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**UGC NET - ENGLISH**  
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**PAPER - II**

- **Victorian Age**
- **Victorian & Pre-Raphaelite**

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## VICTORIAN AGE

The period spanning from 1837-1901 is known as the Victorian Age as Queen Victoria succeeded to English throne in 1837 and she died in 1901. Though some critics hold that 1887, the year of Victorian Jubilee should be taken to mark the end of the Victorian Period in literature because by that time a fresh generation of poets and writers had risen and while those of the former generation who still survived had nothing of importance to add to their literary output.

The Reform Bill of 1832 gave the middle class the political power it needed to consolidate and to hold the economic position it had already achieved. Industry and commerce burgeoned. While the affluence of the middle class increased, the lower classes, thrown off their land and into the cities to form the great urban working class, lived ever more wretchedly. The social changes were so swift and brutal that Godwinian utopianism rapidly gave way to attempts either to justify the new economic and urban conditions, or to change them. The intellectuals and artists of the age had to deal in some way with the upheavals in society, the obvious inequities of abundance for a few and squalor for many, and, emanating from the throne of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), an emphasis on public rectitude and moral propriety.

### The Novel

The Victorian era was the great age of the English novel—realistic, thickly plotted, crowded with characters, and long. It was the ideal form to describe contemporary life and to entertain the middle class. The novels of Charles Dickens, full to overflowing with drama, humor, and an endless variety of vivid characters and plot complications, nonetheless spare nothing in their portrayal of what urban life was like for all classes. William Makepeace Thackeray is best known for *Vanity Fair* (1848), which wickedly satirizes hypocrisy and greed.

Emily Brontë's single novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), is a unique masterpiece propelled by a vision of elemental passions but controlled by an uncompromising artistic sense. The fine novels of Emily's sister Charlotte Brontë, especially *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), are more rooted in convention, but daring in their own ways. The novels of George

Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) appeared during the 1860s and 70s. A woman of great erudition and moral fervor, Eliot was concerned with ethical conflicts and social problems. George Meredith produced comic novels noted for their psychological perception. Another novelist of the late 19th cent. was the prolific Anthony Trollope, famous for sequences of related novels that explore social, ecclesiastical, and political life in England.

Thomas Hardy's profoundly pessimistic novels are all set in the harsh, punishing midland county he called Wessex. Samuel Butler produced novels satirizing the Victorian ethos, and Robert Louis Stevenson, a master of his craft, wrote arresting adventure fiction and children's verse. The mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, writing under the name Lewis Carroll, produced the complex and sophisticated children's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). Lesser novelists of considerable merit include Benjamin Disraeli, George Gissing, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Wilkie Collins. By the end of the period, the novel was considered not only the premier form of entertainment but also a primary means of analyzing and offering solutions to social and political problems.

### **Nonfiction**

Among the Victorian masters of nonfiction were the great Whig historian Thomas Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle, the historian, social critic, and prophet whose rhetoric thundered through the age. Influential thinkers included John Stuart Mill, the great liberal scholar and philosopher; Thomas Henry Huxley, a scientist and popularizer of Darwinian theory; and John Henry Cardinal Newman, who wrote earnestly of religion, philosophy, and education. The founders of Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, researched and wrote their books in the free environment of England. The great art historian and critic John Ruskin also concerned himself with social and economic problems. Matthew Arnold's theories of literature and culture laid the foundations for modern literary criticism, and his poetry is also notable.

### **Poetry**

The preeminent poet of the Victorian age was Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Although romantic in subject matter, his poetry was tempered by personal melancholy; in its mixture of social

certitude and religious doubt it reflected the age. The poetry of Robert Browning and his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, was immensely popular, though Elizabeth's was more venerated during their lifetimes. Browning is best remembered for his superb dramatic monologues. Rudyard Kipling, the poet of the empire triumphant, captured the quality of the life of the soldiers of British expansion. Some fine religious poetry was produced by Francis Thompson, Alice Meynell, Christina Rossetti, and Lionel Johnson.

In the middle of the 19th cent. the so-called Pre-Raphaelites, led by the painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, sought to revive what they judged to be the simple, natural values and techniques of medieval life and art. Their quest for a rich symbolic art led them away, however, from the mainstream. William Morris—designer, inventor, printer, poet, and social philosopher—was the most versatile of the group, which included the poets Christina Rossetti and Coventry Patmore.

Algernon Charles Swinburne began as a Pre-Raphaelite but soon developed his own classically influenced, sometimes florid style. A. E. Housman and Thomas Hardy, Victorian figures who lived on into the 20th cent., share a pessimistic view in their poetry, but Housman's well-constructed verse is rather more superficial. The great innovator among the late Victorian poets was the Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins. The concentration and originality of his imagery, as well as his jolting meter ("sprung rhythm"), had a profound effect on 20th-century poetry.

During the 1890s the most conspicuous figures on the English literary scene were the decadents. The principal figures in the group were Arthur Symonds, Ernest Dowson, and, first among them in both notoriety and talent, Oscar Wilde. The Decadents' disgust with bourgeois complacency led them to extremes of behavior and expression. However limited their accomplishments, they pointed out the hypocrisies in Victorian values and institutions. The sparkling, witty comedies of Oscar Wilde and the comic operettas of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan were perhaps the brightest achievements of 19th-century British drama.

### **A brief survey of the major writers of the Victorian Age-**

**Mathew Arnold**: Matthew Arnold (24 December 1822 - 15 April 1888) was a British poet and cultural critic who worked as an inspector of schools. He was the son of Thomas

Arnold, the famed headmaster of Rugby School, and brother to both Tom Arnold, literary professor, and William Delafield Arnold, novelist and colonial administrator. Matthew Arnold has been characterized as a sage writer, a type of writer who chastises and instructs the reader on contemporary social issues.

### **Poetry**

Arnold is sometimes called the third great Victorian poet, along with Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning. Arnold was keenly aware of his place in poetry. In an 1869 letter to his mother, he wrote:

" My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning; yet because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn as they have had theirs."

Stefan Collini regards this as "an exceptionally frank, but not unjust, self-assessment." "Arnold's poetry continues to have scholarly attention lavished upon it, in part because it seems to furnish such striking evidence for several central aspects of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century, especially the corrosion of 'Faith' by 'Doubt'. No poet, presumably, would wish to be summoned by later ages merely as an historical witness, but the sheer intellectual grasp of Arnold's verse renders it peculiarly liable to this treatment."

Harold Bloom echoes Arnold's self-reference in his introduction (as series editor) to the Modern Critical Views volume on Arnold: "Arnold got into his poetry what Tennyson and Browning scarcely needed (but absorbed anyway), the main march of mind of his time." Of his poetry, Bloom says, "Whatever his achievement as a critic of literature, society, or religion, his work as a poet may not merit the reputation it has continued to hold in the twentieth century. Arnold is, at his best, a very good but highly derivative poet.... As with Tennyson, Hopkins, and Rossetti, Arnold's dominant precursor was Keats, but this is an

unhappy puzzle, since Arnold (unlike the others) professed not to admire Keats greatly, while writing his own elegiac poems in a diction, meter, imagistic procedure, that are embarrassingly close to Keats."

Sir Edmund Chambers noted, however, that "in a comparison between the best works of Matthew Arnold and that of his six greatest contemporaries... the proportion of work which endures is greater in the case of Matthew Arnold than in any one of them." Chambers judged Arnold's poetic vision by "its simplicity, lucidity, and straightforwardness; its literalness...; the sparing use of aureate words, or of far-fetched words, which are all the more effective when they come; the avoidance of inversions, and the general directness of syntax, which gives full value to the delicacies of a varied rhythm, and makes it, of all verse that I know, the easiest to read aloud."

He has a primary school named after him in Liverpool, where he died, and secondary schools named after him in Oxford and Staines.

His literary career - leaving out the two prize poems - had begun in 1849 with the publication of *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* by A., which attracted little notice - although it contained perhaps Arnold's most purely poetical poem "The Forsaken Mer man" - and was soon withdrawn. *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (among them "Tristram and Iseult"), published in 1852, had a similar fate. In 1858 he brought out his tragedy of "Merope," calculated, he wrote to a friend, "rather to inaugurate my Professorship with dignity than to move deeply the present race of humans," and chiefly remarkable for some experiments in unusual - and unsuccessful - metres.

His 1867 poem "Dover Beach" depicted a nightmarish world from which the old religious verities have receded. It is sometimes held up as an early, if not the first, example of the modern sensibility. In a famous preface to a selection of the poems of William Wordsworth, Arnold identified himself, a little ironically, as a "Wordsworthian." The influence of Wordsworth, both in ideas and in diction, is unmistakable in Arnold's best poetry. Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach" appears in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and is also featured prominently in *Saturday* by Ian McEwan. It has also been quoted or alluded to in a variety of other contexts.

Some consider Arnold to be the bridge between Romanticism and Modernism. His use of symbolic landscapes was typical of the Romantic era, while his skeptical and pessimistic perspective was typical of the Modern era. The rationalistic tendency of certain of his writings gave offence to many readers, and the sufficiency of his equipment in scholarship for dealing with some of the subjects which he handled was called in question, but he undoubtedly exercised a stimulating influence on his time. His writings are characterized by the finest culture, high purpose, sincerity, and a style of great distinction, and much of his poetry has an exquisite and subtle beauty, though here also it has been doubted whether high culture and wide knowledge of poetry did not sometimes take the place of true poetic fire. Henry James wrote that Matthew Arnold's poetry will appeal to those who "like their pleasures rare" and who like to hear the poet "taking breath."

The mood of Arnold's poetry tends to be of plaintive reflection, and he is restrained in expressing emotion. He felt that poetry should be the 'criticism of life' and express a philosophy. Arnold's philosophy is that true happiness comes from within, and that people should seek within themselves for good, while being resigned in acceptance of outward things and avoiding the pointless turmoil of the world. However, he argues that we should not live in the belief that we shall one day inherit eternal bliss. If we are not happy on earth, we should moderate our desires rather than live in dreams of something that may never be attained. This philosophy is clearly expressed in such poems as "Dover Beach" and in these lines from "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse":

Wandering between two worlds, one dead

The other powerless to be born,

With nowhere yet to rest my head

Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

Arnold valued natural scenery for its peace and permanence in contrast with the ceaseless change of human things. His descriptions are often picturesque, and marked by striking similes. However, at the same time he liked subdued colours, mist and moonlight. He seems to prefer the 'spent lights' of the sea-depths in "The Forsaken Mermaid" to the village life preferred by the mermaid's lost wife.

In his poetry he derived not only the subject matter of his narrative poems from various traditional or literary sources but even much of the romantic melancholy of his earlier poems from Senancour's "Obermann".

### **Prose**

Assessing the importance of Arnold's prose work in 1988, Stefan Collini stated, "for reasons to do with our own cultural preoccupations as much as with the merits of his writing, the best of his prose has a claim on us today that cannot be matched by his poetry." "Certainly there may still be some readers who, vaguely recalling 'Dover Beach' or 'The Scholar Gipsy' from school anthologies, are surprised to find he 'also' wrote prose."

George Watson follows George Saintsbury in dividing Arnold's career as a prose writer into three phases: 1) early literary criticism that begins with his preface to the 1853 edition of his poems and ends with the first series of Essays in Criticism (1865); a prolonged middle period (overlapping the first and third phases) characterized by social, political and religious writing (roughly 1860-1875); 3) a return to literary criticism with the selecting and editing of collections of Wordsworth's and Byron's poetry and the second series of Essays in Criticism. Both Watson and Saintsbury declare their preference for Arnold's literary criticism over his social or religious criticism. More recent writers, such as Collini, have shown a greater interest in his social writing, while over the years a significant second tier of criticism has focused on Arnold's religious writing. His writing on education has not drawn a significant critical endeavor separable from the criticism of his social writings.

### **Literary criticism**

Arnold's work as a literary critic began with the 1853 "Preface to the Poems". In it, he attempted to explain his extreme act of self-censorship in excluding the dramatic poem "Empedocles on Etna". With its emphasis on the importance of subject in poetry, on "clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style" learned from the Greeks, and in the strong imprint of Goethe and Wordsworth, may be observed nearly all the essential elements in his critical theory. George Watson described the preface, written by the thirty-one year old Arnold, as "oddly stiff and graceless when we think of the elegance of his later prose."



Criticism began to take first place in Arnold's writing with his appointment in 1857 to the professorship of poetry at Oxford, which he held for two successive terms of five years. In 1861 his lectures On Translating Homer were published, to be followed in 1862 by Last Words on Translating Homer, both volumes admirable in style and full of striking judgments and suggestive remarks, but built on rather arbitrary assumptions and reaching no well-established conclusions. Especially characteristic, both of his defects and his qualities, are on the one hand, Arnold's unconvincing advocacy of English hexameters and his creation of a kind of literary absolute in the "grand style," and, on the other, his keen feeling of the need for a disinterested and intelligent criticism in England.

Although Arnold's poetry received only mixed reviews and attention during his lifetime, his forays into literary criticism were more successful. Arnold is famous for introducing a methodology of literary criticism somewhere between the historicist approach common to many critics at the time and the personal essay; he often moved quickly and easily from literary subjects to political and social issues. His *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888), remains a significant influence on critics to this day. In one of his most famous essays on the topic, "The Study of Poetry", Arnold wrote that, "Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry". He considered the most important criteria used to judge the value of a poem were "high truth" and "high seriousness". By this standard, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* did not merit Arnold's approval. Further, Arnold thought the works that had been proven to possess both "high truth" and "high seriousness", such as those of Shakespeare and Milton, could be used as a basis of comparison to determine the merit of other works of poetry. He also sought for literary criticism to remain disinterested, and said that the appreciation should be of "the object as in itself it really is."

### **Last years**

Few details remain of Hazlitt's daily life in his last years. Much of his time was spent by choice in the bucolic setting of Winterslow. But he needed to be in London for business reasons. There, he seems to have exchanged visits with some of his old friends, but few

details of these occasions were recorded. Often he was seen in the company of his son and son's fiancée. Otherwise, he continued to produce a stream of articles to make ends meet.

In 1828, Hazlitt found work reviewing for the theatre again (for The Examiner). In playing he found one of his greatest consolations. One of his most notable essays, "The Free Admission", arose from this experience. As he explained there, attending the theatre was not merely a great solace in itself; the atmosphere was conducive to contemplating the past, not just memories of the plays themselves or his reviewing of past performances, but the course of his whole life. In words written within his last few months, the possessor of a free admission to the theatre, "ensconced in his favourite niche, looking from the 'loop-holes of retreat' in the second circle ... views the pageant of the world played before him; melts down years to moments; sees human life, like a gaudy shadow, glance across the stage; and here tastes of all earth's bliss, the sweet without the bitter, the honey without the sting, and plucks ambrosial fruits and amaranthine flowers (placed by the enchantress Fancy within his reach,) without having to pay a tax for it at the time, or repenting of it afterwards."

He found some time to return to his earlier philosophical pursuits, including popularized presentations of the thoughts expressed in earlier writings. Some of these, such as meditations on "Common Sense", "Originality", "The Ideal", "Envy", and "Prejudice", appeared in The Atlas in early 1830. At some point in this period he summarized the spirit and method of his life's work as a philosopher, which he had never ceased to consider himself to be; but "The Spirit of Philosophy" was not published in his lifetime. He also began contributing once again to The Edinburgh Review; paying better than the other journals, it helped stave off hunger.

After a brief stay on Bouvier Street in 1829, sharing lodgings with his son, Hazlitt moved into a small apartment at 6 Frith Street, Soho. He continued to turn out articles for The Atlas, The London Weekly Review, and now The Court Journal. Plagued more frequently by painful bouts of illness, he began to retreat within himself. Even at this time, however, he turned out a few notable essays, primarily for The New Monthly Magazine. Turning his

suffering to advantage, he described the experience, with copious observations on the effects of illness and recovery on the mind, in "The Sick Chamber". In one of his last respites from pain, reflecting on his personal history, he wrote, "This is the time for reading. ... A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. ... A rose smells doubly sweet ... and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-ridden. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied associations to a focus. ... If the stage [alluding to his remarks in "The Free-Admission"] shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of our enjoyments". At this time he was reading the novels of Edward Bulwer in hopes of reviewing them for The Edinburgh Review.

Such respites from pain did not last. Though a few visitors cheered these days, toward the end he was frequently too sick to see any of them. By September 1830, Hazlitt was confined to his bed, with his son in attendance, his pain so acute that his doctor kept him drugged on opium much of the time. His last few days were spent in delirium, obsessed with some woman, which in later years gave rise to speculation: was it Sarah Walker? Or was it, as biographer Stanley Jones believes, more likely to have been a woman he had met more recently at the theatre? Finally, with his son and a few others in attendance, he died on 18 September. His last words were reported to have been "Well, I've had a happy life".

William Hazlitt was buried in the churchyard of St Anne's Church, Soho in London on 23 September 1830, with only his son William, Charles Lamb, P.G. Patmore, and possibly a few other friends in attendance.

### **Selected list of works**

#### **Books**

An Essay on the Principles of Human Action (1805)

Free Thoughts on Public Affairs (1806)

A Reply to the Essay on Population, by the Rev. T. R. Malthus (1807)

The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men, and Manners (with Leigh Hunt; 1817)

Characters of Shakespear's Plays. (1817)

Lectures on the English Poets (1818)

A View of the English Stage (1818)

Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1819)

Political essays, with sketches of public characters (1819)

Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820)

Table-Talk; or, Original Essays. (1821-22; "Paris" edition, with somewhat different contents, 1825)

Characteristics: in the manner of Rochefoucault's maxims (1822)

Liber Amoris: or, The New Pygmalion (1823)

The Spirit of the Age. (1825)

The Plain Speaker: Opinions on Books, Men, and Things (1826):

Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy (1826)

The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte (four volumes; 1828-1830)

The Fight. (1822)

My First Acquaintance with Poets. (1823)

On The Pleasure of Hating. (written 1823; published 1826)

Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen. (1826)

Charlotte Brontë (21 April 1816 - 31 March 1855) was an English novelist and poet, the eldest of the three Brontë sisters who survived into adulthood, whose novels are English literature standards. She wrote Jane Eyre under the pen name Currer Bell.

### Jane Eyre

Charlotte's first manuscript, The Professor, did not secure a publisher, although she was heartened by an encouraging response from Smith, Elder & Co of Cornhill, who expressed an interest in any longer works which "Currer Bell" might wish to send. Charlotte responded by finishing and sending a second manuscript in August 1847, and six weeks

later Jane Eyre: An Autobiography, was published. Jane Eyre was a success, and initially received favourable reviews. There was speculation about the identity of Currer Bell, and whether Bell was a man or a woman. The speculation heightened on the subsequent publication of novels by Charlotte's sisters: Emily's Wuthering Heights by "Ellis Bell" and Anne's Agnes Grey by "Acton Bell". Accompanying the speculation was a change in the critical reaction to Charlotte's work; accusations began to be made that Charlotte's writing was "coarse", a judgment which was made more readily once it was suspected that "Currer Bell" was a woman. However sales of Jane Eyre continued to be strong, and may even have increased due to the novel's developing reputation as an 'improper' book.

## Novels

Jane Eyre, published 1847

Shirley, published in 1849

Villette, published in 1853

The Professor, written before Jane Eyre, submitted at first along with Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, then separately, and rejected in either form by many publishing houses, published posthumously in 1857

Emma, unfinished; Charlotte Brontë wrote only 20 pages of the manuscript, published posthumously in 1860. In recent decades, at least two continuations of this fragment have appeared:

Emma, by "Charlotte Brontë and Another Lady", published 1980; although this has been attributed to Elizabeth Goudge, the actual author was Constance Savery.

Emma Brown, by Clare Boylan, published 2003

## Poetry

Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell (1846)

Selected Poems of The Brontës, Everyman Poetry (1997)

Emily Jane Brontë (30 July 1818 - 19 December 1848) was an English novelist and poet, best remembered for her solitary novel, *Wuthering Heights*, now considered a classic of English literature. Emily was the third eldest of the four surviving Brontë siblings, between the youngest Anne and her brother Branwell. She published under the pen name Ellis Bell.

### **Wuthering Heights**

In 1847, Emily published her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, as two volumes of a three-volume set (the last volume being *Agnes Grey* by her sister Anne). Its innovative structure somewhat puzzled critics.

Although it received mixed reviews when it first came out, and was often condemned for its portrayal of amoral passion, the book subsequently became an English literary classic. In 1850, Charlotte edited and published *Wuthering Heights* as a stand-alone novel and under Emily's real name. Although a letter from her publisher indicates that Emily was finalizing a second novel, the manuscript has never been found.

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (6 March 1806 - 29 June 1861) was one of the most prominent poets of the Victorian era. Her poetry was widely popular in both England and the United States during her lifetime. A collection of her last poems was published by her husband, Robert Browning, shortly after her death.

### **Critical reception**

American poet Edgar Allan Poe was inspired by Barrett Browning's poem *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* and specifically borrowed the poem's meter for his poem *The Raven*. Poe had reviewed Barrett's work in the January 1845 issue of the *Broadway Journal* and said that "her poetic inspiration is the highest-we can conceive of nothing more august. Her sense of Art is pure in itself." In return, she praised *The Raven* and Poe dedicated his 1845 collection *The Raven and Other Poems* to her, referring to her as "the noblest of her sex".

Her poetry greatly influenced Emily Dickinson, who admired her as a woman of achievement. Her popularity in the United States and Britain was further advanced by her

stands against social injustice, including slavery in the United States, injustice toward Italian citizens by foreign rulers, and child labour.

In Lilian Whiting's 1899 biography of Elizabeth she describes her as "the most philosophical poet" and depicts her life as "a Gospel of applied Christianity". To Whiting, the term "art for art's sake" did not apply to Barrett Browning's work for the reason that each poem, distinctively purposeful, was borne of a more "honest vision". In this critical analysis, Whiting portrays Barrett Browning as a poet who uses knowledge of Classical literature with an "intuitive gift of spiritual divination". In Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Angela Leighton suggests that the portrayal of Barrett Browning as the "pious iconography of womanhood" has distracted us from her poetic achievements. Leighton cites the 1931 play by Rudolf Besier, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, as evidence that 20th century literary criticism of Barrett Browning's work has suffered more as a result of her popularity than poetic ineptitude. The play was popularized by actress Katharine Cornell, for whom it became a signature role. It was an enormous success, both artistically and commercially, and was revived several times and adapted twice into movies.

Throughout the 20th century, literary criticism of Barrett Browning's poetry remained sparse until her poems were discovered by the women's movement. She once described herself as being inclined to reject several women's rights principles, suggesting in letters to Mary Russell Mitford and her husband that she believed that there was an inferiority of intellect in women. In *Aurora Leigh*, however, she created a strong and independent woman who embraces both work and love. Leighton writes that because she participates in the literary world, where voice and diction are dominated by perceived masculine superiority, she "is defined only in mysterious opposition to everything that distinguishes the male subject who writes..." A five-volume scholarly edition of her works was published in 2010, the first in over a century.

### **Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite**

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (also known as the Pre-Raphaelites) was a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The three founders were soon joined by William

Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and Thomas Woolner to form a seven-member "brotherhood".

The group reacted against the Victorian materialism and the conventions of the Royal Academy in London and was inspired by medieval and early Renaissance painters up to and including the Italian painter Raphael. They found their inspiration at first from the bible, history and poems, but soon the subjects from modern life were also used rooted in realism and truth to nature.

Pre-Raphaelite art became distinctive for its blend of archaic, romantic, and moralistic qualities. The group's intention was to reform art by rejecting what they considered to be the mechanistic approach first adopted by the Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo. They believed that the Classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name "Pre-Raphaelite". In particular, they objected to the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the founder of the English Royal Academy of Arts, whom they called "Sir Sloshua". To the Pre-Raphaelites, according to William Michael Rossetti, "sloshy" meant "anything lax or scamped in the process of painting ... and hence ... any thing or person of a commonplace or conventional kind". In contrast, they wanted to return to the abundant detail, intense colours, and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian and Flemish art.

The Pre-Raphaelites have been considered the first avant-garde movement in art, though they have also been denied that status, because they continued to accept both the concepts of history painting and of mimesis, or imitation of nature, as central to the purpose of art. However, the Pre-Raphaelites undoubtedly defined themselves as a reform-movement, created a distinct name for their form of art, and published a periodical, *The Germ*, to promote their ideas. Their debates were recorded in the *Pre-Raphaelite Journal*.

### **Beginnings of the Pre-Raphaelite**

Illustration by Holman Hunt of Thomas Woolner's poem "My Beautiful Lady", published in *The Germ*, 1850



The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in John Millais's parents' house on Gower Street, London in 1848. At the initial meeting, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt were present. Hunt and Millais were students at the Royal Academy of Arts. They had previously met in another loose association, a sketching-society called the Cyclographic Club. Rossetti was a pupil of Ford Madox Brown. He had met Hunt after seeing his painting *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which is based on Keats's poem. As an aspiring poet, Rossetti wished to develop the links between Romantic poetry and art. By autumn, four more members had also joined, to form a seven-member-strong Brotherhood. These were William Michael Rossetti (Dante Gabriel Rossetti's brother), Thomas Woolner, James Collinson, and Frederic George Stephens. Ford Madox Brown was invited to join, but preferred to remain independent. He nevertheless remained close to the group. Some other young painters and sculptors were also close associates, including Charles Allston Collins, Thomas Tupper, and Alexander Munro. They kept the existence of the Brotherhood secret from members of the Royal Academy.

### Early doctrines

The Brotherhood's early doctrines were expressed in four declarations:

1. To have genuine ideas to express
2. To study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them.
3. To sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parodying and learned by rote.
4. Most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.

These principles are deliberately non-dogmatic, since the Brotherhood wished to emphasize the personal responsibility of individual artists to determine their own ideas and methods of depiction. Influenced by Romanticism, they thought that freedom and responsibility were inseparable. Nevertheless, they were particularly fascinated by medieval culture, believing it to possess a spiritual and creative integrity that had been lost

in later eras. This emphasis on medieval culture was to clash with certain principles of realism, which stress the independent observation of nature.

In its early stages, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood believed that their two interests were consistent with one another, but in later years the movement divided and began to move in two directions. The realist-side was led by Hunt and Millais, while the medievalist-side was led by Rossetti and his followers, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. This split was never absolute, since both factions believed that art was essentially spiritual in character, opposing their idealism to the materialist realism associated with Courbet and Impressionism.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was greatly influenced by nature and they used great detail to show the natural world using bright and sharp focus techniques on a white canvas. In their attempts to revive the brilliance of colour found in Quattrocento art, Hunt and Millais developed a technique of painting in thin glazes of pigment over a wet white ground. They hoped that in this way their colours would retain jewel-like transparency and clarity. This emphasis on brilliance of colour was in reaction to the excessive use of bitumen by earlier British artists, such as Reynolds, David Wilkie and Benjamin Robert Haydon. Bitumen produces unstable areas of muddy darkness, an effect that the Pre-Raphaelites despised.

### **Public controversies**

The first exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite work occurred in 1849. Both Millais's *Isabella* (1848-1849) and Holman Hunt's *Rienzi* (1848-1849) were exhibited at the Royal Academy, and Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* was shown at the Free Exhibition on Hyde Park Corner. As agreed, all members of the Brotherhood signed works with their name and the initials "PRB". Between January and April 1850, the group published a literary magazine, *The Germ*. William Rossetti edited the magazine, which published poetry by the Rossettis, Woolner, and Collinson, together with essays on art and literature by associates of the Brotherhood, such as Coventry Patmore. As the short run-time implies, the magazine did not manage to achieve a sustained momentum. (Daly 1989).

In 1850 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood became controversial after the exhibition of Millais's painting *Christ in the House of His Parents*, considered to be blasphemous by many reviewers, notably Charles Dickens. (Dickens considered Millais' Mary to be ugly. Interestingly enough, Millais had actually used his sister-in-law Mary Hodgkinson as a model for the Mary in his painting). Their medievalism was attacked as backward-looking and their extreme devotion to detail was condemned as ugly and jarring to the eye. According to Dickens, Millais made the Holy Family look like alcoholics and slum-dwellers, adopting contorted and absurd "medieval" poses. A rival group of older artists, *The Clique*, also used their influence against the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Their principles were publicly attacked by the President of the Academy, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake.

Following the controversy, Collinson left the Brotherhood. They met to discuss whether he should be replaced by Charles Allston Collins or Walter Howell Deverell, but were unable to make a decision. From that point on the group disbanded, though their influence continued to be felt. Artists who had worked in the style still followed these techniques (initially anyway) but they no longer signed works "PRB".

However, the Brotherhood found support from the critic John Ruskin, who praised their devotion to nature and rejection of conventional methods of composition. The Pre-Raphaelites were influenced by Ruskin's theories. As a result, the critic wrote letters to *The Times* defending their work, later meeting them. Initially, he favoured Millais, who travelled to Scotland in the summer of 1853 with Ruskin and Ruskin's wife, Effie, to paint Ruskin's portrait. Effie's increasing attachment to Millais, among other reasons (including Ruskin's non-consummation of the marriage) created a crisis, leading Effie to leave Ruskin, have the marriage annulled on grounds that it had not been consummated, and marry Millais, which caused a public scandal. Millais abandoned the Pre-Raphaelite style after his marriage, and Ruskin often savagely attacked his later works. Ruskin continued to support Hunt and Rossetti. He also provided independent funds to encourage the art of Rossetti's wife Elizabeth Siddal.

### Later developments and influence

Artists who were influenced by the Brotherhood include John Brett, Philip Calderon, Arthur Hughes, Gustave Moreau, Evelyn De Morgan, Frederic Sandys (who came into the Pre-Raphaelite circle in 1857), and John William Waterhouse. Ford Madox Brown, who was associated with them from the beginning, is often seen as most closely adopting the Pre-Raphaelite principles. One follower who developed his own distinct style was Aubrey Beardsley, who was pre-eminently influenced by Burne-Jones.

After 1856, Dante Gabriel Rossetti became an inspiration for the medievalising strand of the movement. Dante Gabriel Rossetti became the link to the two different types of Pre-Raphaelite painting (nature vs. Romance) after the PRB became best in the late 1800s. Rossetti, although the least committed to the brotherhood, continued the name and changed the Brotherhood's style drastically. He began painting versions of femme fatales using models like Jane Morris, in paintings such as: Proserpine, the blue silk dress, La Pia de' Tolomei, etc. His work influenced his friend William Morris, in whose firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. he became a partner, and with whose wife Jane he may have had an affair. Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones also became partners in the firm. Through Morris's company the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood influenced many interior designers and architects, arousing interest in medieval designs, as well as other crafts. This led directly to the Arts and Crafts movement headed by William Morris. Holman Hunt was also involved with this movement to reform design through the Della Robbia Pottery company.

After 1850, both Hunt and Millais moved away from direct imitation of medieval art. Both stressed the realist and scientific aspects of the movement, though Hunt continued to emphasize the spiritual significance of art, seeking to reconcile religion and science by making accurate observations and studies of locations in Egypt and Palestine for his paintings on biblical subjects. In contrast, Millais abandoned Pre-Raphaelitism after 1860, adopting a much broader and looser style influenced by Reynolds. William Morris and others condemned this reversal of principles.

The movement influenced the work of many later British artists well into the twentieth century. Rossetti later came to be seen as a precursor of the wider European Symbolist

movement. In the late twentieth century the Brotherhood of Ruralists based its aims on Pre-Raphaelitism, while the Stuckists and the Birmingham Group have also derived inspiration from it.

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery has a world-renowned collection of works by Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelites that, some claim, strongly influenced the young J.R.R. Tolkien, who would later go on to write his novels, such as *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, with their influence taken from the same mythological scenes portrayed by the Pre-Raphaelites.

In the twentieth century artistic ideals changed and art moved away from representing reality. Since the Pre-Raphaelites were fixed on portraying things with near-photographic precision, though with a distinctive attention to detailed surface-patterns, their work was devalued by many painters and critics. In particular, after the First World War, British Modernists associated Pre-Raphaelite art with the repressive and backward times in which they grew up. In the 1960s there was a major revival of Pre-Raphaelitism. Exhibitions and catalogues of works, culminating in a 1984 exhibition in London's Tate Gallery, re-established a canon of Pre-Raphaelite work.

The term Pre-Raphaelite, which refers to both art and literature, is confusing because there were essentially two different and almost opposed movements, the second of which grew out of the first. The term itself originated in relation to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an influential group of mid-nineteenth-century avant-garde painters associated with Ruskin who had great effect upon British, American, and European art. Those poets who had some connection with these artists and whose work presumably shares the characteristics of their art include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

**William Holman Hunt's** portraits of his young Pre-Raphaelite Brothers John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. [Click upon thumbnails to obtain larger images.]

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was founded in 1849 by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), D.G. Rossetti, John Everett Millais (1829-1896), William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and F. G. Stephens to revitalize the arts. (Even though William and Michael's sister, Christina, never was an official member of the Brotherhood, she was a crucial member of the inner circle. Although the young would-be art revolutionaries never published a manifesto, their works and memoirs show that having read Ruskin's praise of the artist as prophet, they hoped to create an art suitable for the modern age by:

1. Testing and defying all conventions of art; for example, if the Royal Academy schools taught art students to compose paintings with (a) pyramidal groupings of figures, (b) one major source of light at one side matched by a lesser one on the opposite, and (c) an emphasis on rich shadow and tone at the expense of color, the PRB with brilliant perversity painted bright-colored, evenly lit pictures that appeared almost flat..
2. The PRB also emphasized precise, almost photographic representation of even humble objects, particularly those in the immediate foreground (which were traditionally left blurred or in shade) --thus violating conventional views of both proper style and subject.
3. Following Ruskin, they attempted to transform the resultant hard-edge realism (created by 1 and 2) by combining it with typological symbolism. At their most successful, the PRB produced a magic or symbolic realism, often using devices found in the poetry of Tennyson and Browning.
4. Believing that the arts were closely allied, the PRB encouraged artists and writers to practice each other's art, though only D.G. Rossetti did so with particular success.
5. Looking for new subjects, they drew upon Shakespeare, Keats, and Tennyson.

In addition to the formal members of the PRB, other artists and writers formed part of a larger Pre-Raphaelite circle, including the painters Ford Madox Brown and Charles Collins, the poet Christina Rossetti, the artist and social critic John Ruskin, the painter-poet William Bel Scott, and the sculptor poet John Lucas Tupper. Later additions to the Pre-Raphaelite



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circle include J. W. Inchold, Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris - and even J. M. Whistler.

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