

Fact into Figure: Typology in Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, by Herbert Sussman; pp. xix + 158. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979, \$11.00.

TWO RECENT WORKS, GEORGE LANDOW'S *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* and Herbert Sussman's *Fact Into Figure: Typology in Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, examine an early Pre-Raphaelite tendency toward religious, historical, social, and ethical allegory. Landow's extensive study analyzes typological conventions in a wide range of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Sussman's briefer *Fact Into Figure* traces some sources for Pre-Raphaelite symbolism in biblical exegesis, evangelical science, and Thomas Carlyle's and John Ruskin's figural readings of history. Dismissing Romanticism as "unscientific," Sussman ignores another major source for the characteristic Pre-Raphaelite fascination with natural detail: Romantic criticism, poetry, and art. His general equation of Romanticism with vague emotionalism and incoherent metaphysics minimizes the Pre-Raphaelites' attempts to realize such Romantic ideals as brilliant coloration, landscape, sensuous elaboration, and direct expression of feeling.

Sussman reviews Carlyle's and Ruskin's use of historical typology in *Past and Present* and *Stones of Venice* in two early chapters, then devotes the major portion of his study to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood from 1846 to 1853, the period in which William Holman Hunt's, John Everett Millais's and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's early interests in intricate symbolic patterns converged and flourished. In three chapters entitled "Scripture as History," "History as Scripture," and "Literary Paintings," he postulates a typological focus for such works as Hunt's *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids* and *Claudio and Isabella*, and Millais's *The Carpenter's Shop*, *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, and *The Woodman's Daughter*. He also offers several citations from contemporary critics which suggest that they did think in these terms, and attempted on several occasions to identify and evaluate figurative patterns within Pre-Raphaelite works.

Such allegorical readings better fit the moral and religious literalism of Hunt than the more oblique allusions of Rossetti and

Millais. No doubt the young squire's gift of fruits in Millais's *The Woodman's Daughter* prefigures the recipient's seduction and death. But the painting's bright verdure and attractive children were no less present to a Victorian audience little acquainted with Coventry Patmore's poems, and such an audience would have responded with immediate sympathy to the suggestion of innocent childhood love thwarted by distinctions of rank. Millais's sensuousness and straining after poignance, which Sussman calls "sentimental eroticism" (p. 77) and "a slosh of feeling" (p. 79), in fact began rather early, and always coexisted with the historical and emblematic elements Sussman values. As he notes, they eventually dwindled to simplistic mannerisms. A *Woodman's Daughter* without pastoral brilliance, nevertheless, would be more unrecognizable — and less interesting — than a *Woodman's Daughter* without a seduction emblem.

Even Hunt struggled somewhat to reconcile homiletic prescriptions with Pre-Raphaelite delight in landscape and sensuous detail. In *The Hireling Shepherd*, trysting shepherds, vivid wheatfields, and frisking sheep tend to affirm what the engorged sheep and death's-head moth dutifully deny. Hunt's rigorism in the use of biblical types was sincere, however, and perhaps for this reason he waived ambivalent portrayal of sexual love in his most important later paintings: *The Scapegoat* (1856), *The Finding of the Savior in the Temple* (1854-60), *The Triumph of the Innocents* (1876-87, Walker Art Gallery version), and *May Morning on Magdalene Tower* (1888-91). Millais and Rossetti soon found such religious allegory too confining for their celebrations of domestic happiness and erotic mysticism, and Sussman does a good job of tracing their escape from Hunt's fold. His comparisons of early and later drafts of Rossetti's *My Sister's Sleep, Ave* (entitled *Mater Pulchrae Delectionis* in an 1847 draft), and *The Blessed Damozel* show omission, even subversion of religious motifs.

Sussman's epilogue argues that artists since the early Pre-Raphaelites have been unable to share meanings with their audience. He cites as evidence of this an *Aethnaeum* diatribe of 10 May 1856 against *The Scapegoat*. "The question is simply this, — here is a dying goat, which, as a mere goat, has no more interest for us than the sheep

that furnished our yesterday's dinner . . . it is impossible to paint a goat, though its eyes were upturned with human passion, that could explain any allegory or hidden type. . . . We might spin these fancies from anything — from an old wall, a centaur's beard, or a green duck pond." Sussman concludes with some nostalgia: "Once natural fact is no longer seen figurally, no longer felt to have an inherent or 'intrinsic' metaphysical correspondence to a specific spiritual fact, then any physical object can serve equally well to represent any general principle or emotional state and the way is open for the private mythologies and *symboliste* methods that characterize art and literature from the later nineteenth century to the present day."

In fact, Landow notes in his study of Hunt that *The Scapegoat* did meet with some appreciation. No one, moreover, would claim that the Pre-Raphaelites were less acceptable to their Victorian audience in 1856 than six years earlier. The *Athenaeum* reviewer's objection is hardly to the use of complex allegory and symbolism, but to Hunt's choice of a "low" object as vehicle; he finds the representation of a goat, like an "old wall" or "green duck pond," inherently contemptible and ludicrous. At its best, Pre-Raphaelite art resisted such conventions of "sublimity" with striking and unexpected juxtapositions. Hunt clearly wished to use the goat's humble nature and its emblematic significance to represent exactly such a contrast between divine and human judgments. The quotation he affixed from *Isaiah* 53:4 indicts human heedlessness and pride: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Sussman's own reconstructions also testify that reinterpreted "private mythologies" can retain their power to startle and perplex. Despite strong early disagreements with their audience, the Pre-Raphaelites accommodated certain conventions of the Royal Academy to central elements of Victorian taste: admiration for bright coloration and ornamentation, narrative sequence, moral didacticism, and romantic, familial, and patriotic themes.

Fact Into Figure is well indexed and well illustrated but very brief (less than one hundred pages of written text), and his arguments are seldom applied to the work of

lesser Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood figures such as Thomas Woolner, Walter Deverell, and William Michael Rossetti. More evidence from contemporary art-criticism or early-Victorian religious, historical, and scientific treatises would also be desirable. A restricted focus tends to overemphasize Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood unity of purpose; figural motives were only one among several aspects of their loosely shared theory and practice.

In one hundred thirty years, critical response to the Pre-Raphaelites seems ironically to have come full circle. Early critics pilloried the movement as a clique, and later critics tended to reduce it to a collection of anecdotal splinters. Recent studies have argued that the Pre-Raphaelites did in fact share common modes for painting landscape (Alan Staley, *The Pre-Raphaelite Landscape*, 1973), presenting psychological and biographical themes (David Sonstroem, *Rossetti and the Fair Lady*, 1970), and expressing social concern (A. I. Grieve, *The Pre-Raphaelite Modern-Life Subject*, 1976). Sussman's monograph provides a useful reminder of the extent to which a self-conscious typology informed many of their best early works.

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The Victorian Constitution: Conventions, Usages and Contingencies, by G. H. L. Le May; pp. viii + 243. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, \$25.00; London: Duckworth, £8.50.

WHAT IS CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY? IT IS NOT a term that is used as much as it was half or even a quarter of a century ago when the constitutional histories of G. B. Adams, D. L. Keir, and many others were prescribed reading in English history courses. Much has been written in the past few decades about topics of constitutional importance such as the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, 1884, and 1918, the Parliament Act of 1911, and the structure of politics in the reformed Parliament, but generally in the context of political history. Despite his rigorous subtitle, G. H. L. Le May writes more in this tradition than in that of the older constitutional historians or of political scientists such as Ivor Jennings or John P. Mackintosh. There is a great deal about the role of the monarchy, the cabinet