In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.
The Hireling Shepherd represented William Holman Hunt's first effort at producing a modern landscape with a moral theme. To date scholarship has focused exclusively on interpreting the work's complex iconography. Such a narrow approach fails to consider the more fundamental issue of how the painting functioned within the context of the rural landscape tradition as it existed in mid-Victorian England. This present investigation will address this problem by analyzing The Hireling Shepherd in concert with its critical reception and the relevant historical circumstances which surrounded its production.

An assessment of the critical response to the painting clearly indicates that Hunt's coarse, idle, rural lovers disturbed and angered a large segment of the predominantly urban, middle-class audience that viewed it at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1852. To make sense of this response it is necessary to determine first what constituted acceptable rural imagery. An examination of prints, songs, and literary descriptions, as well as paintings, reveals that a remarkably congruent vision of the countryside as a place of peace, virtue, social harmony, and plenty was presented to the urban public as an accurate representation of contemporary rural life. This normative vision was predicated upon viewer needs and expectations which, in turn, were strongly affected by the economic status of agriculture in this period, and by related social and political issues. Hunt's image, therefore, is discussed in relationship to other, more acceptable rustic
landscapes and analyzed in the context of contemporary agricultural issues.

Despite its generally hostile reception in the conservative and centrist press, *The Hireling Shepherd* did have admirers, who also wrote favorably of the two other major Pre-Raphaelite works in the exhibition, Millais' *Ophelia* and *A Huguenot*. An examination of the reviews received by these three paintings together with other contemporary writings on Pre-Raphaelitism indicates that admirers tended to be politically liberal, scientifically-oriented intellectuals. They expressed a marked preference for the highly particularized and scientifically accurate detailing of these works as opposed to the more generalized and idealized effects of paintings produced in the academic tradition established by Joshua Reynolds and perpetuated by Charles Eastlake.

Having identified the public for Hunt's rustic landscape, it is necessary to understand why this group wished to promote this type of painting. A scrutiny of writings by some of the most ardent supporters of *The Hireling Shepherd* and other like-minded intellectuals discloses similar beliefs in the value of scientific methodology as an instrument of social and moral progress. On an artistic level *The Hireling Shepherd* mediates these various ideas by suggesting that a "truthful" composition rendered with scientifically accurate detail is a better vehicle for revealing moral truth than the "false" idealizations of academic classicism.

The results of this investigation indicate that Holman Hunt's refusal to promote an affirmative vision of rural England
was prompted by his moral commitment to an art based on scientific observation and delineation. As a consequence The Hireling Shepherd challenged traditional assumptions about the nature and purpose of rustic landscape painting and at the same time activated an even larger conflict concerning the role of science as an instrument for maintaining ideological control of English society.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A thesis represents a communal effort, even though it bears the name of only one individual. I would like to thank my friends in Vancouver and Bellingham whose support and encouragement was unflagging throughout this project. In addition, David Solkin facilitated the progress of this thesis at every stage—from offering useful ideas at the outset to scrutinizing the final product with a trained editorial eye. Serge Guilbaut not only supplied helpful suggestions for this particular effort, but also taught me how to look at art and art history with a new critical awareness. Finally, I wish to thank George Kriz for his technical advice in preparing the manuscript, as well as for his much needed love and support.
INTRODUCTION

In 1852 William Holman Hunt exhibited a painting with a seemingly innocuous theme at London's Royal Academy. Entitled The Hireling Shepherd (Fig. 1, p. 98) it depicted a shepherd and shepherdess reposing in a summer landscape. This type of rustic subject was commonplace at this time, appearing repeatedly in paintings, popular prints, and illustrations for books, magazines, and sheet music. Hunt later wrote of The Hireling Shepherd that although he intended it to have moral significance,

...my first object as an artist was to paint, not dresden china bergers, but a real Shepherd, and a real Shepherdess, and a landscape in full sunlight, with all the colour of luscious summer...^1

The artist's desire to paint a scene with primary attention given to the truthful representation of figures and their natural setting seems as unremarkable and uncontroversial as the subject selected. The reviews which the painting received upon its exhibition clearly indicate, however, that there existed strong and divergent opinions about the artistic consequences of Hunt's attachment to the 'truth.'

Most of the reviews which appeared in the London press were openly hostile. For example, the Athenaeum reported that: "Mr. Hunt, who has 'an oath in heaven' to tell 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth,' carries anti-eclecticism to the absurd. Like Swift he revels in the repulsive."^2 Not all the reviews were unfavorable, however. The Spectator critic, William Michael
Rossetti, who was Hunt's friend and fellow Pre-Raphaelite, saw the situation differently. Writing of *The Hireling Shepherd* and the other Pre-Raphaelite works in the exhibit, he declared:

...it is superfluous to say that they [the paintings] are produced on the "Pre-Raphaelite" principle of faithful unswerving truth—a truth which recognizes no degree of less and more—were it not that we conceive this fact to be the key to their altogether peculiar impressiveness.

Why did one viewer find Hunt's painting "repulsive" and another peculiarly impressive? This investigation will examine this question, which can be restated in more general and fundamental terms: Why was this rural landscape with its distinctive form of Pre-Raphaelite realism produced in England at mid-century and what did it mean to contemporary viewers? The answers to these questions will not only promote an understanding of this particular work, but will also help to explain the function of rural landscape painting at this time as well as the phenomenon of Pre-Raphaelite realism, which by the late 1850's was to become the dominant mode of landscape painting in England.

It is reasonable to ask why more effort should be expended in studying this painting. Beyond the cursory references to *The Hireling Shepherd* in exhibition catalogs and surveys of Pre-Raphaelite painting, two extended analyses of the work appeared in the early 1970's—an article of 1972 by John Duncan Macmillan and a chapter of a doctoral thesis by Lindsay Errington, completed the following year. A brief review of this research, however, reveals major methodological weaknesses which lead to an inadequate and even misleading evaluation of the painting's
meaning and importance.

Macmillan's article, "Holman Hunt's Hireling Shepherd: Some Reflections on a Victorian Pastoral," is an iconographical study of the work's pastoral imagery. The author connects Hunt's own statements about the painting to possible thematic sources. These include verses from St. John (which refer to a 'hireling') and Milton's Lycidas, which uses biblical allegory and pastoral imagery in order to comment on contemporary church leadership. Artistic precedents for the composition are found in the fancy pastorals of Boucher, which, Macmillan argues, represented the antithesis of the morally elevating art to which Hunt was committed. Hunt's intent, according to this analysis, was to produce an anti-pastoral which critiqued the actions of the contemporary clergy and exposed the falseness of earlier pastoral painting by demonstrating the virtue of depicting the visual truth. This analysis of iconography and thematic sources is coherent, thorough, and convincing, and thus will be of great value to this present investigation.

The problems with Macmillan's article derive from the way in which he sets out to answer his original question: "What exactly does the picture mean." For him, this question translates into: what meaning did Hunt intend his painting to convey? Within this narrowly defined scope the author fails to consider fully the contemporary religious controversies which he claims inspired Hunt's symbolic attack on the clergy. Only one paragraph refers to current ecclesiastical disputes, without expanding on their nature and importance. Even more serious is Macmillan's
assumption that the meaning of The Hireling Shepherd can be elucidated solely by studying the symbolic content of its imagery. No attention is directed to the manner in which the work was executed—the hard-edge detailing, lack of chiaroscuro, and use of bright colors, which were the hallmark of Pre-Raphaelite realism. Hunt's decision to paint in this manner was conditioned by a increasing demand for highly particularized images—a fact which Macmillan totally neglects.

Finally, the most fundamental problem with Macmillan's approach involves his assumption that The Hireling Shepherd has a single meaning, defined by its producer, which is fixed and timeless. It is obvious from the critical excerpts quoted previously (see pp. 1 and 2) that the painting was seen quite differently by Hunt and various sectors of the contemporary London public, yet Macmillan simply termed the work "a success." This statement might lead to the misapprehension that most viewers liked the picture and correctly interpreted its moral message. A thorough analysis of the critical response is crucial: determining how different types of viewers responded to the painting and the reasons for their response aids enormously in the identification of the major contemporary issues and conflicts which the work activated. Only by examining The Hireling Shepherd in the context of these issues can its historical significance be discovered.

Errington's exhaustive analysis of the iconography of The Hireling Shepherd agrees fundamentally with Macmillan's. It also shares the same basic weakness—the failure to examine any aspect of the work beyond its thematic sources and intended symbolic
meaning. Both observe that Hunt's use of a Virgilian pastoral to critique a neglectful clergy resembles Milton's Lycidas in form and purpose. Unlike Macmillan, Errington explores the status of contemporary religious controversies to determine possible motives for Hunt's desire to critique pastoral leadership.

Since Hunt's public did not appear concerned with his symbolic references to sectarian division among a neglectful clergy, Errington dismisses the critical response to the painting with a single sentence: "The price for Hunt's originality was bound to be public incomprehension." Possibly. However, there also seems to be an equal unwillingness on the part of modern scholars to try to comprehend what various groups within this public were saying about their artistic needs and expectations. Neither Macmillan nor Errington attempts to situate The Hireling Shepherd within its proper pictorial tradition. Set into this context it becomes clear that the painting negated the dominant urban image of the countryside as a place of harmony, peace, and virtue. In the process of analyzing the discomfort raised by Hunt's unconventional rural landscape much can be discovered about the function of rural imagery in England at this time.

The criticisms raised in the preceding discussion should indicate the direction this present investigation will take. It is essential to examine The Hireling Shepherd's iconography, formal characteristics, and critical reception in concert with the contemporary issues which the work activated. Attention will first be focused on the painting's function as a rural landscape. This involves consideration not only of an artistic tradition,
but the forces that helped shape that tradition—the actual economic and social conditions present in rural England at mid-century.

The other major issue to be addressed arises from the manner in which *The Hireling Shepherd* was painted. Hunt's highly particularized and unidealized treatment of his figures and their landscape setting was seen by admirers and hostile critics as a manifestation of Pre-Raphaelite realism. Scientific terminology and analogies were often invoked in discussions of Pre-Raphaelite realism, which was praised by liberal advocates as modern and progressive, and condemned by conservative critics as mechanistic and unpoetical. The most ardent admirers of *The Hireling Shepherd* tended to be liberal intellectuals who understood the power of invoking scientific principles and methodology in the formation and legitimization of social policy. Therefore, a thorough analysis of Hunt's rural landscape requires an investigation into the use of science as an ideological instrument in the years preceding the Darwinian Revolution.

An analysis of the factors which impinged upon the production and reception of *The Hireling Shepherd* indicates that, far from being solely the private vision of an individual artist, Hunt's rural landscape was a response to a demand for a new kind of painting on the part of a vocal and influential group of scientifically-oriented intellectuals. This new art embodied a world view in which moral values and social structures are intimately connected to a mechanistic universe whose processes are particularized and scientifically verifiable. Hunt's commitment to this form of artistic 'truth' led him to produce a
work whose scientific accuracy and moral rigor challenged the fundamental assumptions and conventions upon which the rural landscape tradition was built.
NOTES


6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., p. 190.

9. Ibid., p. 187. The dangers of dwelling exclusively on thematic sources and iconography are dramatically revealed when the critical response to this painting is considered. Recalling Macmillan's emphasis on the close connection between The Hireling Shepherd and Milton's Lycidas, it is startling to find that David Masson, perhaps the most knowledgeable Milton scholar in England at that time, failed to make any reference to Milton in his extensive and very positive contemporary review of Hunt's rural landscape.


11. Ibid., p. 307ff.

12. Ibid., p. 328.
CHAPTER I

The Hireling Shepherd: Background and Iconography

Controversy surrounded the exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite paintings at the Royal Academy in 1851. It will be worthwhile to review briefly the public debate occasioned by this exhibition before analyzing the production and reception of The Hireling Shepherd in 1852. This look back will be helpful in determining the extent to which Pre-Raphaelite painters in 1852, notably Hunt, J. E. Millais, and Charles Collins, modified their art as a result of the negative criticism they had received in 1851.¹ Similarly, the reaction of the public and the critics to Pre-Raphaelite painting in 1852 was to some degree pre-conditioned by the paintings they had seen in 1851 and by the discussions these works had generated in the press. Finally, the consequences of John Ruskin's intervention on behalf of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the spring and summer of 1851 must be analyzed, for it has often been misunderstood. For example, James Sambrook claims that "attacks on Pre-Raphaelite painting continued in the following year [1851] until Ruskin came to the Brotherhood's rescue with his letters to the Times in May and his pamphlet, Pre-Raphaelitism (1851)."² A closer examination of the impact of Ruskin's support will reveal to what extent this intervention can simply be termed a "rescue" which staved off further attacks.

The Royal Academy Exhibition of 1851 included John Everett Millais' The Return of the Dove to the Ark, The Woodman's Daughter, and Mariana (Fig. 2, p. 99), Hunt's Valentine Rescuing
Sylvia from Proteus (Fig. 3, p. 100), and Charles Collins' Convent Thoughts (Fig. 4, p. 101). The Art Journal attacked all of these works, faulting them for their ill-proportioned and ungraceful figures—especially Collins' nun in Convent Thoughts and Millais' figure of Mariana. The reviewer was also critical of the two-dimensionality of Valentine Rescuing Sylvia. In this work Hunt rejected the use of atmospheric perspective; instead, he placed his figures against a highly detailed background with a high horizon which rises rapidly from the foreground. The resulting compression flattens the background into a screen against which the foreground drama is set. The plain black background of Millais' Return of the Dove was also noted by the critic, who complained that the whole composition "affects the medieval manner." The Athenaeum review briefly condemned these paintings as a group, singling out only Convent Thoughts for specific mention. Collins was criticized for his failure to idealize the figure of the nun and for his misplaced concern with minute rendering of ancillary details. The strongest censure came from the Times. Like his colleague at the Athenaeum, the Times critic treated the paintings of Hunt, Collins and Millais as an undifferentiated group—a tactic which could be construed as an attack on the ability of these paintings to stand as independent works of art, deserving of individual attention. The reviewer criticized the young artists' contempt for perspective, their unconventional use of light and shade, and their devotion to a minute rendering of detail. In a review published a few days later the critic continued the attack, condemning the "crude color of remote antiquity," the treatment of draperies ("snapped
rather than folded"), and the faces of the figures, "bloated into apoplexy" with expressions "forced into caricature." The review concluded with the assertion that these "monkish follies" had no place in a decent collection of English art.9

This criticism so alarmed the Pre-Raphaelites that Millais asked the poet Coventry Patmore to seek John Ruskin's aid in defending the young artists. Ruskin responded by writing two letters, published in the Times on May 13 and May 30, and a pamphlet, Pre-Raphaelitism, issued August 13. In the first letter Ruskin refuted the charge of medievalism by explaining that the new art sought a return to archaic honesty of expression, but did not reject modern advances in technique. He then defended the accuracy of the perspective and handling of drapery. Further countering charges that the artists were untruthful in their rendering of forms, Ruskin praised Collins' careful treatment of the nun's flower in Convent Thoughts, comparing it to a botanical study.10 But this first letter also contained words of caution for the artists regarding their possible "Romanist and Tractarian tendencies." Ruskin found Collins' nun and the "idolatrous" toilet table in Mariana elements which particularly disturbed him in this regard.11 In his second letter Ruskin reiterated his concern that the Pre-Raphaelites avoid works with these sorts of religious connotations. While praising the artists generally, Ruskin included many specific criticisms of the paintings. The figure of Sylvia in Hunt's piece and one of the girls in Millais' Return of the Dove were especially faulted for their commonness of feature.12
Ruskin's pamphlet, Pre-Raphaelitism, again restated the basic concerns of his letter, this time emphasizing the need for a scientific rendering of nature:

If they [the Pre-Raphaelites] adhere to their principles and paint nature as it is around them, with the help of modern science and with the earnestness of the men of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, they will, as I said, found a new and noble school in England. If their sympathies with the early artists lead them into mediaevalism or Romanism, they will of course come to nothing.¹³

Although the pamphlet then turned away from a discussion of these artists, devolving rapidly into a paean to the art of J. M. W. Turner, its preface contained one other very important passage, quoted by friends and adversaries alike in discussions of Pre-Raphaelite painting throughout the 1850's. Ruskin began his preface by stating that in Modern Painters I he had told young English artists that

They should go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thought but how best to penetrate her meanings; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing.¹⁴

The Pre-Raphaelites, he asserted, have carried out this advice to the letter.¹⁵ These words could be construed to imply that Hunt, Millais and Collins were Ruskin's disciples, eager to obey his aesthetic theories, but no evidence exists to suggest that any of the artists had read Modern Painters I at this time.¹⁶ Despite this fact, Ruskin's preface ensured that Pre-Raphaelitism and Ruskinian aesthetics would be forever linked and confused in the
minds of contemporary critics and the public.

Ruskin's remarks on Pre-Raphaelitism attracted considerable notice in the press throughout the following two years. David Masson, writing in the liberal, non-conformist British Quarterly Review, noted that critical reaction to Pre-Raphaelite painting altered dramatically from condemnation to praise between 1851 and 1852. He attributed this change to "a triumph of the Pre-Raphaelite principle" and credited Ruskin's intervention for the speed of this success. As previously noted, other writers since Masson have rather simplistically attributed the critical success of Pre-Raphaelitism to Ruskin, who is represented as having had unchallengeable authority in artistic matters at the time.

An analysis of the response to Ruskin's writings on Pre-Raphaelitism demonstrates that the issue of his authority was far more complex. In 1851 Ruskin was only thirty-two, yet he had already published two volumes of Modern Painters, one volume of The Stones of Venice, and The Seven Lamps of Architecture, books which challenged many accepted artistic conventions and principles. Many English art critics held a conservative position defending the ideals of art articulated originally by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which were still promoted in the Royal Academy. It is not surprising that these men saw Ruskin not as an unimpeachable authority but as a formidable adversary. This attitude is revealed in John Ballantyne's essay on Pre-Raphaelitism which appeared in the Art Journal in July 1851:

13
To attempt to criticize such works seems trifling with time, but when we see this junto held up to notice and favourable observation by such men as the Under-graduate of Oxford [Ruskin], it becomes our duty to enter into the mêlée.\textsuperscript{18}

These sentiments were echoed by E. V. Rippingille in \textit{Bentley's Miscellany}, Solomon Hart in the \textit{Athenaeum}, and John Eagles in \textit{Blackwood's}.\textsuperscript{19} Even the reviewer for \textit{Fraser's}, who was sympathetic to the Pre-Raphaelites, criticized Ruskin for turning his pamphlet into an exposition on Turner.\textsuperscript{20} Those critical of the new art and Ruskin's writings about it all took the same line of attack. They retraced the progress of art from medieval times to its perfection in the art of Raphael and Michelangelo in order to demonstrate that Renaissance conventions of composition, perspective, and \textit{chiaroscuro} were essential to good picture making. They maintained that a rejection of these ideals was a retreat into a self-conscious medievalism redolent of bad taste.

Similarly Ruskin's advice to go to nature, "rejecting nothing, selecting nothing," was resoundingly condemned. "Rejection and selection are not, indeed, the prerogative, merely, but the duty of the artist," an anonymous reviewer of Ruskin's pamphlet declared.\textsuperscript{21} Even William Michael Rossetti, a member of the P. R. B., criticized Ruskin on this point.\textsuperscript{22} Notwithstanding this objection, Rossetti praised Ruskin for his defense of the new art, as did other writers such as Masson and the critic for the \textit{Irish Quarterly Review}.\textsuperscript{23}

Clearly Ruskin did not magically turn the tide of opinion in favor of the Pre-Raphaelites; more accurately, he forced opponents of the Brotherhood to take the new art seriously. His
support also may have encouraged writers sympathetic to the artists, such as Masson, and the critics at _Fraser's_ and the _Irish Quarterly Review_, to speak out. As previously noted, the other major effect of Ruskin's intervention was to broaden and confuse the issue of Pre-Raphaelitism, whose principles after 1851 became inextricably connected with his aesthetics.\(^{24}\)

Those of the approximately 200,000 middle- and upper-class visitors to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1852 who had seen the exhibit of 1851 and had kept abreast of current arguments surrounding Pre-Raphaelitism might have expected to encounter works by Hunt and Millais which were self-consciously medieval, both in theme and formal construction.\(^{25}\) In fact, the discourses surrounding the three works exhibited by Hunt and Millais this year hardly raised the issue of medievalism at all. None of these paintings dealt with subjects which could be construed as Romanist or Tractarian: Hunt produced a rural landscape; Millais produced one work, _Ophelia_ (Fig. 5, p. 103), with a Shakespearean subject, and another, _A Huguenot_ (Fig. 6, p. 104), which was unabashedly pro-Protestant. It is difficult to gauge how much impact the furor over Romanist themes and Ruskin's subsequent warnings to avoid them had on Hunt, since his _Valentine Rescuing Sylvia_ had also had a subject unlikely to fuel suspicions of Tractarianism. On the other hand, Millais' _Return of the Dove_ and _Mariana_ both had been attacked on religious grounds. Millais was particularly disturbed when he discovered that in November 1851 his brother was asked by a Dr. Hesse of Leyton College if the artist were a Catholic. This person took
The Return of the Dove to be a symbolic appeal for English people to return to the Catholic Church. It is not unlikely, then, that A Huguenot was consciously intended to dispel doubts about any suspected pro-Catholic biases.

Likewise, much of the criticism that these artists were affecting a medieval manner in their handling of color, perspective, drapery, and chiaroscuro was also lacking. Although A Huguenot was faulted by the Times for a lack of atmospheric perspective and a certain awkwardness in the man's pose, these were seen as technical errors, and not medievalizing features. Since most of the criticisms of 1851 were neutralized, it is not surprising that Millais' two paintings enjoyed a fair measure of success both with the critics and the viewing public (this success will be analyzed more thoroughly in Chapter III). What is surprising is that Hunt's Hireling Shepherd was more vigorously attacked by critics in the centrist and conservative press than was his Valentine of the preceding year. Before analyzing this criticism, it will be useful first to gain some understanding of how The Hireling Shepherd was constructed and what meanings can be attached to its elaborate iconography.

The Hireling Shepherd was Hunt's first effort to impart a moral message to his public via a contemporary subject in which symbols are included solely in the guise of naturalistic details. It is likely that this attempt at didactic painting through a combination of realism and symbolism was inspired by Hunt's encounter with Modern Painters II. The artist's commitment to his own version of Pre-Raphaelite realism is apparent both in his figures and the landscape they inhabit. Dominating the
foreground are a shepherd and shepherdess whose sturdy bodies combine to form a stable triangle. The shepherd is showing his companion a death's head moth he has found, concerned that it is an evil omen. She, ostensibly afraid of the creature, shrinks back against the young man's shoulder. Hunt selected local country people as the models for his shepherd and shepherdess, observing and recording their ample forms with a microscopic accuracy worthy of a naturalist. Thus the viewer is presented with every detail of the couple's coarsely-waved hair, blotchy, reddened skin, and muscular limbs. This minute detailing extends to the treatment of their garments and accessories—note especially the carefully rendered stitching on the girl's smock. The critics' reactions to Hunt's figures will be examined later; for now it is noteworthy that Ruskin never commented on this painting, although he publicly praised Hunt's Valentine, as he would the later The Light of the World (1853) and The Awakening Conscience (1854). This silence can perhaps be explained by Hunt's commitment to a Ruskinian "truth to Nature" that even Ruskin himself found too rigorous to be acceptable.

Surrounding the lovers is a brightly lit summer landscape of great lushness. Botanically accurate plants appear in the foreground; this careful detailing is continued throughout the middle ground, in the treatment of the sheep and swallows behind the shepherd, and in the trees, grass, and wheat behind the shepherdess. The background opens into distant hills and fields which are rendered with enough atmospheric perspective to give the viewer a convincing sense of illusionistic space. It should
be recalled that Hunt's *Valentine* was criticized for its flat, screen-like background. If this use of conventional perspective in the later work was a concession to the critics of 1851, it was one of the very few Hunt chose to make. Throughout the scene academic conventions of light and shade are rejected in favor of an interplay of vibrant colors which resonate across the surface of the canvas. This handling of color even extends to the use of colored shadows (note those playing over the sheep behind the young man), which was highly unusual in painting at this time.

Sickness, death, and immorality mar the beauty of this summer landscape. Neglected by the shepherd and his companion, the sheep are straying into the wheat on the right, trampling it and endangering themselves, for by eating the grain they will become distended with gas, sicken, and die. One sheep can be seen in the wheat field, and two behind the shepherd are already bloated and in pain. The sickly lamb on the shepherdess' lap is also the victim of inattention, for it is eating green apples, which are poisonous to young sheep. Images of neglect extend to the landscape itself. The stream by the shepherdess' feet is choked with weeds, resulting in the formation of a swampy area which stretches through the center of the picture behind the figures. They are on unstable ground, physically and morally, and the animals are in danger of sheep-rot arising from the marsh.31

In his only major statement about the work, a letter written in 1897, Hunt identified the shepherd with those "muddle-headed pastors who instead of performing their services to their flock--
which is in constant peril—discuss vain questions of no value to any human soul."\(^32\) As previously noted (p. 1) Hunt continued that he did not wish to force the moral, his first object being to paint "not dresden china bergers, but a real Shepherd and a real Shepherdess, and a landscape in full sunlight, with all the colour of luscious summer..."\(^33\)

In the early 1970's John Duncan Macmillan and Lindsay Errington, working independently, attempted to explain Hunt's elaborate iconography by analyzing the textual sources upon which he may have drawn.\(^34\) The shepherd's song from *King Lear* which accompanied the work's 1852 catalog entry alludes only to the general subject of the work without throwing much light on its meaning.\(^35\) Errington and Macmillan both determined that the most important sources for the painting are some verses from St. John and passages from Milton's pastoral poem, *Lycidas*. Hunt seems to have taken his title from the parable in John 10:7-18 which contrasts Jesus, the good shepherd, with the hireling who cares not for his flock and abandons them to the wolves. Milton's *Lycidas*, a pastoral which, according to the subtitle, "foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy," also draws on this passage from John for its theme of moral neglect. The poet's dissolute young shepherd, preferring "to sport with Amaryllis in the shade," (line 68) abandons his sheep, who, like Hunt's unfortunate beasts, become swollen with 'wind' and wander on marshy ground (see lines 125-127). Thus both Hunt and Milton have infused a Virgilian pastoral subject with Christian meaning deriving from the allegory of laity as flock and priest as shepherd.\(^36\)
The specific target of this moral attack, for both the poet and the painter, is a neglectful clergy. Errington discusses in some detail the major religious controversies raging in England during mid-century which would have claimed the attention of the clergy, distracting them from serving the spiritual needs of their congregations. Major concerns were the widening schism between the Evangelical and High Church Parties; the "Papal Aggression Scare" of 1850-51, brought about by the Pope's reinstitution of the Catholic hierarchy in England; and the Russell government's response to this action, the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, which caused so much dissension that it almost brought down the government. Finally, there was the Gorham Case, which involved a decision not to institute a clergyman (Mr. Gorham) to a living because of his controversial views on baptism. The case itself became controversial and provoked more schisms in an already divided Church. It is difficult to determine which of these issues Hunt was addressing in his didactic painting of a "muddle-headed pastor," concerned with "sectarian vanities," or whether he had one specific religious controversy in mind at all. As Errington observes,

One is not really faced with an entirely disconnected set of events. All these were like stones dropped into a pool of sectarian division, extremism of parties and doctrinal wrangling, such that an observer at the time might well have experienced a sense of mounting anxiety at such a succession of wrong-headed perversities.

J. D. Macmillan suggests that Hunt's didactic pastoral was intended to be more than a manifestation of the artist's anxiety
about these contemporary religious controversies. Pursuing the connection between *Lycidas* and *The Hireling Shepherd*, Macmillan proposes that Hunt was inspired not only by the poem's pastoral imagery and moral theme, but also by its literary function. In this work Milton seems to be using the pastoral tradition to criticize itself. Transforming this critique to a pictorial level, Hunt, Macmillan maintains, may have been making a pointed attack on the aristocratic pastorals of artists such as Boucher, whose *Pensent-t-ils a ce mouton?* bears compositional similarities to Hunt's picture.\(^4\) Such a critique does seem implied by Hunt's later remarks about his intention to paint real people, not "dresden china bergers," who falsely represent the reality of rural life. Ruskin's idea of identifying moral with visual truth is developed by Hunt beyond the general notion of truth to nature. Assuming a priest-like role, he uses visual reality to teach a particular moral truth. In defining his role as artist/priest Hunt is also passing judgment on other artists who have shirked their moral duty to tell the truth. Macmillan concludes that

The hireling then becomes the type of the bad artist, the artist with no sense of his pastoral duty, who like Boucher, preferred the fatal idleness of pastoral dalliance. His negligence becomes active immorality and thus the picture is both an allegory of the false artist and a demonstration of the true.\(^4\)

Exemplifying this determination to present both visual and moral truth is Hunt's use of naturalistic symbols such as the death's head moth (so-named for the skull pattern on its back)
which the shepherd holds in his hand. The insect represents both the cause and effect of spiritual neglect. The shepherd's superstitious concern about the meaning of this ill omen provides the occasion for his romantic involvement with the shepherdess. At the same time, the moth becomes a prophetic symbol of the fatal consequences of their dalliance: the death of the sheep, destruction of the grain, and the moral fall that will result from the sexual encounter which seems to be imminent.

Symbols of death are not present in Boucher's elegant fantasies, but they are prominent in another form of pastoral painting which dates from the seventeenth century. The prototype for these works is a pastoral by Giovanni Francesco Guercino (Fig. 7, p. 105). It shows two shepherds who unexpectedly have come upon a large human skull; this 'death's head' is lying on a piece of crumbling masonry which is incised with the words, "Et in Arcadia Ego." This phrase, as Erwin Panofsky has demonstrated, is properly translated as "Even in Arcady, there am I," the pronoun referring to Death. Thus Guercino's painting conveys a warning in the manner of a medieval memento mori; "Death calls to youth and bids it to remember the end." Later continental artists such as Poussin softened this message, transforming the motif into an elegiac reminiscence. In England, however, the harsher, moralizing intent of Guercino's composition was preserved as it passed into the work of Reynolds and later English artists working into the twentieth century. For Hunt to have used a skull to represent physical and spiritual death would have violently disturbed the naturalism of his rural landscape. Replacing the skull with a death's head moth, a
wholly convincing natural detail, conforms exactly to the Pre-Raphaelite principles championed by Hunt and articulated by Ruskin: archaic honesty of expression (i.e. the moral implied by the reference to a *memento mori*) coupled with scientific advances in technique (the entomologically accurate rendering of the moth).

Hunt made it clear that he did not expect everyone who saw his painting to decipher all its complex meanings, but did intend that his public would read some kind of moral lesson from it. In an undated manuscript, probably from the 1890's, Hunt noted that in titling his work he used the word "hireling" with its pejorative connotation, rather than "jolly," which is the adjective Shakespeare used to describe his shepherd in the song from *King Lear*. Hunt stated that "He [Shakespeare] could afford to have his meaning overlooked by idle readers. I could not and so I adopted the word which in its proper suggestion represents a man neglecting his duty for selfish and idle fancies."^46

The selection of a Shakespearean verse as a gloss for the painting no doubt derived from Hunt's respect for the author's moral commitment to people of all classes. In his history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood the artist wrote of Shakespeare's

large-hearted sympathy with his fellows of every class; he catered for the unlearned not less than for the profundest philosopher...The charity of his example had led me to rate lightly that kind of art devised only for the uninitiated, and to suspect all philosophies which assume that the vulgar are to be left for ever unredeemed.^^

Paintings bearing elevated themes had traditionally possessed
mythological or historical subject matter and were primarily directed to the privileged classes. Hunt's production of a morally significant genre subject was undoubtedly an attempt to address (and also redeem) the "vulgar" masses in a visual language they could understand. Herbert Sussman suggests that this moral elevation of genre painting was politically motivated and expressed the artist's democratic ideals which had been formed amidst the revolutionary upheavals of the late 1840's. Evidence for this contention exists both in Hunt's writings and in his art, but this evidence must be carefully interpreted.

In 1848 Hunt painted Rienzi, depicting the fourteenth century Italian hero who led the common people in an uprising against their oppressors. That the painting was a response to contemporary events in Europe is clear from Hunt's discussion of it in his memoir:

Like most young men, I was stirred by the spirit of freedom of the passing revolutionary time. The appeal to Heaven against the tyranny exercised over the poor and helpless seemed well fitted for pictorial treatment. "How long, O Lord!" many bleeding souls were crying at that time.

Notwithstanding this revolutionary fervor, Hunt remained staunchly committed to the interests and values of the middle class. His account of the great Chartist procession of April 1847 focused almost exclusively on the restrained and dignified behavior of the crowd, its leaders, and the police. For Hunt working class revolutions were acceptable when confined to the continent; the English poor were expected to conduct their protests with decorum.
The preceding discussions indicate the wide scope of Hunt's ambitions. He wished to communicate a moral message about spiritual neglect to a broad public via a realistic rendering of a modern rural scene. To facilitate this task, he chose a title with obvious biblical overtones in the hope that the moral might not be missed by casual viewers. At the same time, however, *The Hireling Shepherd* is a work of such complexity that only the most erudite could possibly have grasped subtle connections with current theological debates, the moralizing theme of *Et in Arcadia Ego*, and the satiric *Lycidas*. Hunt apparently did intend that someone look beyond the obvious moral, for he declared that the deeper meaning of the work was to be reserved only for those who "might be led to work it out." How successful was the artist in producing a work which had 'something for everyone'—broad moral significance for the unschooled public and deeper critical meaning for the more serious and educated patrons of the Academy? An examination of the reviews from the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1852 reveals that there was indeed a diversity of response, but this critical reaction was not centered in debates over fine points of thematic interpretation. Most critics found the painting aesthetically repugnant rather than morally instructive. To understand this response *The Hireling Shepherd* must be examined both in the context of the rural landscape tradition and of rural reality, i.e. the social and economic state of the English countryside at mid-century.
1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti did not exhibit publicly in London from 1851 to 1857.


3. A thorough discussion of Pre-Raphaelite paintings exhibited in 1851 is beyond the scope of this inquiry. For a cogent analysis of these works in the context of contemporary religious controversies, see Lindsay Errington, "Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1840-60" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of London, 1973).


5. Ibid., p. 160.

6. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


15. Ibid.
16. We only know from Hunt's biography that he read Modern Painters II and was impressed by the discussion of Tintoretto's use of typological symbolism. For a fuller discussion of this issue see George Landow, Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 4.


25. The figure of 200,000 visitors is an estimate based on average admission receipts in the 1850's [Sidney Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy, 1768-1968 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1968), p. 115]. Admission was one shilling, which represented from 15-20% of a laborer's weekly wages. It is unlikely, then, that the working classes frequented such exhibits.


28. See George Landow, William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 2-5, for a full discussion of Ruskin's influence on Hunt's efforts to create a modern, moral art.


30. Ruskin's letters to the Times in defense of these later two works are reprinted in his Works, 12:328-35.


32. William H. Hunt to J. E. Pythian, 1897, in Macmillan, p. 188.

33. Ibid.

34. Errington's thesis is cited in note 3.

35. "Sleepeth or Waketh thou, jolly shepherd?/Thy sheep be in the corn;/And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,/Thy sheep shall take no harm," King Lear, Act III, Scene 6.

36. Errington, p. 279.

37. Ibid., p. 307ff.

38. Ibid.

39. Hunt is quoted as saying that his picture was intended to be "a rebuke to the sectarian vanities and vital negligencies of the day." Robin Ironside and John Gere, Pre-Raphaelite Painters (London: Phaidon, 1948), p. 28.

40. Errington, p. 324. Hunt's interest in these religious questions is carefully documented by Errington, who discusses the religious tracts and books the artist read while painting The Hireling Shepherd. These include Ruskin's Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds, which laments the recent schisms in the Church of England, and the the writings of Bishop Hooker, a sixteenth century theologian, who repeatedly spoke of the duty of pastors to attend the spiritual needs of their flocks (Errington, pp. 301-9).

41. Macmillan, p. 191. An engraving of Boucher's painting is reproduced in Macmillan, p. 188, fig. 2.
42. Ibid., p. 195.


44. Panofsky, p. 309.

45. Ibid., pp. 310-1. The notable exception is Richard Wilson, whose elegiac Ego Fui in Arcadia of 1755 was a product of his years of study in Rome.

46. Hunt, quoted in Macmillan, p. 188.

47. William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 1:148. Perhaps it was this belief in Shakespeare's ability to communicate with all classes that impelled Hunt to base his paintings of the early 1850's on Shakespearean themes (Valentine Rescuing Sylvia, exh. 1851--The Two Gentlemen of Verona; The Hireling Shepherd, exh. 1852--King Lear; Claudio and Isabella, exh. 1853--Measure for Measure).

48. Herbert Sussman, Fact into Figure: Typology in Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), p. 90.

49. The painting's full title is Rienzi Vowing to Obtain Justice for the Death of His Young Brother, Slain in a Skirmish between the Colonna and Orsini Factions. For a thorough discussion of its literary sources and contemporary meaning see Lindsay Errington, "Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1840-1860" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of London, 1973), pp. 210-41.

50. Hunt, 1:114.

51. Ibid., 1:101-2.

52. Hunt, quoted in Macmillan, p. 188.
CHAPTER II
Rural Imagery and Agricultural Economy

At least eight reviews of The Hireling Shepherd were published in the London press (for a review of the readership and political orientation of these periodicals, see Appendix).¹ The critics writing in the three most conservative of these publications, the Times, Athenaeum, and Art Journal, were vehement in their disapproval of the painting. The attacks centered on Hunt's highly particularized and unidealized treatment of the figures. For example, the reviewer for the Times clearly hated the figures, yet did manage faint praise for the artist, possibly for his handling of the landscape. After describing the painting as "ludicrous" and "repulsive" the critic observed that it was

held by not a few of the artists and connoisseurs assembled yesterday at the Academy to denote powers which might one day reach a safer channel. Shepherds and shepherdesses with such fierce complexions, such wiry hair, and such elephantine feet were not born in Arcadia; but here again there are signs of patient study and of misdirected imitative skill which may rise above the wretched conceit that now seems to enthrall them.²

The adjectives connoting physical strength--"fierce," "wiry," and "elephantine"--immediately follow a statement about Hunt's directing his efforts toward "a safer channel." The implication seems to be that the depiction of these powerful rustics is unsafe, possibly even threatening. Perhaps it was thought that the best way to neutralize such a threatening image was to make fun of it, hence the use of the belittling "ludicrous." The
review in the *Illustrated London News* was much briefer, but took exactly the same tack. Calling the painting "absurd," the critic echoed the complaints in the *Times*: "Surely never were seen shepherd or shepherdess with such fiery red skin or such wiry hair."³

Although the *Times* critic made reference to Arcadia, nineteenth century artists seldom sought to reproduce the classical pastoral landscapes of Claude and Poussin (fancy pastorals à la Boucher were rare or non-existent).⁴ Had Hunt placed "fierce," "wiry," "elephantine" rustics in a classical Italian pastoral setting they would have appeared merely silly and posed no threat. The real problem for these viewers arose because the artist placed such people in an English landscape and dressed them in modern clothing. This unhappy state of affairs was uppermost in the mind of the *Athenaeum* critic:

> These rustics are of the coarsest breed,—ill favoured, ill fed, ill washed. Not to dwell on cutaneous and other minutiae,—they are literal transcripts of stout, sunburnt, out-of-door labourers. Their faces, bursting with a plethora of health, and a trifle too flushed and rubicund, suggest their over-attention to the beer or cyder keg on the boor's back...The faces and arms are stippled in with miniature care, and tinted as if both had fed on madder or been busy with raspberries, and would be none the worse for a course of brimstone.⁵

This passage reveals the extent to which this image angered and confounded many viewers. Clearly the figures were seen as agricultural laborers. Why then was the critic so upset by their coarseness? He stated that they were ill-washed, yet neither their skin or clothing is dirty. He maintained that they were
ill-fed and yet "bursting with a plethora of health." Beyond the obvious contradiction, why was healthiness seen here to be troublesome? Finally, after having stated that the pair was sunburned—a seemingly adequate explanation for their ruddy complexions, the critic launched into other explanations, ranging from the plausible (they have been drinking) to the absurd (they have eaten madder, a plant from which a red dye is made). With all of its contradictions and angry sarcasm, the review does not attack the painting as being a false representation of rural life. Rather the concern seems to be that its truthfulness is somehow terribly inappropriate.

The critic at the Star of Freedom also had problems with Hunt's painting. He called it both "repulsive" yet "marvellously accurate" (an interesting pair of adjectives), and complained about the reddened faces of the figures: "...having worked among agricultural labourers, in all seasons of the year, we cannot say that we remember to have seen a red in their faces so brick-dust-like in its roughness." Thus the reaction to Hunt's painting by both of these critics was quite similar despite the fact that the first review appeared in the conservative Athenaeum, which was devoted to art, science, and literature and was published for the intelligentsia, while the latter review appeared in a Chartist newspaper committed to the causes of the working class. This somewhat surprising lack of conflict derives in part from the broad consensus that existed at this time about the nature of acceptable rural imagery (the reasons for this consensus will be explored later). More generally, it should also be recalled that
admission fees effectively excluded the working classes from attending exhibitions of the Royal Academy (see p. 27, n. 25). Yet it is clear from the fact that a Chartist newspaper chose to review such an exhibition that a segment of the working classes wanted to be part of the Academy public. To that end art criticism in working-class journals sometimes parroted the views of more elitist periodicals in order to demonstrate that the lower classes also possessed the intelligence and aesthetic sensitivity necessary to appreciate "high" art.

The remaining two reviews which described the painting at any length were highly favorable and stressed Hunt's realism. The first, appearing in the Spectator and written by W. M. Rossetti, emphasized the health and robustness of the figures, this time as positive features. The other, Masson's piece in the British Quarterly Review, noted the "audacity with which he [Hunt] has selected such a veritable pair of country labourers for the principal figures." Masson clearly admired Hunt's painting, yet also felt some discomfort: "That we quite like such extremes of realism of pictures as the jolly shepherd and his mate, we cannot in conscience say; but Mr Hunt is a man who knows what he is about better than most critics can tell him..."

Finally, there are some interesting omissions and silences. Tom Taylor, the art critic for Punch, was wildly enthusiastic about Millais' Ophelia and A Huguenot and had a high regard for the Pre-Raphaelites in general. He dealt with the 'problem' of Hunt's coarse laborers by ignoring it. His only statement about the work contained praise for the landscape background without referring to the figures at all—an amazing feat considering how
difficult it is to eliminate mentally Hunt's large figures from their dominant position in the composition. The liberal Fraser's was even more silent. The art critic had kind words for the Pre-Raphaelites, greatly admired Millais' works, yet made no mention at all of Hunt's picture. Ruskin, it should be recalled, also refrained from any public comment.

Outraged sarcasm, self-conscious discomfort, silences possibly born of embarrassment and disapproval—the reactions of all the critics, Rossetti excepted, suggest that a wide range of groups within the Academy public had difficulty accepting Hunt's rural landscape. Clearly this work presented a view of rural England quite different from the customary one which appeared in paintings and prints and also in literary descriptions. Although these depictions proliferated throughout English culture in many forms, they presented a remarkably congruent portrait of the countryside because of the unifying principles and assumptions on which they were based. A look at some of these works and the tradition from which they arose will help explain precisely how The Hireling Shepherd was such a disruptive image, and what this disruption meant.

English rural landscapes of the nineteenth century had evolved from the Georgic landscape of the eighteenth century, which was rooted in classical poetry (especially that of Virgil and Horace) and targeted a predominantly aristocratic public. The Georgic vision of an idyllic country life was presented as a positive alternative to the evils of city and court. This rural world, populated by the happy husbandman who planted and
harvested his crops and tended his livestock, promised a life of health, virtue and simplicity set into a stable social order which was divinely ordained. By the end of the eighteenth century the public for rural landscapes expanded to include urban middle-class viewers and buyers as well as the landed aristocracy. In response to the needs and demands of this broader public these images became more realistic, depicting an identifiably English countryside inhabited by figures who were clearly members of the agrarian working class.  

The first half of the nineteenth century had seen agricultural depression and prolonged agrarian unrest. As a result it became clear, even to city dwellers, that agricultural labor was exhausting and difficult and, therefore, that workers did not go about this labor beaming with happiness and good cheer. Artists, therefore, were faced with the problem of representing rural laborers in a manner which was accurate enough to be believable while still maintaining the traditional image of the country as a place of social stability, virtue, and abundance.

One way artists avoided showing laborers as tired and unhappy was to place them in the distance so that their faces were too small to be seen. This size reduction also facilitated attempts to harmonize workers with their setting, so that they appeared almost as natural features, occupying their rightful place in the universal order. This technique was used successfully in Henry Jutsam's *A Mountain Spring*, which was exhibited at the British Institution in 1852. In the distance and middle ground a poor family is shown gathering wood along the
banks of a mountain stream. A print of this work (Fig. 8, p. 106) was published in the *I. L. N.* with the comment that "...some figures of wayfarers, judiciously introduced, form, by their warmth of local colour, an agreeable point of repose for the eye." The distant forms of these laborers become first "wayfarers", and then, more abstractly, "points of repose." Thus is work (performed by the rural poor) transformed into rest (for the middle-class viewer). This process neutralizes any empathy which the viewer might have with these people and obscures the harshness of their labor. The harmonious integration of this working family into the scene suggests, furthermore, that their place at the bottom of the social and economic ladder is as natural as their surroundings. A hymn written by a Mrs. Alexander in 1844 suggests that their social status is not only natural, but divinely ordained:

The rich man in his castle  
The poor man at his gate  
He made them high and lowly  
And ordered their estate

Hunt's hireling and his companion are, by contrast, in divinely ordered harmony neither with their setting nor their "fellow man." The figures are not set into the distance, but dominate the foreground, their forms filling a sizeable proportion of the picture area. The impact such large and powerful figures made on some viewers is apparent from the previously quoted comments of the *Times* critic, who clearly found them threatening (see p. 30). Enhancing the sense of disharmony
is the fact that the figures are sharply outlined and their clothes contrast strongly with the background so that they appear to be inlaid into the composition, as W. F. Axton puts it, like bright pieces of enamel set into cloisonne work.\textsuperscript{18} Because of their idle flirtation the lovers are willfully disregarding their duty, not only to the sheep, but to the farmer who has hired them. As a result the farmer's profits are being destroyed—his sheep are dying and his grain is being trampled—while the perpetrators go unpunished. This situation is bound to bring the negligent couple into conflict with their employer.

There were ways, of course, in which rural workers could be shown at close range. Invariably such figures were seen enjoying a moment's leisure in order to avoid the uncomfortable prospect of showing clearly people engaged in harsh toil. One such work was William Mulready's \textit{The Sonnet} (Fig. 9, p. 107). The young lovers are large, powerful specimens, but their gentle demeanor and harmless activity neutralizes any threat arising from their size. Also, their setting is suitably vague insofar as it is not obviously an agrarian environment (if it were, the artist would probably have included a rake or other tool beside the man to indicate that he had been working and would return to his labor shortly). Therefore, there is no suggestion that this moment of repose has disrupted the rural economy.

Allen Staley has described \textit{The Sonnet} as a general thematic antecedent to \textit{The Hireling Shepherd}, since both feature working class lovers as genre subjects.\textsuperscript{19} But how different are Mulready's young people from Hunt's! Mulready's awkward young
poet hunches over, head down, meekly awaiting his companion's response to the verses he has written for her. This response is suitably modest; placing her hand to her mouth, the young woman expresses an emotion so restrained that it is impossible to read. One cannot imagine a sexual encounter following this innocent rendez-vous. Such an outcome appears much more likely with Hunt's beer-drinking shepherd and his "sun-burnt slut," as Masson referred to her. The seductive look of the shepherdess and enveloping gesture of the shepherd suggests that the stable triangle which their bodies form could easily be collapsed. As Macmillan has pointed out, the moral downfall of the shepherdess is indicated symbolically by the marshy, unstable ground on which she sits and the shadow creeping over her feet. She is still in the light, but if she is not careful she will plunge into darkness. The importance of rural virtue is apparent in Thomas F. Marshall's work of 1852, The Shepherd's Daughter (see engraving, Fig. 10, p. 108). The demure pose, modest gaze, and attractive form of the young woman prompted the Illustrated London News to describe it as a "chaste and pleasing study."

Rural virtue implied temperance as well as sexual restraint. The beer keg at the belt of Hunt's shepherd was noted with disapproval by the Athenaeum critic, who suggested that the ruddiness of the lovers' faces was caused by "over-attention to the beer or cyder keg on the boor's back" (see p. 31). The keg was an unpleasant reminder of what was seen as a major social problem by concerned members of the middle and upper classes. Insobriety was frequently presented as the preferred occupation of many laboring men. In urging striking machinists to return to
work in January 1852, the editors of the I. L. N. cautioned: "In all trades there are unfortunately a number of idle and dissolute men who dislike work—men who, if they can earn sufficient in three or four days to keep them for six, will only work three or four days and pass the remainder in drinking and dissipation." 23

Economics and intemperance were frequently linked in such a fashion. A writer for Chambers' Edinburgh Journal suggested that excessive drinking was the cause of the inadequate living conditions of the poor. After having advised readers that "the inequality of human condition, or the possession of less or more wealth, is of so little importance as to be unworthy of a thought" (because "all the best gifts of the Creator...are free"), he went on to suggest that the poor could have nutritious food, warm clothing, fuel, and better homes if they would stop wasting their money on alcohol. 24 Working class intemperance, then, was a red flag to middle class moralists, who saw it as the root of economic and social problems for employers and workers alike. Reminders of such an evil had no place in a scene which was supposed to reaffirm only the positive features of the countryside and its inhabitants. 25

The qualities of moral restraint manifested in traditional rural scenes, such as those by Mulready and Marshall previously mentioned, reinforced the notion that virtue resided in the country and vice in the city. M. D. Hill, in testimony before the Select Committee on Crime and Destitute Juveniles, attempted to justify this attitude toward rural virtue and urban vice:
...in the small towns there must be a sort of natural police of a very wholesome kind, operating upon the conduct of each individual, who lives as it were under the public eye; but in a large town, he lives, if he chooses, in absolute obscurity...which to a certain extent gives impunity.26

He went on to state that crime had increased with the increasing physical separation of the classes (i.e., since wealthier people began moving to the cities, leaving the countryside to the poor): "The result of the old habit was, the rich and poor lived in proximity and the superior classes exercised that species of silent but very efficient control over their neighbors to which I have already referred."27 Hill clearly felt that the rural poor had once been moral because a "natural police" formed by their economic superiors was able to control their behavior effectively and silently (possibly without their even realizing what was happening).

The idea of the countryside as a symbolic (or actual) repository of virtue took on a special urgency at a time when many feared that the encroachment of industry and urbanization would envelop and contaminate rural areas.28 Robert Surtees articulated this particular attitude in the 1852 novel, Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour, in which he described the old Handley Cross neighborhood as

a rich grazing district full of rural beauties and renowned for the honest independence of its inhabitants. Neither factory nor foundry disturbed its morals or its quietude—steam and railroads were equally unknown.29
Rural virtue, Surtees seems to be saying, is predicated on a clear separation of city and country. The immorality of Hunt's rustics, whose dalliance was fuelled by the beer keg on the shepherd's belt, would seem to signal the collapse of the moral barrier which insulates the country from the city.

The need to maintain this separation can also be explained by the desire of the urban classes to see the countryside as a place of repose--a necessary retreat from the stresses of city living. By 1852 this image of a restorative countryside was accessible to all classes of the urban public, not just the rich. Accordingly, in remarks which prefaced the review of the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1852 in the Star of Freedom, the critic explained how landscape artists served the urban public:

We love Pictures, certain of which possess the magic of opening all heaven upon our soul. A Picture Gallery to us, who are shut up in a gloomy city, is like those springs which, of old, flowed by the English road-side, and which had a resting-seat for the weary traveller to sit, and a bowl attached for him to refresh himself with a draft of the pure free water. They are our way-side sacrament. In the absence of the reality, we have a blessed privilege in the painter's happy art.

Blessings on them who keep such plots of Eden alive, and warm, and green in their hearts, and bring them to us, welcome and dear as the cool sod of earth to the feet of the poor sky-lark caged in its smoky city prison.

Although this critic professed to have worked with agricultural laborers all through the year, he seemed to have forgotten their importance in fashioning this world of beauty and refreshment. Truly the suffering of the agrarian poor would be an unwelcome intrusion into this English Eden, which exists for the benefit of the urban dweller caged in his "smoky city prison." It is
important to note that landscape painting was presented here as a surrogate for the countryside; as such it performed the same restorative function. By producing a rural landscape in which there was immorality, harmful neglect, and suffering, Hunt denied his urban viewers the benefits they had come to expect from rural England and its visual representation. That is, he failed in his 'sacramental' duty to provide a restorative image of rural beauty, and he further suggested that the actual countryside might not be as peaceful and bountiful as the viewer might wish.

The sentiments expressed by the critic at the *Star of Freedom* can be found throughout the social strata. The very conservative, elitist *Art Journal*, for example, employed artists such as F. W. Hulme and Myles Birkett Foster throughout the 1850's to produce idyllic rural landscape illustrations which were the visual counterparts of the passage quoted from the *Star of Freedom*.

Just because this view of the countryside was so pervasive, both in public consciousness and in art, does not mean, however, that the values it expressed were permanent, universal, and transcendent. Rather this vision was based on ideological assumptions—composites of truth, falsehoods, and hidden contradictions—which were specific to the historical circumstances of this time. To understand why Hunt's image, which rejected Georgic conventions of rural harmony, morality, and stability, was so threatening it is necessary to explore these historical circumstances, i.e., the condition of English agriculture at mid-century.

The reality of agricultural life in the late 1840's and
early 1850's was one of economic distress in the midst of industrial prosperity reaped principally by the urban middle and upper classes. Agricultural depression haunted the entire decade of the 1840's and was still an important enough issue in 1851 to merit mention in Queen Victoria's speech for the opening of Parliament that year. At the bottom of the economic ladder the rural poor were hardest hit by the depression. Key factors contributing to their abysmal living conditions were a scarcity of jobs, low wages (eight to ten shillings per week) and a lack of clean, inexpensive housing.

Many rural laborers, especially the young, chose to seek a better life in the city, joining the ranks of the urban poor who were already compressed into squalid tenements in cities unprepared for their increasing numbers. The most militant among those who remained behind expressed anger at their economic exploitation by resorting to arson. Between 1848 and 1852 thirty-eight per cent of the rural prisoners in jail at Ipswich and Bury were serving sentences for incendiarism. In James Caird's detailed survey of English agriculture in 1850-1 it is recorded that incendiary fires were an almost nightly occurrence in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire:

Many farmers live in constant apprehension of them [fires], and, with their families are kept in a state of nervous excitement which we had not expected to find in any English county...To say that in a district within 50 miles of London property is so insecure and even life in some degree of hazard is to tell of a country in a semi-barbarous state.

Caird attributed this arson to anger over low wages, which
coupled with high cottage rents, left laborers with little to spend for the necessities of life.  

The fall of 1851 saw the best harvest in several seasons, yet the result of years of economic hardship was not to be erased quickly. Incendiarism continued into 1852: a week before the Royal Academy Exhibition opened, arsonists burned down the entire village of Harwell, an event which attracted thousands of spectators and prominent notice in the London press. In addition to these incidents were numerous accounts of poaching which in the 1850's took on the aspect of a "guerrilla class action," according to Howard Newby.

The rural landscapes produced during the late 1840's, unsurprisingly, did not depict barren fields, starving peasants or a land laid waste by arson. Instead images of the countryside reassured urban viewers that all was well. William F. Witherington's Harvest Field of 1848 (Fig. 11, p. 109) and Henry Jutsam's 1849 work of the same name (see engraving, Fig. 12, p. 110) present remarkably similar views of a bountiful harvest replete with hay stacks and wagons heavily loaded with grain. Completing the two scenes are the figures of field workers. Men in the background tend the wagons, while their wives and children occupy the fore- and middle ground, gleaning, bundling grain, and resting with their babies.

The presence of women and children in the fields affirms the virtue of family living, where individuals can work and rest, supported by the bonds of familial love and duty. Artists and writers were constantly reminding their public that strong family ties among the poor prevented sexual promiscuity and promoted
sobriety and industriousness (happy family men don't sit in alehouses all day drinking instead of working). As a result, this period was marked by the production of enormous numbers of cottage interiors, showing happy rural families gathered around the dinner table or the hearth. At this same time tavern scenes, such as those produced by Morland and Wilkie half a century earlier, were seldom to be seen.\textsuperscript{41} Hunt's image provided a sharp contrast to these familial scenes. His rural lovers appear to be unmarried, are totally unsupervised, and seem about to succumb to the pleasures of the keg and the flesh. The damage done by their active immorality is immediately apparent in the abundant landscape surrounding them. In contrast the laboring families of \textit{The Harvest Field}, surrounded by abundance, are harmoniously integrated into their world of labor and leisure. Unlike Hunt's painting, idleness is presented here as a well-earned and temporary respite from hard work. Such images of agrarian bounty and harmony must have been a welcome sight to an urban public faced with the social and economic reality of agricultural distress and rural violence.

Throughout this same period a related economic threat coming from the landed interest led the urban commercial and industrialist classes to promote even more vigorously images of rural life which emphasized agricultural abundance and social harmony. This perceived threat concerned the continuing controversy over trading restrictions on grain. In 1846 the Anti-Corn Law League, a coalition of commercial and industrial interests, succeeded in effecting the repeal of the Corn Laws in
Parliament. The repeal eliminated the duty on grain imports, and thus assured a steady, inexpensive supply of grain for domestic markets. This grain was the basic food source (as bread) for the industrial working class. Low bread prices meant that employers could pay lower wages to their workers, and also would pay reduced poor rates, which were directly tied to bread prices. Rural property owners, from farmers to the landed aristocracy, naturally opposed the repeal, since it would lower the value of domestic grain. Although the issue seemed to be settled with the passage of the Repeal Act in 1846, Protectionists (the rural interest) continued to agitate for re-imposition of the duty throughout the late 1840's and early 1850's.

Five years after repeal, emotions still ran high. In May 1851 a Protectionist meeting at Tamworth ended in a riot which lasted two days and required military intervention. At the same time the landed interest in Parliament was pressing for reimposition of grain duties on the grounds that they were needed to assuage the current economic crisis in agriculture. These peers emphasized the harshness of the rural depression and warned of the dire consequences which would follow if the urban interest attempted to minimize the situation. The Spectator recorded the following warning by one of the Protectionists:

The Duke of Richmond declared that if the farmers are any more taunted with the fewness of agricultural paupers, they will discharge the immense masses of labourers whom in charity they now employ to a quadruple degree beyond the wants of the land; and if they do this remember that crime follows idleness. [emphasis mine]
Immediately following this speech, pro-industrialist speakers attempted to discredit Richmond, maintaining that conditions in the countryside were not nearly as bleak as the Protectionists had indicated.  

February 1852 brought a change of government; the pro-industrial Whig, Lord Russell was replaced as prime minister by the Protectionist Lord Derby. Immediately, cries for and against Protection were heard in Parliament, and the urban press continued its campaign of alternately chastising Protectionists and making conciliatory gestures to them. The dominant message was that rural and city folk each must do their share for the economic betterment of the whole society. In 1851 the Illustrated London News published a song, "Trade and Spade," which articulated this viewpoint quite clearly. The opening verses traced the growing schism between town and country. The second verse took up the problem of rural idleness in terms that seem intended for a rustic like Hunt's hireling:

And Trade lost temper in his pride
He utter'd words of scorn;
"You do not know the ways of men:
Amid your sheep and corn
You doze away the busy day,
Nor think how minutes run:
Go, put your shoulder to your work
And do as I have done."  

The song ends with the factions reunited, both working industriously for the good of a duty-free England. Throughout the economic and political debates of the early 1850's, then, city dwellers were constantly being reminded of the
evils of idleness in rural workers. The Duke of Richmond pointed to the increase in crime that follows rural idleness, while "Trade and Spade" emphasized the economic harm that such idleness brings. In order to maintain social control over agrarian laborers, then, it was in the best interests of the urban classes, especially the entrepreneurial elite (who stood to gain the most) to promote a view of rural life which affirmed that a sober, industrious, and docile working class was laboring in harmony with farmers and landowners to provide an abundance of agricultural produce.

The Hireling Shepherd presented a picture of agrarian life which was starkly at variance with this ideal image. Idleness was a feature of this work prominent enough to be mentioned in three reviews. Its unacceptability was made clear by the Athenaeum critic who finished his attack on the painting by stating that "Mr. Hunt's 'Love in Idleness' may be compared with Love and Labour by Mr. [Richard] Redgrave." The latter work (unlocated), "a charming bit of rural incident," also had a loving couple in the foreground, but behind them were mowers reaping on a hill, "keeping workmanlike time with step and scythe right pleasing to farmers eye." It was acceptable to be idle in a modern Georgic only so long as someone was doing the work.

The willful nature of the lovers' immoral and neglectful behavior, coupled with their coarseness, brought Hunt's painting into conflict with other middle-class assumptions and expectations. This was a dominant class which legitimized its power by insisting that the lower classes imitate their superiors in order to achieve economic success. This demand for
imitation was the touchstone of entrepreneurial ideology throughout the entire period, and was expressed in its most popular form through the rags-to-riches stories appearing in the self-help books of Samuel Smiles later in the decade.49

Aesthetically this requirement for imitation demanded that the laboring poor not only behave properly, but also assume a modest and pleasing appearance. Therefore, although traditional rural landscapes showed laborers who clearly belonged to the lower classes by virtue of their dress, activity, and surroundings, their appearance was nearly always idealized toward middle-class notions of decorum. In all of the rural images discussed thus far field workers are shown with neatly coiffed hair, trim bodies, and the pale, unblemished skin so prized by refined urban society, but so difficult to achieve if one is actually working outside all day.50 The unruly hair, reddened skin, and large, coarse bodies of Hunt's pair are a reproof to these aesthetic conventions, and reinforce the disregard which the couple would seem to have for the value system their economic superiors wish to impose on them. The angry, sarcastic descriptions of Hunt's 'coarse brutes' in the conservative industrial press testify to the importance of seemingly superficial artistic conventions. Likewise, the discomfort which the Chartist critic expressed at seeing such ruddy-complexioned laborers may testify to the success of this social strategy. The critic may have felt that the only way workers would gain political and economic power was by blending in with their masters—that is, by looking and behaving like earnest, well-groomed, middle-class Victorians.

49
The preceding discussions indicate that while, as Macmillan and Errington maintain, Hunt may have intended his picture to function primarily as an anti-pastoral, the major impact of the work resulted from its more broadly-based anti-Georgic character. That is, it challenged the assumptions and hidden contradictions which supported contemporary images of the "real" English countryside as well as those underlying the myth of Arcadia. Successful images like the two Harvest Field paintings affirmed that agriculture was flourishing and that rural workers were content and active at a time of economic distress and worker unrest. By effectively negating this image The Hireling Shepherd served as an unbidden reminder that the urban middle and upper classes had neither total economic control over agricultural production nor complete ideological control of the rural poor. The vehemence with which this anti-Georgic was rejected by conservative and centrist elements in the industrialist press indicates how important it was for them to maintain control over the public's perception of the countryside. With apparent threats to their dominance coming from rural interests and the rural and urban working classes it is not surprising to find that political and cultural conservatives were highly intolerant of Hunt's challenge to their idyllic version of rural England.
NOTES


4. The works of Claude and Boucher were very much out of fashion in the late 1840's and 1850's. Instead, Dutch landscapes were in vogue, appearing regularly on the pages of *Art Journal* and even meriting mention in Charles Kingsley's 1850 novel, *Alton Locke* (London: Macmillan, 1905, p. 47).


9. Ibid.


13. Many social histories of this period have been published. One of the finest is E. J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), which focuses on the rural uprising of 1830.
14. This distancing process was not restricted to the visual arts. Mrs. Gaskell, usually noted for her sympathetic, if unidimensional, portrayals of the lower classes, banished local laborers into the distance at a point in North and South when Margaret was describing the quiet countryside around her village: "Sometimes I used to hear a farmer speaking sharp and loud to his servants, but it was so far away that it only reminded one pleasantly that other people were hard at work in some distant place, while I just sat on the heather and did nothing" [Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South (New York: Putnam, 1906 (orig. pub. 1855)], p. 117]. Used in this way distance not only diminishes the harshness of manual labor, but also the conflict between masters and servants.


16. This process of naturalization can also be seen in a poem by Desmond Ryan published as a song, "A Song of Spring," in the Illustrated London News, May 4, 1850 (p. 309). The last verse began: "The ploughboy's whistle, shrill and strong, /Comes blended with the milkmaid's song:/The low of kine, adown the dale,/And call of bleating flocks, prevail,/All Nature wide — heaven, earth, and sea—/Resounds with varied melody." The singing and whistling workers blend with the lowing and bleating livestock to form the natural fauna of the rural landscape.


22. "Opening of the British Institution," Illustrated London News, 20 (February 14, 1852) p. 148. Note that although the young woman is not shown working, she is surrounded by the evidence of her labor—the sheep, bucket, broom and spindle. These objects were divorced from their true significance by the reviewer, who
referred to them as "accessories tastefully introduced" (ibid.).


25. Judith Bronkhurst suggests that Hunt may have included the beer keg to record his disapproval of the common practice of providing rural laborers with beer in place of pay ([Tate Gallery], The Pre-Raphaelites (London: Allen Lane, 1984), p. 95). If this was indeed the case it was not noted by the critics.

26. "Report of the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Juveniles" (1852), excerpted in The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain, ed. B. I. Coleman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 132. Coleman states that Hill was a radical in politics, which, given the conservative tenor of the latter's remarks, should indicate the narrow range of political attitudes toward the working classes at this time.

27. Ibid.


31. See, for example, Village Homes, an illustration by F. W. Hulme which appeared in the Art Journal, 12 (1850), p. 107.

32. Spectator, 24 (February 15, 1851), p. 146.


38. Ibid.


40. Newby, p. 64.

41. See, for example, David Wilkie's Village Politicians (1806) and George Morland's The Alehouse Door (1792). These two works are discussed in Barrell, pp. 111-5.


44. Ibid.


46. The reviews were those from the Athenaeum, British Quarterly Review, and Spectator.


49. The ingenuity of this ideological strategy is largely lost today because it is still so pervasive. It was not always so. In eighteenth century England, for example, no one would have suggested that either the working poor or the middle classes could succeed by pursuing the life of leisure which was seen as the birthright of the privileged classes.

50. Mulready's lovers in The Sonnet possess monumental forms, but their derivation from Michelangelesque models is so explicit that they could not be seen as brutish.
Urban unrest was even more rife than agricultural disturbances. The early months of 1852 saw London and Manchester racked with an industrial strike which at one point affected twenty thousand workers. In seeking an end to the dispute, owners and managers repeatedly warned strikers of the lure of idleness (see, for example, "Amicus," letter to the Times, January 10, 1852, p. 3). Thus, Hunt's idling laborers may also have raised unpleasant associations for his public with this recent intransigence on the part of the urban labor force.
CHAPTER III
A Clash of Aesthetics

In analyzing the negative criticism generated by The Hireling Shepherd it becomes apparent that Hunt's detractors were unable or unwilling to read any moral from it at all, even on the most superficial level. No doubt the unpleasant social and economic issues raised by the image partially obscured its didactic meaning. This is ironic, for the work was intended to be read as an indictment rather than a celebration of idleness, sexual promiscuity, and intemperance. It could be claimed that the critics simply did not understand Hunt's pastoral symbolism were it not for the fact that Rossetti's critique, which appeared on May 15th, emphasized the work's moral significance. Stating that the title was "the moral condensed," Rossetti explained that the scene was not a casual incident of shepherd life, but had a moral suggestiveness which pervaded the entire composition. He then alluded to the underlying significance of the neglectful hireling, the death's head moth, the unripe apples and the straying sheep.\(^1\) The Art Journal, Athenaeum, Star of Freedom, and I. L. N. published reviews two to four weeks after Rossetti's piece appeared, and thus had access to a basic explanation of the work's symbolism. Nonetheless the last three made no mention of an underlying moral, while the Art Journal dismissed it with contempt: "...but moral sentiment--although the profession of the picture--is altogether superseded by an overweening desire for eccentric distinction."\(^2\) This remark conveys the critic's anger, but does not explain it.
Fortunately, other writers were more forthright about the nature of Hunt's "eccentricity:"

...we hope that Mr. Hunt may surmount the eccentricities which give his figures minuteness without delicacy, as Gulliver describes the stumps of a human beard to be inexpressibly disgusting to Lilliputian eyes wrote the Times critic. Earlier in the same article the critic had described more generally the basic problem raised by the Pre-Raphaelites' highly particularized compositions.

The tendencies of these junior artists are diametrically opposed to the traditional merits and defects of the English school of painting, as it has existed for the last half-century. Instead of breadth, effect, and a vague feeling of the grand and the beautiful, conveyed by a somewhat loose and random style of execution, they aim at excessive precision, minute particularity, a fidelity of detail which they cannot at present combine with general truth of vision, and a study of accessories which is not easily allied to deep interest or poetic feeling.

Hunt, Millais, and Collins are seen here to have sacrificed general Truth, associated with beauty, grandeur and broad effects, for an inferior form of realism—marked by slavish dedication to accuracy and detail. This rejection of what was perceived as the traditional aesthetics of the 'English School,' was the central issue in discussions of Pre-Raphaelitism in the 1850's. For example, Masson began his 1852 review of Pre-Raphaelitism by quoting those excerpts from Joshua Reynolds' Discourses which he judged to be especially repellent to the young artists. In Discourse III (1770) Reynolds considered the
notion of an ideal and generalized art: "...the whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind." Later he explained that "this idea of the perfect state of nature, which the artist calls the ideal beauty, is the great leading principle by which works of genius are conducted." This idea of perfect nature and ideal beauty had a right to be called divine, Reynolds maintained, since it expressed God's perfect plan for the world.

By making an analogy between aesthetic and ethical harmony, he was able to equate ideal beauty with a perfect world order, composed of moral laws and social relations which were divinely fixed. This perfect moral and social structure operated despite the imperfections of existing society; the task of art was to make visible these transcendent principles.

This type of art, which featured idealized forms and elevated subject matter, was directed to a narrow and privileged public, the landed aristocracy above all, who were more than willing to accept artistic confirmation that their place in the social hierarchy was natural and divinely ordained. Only this group possessed the social refinement, classical education, and experience gained through travel to respond to ideals of universal truth and beauty expounded by ancient authors, displayed in the works of the High Renaissance masters, and reproduced in the classical landscapes and history paintings of eighteenth century English artists. Radically different economic, social, and political circumstances prevailed by 1852; with them had come an expanded public for art, which included
large numbers of urbanites whose wealth came from industry and commerce. Nevertheless cultural conservatives still clung to the authority of this old aristocratic aesthetic, as evidenced by the Reynoldsian remarks of the Times critic.

This conservative presence was strongly felt at the top of the Royal Academy's hierarchy. Charles Eastlake, Academy President in 1852, promoted an art based on ideal beauty and noble sentiment both in his lectures on painting and in his own work. His Ippolita Torelli (Fig. 13, p. 111), exhibited in 1851, was a most forceful exposition of his aristocratic conservatism. The painting depicted the wife of Castiglione, that noted courtier whose Book of the Courtier was the definitive guide to social refinement throughout the courts of sixteenth century Europe. The beautiful Ippolita, dressed in a satin gown, and posed pensively in a chair decorated with putti, delighted the conservative critics. Emphasizing the work's connection to the classical tradition of the High Renaissance, the Art Journal critic observed that Ippolita "reminds the spectator of the sybils of the Italian painters save that the expression is of a character less severe." The Athenaeum critic concurred: "[A study] marked by refinement of character, beauty of a high class, and tenderness--controlled by delicate taste and embodied in a graceful action ..." Note that a judgment about the sitter's "refinement of character" is immediately followed by a comment on her beauty. The unspoken assumption, grounded in the aesthetics of the classical tradition, is that beautiful forms bespeak virtuous ideals. Even though The Hireling Shepherd is about
Christain virtue, it conveys this message through a negative example. This Hogarthian tactic violated the academic norms of mid-nineteenth century picture making.\textsuperscript{10} The critic at the \textit{Art Journal} put the case quite clearly in his 1852 review of a work by Ford Madox Brown: "It is not the office of Art to present to us truths of an offensive kind; these are abundant in every-day life, and it is in Art that we seek refuge from them."\textsuperscript{11}

Although aesthetic conservatives at the \textit{Art Journal} and elsewhere found Hunt's rustic landscape offensive, the work did have its advocates--i.e., a specific public which was attracted to it primarily because of its highly detailed realism. In order to understand why the painting enjoyed this limited success it is necessary to determine first the constituency of this public. Since critical attention centered on its highly unconventional treatment of the principal figures, \textit{The Hireling Shepherd} did not consistently generate reviews which specifically addressed the issue of its particularized rendering of natural details (recall that Fraser's was silent and Punch, \textit{Art Journal} and \textit{I. L. N.} published only abbreviated comments). However, a wide range of critics did discuss Pre-Raphaelite detailing as it appeared in Millais' two works in the exhibit, \textit{Ophelia} and \textit{A Huguenot}. Before analyzing further the reception of \textit{The Hireling Shepherd}, therefore, the critical response to the detailing in Millais' works will be considered. In this way a clearer notion of the public for this kind of painting will emerge.

\textit{A Huguenot on St. Bartholomew's Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger by Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge} was perhaps the most admired painting exhibited at the Royal Academy
in 1852. The reviews it received were almost unanimously favorable, and it drew large crowds during the exhibition. The subject was drawn from the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, a bloody incident from the French Huguenot conflicts of the mid-sixteenth century. The title explains the scene's narrative action: The pro-Catholic Duc de Guise has ordered all Catholics to wear a white armband to proclaim their faith and protect them from being executed as Protestant heretics (Huguenots). The young Catholic woman attempts to tie her white handkerchief around the arm of her Huguenot lover in order to save his life. He nobly rejects her efforts, embracing her, while removing the Catholic token from her grasp.

Millais confined his lovers to a narrow space against an ivy-covered brick wall. Each brick, ivy leaf, and outgrowth of moss is rendered individually and with studied accuracy. This close attention to detail extends to the treatment of the foreground flowers, which recall the botanically accurate plants in front of Hunt's shepherd and shepherdess. The analogy between the two paintings ends there, however. Millais' two lovers are depicted quite differently than Hunt's lusty pair. Choosing handsome models, Millais generalized and softened their hair and facial features, as well as their garments, which hang in heavy, gentle folds. The fine forms of the figures are accentuated by the artist's handling of light and color. A hallmark of Pre-Raphaelite painting up to this time was the use of strong colors and bright, even lighting. In *A Huguenot*, however, the colors are much lower in key, with the dark, rich clothing providing a
strong contrast to the flesh tones of the faces and hands, and to the soft red of the wall. Likewise, even lighting has been abandoned in favor of a more conventional use of deep shadows (in the ivy) which form a dramatic backdrop for the woman's pale face. Through his use of highlights, shadow, and color contrasts Millais has focused his scene on the expressive faces of his handsome lovers. Those elements which exhibit minute detailing—the wall, ivy, and foreground flowers—have been darkened and pushed to the periphery of the scene.

By contrast Millais' second production for the 1852 exhibition was a work in which a plethora of lush botanical detail seems nearly to overwhelm the picture's ostensible subject, the drowning Ophelia. The top half of the canvas is filled with a variety of green plants and a dogwood whose pink flowers explode into the center of the composition, compressing even further the limited space allotted the figure. This botanical display is echoed in the girl's dress which, strewn with pearls, floral designs and actual flowers, seems more a feature of the landscape than an article of clothing. As in A Huguenot Millais has highlighted the face of his Shakespearean heroine, framing it with the dark water of the pool in which she lies. Ophelia's features are less refined than those of the Huguenot's fiancee, yet both faces are pale and convey pathos and helplessness (in sharp contrast to Hunt's shepherdess who is neither pale nor pathetic). Although its colors are more subdued than those in Hunt's painting, Ophelia is a far brighter and more luminous work than A Huguenot.

Here then are three works by Hunt and Millais which place
one or two figures outdoors and utilize in different ways botanically detailed settings. The critical reaction to the paintings varied greatly: *A Huguenot* was widely praised, *Ophelia*'s reception was mixed, and *The Hireling Shepherd* was reviled or ignored by all except Rossetti and Masson. Despite these variations in composition and in general response, critical reaction to the issue of Pre-Raphaelite realism was remarkably consistent among the three paintings. For example the *Art Journal* critic liked *A Huguenot*, but felt that the detailed background prevented the figures from appearing three-dimensional. The same reviewer complained of the artist's "vegetable anomalies" in his less favorable review of *Ophelia*. Likewise, the critic for the *Athenaeum*, who overreached himself in his effusive description of the Huguenot's lover, began his critique with a series of dry comments on the reality of the wall. He went on to point out gleefully that in both of Millais' paintings flowers were shown blooming out of season.

This pattern of reaction was repeated in less conservative and intellectually prestigious publications, such as *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*. Tom Taylor, the *Punch* critic, waxed rhapsodic in describing the beautiful heroines of Millais' two pictures, but seemed uncomfortable with their natural settings. In an imaginary conversation with an artist Taylor declared:

Talk as you like...about the needless elaboration of those water-mosses, and the over making-out of the rose-leaves and the abominable finish of those river-side weeds matted with gossamer which the field botanist may identify leaf by leaf. I tell you, I am aware of none of these. I see only the face of poor drowning Ophelia.
The critic at the I. L. N. was even more blunt. After proclaiming the expression of the woman in *A Huguenot* as a "masterpiece of study and execution," he went on to speak of the flowers and the wall as being "elaborated with a painstaking and realness which are among the little triumphs of the new school."\(^{19}\)

The situation shifts dramatically when more politically and culturally liberal periodicals are considered. Rossetti's reviews of the three works were, as is to be expected, extremely positive. Although he dwelled on the expressive figures in *A Huguenot*, he went on to remark that the wall and nasturtiums displayed "a fidelity never even aimed at in such subjects."\(^{20}\) His account of the botanical setting in *Ophelia* was highly detailed and full of praise. The reviews of Millais' two works in the liberal *Fraser's* followed Rossetti's assessment closely. A half-page description of *Ophelia* concluded with the judgment that

...there is a wilfulness in the whole management of the subject. But we feel, also, that it is the wilfulness of taking Nature as she is, instead of composing her into a picture. This fidelity makes a distinct impression of reality upon the mind which no cunning tricks of conventional art could have so perfectly produced.\(^{21}\)

The wall in Millais' other work also received unreserved praise as a demonstration of his consummate technical skill.\(^{22}\) It seems likely that this critic would have been just as enthusiastic about Hunt's highly particularized landscape, had the lovers been more refined and well-behaved.
The most politically liberal publication of those surveyed is the non-conformist **British Quarterly Review**. Masson's review of *Ophelia* therein is the mirror image of Taylor's *Punch* review. Whereas Taylor loved the figure and barely tolerated the ancillary detail, Masson disliked both the pose and the features of the figure, but declared the painting "wonderful" on the basis of the natural setting. This, he declared, was elaborated with a minuteness unknown in any previous treatment of the subject.²³ His praise for *A Huguenot* was less qualified, but he noted at the outset that the subject was "less ambitious and genuine" than that of *Ophelia*.²⁴ Perhaps Masson, alone of all the critics, sensed that the former was self-consciously contrived to win the approval of a sentimental and strongly anti-Catholic public (see p. 71, n. 14).

After considering these several responses to Pre-Raphaelite realism, the pattern which emerges is quite unmistakable: critics writing in conservative and centrist periodicals tended to dislike the Pre-Raphaelites' departure from academic conventions, whereas writers in more liberal publications were enthusiastically supportive of this highly particularized realism. This pattern is most clearly seen in the general response to *Ophelia* in which botanical detail can almost be said to constitute the subject. Invariably conservative journals published unfavorable reviews. The centrist *Punch* and *L. L. N* split in their overall reaction to the work, but neither were drawn to its botanical elaborations. The more liberal journals were all favorably disposed to the painting, praising those very details which the others condemned. It was among these same
liberal journals and the public they represented that Hunt would find his strongest support.

The two most favorable reviews of The Hireling Shepherd hailed it for its vivid realism in lengthy passages which recreate in print Hunt's particularized view of the English countryside.

The action of each of these sheep—all distinct and characteristic—has been watched and perfectly understood. In the countryside in which the incident takes place—from the marsh-mallows, elecampane plant, and thickly tangled grass of the foreground, to the August corn-field and pollard willows, and above all the elms and bean-stacks of the distance, there is a feeling of the country—its sunny shadow-varied openness—such as we do not remember to have seen ever before so completely expressed; a reality which makes the distance beyond the horizon as conceivable and actual as in nature.

These observations by Rossetti were echoed by Masson:

...on the whole, the picture is a piece of broad rural reality, with none of the fantastic circumstances implied in the lines quoted above [i.e. the gloss from King Lear], and with no attempt to bring out the scriptural allusion, if it exists, by deviating from what is English and modern...the picture is, in all respects, one of the best in the exhibition. Such corn, such sheep, such meadows, such rows of trees, and such cool grass and wild flowers to sit amidst are not to be found in any painting that we know.

Even hostile critics found themselves categorizing the details of Hunt's landscape:

Downright literal truth is followed out in every accessory; each sedge, moss, and weed—each crop, beans or corn—is faithfully imitated. Summer heat pervades the atmosphere,—the grain is ripe,—the swifts skim about,—and the purple clouds cast purple shadows.
The *Athenaeum* critic thoroughly disapproved of the painting and yet he seemed as obsessed with its carefully reproduced *flora* and *fauna* as Masson and Rossetti were.

What was the source of this fascination? F. G. Stephens was the first writer to answer this question in terms which addressed *The Hireling Shepherd* specifically. In a passage from a book about Hunt published in 1860 he discussed the artist's ability to see a landscape with the eyes of a scientist.

[In *The Hireling Shepherd*] is embodied a genuine thought, in flowing and intense colours, victorious rendering of nature in every detail, solid and manly execution unflinchingly carried out, with the representation of sunlight effect, which was an entirely new thing in art. For the painter first put into practice, in an historical picture, based upon his own observation, the scientific elucidation of that particular effect which having been hinted at by Leonardo da Vinci, in one of his wonderful world-guesses, was partly explained by Newton, and fully developed by Davy and Brewster. He was absolutely the first figure-painter who gave the true colour to sun-shadows, made them partake of the tint of the object on which they were cast, and deepened such shadows to pure blue where he found them to be so, painted trees like trees, and far-off hedgerows standing clearly in pure summer air.28

Stephens placed Hunt in illustrious company, indeed. Armed with the scientific theory developed by Leonardo, Newton, Brewster, and Davy, Hunt was able to produce a landscape unequaled in its closely observed scientific accuracy.

This connection between Pre-Raphaelite realism and science was frequently made in the early 1850's. Ruskin, it should be recalled, praised the botanical accuracy of the flowers in *Convent Thoughts* (p. 11) and Taylor suggested that the floral setting for *Ophelia* would stand up to an inspection by a field
botanist (p. 63). The Athenaeum critic began his 1852 review of the R. A. Exhibition by referring to the Pre-Raphaelites as "paleontologists in art." He went on to criticize the new art in a tirade which ingeniously attempted to tie its scientific tendencies to medieval regressiveness:

...in the close but misdirected observance and imitation of everything, and in a neglect of selection, the relative value of form and colour may be lost sight of, until the surfeited eye sickens at an atomic analysis which demands the microscope to examine and the leisure of monastic illuminators to execute it.

Hunt and his supporters were not drawn to this mode of painting because it appeared retrogressive. On the contrary, they stressed that scientific delineation was necessary in order to keep art in step with the modern advances of the times. Thus Hunt, when asked by an Oxford don in 1852 to explain the guiding principle of Pre-Raphaelitism, quoted these lines from Tennyson's *Golden Year*:

The fair new forms
That float about the threshold of an age
Like the truths of science waiting to be caught
Crying "catch me who can," and make the catcher crowned

Earlier in his memoir Hunt revealed less poetically his interest in science:

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We often trenched on scientific and historic grounds, for my previous reading and cogitations, without making me profound, had led me to love these interests and to regard them as of the greatest poetic and pictorial importance for modern art. I argued that the appeal we made could be strengthened by adopting the knowledge which human penetration had discovered.\textsuperscript{32}

Hunt understood that those artists who wished to produce a truly modern form of painting would have to be able to understand and utilize the discoveries and processes of a scientific age.

In 1850 Stephens, writing in the Pre-Raphaelites' short-lived literary magazine, \textit{The Germ}, expressed this same conviction:

\begin{quote}
The sciences have become almost exact within the present century. Geology and chemistry are almost re-instituted. The first has been nearly created, the second expanded so widely that it now searches and measures creation. And how has this been done but by bringing greater knowledge to bear upon a wider range of experiment; by being precise in the search after truth? If this adherence to fact, to experiment and not to theory...has added so much to the knowledge of man in science, why may it not greatly assist the moral purposes of the Arts?\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Scientific discoveries and empirical methods were being invoked to assist the "moral purposes" of a range of endeavors extending far beyond the realm of art. Only by situating \textit{The Hireling Shepherd} in the context of this wider phenomenon can its success with a politically liberal and scientifically-oriented public be understood.
NOTES


7. For a full discussion of the function and meaning of the classical tradition in eighteenth century English landscape painting, see David Solkin, *Richard Wilson--The Landscape of Reaction* (London: Tate Gallery, 1982), especially Chapters II and III.


10. William Hogarth's major print cycles, *Marriage a la Mode* and *The Rake's Progress*, preach virtue by depicting the downfall of their Immoral protagonists.

11. "The Royal Academy," *Art Journal*, June 1, 1852, p. 173. The painting in question was Ford Madox Brown's *Jesus Washing Peter's Feet*. Brown was never a member of the P. R. B., but was bound to the young artists throughout this period by mutual respect and a similarity in artistic goals and methods.


13. The parties in this conflict were the Catholic faction led by the Duc de Guise and the Huguenots, a group of Protestants who sought both religious freedom and political power. Convinced by his mother, Catherine de' Medici, that the Huguenots were plotting to overthrow the government, King Charles IX ordered the death of leading Huguenots in Paris on August 24, 1572, St. Bartholomew's Day. Mob violence followed in the city and in the provinces in which thousands of Huguenots were killed. The incident depicted by
Millais follows from a scene in Meyerbeer's opera, Les Huguenots, which had been performed with enormous success in London every season from 1848 to 1852 [Malcolm Warner, "Notes on Millais' Use of Subjects from the Opera, 1851-4," Pre-Raphaelite Review, 2:1 (November 1978), p. 73].

14. It is outside the scope of this discussion to analyze completely the factors affecting the critical reception of A Huguenot and Ophelia. Some potentially fruitful lines of inquiry can be suggested, however. Briefly, it should be noted that both works depict women who are pathetic, lovely, and ineffective in their attempts to influence the men they love. This inferior view of women was being challenged in the early 1850's by feminists in England, who were ridiculed in the conservative and centrist sectors of the urban press. Thus these two paintings would need to be examined in the light of contemporary attitudes toward male authority. Anglo-Catholicism is a further issue which specifically concerns A Huguenot. Millais has given his public a Protestant hero who risks death at the hands of Catholic oppressors rather than renouncing his faith. Such a subject could not fail to be enormously popular at a time of deep hostility to the Roman Church as a result of the Pope's reinstitution of the Catholic hierarchy in England.

18. [Tom Taylor], "Our Critic' Among the Pictures," Punch, 22 (January-June 1852), p. 216.
22. Ibid., p. 235.
24. Ibid., p. 218.


28. [Frederic G. Stephens], William Holman Hunt and his Works (London: J. Nisbet, 1860), pp. 19-20. Sir Humphrey Davy (1778-1829) was an English chemist who worked primarily in the field of electrochemistry. His public lectures were enormously popular and gained him a wide reputation. Sir David Brewster (1781-1868) was an eminent scientist who devoted much time to the study of light and optics.


30. Ibid.


CHAPTER IV
Pre-Raphaelite Realism and the Ideology of Science

Over half a century before Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published (in 1859) and debated, English geologists, astronomers, paleontologists, and biologists had begun to produce convincing evidence that the biblical account of the origin of the earth and its lifeforms was false. To cite but one example, in the early 1830's Charles Lyell published his *Principles of Geology* in which he argued that the earth's crust did not assume its present form as the result of a single cataclysmic act, but was shaped over an enormous time span by geological forces which are still in operation.¹ The consequences of this line of inquiry for clergy and laity trained to accept the Bible as fact were deeply alarming. John Ruskin's famous remark to Henry Acland in 1851 exemplifies the confusion experienced by sincere Christians when confronted with current scientific discoveries: "...if only the Geologists would leave me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses."²

Many scientists hoped that by couching their discoveries and theories in terms which did not directly threaten biblical authority, they could diffuse attempts by clergy to discredit them. In a letter to a fellow geologist, G. P. Scrope, Lyell wrote of the editorial strategies employed in the production of his *Principles:*
If we don't irritate, which I fear that we may...we shall carry all with us. If you don't triumph over them, but compliment the liberality and candour of the present age, the bishops and enlightened saints will join us in despising both the ancient and modern physico-theologians...If I have said more than some will like [in the Principles], yet will I give you my word that full half of my history and comments was cut out, and even many facts; because either I, or Stokes, or Broderip, felt that it was anticipating twenty or thirty years of the march of honest feeling to declare it undisguisedly.  

Clearly Lyell sensed the inevitable victory of modern science over religion as the final authority on cosmogonical issues; the immediate concern was how to make the transition as comfortable as possible for all parties concerned—scientists, clergy, and the general public.

William Broderip, whose editorial advice Lyell sought in softening the impact of his treatise, was a magistrate and naturalist, whose natural history articles published in the 1840's and 1850's brought him a fair measure of popular recognition. He placed his vast shell collection at Lyell's disposal to aid in the identification of fossils. Shells were not all Broderip collected, however; he was also interested in art, and in July 1852 he purchased The Hireling Shepherd from Hunt for three hundred guineas.

The reasons for Broderip's attraction to this work are not hard to fathom. Its precise and accurate delineations of all lifeforms, botanical and zoological (including the moth and the human figures) must have recalled to the naturalist his own scientific descriptions and observations. The moral significance of this carefully delineated rural landscape was most likely seen by Broderip as an asset. In order to alleviate
the tension between science and religion, scientists and theologians frequently made use of design arguments which were based on the assumption that scientific research exposed and explained the uniform and logical plan God used in creating the universe.7

A typical example of how religious dogma was integrated into scientific discussions is furnished by Richard Owen, the pre-eminent comparative anatomist of his day, in an 1858 address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science. He insisted that even if

...both the fact and the whole process of the so-called "spontaneous generation" of a fruit-bearing tree, or of a fish, were scientifically demonstrated, we should still retain as strongly the idea, which is the chief of the "mode" or "group of ideas" we call "creation," viz. that the process was ordained by and had originated from an all-wise and powerful First Cause...8

There is no reason to doubt Owen's religious sincerity; the fact remains that such a view also promised certain benefits for scientists. By first acknowledging God's master plan behind natural forces, they could hope to insulate themselves from charges of atheism as they proceeded with their investigations.9 Owen was Broderip's closest friend and associate in the 1850's; through Broderip he met Holman Hunt in 1852, and professed great admiration for the artist's work.10

In fashioning a painting which was both "modern" in its scientific definition of form and "moral" in theme, Hunt used the basic notion underlying design arguments, but from a theological
perspective. Liberal clergymen realized that the basic tenets of their faith would inevitably be dismissed as superstition if they did not incorporate modern discoveries about creation and zoological development into their theology. Paralleling this process, Hunt clearly realized that artists had to develop new modes of representing old truths. In his autobiography he explained that his reason for travelling to Syria in the 1850's to paint sacred subjects was "that more exact truth was distinctly called for by the additional knowledge and longings of the modern mind..." Masson most eloquently expressed the challenge facing artists like Hunt:

As astronomy has felled the old physical images to which men attached their ideas of heaven and hell, so in a thousand other directions has the thought of man felled the ancient images to which ideas, morally as everlasting as these, had their sensible attachment. But, as it is the function of the artist, if he makes it an express aim to foster and impress these ideas at all, to do so by symbols that shall have power over the contemporary mind, how can an artist now fulfil this function? This is the great question—a question in the presence of which Pre-Raphaelitism, so far as this aim is concerned, can appear at best as aspiration, and falls far short of performance.

Masson saw Pre-Raphaelite realism as an attempt to bridge the gap artistically between science and traditional ethics—and this is an important point: he was not proposing that artists seek to represent a new moral order; rather they needed to define a new vocabulary for expressing the traditional values of Christianity.

This is quite clearly the artistic dilemma Hunt was addressing in his modern moral landscape of 1852. By representing moral conflict in purely contemporary terms, he
emphasized that the forces of good and evil have operated with undiminished intensity throughout history, in exactly the same way that Lyell's uniform geological forces have acted. By refusing to generalize and idealize his subject he gave it scientific credibility; the viewer is presented with concrete, if unpleasant, evidence for the existence of human immorality. Owen and Broderip were dealing with the reverse problem—the cloaking of their discoveries about tangible reality with enough spiritual significance to render them acceptable. Perhaps they understood that Hunt's purposes and strategies were fundamentally similar to their own.

However conciliatory scientists, writers, and artists attempted to be in moralizing science and modernizing religion, no one doubted that a bitter contest for cultural and political control was occurring between the proponents of science and ecclesiastical authority. A new intellectual elite, in the form of scientific laypersons, was successfully challenging the Anglican clergy in their role as systematizers of culture. Allied with this new group were the real wielders of economic and political power and the direct beneficiaries of technical progress—the men whom Thomas Carlyle termed the "Captains of Industry." More than any other intellectual of his time Carlyle helped to define and legitimize the role this coalition, which Frank Turner terms the "functional liberal elite," would play in English society. Like contemporary scientists such as Thomas Huxley, Lyell, and many others, Carlyle believed that the social and economic policies of England should be directed by leaders
whose authority stemmed from their talent and knowledge of facts. Unlike the more ephemeral qualifications of the titled aristocracy and their allies, the Anglican clergy, the skills of the scientific/industrial group were practical and therefore could be applied to positive tasks, such as badly needed sanitary reform. These pragmatic, knowledgeable leaders, according to Carlyle, would be motivated by a spirituality which was quite separate from institutional religious practices and dogma, which he condemned as insincere and formalistic.16

This secularized spirituality was grounded in moral laws which established patterns of ethical behavior dependent on a fixed, hierarchical social order. Like so many others, Carlyle conflated moral laws with the laws of science and nature.17 Ruskin, for example, assumed an equivalence between social organization and natural laws when he wrote disparagingly about "the pursuit of that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty." He declared that liberty does not exist in the universe: "The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment."18 In place of liberty, Ruskin recommended a law of obedience to moral duty and political authority; this 'law' he then discussed in conjunction with the Law of Gravitation and other natural phenomena in order to establish its existence in the natural order.19

The advantages to scientists in secularizing spirituality and equating scientific and moral authority were clearly perceived by Thomas Huxley in 1855, when he was involved in
teaching science to the working classes:

I want the working classes to understand that Science and her way are great facts for them—that physical virtue is the base of all other, and that they are to be clean and temperate and all the rest—not because fellows in black and white ties tell them so, but because these are plain and patent laws of nature, which they must obey 'under penalties.'

Huxley's advice is totally compatible with the social theories of Carlyle. The latter argued for a leadership based on practical knowledge; Huxley promoted obedience to the political authority of this group over the traditional ruling elite (the "fellows in black and white ties") by pointing out that the sources of its expertise, namely, science and the laws of nature, demand that the working classes submit to established social norms.

This brief incursion into the world of Carlylean social philosophy has been essential in order to establish how science was employed as an ideological weapon in promoting the power of a new functional, liberal elite. Most of those who actively supported Pre-Raphaelitism in general and who praised The Hiring Shepherd specifically espoused the viewpoints of this particular group. Broderip, for example, was not only a progressive scientist, but also a magistrate involved in an evaluation of sewer statutes, thus combining an interest in pure science with pragmatic social reform. Masson was a devoted admirer of Carlyle's social philosophy, as is clear from his extended review of the Latter Day Pamphlets in the North British Review. Like Carlyle he eschewed a fully representative system.
of government in favor of a more limited system directed by intellectuals. Masson was much more scientifically-oriented than the philosopher, characterizing the idea of evolution as that "most splendid of scientific generalizations" nine years before Darwin's theory was made public.\textsuperscript{22} Ruskin should be mentioned here, for even though he did not comment on Hunt's picture, he was a vigorous promoter of scientifically accurate representations of nature. Carlyle's writings were central to the formation of Ruskin's own social philosophy. Like his mentor Ruskin was severely critical of the social effectiveness and moral leadership of traditional institutions. Although suspicious of industrial and technological 'progress,' he continually used scientific analogies in his writings and saw moral and physical laws as manifestations of the same universal order—as has previously been noted. W. M. Rossetti was probably the most politically radical of this group (in theory, at least). His enthusiasm for scientific progress was coupled with an openly-declared religious scepticism.\textsuperscript{23} He admired Carlyle and was well-acquainted with at least his \textit{Latter Day Pamphlets}.\textsuperscript{24}

Hunt himself expressed great admiration for Carlyle and his writings. In his autobiography Hunt recollected: "I had read all his books that I had been able to buy or borrow, and with all the reverence of my nature I had seen the living prophet rambling along the streets of the neighborhood, bent down, as it seemed, with the weight of sad wisdom..."\textsuperscript{25} Hunt's esteem for Carlyle was reciprocated. The latter visited the artist's studio in April 1852; his reaction to \textit{The Hireling Shepherd} was recorded
in a letter to Hunt from Jane Carlyle: "Mr. Carlyle says it is a really grand Picture! The greatest Picture that he has seen painted by any modern man!" 26

The reasons for Carlyle's enthusiasm are unrecorded but not impossible to divine. The painting is a visual expression of many of his ideas and those expounded by the scientists and other intellectuals just described. In producing a painting about pastoral neglect, Hunt offered a critique of the Anglican clergy, the self-appointed moral guardians of the lower classes. Such a critique would be well-received by Carlyle and other intellectuals who were interested in transferring this guardianship to a group of pragmatists devoted to industry and science. Enhancing its appeal to this group, the painting is devoid of symbols associated with religious institutions; instead moral meaning is conveyed through the natural details of a purely secular scene of modern rural life. This approach was favored by Carlyle, who believed strongly in emphasizing the spiritual element in the mundane occurrences of contemporary life. 27

By depicting this rural incident with the precision of a scientific illustrator, the artist offers the viewer concrete proof of the reality of immoral actions. The implication is that scientifically observed and recorded facts are superior to beautifully generalized fantasies as vehicles for conveying moral truths. All of the writers who recorded their approval of The Hireling Shepherd expressed explicit agreement with this judgment. The emphasis on careful observation accords with the fundamental assumptions which underlie the scientific method: In order to understand a phenomenon, it first must be observed and
carefully described. The next step in the process is analysis, after which control and manipulation of the subject is possible.28

Although this system of analysis was developed as a tool for physical scientists, it was appropriated for use in the formation of social policy as well. In her well-known article on the German peasantry (Westminster Review, 1856) George Eliot promoted scientific study as a first step in a program of reform targeting the lower classes:

If any man of sufficient moral and intellectual breadth, whose observations would not be vitiated by a foregone conclusion...would devote himself to studying the natural history of our social classes, especially of the small shopkeepers, artisans, and peasantry,—the degree in which they are influenced by local conditions, their maxims and habits...the interaction of the various classes on each other, and what are the tendencies in their position towards disintegration or towards development,—and if, after all this study, he would give us the result of his observations in a book well nourished with specific facts, his work would be a valuable aid to the social and political reformer.29

In this view the working classes are to be studied like zoological specimens so that social reformers can understand them and thus provide for their welfare and management.

Eliot's social policies, along with those of like-minded reformers, were motivated by a genuine concern for those suffering from economic hardship. Closely allied with these humanitarian feelings, however, was the realization that healthy, happy laborers work harder, produce more, and are much less inclined to foment unrest. For example, in 1850 Dr. John Simon prepared a medical report for the City of London on the subject
of sanitation. In arguing for technical improvements he warned:

...you cannot but see that side by side with pestilence there stalks a deadlier presence; blighting the moral existence of a rising population; rendering their hearts hopeless, their acts ruffianly and incestuous; and scattering, while society averts her eyes, the retributive seeds of increase for crime, turbulence, and pauperism.30

Technical progress in the field of sanitation was necessary not only for the suffering poor, but also for the more privileged, if they wished to avoid increased crime, poor rates, and social unrest. This argument was constantly being made in the urban press throughout the late 1840's and 1850's.

Eliot made it clear that successful social reform demands accurate information about the behavior and conditions of the working classes. Idealization and generalization preclude the accumulation of the type of data needed for analysis and further action. In light of this belief it is revealing that Eliot was the only viewer on record to find that Hunt's shepherd and shepherdess were too idealized:

Even one of the greatest painters of the pre-eminently realistic school, while in his picture of The Hireling Shepherd, he gave us a landscape of marvellous truthfulness, placed a pair of peasants in the foreground who were not much more real than the idyllic swains and damsels of our chimney ornaments.31

Hunt's image of healthy, happy, gaily-dressed idlers must have contrasted sharply with the poorly nourished, over-worked, and shabbily-dressed agrarian laborers whom Eliot had observed toiling in the real English countryside. This discrepancy was
not noted by other critics, friendly or hostile; they found, to the contrary, that Hunt's figures were "literal transcripts" of rural laborers (p. 31). The readiness with which this image was accepted as literally true testifies to the power and persuasiveness of Pre-Raphaelite realism. The bright color and minute elaboration of the forms in The Hireling Shepherd convey a convincing sense of physical presence; this illusion of reality is reinforced by the inclusion of scientifically-rendered botanical details. Since the flowers, sheep, insects, and trees are accurately reproduced, the viewer is persuaded to accept the fidelity of the shepherd and shepherdess as well. Unlike Eliot, admirers of this painting did not demand that a work of art serve as a repository of empirical data for social reformers. They did argue for paintings which mediated their general belief in the moral and social value of scientific observation and analysis.

Modern sceptics might object that Hunt's acutely detailed realism could not possibly have been seen by contemporaries as the manifestation of a specific attitude toward science and social change. However, a writer for the Irish Quarterly Review made just such a connection. He praised Pre-Raphaelite realism as a necessary advance, commensurate with other forms of human progress:

Science and literature have advanced; the appliances of civilisation and refinement, manufactures, commerce, theory of government, and sanitary regulations, all have made astonishing progress in the last four centuries. Art ought to be no exception...32
The scientists and other intellectuals who responded favorably to *The Hireling Shepherd* would have agreed with this assessment of the proper role of art in modern industrial England. For them Hunt's rustic landscape represented a "victorious rendering of nature in every detail" (p. 67). As such it confirmed their belief that social and moral progress must be predicated upon an understanding of external reality which is grounded in empirical observation.
NOTES


4. Broderip's *Zoological Recreations* (1852) were sufficiently well-known to rate a gentle parody and cartoon in *Punch* [23 (July-December 1852), p. 85].


6. In 1830 Broderip and G. B. Sowerby co-authored *Species Conchyliorum* (London: G. B. Sowerby), in which they wrote detailed descriptions of various types of shells. The scientific illustrations which accompanied the text shared many similarities with Hunt's landscape: lack of chiaroscuro, bright colors, hard-edge detailing, and a refusal to idealize. With regard to this latter quality, the shell illustrations, like Hunt's painting, were highly specific, recording individual imperfections along with other characteristics. Later in the century Edmund Gosse, son of the prominent naturalist, Philip Gosse, remarked on the similarity between Hunt's paintings and scientific illustrations. In describing Hunt's *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854-60) he wrote: "This large, bright, comprehensive picture made a very deep impression upon me, not exactly as a work of art, but as a brilliant natural specimen" [Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son: Biographical Recollections* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1908), p. 257].


11. Ibid., 1:150.


14. "In all European countries, especially in England, one class of Captains and commanders of men, recognizable as the beginning of a new real and not imaginary 'Aristocracy,' has already in some measure developed itself: the Captains of Industry;--happily the class who above all, or at least first of all, are wanted in this time" [Thomas Carlyle, Latter-Day Pamphlets [London: Chapman and Hall, 1901 (orig. pub. 1850)], p. 30].


19. Ibid., 8:250-1.


22. Ibid., p. 19.


27. Sussman, p. 21.

28. In 1887 Huxley began a description of the scientific method in this way: "The development of every branch of physical knowledge presents three stages, which in their logical relation are successive. The first is the determination of the sensible character and order of the phenomena. This is Natural History in the original sense of the term, and here nothing but observation and experiment avail us" [Thomas Huxley, Methods and Results (New York: Appleton, 1902), p. 64].


CONCLUSION

The production, exhibition and reception of *The Hireling Shepherd* involved Hunt and his public in a dialogue about very basic, yet complex, artistic issues: what the proper subject should be for a work intended to have elevated moral significance, and in what manner that subject should be represented. Hunt's audacious answer to these questions polarized his audience. He selected a seemingly innocuous subject, rustics in a landscape, as the vehicle for an object lesson about the nature of a truly moral and modern form of painting.

The work violated the academic norms of rural landscape painting in several ways. First, rural scenes were not supposed to be moral sermons which attacked the behavior of ecclesiastical authorities. In fact such landscapes were expected to have no higher symbolic meaning at all. Elevated themes were to be attached only to higher forms of art such as history painting and overtly religious art. As was indicated in Chapter III, this legacy of eighteenth-century academic tradition had passed into mid-nineteenth-century art relatively unchallenged and unaltered. Next, rural landscapes were expected to affirm the vision of the countryside adopted by the urban population. Chapter II described how all classes of urban society had a vested interest in promoting a positive view of the country in which peace, prosperity, and virtue reigned, uncontaminated by the problems of the city. It was particularly essential to maintain this image in the early 1850's, which saw the end of a period of agricultural depression, rural unrest, and tension between urban and
rural interests over the importation of foreign grain. Rejecting this normative vision, Hunt asked his viewers to read a message of moral significance and critical intent in a lowly genre painting which negated the prevailing image about the nature of rural life. Stated more simply, the artist challenged his public to reevaluate the function and meaning of the single most popular form of English painting at the time—the rural landscape.

It is not surprising, then, that few rose to the challenge. Most critics refused to read a Christian message in a country scene that repulsed them with its coarse, immoral rustics and neglected, dying sheep. Perhaps the greatest surprise is that anyone liked it at all. But Hunt did not produce this work in a historical vacuum. As was indicated in Chapters III and IV, intellectuals in a variety of disciplines were insisting on a new type of art which acknowledged and incorporated the scientific principles which provided the theoretical foundation for England's industrial wealth and power.

In 1851 conservative critics had branded these new paintings "monkish follies"—medievalizing anachronisms which flaunted garish colors, unidealized figures and excessive detail. The articles and reviews written in support of The Hireling Shepherd and other Pre-Raphaelite works exhibited in 1852 insisted that these formal qualities were not anachronistic. Instead they were the hallmark of a modern aesthetic which favored the close observation and highly particularized rendering of forms within a composition. This mode of representation, which is akin to the techniques used in making scientific drawings, is useful if the
intent is to analyze a subject in order to understand it. In his review of *The Hireling Shepherd* Rossetti praised Hunt specifically for his skill at observation and analysis: "...the action of each of these sheep—all distinct and characteristic—has been watched and perfectly understood" (p. 66). As was described in Chapter IV, careful observation and analysis were scientific tools which were also being applied to the formulation of social and economic policy. Such methods not only provided the means to gather and process raw data, but they also lent an aura of objectivity and authority to the policies which were the end product of such a process. Similarly Hunt, his colleagues, and supporters were aware that an empirical approach to art could confer similar benefits. Paintings such as *The Hireling Shepherd* and *A Huguenot*, which possessed moral themes, could claim an even stronger moral authority which derived from the scientific manner in which they were executed, since the laws of science were assumed to operate under divine approval.

It is apparent from the discourses which *The Hireling Shepherd* generated that its most vehement critics and ardent supporters represented opposing factions within the urban middle class, and that these groups understood exactly what was at stake. The importance of science was not the issue. Both sides championed science and industry as the source of England's wealth, power, and social stability. The success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 graphically demonstrated the broad consensus that existed throughout the middle and upper classes about the value of scientific and technical expertise. The real debate was about who would speak for the industrial culture and what
they would say. Cultural conservatives preferred to graft the trappings of the former aristocratic, agrarian order onto an urban-industrial economic and political structure. Their message was transmitted by clergy who preached the accepted dogma of established institutional religion and those intellectuals who invoked the glory of the past and the authority of the classical tradition.

It is not surprising, then, that one of the most sustained attacks on Hunt and his colleagues came from a conservative clergyman, the Reverend Edward Young. In 1857 Young published a lengthy book attacking the Pre-Raphaelites. Like Hunt, Ruskin, Rossetti, and Masson he recognized the link between the new art and science, but could not share in their belief that this association marked a new phase of artistic progress:

There are few things, perhaps more ominous in the present day than that of which Pre-Raffaellitism is an expression...There never was perhaps, a time when there co-existed so much knowledge and so little proportionate wisdom, or when all that did not admit, like mechanics or the fixed sciences, of being tested by palpable experiment was being disintegrated by the discovered wonders of its own component particles.

Religion and academic aesthetics could offer no help in such a process of analysis and "disintegration;" their function was completely antithetical—the synthesis of ideal forms into a harmonious whole by means which were largely intuitive. David Masson understood that men such as Young would not welcome a new scientific aesthetic which rendered their education and experience useless. In his review of Pre-Raphaelitism he
remarked approvingly that Hunt had "too strong and too unsophisticated a sense of what fact is, to seek for it exclusively among West-end ecclesiasticalities." That artist's public consisted of Young's rivals in the contest for cultural control—the Broderips, Rossettis, and Carlyles of mid-Victorian society, whose social and cultural vision has been described in the previous chapter.

J. B. Atkinson's review of art exhibitions in 1858 provides valuable insights into the direction landscape painting took as a result of The Hireling Shepherd and other Pre-Raphaelite landscapes. As is clear from his remarks, Atkinson was a champion of the aristocratic, academic tradition in the mold of Reynolds and Eastlake. His discomfort with the kind of paintings produced for recent exhibitions is clear:

Still, in all this we see not the dawn of any great era. Thistle-down, hedge, clematis, daisies, even the renowned cherry-blossom...may one day again sink into mere commonplace. The public may ere long have had more than enough of this rural simplicity...and the well-dressed, high-born crowds of the Academy may again regain their innate sympathy with the aristocracy of nature, the mountain-heights, the infinity of space...all that give dignity to earth, and sublimity to sky...This year's Exhibitions would appear designed specially to teach us that the fine arts are only a branch of natural history; that the more perfect the picture, the more nearly it approaches to a scientific diagram; that a painting of rock or mountain is worse than "worthless," unless the geologist can bring to it his hammer and bag his specimens; that a foreground is absolutely "dishonest" unless the Microscopic Society could turn it into a studio. The poet is thus fairly ousted from his domain and imagination lies imprisoned in the hard fetters of positive and visual reality.

Clearly the Academy public, a largely middle-class, urban group,
had, by this time, given their approval to the kind of art promoted by Masson, Eliot, Rossetti, Carlyle, and Hunt—an art that represented their "plebian" concern with making an accurate assessment of physical reality. No longer would they accept a outmoded form of art which assumed that there was an "aristocracy of nature" waiting to be painted for a public which was assumed to be exclusively high born.

Although the rural landscapes of which Atkinson was writing shared much with their antecedent from 1852, important differences also existed. These works made no pretense of being moral sermons in naturalistic disguise. Perhaps this was because the basic tenets of scientific naturalism—which held that the universe can be attributed to uniform and verifiable processes of nature without recourse to supernatural causes—were increasingly accepted without being directly tied to theological palliatives regarding God's divine plan. Also, these paintings combined Pre-Raphaelite realism with rural subjects which did not threaten the affirmative image of the countryside demanded by their public. Meticulous landscapes featured well-behaved country people, working and playing just as they had done in more generalized landscapes fifty years earlier (see, for example, John Brett's The Stonebreaker of 1857-8, Fig. 14, p. 112).

The Hireling Shepherd, then, was somewhat of an anomaly, both in 1852 and later. Hunt's refusal to accommodate the normative vision of the countryside was occasioned by his commitment to a form of painting which revealed moral truths via a scientific rendering of natural forms. Most of Hunt's public found this relentless realism too threatening to be acceptable.
Indeed, after finishing the oil sketch for *The Hireling Shepherd* in 1860, even Hunt never again depicted such unidealized figures, although his settings and details remained highly elaborated. Fortunately for scholars trying to understand how art functioned at this time, Hunt's first modern moral subject did push Pre-Raphaelite "truth to nature" to the outer limits of acceptability. In the process, *The Hireling Shepherd* generated a lively debate which exposed the strategies used by opposing factions in the contest for ideological control of English society. For Hunt and the scientifically-oriented intellectuals who championed *The Hireling Shepherd*, the words of William Blake could be sounded as their challenge to the nineteenth-century defenders of an eighteenth-century classical aesthetic: "To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit."6
NOTES

1. The working classes generally shunned the Great Exhibition ("Labour and the Crystal Palace," Northern Star, June 14, 1851, p. 4). In 1852 a letter in the Star of Freedom indicated why one worker was unimpressed by this celebration of industrial power: "For some years we have had it dinned in our ears that every hungry man was fed—that our modern institutions were progressing to perfection. Last year Hyde Park was all gaiety. Science held her carnival and man, astonished and bewildered at the sight, asked not how many men have perished, died, because of the misapplication of man's ingenuity." ("Pauperism, Civilisation and Emigration," letter to the editors, Star of Freedom, June 5, 1852, p. 15)

2. Edward Young, Pre-Raphaelitism (London: Longman, Brown and Green, 1857).

3. Ibid., p. 241.


Figure 1

William Holman Hunt, The Hireling Shepherd, 1851,
City of Manchester Art Gallery
(Source: City of Manchester Art Galleries)
Figure 2: John Everett Millais, Mariana, 1851, The Makins Collection [Source: James Harding, The Pre-Raphaelites (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)]
Figure 3: William Holman Hunt, Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus, 1851, Birmingham Art Gallery [Source: James Harding, The Pre-Raphaelites (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)]
Figure 4: Charles Collins, Convent Thoughts, 1851, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford [Source: James Harding, The Pre-Raphaelites (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)].
Figure 5

John Everett Millais, Ophelia, 1851-2,
The Tate Gallery, London
(Source: The Tate Gallery, London)
Figure 6: John Everett Millais, *A Huguenot*, 1851-2, The Makins Collection (Source: The Makins Collection)
Figure 7: Il Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri), I Pastori d'Arcadia, n. d., Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome [Source: Il Guercino (Bologna: Alfa, 1968); reproduced by courtesy of Denis Mahon]
Figure 8: Engraving from Henry Jutsam, A Mountain Spring, 1852 (Source: Illustrated London News)
Figure 9: William Mulready, *The Sonnet*, 1839, Victoria and Albert Museum, London [Source: James Harding, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)]
Figure 10: Engraving from Thomas F. Marshall, *The Shepherd's Daughter*, 1852 (Source: *Illustrated London News*)
Figure 11: William F. Witherington, *The Harvest Field*, 1848, Richard Green Gallery (Source Richard Green Gallery)
Figure 12: Engraving from Henry Jutsam, The Harvest Field, 1849 (Source: Illustrated London News)
Figure 13: Charles Eastlake, Ippolita Torelli, R. A. 1851, destroyed [Source: David Robertson, Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)]
Figure 14: John Brett, *The Stonebreaker*, 1857-8, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool [Source: James Harding, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977)]
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APPENDIX

Survey of Periodicals Reviewing The Hireling Shepherd

All eight periodicals under consideration here (Art Journal, Times, Athenaeum, Illustrated London News, Punch, Spectator, British Quarterly Review, and Star of Freedom) were published in London and spoke to an urban readership. Thus all promoted urban industrial interests over those of rural proprietors and farmers. Beyond this unifying feature, these journals and newspapers represented different urban groups and thus had somewhat varied cultural and political outlooks.

The Art Journal, which claimed a monthly circulation of 25,000 in 1851, catered to the artistically sophisticated members of the upper and middle classes.¹ In 1845 the editor clearly set out the journal's political philosophy: "Conservative by education, habit, and principle, we shrink from the idea of aiding the adversaries of any established institution."² Not surprisingly, the Art Journal was, along with the Times, the staunchest defender of the Royal Academy among the publications surveyed.

The Times' readership was approximately 61,000 in 1855. Like the Art Journal, it catered to the educated middle and upper classes. Politically conservative, it adopted the position of the High Church on religious matters.³

The Athenaeum (estimated circulation in 1855—20,000) was a weekly review devoted primarily to literature and science.⁴ As such it catered to middle- and upper-class intellectuals and
expounded political views ranging from conservative to centrist. The nature of its art criticism varied somewhat over the decades of the 1850's and 1860's. For example the critic in 1849-51 was Solomon Hart, whose conservative reviews were aesthetically consistent with the paintings he produced for the Royal Academy exhibitions at that time. Ten years later the critic was F. G. Stephens, a cultural progressive and political liberal, who had been a steadfast friend and advocate of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood since its inception.

The weekly Illustrated London News (I. L. N.) had a circulation of about 100,000 in 1860 and was avowedly middle class: "Our business will not be with the strife of the party, but with...the home life of the empire, with the house-hold gods of the English people and above all of the English poor." Notwithstanding this declaration of concern for the poor, the editors were angered when 20,000 workers went on strike in 1852, closing factories in London and Manchester. The editors focused on the "deadly injury upon the trade of the country" which the strike would bring, not the plight of the workers. Although the paper was more liberal than the Times, art criticism at the I. L. N. followed the Times' conservative viewpoint quite closely in this period.

Punch (circulation, 40,000, in 1860) was a middle-class weekly which had been strongly radical in the early 1840's, but by 1852 was liberal/centrist in orientation. Like the Times and I. L. N. it was militantly pro-industrial; in 1852 most issues contained criticism and ridicule directed at farmers desiring to see duties reimposed on imported grain. It is worth noting that
Tom Taylor, art critic for Punch in 1852, became the Times critic in 1857. Periodicals at this time, it seems, would tolerate some variation in artistic viewpoint among their critics as long as they did not deviate too widely from basic editorial policy.

The Spectator was a weekly newspaper (circulation in 1855 estimated at 2,600) which was devoted to political, literary, and scientific topics. Ellegard describes its readers as middle to upper middle class, highly educated, and politically liberal. Religious issues were generally treated from a latitudinarian viewpoint. In 1850 W. M. Rossetti, who became the paper's art critic in 1851, wrote of its editorial art policy: "...it appears that its tactics are somewhat hostile to the Academy in so far at least as the aim of keeping it up to public responsibility may be so construed."

Information about the British Quarterly Review is somewhat limited. Ellegard reports its circulation in the 1850's as approximately 2,000. It was a politically liberal religious review, directed toward Congregationalists and Baptists. Art reviews were rare; most of the issues published in 1852 were devoted to literary reviews and religious articles.

The most radical periodical under consideration is the Star of Freedom, which previously had been published as the Northern Star. A Chartist paper which outlived the Chartist Movement, it promoted the causes of the working classes and women before ceasing publication in 1852. Although the literary reviews which appeared in 1852 were ideologically consistent with the general
policy of the paper, the art reviews were not, as the excerpts quoted in Chapter II indicate. In general the critic parroted the aesthetic views of the well-established conservative organs such as the Art Journal and Times. It is apparent that the author of the R. A. Exhibition review saw academic art as a commodity which expressed universal values rather than the interests of a privileged group who opposed the principles on which Chartism was based.

This brief review suggests that, the Star of Freedom excepted, the political spectrum represented by mid-Victorian periodicals was relatively narrow (especially when compared to French newspapers and journals of the same period). Ideological differences existed between mass circulation newspapers such as the Times and I. L. N., but often they were subtle. Despite this somewhat constricted range of journalistic viewpoints, distinct differences in aesthetic philosophy are discernable in these various publications. As indicated in Chapters II-IV, these artistic attitudes are usually consistent with the basic political, social, and religious orientation of the readership.
NOTES


2. Quoted in Landow, p. 129.


4. Ibid., pp. 8-9.


13. Ellegard, p. 11.
