THOMAS J. TOBIN. **Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press: A Bibliography**. Pp. 232 (ELS Monograph 87). Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 2002. Paper, $25.

Scholars of Pre-Raphaelitism have been well served for nearly forty years by the late William Fredeman's *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (1965), an essential tool for research in the area. Thomas J. Tobin has at once narrowed Fredeman's focus—because he concentrates only on one nineteenth-century genre—and extended his range—because he has located more than his predecessor—in this new bibliography for the English Literary Studies peer-reviewed monograph series at the University of Victoria. Tobin's book is a 190-page chronologically ordered list of articles, reviews, and letters from the periodical press that are explicitly about, or which contain significant reference to, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the most important and the least well defined movement in the history of nineteenth-century English painting. Tobin's industry has been considerable. Fredeman listed some 500 periodical entries; Tobin has 2,400. Many of his additions include articles cited in other nineteenth-century literary texts, entries in languages other than English, articles on other subjects

that nonetheless discuss Pre-Raphaelitism, and entries from obscure low-circulation periodicals. These include such items as a discussion in the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* of the role played by Pre-Raphaelite sympathizers in the decoration of organ case work at Llandaff Cathedral (located by the Spencer Stanhope scholar Francesco Fiumara) and various entries from low-circulation American journals such as the bi-weekly New York *Crayon*.

It was the *Crayon* that published a pertinent query from 'An Interested Reader', remarking that, while the term 'pre-Raphaelite' had become a familiar word, many were in doubt as to its meaning. The correspondent—perhaps the editor of the *Crayon* himself, cunningly creating an occasion for an article—politely asked that 'in your next number', the editor should 'explain the exact meaning of the term' (quoted on p. 23). The most obvious achievement of Tobin's *Bibliography*, as it ranges across so many different approaches to and understandings of Pre-Raphaelitism, is to confirm the impossibility of answering the request. A brief glance through the titles of the articles included here in a randomly chosen year, 1877, underlines the portmanteau nature of Pre-Raphaelitism as a category: 'Morris and Tennyson's Mediaevalism'; a review of Rossetti's *Venus Astarte*, *A Sea Spell*, and *The Blessed Damozel*; digs at Millais in *Punch*; a note on Woolner's bust of Huxley; a piece on 'Togas and Toggery' in *Scribner's*; a discussion of Swinburne's views of Charlotte Brontë; a review of a German translation of Edmund Gosse's study of Swinburne in the *Academy*, and many reviews and analyses of William Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung*, a text which was in fact part of Morris's rejection of what he saw as his earlier Pre-Raphaelite mode.

Tobin's collection will be a useful resource in terms of its bibliographical listings, an important supplement to Fredeman, for those making their way through this highly diverse territory. But while admiring its archival scholarship in the compilation of these lists, the reader must also be wary of Tobin's poor prefatory essay. The problem stems partly from those difficulties of defining the Brotherhood, an understandable difficulty indeed. But Tobin persists in implying that, somewhere, there is an entirely clear definition that will do for the period at large, instead of accepting its interesting and challenging multiplicity. Of the time of the Oxford Union murals, Tobin remarks 'Strictly speaking, this period . . . ought not to be labeled Pre-Raphaelitism at all' (p. 31). But this is to create some problems. The open-endedness of 'Pre-Raphaelitism' needs to be accepted in place of such implications that there is a *strict* definition lurking in the shadows of Victorian cultural history. It is a problem in this introduction that leads to many statements which, as they stand, are empty. When Tobin comments, for instance, that 'Christina Rossetti is one of the main Pre-Raphaelite poets' (p. 32), what does this mean? In what ways can she *usefully* be described as a leading figure in Pre-Raphaelite poetics? Tobin provides no answer. Christina's work, of course, included poems (such as 'In an Artist's Studio') critical of her painter brother and of the Brotherhood. As to Ruskin's influence on the movement, Tobin is no better. 'The original aim' of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, he declares, offering the classic simplistic definition of the early stages of the movement, was simply 'to follow John Ruskin's advice in *Modern Painters*: "go to Nature in all singleness of heart . . . rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing"' (p. 16). Of course, fidelity to the visual world was an important strand in the early movement's identity, but to cite Ruskin as the plain originator of this for all the original members of the Brotherhood, and to avoid consideration of their qualifications to this aesthetic more or less from the start, is untenable. And that is not even to begin considering the kind of misreading of Ruskin that is required to see those words from *Modern Painters I* as a complete summary of his directions to artists. Then there are the errors of fact or

emphasis. Ruskin did not advocate a return to Venetian Renaissance art—in his definition of the Renaissance—as Tobin implies on page 14, but the contrary. *Modern Painters* was completed in 1860, not 1846 (p. 13); the standard Cook and Wedderburn *Library Edition* of Ruskin's works is thirty-nine, not thirty-six, volumes, its publication dates 1903–12, not 1903 (p. 35). It's a little misleading to say that Ford Madox Brown began his painting education on the Continent in the 'early decades of the nineteenth century' (p. 14) when the years concerned were 1836–46, and strange to comment that the Nazarenes were simply 'eccentric German painters' (p. 15). It is more peculiar to remark that the Pre-Raphaelites rejected the 'visual principles of the Old Masters, which had been taught in the Royal Academy for centuries' (p. 28) when firstly it depends which 'Old Masters' are meant, and secondly and more basically, it forgets that the Royal Academy was founded in 1768. Tobin comments with what I can only describe as unhelpful complacency on the final page of this introduction that 'Making this compilation, I have learned much more about the world in which the Pre-Raphaelites lived than I had thought I might' (p. 33). I'm afraid that one has to wish rather more had been learned before this essay was committed to print.

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