967).

The traditional view of the artist in modern society has tended to stress the problem of alienation; by his very nature, the artist is not at home in society. It has become such a common-place that even historians, who are bound to be discriminating as well as disinterested, too often neglect the social role and responsibilities of artists.<sup>1</sup> Part of the reason for this view is that the French artists of the nineteenth century have become the exempla of modern artists because their art has won the highest critical acclaim. But the Victorian artist was not like his French colleague, nor were the artistic institutions and traditions of the two countries comparable. The Royal Academy especially contributed to the stability of the Victorian art world and its respectable social position vis-a-vis the political and industrial worlds. As changes in the economic and social world created problems for artists, the Royal Academy managed to maintain stable relationships, artistic traditions and professional ideals which the rest of society respected.

Although the Academy did provide artists with an entry into society and social position, it could not solve problems which brought art and society into opposition, especially those posed by changing market conditions. Nor did the cautious policies of the Academy inspire many young and idealistic artists who were well aware of the contradictions between an artist's declared ideals and his social and economic position. Yet these young artists were important in changing artistic styles and in upholding the ideals, both professional and aesthetic, which the Academy endorsed. The Academy was successful in controlling the social aspect of the art world even after it had lost its educational monopoly in the 1870's through its control of the only major annual exhibition of con-

temporary art in England. The Pre-Raphaelite "rebellion" was only the most notorious instance of the several times when young artists created sensations by their new styles. The Pre-Raphaelite painters entered the art world as professionals by paths not essentially different from those which earlier artists had followed. John Millais was quickly elected an Associate of the Royal Academy while D. G. Rossetti made a living selling his works to a small circle of interested patrons; dozens of artists already enjoyed similar careers in society.<sup>2</sup>

The Academy viewed the challenges of the changing circumstances which came from the political as well as the social and economic spheres as assaults on the independence of the Academy. Their response was to safeguard their unique position as a self-supporting private corporation under the Crown's patronage. Their annual exhibition produced a surplus of funds, their method of election assured them of freedom from outside pressures and their patron helped them resist the attempts of Parliament to control the Academy. Yet this struggle was only one aspect of the effects of new conditions on the Victorian art world. The Academy maintained its independence but also adapted to the new conditions and compromised with certain irresistible pressures. The buying and selling of contemporary art works created an art market which operated on principles entirely alien to those which artists believed determined the merit of artistic works. And the widespread interest of the rising industrialists in contemporary art helped to create a new taste in art as they preferred different subjects from those which the aristocratic patron usually commissioned. So styles and attitudes changed and the Academy sought to contain them within an institutional framework which was socially respectable.



The Royal Academy was an eighteenth century institution and was the result of the need felt by artists and art lovers for an institution dedicated to the protection and promotion of the arts in Great Britain. In 1755 a scheme for a national academy had been proposed which included plans for "a yearly exhibition of pictures, statues and models, and designs in architecture" as well as a national art school.<sup>3</sup> This scheme came to nothing because artists and their aristocratic patrons who were to form the academy could not agree on the relative powers of artists and laymen within the proposed institution. As a result of this failure, artists looked elsewhere for patronage and endeavored to construct an Academy which they alone controlled. The annual exhibition and the national school, however, were the acknowledged functions of a national academy.

The exhibitions were to have two major functions. They were the only direct means the academy had of raising money, an important consideration in maintaining the independence of the institution and its school. And exhibitions provided a suitable means of "publishing" works of art. Artists were still involved in a system of patronage which obliged them to solicit commissions from the wealthy and graciously to accept the gratuitous generosity of patrons. An annual exhibition sponsored by a prestigious academy had the dramatic effect of requiring the wealthy to seek out the artists' works and to pay a fee to see them. It hardly destroyed the system of patronage yet it did demonstrate the rising position of the artist in relation to his aristocratic patrons.

When a group of artists gathered in November 1768 to found an academy they had resolved to exclude laymen from the institution. They looked

to the King to provide the prestige which they required and a suitably unquestioning patronage. On 28 November 1768 these artists sent a Memorial to King George III stating their main objectives

We only beg leave to inform your Majesty, that the two principle objects we have in view are, the establishing of a well-regulated School or Academy of Design, for use of students in the Arts, and an annual exhibition, open to all artists of distinguished merit, where they may offer their performances to public inspection, and acquire that degree of reputation and encouragement which they shall be deemed to deserve.<sup>4</sup>

The King signed the Instrument of Foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts on 10 December 1768 and promised his full support to the institution, even to the extent of making the Privy Purse responsible for financial deficits. For the first eleven years the Academy required this financial support but the exhibitions soon drew in all the funds necessary.

The Instrument of Foundation provided for forty members who would be Royal Academicians and who would elect the President and other officers together in an assembly. The assembly also decided questions of policy and chose new members to fill vacancies from the ranks of Associates of the Royal Academy. The Associates were elected by the Academicians from the multitude of artists who had exhibited in the annual exhibition. These Associates had no voting privileges and were not assured of eventual election to full membership but they did enjoy the preference of the hanging committee of the exhibitions and only from among their number were full members chosen. The Academy began with less than forty members but vacancies were soon filled and the number of Associates grew to around twenty. The first President was Joshua Reynolds, who was knighted by the King, and he was re-elected President every year until his death in 1792. Reynolds handled much of the administrative duties pertaining to

the Academy's activities and obligations but the Instrument provided for a Council of eight members who were appointed by rotation from the full list of members. The hanging committee responsible for the selection and hanging of the annual exhibition was usually chosen out of the Council and perhaps for this reason, the rotating membership on the Council appears to have been a jealously guarded privilege.<sup>5</sup> Besides the President and Council, other members acted in the offices of Librarian, Secretary and Keeper of the Academy schools.

To fulfill their objective of maintaining a tuition-free school, the Academy set aside rooms, began to acquire plaster casts from the antique and appointed an Academician to act as Keeper and to oversee the administration of the schools. The schools were organized so that Academicians visited for one month each, instructing the students as they wished that students might benefit from the various excellences of all Academicians. There were also permanent Professors of Painting, Perspective, Architecture, Sculpture, Anatomy and other aspects of art studies. But these Professorships were not always filled and when they were, the Professor did not always fulfill his duties. Some Academicians, such as J. M. W. Turner, the great landscape artist who was Professor of Perspective from 1807 to 1837 were assiduous in their Professorships. But one Professor of Painting in the late eighteenth century, James Barry, actually used the office to attack the Academy and Academicians and became for his efforts the only member to be expelled from the Academy.<sup>6</sup>

The students received their education free but no scholarships were awarded for study in London and studying art was time-consuming. It was not a pursuit for the poor nor was it popular with the wealthy who studied

art only to be an amateur. A probationer at the Academy schools was required to be more than an amateur. Academicians selected students by judging drawings made by aspirants. Once this preliminary drawing was approved, the prospective student made a drawing from a cast under the supervision of the Keeper and if this was approved, the applicant entered the schools as a probationer. Art students today would be surprised and probably horrified by the rigorous curriculum of the Academy's schools. There were few changes in procedure until the beginning of the twentieth century and the entire course of study was based on the acquisition of skillful and painstaking draughtsmanship. The student began drawing from antique casts, often spending weeks on a single drawing, months if the cast was intricate. When students had attained a degree of skill in the antique, they were allowed to enter the life school and to draw from the live model. There did exist at various times schools for architecture and sculpture though oil painting was the art which was consistently taught. Students generally took six to seven years to complete their studies, learning new skills slowly but thoroughly, and when they left the schools, many of them had already attempted exhibition pieces.<sup>7</sup>

The school was very successful in training artists if we judge by the number of famous Victorian artists who spent time in the schools. But there were difficulties within the organization of the schools. The Keeper and visiting professors often clashed over whose authority was greater, the conflict arising out of the question of who was to set the model. A related problem was in getting the visiting professors to work with the Keeper in maintaining consistently high standards of

work or even a consistent program of study. This was a continually recurring problem and by the early Victorian period the schools had fallen into a lamentable state.<sup>8</sup> There were few alternatives to the Academy's schools however, and when the French ateliers and the National Art Training School at South Kensington competed for students in the 1850's, the Academy had begun to reform. The famous Victorian artist who had never studied at the Academy was an exceptional figure.<sup>9</sup>

The Academy's second objective was the establishment of an annual exhibition of paintings, sculpture and architectural models and plans. The one shilling admission to this exhibition provided the funds for the schools and for the charities devoted to artists and their families. King George III provided his Academy with rooms at Somerset House and the Academy took up the challenge of organizing yearly exhibitions which would reap substantial profits. They advertised for submissions and made several rules governing the exhibition the most important being that submitted works had to be framed, original works (excepting, of course, sculpture and architectural models) received by a certain date and the Academy Council had the only say in the selection and arrangement of the exhibition. From its earliest years the Academy had problems with its exhibition policies. Although Academicians were given preference over other artists by the hanging committee, the limited wall space made it impossible to hang every picture in the most favorable light and outsiders were not the only disgruntled exhibitors. The paintings of the late eighteenth century were large enough to survive the worst consequences of the limited space if we can judge from a contemporary engraving, and the hanging committee generally tried to arrange for every picture to be

seen. [Figure 1] But even if a painting were hung on the line, the coveted wall space at six to eight feet above the floor roughly at eye-level, subject and color could be ruined by too close an association with an uncomplementary canvas. Artists were naturally anxious that their works should be seen to their best advantage and envious rivalries marked most exhibitions. Although the Council was responsible for the hanging of the exhibition, a committee of three Academicians actually chose and hung the entire exhibit. The membership of this hanging committee was periodically expanded during the nineteenth century as members and outsiders expressed concern as to the possibility of injustices arising from the difficulties and immensity of the task. In 1876 Charles West Cope portrayed the entire Council choosing the works but such a representation was purely a form. [Figure 2] The largest hanging committees in the nineteenth century had seven members officially although four or five might do most of the work.<sup>10</sup> The Academy made its bitterest enemies over the question of where pictures were hung. James Barry, the only Academician to be expelled from the Academy, had tried unsuccessfully to reform hanging policies and Benjamin Robert Haydon, the most notorious enemy of the Royal Academy, never forgave the committee of 1811 for hanging his Dentatus in the ante-room rather than in the main gallery.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the cramped quarters and the great number of works submitted each year, the Academy continued to crowd paintings over every available inch of space. The Academy's moves to Trafalgar Square and Burlington House provided more room for the exhibitions but the number of works submitted increased far more rapidly than did the

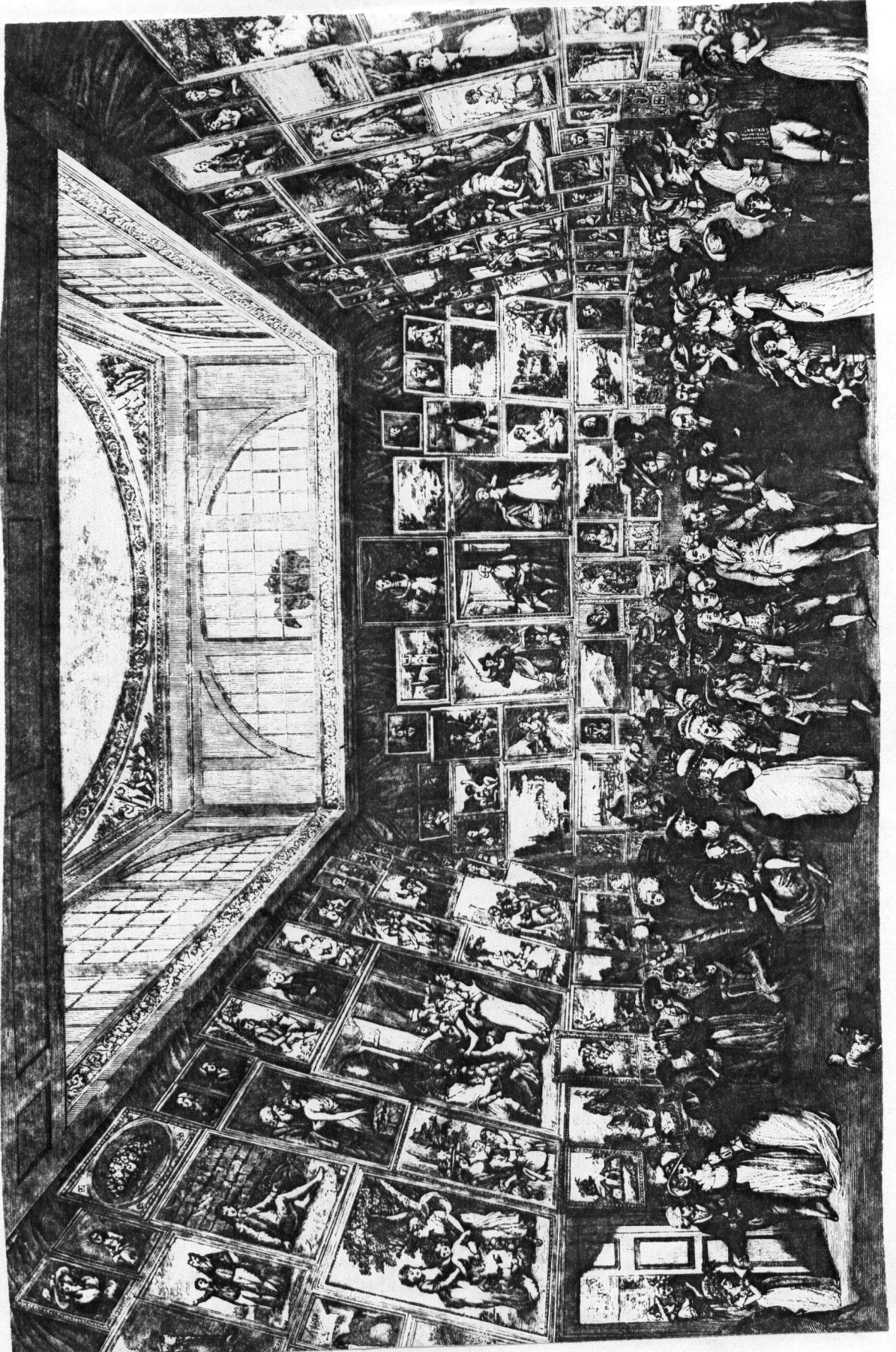


Figure 1

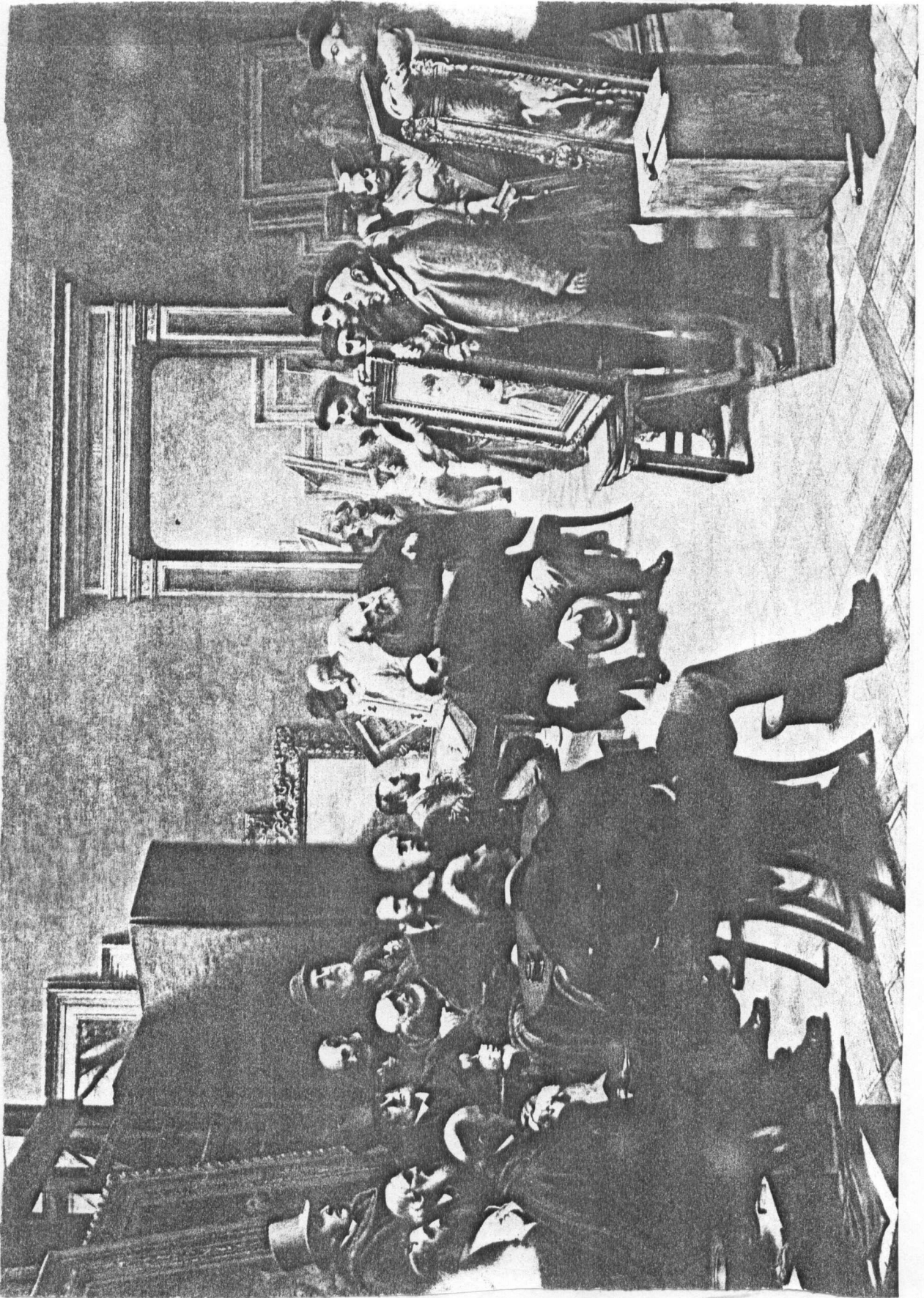


Figure 2



available space. The worst hanging practices, especially that of "skying works or placing them right up against the ceiling, were discontinued in the 1870's and W. P. Frith's Private View at the Royal Academy, 1882 portrayed the reformed exhibition. [Figure 3] These exhibition practices were of great importance to artists because they concerned the publication of their works and reputations. As early as the first Royal Academy exhibition, one of the purposes of the show was to sell paintings and the catalogue duly marked with an asterisk those pictures which the artists wished to sell.<sup>12</sup> The Academy exhibitions were a marketplace for contemporary art but not an efficient one. Only artists could submit works, which had to be new to the public eye, and the auction block at Christie's was so obviously more suitable for disposing of pictures that the Academy never became markedly commercial. Their exhibitions strove above all to present the best examples of English contemporary art, to provide an arena for establishing a young artist's reputation and to provide examples of the different phases of English artistic life. It would have been most unusual if the Academy had not met with opposition and criticism in pursuing these ends.

The only serious challenge to the Academy's position came in the 1830's when the Academy moved from its crowded rooms in Somerset House to quarters in the new National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. The Academy was a private corporation, although it enjoyed the patronage of the Crown, but it occupied or at least was going to occupy what was undoubtedly a public building being built at public expense. And the Academy enjoyed an artistic monopoly of a kind and its tremendous in-

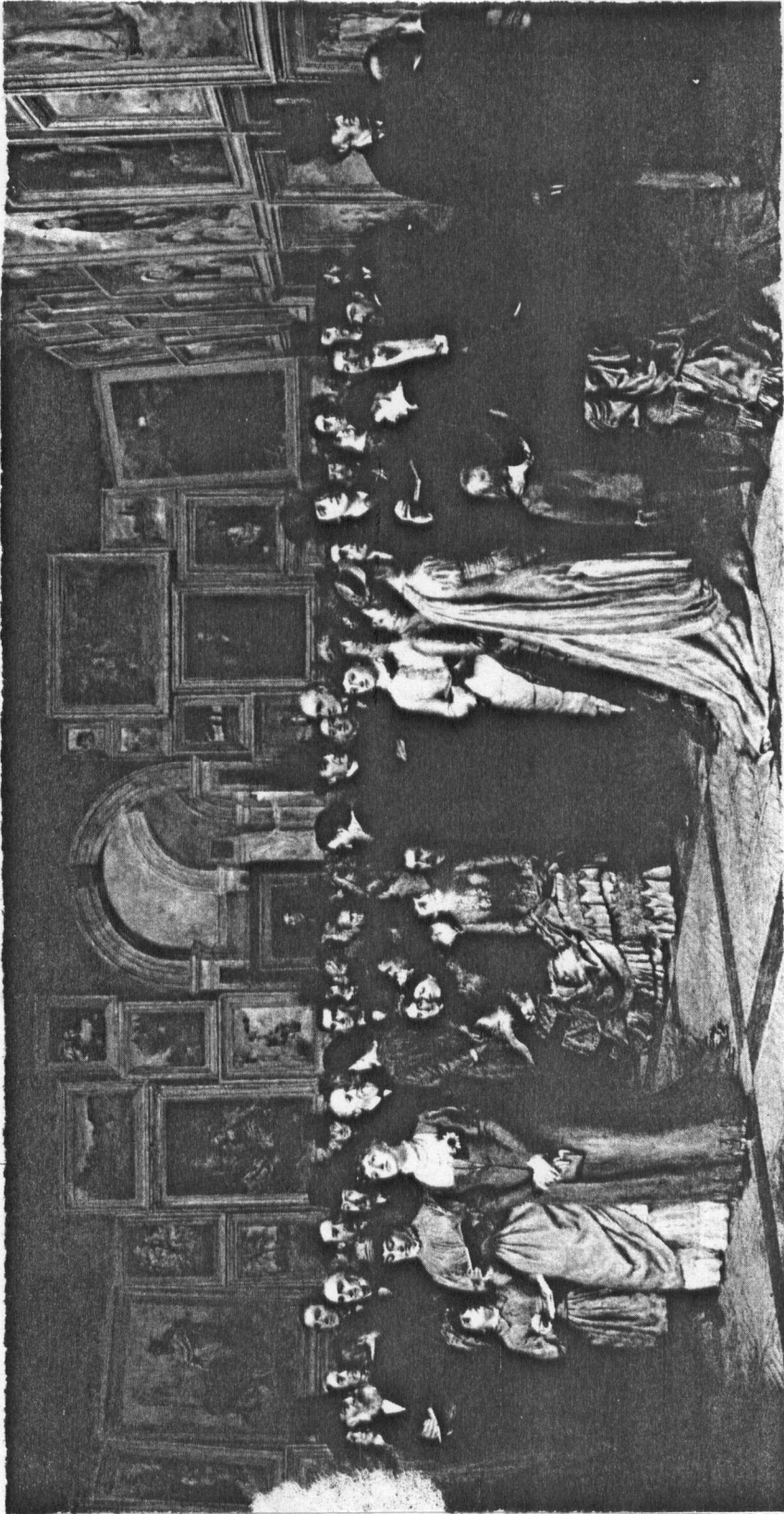


Figure 3

fluence over the English art world through its school and exhibitions aroused suspicious hostility in government. The problems were brought out by testimony given to a Parliamentary commission which sat from 1835 to 1836.<sup>13</sup> The evidence clearly showed that two different parties joined forces to attack the Academy before this committee. The first was the group of outsider artists led by Benjamin Haydon who felt that the Academy used its power to further the careers of its members at the expense of true art. The second group was the radical politicians who wished to see the Academy submit to public authority. These groups allied over the criticism of the administration of the Royal Academy which they both felt, for different reasons, ought to be regulated by government authority. The Academy finally prevailed in this prolonged crisis with its organization and independence intact and moved to the new quarters in Trafalgar Square. Although the politicians and outsider artists never repeated their strong alliance in the nineteenth century, the scathing criticism had exposed the weaknesses of the Academy and attacks from both quarters continued until the move to Burlington House in 1868 brought about a resolution of those ambiguous relations between Parliament and the Academy.

These activities and controversies suggest the vitality and importance of Academic influence and some of the conditions with which artists and art-lovers had to cope. The Academy regulated the Victorian art world by imposing a steady, almost inexorable rhythm on the artistic life of the period through its exhibitions and by its creation and maintenance of an artistic cursus honorum through its schools and bestowal of membership. To be a successful Victorian artist, a man had

first to obtain an education and second to obtain admission into the Academy, or at least into the exhibition rooms each year.

Art, especially painting, was a career that required years of training under accomplished masters. The Academy provided such training but a student had to be proficient in certain skills in order to gain admission to the school. The aspiring student had to begin elsewhere. For those who could afford them, private drawing masters were the beginning.<sup>14</sup> He could teach fundamentals but usually very little more as he was one of the recognized failures of the art world. There were a few drawing schools and they did prepare students for Academic studies but they were few and the number of students enrolled in them must have been quite small. W. P. Frith and John Millais studied at Mr. Sass' drawing school in London, a reputable private school.<sup>15</sup> There were also provincial and municipal schools such as the Norwich Academy, founded in 1805, and after the establishment of the Schools of Design under the aegis of the Board of Trade, these schools unintentionally trained students in the fine arts.<sup>16</sup> Established artists did occasionally take on individual students as well. George F. Watts learned from William Behnes; Charles Eastlake studied with Benjamin Haydon; and D. G. Rossetti studied for awhile with Ford Madox Brown. These relationships were not formally arranged and were thus hardly comparable with the atelier system in France. For various reasons schools did not form around artists in Victorian England, even after the French atelier system was recognized as a feasible model. Art teachers were traditionally at the lowest rank, socially and artistically, in the art world; they taught because they could not support themselves by the sale of their works. An established

artist might instruct a disciple for the sake of art but accepting remuneration for such work had disagreeable social and economic implications, above all the failure to receive money for one's own art works. Even if an artist ignored these particular consequences of founding a school, there were reasons that were as discouraging. There was the immense time and effort required to teach students and to see to the administration of an educational establishment and there was the fact that a school which competed with the Academy at its own level was bound to excite hostility in that quarter.

Every Victorian artist was aware, however, that England had deficiencies which made it desirable for an art student to study on the continent, or at least to make an artistic pilgrimage there. The Academy occasionally awarded travelling scholarships to its exceptional students for study in Italy although there was no formal English school in Italy. It was the artistic heritage and traditions of that country which attracted students and the sunny climate with its effects of light so alien to the English climate. J. M. W. Turner and David Wilkie had been charmed by Italy and so too were Charles Eastlake, G. F. Watts and Frederic Leighton. But Italy was not the only magnet on the continent. Leighton also studied in Germany and John Phillip, a contemporary of W. P. Frith, lived for awhile in Spain. But as the century progressed it was France that drew art students from England to the continent. Frederic Leighton who had ample opportunity to make comparisons perceived that France offered what no other continental country did—emulation of living artists.<sup>17</sup> By the late 1850's France had become a convenient and an alluring place to continue art studies and Edward

Poynter, Thomas Armstrong, James Whistler and George Du Maurier studied together in Gleyre's atelier at that time.<sup>18</sup>

The English art student thus had several opportunities open to him but in pursuing these, he was guided by a definite idea of what was required for success. And perhaps more than anything else, he required an individuality of style. This was necessary to distinguish his works at exhibitions and to establish his reputation. Works of art were unique and therein lay their tremendous value and appeal. They could never be mass-produced. Along with the conventions of accurate draughtsmanship and perspective, correct lighting, and appealing subject matter, individuality was a necessary quality of art for the mid-Victorians. It pressed so on Frederic Leighton that when he doubted his originality as a student, he succumbed to a paralysis of his creative powers.

For some time I have scarcely composed at all; partly, it is true, because I have no time, but partly also because I do not feel myself in a position to embody an idea properly. I know that such a situation is morbid, and I hope to extricate myself from it in time. It arises also partly from the fact that my individuality is not yet sufficiently developed...<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis on individuality in art probably contributed to the appeal of various educational opportunities and the almost restless search for artistic inspiration which characterized many Victorian artists.

However, despite differences in training and in artistic style, when the art student was ready to become the artist and to make of his genius a livelihood, then he looked to the Royal Academy's annual exhibition to establish his reputation. John Millais and Holman Hunt, W. P. Frith and John Phillip, Frederic Leighton and Edward Poynter, and

James Whistler not the less all submitted works to the Academy for their summer exhibition. Even D. G. Rossetti painted an exhibition piece entitled The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary which, although it did not hang in the Academy's exhibition hung in the "Free Exhibition" which was sponsored by a small London gallery.<sup>20</sup> Millais, Frith, Phillip and Leighton soon obtained that election to Academic ranks which was the mark of professional success. Holman Hunt and others, including G. F. Watts and D. G. Rossetti, found buyers for their works and were able to live more or less comfortably. But the sale of paintings depended upon their proper publication and public exhibition was a fact of almost every artist's life.<sup>21</sup>

Besides the Royal Academy exhibition there were other places to publish paintings. The British Institution, founded in 1805, provided a place to exhibit and sell works although portraits were excluded. A group of private subscribers provided the necessary capital to found the Institution and they decided what works would be hung and how they would be arranged.<sup>22</sup> There were various organizations in London which sponsored exhibitions such as the Society of Painters in Water-Colour and the Hogarth Club, but their memberships were small and none could draw public interest as did the Academy. Besides these exhibitions there were small galleries which held shows such as the one in which the "Free Exhibition" was held in 1849 and 1850.<sup>23</sup> The few provincial exhibitions included the important annual show of the Liverpool Academy. These exhibitions however only supplemented the Academy's annual show in that they provided a wider sphere for the publication of contemporary art, but none rivaled the Academy and only the Academy could bestow the honor and pri-

vileges of Academic membership. Membership did not ensure an artist of profitable sales but it did at least guarantee that the hanging committee would always be friendly.<sup>24</sup>

If an artist was unsuccessful in gaining admission to the Academy, he could still make a comfortable living through the sale of his works. There were many places to exhibit and even with limited publication of their work, many artists found sufficient buyers to support them. G. F. Watts, D. G. Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones were all able to live from the sale of their works although they seldom or never exhibited at the Academy.<sup>25</sup> But these men were able to establish a reputation based on their works and the critical approval of such men as John Ruskin and W. M. Rossetti. Artists whom fame and fortune eluded could turn to portraiture which, despite the rise of photographic studios, was profitable work and relatively easy to obtain. Men who otherwise never bought paintings would commission portraits of themselves or of members of their families. For the able draughtsman it was relatively easy work and the earliest commissions given to Leighton, Millais and Watts were for portraits.<sup>26</sup> While they were still students these commissions brought them between £10 and £25 but established artists could earn several hundred pounds in the 1860's. Artists could also earn money copying other works. Picture owners often wished works to be copied for various reasons and Leighton usually recommended a young artist friend to his patrons for copying jobs.<sup>27</sup> Pay for this was small but it was a way into the world of important buyers and collectors as they generally commissioned copies. Early in his career G. F. Watts copied a painting for Constantine Ionides for £10 and Ionides startled



an acquaintance by preferring Watts' copy to the original.<sup>28</sup>

Besides portraiture and copying, an artist could teach the fine arts, privately or in an art school. The private drawing master was a member of many wealthy households although his subservient position was hardly an enviable one. The art teacher in his own school was more happily placed but it never gave fortune or fame. Mr. Sass, the early teacher of both Millais and Frith, did exhibit each year though not at the Academy and was yearly rebuked by the critics.<sup>29</sup> After the Schools of Design were established in England, they required qualified instructors and as the cause was no less than the fate of art in Britain, some Academicians including Richard Redgrave and William Dyce joined the Schools' administration. The teachers in these schools were respectable but except for the Academicians they were not successful artists. Under Henry Cole's management in the 1850's, the Schools were transferred to the new Department of Education and began to train students as art teachers for general schools as well as art schools. But the rising prestige of artist and educator during the last half of the nineteenth century did tend to raise the status of art teachers. The Slade School of Art at the University of London enjoyed two highly respected professors in its early years, Edward Poynter, later a President of the Royal Academy, and Alphonse Legros. They were admired for their teaching methods as well as for their own artistic skill.<sup>30</sup>

Artists could also enter the field of illustration and engraving. This field, too, had its luminaries and drudges but engravers engaged in such difficult techniques as steel-line engraving or mezzotint had to be carefully trained. Illustrators usually drew work on blocks which

were then engraved by other hands. The training of engravers was a long and rigorous undertaking. Engravers were craftsmen and learned their trade through apprenticeships with established engravers. Illustrators were draughtsmen, usually trained as painters were trained and the actual cutting of blocks was done by an engraver. George Du Maurier, Charles Keene and John Tenniel as Punch illustrators and Samuel Cousins and the Daziel brothers as engravers were among the luminaries in the field and they enjoyed considerable financial success and social prestige. Cousins was the first engraver to be elected Royal Academician in 1854. But below these heights were numberless drudges toiling at the illustrations which appeared in periodicals, advertisements, pamphlets, and all the printed illustrations of the period. It was considered one of the few respectable occupations for an unmarried woman who required to support herself and the government School of Design tried to provide training for these ladies.<sup>31</sup>

The economics of art were diverse, complicated and recognized great distinctions between kinds and quality of work. Tremendous sums were regularly paid by wealthy collectors for oil paintings by Academicians and just as regularly, businesses paid small amounts to illustrators and engravers for advertisement art. The relationship between artist and buyer, however, cannot be clearly understood merely by defining the "cash nexus", but that connection was undoubtedly an important one especially among the art netherworld. Patronage no longer formed an ideal relationship for the emulation of artists and buyers; the Royal Academy had done much to free artists from that kind of relationship in which they were subservient to wealth. But because works

of art represented certain ideas concretely, including culture itself, these ideas constantly intruded into market transactions and interfered with the motivations and prudence of buyers. By the 1860's the art market reflected a changed conception of artistic worth in an exaggerated inflation of prices paid for contemporary works.<sup>32</sup> Superior workmanship and professional skill no longer adequately defined the merits of these works; genius was being bought and sold and the man who could afford it possessed more than a beautiful painting when he owned a Millais, Rossetti or Whistler. Paintings, more than music or literature, were the concrete actuality not merely the symbol of culture. They were for many the only contact which remained to them in modern society with all the aesthetic experience and spiritual humanism which seemed so abundant in historical life. Only music and literature provided a similar experience—a dreamlike vision of actual life conforming to some heartfelt sense of the world's order.

Art was a dream but a dream which sprang up from a longing to realize what ought to be.<sup>33</sup> The more perfectly the painted image corresponded to the sentimental image in the viewer's mind, the more precious the art. The Victorians looked at the world with their heads and hearts as well as with their eyes and thus the conventions of verisimilitude in perspective, lighting and representation were necessary to them. Oil and water-colors were the most valuable art works because the most capable of embodying the images of reality and these artists were the "aristocrats" of the art world. Engravings, their value diluted by the fact that they were images of images, were yet prized for their meticulous workmanship in reproducing popular paintings and engravers

formed a solid "middle class" in the art hierarchy. They were excluded from the Royal Academy until 1854 and then were admitted reluctantly. Yet they catered to a huge market and reaped large profits from it. The netherworld of art teemed with the industry of drones whose work was worth very little, aesthetically or financially, but who gratified the Victorian love of images. This hierarchy was based on the skill of the artist, his ability to embody the dream of reality in his work, not on any social or economic circumstances. Distinctions between artists and works related directly to the idea of art and the things which art stood for and this affected the art market as much as did speculation and investment in art works. So the art market fed on the ideas of culture which works of art embodied and on the commodity itself.

All the diversity and individuality which so marked the art world of the 1840's through the 1860's was more real than apparent. The amazing complexity of the art world—its spiritual and economic tensions, its unresolved conflicts and jealous hatreds, its tenuous relationship to reality—all this was submerged in a coherent style of expression. Commenting on the British pictures at the Paris Exhibition in 1855, Anton Springer remarked:

The circumstances of English Art offer a peculiar spectacle. Much originality, and yet a painful monotony; an agreement in many points, in the prevailing manner, but no school; a local character everywhere strongly marked, but no artistic unity.<sup>34</sup>

This exhibition contained many of the Pre-Raphaelite works including such examples of the "hard-edge" technique as Millais' Ophelia and Holman Hunt's Our English Coasts. [Figures 4 and 5] To the outsider, these Pre-Raphaelite works were very like the paintings which the Pre-Raphaelites so disliked which were exhibited with them in 1855. This

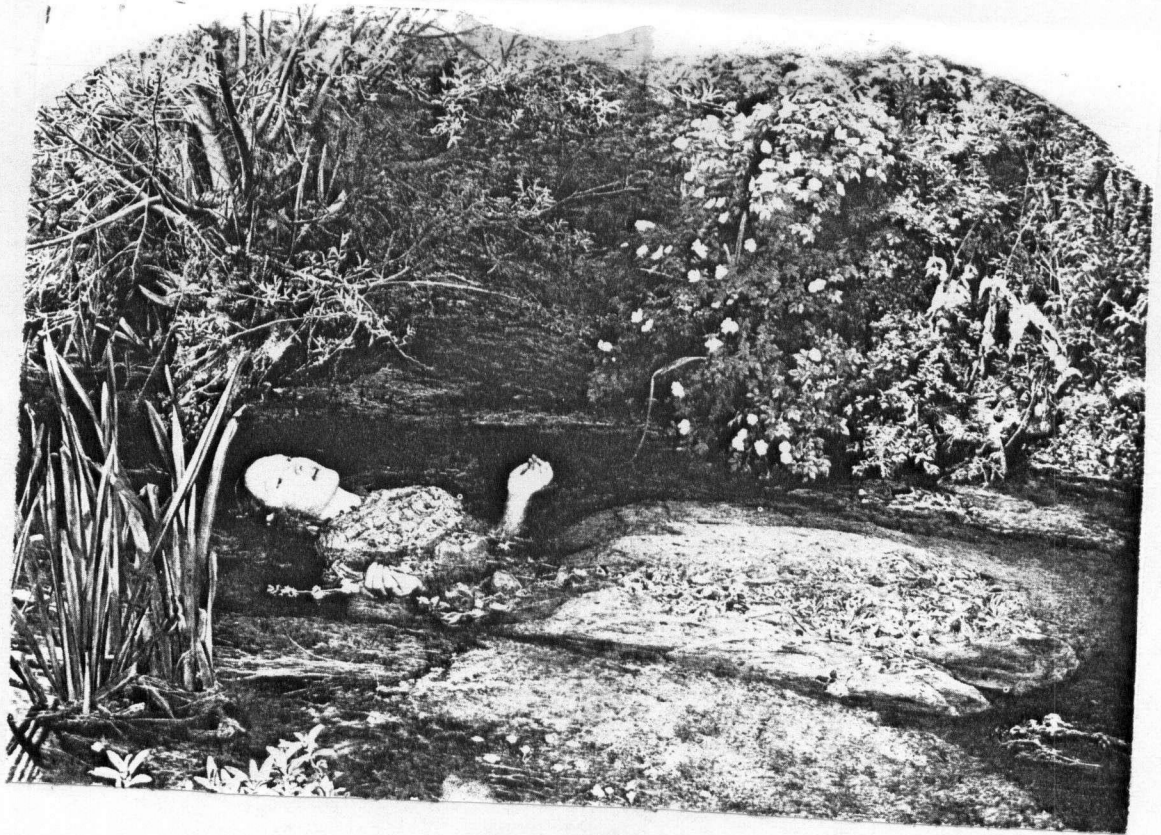


Figure 4

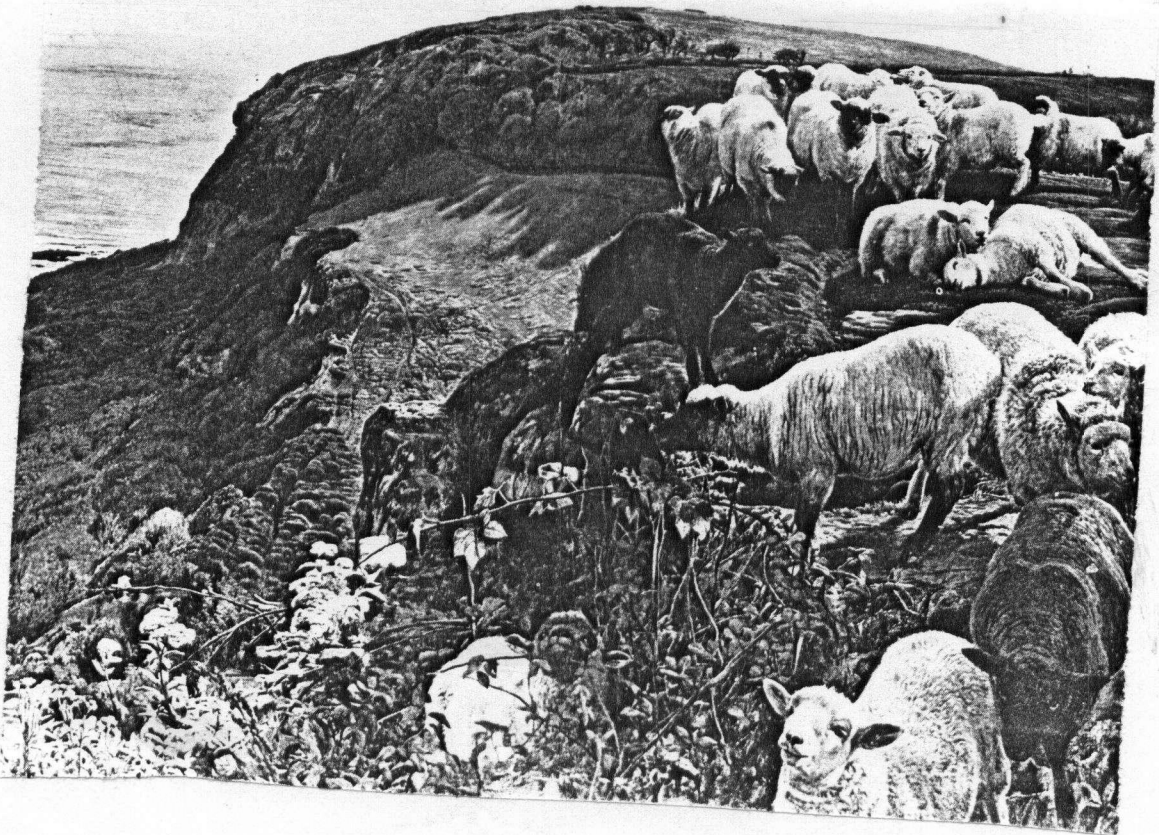


Figure 5

coherence of expression would perhaps not properly be called a style and yet it made the art world work and kept all the opposing and dis-integrating forces in check. The coherence of the mid-Victorian style was singular considering the contradictions which it contained and from which it sprang. The institutions and ideals of the art world resisted the consequences of the social and economic changes which were engulfing its markets, attitudes, relationships and prejudices yet the art which was produced out of this milieu profoundly touched the deepest sympathies of the new society, rather than the old. And it appeared to have produced this style unintentionally, almost unconsciously, and often in contradiction to its own expressed ideals. This style was evident in the works of Frith and Millais, perhaps the most representative mid-Victorian artists, and also in the work of hack illustrators and manufacturing designers. The effects of this style on the art world were dramatic though not startlingly visible. During the 1850's the mid-Victorian style allowed the art world to develop as a whole, and similar attitudes among critics, artists and collectors towards the new style gave a sense of community to cultural life. The style itself contributed to the growing popularity of art, which meant the entry into the art world of new people and new classes. By the late 1860's when different and even hostile styles were acknowledged in English art, the mid-Victorian style began to lose its coherence, its vitality and meaning. By the late 1870's the mid-Victorian style, or a caricature of it, was identified with peculiar aesthetic prejudices and with certain economic and social relationships.

The development of the mid-Victorian style twined around three

cultural events—the formation of the "Clique", the ambitious statement of Pre-Raphaelite artistic aims on canvas and in print, and the art criticism of John Ruskin, especially his Academy Notes for the 1850's. Together, these three events meant more to the development of the Victorian art consciousness than merely the sum of each, and their entire effect was distinct from the effects of any one or two taken together. The effect of the "Clique" on the art world was negligible and this association of Academy students broke up without ever achieving public recognition and long before its members won reputations.<sup>35</sup> But it lasted long enough to make conscious in its members a concern for representing human beings in a certain way. Each member of the "Clique" sought to excel in one type of subject painting—W. P. Frith in scenes from contemporary life, Richard Dadd in imaginative works, H. N. O'Neil in works of "striking character, appealing to the feelings," Augustus Egg in the illustration of famous literary works, and John Phillip in works illustrating incidents in the lives of famous people. This apportionment of artistic labors reveals very little about the group's aims and ideals but their work clearly shows that they were preoccupied with representing incidents and emotions which were typical of all human life. Because they portrayed great personages and great events in common terms, without the solemn pomp and ceremony which characteristically clothed them, they pleased the democratic sentiment which believed in equality of all men.

Frith's series of works on marriage proposals and H. N. O'Neil's famous Eastward Ho! demonstrate two sides of this treatment. [Figures 6 and 7] In The Proposal Frith presented an important but a usual event in the lives of most people and in doing so suggested typical but sincere





Figure 6



Figure 7

and deeply-felt emotions. O'Neil presented a striking contemporary event in the particular incident of men embarking on a dangerous undertaking, saying goodbye to their loved ones. In his work, O'Neil portrayed the euphoria, the parting grief, the consciousness of right, almost all the emotional drama of the event which could be personified. These artists controlled face and gesture in their works in order to portray precise and recognizable emotions and to impress on the viewer the meaning of their work. The "humanism" of the "Clique" amounted to the promotion of emotional subjects in English art and the consequent importance of sentimentalism for both artist and art-lover.

The artists left little mystery in their works as they carefully manipulated the emotional and intellectual responses of the viewer, often through the heavy-handed symbolism of Egg's Past and Present. [Figures 8, 9 and 10] Yet this manipulation was possible only because the prejudices of Victorian life were so concrete and pervasive. These prejudices informed literature as well as art and amounted to a conviction that certain values were of paramount importance. More importantly, perhaps, these prejudices were firmly grounded in a social conception of men in the world and thus tended to explain all human action in typical, socially recognized terms. Mid-Victorian art revelled in its intelligibility; anyone who understood the way of the world could easily understand it.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood made the second great contribution to the mid-Victorian style. Their contribution came through John Millais and William Holman Hunt, however, rather than through D. G. Rossetti who worked in relative obscurity during the 1850's. The "Clique" had not bothered much with technique, being preoccupied with the repre-

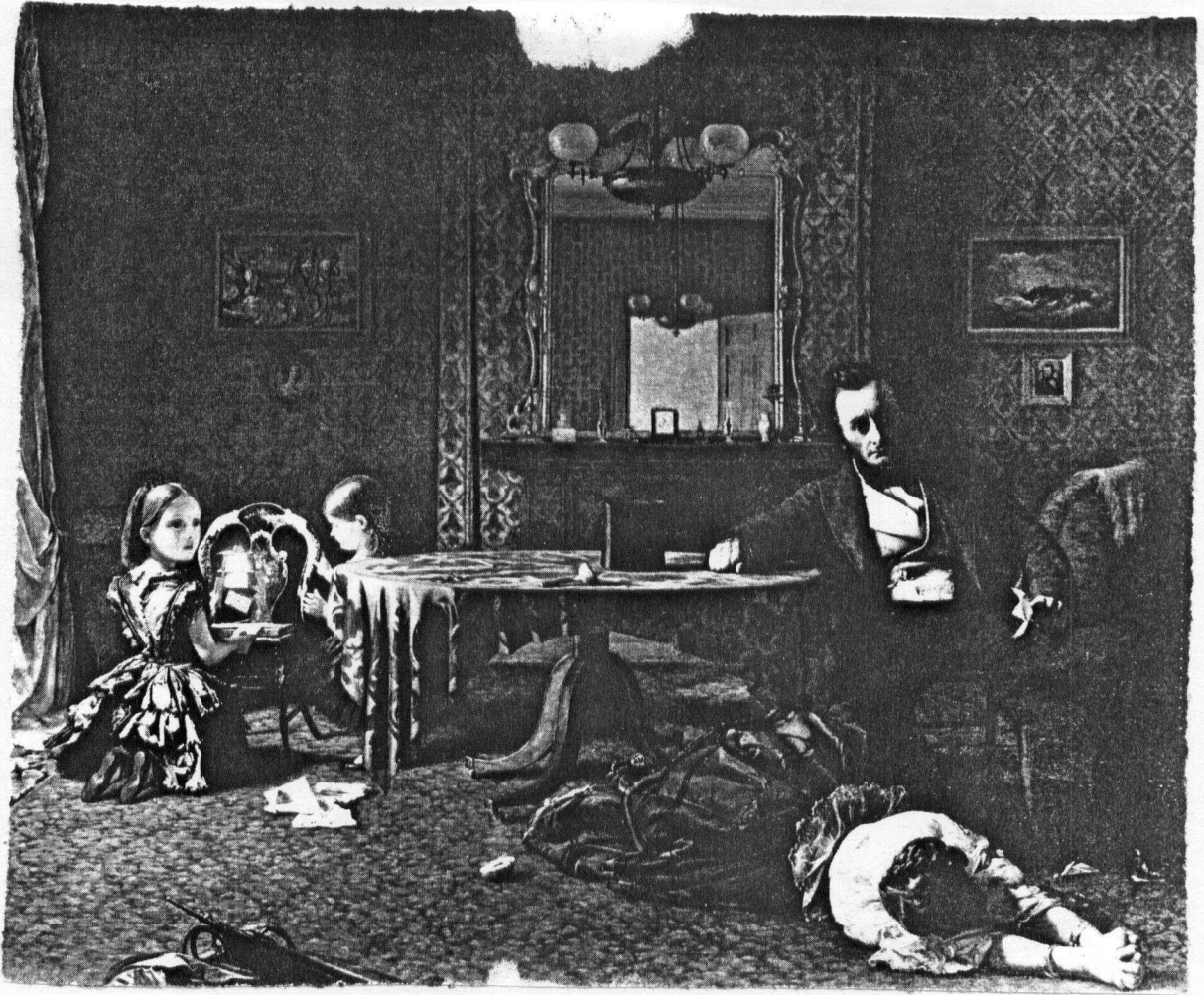


Figure 8

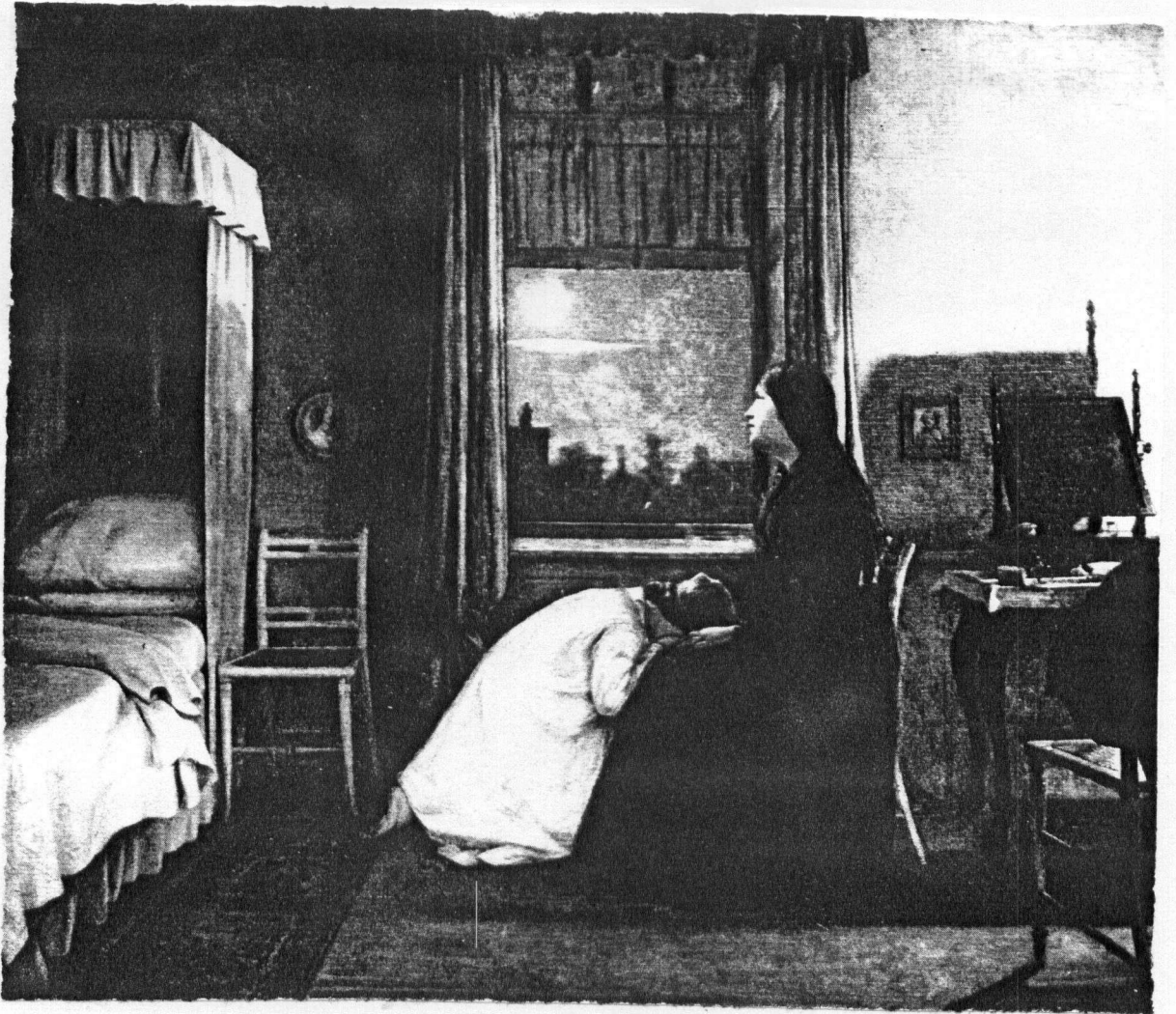


Figure 9



Figure 10

sentation of subject. Pre-Raphaelitism, especially the works which Millais and Holman Hunt exhibited at the Academy in the 1850's, was a technique which emphasized brilliant color and meticulous detail. Rossetti's withdrawal from public exhibitions ensured that his medieval idealism was not associated with the development of Pre-Raphaelite painting in the popular press.<sup>36</sup> The prosaic medievalism of Millais' and Hunt's work was not entirely alien to the public which was fond of Frith's work and their insistence on "truth to nature" (coupled with the extraordinary brilliance of their canvases on the Academy's walls) was a satisfying statement of artistic purpose. The garish paintings of "hard-edge" Pre-Raphaelitism were not beautiful to the mid-Victorian public, but as Millais' style changed, he symbolized the synthesis of Pre-Raphaelite actualism and brightness with conventional Academic beauty. A commentator on the Paris Exhibition of 1867, remembering the Pre-Raphaelite display at the 1855 Exhibition, described this thesis.

That Pre-Raphaelitism, in the interval between [1855 and 1867]... has worked its own cure, Mr. Millais himself proves, by pictures which are pledged to the opposite school of breadth and generalization. This practical extinction of Pre-Raphaelitism must be counted as one of the chief facts brought out in Paris; yet there is reason to hope that what was good in the system survives. Precision, truth and individuality have been gained.<sup>37</sup>

Color and detail were the main characteristics which mid-Victorian art gained from the Pre-Raphaelite example, and it also contributed an idea of art, a complex of ideals and practices which made art especially precious.

Ruskin's effect on mid-Victorian style was closely related to the Pre-Raphaelite problem.<sup>38</sup> He of course came to the defense of Pre-

Raphaelitism but through his writing and his interpretation of Pre-Raphaelitism he expanded the meaning of the movement in the public mind. Millais and Holman Hunt were committed to a particular technique, "hard-edge" Pre-Raphaelitism, as well as the general principle of "truth to nature."<sup>39</sup> Ruskin fastened on the principle and praised the honesty and detailed accuracy of representation in artists whose styles resembled the Pre-Raphaelites' but who were sometimes completely ignorant of the movement, such as John Frederick Lewis.<sup>40</sup> Even William Dyce, an Academician working securely within mid-Victorian Academic conventions, and W. P. Frith were praised for Pre-Raphaelite work. If Rossetti's failure to achieve public recognition obscured the nature of Pre-Raphaelite painting in the 1850's, Ruskin further obscured it by praising the "Pre-Raphaelitism" of many artists of widely different aims. Both circumstances affected the eventual acceptance of Pre-Raphaelite art in which the prosaic humanism of Millais' compositions easily entered the mainstream of mid-Victorian art, once his "hard-edge" technique was softened.

The Pre-Raphaelite contribution to the mid-Victorian style was partly a method of representation. Artists were more careful in the painting of details and effects, and the tendency towards visual disintegration in paintings became more pronounced. In "hard-edge" Pre-Raphaelite compositions such as Holman Hunt's Our English Coasts and Millais' Ophelia, the vividness of color and detail made it difficult for the eye to comprehend the whole as it tended rather to wander restlessly from detail to detail. The same tendency marked many Victorian works. Until the last decades of the century when a new art consciousness



demanded a subordination of visual detail in order for the entire work to have a single visual effect on the viewer, paintings were bound together to produce a single effect by the narrative or sentimental interest of the subject. Only the later generation denounced these narrative bonds as unartistic and therefore illegitimate; for the mid-Victorians, character and sentiment were as legitimate as perspective in art. This view of art actually encouraged the autonomy of the details in a painting because the details of expression and material props greatly enhanced the narrative of a work. Pre-Raphaelitism tended to expand the possibilities of sentimental art.

Another contribution of Pre-Raphaelitism was the widespread acceptance of truth to nature as a tenet of criticism. Ruskin's art criticism in the 1850's was devoted to the truth of representation and he attacked trivial matters as often as he criticized mistaken conceptions. In a criticism of a painting of a scene from King Lear, Ruskin disapproved of the conception of Cordelia but he also objected that the light reflecting from a jewel could not appear the way it was painted, given the represented conditions of light. Anyone could verify this by a simple experiment.<sup>41</sup> This meant that people attending exhibitions could perceive technical greatness by applying to their own powers of observation; critics often did little more.<sup>42</sup> Throughout the 1850's and 1860's, art-lovers were delighted by trompe d'oeil effects. There were pitfalls for artists in this kind of criticism, even for the most technically brilliant. A correspondent to the Art Journal complained in 1855 that the fire in Millais' The Rescue (in which a fireman is bringing two children out of their burning home to the frantic mother)

clearly had to be from a chemical factory rather than from a private dwelling because only certain chemicals produced the livid red hue of the flames as Millais painted them.<sup>43</sup> [Figure 11]

These changes in the Victorian art consciousness were subtle but important. The most important effect was to make it easy for the newly enriched middle-classes to comprehend art and to feel at ease in the art world. The humanism of mid-Victorian subjects and the actualism of representation were immediately intelligible to any viewer who was acquainted with the social and cultural rituals of mid-century. This intelligibility accounted partly for the immense popularity of painting in the 1850's and 1860's, but mid-Victorian art was not only comprehensible, it was positively endearing. The one aspect of contemporary life which the artists of the period captured faithfully on canvas was the emotional life. All the meaning that feelings gave to events was evident in Frith's The Derby Day, Egg's Past and Present, Bowler's The Doubt and Millais' Cherry Blossoms. [Figures 12 and 13] This side of actual life could only fit meaningfully into the domestic arena in which the emotional life of most mid-Victorians was enshrined. Mid-Victorian paintings usually hung in private homes rather than in public buildings or commercial offices.<sup>44</sup> Around the domestic hearth these compositions made sense and they served a cultural and social role similar to that of the well-tuned and oft-played piano. Partly it was pride of possession and partly it was as a focus for conversation that made paintings a worthwhile addition to the home. But paintings also represented all the finer things in life, not only cultural, but moral, emotional and intellectual as well. Because in many ways the home was

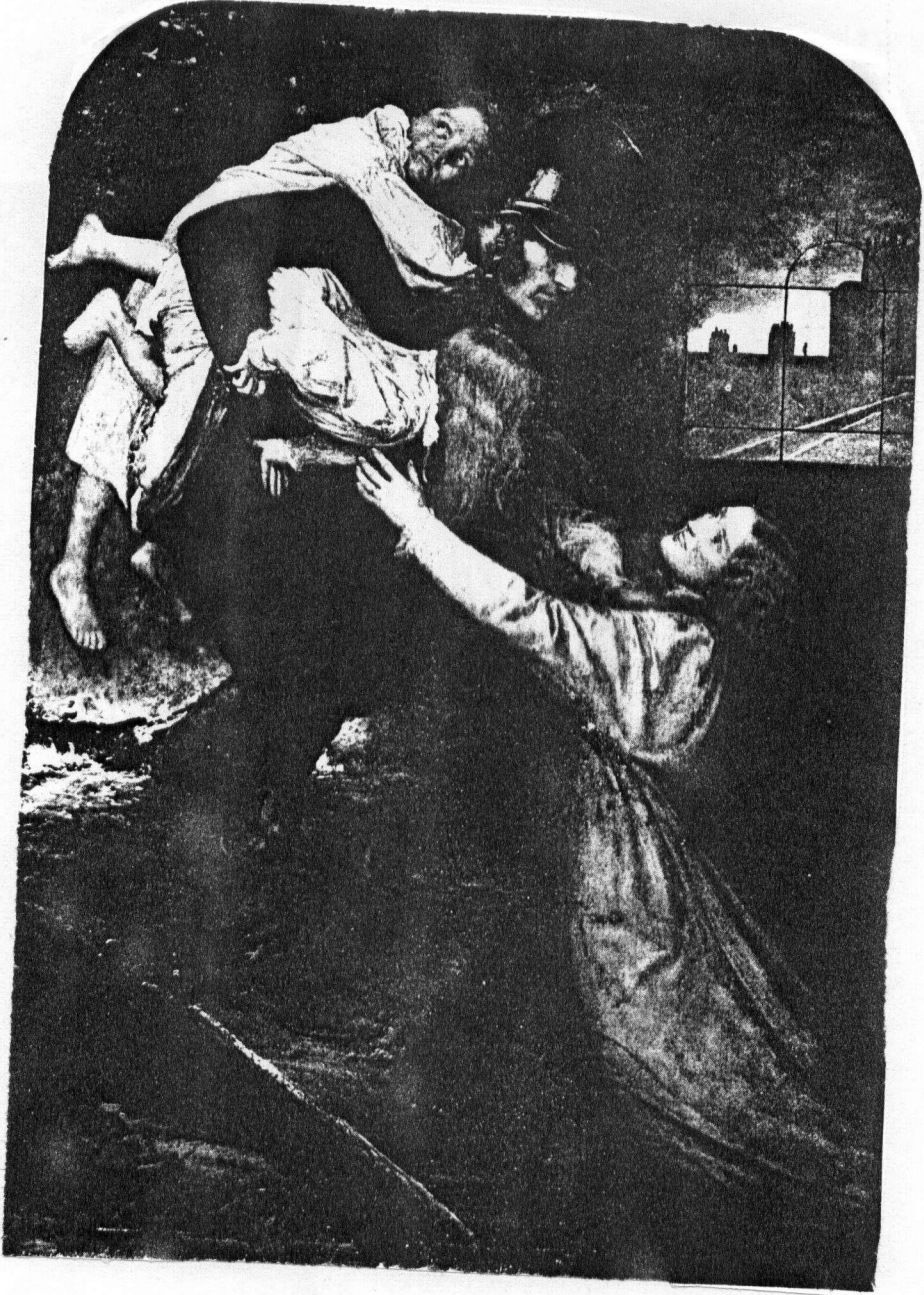


Figure 11



Figure 12

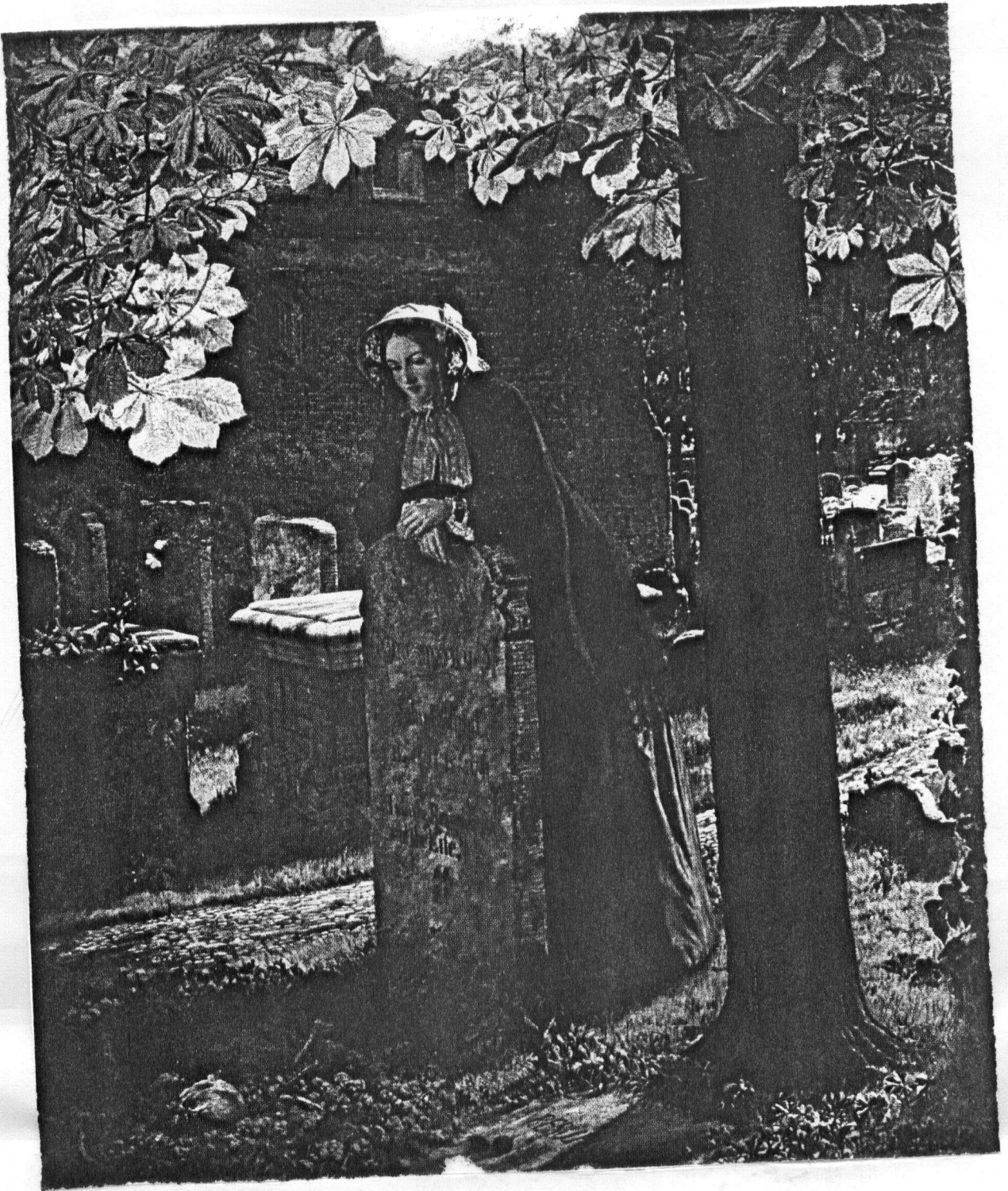


Figure 13

a compensating institution for the toils of business or public life, painting was deliberately divorced from the harsher realities of making a living and took its place naturally at home along with children, music, garden parties, needlework and rustling skirts.

Despite the great popularity of art, there were Victorians who yearned for what was not. Many critics resented the fact that paintings adorned private drawing-rooms rather than public edifices. Although artists created works that touched critics deeply, there lingered through the 1850's an anxiety as to what this art expressed of national life or greatness.<sup>45</sup> This anxiety was a shadow cast by a fundamental problem in the manufactured arts where the idea that art necessarily expressed national character had long been established. Ruskin recognized this relationship and in his criticism of the 1850's, he attempted to come to grips with it and with his own feelings and hopes for art. The productions of past ages were much more available to public view in the 1850's than they had been before, and historical styles were both beautiful and awesome. They had that quality which the Victorians never quite achieved—the monumental. In competing with historical styles, Victorian artists attempted to mix great subjects with their sentimental humanism, a recipe destructive to monumentality. With Ruskin, whose criticisms were always personal and honest, the greatest pictures were often those which did not express any national sentiment and which had no touch of the monumental. In 1855 two pictures were exhibited at the Royal Academy demonstrating two distinctly different approaches to composition, Millais' The Rescue and Frederic Leighton's Cimabue's Madonna. [Figures 11 and 14] The Rescue was the picture of the year and Ruskin praised

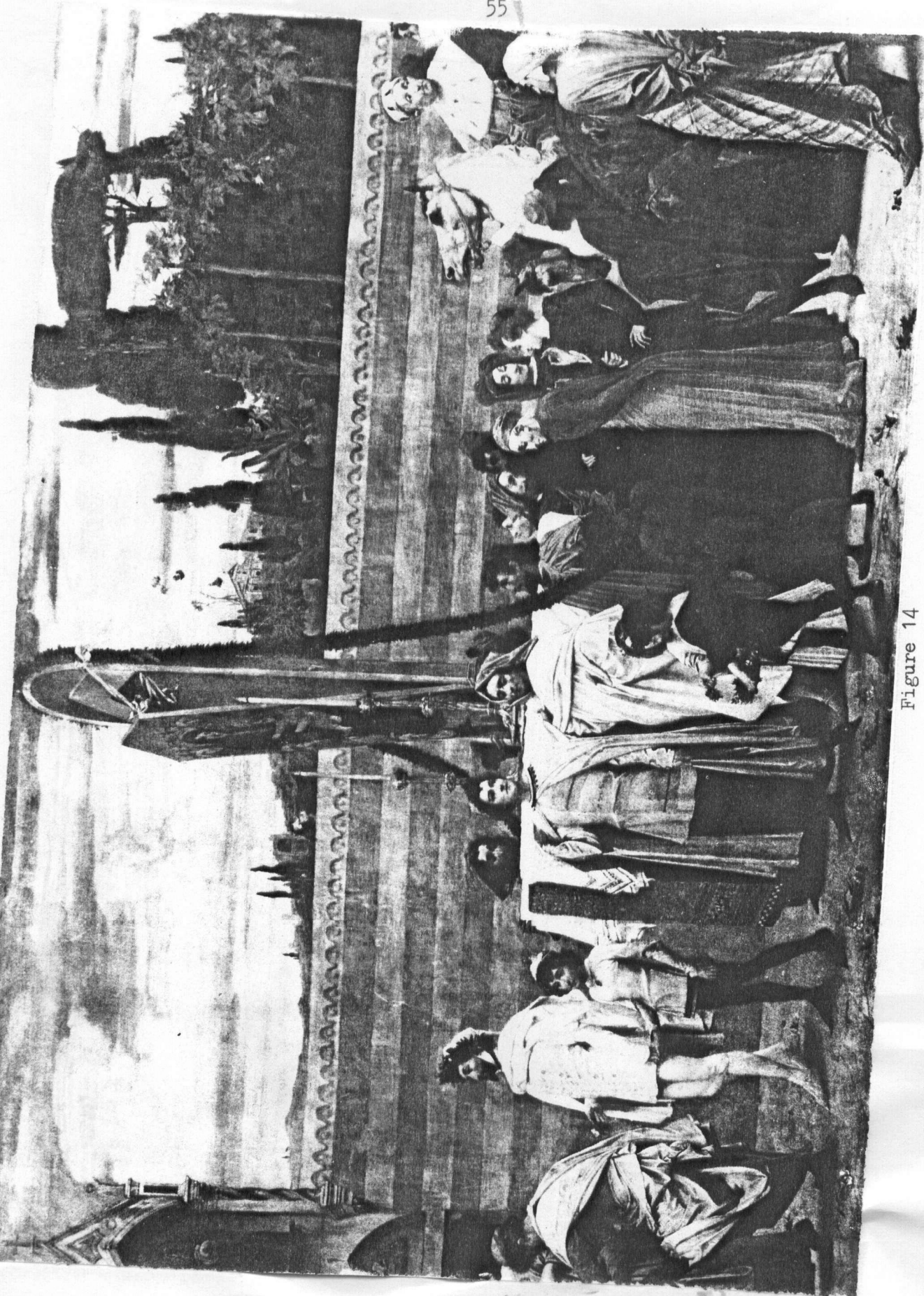


Figure 14

it lavishly declaring it the only great picture in the exhibition.

But, he wrote, it was "very great. The immortal element is in it to the full. It is easily understood, and the public very generally understand it."<sup>46</sup> In his same criticism Ruskin discussed Leighton's picture and though he thought it a good painting, he had serious reservations.

Its defect is, that the equal care given to the whole of it, is not yet care enough. I am aware of no instance of a young painter, who was to be really great, who did not in his youth paint with intense effort and delicacy of finish. The handling here is much too broad; and the faces are, in many instances, out of drawing, and very opaque and feeble in colour... The Dante especially is ill-conceived—far too haughty and in no wise noble or thoughtful.

Ruskin's reasons for preferring The Rescue was that it expressed a "higher order of emotion" than any expressed in Leighton's painting. Yet Leighton's painting was meant to express the enthusiasm and admiration of an entire community for a great work of art. Ruskin ought to have understood Leighton's composition and at least sympathized with the ideal expressed. But Leighton's style was monumental to the point of impersonality and with this Ruskin could not sympathize, even though their ideals were similar. Ruskin, like most mid-Victorians, cared more for feeling than form in art and feeling could not sustain a monumental style. National art, art which expressed great and noble ideas, required some touch of the monumental, some impressive convention of expression which transcended social ritual. This was no longer possible in the Victorian world.

Other aspects of the mid-Victorian search for great contemporary art demonstrated the ambiguities of the attitude towards the possibility of a national school. Haydon's school of historical painting was a



dead issue. The historical works decorating the Houses of Parliament brought praise and even some enthusiasm but they were individual efforts and could not match the popularity of the oil paintings at the Royal Academy's exhibitions. The cartoons entered in competition for the decoration of Parliament were honored with a provincial tour by an art dealer, but when G. F. Watts' cartoon was sold to another dealer, he had to cut it into small pieces in order to sell it.<sup>47</sup> High art was not popular at the Academy exhibitions either. W. P. Frith, the most prosaic of the great Victorian artists, while admitting that his works were not great nor could be, had little sympathy with High Art. In his Autobiography Frith described an incident which occurred at an Academy exhibition.

One Academician of what is called the "high-aim" school, by which is meant a peculiar people who aim high and nearly always miss, and who very much object to those who aim much lower and happen to hit—he said to me, looking at the crowd round my picture:

"That work of yours is very popular; but I intend to exhibit a work next year that will have a greater crowd about it than that."

"Indeed," said I. "And what is your subject?"

"Well, I have not quite fixed on the title yet; but I think I shall call it 'Monday Morning at Newgate'—the hanging morning, you know. I shall have a man hanging and the crowd about him. Great variety of character, you know. I wonder you never thought of it."<sup>48</sup>

The problem with High Art was of course that there was no fundamental agreement even among the middle-classes as to what images expressed national sentiment and yet certain qualities had to be included. Under these circumstances, artists could not compete with historical styles.

However much some art-lovers in the 1850's missed "great" contemporary art, there can be no doubt that the style was tremendously satisfying. It encouraged the middle-classes to engage in picture-

buying, as well as to attend exhibitions and subscribe to art periodicals. There was a common language of artistic imagery in the 1850's and as artists knew what was expected of them, so buyers could value a work with very little experience. Sentimental humanism of subject, bright color and detail, careful accuracy of representation—these were the cornerstones of the mid-Victorian art world. To the style which they created was due the harmony and coherence which distinguished the 1850's. Despite complaints from some quarters about prices paid for various works of art, the art market worked because of the intelligibility of the commodity and because prices rose gradually. The first challenges to this world came as stylistic innovations and although they were closely connected with social, economic and intellectual challenges, the crisis which altered the mid-Victorian art consciousness was brought about by the problems which new styles created. And the first style which challenged the art world after the Pre-Raphaelite rebellion was introduced in the 1860's by artists trained on the continent. Their style reflected their artistic education and their distinctly different aims in art—form arrived to challenge feeling.

The two artists who most clearly and forcefully represented this new style were Frederic Leighton and Edward Poynter. Leighton had received all his training on the continent, first in Germany under Steinle, then in Italy and finally in France. Italy was his great love, but he travelled to France out of an inner necessity.

From an artistic point of view I am quite glad to leave Rome, which I, for a beginner, regard as the grave of art. A young man needs before all things the emulation of his contemporaries; this I lack here in the highest degree; also here I cannot learn my trade... I am of the opinion that the spirit cannot work

effectively until the hand has obtained complete pliancy, and I cannot see what<sup>49</sup> right a painter has to evade the difficulties of painting...

So he went to Paris in 1856 and although he knew Poynter and had advised him to study in France, he took almost no part in the student life led by Poynter and his friends at Gleyre's studio.<sup>50</sup> Poynter had decided to study in Paris after visiting the International Exhibition in Paris in 1855. This was the first time that a large collection of both French and British paintings were exhibited together and the first opportunity for artists and the public to compare the two national schools. Poynter for one was struck by the elegance and the free but controlled energy of French draughtsmanship.<sup>51</sup> W. M. Rossetti recognized that the excellence of the French school lay in its competence which was "beyond rivalry."<sup>52</sup>

The art student in France was thoroughly trained in the skills of the hand and in the production of various pictorial effects. The French were preoccupied with form rather than subject and as the English had expended great efforts on subject pieces, so had the French given their best to achieve an unsurpassed expertise. For Poynter and Leighton, indeed for any young English artist who was not entirely satisfied with Academic conventions, the brilliance and ease of French work was seductive. They hoped to learn French forms in order to perfect the English style. They never entirely renounced the English subject nor did they ever abandon the lessons in form which their Parisian training had instilled.

In the early 1860's Leighton and Poynter returned to England to begin their artistic careers. At the same time other artists trained

in France came to work in England—James Whistler, George Du Maurier, Thomas Armstrong, Alphonse Legros and James J. Tissot. Their distinctly different style, so evident in Leighton's painting in 1855, was not so clear in the 1860's when individualism had created so many different artistic visions within the clear stylistic conventions of the period. Leighton had read Ruskin's books and sought to copy nature as Ruskin had suggested, with all reverence, accepting everything, rejecting nothing.<sup>53</sup> Leighton and Poynter accepted the necessity of an interesting subject but drew upon the ideal forms of classicism. Their subjects were removed from the kind of humanism current among most Victorian works. Their fondness for classical forms, especially drapery, grew out of their continental training.

At the same time another new influence was developing in English art. Rossetti took Edward Burne-Jones as a pupil and Rossetti's mystical and idealistic medievalism captivated an apt pupil. Like the artists trained in France, Rossetti and Burne-Jones rejected the sentimental representation of contemporary life in favor the a representation of the forms and visual rhythms of medieval life. Although the classical and medieval forms of the two groups were as different from each other as they were from the typical mid-Victorian style, they presented a similar challenge to that style because they were both essentially anti-modern. And their dissatisfaction with modern life was not simply an aesthetic preference. Like the mid-Victorians, their aesthetic preferences were grounded in an entire complex of feelings, prejudices and values, and both Burne-Jones and Leighton

expressed a deep distrust of many of the values and ideals which informed middle-class life. Burne-Jones learned this distrust early first from Newman through his Sermons.

When I was fifteen or sixteen he [Newman] taught me so much I do mind [sic]—things that will never be out of me. In an age of sofas and cushions he taught me to be indifferent to comfort, and in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen, and this so early that it was well in me when life began... So if this world cannot tempt me with money or luxury—and it can't—or anything it has in its trumpery treasure-house, it is most of all because he said it in a way that touched me... So he stands to me as a great image or symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world's life in one splendid venture, which he knew as well as you or I might fail, but with a glorious scorn of everything that was not his dream.<sup>54</sup>

Leighton's rejection of the values of modern life was first indicated while he was still a student in Italy. Although Leighton was later known as a man of remarkable social gifts, in Italy he displayed an intense aversion to a type of person which later he and many others identified as a threat to art.

...I have an ungovernable horror of being asked to tea; my aversion to tea-fights, muffin scrambles, and crumpet conflicts, which has been gathering for a long time, has now become an open wound. The more I enjoy and appreciate the society and intercourse of the dozen people that I care to know, the more tiresome I find the commerce of others, braves at excellentes gens du reste; the Lord be merciful to the overwhelming insipidity of that individual whose name is Legion—the unexceptionable—the highly respectable.<sup>55</sup>

In later years, Leighton identified utilitarianism with these mediocrities and on them and their narrow materialism, he placed the responsibility for the Philistinism which oppressed art. But it was the new style itself which most insistently attacked modern materialism and which led to the expression of these criticisms.

Almost all the elements of this new formal style were anti-modern

or at least expressed the inadequacy of modern artifacts for artistic representations. The most obvious difference between the new style and the mid-Victorian style was that the new one rarely portrayed modern subjects except in portraiture. Leighton and Poynter drew on classical myth and history or similarly exotic subjects for their works while Rossetti and Burne-Jones drew on the legends and literature of the middle ages. One obvious reason for this was that modern artifacts of dress, furniture and architecture had none of the formal, ideal qualities of the beauty which these artists preferred. Above everything else these artists sought a beauty of harmonious proportions, of flowing lines and balanced forms, such as drapery displayed in classical art. Modern dress for women was constraining and ungainly while for men it was drab, even absurdly plain. The modern room was generally decorated with a myriad of unrelated forms and often with materials devoid of any real beauty, but painted or papered or carved to disguise the fact. At the time Burne-Jones, Leighton, Poynter and the others entered the art world there were many reformers vehemently chastizing the manufactured arts for all their defects, and these artists were among the first to create a new and satisfying style in interior decoration.

The art of the neo-classicists and neo-medievalists presented with all deliberation a new world to Victorians, a world distinct from contemporary life, more perfect and more beautiful. The new artists, even Burne-Jones, were not actualists as the mid-Victorian artists were; they were idealists seeking to control the visual rhythm of their works as carefully as their predecessors controlled the emotional rhythm. And in

their subjects, the new artists reached for perfection, avoiding subjects which were too common, too intensely dramatic or too sentimental.

The second element of dissatisfaction which the idealists displayed in their works was a distaste for the mid-Victorian style itself, especially the cleverness and commonness of it. When Burne-Jones saw Rossetti's work for the first time, he thought it so unlike the typical work of the period as to be something entirely different; he had not liked art until he knew Rossetti's work.<sup>56</sup> There was, the idealists believed, a fundamental difference between most mid-Victorian art and the great art of the past; great art was an expression of great faith and was created out of a compelling inner necessity, but most Victorian art was produced to make money. Leighton, comparing the old Italian masterpieces with those of his own period, said:

...they...were all painted with an ardent belief in the faith to which they all owe their existence; from thence arose, amongst other excellencies, a certain naif, ingeniously childlike treatment of the miraculous, which, combined with the manly dignity of consummate art, gives them an indescribable charm, which nothing can replace. Now—with us, at least, of the cold belief—men throw really eminent talents—to the dogs.<sup>57</sup>

Lacking the ardent faith, as almost all did, the idealists attempted to match the striving for perfection which they discerned in older works. Leighton and Burne-Jones were alike in deliberately seeking out the difficulties of painting in order to avoid cleverness.<sup>58</sup> Throughout his career Leighton was often criticized for an overly refined manner. His methods of composition and painting were so rigorous that they systematically obliterated accidental or uncontrolled effects. Yet Leighton recognizing the validity of this objection, deliberately chose his superlatively finished results.—When a fellow artist praised a sketch and

and-asked-that Leighton not ruin it by adding to it, Leighton replied,

No, I shall finish it, and probably, as you suggest, spoil it. To complete satisfactorily is what we painters strive for. I am not a great painter, but I am always striving to finish my work up to my first conception.<sup>59</sup>

It was the idealists who made the connection between the low state of English art and the Philistinism of the middle-classes, who bought most of the contemporary paintings. Above all they despised the utilitarianism that pervaded so much of middle-class life and the preoccupation with material comforts and possessions. The triviality of middle-class life they attributed to the absence of serious beliefs and pursuits. In reality, the spiritual life of the mid-Victorians disappointed because there was no high place in it for art and it did not provide the spiritual inspiration which the artists sought. It was not the faithlessness of the age which created such discontent in the artists, rather it was their own lack of faith which the age could not remedy.

The whole current of human life [Leighton declared to Academy students] setting resolutely in a direction opposed to artistic production, no love of beauty, no sense of the outward dignity and comeliness of things, calling on the part of the public for expression at the artist's hands; and, as a corollary, no dignity, no comeliness for the most part, in their outward aspect...<sup>60</sup>

The emotional life represented in mid-Victorian works, even when it was serious and sincere, was trivial and personal. The idealists rejected this view of human nature which was so grounded in the social prejudices of the middle-classes. They wished rather to express the abiding human values which all great art expressed and which transcended social and historical conditions. Hence their preoccupation with classical myth and literature. [Figures 15,-16 and 17] With the idealists, art



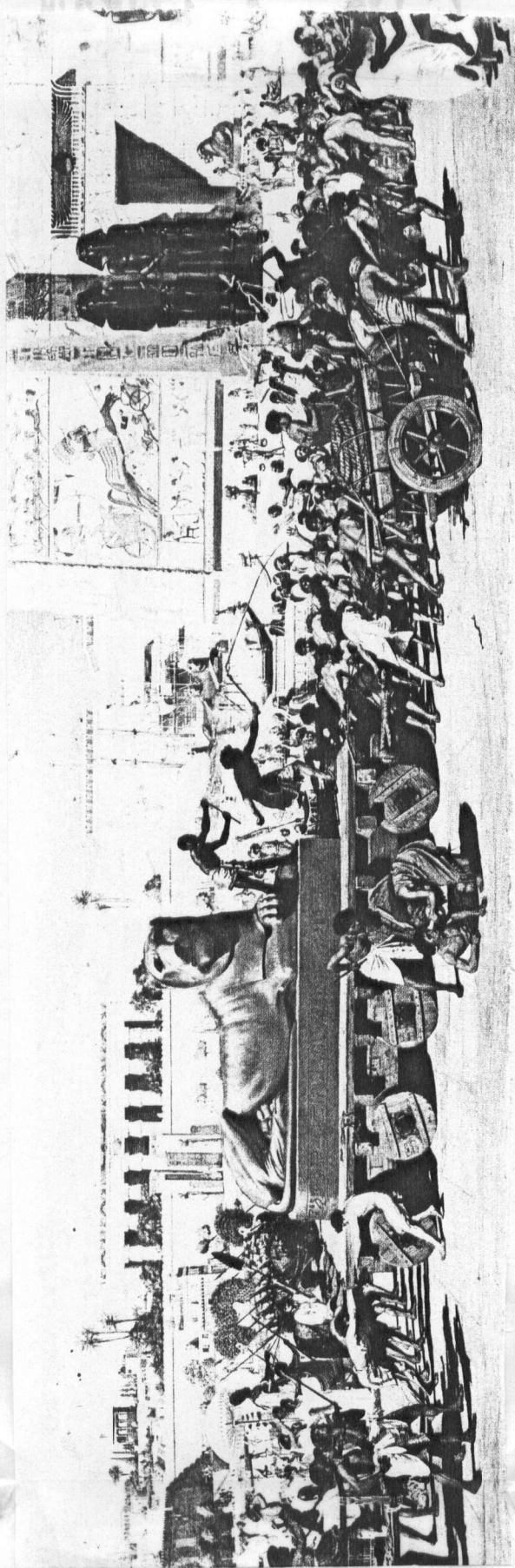


Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

meant different things than it did to the mid-Victorians and this was visible in their style, their subject matter and their remarks in letters and speeches. They were preoccupied with form and color, with subjects of enduring human interest which were worthy of their efforts, and with the serious dedication of the artist to his art in a devoted but lifeless imitation of the faithful. Of critical importance to them was the relationship of art to society, and in so far as they could, they preached the reformation of society for the rebirth of art. And the factor in the art world which continually mocked the meaning of art and the ideal relationship between art and society was the art market.

In the 1860's when most of the idealists began to pursue careers in London, the art market boomed.<sup>61</sup> Collectors paid huge sums for old masters, but also for the works of living artists which were recommended to buyers by being easy to authenticate. Prices had risen during the 1850's and by the 1860's, artists could live luxuriously from the sale of their works. Artists were also rising in social esteem and Frederic Leighton was the first artist in England to be raised to a peerage in 1896.<sup>62</sup> This was indeed a golden age for living artists, yet there were serious problems, problems which prosperity aggravated rather than solved.

As the art market attracted more money, it also attracted speculators. The tremendous increase in prices and the two different styles made speculation more obvious. One painting was often sold several times in as many years and the disparity between the prices paid on the different sales usually rose as other art prices rose. The idealists never thought the prices paid for their works were too high, yet there

were complaints that some artists received more money than their works were worth.<sup>63</sup> The same economic phenomenon which had allowed the idealists to enter easily into the art world, rising prices, also aggravated that aspect of the art world which was most distasteful to them, the impersonal exchange of money for work.

The idealists were not alone in their condemnation of the speculative principle in the art market. W. P. Frith in his Autobiography lamented the changes in the art market.

A great change has taken place since the year 1844, when such men as Sheepshanks, Vernon, Miller, Gibbons and others were collecting works of modern art, influenced by the love of it, and not<sup>64</sup> by the notion of investment so common in the last few years.

Art critics eager to explain the decadence of art and the cultural developments in Victorian England also analyzed the market and its unfortunate effects on painting.

Within the present generation the patronage of living art has become tenfold what it was at the beginning of the century. Prices have risen as patrons have increased. The nobleman, as a rule, is no longer the principal picture-buyer... The great manufacturing and trading districts now open the best picture markets. The overflowings of wealth realized in Lancashire mills, and Liverpool or London offices, and Gloucestershire forges, are invested in pictures. Love of art, in some cases; ostentation, and the notion that a gallery of pictures is the becoming appendage of a fine house, in more, coupled with a keen eye to business, in most instances are the motives for this kind of investment...also the rise of the middle-man, the picture<sup>65</sup> dealer, print publishing is almost entirely in their hands.

The same author complained of the "unexampled and triumphant intrusion into the domain of art of the trading and speculative principle." But although critics were concerned about these developments, it was the artist who dealt with the problems they caused, and who benefited from the new riches.

Much of the selling done in the 1850's by artists was to established buyers, both private parties and dealers. Millais sold many of his early works to Mr. Combe of Oxford and to Mr. Farrar and Mr. White, both picture dealers.<sup>66</sup> Farrar and White had regular buyers as well and they made their profits by reselling Millais' works at a higher price and reserving the copyright in order to profit from the sale of engravings. This was apparently a general practice.<sup>67</sup> The most galling aspect of the art market was the way it enriched speculators who profited from another's work. Every artist who had achieved some success could look back on works of his which had made fortunes for publishers or which had been sold cheaply by him and now fetched a high price at auction.<sup>68</sup> Most of the injustices of the art market had existed earlier for the basic mechanisms had been long established, but they had not been so visible before.

The mid-Victorians were often devoted artists, yet they rarely looked on their profession as more than a superior trade; they were proud of their skill, unashamed of their honors and income. The idealists, however, saw themselves as more than professionals. For them art was a calling and becoming an artist meant devoting oneself to a rigorous striving for perfection. The idealists themselves perceived that the Church, especially the Catholic Church, provided a model form of life, and the spiritual vitality, which they lacked. It haunted the agnostic Leighton in his early student years.

What artist, however uncatholic in his belief, can contemplate those old Gothic churches, with their glorious tabernacles and other ornaments equally beautiful and equally disused, without painfully feeling what an almost deadly blow the Reformation was

to High Art, what a powerful incentive it removed, irrevocably? Who, in his heart of hearts, can but dwell with melancholy regret on the times when art was coupled with belief, and so many divine works were virtually expressions of faith? What a purifying and ennobling influence was thus exercised over the taste of the artist! an influence which nothing can replace...

In the market-place the distinction between the mid-Victorians and the idealists became painfully clear—the old professionals painted to make money, the idealists painted because of a spiritual need.

In his book, Three Great Modern Painters, A. Lys Baldry emphasized that none of these painters, Leighton, Burne-Jones or Whistler, catered to the popular taste and cited their isolation from various movements and, in the case of Burne-Jones and Whistler, from the Academy as evidence of their true inner inspiration.<sup>70</sup> The real artist looked only to himself for his standards and because of this, those artists who ignored or attacked the Academy were entirely acceptable. Academic artists such as Leighton, Poynter and Laurence Alma-Tadema were acceptable as well, their membership not being held against them.

The idealists shared a more coherent view of the artist's social role than did the mid-Victorians, but that view stressed individualism, inspiration and an inner consciousness of duty. Although they sympathized with each other, they never acted together as a group. Nor did they ever fully realize, even to themselves, the role of art in the modern world. Their nostalgia for the old age of faith was based on their conviction that in such an age, art had held a worthy position. The anxiety and despair which they felt was due partly to the fact that they could not entirely replace religion with art, that the cult of art alone could not, in their eyes, sustain art in the social role they wished

for it.

The major aesthetic difference between the mid-Victorians and the idealists was almost identical to their stylistic differences. The mid-Victorians loved beauty but they found it in naturalism and in popular types in which loveliness and sentiment were mixed. There was a paradox in the distinction between the aesthetic aims of the mid-Victorians and the idealists. Although the idealists stressed those aspects of painting which were apprehended by sight—form, line, color and harmonious proportions—mid-Victorian canvases depended more on the immediate sensual appeal of a work. A mid-Victorian painting required the viewer to enter into the scene portrayed, to believe in it, and it accomplished this partly by careful naturalism which made details sensibly real. But this sensuousness, because it served a definite pictorial purpose, was subordinated to an idea of character. When Millais considered women in art, he described the sensual appeal of mid-Victorian art.

It is only since Watteau and Gainsborough that woman has won her right place in Art. The Dutch had no love for women, and the Italians were as bad. The women's pictures by Titian, Raphael, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, and Velasquez are magnificent as works of Art; but who would care to kiss such women? Watteau, Gainsborough, and Reynolds were needed to show us how to do justice to woman and to reflect her sweetness.

Sweetness was an attribute of character rather than form. While the mid-Victorians pursued the beauty of character, the idealists sought an enduring beauty of form precisely like the "magnificent" art of Titian and Velasquez. [Figures 18 and 19] The sensuousness of the idealists was almost cold-blooded compared with that of the mid-Victorians. And yet idealist canvases aimed at delighting the mind through de-



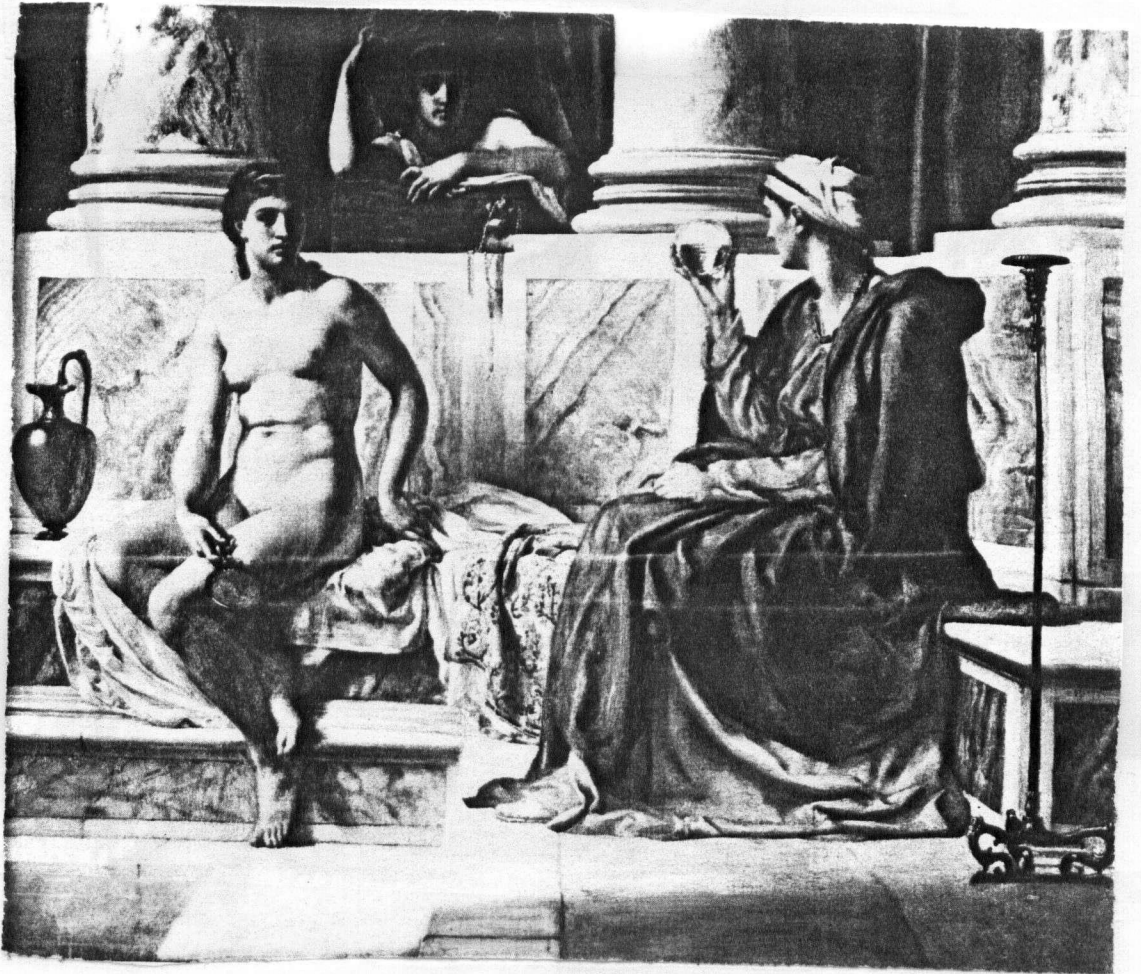


Figure 18



Figure 19

lighting the eye; they appealed directly and particularly to the senses as the true touchstones of artistic appreciation.

For the idealists the monumental form with its measured rhythms of line and color was the great style and fresco the true medium. Fresco was assuredly not a middle-class style and most of the idealists enthusiastically undertook at least one fresco—Rossetti and Burne-Jones in the Oxford Union, Leighton at Lyndhurst Church and the South Kensington Museum and G. F. Watts at Lincoln's Inn and Little Holland House.<sup>72</sup> But this revival of fresco painting posed more problems than could be successfully overcome. There were the purely technical aspects of fresco; fresco was an alien technique and artists, conditioned to the full-bodied color of oils and the transparency of water-colors, were often dissatisfied with the flat colors of fresco. Permanence of color was also a problem, as Rossetti discovered, as was composing subject matter complementary to the flat colors and form of fresco, and the large spaces which the work must occupy. Overcoming these problems required extensive experimentation above all else, but nowhere in Victorian England was there a field for such experimentation. The economics of the art world frustrated the hopes of the idealists. Fresco painting was far more expensive both in time and materials than oil or water-color, and it required a great amount of wall-space and a correspondingly large gallery. Enough light had to fall on the fresco to lighten its flat color for the work to be aesthetically successful. In subject, material and style, fresco was too cold and monumental to satisfy the cultural needs of the middle-classes who would not commission such works. And it was too permanent; though not

impossible, it was difficult and expensive to move, and there was no market for contemporary fresco as there was for oil paintings.<sup>73</sup>

There was an alternative to an art market controlled by the middle-classes and that was the establishment of government patronage. The aristocracy was no longer a significant force in the art market although they appear to have supported the few sculptors of the mid-Victorian period.<sup>74</sup> But it was conceivable to some artists that their influence in government might make government a wise and disinterested patron of the arts. The idea was old by the 1860's. Haydon had campaigned for government patronage and the scheme for decorating the Houses of Parliament was hailed as a great triumph for the arts.<sup>75</sup> Government patronage was attractive for many reasons--government had money and during the 1850's and 1860's it was doing a great deal of building. Public buildings were a natural place for fresco paintings expressing national greatness and government would certainly approve the patriotic and educative value of such art work. Yet for different reasons, in the eyes of the new artists, government proved to be as unsatisfactory a patron as the middle-classes if not more so. The government had money but it was unwilling to spend more than necessary; decoration was usually minimal. The cheapness of government frustrated architects as well as artists and there was nothing so indicative of this frustration as a comparison of the proposed plans for a building and the finished building--what grandeur beat in the heart of the small shells of Victorian buildings.<sup>76</sup> [Figures 20 and 21] By the 1860's the government's shortcomings were all too evident. Even the decoration of the Houses of Parliament embittered artists and Maclise com-

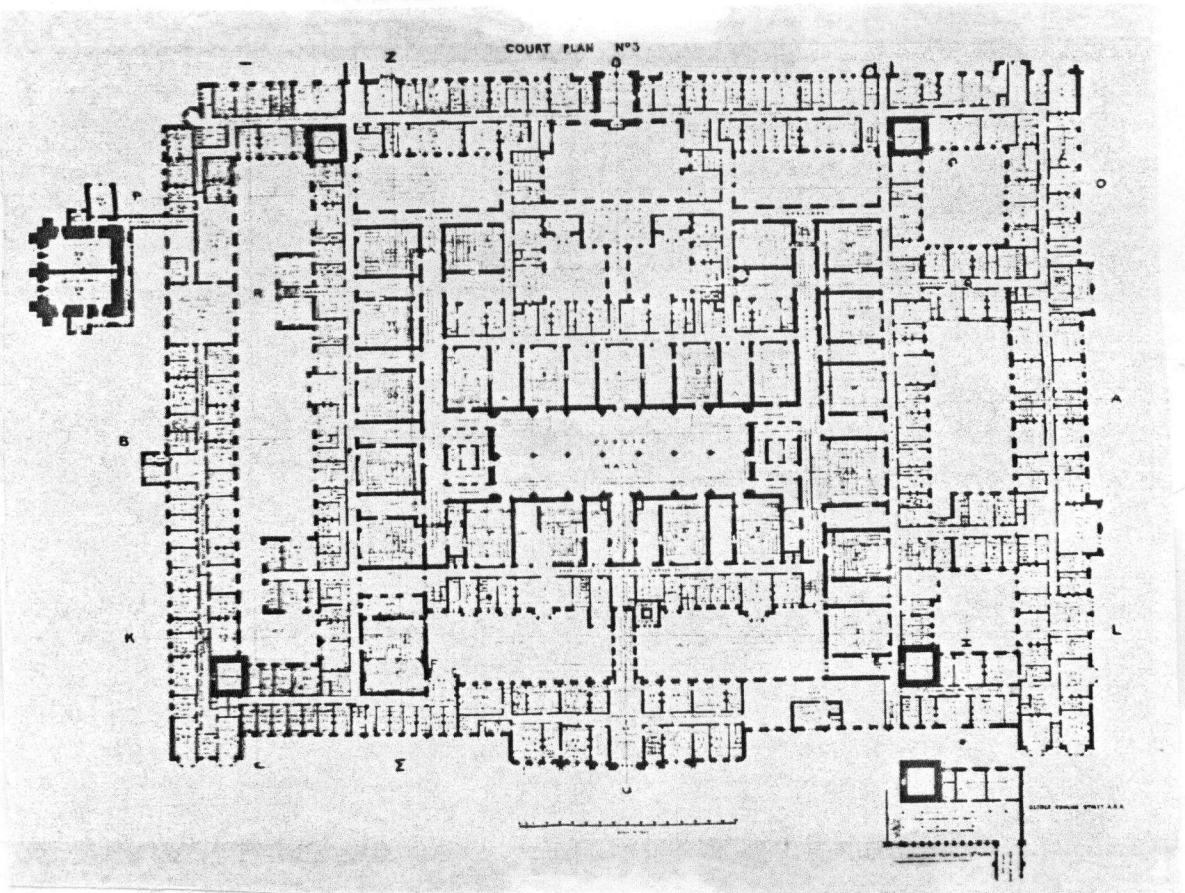
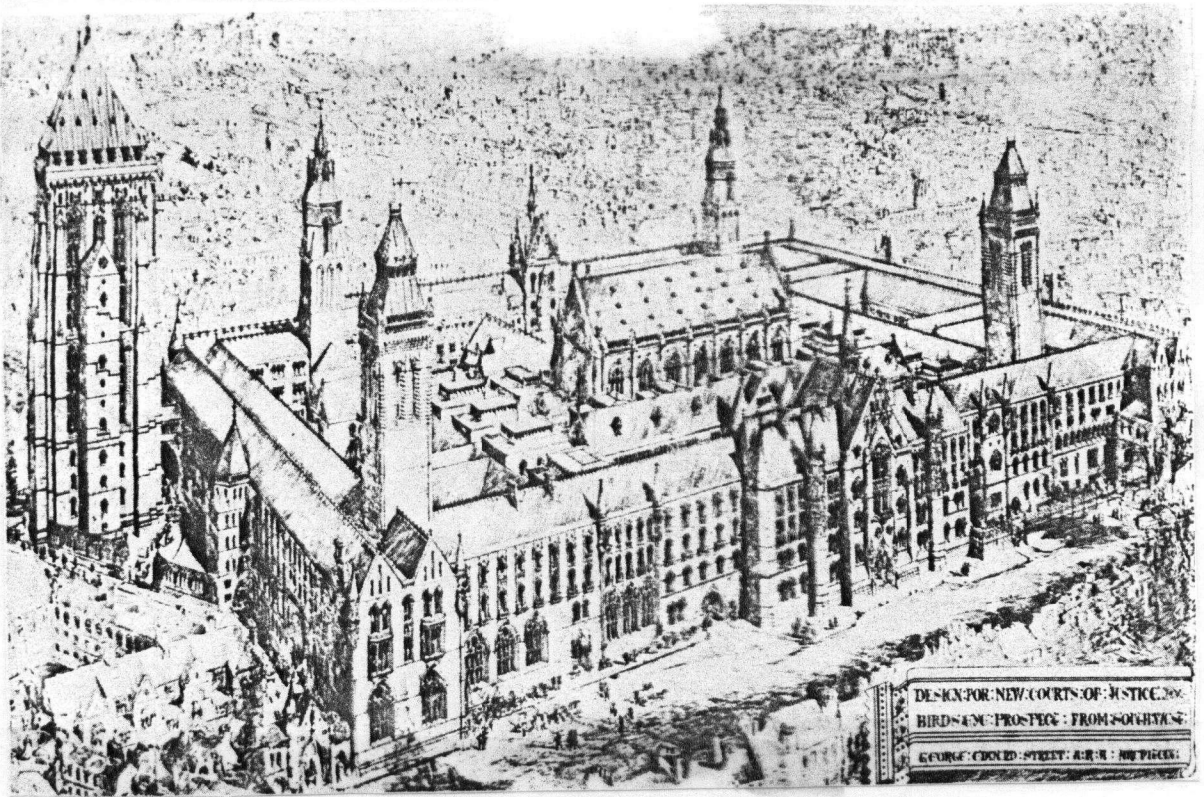


Figure 20

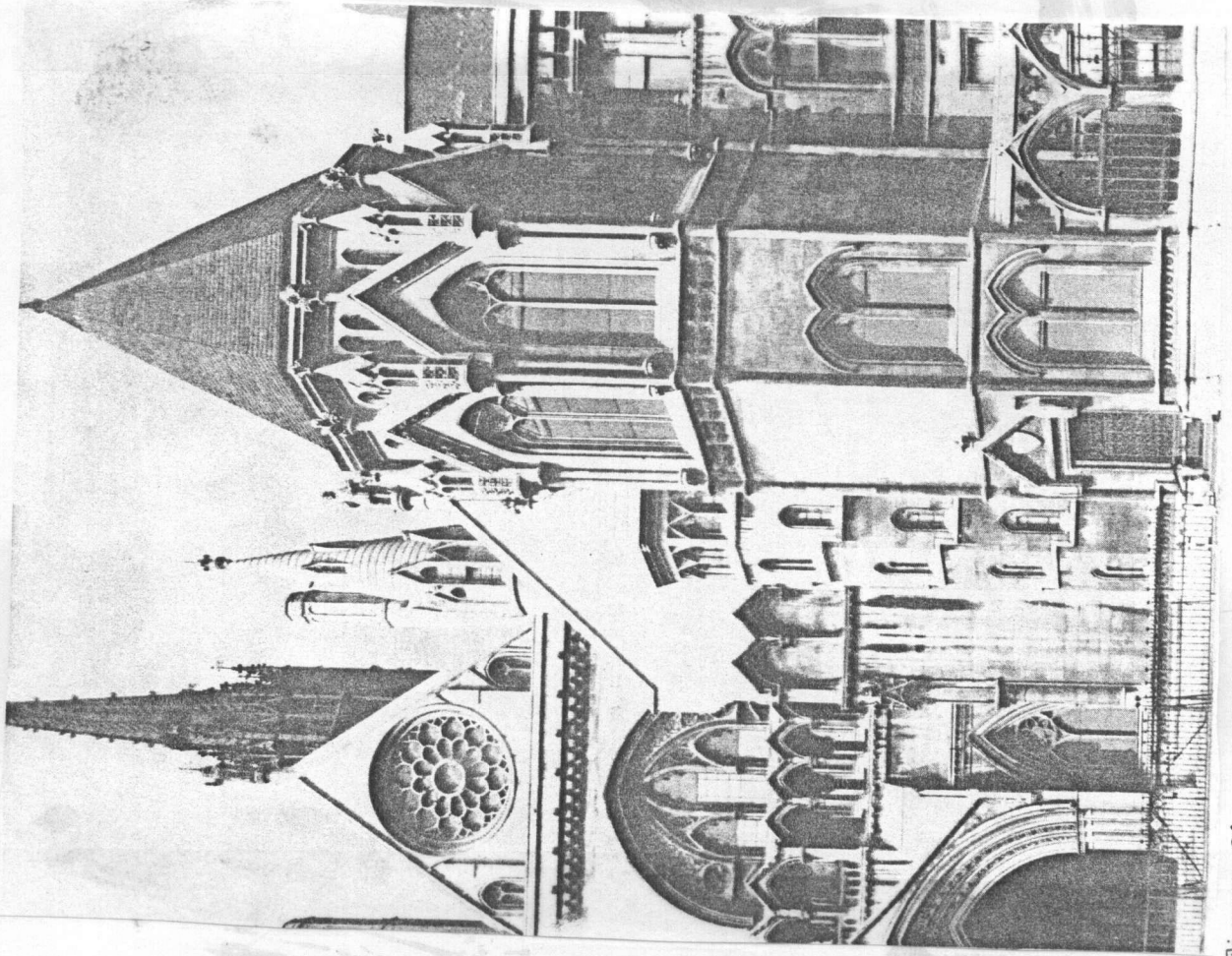
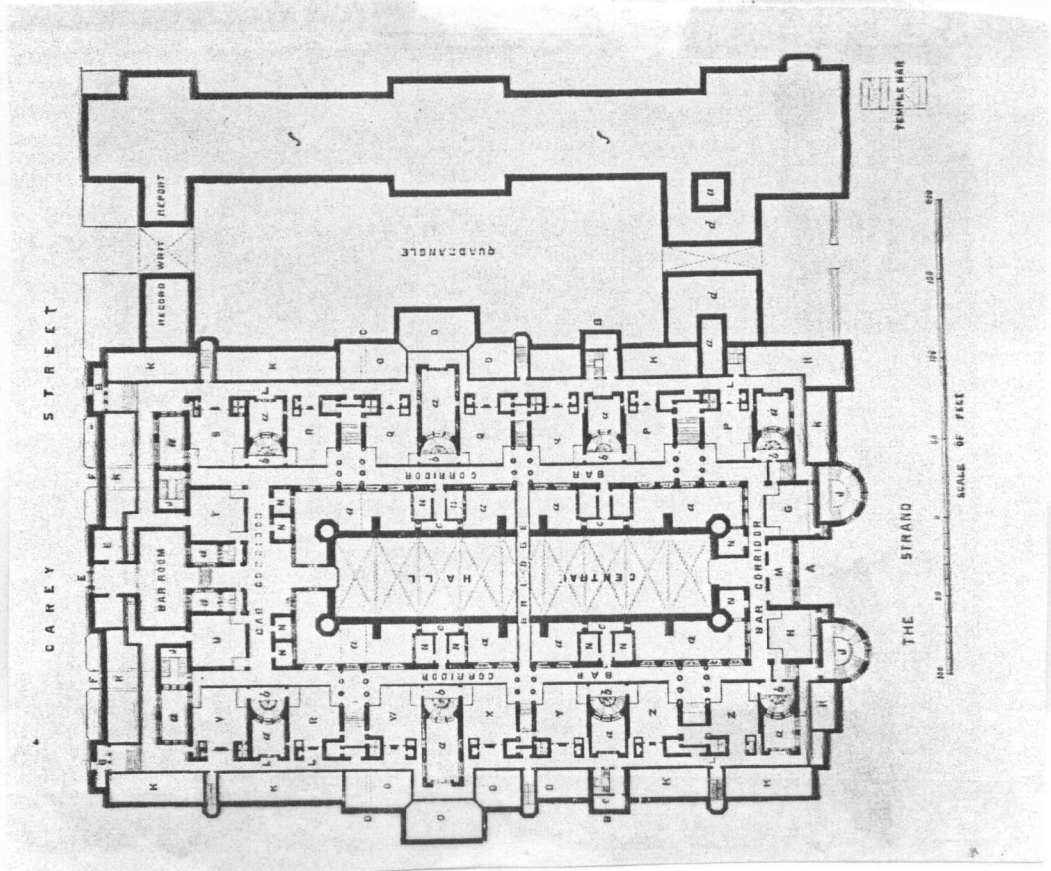


Figure 21



plained that he could not get paid for his work.<sup>77</sup>

There were alternatives to the free art market besides government patronage—the patronage of business and the Church. Both offered opportunities for fresco but the expenditures required for fresco were too great. When Watts offered to decorate Euston Station with frescoes for the costs of the materials alone, the managers of the London and North-Western Railway reluctantly refused because the cost of scaffolding alone was prohibitive.<sup>78</sup> Leighton's fresco in Lyndhurst Church was a donation. Unfortunately by the 1860's the work of good artists was generally so valuable that only oil and water-color painting were economically feasible for artist and buyer. And what was true of fresco was generally true of monumental sculpture as well. Unlike Frith or Millais who accepted and worked comfortably within the economic boundaries of the art world, the idealists had attempted, in the name of art, to expand those boundaries and found they could not do it.

By the late 1860's the rise of idealist art in Victorian England had created a new consciousness of art. W. M. Rossetti in 1867 spoke of decorative art as opposed to pictorial or strictly representational art as the highest form of art.<sup>79</sup> Critics as well as artists recognized in this new style the claims of a purely artistic manner of expression. There was an explicit acceptance of the artistic license of arrangement and selection of nature. Separate from nature and more noble, art had its own laws and truths.<sup>80</sup> In the late 1860's the word "aesthetic" began to appear more frequently in critical writings to distinguish the purely formal attributes of a work from its ethical or narrative qualities, and to denote the rules of form, color and style which excluded moral and

intellectual considerations. Walter Pater, W. M. Rossetti and several anonymous critics used the term, but not to denote a school, merely a way of looking at art.<sup>81</sup> The idea that these aesthetic qualities were more truly artistic led critics in the late 1870's to state that aesthetic excesses were more forgivable, because more true to art, than the excesses of sentimental narrative. As the Saturday Review observed:

We have no great love for the vagaries of what is called the aesthetic school, and find it difficult to understand or approve [their] enthusiasm... But the extravagances into which the cultivators of the aesthetic sometimes fall have their origin at least in an artistic feeling, in a desire for something higher than the spirit which is prepared to turn out pictures as a boot-maker turns out boots. And that there is the least tinge of true feeling for art in such productions as "The Road to Ruin" can hardly be urged with any show of reason.<sup>82</sup>

"Aesthetic" was an old word but it served the 1870's better than it had the 1850's.

There was a decided antipathy between idealists and mid-Victorian artists but they never came to an open break in the 1860's. They never really realized where the boundary lay between them. It was not so much what they had in common, but rather the ambiguity of their own positions in relationship to each other. No issue arose to illuminate their differences and the rhetoric of art with its limited categories obscured their different aims and methods. Millais, whose attitudes and style were pre-dominately mid-Victorian, was linked with the idealists through his relationship with Rossetti and because of his style, which was often as decorative as Tissot's or Moore's. Leighton, one of the foremost of the idealists, by virtue of his impeccable style and ambitions, entered the Academy and loyally defended the institution which Watts and Burne-Jones disliked. Watts himself was so thorough an indivi-



dualist-in-his art that he had few stylistic similarities with either the neo-classicists or the neo-medievalists, and although he criticized the Academy in 1863 before a Parliamentary commission, he became an Academician in 1867. Of critical importance was the ability of the Academy to bring many of the idealists into its ranks, to divide the idealists before the idealists divided the art world.

And there was common ground between idealist and mid-Victorian. Their styles both showed attention to natural detail, careful finish and a concern for interesting subjects. They both believed in the seriousness of the artistic profession, the truth of the artistic heritage of the Italian and Dutch schools, the necessity of strict training and high standards, and the duty of the artist to embody aesthetic and ethical values in his work. The idealist art consciousness arose beside that of the mid-Victorian and artists and critics who accepted idealism tended to see it as a refinement, a development of the mid-Victorian art consciousness. Idealism might have overtaken and gradually obliterated mid-Victorian attitudes, as it appeared to be doing, but this transition was interrupted and further confused by a third and radically different view of art—that of the American artist, James Whistler, who settled in England in 1860.

Whistler's artistic training was not very different from that of other Victorian artists. He drew maps for the United States Coastal Survey before he finally decided to study art. Then he went to Paris where he studied in Gleyre's atelier with Poynter, Du Maurier and Armstrong.<sup>83</sup> He met Gustave Courbet and was for awhile influenced by his realist style, but more significant for Whistler's development

than his Parisian training was his cultural heritage as an American. Whistler was a thorough individualist. To him the attempts of the mid-Victorians to relate art directly to the emotional and social life of the period was nonsense. And the idealists' attempts to restore art to its exalted place in the world was equally absurd. The social and cultural associations of Victorian art meant nothing to Whistler and he saw art and the artist as isolated phenomena. Whistler was a democrat but not one such as William Morris whose democracy reached out into the whole community of humanity; Whistler's democracy was that which cared for individual integrity, for rights and freedoms, and was drawn out of the pervasive cultural myth of the lone American. For Whistler art expressed individual genius rather than a social spirit or sentiment. When someone suggested to him late in life that the work of Millet, the French artist, suffered from the strain of marital and financial problems, Whistler disagreed:

You're wrong—an artist's work is never better, never worse, it must be always good, in the end as in the beginning, if he is an artist, if it is in him to do anything at all. He would not be influenced by the chance<sup>84</sup> of a wife or anything of that kind. He is always the artist.

Whistler was the first unabashed modern in English fine art, and his style and attitudes eventually precipitated a crisis which finally illuminated so many of the problems and contradictions of the art world.

Whistler's first exhibited works in England were At the Piano and Wapping. The first was a portrait of his step-sister and her daughter, and the second a view of the riverside. Portraiture and riverscapes were his most important English subjects and these first attempts were noticed and praised by critics who recognized in Whistler

an admirable colorist with an eye for form. Some complained of his lack of finish but Whistler had learned that finish was subordinate to color and form along with Poynter and Armstrong. He was therefore accepted as a decorative artist by W. M. Rossetti and Sidney Colvin.<sup>85</sup>

The first significant attack by an English critic of Whistler's work came in 1863 when Whistler's The White Girl was exhibited at the Salon des Refuses in Paris. [Figure 22] The Academy had rejected it the year before and when it hung in Paris, P. G. Hamerton wrote:

I watched several parties, to see the impression "The Woman in White" made on them. They all stopped instantly, struck with amazement. This for two or three seconds, then they all looked at each other and laughed. Here, for once, I happen to be quite of the popular way of thinking.<sup>86</sup>

Whistler did not forgive injuries, however, and soon struck out at the prejudice in English art which he believed blinded critics and other viewers to the very great technical merits his works demonstrated—the preoccupation with subject.

Well, you know, it was this way, when I came to London I was received graciously by the painters. Then there was this coldness and I could not understand. Artists locked themselves up in their studios—opened their doors only on the chain; if they met each other in the street they barely spoke. Models went round silent, with an air of mystery—... Then I found out the mystery: it was the moment of painting the Royal Academy picture. Each man was afraid his subject might be stolen. It was the great era of the subject. And, at last, on Varnishing Day, there was the subject in all its glory—wonderful! The British subject! Like a flash the inspiration came—the Inventor!—and in the Academy there you saw him...he sat, hands on knees, head bent, brows knit, eyes staring; in a corner angels and cogwheels, and things; close to him his wife, cold, ragged, the baby in her arms—he had failed! the story was told—it was clear as day—amazing!—the British subject!<sup>87</sup>

Yet Whistler's quarrel was not primarily with narrative art or even the "British subject." The White Girl was a perfectly good subject



Figure 22

piece-and one critic thought it an illustration of Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White.<sup>88</sup> The real quarrel between Whistler and the Victorians was over the sentimental character required of a subject work. An American critic had complained of the "souless eyes" of The White Girl.<sup>89</sup> In Victorian art it was "de rigueur" to represent the spirit as well as the body and in breaking with this convention, Whistler demonstrated his stylistic radicalism.

Portraiture was also an area where Whistler and Victorian artists disagreed. His most famous portraits, those of his mother and of Thomas Carlyle, he called Arrangements in Black and Grey. Whistler said of his mother's portrait, "To me it is interesting as a portrait of my mother but what can or ought the public to care about the identity of the portrait?"<sup>90</sup> G. F. Watts, an enthusiastic portraitist of great personalities, disagreed. "A portrait," he said, "should have something in it of the monumental; it is the summary of the life of a person, not the record of accidental position or arrangement of light and shadow."<sup>91</sup> Whistler's art was militantly "aesthetic" as he persistently rejected the pictorial primacy of character and spirit, so much so that many of his portraits were stiff and belabored. Despite these disagreements, Whistler's beauty of form and color still communicated to the Victorians and though he was often criticized for his sketchy handling and bizarre subjects, critics continued to find something beautiful in his work.

Mr. Whistler's work in his peculiar line can no longer surprise us, and if to be eccentric is one of the painter's objects, he would do well to consider the propriety of astonishing the world by painting like an ordinary mortal. At the same time we must confess we have been equally surprised and pleased by finding among Mr. Whistler's collection of curiosities one

production which, under the name of a nocturne, or an arrangement or a pizzicato, presents a sketchy view of the Thames at nightfall which is neither unnatural nor unpleasing. We may of course be wrong in our notion of what the work is intended to represent.<sup>92</sup>

The Victorians did not take Whistler seriously and although many respected his merits as an artist, few believed that Whistler's style or his attitudes towards art posed a serious challenge to the idealists, who by the mid-1870's were already the prevailing force in the art world. But Whistler had his colleagues and disciples, and though their influence was unorganized and barely visible, it tended in one direction—the destruction of sentiment in art.

The distinction between Whistler's art and mid-Victorian art was always very clear, but the position of the idealists in this matter was not. Leighton and Burne-Jones were led by their love of design to find merit in Whistler's work, and yet they still believed that great art required character as well as beauty. They seemed to stand in between. But a linear conception of their relationships cannot adequately describe them. The art world of the mid-1870's had become far too fluid. It was not only that these three major groups of artists were never organized, and thus never presented a single face to any problem; the problems themselves constantly changed forms. Art represented, in general and in all its concrete forms, ideas. The three major styles of the 1860's and 1870's expressed different ideas of beauty, of truth, of humanity. And yet the forms through which these ideas could be expressed, in literature and painting, were so limited that similar forms expressed very different ideas.

The great crisis came in the 1870's and led to that comic opera

~~which was the aesthetic movement.~~ None of the three views of art were very clear, and none of them in themselves could solve the problems which threatened the stability of the art world. Ideas were powerful enough to raise expectations, to inspire loyalties and create antipathies, and generally to make it difficult for existing circumstances to satisfy artists and art-lovers. Problems such as the social role of artists, the value of their works, the relationship between artists and their patrons, and the meaning of art and art works in the daily lives of different classes and conditions could not be resolved without settling the circumstances which directly affected these problems. The new attitudes did not alter these circumstances, nor did the existing institutions modify them. In the 1870's the idealist conception of art could no longer obscure the fact that the organization of the art world within Victorian society did not correspond to its ideals. The divergence of what was from what ought to be created a tension which affected all aspects of the art world as artists could relinquish neither the real world or the ideal. For the first time artists began to struggle bitterly among themselves and against circumstances in order to preserve their ideal of art as well as the existing social organization which made them respectable and rich. Whistler alone cared nothing for this struggle and his actions illuminated the critical state of the art world in the 1870's.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Grana, Modernity and its Discontents, xiii-xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the august forty of the Academy in whose footsteps Millais followed, there were several well-known artists in their time who lived without Academic patronage, as Rossetti did, including Benjamin Robert Haydon, John Martin and John Linnell. Linnell was finally elected A.R.A. in 1867, but he declined to accept (unlike Burne-Jones who accepted election in 1885). According to the Art Journal, VI (1867), 114, having finally achieved success without Academic patronage, he would not in his old age enter that body. For Haydon's career see Eric George, The Life and Death of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter 1786-1846 (Oxford, 1967), and for Martin see Mary L. Pendered, John Martin, Painter. His Life and Times (New York, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> Sidney C. Hutchinson, The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1968 (New York, 1968), 32. Hutchinson's is the best history of the Academy available but is too brief. Other histories include J. E. Hodgson and F. A. Eaton, The Royal Academy and its Members, 1768-1830 (London, 1905), Charles Holme, ed., The Royal Academy from Reynolds to Millais (New York, 1904), Walter Lamb, The Royal Academy (London, 1951) and G. D. Leslie, The Inner Life of the Royal Academy (London, 1914).

<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson, 43. The artists who signed were Benjamin West, Francesco Zuccarelli, Nathaniel Dance, Richard Wilson, George Michael Moser, Samuel Wale, G. Baptis. Cipriani [sic], Jeremiah Meyer, Angelica Kauffman, Charles Catton, Francesco Bartolozzi, Richard Yeo, Mary Moser, Agostino Carlini, Francis Cotes, William Chambers, Edward Penny, Joseph Wilton, George Barret, Fra. Milner Newton, Paul Sandby and Francis Hayman. Conspicuously absent is Joshua Reynolds, the first P.R.A. Because of the rivalry of another group of artists, Reynolds hesitated before he accepted election as President of the Academy. See Hutchinson, 44-6.

<sup>5</sup> The Instrument of Foundation is contained in Hutchinson, 209-13. For changes in the Council see Hutchinson, 78, 132, 145-6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 78-80.

<sup>7</sup> Millais, one of the most precocious of English artists, painted his first exhibition piece, Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru, when only 16. J. G. Millais, The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais (London, 1900), 9, illustration facing 16.

<sup>8</sup> Hutchinson, 93-112. W. P. Frith, My Autobiography and Reminiscences (London, 1889), 38. M. S. Watts, George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist's Life (New York, 1912), I, 25-6.

<sup>9</sup> There were several of these exceptions including Frederic Leighton,



Edward Burne-Jones and James Whistler, but D. G. Rossetti, Edward Poynter and Albert Moore all studied at the Academy for a period.

<sup>10</sup>Hutchinson, 132.

<sup>11</sup>For Barry, Ibid, 78-80. For Haydon, see B. R. Haydon, The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon 1768-1846, ed. Tom Taylor (New York, 1962), 2 vols.

<sup>12</sup>Hutchinson, 56.

<sup>13</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connexion with Manufactures; With Minutes of the Evidence, Appendix and Index, H.C., 1936 (568), IX, 209-343. See also Hutchinson, 93-102.

<sup>14</sup>Millais, 6.

<sup>15</sup>Frith, 21-37, and Millais, 6-7. See also Stuart Macdonald, The History and Philosophy of Art Education (London, 1970), 33.

<sup>16</sup>Geoffrey Holme, ed., The Norwich School (London, 1920).

<sup>17</sup>Barrington, Leighton, I, 191, and below, 58-9.

<sup>18</sup>Du Maurier wrote a fictional account of these student days called Trilby (New York, 1927) in which their student life was romanticized.

<sup>19</sup>Barrington, I, 295.

<sup>20</sup>G. H. Fleming, Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (London, 1967), 12-3, 100. The exhibition was free neither for viewers, who paid the customary shilling admission, nor for artists, who had to rent wall-space.

<sup>21</sup>It is true that Rossetti rarely exhibited after 1850 due to the hostile reception of his Ecce Ancilla Domini!, see W. M. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer (London, 1889), 12-5, 45-6, but he profited from his few exhibitions and the notoriety of the Pre-Raphaelites.

<sup>22</sup>Hutchinson, 85, and Hesketh Hubbard, A Hundred Years of British Painting (1851-1951) (London, 1951), 64-5.

<sup>23</sup>The press reviewed most of the major exhibitions including those at the Academy, the British Institution, the Dudley Gallery and later, the Grogsvner Gallery. Whistler's White Girl hung in the Berners Street Gallery, see Pennell, Whistler, 69-70.

<sup>24</sup>In 1830, the hanging committee accidentally rejected one of Constable's paintings as it had been reviewed with some outsiders' works. They wished to change their decision, but Constable would not allow it saying that it had properly been rejected as a daub. Hutchinson, 95.

<sup>25</sup>For a catalogue of exhibitors, their works and the year exhibited, see Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904 (London, 1905-6), 8vols. Because the Academy was founded in December 1768, the first exhibition was in the spring of 1769.

<sup>26</sup>Barrington, I, 45-6, Millais, 43, and Watts, I, 34.

<sup>27</sup>Barrington, I, 272.

<sup>28</sup>Watts, I, 32-3.

<sup>29</sup>Frith, 22.

<sup>30</sup>Macdonald, 30, 271-2, and Hubbard, 106-7.

<sup>31</sup>Macdonald, 146-8.

<sup>32</sup>Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste. The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices 1760-1960, I. (London, 1961), 143-60.

<sup>33</sup>The Portfolio, I (1870), 110.

<sup>34</sup>The Fine Arts Quarterly Review, I (1863), 6.

<sup>35</sup>For the "Clique" see Patricia Alderidge, Richard Dadd (London, 1974), 13, also, Art Journal, XXXVII (1898), 202.

<sup>36</sup>Art Journal, VI (1867), 247.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>For Ruskin's works, see John Ruskin, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903), 39 vols. The most important critical writings by Ruskin on contemporary art are contained in John Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism: Lectures on Architecture and Painting (London, 1906).

<sup>39</sup>Quentin Bell, Victorian Artists (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 28-39.

<sup>40</sup>Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism, 90, 212, 240, 281.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>42</sup>"The Picture Galleries," The Saturday Review, XLVI (1878), 791.

<sup>43</sup>Art Journal, VI (1855), 211-2.

<sup>44</sup>Exceptions were the few frescos, historical and allegorical works and some portraits which were commissioned by corporate bodies. These rarely hung in the Academy, and generally speaking, were not profitable for artists.

<sup>45</sup>Art Journal, VI (1855), 243, Fine Arts Quarterly, I (1863), 80. W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, 34-5, lamented the paucity of monumental art done in situ.

<sup>46</sup>Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism, [The Rescue] 189, [Cimabue's Madonna] 192.

<sup>47</sup>Watts, I, 43-4.

<sup>48</sup>Frith, 195-6.

<sup>49</sup>Barrington, I, 191.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, 235-49, and William Gaunt, Victorian Olympus (New York, 1952), 59.

<sup>51</sup>Art Journal, XX (1881), 27.

<sup>52</sup>W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, 94.

<sup>53</sup>Barrington, I, 109.

<sup>54</sup>Lady Burne-Jones, Memorials, I, 58-9.

<sup>55</sup>Barrington, I, 166.

<sup>56</sup>Lady Burne-Jones, I, 48.

<sup>57</sup>Barrington, I, 73.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 155-6, 191, 283. See also, Ernest Rhys, Frederic, Lord Leighton (London, 1898), 62, Lady Burne-Jones, II, 88. For Whistler's attitude towards searching out deliberate difficulties, see Weintraub, Whistler, 211.

<sup>59</sup>Rhys, 118.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 73.

<sup>61</sup>Reitlinger, The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 143-60.

<sup>62</sup>Barrington, II, 331.

<sup>63</sup>W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, 2.

<sup>64</sup>Frith, 76. Frith did not like collectors because of their unpredictable demands and tastes and their inability to assess the value of artistic work. See Frith, 94-5.

<sup>65</sup>Fine Arts Quarterly, I (1863), 15.

<sup>66</sup>Millais, 38, 55, 80.

<sup>67</sup>Frith, 173, 195.

<sup>68</sup>Millais, 51, 80-1, and Art Journal, I (1857), 170.

<sup>69</sup>Barrington, I, 66.

<sup>70</sup>A. Lys Baldry, Three Great Modern Painters. Leighton. Whistler. Burne-Jones (London, 1908), 44-8, 55-6, 67-8.

<sup>71</sup>Millais, 81.

<sup>72</sup>Hubbard, 96-8, Barrington, II, 104-8, Watts, I, 135-6, 290.

<sup>73</sup>Watts, I, 290-3.

<sup>74</sup>L. G. G. Ramsey, The Connoisseur New Guide to English Painting and Sculpture (London, 1962), 117-20, Art Journal, VI (1855), 128-30, lists the owners of the sculpture sent to the Paris International Exhibition of 1855. Compared with the owners of the paintings, there is a large number of peers who owned sculpture in 1855.

<sup>75</sup>Haydon wanted government patronage more from hatred of the Academy than from faith in government as a wise patron. See Haydon, I, 595, 620-1.

<sup>76</sup>John Summerson, Victorian Architecture. Four Studies in Evaluation (New York, 1970), 77-117.

<sup>77</sup>Art Journal, VI (1867), 28. Government patronage was discredited early and never regained favor as an alternative to the free market. See Fine Arts Quarterly, I (1863), 34.

<sup>78</sup>Watts, I, 290-3.

<sup>79</sup>W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, viii-ix.

<sup>80</sup>The Magazine of Art, I (1878), 62, Rhys, 25.

<sup>81</sup>anon., "The Present Position of Landscape Painting in England," The Cornhill Magazine, XI (March, 1865), 14, anon., "Art and Morality," The Cornhill Magazine, XXXII (July, 1875), 97. In his article on Morris' poetry in 1868, [Walter Pater], "Poems by William Morris," The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review, XXXIV (1868), 300-12, Pater did not use the word "aesthetic". In his Renaissance of 1873, he described his kind of criticism as "aesthetic" criticism and in the reprint of his Westminster Review article in his Sketches and Reviews the article was retitled "Aesthetic Poetry."

<sup>82</sup>anon., "The Picture Galleries," The Saturday Review, XLVI (1878), 561.

<sup>83</sup>Pennell, 31-53.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, 405.

<sup>85</sup>W. M. Rossetti, Some Reminiscences, I, 182, II, 317.

<sup>86</sup>Cited in Pennell, 74.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid, 58.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid, 70.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, 100

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 119.

<sup>91</sup>Cited in Jeremy Maas, Victorian Painters (London, 1969), 219.

<sup>92</sup>anon., "The Picture Galleries," The Saturday Review, XLVI (1878), 561.

The art world of the mid-1870's in England was fluid and confused, where uncertainties and anxiety plagued all but the most complacent. Artists were faced with the challenges of new styles; critics were seriously questioning their own attitudes towards modern art and the value of their criticism.<sup>1</sup> The only thing lacking for a true crisis was an incident of sufficient proportions. The insoluble problem prompting the widespread anxiety was that of settling the social role of the artist, establishing one which the artist did not despise and yet which did not disrupt the social organization. That the old social roles which artists had filled were no longer viable Whistler ably demonstrated in his relationships with his patrons and critics. But this major problem was for a long time held in abeyance by the financial success of artists and by the ability of the Royal Academy to pose as a solution. Yet this major problem spawned others which were not obscure: the relationship of artists and patrons, the role of collectors in the art market, determining the value of artistic work, separating monetary concerns from aesthetic concerns, and defining the boundaries of criticism in a world where criticism affected market value. These problems eventually triggered an incident of sufficient proportions to create a crisis, the libel action taken by Whistler against Ruskin, and also made possible the aesthetic euphoria of the late 1870's and early 1880's.

By the mid-1870's the old problems of the art market and their effects on art were becoming critical. As early as 1867 the Art Journal had condemned the disastrous effects of competition in the awarding of government commissions by open contest. Instead of artistic perfection

and fitness, "the competitors have striven for originality as a condition of success in the competition..."<sup>2</sup> In 1881 after the triumph of the new art consciousness of the idealists, the Art Journal extended this principle to picture exhibitions:

Another prolific cause of perverted aims in Art is to be found in the competition of attraction on the walls of picture galleries. The necessity of painting up to exhibition pitch, and the temptation to endeavour to outshine one's neighbour by startling contrasts or mere brilliancy of colour, have induced a meretricious showiness in modern Art...

These problems of competition involved more than the art market but the market remained the model demonstrating the perverse effects of anarchic competition. However, the art market was distinctly different from the industrial or agricultural markets in which standard commodities were interchangeable; the entire character of the art market depended on the fact that individual and unique items were traded. Individuality and uniqueness had been important to the art patron, but they were essential to the art collector.

The distinction between patron and collector is difficult to pinpoint in actual personalities; Frederick Leyland was probably more of a collector than a patron, although he was generous and encouraging to several young artists. But in general terms the distinction is evident. Patronage and collecting satisfy two different cultural and psychological needs. Patronage involves a relationship, usually intended to benefit both people, which results in the production of specific works. Collecting, a peculiarly fascinating and addictive past-time, arises from an acquisitiveness, usually directed towards what is rare—art works, stamps, china or antiques. The satisfaction

of collecting comes not from any human relationship or creative process and only indirectly from the beauty of particular pieces. It is the collection itself, especially its completeness or the rarity of the best pieces, and possession of it which satisfies. There had been collectors in England long before the 1870's. The fourth Marquess of Hertford in the first part of Victoria's reign was a good example of an art collector.<sup>4</sup> But it is probable that collecting art works became a fascination for the wealthier classes in England between 1860 and 1880. The mania for blue and white porcelain in the 1860's suggests this as does the rapidly rising prices in the picture market. In 1862 when the new copyright laws were passed, it became illegal for an artist to reproduce or copy any work of his own if he had disposed of the copyright, without the permission of the copyright holder. This was meant to protect collectors. The Pennells, in their biography of Whistler, described a man who was motivated to buy Whistler's etchings by the desire, having obtained a few of them casually, to complete his collection.<sup>5</sup> The importance of the collector in the art market was in his tendency to bid compulsively, his willingness to pay anything for a particular obsession, thus distorting value.

If problems of value, competition and excessively high prices disturbed many Victorians, they rarely fastened on the market mechanism itself as the root of the evil, rather it was the ignorance, pride and avarice of collectors. The early Victorians rarely distinguished between the artistic sense which created art and that which could merely appreciate it. Children were taught drawing not to become artists but to appreciate the beauty of art. While the distinction between the artist



and connoisseur was that the former should be blessed with genius, their training was similar—drawing, painting, studying the old masters and keeping in close touch with one's artistic contemporaries. Artists and connoisseurs spoke the same language and painting was an experience both had shared. Picture-buyers had always been primarily connoisseurs and behind the buying and selling was a recognizable concept of value which blended both into prices and judgment of artistic merit. When the collectors entered the market, many of them relinquished the responsibility of judgment to critics. And when the buyer was evidently no longer motivated by a natural and sincere love of art, his real motivations were suspect. Frith complained that buyers in the 1870's were motivated by "the notion of investment" rather than a love of art.<sup>6</sup>

Yet Frith's assessment cannot explain the character of the art market of the 1870's and 1880's adequately. Surely many buyers were driven by the desire to realize a large profit such as the man who refused to let Frith copy a painting Frith had sold him because a friend told the buyer the original would be worth less if a copy existed.<sup>7</sup> But there was more to the desire to own paintings than simply that. Yet in particular cases it is difficult to determine whether buyers were motivated by a love of a particular work, a love of art, a collecting mania, or merely the hope to realize a large profit. In the personality of Frederick Leyland, one of the wealthiest collectors of the Victorian age, the patron and collector merged, and Leyland's devotion to art in its many forms was truly magnificent. His home was decorated by some of the best designers of the period.

He bought paintings from Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Whistler and owned several old masters, including a Botticelli. Leyland's home was a lavish cocoon of art and he paid large sums for the privilege of ownership.<sup>8</sup> Yet even this merchant prince found that value and price were not the same and his relationship with Whistler during Whistler's decoration of the Peacock Room demonstrated a failure of standards of value and a failure of the patronage model. The failure was Whistler's as well as Leyland's, but the incident illustrated the changed role of the artist in English society.

Whistler desired to decorate Leyland's dining room because his painting, La Princesse du Pays de Porcelaine, hung on the wall behind the head of the table. Leyland had engaged Thomas Jeckyll to design the room using expensive yellow Spanish leather on the walls. The color of the leather and of the flowers painted on the leather clashed with the reds in Whistler's work, and, anxious that his painting be spared this offense, Whistler asked to help decorate the room.<sup>9</sup> Leyland agreed and left town, leaving his room, and his home, in Whistler's hands. Whistler took more time and spent more money than he had planned, but the room was, according to all accounts, a masterpiece of decorative art. During his work on the room, Whistler invited dozens of people to see it without consulting Leyland. When he was finished, he asked 1,000 guineas for his work. The cost of materials was tremendous, as Whistler had apparently used gold leaf with abandon. Leyland was furious and paid the artist £1,000 instead, a reference to the customary distinction between the wages of artists and tradesmen, the former paid in guineas and the latter in pounds. Whistler vented his anger by drawing cartoons

of Leyland as the rich Philistine peacock battling a poor artistic peacock and as a lobster in a frilled shirt. He also called Leyland a parvenu which outraged Mrs. Leyland who overheard and ordered him out of the house. Leyland and Whistler were irreconcilable, yet Leyland did not alter his Peacock Room in any way and when he sat down to dinner at the head of the table, he faced the peacock mural which was so like Whistler's outrageous cartoon.

Ostensibly a dispute over the price of the work, Leyland and Whistler quarreled over a more bitterly estranging issue as their letters demonstrated. Leyland wrote to Whistler:

You choose to begin an elaborate scheme of decoration without any reference to me until the work has progressed so far that I had no choice but to complete it; and it is really too absurd that you should expect me to pay the exaggerated sum your vanity dictated as its value.... There is one consideration, indeed, which should have led you to form a more modest estimate of yourself, and that is your total failure to produce any serious work for so many years.—At various times in the last eight or nine years you have received from me sums amounting to one thousand guineas for pictures, not one of which has ever been delivered....at the time so many newspaper puffs of your work appeared, I felt deeply enough the humiliation of having my name so prominently connected with that of a man who had degenerated into nothing but an artistic Barnum.

Whistler replied:

It is positively sickening to think that I should have laboured to build up that exquisite Peacock Room for such a man to live in. You speak of your public position before the World, and apparently forget that the World only knows you as the possessor of that work they have all admired and whose price you have refused to pay—...

They quarreled over the price because they had two entirely different views of the value of art and the role of the artist. Leyland could afford to give Whistler commissions which Whistler took years to

begin and never finished, as long as the artist remained in the position of client. There was no risk to Leyland, financially, socially or psychologically, in this kind of patronage. But the Peacock Room involved more money than Leyland had already given Whistler for unfinished works and Leyland was not enthusiastic about the decoration. What was worse, Whistler had been the center of the affair, inviting people to Leyland's home as if it were his own, and had made Leyland look ridiculous in the glare of publicity. This artist could no longer be patronized.

The value of art was a tremendous problem in the 1870's and not only for Leyland and Whistler. Art was a popular enthusiasm; it promised to sanctify life, to give it a noble form and purpose. Several interpretations of the aesthetic movement have emphasized its relationship to Philistinism as glaring and extreme opposites.<sup>11</sup> In the realm of manufactured art, this distinction was clearly expressed by Walter Gropius who saw aestheticism as a reaction to Philistinism.

Our object was to permeate both types of mind; to liberate the creative artist from his otherworldliness and reintegrate him into the workaday world of realities; and at the same time to broaden and humanise the rigid, almost exclusively material mind of the business man. Our governing conception of the basic unity of all design in its relation to life, which informed all our work, was therefore in diametrical opposition to that of 'art for art's sake', and the even more dangerous philosophy it sprang from: business as an end in itself.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Gropius implied a distinction which could not have been true in the 1870's—that the artist and the businessman were two distinct personalities existing in separate individuals. Leyland and men like him accumulated wealth with a ferocious energy in business and then spent it extravagantly on works of art.<sup>13</sup> Materialism and aesthe-

ticism informed the same personality. Artists, too, had their business side. The successful ones knew how to please the market, whether it was the popular one which bought engravings or a circle of particular patrons. They knew how to set prices, how much their own labor was worth to them, and although they did not turn out a masterpiece a month, they usually managed to produce "stunners" for the Academy exhibition in spring.

This contradiction existed not as opposing, but as complementary forces in the same person. Philistinism was given a psychological explanation by Thorstein Veblen in 1918:

Accountancy is the beginning of statistics, and the price concept is a type of the objective, impersonal, quantitative apprehension of things. Coincidentally, because they did not lend themselves to this facile rating, facts that will not admit of a quantitative statement and statistical handling decline in men's esteem, considered as facts, and tend in some degree to lose the cogency which belongs to empirical reality. They may even come to be discounted as being of a lower order of reality or may even be denied factual value.<sup>14</sup>

Yet this depends on the "quantitative apprehension of things" providing a satisfying view of reality. If reality had grown vaguely unpleasant, as it had in the 1860's and 1870's to many observers, then those facts which had ever eluded quantitative analysis and description appeared in a new light. They were now precious and full of promise, but they retained their unreality. Indeed their unreality became their most important quality. This element of fantasy was evident in Burne-Jones who declared, "Of course imagining doesn't end with my work: I go on always in that strange land that is more true than real."<sup>15</sup> But Burne-Jones required more than imagination in art works. He insisted on good workmanship and finish. So other

artists and art-lovers indulged in the fantastic like Watts and Leyland, but they all had a keen sense of material necessity as well. The aesthetes caricatured by George Du Maurier in Punch demonstrated how fantasy was without the counterweight of social reality. [Figures 23 and 24] Important and precious as art was, it was not to be the guiding force in life, the end and aim of all effort, as Whistler seemed to think. Aestheticism was not a rejection of Philistinism, if Philistinism meant a concern for material welfare and a utilitarian outlook. These things were so imbedded in the routine of life by 1870 that they could not be eradicated; they were never meant to be eradicated. Aestheticism was the complement of Philistinism.

Thus the attack on Philistinism which mounted dramatically in the 1870's and was marked by a fierce rhetoric, was peculiarly inefficient and restless in its aims. Competition was denounced and in 1877, with the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, a kind of non-competitive exhibition was attempted. The exhibitors were invited to submit works by the owner, Sir Coutts Lindsay, a banker. The galleries themselves were decorated with plants and beautiful furniture and the walls were covered with a red damask. Because the exhibitors were limited by invitation, they were hung on the line with reasonable intervals between them. The Grosvenor was a great success and quickly became the "other" summer exhibition, challenging the Academy's monopoly of modern art exhibitions.<sup>16</sup> This opening in 1877, however, caused conflicts between artists and critics who professed a hatred for Philistines. Watts thought the red damask a perfect ground for his paintings, and Whistler hated them.<sup>17</sup> Ruskin hated Whistler's paintings. Critics complained that the general



Figure 23



### DILETTANTISM.

TO THE TRUE CRITIC OF VOCAL MUSIC, ART IS EVERYTHING, AND VOICE IS ONLY A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION. IN FACT, HE WOULD AS SOON DISPENSE WITH THE LATTER ALTOGETHER, AS THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A BEAUTIFUL ORGAN OFTEN CONSTITUTES A MATERIAL IMPEDIMENT TO THE SUBTLER AND MORE SPIRITUAL AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF REFINED EMOTIONAL INTERPRETATION—WHATEVER ALL THAT MAY BE.

Figure 24



public went to the exhibitions because it was a social duty, "like leaving cards after dining out," not out of any love for art.<sup>18</sup>

The truth of the matter was that the Grovers had not solved the problem of competition in exhibitions; it had never been a competition. The invitation of exhibitors was hardly a solution which the Academy could use. Not even the Grovers could keep it up and by the mid-1880's, the Gallery had faded to rank with those other numberless galleries who sponsored exhibitions of modern art.<sup>19</sup>

Another attack on Philistinism was aimed at the common realism of mid-Victorian art and the Pre-Raphaelite axiom that every visible detail be transferred faithfully to canvas. The idealists tended to equate realism with mere technical dexterity and compositional mediocrity. Whistler stated this position in his "Ten O'Clock" lecture, but emphasized the unreality of the artist's vision:

...the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses become palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us—then the wayfarer hastens home; the working man and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of <sup>20</sup>pleasure, cease to understand as they have ceased to see...

The idealists' conception of beauty was based on the truth of the ideal forms in art and the rejection of realism and naturalism. But in the 1870's a new sensibility had arisen which interpreted idealism as the champion of "unnaturalism." This new sensibility delighted in the eccentric and bizarre as much as in the frigid classicism of Leighton, and some of Whistler's popularity was due to his cultivation of eccentricities. For those who believed that idealism was a truer

kind of art than the mid-Victorian, the rejection of naturalism and convention could easily lead to the cultivation of unnaturalism and unconventionalism. This new sensibility was keenly awake to images of sadness, disease and death. Burne-Jones was often criticized for his morbid style with its sad, pale figures which, of course, was particularly appealing to the new consciousness. This morbid sensibility was not the over-riding feeling in any person, not even Walter Pater, who expressed it so well in his writings. Nonetheless it was becoming a convention, a way of looking at things which touched some sense of reality's order in many people. It was an inversion of the natural order as the mid-Victorians saw it—instead of happiness, sadness; instead of blooming health, pale disease; and instead of life, death.

The morbid sensibility developed partly from the mid-Victorian critique of appearances; things were seldom as they seemed. In art, John Ruskin had eloquently argued that perfect finish was a sign of cultural degradation in mid-Victorian design. But certain conventions held true nevertheless, especially in painting where appearances had to reveal all levels of reality, and these conventions celebrated the virtues of health. When these conventions no longer convinced the viewer, mid-Victorian realism was no longer reasonable; realism no longer seemed real. The disappearance of mid-Victorian conventions, however, did not make the morbid sensibility inevitable. It was Walter Pater whose consciousness of transition, regret and death influenced the aesthetic sensibility of the 1870's. Pater had almost no direct influence over Victorian art, but his responses to aesthetic experience were so perfectly in tune with one aspect of Victorian

painting that his ideas must be related to the fine arts as well as to art theory in the 1870's.

Like so many of his contemporaries, Pater was not concerned primarily with the aesthetic qualities of art as Whistler described them. Pater's contribution to aestheticism was not the philosophy of art for art's sake, but rather a model interaction between art and the sensitive temperament of a high-strung personality. In discussing art and literature in his early essays, Pater rarely mentioned the purely aesthetic qualities of form, color, line, rhythm; they were always imbedded in a catalogue of associations, historical, literary and personal.

The poem which gives its name to the volume ["The Defence of Guenevere"] is a thing tormented with passion, like the body of Guenevere defending herself from the charge of adultery, and the accent falls in strange, unwonted places with the effect of a great cry.<sup>21</sup>

Pater's style, in its metaphors and general organization, suggests an association of ideas in which connections are based on some unconscious perception of reality, certainly an unconventional one. His imagery was unusual, even bizarre, yet haunting.

Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnabulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them, as the flame of a little taper shows through the Host.<sup>22</sup>

Pater's defense of art for art's sake, made at the end of his article on William Morris' poetry in 1868 and included in his Studies in the History of the Renaissance in 1873, can be more clearly understood as a defense of a particular meaning of art in life rather than primarily as a defense of the integrity or amorality of art. Pater's

earlier writings everywhere displayed a curious and bewildering combination of mental reverie and the images of a fearful reality, which he described as continual and meaningless change. Obsessed with the psychological effects of aesthetic experience, Pater had the scholar's tendency to feel the reality of intellectual activity as vividly as that of physical activity. Art was for Pater a means of extending experience, of actually extending life. When Pater said:

Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.<sup>23</sup>

it is important to know what qualities Pater saw in art. They were, in fact, similar to those qualities Ruskin perceived—the quality of human life of a particular cultural epoch.

The composite experience of all the ages is part of each of us; to deduct from that experience, to obliterate any part of it, to come face to face with the people of a past age, as if the middle age, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century had not been, is as impossible as to become a little child, or enter again into the womb and be born. But though it is not possible to repress a single phase of that humanity, which, because we live and move and have our being in the life of humanity, makes us what we are; it is possible to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it... Such an attitude towards Greece, aspiring to but never actually reaching its way of conceiving life, is what is possible for art.<sup>24</sup>

The great difference between Pater and Ruskin was not in their attitudes towards what was possible for art but rather in their attitudes towards experience and the significance of human life, and therefore towards the relationship between art and experience. For Ruskin life was a duty, and its meaning lay in the obligation of the living to be good and to fulfill the responsibilities imposed by a natural order of life. Art was valuable because it expressed truth

and goodness, and was therefore an education and an inspiration. For Pater life was an enigma with no clear meaning or purpose. The necessity of order which continued to guide Ruskin and Arnold after their crises of faith no longer seemed reasonable to Pater, despite his obvious anxiety about life's meaningless change, and death. Art for Pater was a kind of redemption which pushed back the isolating horizon by extending the realm of experience into a terrain where meaning was immediately and personally sensible. Art was more precious than political or charitable endeavors because aesthetic experience was purely personal and never went beyond the confines of one's own skull, as did every worldly passion, to become confused in the kaleidoscope of social experience.

Pater's effect on the Victorians of the late 1860's and 1870's was not surprising; some found him dangerous, while others accepted his work as serious and interesting. Pater's emphasis on the universal restlessness of things struck a raw nerve and several of his Oxford colleagues, including the redoubtable Dr. Jowett, recoiled painfully from it. But several scholars and critics, including John Addington Symonds and Mrs. Mark Pattison, found Pater's Renaissance a thoughtful book by a serious writer.<sup>25</sup> Pater's rejection of the necessity of order was certainly commonplace enough by the 1870's to be viewed as harmless by a large number of cultivated people. Pater's sensibility was also important because of the way his striking imagery penetrated late Victorian culture, or perhaps the converse was more true—the way in which the imagery of idealist Victorian art penetrated Pater's mind. Pater expressed better than any art critic that peculiar beauty of the

medieval idealists, Rossetti and Burne-Jones, in his discussion of William Morris' medieval poetry. Without ever actually speaking of the artists or their work, he seems to describe a Burne-Jones painting in the passage, "...people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulist, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them..."<sup>26</sup> Pater's prose discussing medievalism was the literary counterpart to Burne-Jones' and Rossetti's paintings, and in the prose, it is easy to discover the morbid sensibility, the preoccupation with disease, disorder and death. "That whole religion of the middle age was but a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses," wrote Pater, and in the following paragraph the descriptive words are "delirium", "appalling", "narcotic", "feverish", "maddening" and "a sudden bewildering sickening of life and all things."<sup>27</sup>

But where was the beauty in disorder and what was the aesthetic pleasure to be had from disease? Of course no one seriously promoted the beauty of sickness in the 1870's; that was only a caricature. But it was a caricature of a sentiment to be found in respectable places, foremost of which, in the art world, was Burne-Jones' studio. Nobody could deny that his sense of beauty rejected the robust. This sentiment was an aesthetic expression of a deep and probably unconscious discontent with the robust materialism of the period, and it afflicted the prosperous, the secure and the educated. Long after its development, a biographer of Frederic Leighton described this sentiment.

Imbued with a rare, peculiar refinement all its own, a kind of aesthetic creed sprang up in the later days of the nineteenth

century apart from the arid soil of commonplace respectability and tasteless materialism. Burne-Jones painted it...the humourists caricatured it, the Philistines denounced it as morbid and unwholesome. Leighton was tolerant and amused, but could not be very solemn over it.... Its text may be found in Melisande's reiterated refrain, "I am not happy"—though the unhappiness does not ever seem to have been of the nature of the iron which entered into the soul, but rather the shadow of sadness, adopted with the idea that such a condition betokens a more rare and tender grace than the radiance of joy can give.<sup>28</sup>

This sweet sadness was not the result of any tragic realization nor even of a heart-felt despair. It was born of the prosperity and security of the upper classes and their dim intimation that their dearest values were pregnant with meaninglessness. Experiencing the ennui of modern life yet bound to those unsatisfying forms and values by a dread of radical change, many late Victorians preferred images of ineffable misfortune to those more robust compositions of more obvious meaning because the latter no longer touched their feelings. The sweet sadness preferred to the radiance of joy was the image of a feeling, a heart-felt sense of inexpressible longing, "that inversion of homesickness known to some, that incurable thirst for the sense of escape, which no actual form of life satisfies..."<sup>29</sup> Yet no real escape was wanted, or even sought, not by Pater or Burne-Jones. The aesthetic satisfaction came from the longing itself, a psychology Pater described in his article on Morris.

For in that idolatry the idol was absent or veiled, not limited to one supreme plastic form like Zeus at Olympia or Athena in the Acropolis, but distracted, as in a fever dream, into a thousand symbols and reflections.... Hence a love define by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant, antinomian.<sup>30</sup>

So while Burne-Jones went on working in that world which was more true than real and while Pater declared the virtue of burning

always with that hard gem-like flame, late Victorian critics and art-lovers, perceiving the beauty and safety of ever unfulfilled longing, grew more and more sensitive to a new set of images. The tension built up by such longing, and the growing irritability of an art world conscious of its own contradictions, created an atmosphere which was intensely susceptible to the world of images. As Pater said, describing Morris' poetry:

A passion of which the outlets are sealed, begets a tension of nerve; in which the sensible world comes to one with a reinforced brilliance and relief—all redness is turned into blood, all water into tears.<sup>31</sup>

So to some minds were idealists turned into aesthetes and men of property into Philistines.

The intensity of feeling about "aesthetic" art was evident in the controversies which such art stirred; the attack on the "fleshly" poets, the hostility shown to Whistler, and the articles in the periodicals which disapproved of the excessive love of beauty and the acute sensitivity of the aesthete.<sup>32</sup> There were few absolutely neutral figures in regard to aestheticism, and yet in the art world itself, among the idealists and their associates, there was an amused though disapproving tolerance of it all. It may be as George Augustus Sala declared, that aestheticism was merely a figment of Du Maurier's imagination,<sup>33</sup> but the press certainly believed in its existence and had decided opinions about it. Artists could be amused because they did not take it seriously, knowing that there were more pressing and important issues in the practice of art than the chimera of art for art's sake. Art for art's sake was a myth invented by outsiders, as a journalist invents headlines,



to cover and explain events in the art world and to make them intelligible and interesting to an outside audience. Nonetheless this invention did exist and helped cause the flurry of controversy among those to whom the practice of art was not so important as the ideas which art embodied. Even the idealists were not totally exempt from this, hence their disapproval of aestheticism.

This was the state of the art world of the 1870's, and no event so clearly illuminated the fluidity and confusion of ideas, the tension, the irritated nerves of the participants and the interdependence of two extreme views of the meaning of art, as did the Whistler vs. Ruskin libel suit of 1878.<sup>34</sup> In the bizarre arena of the courtroom, certain artists and critics took the opportunity to assert principles they had at heart.<sup>35</sup> Two things were clearly shown by this confrontation—first, that the ranks of aestheticism never were or could be monolithic, and second, that the real danger to aestheticism was not Philistinism but conscientious artists who could not agree where the boundary lay between art as a profession and art as a spiritual calling. Aestheticism could not be seriously threatened by Philistinism, imbedded as the latter was in all the forms of practical life. But art had been set free, so to speak, by new social, economic and intellectual realities and had not yet settled into a recognized relationship with any aspect of life. Therefore during the trial, the witnesses attempted to define art, to place it in its proper context, as a preliminary to doing justice in the case.

The episode began in 1877 with the opening of the Groversner Gallery. Whistler had been invited to exhibit and he sent several

works, including a portrait of Henry Irving and a view of the fireworks display at Cremorne Garden entitled Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket. The critical reviews of Whistler's work combined some praise for his coloring and design with criticism of his many eccentricities in subject matter, handling and style. But John Ruskin pounced on Whistler in a notice in Fors Clavigera and railed against the Nocturne in Black and Gold, the one painting Whistler had marked for sale. [Figure 25]

For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approaches the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard much of cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.<sup>36</sup>

This was not merely an unfavorable review; it was a direct attack on Whistler's character and motives and the monetary value of his painting. It did, in fact, amount to libel as the jury in the case found.

This was not the first time Ruskin had created a purchasing drought for an artist.<sup>37</sup> A humorous verse of the period ironically declared itself in sympathy with the eccentric Whistler.

I paints and paints,  
Hears no complaints,  
And sells before I'm dry;  
Till savage Ruskin  
Sticks his tusk in  
And nobody will buy.<sup>38</sup>

The explicit attack on the financial worth of the work and the seemingly malicious characterization of the artist combined with Whistler's contempt for Ruskin's artistic principles to make Whistler sue for libel.<sup>39</sup>

Because of Ruskin's illness the case was delayed in coming to



Figure 25

court until November 1878. Both the plaintiff and the defendant had pressed artists and critics into service as witnesses. Whistler persuaded W. M. Rossetti and Albert Moore to testify for him while Ruskin, who was too ill to appear, mustered the forces of Burne-Jones, W. P. Frith and Tom Taylor, a playwright and art critic for the Times. The legal question which the jury had to decide was whether Ruskin's criticism had damaged Whistler's ability to make a living in his profession and whether that criticism was malicious. But this issue did not seem important to the witnesses as they pursued others, and the trial atmosphere was further befogged by Whistler's reputation for eccentricity and wit. Ruskin's lawyers refused to treat Whistler seriously and asked such questions as, "Why do you call Mr. Irving an Arrangement in Black?"<sup>40</sup> And the ignorance of courtroom officials and jury contributed to the amusement. One of the Nocturnes was displayed upside down, and when a Titian was produced as an example of excellent finish, a juryman complained that they had seen enough of these Whistler's.<sup>41</sup> Yet behind these exchanges, serious issues were being debated.

Whistler began his testimony, after giving his credentials of training and listing his patrons, by describing artistic merit and explaining why he entitled his works Nocturnes.

I have perhaps meant to indicate an artistic interest alone in the work, divesting the picture from any outside sort of interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. It is an arrangement of line, form and colour first, and I make use of any incident of it which shall bring about a symmetrical result. Among my works are some night pieces; and I have chosen the word Nocturne<sup>42</sup> because it generalises and simplifies the whole set of them.

This was a statement of art for art's sake as Whistler understood it—

art had no need for sentiment and works of art could not depend upon any association of literary, historical or narrative interest. But Whistler's idea of art for art's sake was a part of his belief in the integrity of the artist—artists created art and the greatness of the art work was determined by the genius of the artist, and this genius existed independently of moral or intellectual values and was not influenced by social or economic circumstances. The Ruskinian principle which irritated Whistler most was that art embodied values of truth and goodness which the artist derived from the social life around him.

Whistler's idea of the artist and his work was significant to the whole of his career. It was both the cause and result of his estrangement from the Victorian art world, and the cross-examination by Ruskin's attorney exposed the contrary attitudes.

Sir John: What is the subject of the Nocturne in Black and Gold?

Whistler: It is a night piece, and represents the fireworks at Cremorne.

Sir John: Not a view of Cremorne?

Whistler: If it were called a view of Cremorne, it would certainly bring about nothing but disappointment on the part of the beholders. [Laughter] It is an artistic arrangement. <sup>43</sup>

Whistler's ideas led him to criticize Ruskin because he was not an artist, and therefore Ruskin's criticism could not be of any value.

Sir John: You don't approve of criticism?

Whistler: I should not disapprove in any way of technical criticism by a man whose life is passed in the practice of the science which he criticizes; but for the opinion of a man whose life is not so passed, I would have as little regard as you would if he expressed an opinion on law....

Sir John: Do you think it fair that Mr. Ruskin should come to that conclusion?

Whistler: What might be fair to Mr. Ruskin I cannot answer.

But I do not think that any artist would come to that conclusion.<sup>44</sup>

Whistler's insistence on the absolute integrity of the artist led him to another revolutionary attitude towards Victorian culture. Rossetti and Burne-Jones scorned the Academy, and the public adulation which Frith's works inspired was never theirs. But all artists believed that art was a public concern, or at least a popular one, and although there were ignorant people who could not understand art, works of art, like statutes of law, reached out into public life asserting the spiritual order of things. In speaking of the new art consciousness of the 1880's, a Victorian writer analysed its foundations. "The dynamic of it all was the closeness of understanding between artist and public. Now with the start of the 1880's Victorian painting was entering upon its fullest effulgence."<sup>45</sup> Partly of necessity, the public was never of any importance to Whistler.

Whistler: All these works are impressions of my own. I make them my study. I suppose them to appeal to none but those who may understand the technical matter....

Sir John: You send them [your pictures] to the Gallery to invite the admiration of the public?

Whistler: That would be such vast absurdity on my part that I don't think I could. [Laughter]<sup>46</sup>

On the question of the value of works of art, one of the key issues in the trial, Whistler relied again on his idea of art as the creation of a peculiar genius. When he testified that he had finished The Falling Rocket in two days, Ruskin's attorney asked, "The labour of two days, then, is that for which you ask two hundred guineas?" And Whistler replied, "No. I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime."<sup>47</sup> This point gained applause, the only such outburst during the trial. Here, Whistler's imagination ran parallel to that of most Victorians.

But Whistler was more secure in his assessment of value than were his adversaries and his allies. In discussing the price of The Falling Rocket with Ruskin's attorney, Whistler's answers were simple and straightforward.

Sir John: Is two hundred guineas a pretty good price for an artist of reputation?

Whistler: Yes.

Sir John: It is what we who are not artists would call a stiffish price.

Whistler: I think it very likely it would be so. [Laughter]

Sir John: Artists do not endeavour to get the highest price for their work irrespective of value?

Whistler: That is so, and I am glad to see the principle so well established.<sup>48</sup>

Of course Whistler was not one to be shy in his own defense but part of his confidence stemmed from his satisfaction with his concept of value. Other witnesses had considerable difficulty grappling with the problem. When W. M. Rossetti, subpoenaed by Whistler's lawyers, was asked if two hundred guineas was a stiffish price for The Falling Rocket, he replied only after a long pause, and then cautiously, "I think it is the full value of the picture."<sup>49</sup> Burne-Jones, acting on Ruskin's behalf in the trial, was asked the same question, and although his reply was certain, it was hardly one which adequately addressed the problem of artistic value.

Bowen: Is the picture in your judgment worth two hundred guineas?

Burne-Jones: No, I cannot say it is, seeing how much careful work men do for much less. This is simply a sketch. The day and a half, in which Mr. Whistler says it was painted, seems a reasonable time for it.<sup>50</sup>

Burne-Jones clearly did not mean that the value of a work of art depended solely on the amount of careful labor expended on it, but even his intended meaning, that careful and diligent work was one

of several necessary qualities of an art work, failed to solve the many problems posed by valuing art works. And Burne-Jones ideas of value were different when the work under scrutiny was a Titian rather than a Whistler.

Parry: What is the value of this picture of Titian's?

Burne-Jones: That is a mere accident of the salesroom.

Parry: Is it worth one thousand guineas?

Burne-Jones: It would be worth many thousands to me! But it might have been sold for forty guineas.—<sup>51</sup>

He would not have paid the thousands of pounds, however, if he could have purchased it for forty pounds; even for Burne-Jones, there was no intrinsic value in an art work which could be figured into a cash price. Price was the market value. The "accident" of the salesroom was in fact the only objective means of assessing value and it pleased no one precisely because it was objective, because it was not directly related to any intrinsic quality, imagined or not, of paintings.

W. P. Frith, the other artist who testified for Ruskin, was emphatic in his view of the value of Whistler's work.

Bowen: Are the pictures works of art?

Frith: I should say not. The Nocturne in Black and Gold is not a serious work to me. I cannot see anything of the true representation of water and atmosphere in the painting of Battersea Bridge. There is pretty colour which pleases the eye, but there is nothing more. To my thinking, the description of moonlight is not true. The colour does not represent any more than you would get from a bit of wallpaper or silk. The picture is not worth two hundred guineas. Composition and detail are more important matters in a picture.<sup>52</sup>

If Frith's complacency seems irritatingly Philistine to the modern mind, it is only because his mid-Victorian prejudices are so obvious. Yet Burne-Jones' insistence on completion and diligent workmanship was essentially the same as Frith's, although they heartily disagreed on the



question of appropriate subject. During the trial, this preoccupation with completeness, accurate representation and good workmanship amounted to an almost farcical insistence on "finish". Finish was the technical final touch of painting—tidying up the details, smoothing rough touches and giving adequate form to all the visual components of a painting. Finish was a technique but it was also an attribute of style. Like perspective, it was an attribute which Victorian artists did not believe they could give up without taking a backward step in art. But finish was not a quality beyond debate; W. M. Rossetti criticized another art critic for his dogmatic insistence on finish in art.

We incline to think that Mr. Palgrave remains somewhat too much of a Greek when he passes to the contemplation of other cycles and developments of art; and that...he is too anxious to find in them a certain sort of finish, of which a kind of ideal or echo abides in his mind from the models of Grecian perfection, but which does not, and hardly can, assume a like shape in modern.<sup>53</sup>

Burne-Jones craved finish for a different reason than Frith, although he would have agreed that the absence of careful finish in a work was a step back from the artistic truths which the Renaissance had won. The libel suit created an uncomfortable situation for Burne-Jones, as he considered himself a friend of Whistler, and the same paragraph by Ruskin which incited Whistler to sue contained high praise for Burne-Jones' work.<sup>54</sup> But Burne-Jones was willing to put personalities aside because there was an issue far more important at stake—the idea that "good workmanship was essential to a good picture."<sup>55</sup> His testimony elaborated this belief.

Burne-Jones: I think the Nocturne in Blue and Silver is a work of art, but a very incomplete one; an admirable beginning, but that it in no sense whatever shews [sic] the finish of a complete work of art. I am led to the conclusion because while I think the picture has many good qualities—in colour, for instance, it is beautiful—it is deficient in form, and form is as essential as colour....

Bowen: Do you see any mark of labour in the pictures by Mr. Whistler that are under consideration?

Burne-Jones: Yes, there must have been great labour to produce such work, and great skill also. Mr. Whistler gave infinite promise at first, but I do not think he has fulfilled it. I think he has evaded the great difficulty of painting and has not tested his powers by carrying it out. The difficulties in painting increase daily as the work progresses, and that is the reason so many of us fail. We are none of us perfect. The danger is this, that if unfinished pictures become common, we shall arrive at a state of mere manufacture, and the art of the country will be degraded.<sup>56</sup>

Burne-Jones' belief that painting was threatened by Whistler's methods was a frightening reality to him and to many others. Designers in the manufactured arts had experienced the corrosive effects of an anarchic market-place on aesthetic standards, and in the fine arts, the comparison had been pointedly drawn between artists who painted because of an inner compulsion and artists who painted because a ready market existed for their works.<sup>57</sup> Whistler's methods were dangerous because they aped the efficiency and heartlessness of a machine. He turned out works in a day or two, he evaded the difficulties and accompanying soul-searching of art and he did it all with an eccentric, self-publicizing disregard for conventions. After the trial, a London newspaper showed no pity to the bankrupt Whistler declaring that Whistler had only to "knock off" three or four works to pull himself out of debt in less than a week.<sup>58</sup> Whistler's attitudes, as Ruskin and Burne-Jones clearly saw, were a threat to the Victorian view of art; the acceptance of Whistler's aesthetic standards meant the rejection of

mid-Victorian and idealist standards.

The crisis in the Victorian art consciousness which the Whistler vs. Ruskin suit so admirably illustrated was not the conflict of aesthete vs. Philistine or of impressionism vs. narrative art. In the art world of the late 1870's there were no longer generally valid criteria for assessing the value of art which satisfied the sense of propriety of most Victorians. The jury in the trial experienced the difficulty of grappling with value for although they found for Whistler, they only assessed a farthing's damages. Ruskin's criticism had been libelous but it had succeeded, along with the testimony of the witnesses, in destroying Whistler artistic reputation. This difficulty of deciding what art was worth was evident in market transactions and in the relationship between artist and men who bestowed commissions. Whistler was not the only artist to engage in quarrels over the value of his work, although perhaps he had more excuse for it than did artists who were within stylistic conventions. Luke Fildes, a painter trained at the South Kensington National Art School rather than the Academy, disapproved of Whistler's art and in his own work, although clearly influenced by the idealist tendency to decorative art, carried on traditions of realistic genre and elegant portraiture. Yet the problem of value lost him a friend as the following letters demonstrate.

My dear Fildes,

I enclose cheque for £30, I agree with you it is a large price for the drawing. It must be agreeable to you to be able to earn money so easily.

Faithfully yours,  
Edmund Yates

Fildes' reply to this has not been preserved but Yates' second letter clearly suggests it contained a reproach.

My dear Fildes,

You have not read my note in the spirit in which it was written. Nothing could be further from my intention that to suggest anything dishonourable in your conduct for charging me £30 for the frontispiece of Time. You yourself in your note forwarding the charge expressed the opinion that I should probably "think it is a good deal of money fro the work," and in my reply I merely agreed with you. I should have said nothing more on the subject, but since you have reopened it I may tell you that my principle feeling at the charge was surprise. Surprise that you should have treated me, an intimate friend, on the same terms that you treated Mr. Agnew, Mr. Smith the publisher, or the proprietors of illustrated newspapers.

I can only illustrate my meaning by saying that if I had been in the Tom Taylor line and you had asked me to write a few pages descriptive, say, of the "Casuals" or "The Return of the Penitent", I should not have dreamed of taking any money from you for my work. Of course, I did not expect you to draw my frontispiece gratis, but I thought, with the relations between us, that the price was high.

Faithfully yours,  
Edmund Yates

My dear Yates,

The mere agreement with me that the charge for the drawing appeared high would certainly not be sufficient to annoy me. It was the additional sentence that "It must be very agreeable to you to make money so easily", with abundant suggestiveness, that induced me to read your note in a different spirit than it was written.

It forced me to, what you call, "re-open" the subject. But in assuring me that you had no intention of imputing anything dishonourable to me yet, in your second letter, take away with one hand what you give the other.... I think it due to me to say that I receive for every drawing I am now doing for the Graphic £20 from a buyer apart from the high price I receive from the Graphic.... In sending you the original drawing of "The Embankment"—the first I have given to the proprietor of a paper or publisher—I sent you what I could have got £30 at least for; I trust some day you will get £40 or £50 for it. Drawings of that size of mine have sold by auction for £44 some years ago. 59

This exchange is remarkable not only for its substance but also for the suppressed bitterness of emotion which is everywhere evident.

Fildes in fact was so angered by Yates' second letter that he tore it to shreds. Certainly the relations between artists and picture buyers had not always been amicable, but in the late 1870's, their disputes over value betrayed the importance of that question and the confusion as to what determined value. How much, if anything, did friendship count in a transaction? How did an artist determine a fair price for a particular work, especially for a work which like Fildes' drawing earned two separate incomes? The copyright laws of 1862 made this question relevant to every painter. How much did the copyright add, if anything, to the market price of a painting? If the artist retained the copyright in a sale, was the painting worth less? Considering the great profits to be made from the sale of engravings, the copyright could be valuable but artists generally retained copyrights, when they did, in order to be free to make copies of the work, not to profit from the sale of engravings.

The changing criteria of value affected the relationship between artist and buyer in another way. The institution of the Royal Academy, the practice of public exhibition, the invasion of the art world by middle-class buyers and the inflation of picture prices had greatly altered the relationship of patronage. But an echo of the relationship still existed in the form of commissions given to artists by wealthy buyers for specific pictures, usually portraits. The attitudes of artists and buyers towards commissions demonstrated the new stature of the artist in society. Whistler was merciless to people sitting for portraits and yet his clients, even Thomas Carlyle, struggled to endure it.<sup>60</sup> The desire in late Victorian portraiture to "drag a

man's identity onto canvas" meant that the artist no longer flattered as a matter of course.<sup>61</sup> Victorian portraits now readily available to view are generally flattering to their subjects, showing them as lovely and noble specimens, but not because the artist felt it necessary in order to secure commissions. On the contrary, many portraits were painted because the artist had a regard for the subject and felt him to be a good subject. Watts' portrait work was almost all done at his request because he admired his subjects and other important artists were free to capture on canvas only those personalities they wished to paint. Artists were no longer supplicants to the wealthy and the best artists were of a social standing equal to that of their buyers. By the 1870's artists were already receiving the homage of the great and Frederick Leyland, who had commissioned works from D. G. Rossetti and Whistler, waited patiently for years for the completion of these commissions.<sup>62</sup> The apotheosis of the artist had begun and was based on the conviction that was a tremendously valuable and unique part of life.

The flux of ideas and values in the art world of the 1870's and early 1880's created a peculiar sense of the importance of art. Among the cultivated upper classes, art was becoming an everyday necessity which, if it could not be had from paintings, was present in wallpapers, porcelain and even greeting cards.<sup>63</sup> The evidence of dozens of contemporaries bears witness to the enthusiasm for art in its many forms during the period. Most of them believed the enthusiasm was a blessing for English cultural life.<sup>64</sup> For E. B. Bax, a journalist and socialist, the new world of the 1880's embraced not only the arts but all the

The social strata affected by intellectual interests showed an enormous advance in the later [1880's] as compared with the earlier period [1860's]. Middle-class households, where in the sixties anti-macassars, wax-flowers, on the walls religious texts worked in Berlin wool, sentimental drawing-room songs, cheap dance music or transcription of banal Italian airs lying on a chair beside the piano, religious books alternating with cheap novels in the bookcase, Martin Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy", and, as the nearest approach to actual literature, Longfellow's poems, on the drawing-room table—domestic establishments such as these gradually disappeared in the interval between the periods. The generation which came to its own in the eighties had acquired truer instincts and higher interests in art, literature, music, and the deeper problems of life, individual and social, <sup>65</sup> than its predecessors of the early- and mid-Victorian period.

It is perhaps natural that another witness, the son of an artist, should fasten upon art as the most profound expression of the change between mid-Victorian life and life in the 1880's. L. V. Fildes pointed to the late 1860's as the beginning of the artistic awakening of the 1870's.

Rather more than a hundred years ago a movement of Idealism swept over this country and hardly was any class of the community untouched by it. On its artistic side the movement has been associated with the Pre-Raphaelites, but it went wider than that. Pre-Raphaelites, Classicists, Medievalists, Aestheticists, Social-Realists, portrait-painters, landscape painters were all of them finding patrons in the new class of rich industrialists and merchants whose imagination the movement had caught. Nor did the movement stop at wealthy patrons.... The dynamic of it all was the closeness of understanding between artist and public. Now, with the start of the 1880's Victorian painting was entering upon its fullest effulgence. Even to a very small child like myself the world of the 1880's seemed full of brilliance. <sup>66</sup>

To a more mature observer, the art world of the late 1870's and early 1880's was a scene of rebirth and revelation. Art critic and journalist, Harry Quilter, wrote in the Art Journal in 1881:

And now all seems as if it were on the eve of change—old creeds will endure no longer. Art has attacked our lines with a fierceness only to be accounted for by the length of time in which it

has been kept in subjection; a dammed-up river, it has burst its dykes and is sweeping over the land. No wonder that straws and rubbish of all kinds float easily upon the great waters... All this is irritating enough to some of us, and we read greedily Mr. Du Maurier's satires, and listen to Mr. Gilbert's plays; but, after all, it's not the essence of the matter. The English public—at least if we may judge from London—are beginning to have a desire for beauty in their surroundings such as they have never before shown signs of; they want Art with a blind<sup>67</sup> longing, which would be comical were it not almost pathetic.

In his "Ten O'Clock" lecture, Whistler placed the blame for this new age on the "aesthete" and his meddling with matters both social and artistic.<sup>68</sup>

Each of these witnesses proclaimed the attempts made by a larger class of people than had ever attempted before, to realize within their own lives the pleasures of culture. They all discerned a rising interest in art in the 1870's, yet the precise character of this revival bewildered them all. Those who made of this artistic revival the "aesthetic movement" did an injustice to the complexity of cultural relationships of the period. As these witnesses show, the concern for art was wider and more varied than the boundaries of an "aesthetic movement" allowed.

Because of the changing circumstances in the cultural life of the 1870's, and the problems and confusion which they created, art became a preoccupation with many cultivated men and women. The search for a clear standard of value for art works apart from market price disrupted relations between artists and buyers and was a part of the intellectual and cultural education of many individuals. Amid the confusing and conflicting claims made on individuals by the realities and ideals of the period, few approaches to the problem could provide



lasting satisfaction. The relativism which recognized the various excellences of many styles, and acknowledged that value was ultimately a personal and relative judgment was never very convincing, although critics in the 1880's had begun to rely on it. Historicism ran too deep and as L. V. Fildes acutely grasped, the cultural life of the 1870's and 1880's was based on many mid-Victorian traditions.<sup>69</sup> Above all else, the commitment to the idea that art was organically and intimately linked to the social and political life of a nation was only with difficulty abandoned. Even Oscar Wilde, the self-conscious aesthete, wrote Ruskinian criticism in the late 1870's and consciously abandoned Ruskin's principles only in 1881.<sup>70</sup> Relativism in art criticism seemed new in the 1870's and 1880's but an examination of the critics who were relativists suggests that they did nothing more than extend the mid-Victorian principle of individualism in art. W. M. Rossetti, who perceived and defended the beauty of Whistler's art as well as the art of Alphonse Legros and Burne-Jones, admired originality and individualism in painting but clearly was loyal to certain standards of draughtsmanship and design. Although he admired Whistler's good qualities, he did not think Whistler's work better than the more finished, complete art of Rossetti or Burne-Jones. The many new and different styles in the 1870's made the admiration of individualism a significant factor in criticism. But it was individualism, not a relativism recognizing no absolute standards and threatening the destruction of the ideas which made Victorian cultural life meaningful.

This ambiguous relativism was intellectually irritating to many Victorians and was the object of satire and ridicule for others. These

-dissenters created aestheticism out of the ideas which seemed to them dangerous or absurd. The aesthetic movement was, in its beginning, a fiction. Certainly none of major figures of the movement before Oscar Wilde felt comfortable associated with aestheticism and most of them publicly condemned the movement at some time.<sup>71</sup> The character of the early aesthetic movement was publicized by satirists and critics of aestheticism, not its protagonists.

The most pervasive aesthetic doctrine criticized by satirists was the idea that the artist, endowed with genius, created art and that this function was completely independent of any material circumstances. Whistler was the major propagandist for this idea. It had similarities to the widespread belief in the importance of individualism in art, but while Whistler believed the artist was above circumstances by virtue of being an artist, the Victorians believed an artist must strive to conquer circumstances and to assert his own style for the sake of art. Both recognized that genius was unteachable but most Victorian artists were painfully aware of the pitfalls and accidents which might forever derail genius.<sup>72</sup> They believed that unrelenting labor was necessary for artistic development and it was a moral obligation to struggle against the ever increasing difficulties of painting towards the perfect artistic creation. For Whistler, hard work was necessary to master technique in order to facilitate and perfect expression, but he never deliberately attempted a thing because it was difficult. Like relativism in art criticism, the concept of the independent genius was easily ridiculed, but it was never meant to undermine Victorian professional and aesthetic standards for artists.

[Figures 26 and 27] Rather, these ambiguous concepts allowed artists and critics more freedom in developing an idea of the proper relationship between the artist and his society.

The greatest attraction of these two aesthetic doctrines was their promise to reconcile commercialism and industrialism with art. These, in the guise of Philistinism, had ever been the enemies of Victorian art. As the antithesis of art and industry led Ruskin from art criticism to social criticism, so it led every art-lover to confront the contradictory values of these two departments of life. But if Victorians recognized the conflict and strove to resolve it, the unconscious motors and gears of Victorian society frustrated all programmatic solutions. The art world rested on the material wealth and well-being of Victorian society and thus the aesthete's contempt for the Philistine was analogous to the religious anchorite's contempt for his imprisoning body. The aesthetic solution to this dilemma was to separate art and commerce, to cut the ties of the assumed relationship which bound them together. Whistler's declaration of the independence of the artist in his "Ten O'Clock" lecture was one statement of this solution.

Why this lifting of the brow in deprecation of the present—this pathos in reference to the past?

If Art be rare today, it was seldom heretofore.

It is false this teaching of decay.

The master stands in no relation to the moment at which he occurs—a monument of isolation—hinting at sadness—having no part in the progress of his fellow-men....

False again, the fabled link between the grandeur of Art and the glories and virtues of the State, for Art feeds not upon nations, and peoples may be wiped from the face of the earth, but Art is.

It is indeed high time that we cast aside the weary weight of



### MODERN AESTHETICS.

(Ineffable Youth goes into ecstasies over an extremely Old Master—say, FRÀ PORCINELLO BABARAGIANNÒ, A.D. 1266—1231?)

*Matter-of-Fact Party.* "BUT IT'S SUCH A REPULSIVE SUBJECT!"

*Ineffable Youth.* "'SUBJECT' IN ART IS OF NO MOMENT! THE PICKTCHAH IS BEAUTIFUL!"

*Matter-of-Fact Party.* "BUT YOU'LL OWN THE DRAWING'S VILE, AND THE COLOUR'S BEASTLY!"

*Ineffable Youth.* "I'M CULLAH-BLIND, AND DON'T P'CESS TO UNDERSTAND D'AWING! THE PICKTCHAH IS BEAUTIFUL!"

*Matter-of-Fact Party (getting warm).* "BUT IT'S ALL OUT OF PERSPECTIVE, HANG IT! AND SO ABOMINABLY UNTRUE TO NATURE!"

*Ineffable Youth.* "I DON'T CARE ABOUT NAYTCHAH, AND HATE PERSPECTIVE! THE PICKTCHAH IS MOST BEAUTIFUL!"

*Matter-of-Fact Party (losing all self-control).* "BUT, DASH IT ALL, MAN! WHERE THE DICKENS IS THE BEAUTY, THEN?"

*Ineffable Youth (quietly).* "IN THE PICKTCHAH!"

[Total defeat of Matter-of-Fact Party.]

Figure 26



### ÆSTHETIC PRIDE.

*Fond Mother.* "YOU LIVE TOO MUCH ALONE, ALGERNON!"

*Young Genius (Poet, Painter, Sculptor, .&c.).* "'TIS BETTER SO, MOTHER! BESIDES I ONLY CARE FOR THE SOCIETY OF MY *EQUALS*, AND—A—SUCH BEING THE CASE—A—MY CIRCLE IS NECESSARILY RATHER LIMITED."

*Fond Mother.* "BUT SURELY THE SOCIETY OF YOUR SUPERIORS——"

*Young Genius.* "MY WHAT, MOTHER? MY *SUPERIORS!* WHERE ARE THEY!!!"

Figure 27

of responsibility and co-partnership, and know that, in no way, do our virtues minister to its worth, in no way do our vices impede its triumph!

How irksome! how hopeless! how superhuman the self-imposed task of the nation! How sublimely vain the belief that it shall live nobly or art perish....

Therefore have we cause to be merry!—and to cast away all care—resolved that all is well—as it ever was—and that it is not meet that we should be cried at, and urged to take measures.<sup>13</sup>

Whistler also suggested in his lecture that the artist could be immoral and still a great artist. Immorality was impossible in the mid-Victorian and idealist views of art, but the image of the independence of art and national life had advantages and seemed to conform to the evidence of observation and experience. In the 1870's the rise of domestic art made the separation between art and commerce more apparent and intelligible. Both spheres of life had claims on a man's time and energies, and if the business world pressed more urgently and necessarily on a man's time, art offered compensations which no other form of life could. But this attractive solution had its critics as well who struck it at its weakest point—the separation of art and commerce was a deliberate deception and could never be realized in England. In The New Republic, W. H. Mallock made this point when Mr. Rose, the caricature of Walter Pater, described the perfect city.

"You seem to have forgotten trade and business altogether," said Dr. Jenkinson. "I think, however rich you intend to be, you will find that they are necessary."

"Yes, Mr. Rose, you're not going to deprive us of all our shops, I hope?" said Lady Ambrose.

"Because, you know," said Mrs. Sinclair, with a soft maliciousness, "we can't go without dresses altogether, Mr. Rose. And if I were there," she continued plaintively, "I should want a bookseller to publish the scraps of verse—poetry, as I am pleased to call it—that I am always writing."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Rose, a little annoyed, "we shall have all that somewhere, of course; but it will be out of the way, in

a sort of Piraeus, where the necessary *καπήλοι* --"

"A sort of what?" said Lady Ambrose.

"Mr. Rose merely means," said Donald Gordon, "that there must be good folding-doors between the offices and the house of life; and that the servants are not to be seen walking about in the pleasure-grounds."<sup>14</sup>

Mallock believed that life was a unity; a man could not change his values as he changed the topic of conversation. But he was mistaken in attacking the separation of art and commerce as if it were a program, which it was never meant to be. The separation of these worlds, like the ambiguities of relativism and artistic genius, were fictions maintained in order to resolve the tension of contradictions which could not be solved.

The aesthetic movement could be defined, as Harry Quilter suggested, as the most extreme edge of the new art consciousness which was developing under the influence of the idealists, Whistler, Pater and the pressures of changing circumstances in the art world. This extremism was never meant to form the basis of any programmatic change in the art world. Rather, it served to illuminate the new perspectives on art which the new art consciousness opened up. Since the 1860's Victorian art had been moving from the synthesis of a peculiar actualism in representation and sentimentalism in subject to a new conception of ideal form. The breakdown of the standards, the stylistic forms and personal relationships which had supported the mid-Victorian art world precipitated a prolonged crisis during the 1870's which allowed certain events, attitudes and styles to seem suddenly very promising or very dangerous in so far as they offered solutions to problems. But the aesthetic movement had another cultural role; it was the first

major and self-conscious rejection of mid-Victorian cultural values. Only a later generation turned on the mid-Victorians and attacked their aesthetic standards as ridiculous and fraudulent, but this was foreshadowed in the kind of criticism leveled against Frith's work in the 1870's.<sup>75</sup> Now that it is fashionable to discern the aesthetic merits of mid-Victorian art, there is a danger in losing sight of the meaning of the revulsion against mid-Victorian art which began in the 1870's. As the Victorians themselves pointed out, and as we are now beginning to recognize, Victorian design was the product of a cultural milieu which was no longer vital in 1880. From one point of view it may be said that the material realities of the Victorian period betrayed the spiritual powers and aspirations of its artists. But this relationship could as truly be stated in its converse—the artists betrayed their times and themselves by pursuing a vision of art in society which was not, and could never be realized. A later generation discovered the failure of the idealists, as the idealists had discovered the failure of the mid-Victorians. But the aesthetic movement was not just the extreme edge of a rising art consciousness; it was also a part of the much greater cultural changes which divided the mid-Victorian from the late Victorian world.



## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>P[hilip] G[ilbert] H[amerton], "Art Criticism," The Cornhill Magazine, VIII (1863), 334-343. W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, 324-34.
- <sup>2</sup>Art Journal, VI (1867), 59.
- <sup>3</sup>Art Journal, XX (1881), 14.
- <sup>4</sup>Frank Davis, Victorian Patrons of the Arts (London, 1963), 40-6.
- <sup>5</sup>Pennell, Whistler, 108.
- <sup>6</sup>Frith, Autobiography, 76, and below, 69.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid, 149-50.
- <sup>8</sup>Child, Art and Criticism, 312-51.
- <sup>9</sup>The decoration of the Peacock Room is described in Peter Ferriday, "Peacock Room;" The Architectural Review, CXXV (June, 1959), 407-14. The incident is also described by Weintraub, Whistler, 169-81, and Pennell, 147-52.
- <sup>10</sup>Ferriday, "Peacock Room," 413.
- <sup>11</sup>William Gaunt, The Aesthetic Adventure (Harmondsworth, 1957), 257-9. Walter Hamilton, The Aesthetic Movement in England (London, 1882), vii.
- <sup>12</sup>Cited in Herbert Read, Art and Industry (London, 1966), 63.
- <sup>13</sup>Rossetti, Some Reminiscences, 340-1.
- <sup>14</sup>Thorstein Veblen, The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts (New York, 1918), 245.
- <sup>15</sup>Lady Burne-Jones, Memorials, I, 116.
- <sup>16</sup>The Magazine of Art, I (1878), 50, 90.
- <sup>17</sup>Watts, Watts, I, 325, Pennell, 154. According to Watts, Ruskin also hated the red damask ground.
- <sup>18</sup>The Magazine of Art, I (1878), 90.
- <sup>19</sup>Hubbard, British Art, 184-5.
- <sup>20</sup>James Whistler, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (London, 1953), 144.

<sup>21</sup>[Walter Pater], "Poems by William Morris," Westminster Review (1868), 301.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 302.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 312.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 307.

<sup>25</sup>For Jowett's reaction, see Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater (London, 1907), I, 255-6; for Symonds reaction, see J. A. Symonds, "Art and Archeology," The Academy, IV (March, 1873), 103-5; and for Mrs. Mark Pattison reactions, see Wright, I, 253-4. Mrs. Pattison was a scholar of the French Renaissance and was critical of Pater's method because he called his work a history, when in fact it was literary and art criticism.

<sup>26</sup>See above, 107.

<sup>27</sup>[Pater], "Poems by Morris," 302-3.

<sup>28</sup>Barrington, Leighton, II, 25.

<sup>29</sup>Walter Pater, Sketches and Reviews (London, 1919),

<sup>30</sup>[Pater], "Poems by Morris," 302.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 303.

<sup>32</sup>e.g., see Hamilton, vi; "Prigs and Philistines," The Saturday Review, XLVI (1878), 555-6; and "Brownrigg on the Beautiful," Punch, or the London Charivari, LII (February, 1877), 84.

<sup>33</sup>Hamilton, vii.

<sup>34</sup>The story of the trial is told by Whistler in his Gentle Art, 2-18; Pennell, 166-81; and Weintraub, 194-216.

<sup>35</sup>The one major witness who was unable to appear, Ruskin himself, eagerly looked forward to the trial because he wished to use the courtroom as a forum for some principles of art economy. (See Lady Burne-Jones, Memorials, II, 86.

<sup>36</sup>Cited in Pennell, 169-70.

<sup>37</sup>Maas, Victorian Painters, 134, claims that the "Pre-Raphaelite" artist, W. Windus, ceased his painting career after a series of shocks which included the death of his wife and a severe criticism of his work by Ruskin. W. M. Rossetti, however, in his Reminiscences, I, 134, claims

that Windus left the art profession for a "reason which would do him honour," without specifying that reason. Presumably, Windus might have retired to spare the world bad paintings, but it does not seem likely. However, Ruskin's criticism certainly affected Windus and helped dry up the market for Whistler's works.

<sup>38</sup>Cited in Hutchinson, Royal Academy, 131.

<sup>39</sup>Pennell, 164, and Wientraub, 196-8, cite financial problems as well, a result of the building of the White House and the buying drought.

<sup>40</sup>Weintraub, 202.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 211.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 201.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 202.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 203, 204.

<sup>45</sup>L. V. Fildes, Luke Fildes, R.A. A Victorian Painter (London, 1968), 59.

<sup>46</sup>Weintraub, 202, 203.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, 203.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 202.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 206.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, 210-1.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 212.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 212-3.

<sup>53</sup>W. M. Rossetti, Fine Art, 332.

<sup>54</sup>Lady Burne-Jones, II, 87.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Weintraub, 210-1.

<sup>57</sup>See below, 80.

<sup>58</sup>Weintraub, 222-3.

<sup>59</sup>Fildes, 61-3.

<sup>60</sup>Weintraub, 146-68.

<sup>61</sup>Frank Holl, a Social-Realist turned fashionable portraitist, cited in Maas, 223.

<sup>62</sup>Ferriday, "Peacock Room," 409-10.

<sup>63</sup>Art Journal, VI (1867), 115, reported on valentines which "are indeed beautiful Art-works, that might find places in refined collections."

<sup>64</sup>Besides those quoted below, see Whistler, Gentle Art, 151-2; Charles L. Eastlake, Hints on Household Taste (London, 1878), v-vi; and W. Graham Robertson, Time Was (London, 1931), 34-6.

<sup>65</sup>E. Belfort Bax, Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian (New York, 1920), 71.

<sup>66</sup>Fildes, 59.

<sup>67</sup>Art Journal, XX (1881), 280.

<sup>68</sup>Whistler, Gentle Art, 152-3.

<sup>69</sup>Fildes, 59, and below, 127.

<sup>70</sup>Wilde, Works, I, 31.

<sup>71</sup>One of the problems that the major figures of the movement had was in being convincing in their denial of their own "aestheticism." Whistler was most emphatic in his "Ten O'Clock Lecture," Gentle Art, 152-5. Burne-Jones, however, did not like public speaking and it was with reluctance that he appeared for Ruskin in court in 1878. It was there that he made his strongest statement against aestheticism in art, Lady Burne-Jones, II, 86-9. Pater's denial of his connection with the movement was consistent, but almost completely ignored by his contemporaries, see his note to the "Conclusion" of the 1888 edition of the Renaissance.

This brief 'Conclusion' was omitted in the second edition of this book [1878], as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall.

Pater, in a review of Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray in 1891, denied the validity of amoral appreciation of beauty and experience in his view of life, see Wright, II, 159. For a summary of Pater and those whose misinterpreted Pater's ideology, see John Pick, "Divergent Disciples of Walter Pater," Thought: Fordham University Quarterly, XXIII (1948), 114-28.

<sup>72</sup>Barrington, I, 155-6, 208, II, 21-2.

<sup>73</sup>Whistler, Gentle Art, 154-8.

<sup>74</sup>Mallock, New Republic, 280.

<sup>75</sup>See below, 80.

The world of painters, patrons and other cognoscenti was only a part of the Victorian art world. It was indeed the most celebrated, visible and dramatic part but it was also the most dream-like, sheltered as it was in many ways from the activities and social and economic changes which made so many Victorians anxious for the future of art. The fine arts did not directly depend on industry and commerce as did the manufactured arts, and these latter (the Victorians also referred to them as the lesser, industrial, decorative and ornamental arts) had a different relationship with industry and commerce, with the middle-classes and with the market-place than did the fine arts. Because the manufactured arts were a major part of the aesthetic movement, it is necessary to understand these relationships in order to understand the origins of aestheticism within the realm of these "lesser" arts.

In dealing with the manufactured arts, it would be well to have a precise definition of them, yet the evidence in this is not as precise as could be wished. Because the ornamental arts included architectural adornment, the line between architecture, and ornamental work that had an integrity apart from an architectural setting, was never clearly drawn. Evidence of this confusion is the dual role of many early and mid-Victorian architects as designers of buildings and of furnishings. Owen Jones, A. W. N. Pugin, William Burges and Matthew Digby Wyatt all treated interior decoration as a part of the architect's domain.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly these men considered their work in designing chairs, rugs, tables, ink wells and jewelry as art.

Much of this kind of work was hand-crafted and even unique, and therefore would not be considered industrial art which connoted mass production. At the other end of the social and artistic scales were the industrial designers who copied or created designs for textiles, pottery, cast iron ware and other articles manufactured by companies in large factories. These designers were generally drawn out of the working-classes, as it was easier to train workers to do the art work required in industrial design than it was to train artists to design for the manufacturing processes and the available market.<sup>2</sup> There were also many industries which made no pretense at design in their products; these were the utilitarian and pedestrian articles which attracted the admiration of the functional designers of the twentieth century but which few Victorians would have allowed to be artistic at all.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning with the 1836 Parliamentary inquiry into the state of the arts in England, all the reform movements in the manufactured arts aimed at the working-class designers. The architect-designers were exempla, and it was hoped that industrial designers could be trained in design as architects were, which would raise standards in industrial art. Yet both kinds of designers, and designers who did not easily fit into either category, were engaged in designing articles of manufacture. The best definition of these articles would unfortunately be a negative one—articles which by virtue of their design have pretensions to being considered works of art but which cannot be hung in the Royal Academy exhibitions.<sup>4</sup> The manufactured

arts were entirely separate from the fine arts; nonetheless, the line between the ornamental work of architects and the hack-work of a textile designer was greater than the line between architecture and ornamental design done by an architect. The distinction between the fine arts and manufactured arts based on function (an article of manufactured art has some specific use apart from being beautiful) neglects the many articles which are manufactured merely to be beautiful, such as porcelain figures, wallpapers, decorative tiles and ornamental moldings. Also the introduction of function into the definition of manufactured art tends to confuse the issue of the relationship between beauty and function in Victorian art; an issue which will be discussed later.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to arrive at a proper and precise definition of the manufactured arts is the character of the manufacturing art world, a world far more diffuse and complicated than that in which the fine arts were carried on. The immense range of activities and ranks, both social and artistic, within this part of the art world involved art in problems and concerns unrelated to aesthetic questions. An enduring problem which always seemed pressing to contemporaries was reconciling art and commerce. The conflicts between these two departments of life in the fine arts grew out of the intrusion of commercial mechanisms, specifically the market-place, into the sphere of artistic integrity. In the manufactured arts, commercial considerations had to be foremost and the problem of reconciliation therefore lay with designers in providing a place for art



in manufactures. The love of art in its idealized, ethereal forms created a tension in the fine arts which the manufactured arts escaped; there the practical function of design provided a vital bond between aesthetic and utilitarian values which altered the nature of the conflict between material and artistic values. More important, however, the manufactured arts were not plagued with the anxiety created by the intrusion of market value into the realm of aesthetic value. A design had to sell to be successful; manufacturers could not ignore the market in order to pursue a more sublime artistic vision. And the element of uniqueness which gave the fine art market its peculiar character was lacking in the manufactured art market. Even unique pieces of furniture were unique only in design, not in function, and the success of art manufactures depended upon how willing those who had money were willing to spend it on a particular design, or on ornament apart from utility. The manufactured art market was, in one sense, the converse of the fine art market, in that aesthetic considerations constantly intruded upon commercial considerations in manufactured art.

But if practical considerations of design production and marketing alleviated the intensity of the controversy between art and commerce, the conditions in industry and the training of workers as designers created a vast set of problems which the painter, protected by high prices and a relatively closed profession, never faced. The degradations and miseries of life among the industrial population aroused a variety of reformers and reform programs, and through the

manufactured arts, the entire art world came into contact with these reforming energies. These issues reflected the great difference between the fine arts and the manufactured arts in Victorian England—the inevitable involvement of all classes in the manufactured arts as producers or consumers. The fine arts remained, though not necessarily because artists wished it to, out of reach of all but the wealthy, educated and interested. The manufactured arts, spreading with the tides of materialism and industrial production, pervaded all social strata and, as the century wore on, formed more and more of the physical background of all life's activities.

The manufactured arts did not, however, affect all classes or all activities equally. Victorian design affected the fast-growing cities more than the sleepy provincial towns, and the new wealth of the middle-classes more, probably, than the old wealth of the aristocracy. But the manufactured arts presented the problem of popular and democratic art in a way that the fine arts never could. Most reformers who aimed at higher aesthetic standards in the manufactured arts believed that these arts ought to realize their promise of becoming both popular and democratic; they should be cherished by all people for their beauty and they should be available to all people regardless of differences in wealth, education, even geographical location. At the very beginning of the Victorian period, a reform movement attempted to solve the problems of design standards and some of the problems of working conditions by establishing schools of design for training industrial workers. Later reformers tended to

accept this connection of the problem of design standards with the problem of the condition, especially the ignorance, of workers. But it was for these later reformers which included Henry Cole, John Ruskin, William Morris and Lewis F. Day to answer the question— what can be done programmatically to improve the manufactured arts and the lives of the producers?<sup>5</sup> Until the 1870's no answer satisfied reformers with results, either in aesthetic standards or in the improved condition of the working-classes. The great development of domestic art in the 1870's seemed to contemporaries (and also to several historians of Victorian design<sup>6</sup>) the most promising condition the manufactured arts had as yet achieved. It was in this period that the paradoxical developments of Victorian industrial design finally culminated in the failure of the main objective of most reformers— the realization of a truly popular and democratic art. The commitment to a particular artistic vision and to an ideal of an aesthetic humanism made the reformers, even William Morris who rejected the widespread compromise of his contemporaries, retreat from the conditions towards which democratic art had to advance, machine production and labor efficiency.

The complex system of problems and relationships between theory and practice; worker, designer and manufacturer; training and style; various institutions; and the producers and consumers of manufactured art can best be understood by examining first, the interaction between style and the institutions and relationships prevailing within the context of the production of the manufactured arts. And second, it

is necessary to examine the expectations of consumers, and the changing character of the market-place in the 1860's and 1870's. But in order to do this properly, it is important to consider the role of the manufactured arts within the different contexts in which it was important. For example, to architects and industrial designers, the manufactured arts afforded a means of living and a means of expressing artistic fancies and aspirations.

The training and relative freedom of architects such as Owen Jones and A. W. N. Pugin meant that they approached design as a logical extension of architecture, which was a fine art. The problems of architecture considered as a fine art were similar to those of painting, although aggravated by the fact that buildings were meant to please many tastes and to fulfill some purpose as a building. But architecture, buffeted by the stylistic controversy of Gothic vs. classical, was in a critical state in the 1850's. Critics who were generally pleased with the progress of the architectural arts at mid-century still saw dangers.

But there is no security that we shall continue to advance, or shall even keep what we have gained, unless the public can control by their judgment the caprices of individuals. It is for the gratification of the many, and for the sake of their commendation, that beauty is studied, and until they can distinguish between what is good and what is bad, architects labour in vain. In the hands of some the profession will be turned from an art into a money-making business; others, whose ability is not equal to their ambition, will be employed in preference to better men, and the Wrens and the Barrys will be fortunate if, besides being deprived of the stimulus of praise, their plans are not marred by the want of knowledge in their patrons of the common principles of design.

The architect was clearly within the realm of the fine arts, although

his purely ornamental work was not fine art as it could not be hung in the Royal Academy. The architect therefore tended to approach the problem of design as an aesthetic problem; the same way an artist approached a painting.<sup>8</sup> Market considerations were rarely a factor, for the architect designed furnishings for his own buildings, for himself or for particular commissions. He was in an entirely different situation from the industrial designer who was employed by a manufacturer to produce designs and usually to adapt the design to the manufacturing process as well.

The confusions which plagued the manufactured arts were most evident in the case of the industrial designer. Tradition and the practices of the architect-designers taught that design was the province of artists, and when a Parliamentary commission in 1825 and 1836 inquired into the reasons why British industrial design was so inferior to French, the problem of the worker-artist was first explored.<sup>9</sup> The early testimony of Dr. Waagen of Germany stated the traditional view, already romanticized. When the chairman asked him the best method of "applying arts to manufactures," Waagen replied, "In former times the artists were more workmen, and the workmen were more artists, as in the days of Raphael, and it is very desirable to restore this happy connexion."<sup>10</sup> But the processes of manufacture were very different in the nineteenth century from what they had been in the days of Raphael. Although manufacturers naturally looked to professional artists for designs, artists generally did not make good designers.<sup>11</sup> The problem was the machine and the meachanistic discipline which modern manufacturing

processes imposed. In many cases, the process of adapting designs for machine production was purely mechanical itself.

Ewart (Chairman of the 1835-1836 Parliamentary Commission): Are you aware that the French profession of artist is wholly distinct from the profession of reducing the pattern to the Jacquard loom, or adapting it to the Jacquard loom?

Gibson: I am aware of it.

Ewart: You have not stated any sum that is given to these persons [Gibson's designers], but you say it varies according to circumstances?

Gibson: According to the description of the pattern.

Ewart: And it is mixed up with a remuneration given for reducing the design to the mould, or cutting the card, which is necessary for the weaving it in the looms?

Gibson: It is so.

Ewart: The auxiliary branch of the business is purely mechanical, the cutting of the card?

Gibson: Quite so, an operation of machinery.

Ewart: It is not necessary that a person should be an artist to enable him to cut the card of a pattern?

Gibson: By no means.

This separation of the mechanical from the creative and artistic tasks directly contradicted Waagen's claim that the artist and workman should be reconciled. Yet judging from the testimony of 1836 and other, albeit isolated, examples, the division of labor and the concomitant separation of different processes in production rendered the artist-workman necessarily inefficient. Nonetheless, the most significant reform actually implemented as a result of 1836, the establishment of the Schools of Design, aimed at training artist-workmen. It was the triumph of tradition, and the assertion, in the face of much contrary evidence, that art was a creation of human beings rather than of machines and of mechanical processes.

The strain between the theory that workers should be artists, and the reality that they were often merely highly sophisticated machines

was painfully evident in the educational program of the Schools of Design.<sup>13</sup> There, students were trained as artists first; great care and time was spent in teaching them to draw and model natural foliage and historical ornament. Then the attempt was made to turn their artistic skill to industrial design.<sup>14</sup> Until Henry Cole took over the management of the Schools and the establishment of the South Kensington complex of museum and art school, students rarely learned to design for specific methods of production, and even more rarely gained workshop experience in the schools.<sup>15</sup> Although in its early years the school system did have some beneficial influence on Victorian design, students who completed the courses of study faced the same problems that other professional artists faced in the factory system. It was not that the professional artist, stepping to the different drum of his beloved muse, was temperamentally unsuited to industrial design but that their training, their expectations and their approach to design problems were unsuited to the needs and expectations of manufacturers. The day to day requirement of design production meant maintaining a steady output of designs which were "artistic" but which also, and more necessarily, met standards dictated by methods of production, market demand, costs, availability of materials and skilled labor, and the productions of competitors. Because the Schools of Design trained artists, most of their students were as unsatisfactory to manufacturers as professional artists had been.<sup>16</sup> However, the Schools did provide designs for industry in the same way that artists provided designs—manufacturers commissioned particular

works when their own designers were incapable of producing one.<sup>17</sup>

These works were generally the most "artistic" productions of a company and therefore much of the work shown in industrial exhibitions, being of this type, were the gaudy exceptions of Victorian design.

The failure of the Schools of Design to train a large group of industrial designers was tacitly recognized when the Schools were removed from the province of the Board of Trade and transferred to the new Education Department in 1856.<sup>18</sup> The Schools concentrated on training art teachers in the latter half of the century, although it also produced some of the best industrial designers of the 1860's and 1870's. Christopher Dresser was an instructor in the Schools and Lewis F. Day and Frederick Hulme were trained in them.<sup>19</sup> More important than the failure to train industrial designers on a large scale was the failure of the Schools to train the working-classes. Although the Schools were careful to set up classes that workers could attend, the time and tuition required for a successful course of study were significant obstacles for workers to overcome. Undoubtedly some workers enrolled in classes, but the pressures to provide education for the middle-classes as well led to a middle-class student body who regularly attended and regularly paid their fees.<sup>20</sup>

Besides the actual creators of designs, the production of manufactured art was of primary importance to the manufacturer, the owner of the factory which produced such articles to sell in the marketplace. Their attitudes towards industrial design were clearly stated in testimony before the Parliamentary Commission of 1836 and in various



commissions since that time.<sup>21</sup> Their most heart-felt concern was the advantage which well-designed articles had in both the domestic and foreign markets. During the questioning of manufacturers and retail merchants in 1836, the superiority of French design was on everyone's mind, and the economic importance of competing with the French meant that English design standards had to be raised. But as to the best means of doing this, manufacturers often differed. Almost all wished government to safeguard designs and patterns by copyright so that legal action could be taken against design pirates and financial restitution made.<sup>22</sup> However, different manufactures required different lengths of time for copyright protection from six months for ribbon manufacturers to several years for iron-mongers. Aside from this governmental assistance, most manufacturers believed that competition would stimulate improvement in design. For example, a silk manufacturer from Spitalfields testified that the emergence of French manufactures in the English market had greatly improved the trade.<sup>23</sup>

Manufacturers were of course concerned with the establishment of the Schools of Design, but although most agreed that the training the Schools provided was good for the manufactured arts; they disagreed among themselves as to the specific program of education which the Schools ought to follow. Edmund Potter, a calico manufacturer, believed the Schools ought to provide education for the middle-classes as well as the workers in order to prevent its being a mere charity.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the Manchester committee in charge of the Manchester School of Design in the late 1840's disapproved

of Ralph Wornum's lectures on the history of ornament (which had appealed to middle-class audiences in other cities) because they did not refer to anything "practical" and were not "adapted to the capacity of the pupils in general."<sup>25</sup> Undoubtedly many manufacturers hoped that the Schools would provide cheap designs and although they did tend to do so, the costs of design were still great at mid-century.<sup>26</sup> The manufacturers did desire concrete results from the Schools, such as more and therefore cheaper designs, art education for their own children, and designers who could successfully compete with French work. The failure of the Schools to produce these results (other than the second) was viewed by the manufacturers as the failure of governmental interference in this direction.

Yet these manufacturers obviously cared for art very much, and Manchester manufacturers especially, were known for their collections of paintings and fine houses.<sup>27</sup> Potter's desire to open the Schools of Design to the children of the middle-classes was obviously a common one, for such students, especially women and girls, were eager to enroll. And in their businesses, the amount manufacturers spent on design and the importance they attached to it was great. In 1836 designers for various industries (at that time usually workers who had exhibited a facility for design) could earn from £100 to £200 a year, and a partner in an iron foundry testified that the company spent £1,500 a year in the production of models for stoves and fenders alone.<sup>28</sup> In 1850, when most manufacturers agreed that the cost of designs had gone down slightly, a Manchester manufacturer paid £7,000

for designs and paid his head designer £500 for the year.<sup>29</sup> The manufactured arts were therefore, as a source of livelihood for manufacturers, of great concern to them and they were as careful of the "art" as they were of the manufacture. But they realized more clearly than artists that design had to be commercially sound before it could be aesthetically successful as manufactured art. The methods they employed in procuring designs involved the separation of worker and designer and thus meant the failure of Waagen's humanistic solution.

The role of the manufactured arts in the lives of the consumer classes is a more nebulous field of inquiry, but the fragmentary evidence clearly suggests several important points. The first was that art was only one consideration in the purchase of manufactured goods, even if we admit that a consumer bought an article for the sake of art if he considered it more beautiful than any other. Fashion, comfort, luxury, economy and utility were all involved in considering purchases. Generally speaking, fashion, comfort and luxury weighed most with the wealthier classes while out of necessity, economy and utility were more important to the poorer. In 1836 fashion was identified with both art and French design by witnesses before the Parliamentary Commission, but by 1850 a ribbon manufacturer admitted that a prejudice for French goods existed which had nothing to do with the superiority of French design.<sup>30</sup> The separation and conflict of fashionable and artistic taste was a significant factor in the development of Victorian design. It was an issue with which Charles

Eastlake grappled in 1867 and was an issue in furnishings and women's dress, the fair sex being peculiarly susceptible to the dictates of fashion.<sup>31</sup> In Charles Dickens' Our Mutual Friend, fashion and comfort compete for precedence in the Boffin's new home but are also the two major expressions of their new wealth. Luxury was ever fashion's ally, but all these expectations of wealthy consumers were constantly changing form and meaning from season to season, and among the various classes and occupations. The significance of these shades of meaning will be discussed in a different context later.

The importance of the manufactured arts among the lower-classes is an even more difficult problem, for the evidence is all oblique. Although they undoubtedly formed a large market for industrial goods, they assuredly only bought the plainest articles of the plain trade. The ambiguous aims of the 1836 Commission again revealed themselves in this area for the general educational program through museums, galleries and schools which was meant to make designers of the workers was unrealistic. But if it was hoped that this diffusion of artistic principles would make the workers demand better design in the plain trade, thus increasing the amount they spent on industrial goods, that hope was unrealistic until workers had more money to spend. The assumption that design was primarily ornament meant that the direction of design reforms led to higher costs as ornament was added to construction. The working-classes therefore were only at the fringes of the reforms in manufactured arts. Working-class dwellings were certainly dull productions, although in this case economy and utility

crushed ornament at the demand of the builders, who were not working-class members.<sup>32</sup> [Figures 28 and 29] Although some early twentieth century designers found great beauty in the severe functionalism of cheap and useful industrial goods, the designs which did invade the plain trade were crude imitations of fancy designs and well deserved Morris' epithet, "cheap and nasty."

One of the major problems of the aesthetic movement, especially in its earlier stages, was how to make manufactured art available to more people and to raise standards of design in the plain trade. This problem was never satisfactorily solved in the nineteenth century despite the widespread conviction that, "the true principles of good design are universally applicable, and, if they are worth anything, can be brought to bear on all sorts and conditions of manufacture."<sup>33</sup> Victorian designers were not willing to take the step, finally taken by American and continental designers, which identified beauty with utility and function, and turned to the machine as the rightful producer of such art. It is significant that the Victorians, recognizing the claims of both added ornament and basic construction, refused to surrender ornament to function. When Henry Cole and Ford Madox Brown designed articles for poorer consumers, they used very little ornament, but only because ornament would have added costs, not because they believed added ornament was not beautiful. [Figures 30 and 31] Their commitment to the human character of art was too strong.

These were the fundamental attitudes towards and the meanings of the manufactured arts in the early and mid-Victorian periods, but

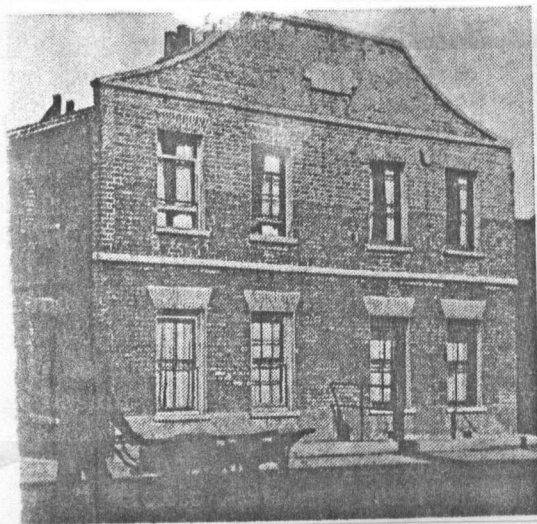


Figure 28

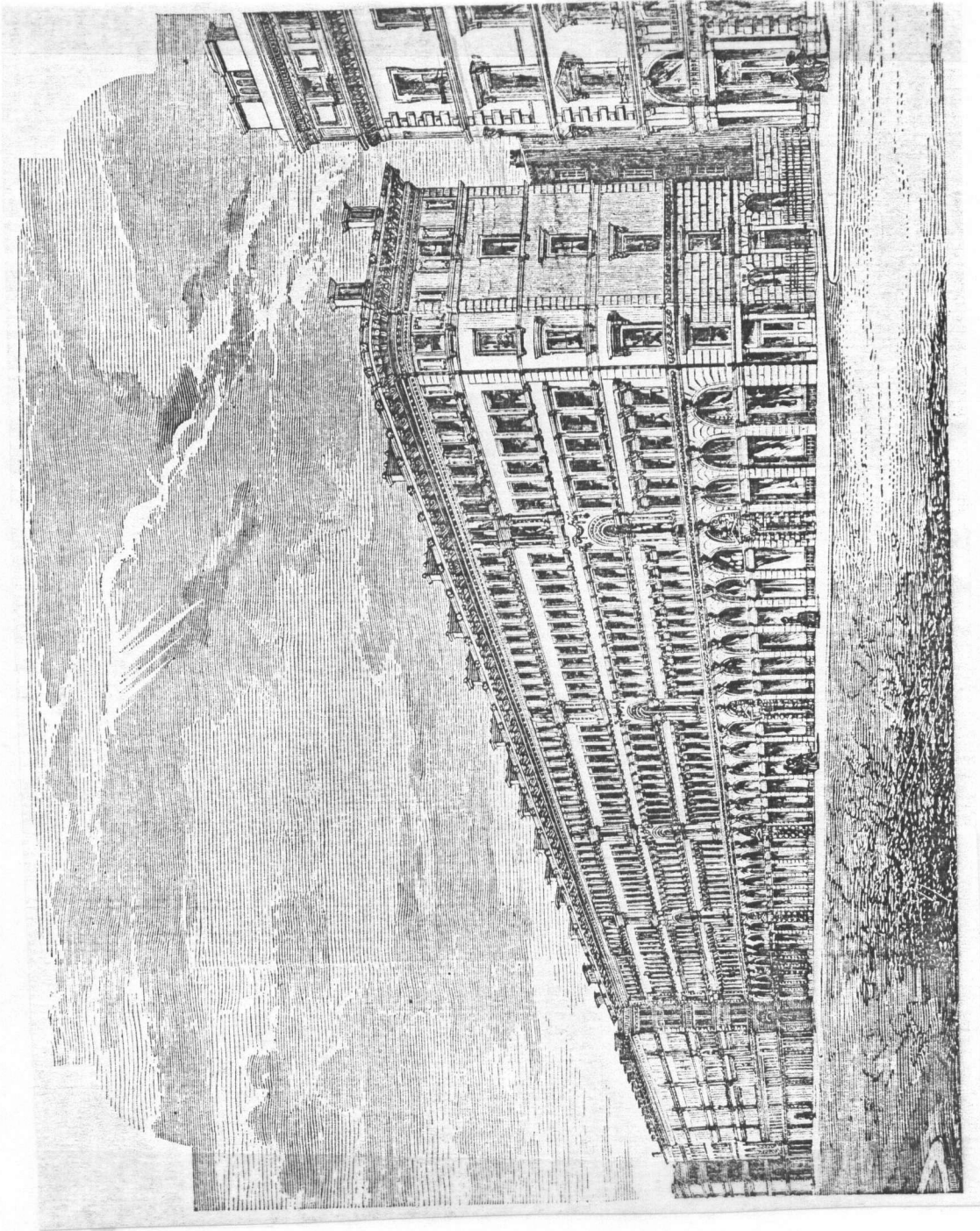


Figure 29

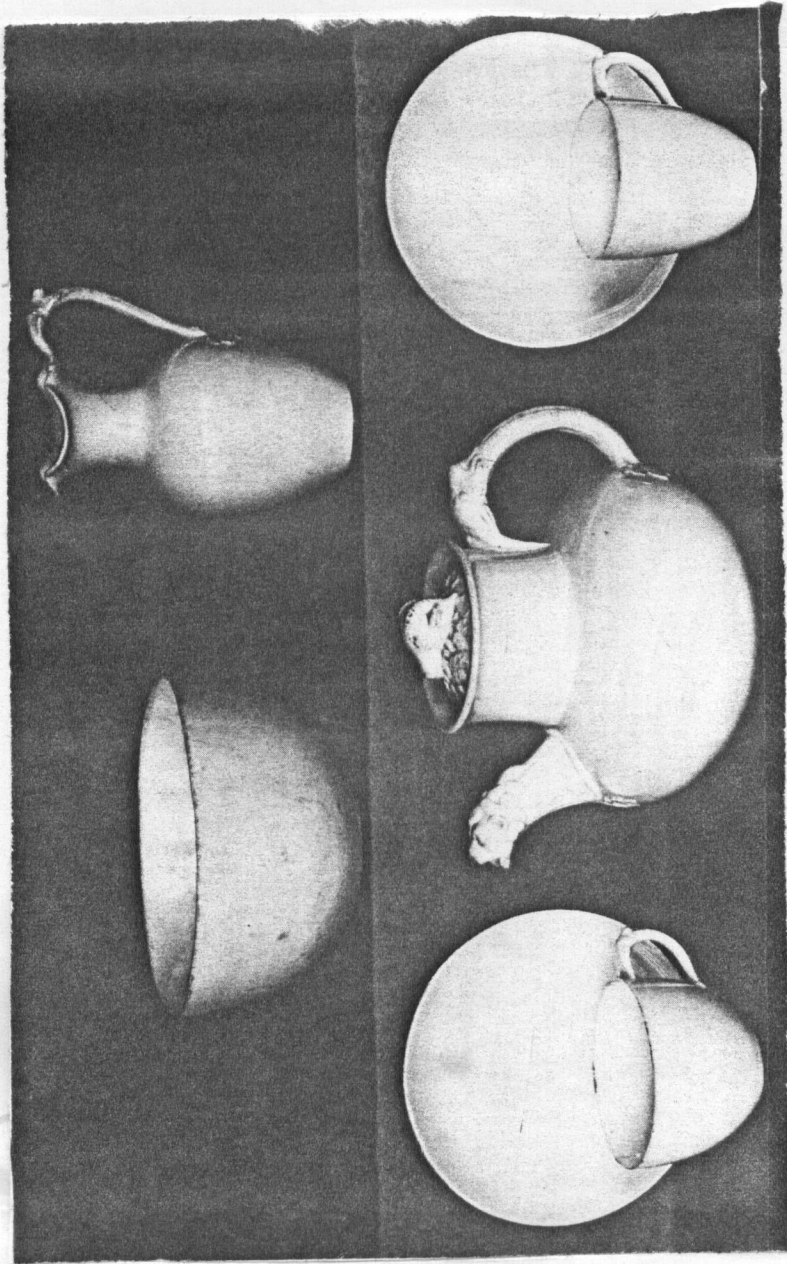


Figure 30



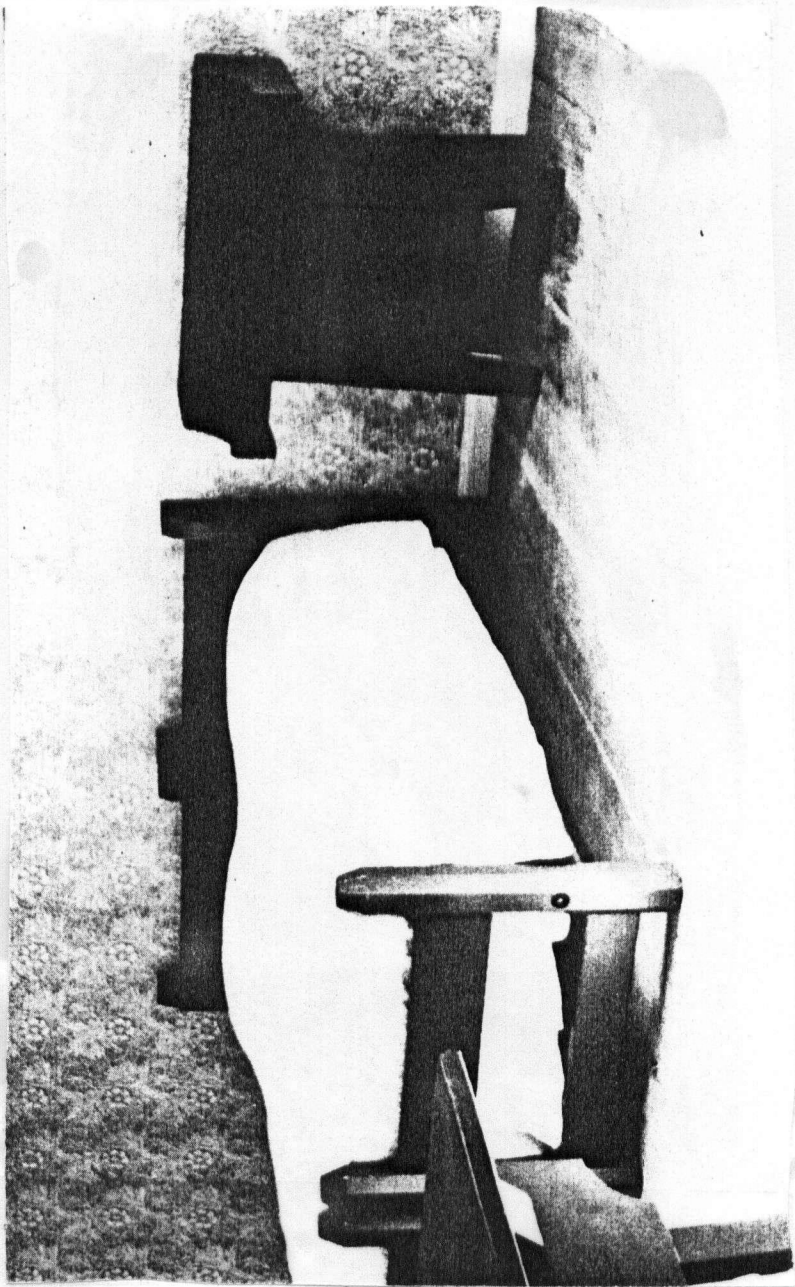


Figure 31

to understand the development of these arts, it is necessary to examine the development of style and institutions in the 1850's and early 1860's. In 1851 art was the happy partner of commerce and industry, as the Great Exhibition proclaimed. But there were problems; the design of the Exhibition was heartily criticized by both Richard Redgrave and Ralph Wornum, administrators and lecturers at the Head School of Design in London.<sup>34</sup> Their major criticism were of the unsuitableness of ornament to use (they were appalled at realistic flowers on carpets), the faulty use of color, the lack of proportion and restraint, and the bulging masses of intricate ornament. [Figures 32 and 33] None of their criticism implied that the Schools of Design were to blame in themselves, only the designers. Yet many of these designers had been trained at the Schools of Design, the most important institution concerned with the manufactured arts at mid-century. A contradiction thus existed within the Schools between the aims and means of the Schools, which stemmed from the many expectations which different groups had of these institutions...

The Schools themselves were under heavy criticism in the late 1840's for not fulfilling their primary responsibility of training industrial designers.<sup>35</sup> Late in the century, Herbert von Herkomer complained that in the field of decorative art,

the special branch for which this department was run, it had failed egregiously, and William Morris had done more in a few years to promote true decorative art than had been done by<sup>36</sup> South Kensington during the whole course of its existence.

The Schools were rarely popular; nonetheless, they had contributed to a change in industrial relationships which explained these criticisms,



Figure 32

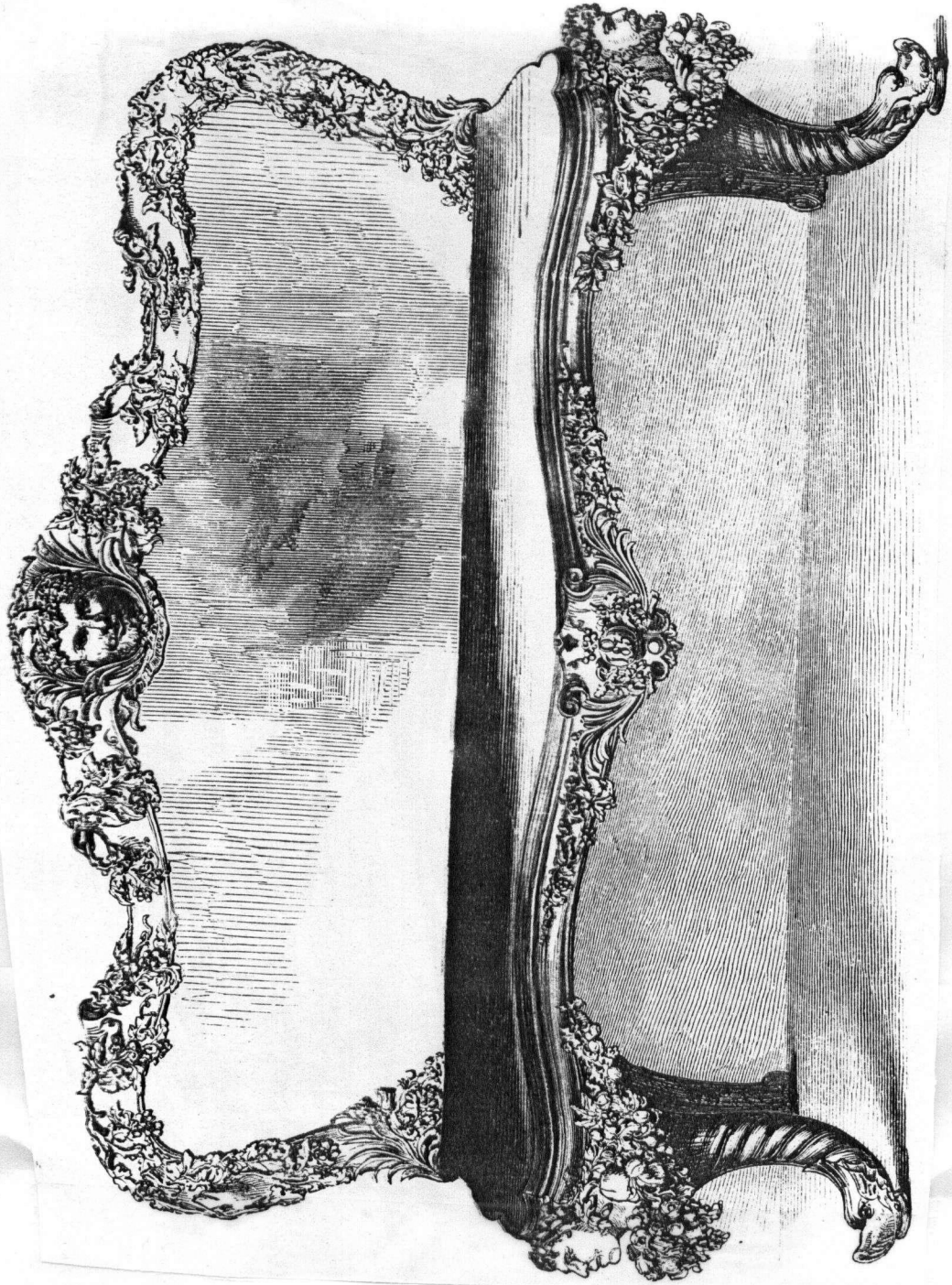


Figure 33

both of style and of the activities of the Schools. By the early 1850's industrial designers were no longer members of the working-classes—their jobs were distinctly different and thus their relationships to manufacturers and to the process of manufacture were different. The industrial designer was no longer a man who sold his labor, but rather sold his skill and in many cases merely the result of his skilled labor, the finished design. The Schools of Design had done much to bring about this change.

The curriculum in the Schools of Design aimed at the training of artists; they were trained as draughtsmen through the stages of drawing in outline first and then graduating to shade and perspective.<sup>37</sup> This skill was sharpened on natural foliage, examples of historical ornament and even, in some cases, the live model. Only after this preliminary training which took months, perhaps several years, was the student permitted to attempt problems of design. It should not be surprising that there was a general tendency in mid-Victorian design to treat manufactured articles after the manner of the fine arts, to paint flowers on carpets and to sculpt tables and chairs. Also, in abandoning the apprentice system, which was utterly incapable of producing enough designers to fill industry's needs, design and work traditions were lost and were replaced by the academic historical analysis of design. Design became an academic discipline rather than a work discipline, and although principles were dogmatic, their application depended upon the varying interpretations by individual designers. The Schools of Design did succeed, however, almost in spite

of themselves, in producing industrial designers. No other group of people, apart from the working-class members drawn out of factory ranks, were capable of designing for industry. Although their training was not entirely suitable for their employment in particular industries, they could and did design for various industries, selling their designs rather than their labor. Also, because after a few years, there were so many graduates of the Schools, their expectations were not high and they were willing to work where they could. Because of this, designs were relatively cheaper in 1850 than they had been for years earlier. But the gap between the kind of work that industrial designers and workers did continued to develop as industries extended the principle of the division of labor.

This dichotomy between designer and worker aggravated the chaotic styles in the mid-Victorian period. Quite apart from Ruskin's theory that the degrading inhumanity of the industrial system was necessarily destructive of art, the separation of designer and worker within the context of the aesthetic and institutional traditions of mid-Victorian art greatly contributed to the exuberant stylistic eclecticism of mid-Victorian design. Despite the echoes of modern functionalism found in the writings of Pugin, Wyatt, Jones and Redgrave, design meant ornament. One of the standard texts in the Schools of Design was Owen Jones' The Grammar of Ornament, an impressive encyclopedia of historical and exotic ornamental motifs, carefully catalogued and described and printed in color.<sup>38</sup> Like most of his contemporaries in the Schools of Design, Jones believed

that the study of historical styles was essential in understanding the universal laws which governed ornament. He did not wish designers to be facile imitators of various styles but rather that, understanding the principles which informed all styles, they might create truly original designs for the modern taste.<sup>39</sup> Despite this insistence on originality, the effect of historicism in the Schools was to accentuate the imitative aspects of Victorian design. The only other major field of inspiration, nature, further contributed to imitative work because students learned to draw accurately from nature before they were taught the principle of conventionalizing natural forms. Thus imitative rather than creative endeavor formed the substance of the designer's education, and originality generally lay in the combination and distortion of these motifs in the application rather than in the creation of new motifs. [Figures 34 and 35]

Because the designer dictated to the worker, the methods of manufacture and their potential for contributing to design were sorely neglected. The designer imposed on the material and the mechanism of production his ideas; they rarely suggested to him aesthetic possibilities. And the only design possibilities for the mid-Victorian designer were those historical and natural motifs learned in the Schools of Design. The designer was generally cut off from the manufacturing traditions of the old hand-craft trades. The results of this training and these relationships were at once visible in 1851 and the demands for some kind of reform to avoid these results were at once voiced.

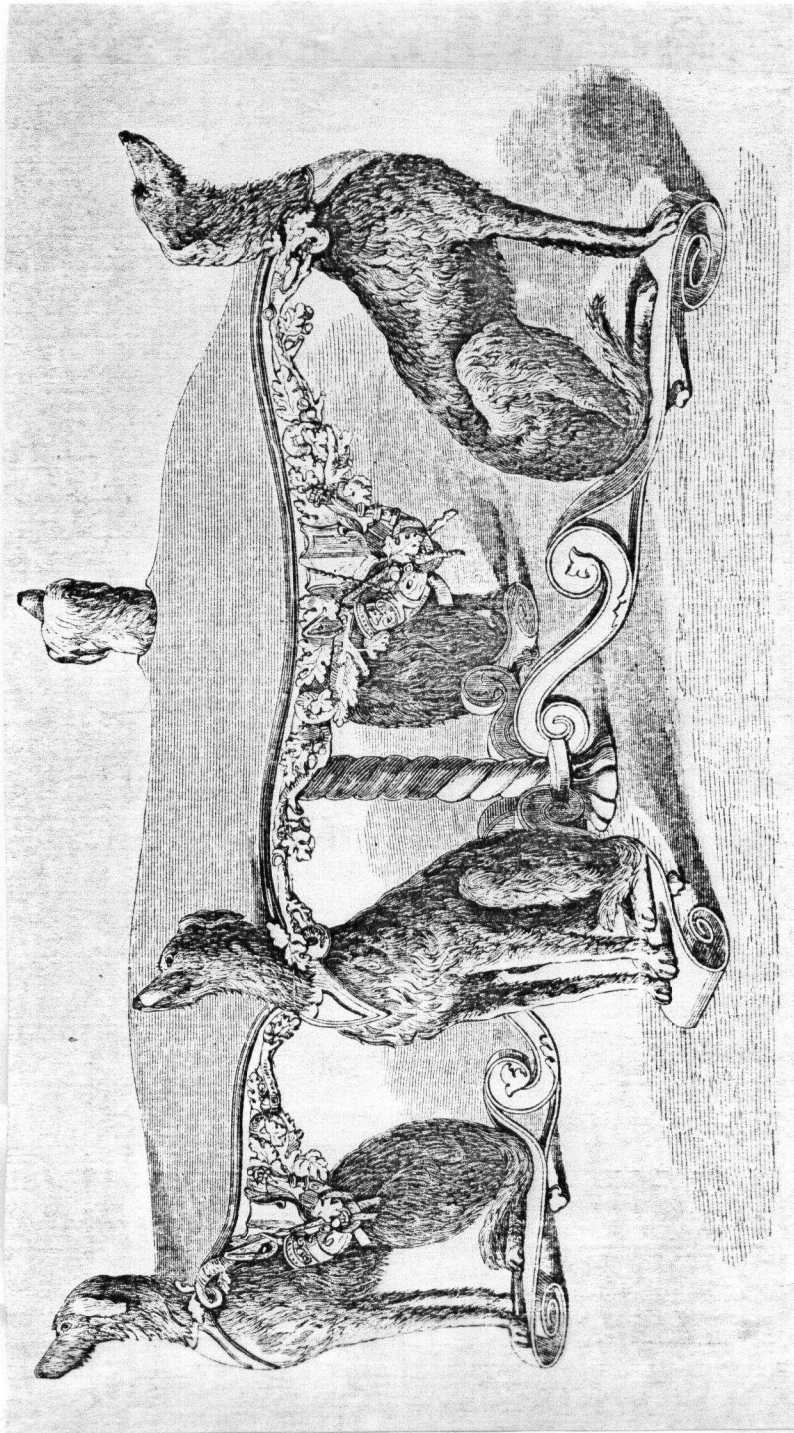


Figure 34



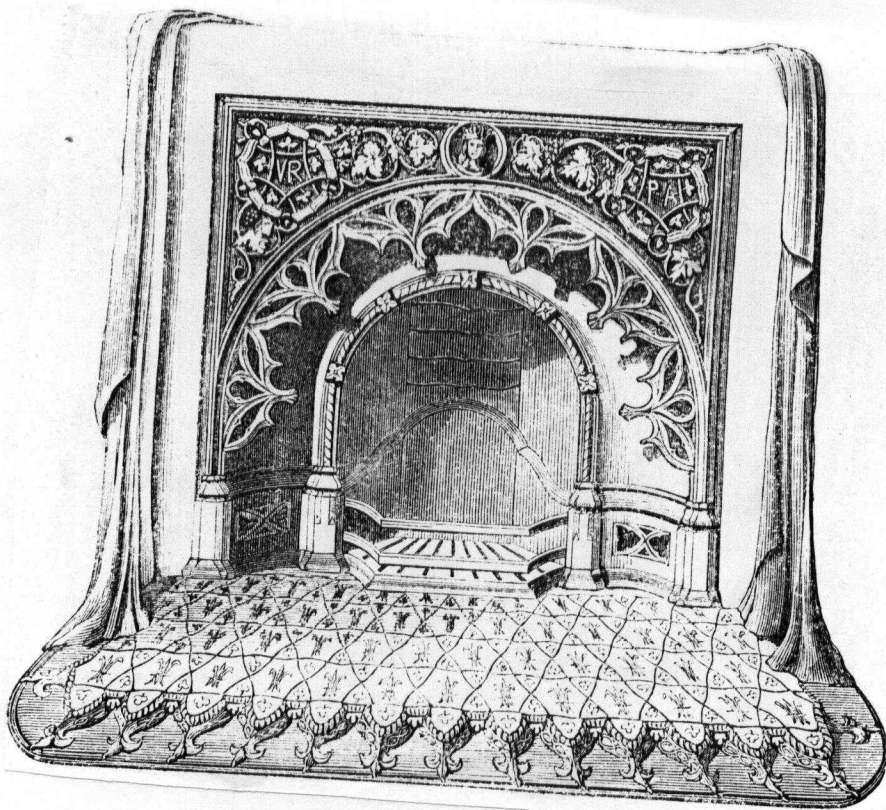


Figure 35

These results were deplored by reformers then and later, however, the passion for detail and ornament among the wealthier classes created a ready market for such productions. Already in 1836 an iron foundry owner declared,

We find we cannot produce articles too expensive for the public taste of the present day. Could we employ artists of a higher character, I am satisfied the public would buy whatever was produced.<sup>40</sup>

Few art-loving peoples have demonstrated such a "horror vacui" as the mid-Victorians and the insistence on a crowded multiplicity of ornament affected architecture as well as the manufactured arts.

We hold it almost as an axiom that there is no internal portion of a building, whether used for public or private purposes, that does not admit of some kind of ornamental work, wherever the eye rests, around or below, there should be something to arrest attention, and that aims at pleasing.<sup>41</sup>

The artifacts of middle-class Victorian life testify to this passion, and although the richness of surface decoration and modeling may seem merely unruly to our eyes, the very profusion and magnificence of this ornamentation is significant. It can hardly be deprecated and written off as the ignorant materialism of a newly rich class, for these same tendencies existed in the work and taste of educated designers and connoisseurs. In their ornamental work, the mid-Victorians were neither shy or restrained, and in their complicated and convoluted designs was an undeniable energy. Christopher Dresser's design symbolizing growth expressed a chaotic and explosive sense of design. [Figure 36] The best way to understand the aesthetic role of design in mid-Victorian culture is to understand the meaning of the energy which created and upheld it.

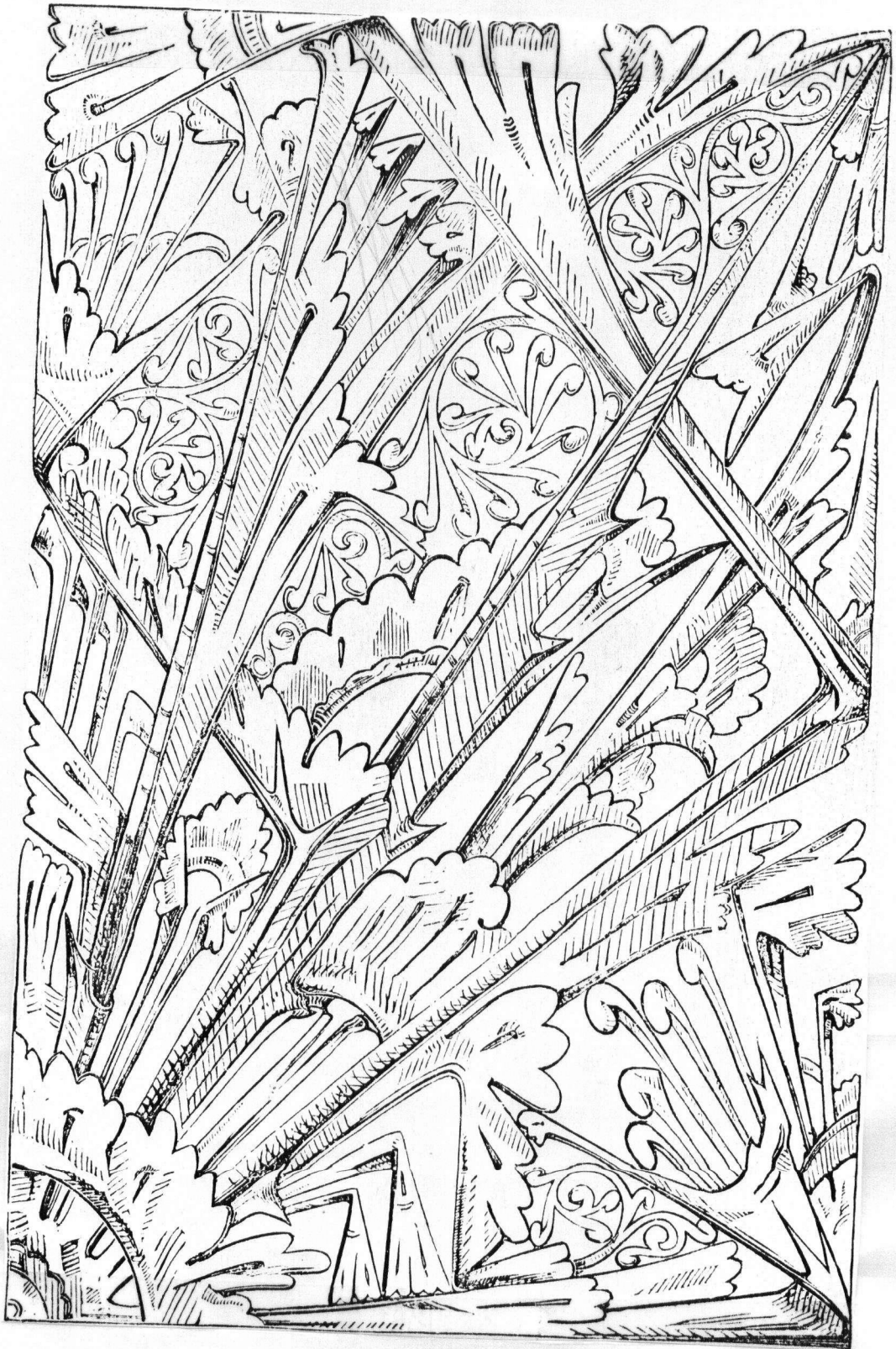


Figure 36

In the creative aspect, the paucity of straight lines, especially in the common-place tables and chairs which furnished every room, was due to the overgenerous application of the principle that curved lines were more beautiful than straight lines.<sup>42</sup> Ruskin consistently denounced the practice of the Schools of teaching students to draw straight lines because he did not believe human beings ought to be able to draw straight lines. Such perfection was an attribute of machine work, or of human labor degraded to the level of machine work. Most of the characteristics of the mid-Victorian style, as opposed to the execution of that style, which are now considered aesthetic failings can be attributed to their zeal for artistic design rather than to indifference or ignorance. The manufactured arts were valued in the 1850's as aesthetic objects and therefore, aesthetic considerations often completely overshadowed functional ones in design. This explains why Richard Redgrave, in his criticism of the designs of 1851, wrote:

The major error of the Exhibition is over-ornamentation, an error which is apt to sicken us of decoration, and leads us to admire those objects of absolute utility (the machines and utensils of various kinds), where use is so paramount that ornament is repudiated and fitness of purpose being the end sought, a noble simplicity will result.<sup>43</sup>

Redgrave was not one of the prophets of the modern movement in which functionalism was the main aesthetic criterion; he was merely reacting against the blindness to function which many designs demonstrated. Ornament was as necessary to Redgrave as it was to William Morris, but they both rejected the substitution of ornament, also understood

as pure art, for an article which was intended to be useful.

The major consumers of manufactured art and thus the audience for which these designs were created was the middle-classes. The reasons why they accepted such design were more complex than the reasons why they were created. Until the 1860's middle-class taste emulated the old aristocratic taste which had developed in the preceding two centuries. Even the new Gothic taste of the nineteenth century was essentially an aristocratic one. The aristocracy had, after all, the only tradition of indulging aesthetic whims with wealth and power. Yet the aristocratic tradition developed out of a rural-based power system which involved special political and social responsibilities, and the number of craftsmen who produced their manufactured art had been limited. The middle-classes entered this tradition, cherishing the things they associated with it, but were unable to enter into the relationships which had made it vital, and were unwilling to relinquish their own attitudes and activities which made it meaningless.

In her novel, North and South, Mrs. Gaskell exposed this tension between the new life of the middle-classes and the old aristocratic tastes which the middle-class characters had taken up.

Mrs. Hale would have been more than interested,—she would have been astonished, if she had seen the sumptuousness of the dinner-table and its appointments. Margeret, with her London cultivated taste, felt the number of delicacies to be oppressive; one half of the quantity would have been enough, and the effect lighter and more elegant. But it was one of Mrs. Thornton's rigorous laws of hospitality, that of each separate dainty enough should be provided for all the guests to partake, if they felt inclined. Careless to abstemiousness in her daily habits, it was part of her pride to set a feast before such of

her guests as cared for it. Her son shared this feeling. He had never known—though he might have imagined, and had the capability to relish—any kind of society but that which depended on an exchange of superb meals...

There was no one upstairs in the drawing-room but Mrs. Thornton and Fanny. Every cover was taken off, and the apartment blazed forth in yellow silk damask and a brilliantly flowered carpet. Every corner seemed filled up with ornament, until it became a weariness to the eye, and presented a strange contrast to the bald ugliness of the look-out into the great mill-yard, where wide folding gates were thrown open for the admission of carriages.

Here is the oppressive materialism and, too, a suggestion that the Thorntons are victims of ignorance. These are minor considerations, however, compared with how very much the Thorntons cared for this display because it signified graciousness to them, and the incongruity between these forms of graciousness and the way of life that the Thorntons led in the shadow of their factory. This incongruity is emphasized by the fact that the Thorntons themselves rarely used their drawing-room, and when they were not entertaining, everything was covered to protect it from dust. And it is symbolic that Mr. Thornton, the factory owner, was learning the classics, the premier symbol of aristocratic cultivation, from a tired old country parson who had lost his faith and resigned his living. The Thorntons had taken into their clumsy but vigorous hands the forms of a moribund culture, because these forms represented the best things in life. Yet their own experiences and situation made them interpret these forms in a way which seemed incongruous, even oppressive, to an observer like Margeret, who had lived among the old culture.

The two most significant changes for the later development of Victorian design—the rise of the independent designer, and the com-

bination of middle-class wealth and their willingness to spend it on art and ornament—resulted from the system of industrial manufacture which strove for the most efficient methods of production in order to return higher profits. The foundation of the changing character of the manufactured art market in the late 1860's and 1870's therefore lay within the organization of the industrial and financial worlds. Any proposed reform which aimed at the reorganization of those worlds in order to change conditions in the manufactured arts would destroy the two factors which had already by the 1870's done so much to improve those arts. Designers disliked the mechanistic modes of production in industry because they replaced the free human effort which they believed was necessary to art work. But most professionals accepted the machine as an inevitable evil, and middle-class consumers, if they associated their incomes with working conditions in industry, were consoled by the fact that by buying good manufactured art, they were aiding the cause of art.<sup>45</sup>

The rise of the independent designer was significant, but the single most important change, without which even Morris and Company might have languished in ecclesiastical decoration, was the awakening of the middle-classes to the importance of art in their surroundings, and the development of domestic architecture in accordance with this interest.<sup>46</sup> As this interest developed, and possibly one of the reasons for it, the tastes of the middle-classes were breaking away from the aesthetic traditions of the aristocracy and developing along new lines. Idealist painting, which flourished in a number of speci-

fic styles, emphasized restraint, proportion, elegance, and clear and harmonious color. And it was in some ways actively critical of contemporary design. But it was the decorative work of artists and architects in their own homes which provided concrete models for a reform of contemporary design standards and created the fashion for particular styles.

William Morris' experiments are well known, but he was neither the first or the last artist to find contemporary work unsatisfactory and to create his own. A. W. N. Pugin had done precisely that in the 1840's.<sup>47</sup> The fashion for blue and white, and incidentally for pieces of furniture designed to display porcelain, began in the 1860's, when Whistler and Rossetti started their collections.<sup>48</sup> Throughout the 1860's and 1870's artists, on the strength of the higher prices they received for their works, designed and in many cases decorated their homes as an exercise of their artistic skills and sensitivity. Leighton's home with its exotic Arab hall, and Alma-Tadema's lavish use of marble in his home were opulent examples of their aesthetic predilections, where Whistler's plain White House in Chelsea clearly demonstrated his severe taste. [Figures 37 and 38] Houses were a field for artistic expression and also a haven for individualism, even eccentricity. Nor were artists the only ones to treat their homes as works of art. Alfred Morrison, Frederick Lehmann and George Howard commissioned houses from Owen Jones, George Aitchison and Phillip Webb, respectively, with interior decoration in each case undertaken by Jones, Albert Moore, and William Morris.<sup>49</sup> The home,



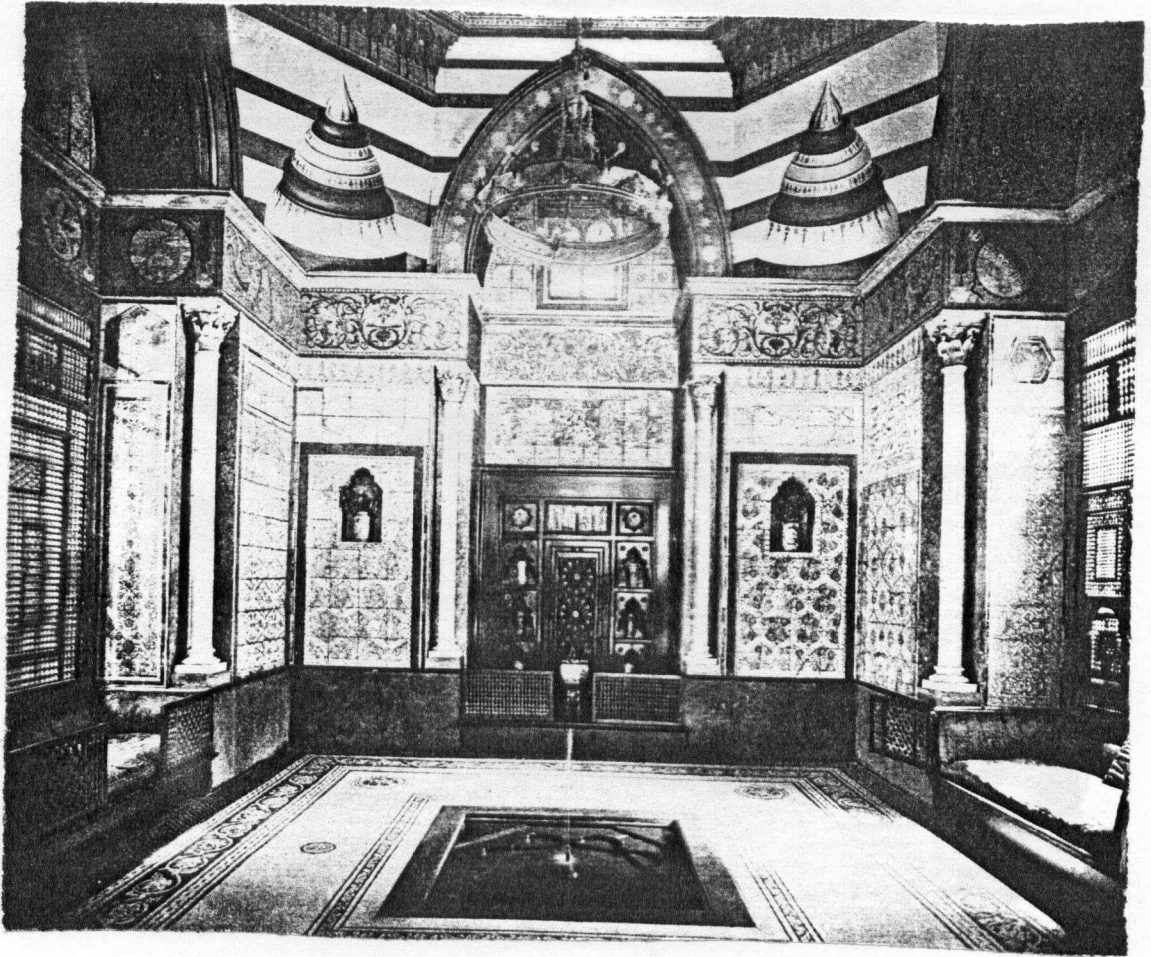


Figure 37



Figure 38

as an ideal, undoubtedly filled a vacuum which others besides artists perceived in Victorian cultural life.

We are too much accustomed in these days of locomotion, to look upon our houses as mere halting places between the stages of our journey through life, and to treat them with as little respect as if they were inns or railway stations. Surely there should be some sanctity about our homes! The place where we were born, or where we began the new married life, where our children were born—and died perhaps—and where we hope at least to die, should have some claim on our reverence.<sup>50</sup>

In many ways, especially in so far as the home provided a field for the expression of spiritual values, the lost impulse of religion in art revived somewhat as artists transferred their reverence from the houses of God to the houses of men.

By 1867 the possibilities of domestic art seemed so promising that Charles Eastlake, an architect-designer and the nephew of the former President of the Royal Academy, published Hints On Household Taste, the first major statement of the new artistic gospel.<sup>51</sup> It was an influential book and although in England Eastlake's reputation was soon eclipsed by those of other designers, in America, Eastlake's influence was so strong that his name was given to a style of furniture (of which he heartily disapproved).<sup>52</sup> In his book, Eastlake pursued two different themes, and they described the basic problems with which the new designers and consumers had to deal. The intimate connection, for good and bad, between the fine arts and the manufactured arts concerned Eastlake and he observed:

...it must be evident to all who have thought earnestly on the subject, that there is an intimate connection between this falling off in the excellence of our manufactures, and the tame vapid character which distinguished even our best painter's work in the early part of the present Victorian age.... National

art is not a thing which we may enclose in a gilt frame and hang upon our walls, or which can be locked up in the cabinet of a collector. To be genuine and permanent, it ought to animate with the same spirit the blacksmith's forge and the sculptor's atelier, the painter's studio and the haberdasher's shop. In the great ages of art it was so.<sup>53</sup>

This was an echo of Waagen's testimony in 1836 and it had its counterpart in the writings of Ruskin and Morris, although the specific relationships between the fine arts and manufactured arts was viewed differently by each of them. The importance of this assumed relationship in the minds of Victorian artists and designers was its effect on the second theme of Eastlake's book—the costs of good design.

The characteristics of the new style in domestic design evolving in the late 1860's obscured in some ways the realities of the manufactured art market. In 1867, the same year as the publication of Eastlake's book, the Art Journal reviewed a French publication on domestic decoration and noted that in most cases "taste was less costly than display."<sup>54</sup> The importance of color as a decorative motif allowed walls to be merely painted rather than papered or panelled. The emphasis on simplicity of design seemed to promise that articles would cost less because less work would actually be done on them, especially furniture since intricate carving was no longer fashionable. Yet as Eastlake pointed out, the cost of good design was in fact much higher than bad.

A feeling is, I trust, being gradually awakened in favour of 'art furniture'. But the universal obstacle to its popularity up to the present time has been the cost which it entails on people of ordinary means. And this is a very natural obstacle. It would be quixotic to expect any one but a wealthy enthusiast to pay twice as much as his neighbour for chairs and tables in the cause of art.<sup>55</sup>

Eastlake's answer to the problem of costs was to increase the demand for 'art furniture' and to increase supply, which would lower the prices. As to whether demand or supply must be increased first, he was less precise; he wavered between blaming buyers for not recognizing and demanding better design, producers for not manufacturing it and making it more available.<sup>56</sup> But the art market, as the market in paintings clearly demonstrated, rested on a peculiar complex of supply and demand in which spiritual and material values mingled and clashed. The assumption that the same spirit must animate the blacksmith's forge and the painter's studio was stronger in the minds of the idealists than it had been among mid-Victorian artists. Burne-Jones, Leighton, Whistler, Poynter, Moore and Walter Crane all undertook decoration work in public and private buildings.<sup>57</sup> As the decorative aspects of idealist painting became accepted as the artistic qualities of all art, the decorative possibilities in industrial and domestic design were viewed as more purely artistic. When Frith contemptuously referred to Whistler's work as no better than the art in colored wallpaper or a piece of silk, he inadvertently stated the equality of the arts which Oscar Wilde later proclaimed as an aesthete.<sup>58</sup>

Because the independent designer lived through the sale of his designs, not his labor, he was more readily accepted as an artist by society. As an artist, the prevailing standards of art were imposed on the designer, the chief of these being that art had to exhibit human workmanship.<sup>59</sup> The effect of this elevation of the designer to artist on the manufactured arts was decisive, and the subsequent development of the domestic revival and the arts and crafts movement

depended on it. The most immediate result and one which the widening market never did obliterate was the higher costs of good design. The aim of the new ideal was for all work to appear hand-wrought, and while some designers did this by producing articles by hand, even those that did design for machine work attempted to make the design appear hand-wrought. Although machine work promised benefits for the lower-classes in leisure and cheaper goods, it was still viewed by designers as an unavoidable evil. Even J. D. Sedding, who was not unsympathetic to machine work, declared, "Art is human or 'tis nothing. Real life forms its substance as well as its garniture."<sup>60</sup> But what was this human element, and what actually comprised the hand imprint in design?

The importance of historical ornament in this context was quite clear; as Gothic design in architecture was associated with religion, so in industrial design a similar association operated. Ornament with a history of fine hand work, especially designs with uneven parts and proportions such as Gothic capitals or Venetian glass, was associated with human freedom and genius. Perfection, especially perfect finish and exact symmetry, was associated with the machine, with lifelessness and meanness.<sup>61</sup> In the manufactured arts as in the fine arts, genius was valued because it represented that aspect of human labor which the machine could not reproduce. Although in the 1870's those qualities of design which idealist painting demonstrated were emphasized—elegance, clear and harmonious color, proportion, restraint, and ideal forms—historicism continued to influence designers strongly and Morris had

a copy of Jones' Grammar of Ornament on his bookshelf.<sup>62</sup>

Along the same lines, naturalism remained strong in design because natural growth remained beyond the ken and control of science and the machine. But naturalism for designers in the 1870's had to be conventional rather than naturalistic and, as with historical motifs, it was studied not in order to imitate forms but rather for the designer to create beautiful and human ornament through an instinctive understanding of the ineffable principles at work in nature and in old art work.

A designer acquaints himself with natural form, natural color, natural growth and so forth, and especially with everything suggestive to him of ornament. But in designing he uses not so much these as memories of them. Just so much of nature as comes to him at the moment, and just that in nature which comes unbidden is to the purpose. The rest is overmuch. Ornament can digest no more.

And as with natural motives, so with suggestions from old work. What has become so much a part of a man that he is no longer conscious whence he had it, does not realize that it is not entirely his own, that he may make use of. More than that it is dangerous to borrow, if he would keep alive in him the faculty of design.<sup>63</sup>

Yet this was what the Schools of Design had taught since their foundation and there is no reason that the designers of the 1870's should have understood it better than those of the 1850's. However, under the influence of idealist painting, Ruskin's propaganda and the fashions for exotic ornament such as Japanese, designers in the later period took different motifs as their own. The aesthetic fad for the sunflower and lily and the peacock was an exaggerated celebration of these new motifs which were in fact more suitable to the kind of conventional designs which mid-Victorian designers had pur-

sued than were the grand motifs of the Gothic and Italianate design.

Designers in architecture and the manufactured arts in the late 1860's and 1870's certainly tended to be less imitative of historical motifs than mid-Victorian designers, and yet they demonstrated neither the abandon of art nouveau or the sterility of functionalism. [Figures 39 and 40] In art history the designs of the 1870's may be labeled "transitional," but it would be misleading if the student of cultural life therefore assumed that these designs only imperfectly realized ideals which flowered in either the 1890's or the early twentieth century. Design in the 1870's satisfied the aesthetic preferences and the commercial realities which were peculiar to the period; it was a fruit, not a seedling, in the eyes of contemporaries.

The standards of the best manufactured art were the antique hand workmanship of skilled craftsmen in pre-industrial societies. Seventeenth century furniture, oriental rugs, eastern porcelain, late medieval tapestries and Venetian glass embodied some of the ideals which contemporary design emulated. Designers copied not only the decorative motifs and principles they discerned in such work, but also the manufacturing methods which produced them. William Morris was an extreme example of this fidelity, both to principles of design and methods of production, but the same sentiment pervaded the Schools of Design and influenced Lewis F. Day and Christopher Dresser as well.<sup>64</sup> Even Eastlake in 1867 suggested that the relationship between designer, worker and the process of manufacture ought to be similar to that which had existed in the idealized workshops which Waagen so admired





Figure 39

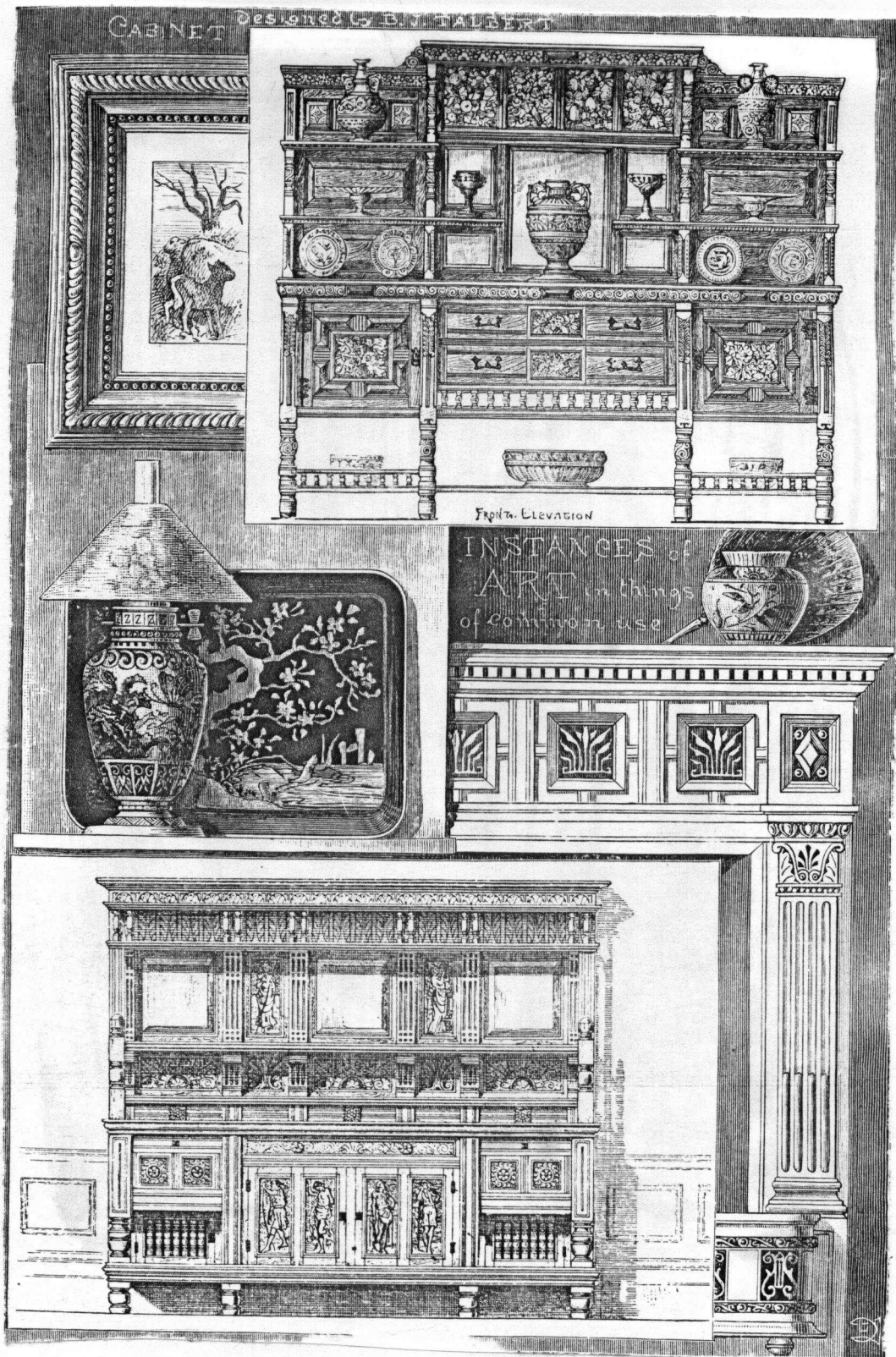


Figure 40

in 1836, but with an important difference.

Now, though the age of old woodwork does, indeed, enhance the beauty of its colour, that is by no means its highest recommendation. The real secret of its value lies in the immense superiority of ancient over modern workmanship, both as regards joinery and decorative carving.... At the present time, when direct supervision is exercised by a qualified designer, and in the class of furniture which is called 'artistic', more attention is given to this branch [joinery] and the result is very different...<sup>65</sup>

This was not the equal partnership of artist and worker which Waagen wished to re-establish; in Eastlake's mind clearly the designer oversaw and controlled all aspects of production, using the skilled worker as a kind of superior tool in the crafting of a designed product.

The involvement of the designer in all aspects of production, and the necessity of using highly skilled workers who were capable of carrying out the designer's ideas meant that such work must be costly. The willingness of collectors and much of the cultivated middle-classes to spend money on the manufactured arts was absolutely crucial to this development. Their willingness stemmed from their infatuation with art as a symbol of the good life and even of goodness itself. Of course, without this financial basis, so much of the painstaking workmanship which characterized the best pieces of the arts and crafts movement would not have been possible. Neither, probably, could the industrial designer have moved so easily into the sphere of the fine arts. By the late 1880's designers were as necessary and as important to the Victorian art world as were painters and architects.<sup>66</sup>

Yet hand work was not the only kind of work affected by the

changes in the market in the 1870's, and the adaption of designs to machine work was one of the triumphs of the period. The inevitability of the machine was recognized by Lewis F. Day, who wrote:

A designer, whatever his natural gift, is of no practical use until he is at home with the conditions of manufacture. It is only when he knows full well the difficulties of the case that he is in a position to avoid or meet them—according to his courage.<sup>67</sup>

The conditions in manufacture were in most industries, at least in part, mechanical, and even Day saw it as a threat to good design which must be met with courage. But the advantages of machine work, especially the lower costs of production, could not be denied and there were many manufacturers around in the 1870's eager to take advantage of the domestic art market. As the Schools of Design had succeeded in training some students in methods of adapting designs to machine production, there was skill enough to adapt hand-wrought patterns to machines. There was a ready market for these productions because the new style was fashionable but also expensive. Lazenby Liberty's warehouse of art manufactures catered to a lesser clientele than did Morris and Company, and below Liberty's were still more and far cheaper shops, most of whose products were machine made.<sup>68</sup>

The distinction between hand and machine work, obvious in such products as furniture and needlework, did not divide manufactured art into two distinct categories. There were methods of manufacture in which the hand and machine were recognized as respectable partners, or where hand work was merely tedious and its aesthetic advantages, accidental. Such was the case in block-printed wallpaper. Designers,

including Morris and Day, drew patterns on blocks which were then cut by other hands and the papers printed by Jeffrey and Company, an independent manufacturer.<sup>69</sup> The actual drawing of the pattern was the only task that was not purely mechanical and whether the actual printing was done by hand or by machine made only one difference to the result, a difference arising from the drying times of different inks. The much longer time required for hand printing over machine roller printing allowed the use of a thicker, more opaque ink, which could dry between hand printings but which would smudge on the rollers.

The high cost of manufactured art in the 1870's and later was due partly to the expensive hand work, but it was also due, and perhaps more decisively, to the involvement of the designer in all phases of production. Most designers, of course, merely drew up designs for industries which were then adapted to methods of manufacture by strange hands. But an important part of Victorian design tradition was the emphasis on the designer understanding the methods of production and controlling his design from his first conception to the finished product. One of the reasons that hand work was so much more satisfying to Victorian designers was because the designer, committed to hand-wrought motifs, could more easily visualize and control the outcome of hand work. All the most notable names in Victorian design, from Pugin through the arts and crafts movement, closely supervised the production of their designs, in many cases even trained the workers who executed them.<sup>70</sup> This strict direction of all phases of production tended to increase the costs of finished products by limiting the

production of works, as the work of one man was necessarily limited, and by adding the cost of the designer's time and effort, which was more valuable than any worker. These conditions all sprang from the conviction summed up by W. R. Lethaby in Art and Workmanship, "Every work of art shows that it was made by a human being for a human being."<sup>71</sup>

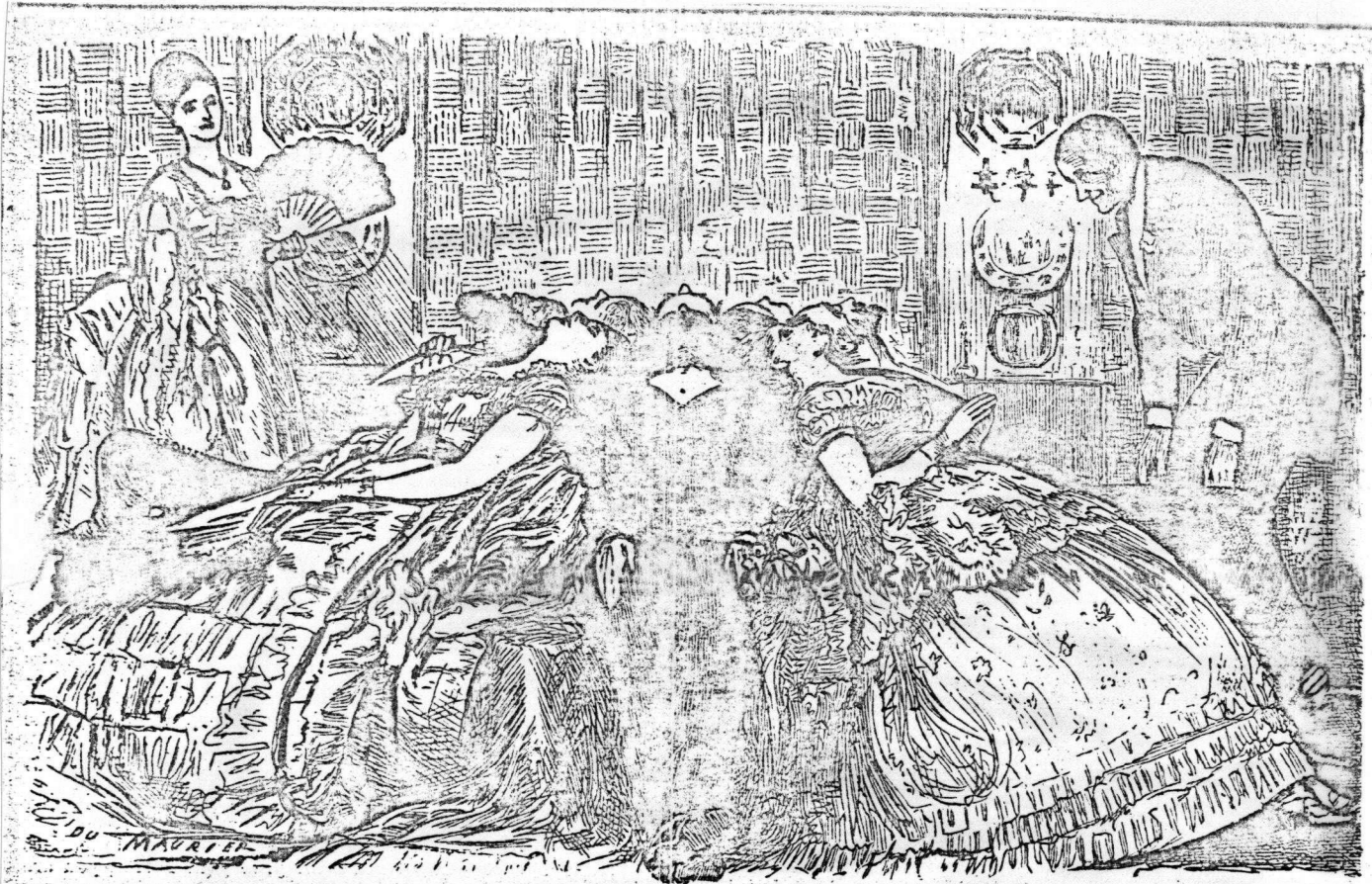
Although the domestic revival both in architecture and the manufactured arts began long before the aesthetic movement, it became an integral part of the fiction of the movement. In one aspect, the mania for blue and white porcelain, the domestic arts actually preceded the fine arts in the aesthetic movement. Du Maurier's "china-maniacs" appeared in Punch in the early 1870's, and in 1874 the Montgomery Spiffinses appeared in a Du Maurier cartoon with a newly decorated drawing-room ceiling. [Figures 41 and 42] One of the reasons that the domestic revival became a target for caricature and was taken up as a part of aestheticism was because it represented the extension of artistic sensibilities into a new sphere. Therefore it was an example of art's ability to reform an aspect of life by making it more delightful and giving it a new meaning. The realization that the home was a refuge from commercial values, where the enduring human experiences of love, innocence of childhood, compassion, even grief and consolation provided the context for the collection and appreciation of all kinds of art work. The manufactured arts were deeply involved in the anti-modern sentiment which pervaded the art enthusiasm of the 1870's. The anti-capitalist passion which animated Morris and others within the arts and crafts movement was only one



**ACUTE CHINAMANIA.**

*May.* "MAMMA! MAMMA! DON'T GO ON LIKE THIS, PRAY!!"  
*Mamma (who has smashed a favourite pot).* "WHAT HAVE I GOT LEFT TO LIVE FOR?"  
*May.* "HAVEN'T YOU GOT ME, MAMMA?"  
*Mamma.* "YOU, CHILD! YOU'RE NOT UNIQUE!! THERE ARE SIX OF YOU—A COMPLETE SET!!"

Figure 41



**ART IN EXCELSIS.**

THE MONTGOMERY SPIFFINSES HAVE JUST HAD THEIR DRAWING-ROOM CEILING ELABORATELY DECORATED BY ARTISTIC HANDS. THEY ARE MUCH GRATIFIED BY THE SENSATION PRODUCED UPON THEIR FRIENDS.

Figure 42



aspect of the general discontent with modern conditions. As in the fine arts, designers who were not opposed to the social and economic foundations of modern industry still lamented the contrary aims of art and commerce.

Designers of the present day do not live under conditions the most favorable to their art. It is their misfortune that they are not left to work out the vein of design natural to them, but are continually called off in some other direction. What matter if there is gold or silver in the neglected working, if it is brass or pewter which happens to be the fashion? We are free neither to follow tradition nor to perfect a style, be it ever so distinctly our own. It is the glitter of newness which attracts.

This is the more significant because it presumes a past freedom which never existed; the industrial designer of the 1870's was, if anything, freer to develop his style than were old craftsmen who received direct dictation from buyers. The lament is in fact a criticism of the disciplines of the machine age, the necessity of being prudent and marketable, the impersonality of the market and the vulgar fashions of a large and incoherent mass of consumers.

By the late 1870's, despite Morris' later defection to Marxism, the enemy of art and culture was not merely the middle-classes and industrialism, without both of which the artistic revival never would have existed, but rather modernity itself and all the mechanical rhythms of modern life. The enduring historicism of the Victorian artistic tradition and the passion for the eternal forms of nature were evidence that the Victorian art consciousness stood steadfast for the cultural life of the past against the imposition of the modern rhythm of activity, of which the great symbol was the machine. In the

struggle for art, the working class was no more an ally than the middle class; they suffered more from the machine than any group but they also had much to gain from the wealth which efficient industrialization generated. Even Morris believed that the workers could revive art in a new society, not simply because of their relationship to the means of production but because all human labor was capable of art; it was in artists rather than in workers that Morris believed and trusted. In 1870 when news of the Paris commune reached Ruskin, he rejoiced in the revolutionary effort until he received news of the burning of the Louvre and, recalling Burckhardt's reaction in Basle, Ruskin rejected communism as yet another barbaric side of modernity.<sup>73</sup>

In painting, artists strove to rise above these obstacles in order to perfect their style and assert their pure individuality. In industrial life, the designer had to deal with many of these obstacles, to accommodate himself to their directions and according to Day, this was part of a designer's artistic duty. "It rests with those who have some faculty of design (their name is not legion) to come to the aid of manufacture, which, without help from art, is given over to the ugliness they deplore."<sup>74</sup> Industrial designers were therefore, despite their intimate and lasting sojourn in enemy territory, worthy champions of aestheticism over Philistinism. As Walter Crane saw it, it was a holy war in which design, as art's weapon, might carry the battle deep in hostile territory.

Turn where we will, we must confront the enemy, however, and each do his part towards the solution of the problem... But new difficulties must be met by new methods, and when we go forth in our warpaint, tattooed, as it were, with the whole grammar of

ornament, to meet the monsters of our time clad in plate glass and iron, or fortified in desirable residences, let us not forget the sling and stone of individual thought and judgment, and that it may yet be potent to put to flight the armies of the Philistines.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the dependence of aestheticism upon Philistinism, if understood as the dependence of art production on industry and commerce, was inescapable in the manufactured arts. The solution to the problem of opposing tendencies of artistic and commercial values was sought in the separation of these two aspects of modern culture. In 1881, the Earl of Derby declared,

We do not boast of aesthetic cotton-mills. I have seen one or two attempts in that direction, but on the whole, the less said about them the better. But I think our law courts, our town halls, our free libraries, and public buildings of that sort, even in our poor smoky Lancashire, will bear architectural comparison with the most modern European work I know. A great writer is perpetually inculcating the theory that so long as we live in smoky towns and use steam-engines and build tall chimneys, it is no use our trying to be artistic. Well, that seems to be a hard doctrine...and if English art is only to begin to flourish when English manufactures cease, I am afraid it will have a very long time to wait, nor would people utterly impoverished care much for anything that was not necessary for their subsistence.<sup>76</sup>

In many ways the 1870's and early 1880's was a great age for manufactured art. Not only were there many able designers producing works which satisfied the most critical tastes but they also were popular works which sold well. There was every reason for optimism, both for the future of art and the future of manufacturing. It was this part of the aesthetic movement--the sunflower dados and peacock-patterned tiles--which gave credence to the widespread fiction that there was an art movement, for certainly the outward forms of ornament seemed new and represented a new order. [Figures 43 and 44] Yet the conditions upon which this effulgence rested were ephemeral and the tremendous problems which had always plagued industrial design were



Figure 43



Figure 44

not solved. The domestic revival and the aesthetic movement generally in all its artistic productions rested on the wealth which the middle classes were willing to spend on art work. As long as they were convinced of the pricelessness of artistic expression and had the money to pursue art, the movement flourished, both in the handicraft industries and in the ateliers. But economic difficulties took their toll on art industries, which were more susceptible to market pressures than were painters, especially when designers chose to put their artistic integrity above the commercial realities of the marketplace, or were ignorant of those conditions.<sup>77</sup> Few of the arts and crafts industries survived more than a few years.

Also the domestic revival had aimed its reforms more at the consumer and the designer than at the workers in art industries. For one thing, the relationship of the worker to the designer and the process of manufacture had been fixed pragmatically; it was impossible to train all workers as designers and in practice, art workers became highly skilled in a specific aspect of production in order to facilitate the accurate reproduction of designs. Nothing more could be done about the worker to improve design. The reform movements had concentrated on the designer and his freedom and the education of public taste and even Morris believed that all workers ought to be designers and all men ought to work. But because designers were accepted as artists, their problems were very different from those of the majority of the working class, even the skilled laborers in art industries. It was no coincidence that Morris began his missionary activity in the late 1870's when the fate of art and the fate of the working class

were being severed; for him the division was false, as workers had to be artists as well. Yet if industrial art had any hope of being democratic, of being readily available to the multitude, Morris' identification had to be relinquished. After the enthusiasm for domestic art died and the market turned to newer styles in the 1890's and early twentieth century, the handicraft designer, the art worker as Morris defined him, was an expensive commodity on the luxury market. C.R. Ashbee, one of Morris' disciples lamented decades later, "We have made of a great social movement, a narrow and tiresome little aristocracy working with great skill for the very rich."<sup>78</sup>

In both the fine and manufactured arts then, the aesthetic movement was a fiction created both by those who championed what they saw as the new freedom of art and those who feared that such freedom merely signaled the beginning of art's estrangement from the serious and vital experiences of all human life. The movement was then a creation of hopes and fears, a straw-man whose substantial reality was the result of vigorous but confused activity. In fact the groups who supported aestheticism and those that condemned or ridiculed it were often very alike in their love of art and their belief in its importance to modern culture. After the crisis in the Victorian art consciousness which accompanied the rise of the new styles and new methods in the art world in the 1860's, in the heady optimism of the delight with new forms and ideas, quite dissimilar ideas, activities and people were grouped together because they seemed to further the cause of art. Even "the cause of art", so near to so many hearts, became a blanket which covered a multitude of aims and ideals. Within

the art world, these differences were quite clear but the outsider and the neophyte saw these things in a light which cast no shadows, the bright light of a new age.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ferriday, "Peacock Room," Architectural Review, CXXV (June, 1959), 411; A. Welby Pugin, The True Principles and Revival of Christian Architecture (London, 1853).

<sup>2</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, H.C., 1836 (568), IX, 16, 17, 33; Great Britain, Reports and Documents, Exhibiting the State and Progress of the Head and Branch Schools of Design, H.C., 1850 (731), XLII, 337-8; Neil McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood and Factory Discipline," The Historical Journal, IV (1961), 32-7.

<sup>3</sup>Herwin Schaefer, The Roots of Modern Design (London, 1970). The functional tradition should not be confused with artistic design traditions; they rarely were the same.

<sup>4</sup>The rules for hanging in the Academy exhibition are found in Hutchinson, Royal Academy, 54-5, and these were little changed throughout the Victorian period. Hutchinson, 58, states that needlework and wax-flowers were allowed in other exhibitions of the eighteenth century, so the Academy's definition of fine art was rather more strict than was usual at the time.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Cole, Fifty Years of Public Work (London, 1884); John Ruskin, The Complete Works of John Ruskin, eds., E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903), XVI-XVIII, XXVII-XXX; William Morris, William Morris, The Collected Works of William Morris (London, 1918), XXI-XX; Lewis F. Day and Walter Crane, Moot Points: Friendly Disputes on Art and Industry (London, 1903).

<sup>6</sup>Eastlake, Household Taste, viii-ix; Elizabeth Aslin, The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau (London, 1969), 13; Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design (New York, 1949).

<sup>7</sup>anon., "The Present State of Architecture," The Quarterly Review, XCV (1854), 362.

<sup>8</sup>Pugin, True Principles, 35, confesses that he sacrificed fitness to purpose in furniture design to artistic principles.

<sup>9</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1836, 11.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 29.

<sup>11</sup>McKendrick, "Wedgwood," 36, explains these problems as ones of temperament, but they were more probably due to the work expectations of artists, which were very different from those of laborers. Hence it was easier to make workers into artists than to make artists into designers.

<sup>12</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1936, 33.

<sup>13</sup>Macdonald, Art Education, 60-185; Gordon Sutton, Artisan or

Artist? A History of the Teaching of Art and Crafts in English Schools (Oxford, 1967), 45-106.

<sup>14</sup>Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1850, 315.

<sup>15</sup>Macdonald, 81, 132.

<sup>16</sup>Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1850, 337-8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 326.

<sup>18</sup>Sutton, 63. After the transfer, construction began at the South Kensington site in 1857.

<sup>19</sup>Stuart Durant, Victorian Ornamental Design (London, 1972), 9-12.

<sup>20</sup>Macdonald, 172; Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1850, 333.

<sup>21</sup>There were annual reports from the Schools of Design from 1843 on, but the major investigation of the Schools was made in 1850, see Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1950, 311-447.

<sup>22</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1836, vii, 16, 24.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 31, 33.

<sup>24</sup>Macdonald, 136-7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 243. Wornum's lectures were published, see Ralph N. Wornum, Analysis of Ornament: The Characteristics of Styles (London, 1882).

<sup>26</sup>Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1850, 331-2.

<sup>27</sup>anon., "The Manchester Exhibition," The Quarterly Review, CII (1857), 165.

<sup>28</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1836, 15, 33.

<sup>29</sup>Great Britain, Reports and Documents, 1850, 331.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 336; Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 19-20, 28.

<sup>31</sup>Art Journal, VI (1855), 40; Eastlake, 13, 118, 258, 270.

<sup>32</sup>Millicent Rose, "Dwelling and Ornament in the East End," The Architectural Review, CIII (June, 1948), 244-6. See also, Eastlake, 32.

- <sup>33</sup>Eastlake, 91.
- <sup>34</sup>Richard Redgrave, "Supplementary Report on Design," Report by the Juries for the Great Exhibition (London, 1852); Ralph N. Wornum, "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste—An Essay on Ornamental Art as Displayed in the Industrial Exhibition in Hyde Park," The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition, London 1851 (London, 1851).
- <sup>35</sup>The Reports and Documents submitted to the House of Commons in 1850 was a part of a reform campaign aimed at reorganizing the Schools.
- <sup>36</sup>Cited in Sutton, 166.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 47-67; Macdonald, 73-112.
- <sup>38</sup>Owen Jones, The Grammar of Ornament (London, 1856).
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., 5-8.
- <sup>40</sup>Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1836, 17.
- <sup>41</sup>Art Journal, VI (1855), 28.
- <sup>42</sup>Eastlake, 55.
- <sup>43</sup>Cited in Nicolette Grey, "Prophets of the Modern Movement," The Architectural Review, LXXXI (January, 1937), 50.
- <sup>44</sup>Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South (London, 1897), 156-7.
- <sup>45</sup>Lewis F. Day, Pattern Design (London, 1915), 2; Ruskin, Works, X, 197-9.
- <sup>46</sup>Aslin, 36-78; H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, "The Victorian Home," Victorian Architecture, ed., Peter Ferriday (Philadelphia, 1964), 73-83.
- <sup>47</sup>John Summerson, "Pugin at Ramsgate," The Architectural Review, CII (April, 1948), 163-6.
- <sup>48</sup>Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste. The Rise and Fall of the Objets d'Art Market since 1750, II (New York, 1963), 202-3.
- <sup>49</sup>Ferriday, "Peacock Room," 411; The Architectural Review
- <sup>50</sup>The Magazine of Art, III (1880), 270.
- <sup>51</sup>Part of Eastlake's book appeared as early as 1864, see Charles Eastlake, "The Fashion of Furniture," The Cornhill Magazine, IX (1864), 337-49.

- <sup>52</sup>Eastlake, Household Taste, viii.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid, 4-5.
- <sup>54</sup>Art Journal, VI (1867), 229.
- <sup>55</sup>Eastlake, Household Taste, 91.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid, 13, 270.
- <sup>57</sup>Lady Burne-Jones, Memorials, I, 156-68; Barrington, Leighton, I, 276-277, II, 104-8, 110-2, 203-4.
- <sup>58</sup>Wilde, Works, I, 32-3, declared, "a painting [has not] any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the walls of Damascus or a Hitzen vase."
- <sup>59</sup>One of the problems growing out of this was whether or not the art work of design was valued separately from the actual manufacture of the object. In 1836 design and manufacture were not separate jobs in many industries and the worker received wages which did not distinguish between art work and mechanical labor, see Great Britain, Report from the Committee on Arts, 1836, 33. When Morris' firm began manufacturing stained glass in the 1860's, the firm's accountant attempted to separate the charges made to clients for design and manufacture, and to assess higher prices for designs in order to put the firm's artists on a level approaching other artists, see Raymond Watkinson, William Morris as Designer (London, 1967), 35.
- <sup>60</sup>Gillian Naylor, The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory (London, 1971), 153.
- <sup>61</sup>Ruskin, Works, X, 197-8, 202; Eastlake, Household Taste, 105.
- <sup>62</sup>Paul Thompson, The Work of William Morris (London, 1967), 89-90.
- <sup>63</sup>Lewis F. Day, Pattern Design, 263.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid, 264; Christopher Dresser, Principles of Decorative Design (London, 1873).
- <sup>65</sup>Eastlake, Household Taste, 66-7.
- <sup>66</sup>National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, Transactions (Liverpool, 1888), and Transactions (Edinburgh, 1889).
- <sup>67</sup>Lewis F. Day, Pattern Design, 263-4.

<sup>68</sup>Aslin, 128-44.

<sup>69</sup>Durant, Victorian Ornamental Design, 75; Aslin, 129.

<sup>70</sup>Naylor, Arts and Crafts Movement, 115-6; McKendrick, "Wedgwood," 35-6; Michael Trappes-Lomax, Pugin: A Medieval Victorian (London, 1933), 31-2.

<sup>71</sup>Cited in Naylor, 181.

<sup>72</sup>Lewis F. Day, Pattern Design, 262.

<sup>73</sup>Ruskin, Works, XXVII, Fors Clavigera (1 July 1871), 181-2.

Ruskin's statement was:

For, indeed, I am myself a Communist of the old school—reddest also of the red; and was on the very point of saying so at the end of my last letter; only the telegram about the Louvre's being on fire stopped me, because I thought the Communists of the new school, as I could not at all understand them, might not quite understand me. For we Communists of the old school think that our property belongs to everybody, and everybody's property to us; so of course I thought the Louvre belonged to me as much as to the Parisians, and expected they would have sent word over to me, being an Art Professor, to ask whether I wanted it burnt down. But no message or intimation to that effect ever reached me.

<sup>74</sup>Lewis F. Day, Pattern Design, 2.

<sup>75</sup>Art Journal, XX (1881), 228.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 232.

<sup>77</sup>Naylor, 153, 170-1.

<sup>78</sup>Cited in Naylor, 9.

The existing histories of the aesthetic movement have drawn their landscapes with large, bold, and always colorful strokes. Certain forms have been clearly delimited through their techniques and have entered the field of historical myth in which a form itself is sufficient to convey an entire complex of images. Unfortunately, too often this complex of images has been created by the historian rather than discovered by him. The sunflower and peacock, William Morris and his wallpapers, Walter Pater's dreamy Renaissance, Du Maurier's intense and drooping aesthetes, and Burne-Jones' languid canvases—these are some of the obvious expressions of the English aesthetic movement and they are all, more or less, myths in that their meaning and relationships to Victorian culture are imposed on them in order to explain events and attitudes whose significance has already been decided upon. These relationships and meanings do not seem, after even preliminary research, genuine; they do not satisfy.

Most of the histories of aestheticism have been content to explain Victorian culture mythically because the historians, most of them art or literary critics, have assumed from the outset that they understand the forms and relationships with which they are dealing. This is quite obvious in the history of Victorian art where the only artists to win serious praise and consideration used to be those under the influence of French art.<sup>1</sup> And even more prevalent was the approval given to art theorists for their "progressive" approach to the problems of design and the disapproval heaped on practising designers for their "monstrous" creations and their inability to develop a truly modern

style, by which the historian generally meant modernism.<sup>2</sup> The patent absurdity of this approach reveals itself in an article by Nicolette Gray, published in 1937.<sup>3</sup> In the "Prophets of the Modern Movement" she pointed out that precisely the same criticisms were leveled against mid-Victorian design by Richard Redgrave in 1851 as by Nikolaus Pevsner in 1936. The interesting question for her (and the fact that, as far as I can tell, she was the first to deal with it suggests the state of the problem) was why had not Redgrave, alive to the faults of mid-Victorian design, succeeded in evolving a modern style? And why had not Ruskin and Pugin, undoubtedly men of genius, seen as clearly as Redgrave the problems of modern design? Gray's answer to the first question was that Redgrave and others of his opinion lacked genius. But of course that merely makes the second question more insistent. Why, when mediocrities were so perceptive, was genius so blind?

If Gray demonstrates the absurdity of this approach, she is not alone in the basic failing. In some degree, every major history of the aesthetic movement and most of the histories of Victorian art suffer from the "interestedness" of their authors. Both the fields of art and literature tend towards the position that aesthetic qualities are absolute or eternally valid. It is one of our heirloom beliefs from the nineteenth century. Preoccupied with the essential and the lasting, art and literary historians often make judgments which the historian of culture cannot accept. For example, it is a serious distortion of Victorian history to dismiss Leighton as a mediocre artist and to praise and carefully catalogue Whistler's experiments. Such a

judgment dismisses the aesthetic criteria of the later Victorians, and more seriously still, ignores the intricacies of the art world and its relationship to the social and economic worlds. The student of Victorian history who knows why Rossetti exhumed his wife's body, but knows little or nothing of the Royal Academy's constitution or activities has a distorted view of Victorian culture. However dear they may be to us, we can no longer impose our aesthetic standards on past cultures.

Yet this is not the end of the difficulty, for the historian finds in the nineteenth century the same problems in cultural life that he may see in the cultural life of the twentieth century. More so than the political or social historian of the period, the cultural historian finds not merely suggestive similarities but in many cases a penetrating sameness of past and present problems. It is therefore understandable if historians draw certain parts of the landscape more clearly than other, even to the extent of ruining the perspective. In this manner, historians have done much to illuminate the Victorian world and have fulfilled an important function in their own time, as myth makers, in delimiting the cultural problems of modern men.

Some of these myths, however, are no longer acceptable. In this study, in re-examining relationships and the context of activities and events, I attempted to demonstrate why they are untenable; they simply do not adequately explain aestheticism. The most prevalent and seductive myth about the character of the aesthetic movement



is that it marked the final alienation, in both the comic and tragic modes, of the artist from the bourgeoisie and their attitudes and values. Although many artists and critics condemned middle-class ignorance and meanness, there was a vital financial and spiritual bond between artists and their bourgeois clients. The two worlds fed on each other, artists receiving money and their clients receiving the only satisfying proof of human nobility and dignity which they could buy. Except in cases where arguments arose, there is nothing to suggest that collectors or artists felt it to be either insulting or demeaning to buy and sell these works at extravagantly dear prices. If the character of the aesthetic movement could be understood in terms of alienation at all, which is doubtful, it would be the alienation of humanity from the machine, of culture from modernity, of the past from the present. Of all this, the middle-classes with their utilitarian philosophy and materialistic preoccupations became the symbol of Philistia, as they were more vulnerable and more amusing than the real enemy symbolized by the machine. Attacking the machine and the mechanistic institutions and relationships which sought to emulate the efficiency of the machine meant destroying what well-being had been won from the past; "Philistine" values had so penetrated Victorian culture and society that few were willing to accept the dreadful consequences of the end of the machine age. The artists of the 1870's almost all sided with the past against the present, but they carried on their holy war in such a way that they carefully avoided contact with the enemy.

The second myth is that the movement embodied the idea of art for art's sake, a conception that confuses more than it clarifies. The phrase in itself is meaningless but it was used by Whistler, Pater and Wilde to express in various contexts the independence of art and the artist, and the rejection of all extraneous values and standards when dealing with art. Even this definition obviously needs qualification, for artistic ideals and standards cannot be independent of experience and are therefore involved to some degree in extraneous values. Given their understanding of the term, however, a program of art for art's sake was never seriously advocated by anyone in the art world of the 1870's. The idealists clearly wished to reintegrate art into the national life and to reawaken a concern for art, as an expression of man's spiritual nature, in every sensible person. More importantly, their ideal was a society which had high aesthetic, social and moral values which would call for expression at the artists' hands. The designers of the period also wished to reintegrate art and society although in a different way. They were more concerned with the particular problems of art in industry, in awakening the aesthetic discrimination of both consumers and producers. Both of the major trends in the art world of the 1870's then accepted art for art's sake only in the sense that it meant art was valuable and ought to be an important part of national life and culture. Whistler and Pater, the most outspoken advocates of art for art's sake in the early years of the movement, believed that art had a vital link with experience and therefore, to them the slogan had a particular meaning.

For Whistler it meant the freedom of the artist from the interference of critics and dilettantes, the establishment of the artist as a professional within his own system of ethics. For Pater it meant that culture (by which he meant what Arnold meant, the best that men have said and done) was a personal possession which he valued for its liberating and enhancing qualities, not as a guide for action as Arnold had. Both Whistler and Pater were attempting to find a satisfying solution to the problem of the incongruity of art in its social and intellectual settings. They believed in the supreme importance of the life of the spirit and were attempting to define its proper expression within a culture which had no objective method of measuring the value of spiritual experience. The aesthete completely devoted to art as his only goddess and neglecting or deprecating every other aspect of life was only a caricature.

The last myth, and one of the earliest as it was put forward by both Wilde and Hamilton, is that the aesthetic movement was a rebirth of art, or of the romanticism of English literature of the beginning of the nineteenth century. Wilde especially, in his lecture on the movement given in America in 1882, took these as his themes. In art the idea that aestheticism was a rebirth of the romantic ideals of Keats and Shelley can be dismissed on the grounds that it has no useful, intelligible meaning. Certainly the artistic style in painting and design had no affinity with the Romantic style in painting exemplified by Haydon and John Martin, and none of the artists of the 1870's looked to the early nineteenth century for inspiration. The kinship

with the early romantics of which Wilde was sensible sprang from his perception that Keats had been scorned by society and had attempted to immortalize himself through the fabrication of art. Wilde did not arrive at aestheticism through Keats, but rather interpreted Keats through his aestheticism. It is equally obvious that the 1870's witnessed a rebirth of art only in the sense that the style of the 1870's was opposed to the work done in the 1850's, and the aesthetic judgment that the later work was superior to the earlier has generally been confirmed by later commentators. Of course the artists of the 1870's believed their work was true and mid-Victorian work was false and because of this, the rebirth of art is a meaningful image. But there are a myriad such rebirths of art in history (the mid-Victorian era had also enjoyed one on its rejection of Regency design) and the term can have no precise meaning until the activities, relationships and ideas peculiar to the 1870's are grasped. Only then can the nature of the artistic revival be understood. And in examining these, it becomes clear that many of the institutions and relationships which contributed to this revival were in fact developed during the early half of Victoria's reign, especially in the realm of the manufactured arts where the Schools of Design, the independent designer and the idea that art enobled manufactures prepared the way for the domestic revival.

In this study I have attempted to look beyond the obviousness of the evidence on the aesthetic movement in order to view the context of change. I have focused especially on the changing relationships

and meanings, rather than personalities and ideas, and have exposed a few of the most visible threads which weave through the art world. First of all, the aesthetic movement was a fiction in that it was created by people who wished to use it as an image—either to express certain truths and to popularize ideas and activities, or to criticize ideas and activities as absurd. The association of people and ideas in a movement was imposed by observers both sympathetic and critical. Although relationships between various people associated with the movement were often close and of critical importance in the development of their ideas and attitudes, those relationships were extraneous to the formation of the movement. Arising out of sympathies unconnected with the supposed tenets of aestheticism, or even in the case of the friendship between Burne-Jones and Morris opposed to them, these relationships are only incorrectly understood within the confines of the aesthetic movement.

Much of the character of the aesthetic movement was, in a manner of speaking, an accident, the result of a peculiar combination of interests and beliefs. It appeared suddenly in the late 1870's but had no exact beginning. Yet it did appear new, even glitteringly new, to contemporaries. This novelty existed more in the combination than in the particular ideas and interests, most of which had been important for years. In many ways aestheticism was based on the culmination of trends which stretched far back to the first years of the reign. The middle-class infatuation with art, the rise of the independent designers, the idealist styles in painting, artistic indi-

vidualism and its identification with freedom of the human spirit, culture as a personal possession all were felt and accepted to a large degree by the art world long before 1875. What gave them their intensity in the late 1870's was the accompanying reaction to traditions, the rejection of customary ideals and solutions. In themselves, each of these ideas was a criticism of some aspect of existing prejudices or conditions. Such criticisms were entirely characteristic of the intellectual climate of the 1850's and 1860's, but in the 1870's this criticism coalesced into a rejection of an era, the mid-Victorian era. The thing criticized was, of course, not an intellectual concept but a fiction as well. The aesthetic movement greatly contributed to the development of the idea of "Victorianism."

The combination of tradition and novelty can also be described in the way in which the aesthetic movement appeared to overcome some of the long-standing problems which the art world faced. The problems had existed since before the 1850's and the solutions which the aesthetic movement offered appeared to be new. The independent genius was to resolve the bankruptcy of patronage in the fine arts rather than the Royal Academy, and the inspiration and integrity of the individual were judged more capable of upholding art than the contrived activities of a corporation of artists. The degraded state of industrial design was to be reformed by the free artist-designer who was approaching the social and artistic rank of the painters, by virtue of the widespread attitudes towards the value of his work. These, of course, were only seeming solutions and testify both to the faith put in art as a re-

generative force, and to the overwhelming desire to resolve the tension which existed in the art world between its ideals and the limitations of its social organization. The solutions had to be merely believable and novel, which they were, although their novelty sprang from their implied rejection of traditional solutions (i.e., the Royal Academy and the Schools of Design).

This seeming novelty was a part of the aesthetic fiction and like the rest of it, had a substantial reality. First, the aesthetic solution proposed a reinterpretation of art and its role in modern society, often under the heading of art for art's sake. Artistic values, given free rein in the confined arenas of domestic life and "ateliers", expanded to fill and color these areas with the appealing sentiment that human life could be beautiful and noble, and that art made it so. In the midst of these vital discoveries, it seemed as if earlier decades had neglected art and had abused humanity in doing so. Of course earlier generations had loved art as well, but because relationships had changed, art was more deeply satisfying to more people in the 1870's than before because it was more tangible. One of the significant changes in attitude in this respect was the tendency to view art and the appreciation of art as a personal possession, and culture as a personal refinement. Unfortunately art as a personal possession implied art works as personal possessions and became something which could be bought, something which it was difficult to harmonize with the democratic hopes for art of those who cared for art and democracy. Education was absolutely necessary for achieving

culture and even if education could be made more democratic, education alone could not sustain personal culture. A certain environment had to be maintained. Yet this dilemma only became visible years later when aestheticism, stripped of its economic foundations and with many of its contradictions all too evident, retreated from the problems which democratic art posed. In a curious dream, the artist Charles Ricketts, described the fate of a man the aesthetic movement could not redeem. He was a "common-place man," shy with women but attracted to talented men, who wished eagerly to accomplish something. A coarse and ignorant woman trapped him into marriage and in this dull and loveless alliance, his hopes and aspirations rotted away. His wife stopped any trend towards culture on his part by an "instinctive hostility" and in the end, the man spent all his vital energy on the preservation of a vestige of peace and the shreds of his self-respect. In his journal for 1900, Ricketts recorded his reactions to his dream and its possibilities as a plot for a novel.

All this seemed horrible to me, and I wondered if it would be of interest to anyone. Yet the man seemed to me terribly pitiful, and I felt that in his degradation some dim consciousness would be his of the fearful odds against common people, the tragedy of common lives, and the absence of human intercourse among common people. Small glimmerings of finer things would shine within him like stars reflected in the mud of a river.<sup>4</sup>

The aesthetic movement in the late 1870's, developed as an uneasy truce between art and commerce, was allowed by the separation of artistic and commercial values into two clearly defined areas. This allowed the humanism which had always been an important part of the Victorian art tradition to flourish like a hot-house plant and to become the



spiritual solace for the injuries which the materialism and the mechanism of modern society inflicted. This artistic humanism was based on historical ideals of life expressed by the idealist painters and by many designers in their styles and in their methods of production. Above everything else the new art consciousness cherished art as a fundamental expression of human excellence, an idea which implied moral superiority as well as aesthetic. As this humanism was essentially an historical ideal and sentimental (because it opposed the materialistic conditions of modern society yet could not realistically attack them), the aesthetic movement could not form a program or even a systematic organization of ideas. As the conditions which gave it life faded, aestheticism grew more and more tenuous and more dream-like. It could not hope to restore the cultural grandeur which the Victorians perceived in the societies which existed in the West before the eighteenth century. Nor did it really make the attempt. It was enough at the time to cultivate the sense of that past glory, to recreate some aspect of the former beauty and dignity of human existence. Of course, any real restoration was impossible and was even made absurd by the fidelity to specific historical details which historicism fostered and which was evident in Alma-Tadema's minutely-plotted visions of ancient Greece and Rome. It was, in the very best sense, play-acting of a sober but delightful kind. It would be misleading to think of it as escapism for even in its most esoteric forms, aestheticism had a serious, one is tempted to say an earnest, purpose—the preservation of certain values, and

the cultivation of a humanism, both of which were moribund in the mechanistic society of the 1870's.

In this cultural play-acting, the aesthetic movement was only the most theatrical part. Idealist painting, the domestic revival in architecture, impressionism, the arts and crafts movement, the personal relativism of Pater all contributed to a wider emergence of humanism in the arts. These more general, more respectable and more acceptable changes formed the raw material of the aesthetic movement fiction, as life among the Victorian upper classes formed the raw material for Trollope's fiction. Aestheticism and the widespread changes in the perception of art and its value did tend in the same direction and suffered from the same weaknesses and contradictions. Both believed in a hopeless restoration—the recreation of the forms of cultural grandeur while renouncing the spiritual and material organization of older societies. Only a few, the chief among them William Morris, realized that the art of the earth, man's true expression of worthwhile labor, could only be restored by destroying the material organization of society.<sup>5</sup> Yet his logical consistency was only what the Earl of Derby called foolish, for to give up the efficiency of the industrial organization, which was absolutely necessary to Morris' ideal, meant widespread suffering for all classes. On the other hand, renouncing art, which embodied the pre-industrial values of freedom, beauty, faith and dignity, meant losing the precious sense of man's worth to himself as a man apart from the machine. The paradox then was the only reasonable answer, the only promising

view of art and society at the time.

The brilliance of the 1870's and 1880's lay in the trembling realization that it worked. Of course, it could not work for long as it rested on such uncertain foundations, and once put asunder, the opposing values of art and commerce were not easily reconciled. This opposition partly explained the curious and fitful languor of late-Victorian culture which was in effect divided against itself. The art critics of the 1870's were the first to perceive that an aesthetic fraud had been perpetrated by mid-Victorian artists and this perception quickened the rejection of mid-Victorian values by adding moral indignation to the traditional criticisms of mid-Victorian ideas and styles. Yet the aesthetic movement was in itself a fraud, a fiction containing glaring contradictions. Once exposed, as it was to Ricketts in his dream, to Morris at the height of the movement and to Wilde in Reading Gaol, it became yet more evidence of the bankruptcy of Victorianism. Thus the optimism of the 1870's, so brilliant and so various, turned to bitterness and hopelessness by the century's end.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Any library catalogue will reveal the frustrating condition of secondary material in this respect. The books on Whistler and the Pre-Raphaelite painters far outnumber those on Leighton, Poynter, Briton Riviere, or any number of other artists who did not challenge the Academic traditions of style and professional position. The works that are available on the latter are outdated for the most part and many were never meant as scholarly studies of either art or history.

<sup>2</sup>Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolette Grey, "Prophets of the Modern Movement," The Architectural Review, LXXXI (January, 1937), 49-50.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Ricketts, Self-Portrait, Taken From the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts, R.A., ed. Cecil Lewis (London, 1939), 33.

<sup>5</sup>Even before his conversion to Marxist revolutionary doctrine, Morris was led, perhaps by his Icelandic studies, to believe that the world required a dreadful devastation before art could be reborn. See William Morris, The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends, ed., Phillip Henderson (London, 1950), 62, 64, 113.

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