SOURCES
FOR SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS’S ‘CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS’

BY

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No other work by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sparked as much controversy or gained as much notoriety for the group as Millais’s *Christ in the House of His Parents (Carpenter’s Shop)* when it was unveiled at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1850 (fig. 1). It touched off a lively but malicious diatribe from Charles Dickens, and ultimately generated Ruskin’s wild defense of the Pre-Raphaelites. Devotional and symbolic in content but naturalistic in detail, it became a strident manifesto of the Brotherhood’s aims, and as such remains one of its seminal productions. Against the backdrop of an ordinary dwelling, Millais reconstructed a carpenter’s setting reminiscent of contemporary workshops. His intent was to illustrate in everyday terms the childhood environment of Jesus. Both public and critics, however, objected to the un-idealized conception which depicted St. Joseph as a common artisan at his workbench and the Virgin and St. Anne as the homely members of a laborer’s family. The crowding of several generations into the composition, moreover, suggested the insufficient accommodations and confining atmosphere of the English workingman’s domain. The net result of Millais’s treatment was to flaunt the conventional ideal of the Holy Family and violate the Victorian code of propriety. As the critic of *The Times* expressed it: “Mr. Millais’s ... picture is, to speak plainly, revolting. The attempt to associate the holy family with the meanest details of a carpenter’s shop, with no conceivable omission of misery, dirt, of even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness, is disgusting.”

The savage attack Millais aroused, and eye-witness testimony to the development of the picture, have somehow combined to prevent the work from being studied for possible sources. While John Rogers Herbert’s *Our Saviour Subject to His Parents at Nazareth* has been mentioned as a “forerunner” of Millais’s work, their obvious differences militate against the suggestion of a direct link (fig. 2). Millais’s painting stands as the incontestable invention of a youthful rebel, a notion sustained by the accounts of Millais’s associates and relatives. According to Holman Hunt, the idea of the picture derived from a sermon on a biblical text which Millais heard at Oxford during the summer of 1849, and a cousin testified that every detail of the work “was discussed by the father, mother, Johnnie (the artist) before a touch was placed on canvas, although sketches had been made.” The picture was begun in the autumn of the same year; Rossetti saw a sketch for it in Millais’s studio on 1 November; the heads of the Virgin and Christ
were being painted when William Rossetti examined the picture on 21 February; on 3 March William Millais was observed posing for the chest of the apprentice. The work was almost completed by 8 April, and shown the following month at the Royal Academy. Millais's family and friends thus participated in the entire development of the picture, and their first-hand
FIG. 3 — MILLAIS. Study for *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1849-1850. Pencil, 4½ × 7½. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. *Phot. of the Museum*. In this preliminary study, as in the two following ones, the apprentice rests his left arm on the bench and lines up the board by sight.


FIG. 5 — MILLAIS. Study for *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1849-1850. Pen and ink and wash, 7½ × 13¼ in. London, Tate Gallery. *Phot. of the Museum*.
reports apparently disinclined scholars to look further for its derivation.

Not long after the work was displayed, however, some spectators must have recognized its striking resemblance to an old master painting attributed to Annibale Carracci, The Holy Family in a Carpenter’s Shop, exhibited at the British Institution in 1851 (fig. 7). Known also as Le Raboteur, the painting had passed from the Orleans collection at the time of the French Revolution to that of the Earl of Suffolk, in whose family it has since remained. It shows three figures in the courtyard of a house: in the center and at the left, St. Joseph teaches the child Jesus how to lay out a plank with a cord, and at the right the Virgin sits doing her sewing, looking up momentarily from her work. Despite the fact that Millais has set his scene in an interior, the general composition and several specific details of the two works are so close that the parentage cannot be doubted.

As in the Annibale, Millais organized his composition frontally around the workbench, thus creating the unusual oblong format and emphasizing the one-point perspective scheme. His St. Joseph and apprentice are analogous to the St. Joseph and Christ in Annibale’s work, both pairs bending over their project. While in three of the preliminary studies for Millais’s picture, the apprentice rests his left arm on the bench and lines up the board by sight (figs. 3–5), in the final stages he pulls a cord taut, his left hand resembling St. Joseph’s right in the Carracci (figs. 6, 1). Obviously, the desire to retain the Carracci motif presented Millais with a difficult problem, since it is unclear in the definitive painting how the other end of the cord is being held in place. The highly finished study at the Tate further indicates that Millais had at first thought of depicting the Virgin at her sewing basket and this reinforces the comparison. The location of the basket on the floor next to the hem of the Virgin’s skirt, the type of basket itself and the ball of thread next to it are similar in both cases. But the preliminary sketches are perhaps most revealing in tracing the evolution of the workbench motif. In Millais’s painting it rests on four heavy uprights and has a thick top, quite at variance from Carracci’s design. It is clear, however, from the Fitzwilliam pencil study and the careful Tate sketch that Millais came close to adopting Carracci’s workbench, which has a much thinner top and sawhorse-type legs canted out from the center. Millais’s first idea demonstrates his difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory form for the table, since it seems to combine the sawhorse legs and the heavy top (fig. 3). It is also worth noting that, although Millais’s scene is set in an interior, like the Carracci, the right side of his picture leads to an inner chamber and the left to a landscape vista. Equally exciting are the scattered wood shavings on the floor, the location of the saw in the background, the boards leaning against the wall, and the curious relationship of Millais’s nail and pincers to Carracci’s clamp and hammer on the top of the tables. Both artists delighted in the use of these accessories to build up the atmosphere of the workshop, and Millais’s finical indulgence in the rendering of the shavings attracted a good deal of critical attention.

Millais might have known Carracci’s painting in the original, although the last previous recorded exhibition of the work had been in 1816. Perhaps Woolner, who hailed from Hadleigh in Suffolk, was familiar with the Earl of Suffolk’s collection. Most likely, however, Millais knew the work from a reproduction. On 11 October, 1856 the Raboteur was stolen together with a number of other works from Charleton Park, the seat of the Earl of Suffolk, and the following month a long article devoted to the theft, accompanied by a wood engraving of Carracci’s work, was published in the Illustrated London News (fig. 7). The article singled out the picture as a first-rate production, praised it as “worthy of the reputation of the great master,” and described it as being “well known to every connoisseur and picture-dealer in the Kingdom.” These remarks, joined to the fact that a reproduction existed, show that the Raboteur had a widespread popularity and was known to the public prior to the 1851 showing at the British Institution. Millais was an avid collector of old master engravings, as well as reproductions of contemporary German artists, and it is instructive to compare the Tate sketch with the wood engraving. The clear,
firm outline — a cardinal quality of Pre-Raphaelite
draftsmanship — and the picturesque details of the
Millais have a close affinity with the style of the
latter. Millais’s study of prints after Joseph
Führich may have made him susceptible to the
reproduction of the *Raboteur*, since they share the
unaffected simplicity and straightforward sen-
timent of *quattrocento* painting.

Millais deviated from the Carracci primarily in
his depiction of an interior scene and in the
greater number of figures he included. In addi-
tion, we know that the figure of St. John the
Baptist at the extreme right was a last-minute
insertion, so that it is not surprising to learn that
the artist tapped still another source to aid him in
clarifying the final picture. For these supple-
mentary features Millais drew upon Hippolyte
Flandrin’s Prix de Rome composition, *Theseus
Recognized by his Father* (fig. 8). It too shares many
qualities with Millais’s work: the oblong view of
an interior established by the length of a table seen
frontally; a dominant horizontal plane around
which a number of figures orbit in an elliptical
design. In both cases, the central axis is empha-
sized by an interior wall member which frames
the principal action, and is in turn thrown into
relief by flanking rectangular openings leading to
the exterior. Several specific parallels also come
through: the relationship of St. Anne to
Theseus’s father who bends over the table and
touches the knife, and that of the bony, sinewy
arm of the old man to the limbs of St. Joseph.
But the most striking of these is the affinity be-
tween the St. John in Millais’s picture, and the
servant at the far right in Flandrin’s who enters
carrying a basket of food. Although facing in
opposite directions, their gestures and composi-
tional roles are nearly identical. Millais would
certainly have been familiar with Flandrin’s pic-

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**Fig. 6** — Millais. Study for *Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1856. Pen
and ink over pencil, 7½ × 11½ in.
London, Tate Gallery. *Phot. of the
Museum.* As in the final stage (Fig. 1),
the apprentice pulls a cord taut, his
left hand resembling St. Joseph’s
right in the Carracci (cf. Fig. 7).

**Fig. 7** — Attributed to Annibale Carracci. *The Holy Family in a
Carpenter’s Shop (Le Raboteur).* Wood engraving published in the
*Illustrated London News*, 8 November 1856. Millais might have
known Carracci’s painting in the original, but most likely from a
reproduction.
ture through Hunt and Rossetti, who had visited Paris in 1849 and made a pilgrimage to the École des Beaux-Arts to see the Prix de Rome compositions. They also wrote back enthusiastically about Flandrin, whom they recognized as a spiritual confrère. But if Millais's relationship with Flandrin—the French Pre-Raphaelite—is understandable, how can we explain his link to Carracci, a representative of one of the traditions Hunt described as “lethal in their influence,” and whose very name by simple definition excluded it from the charmed circle of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood? Indeed, Hunt repeatedly assails the Carracci as the source of all evil in contemporary art, and rejoices when Ruskin reverses Reynolds's order of preference of the Bolognese over the Venetians. A careful reading of these passages, however, reveals that Hunt’s quarrel is not with any of the individual Carracci, but with the academic tradition their followers helped establish. His many criticisms reflect a contemporary prejudice against the Bolognese influence on the Academy. Somewhat naively, he traced the stereotyped compositions and technical mannerisms of contemporary academicians to the Bolognese School. In a sense, this view can be understood in light of certain Pre-Raphaelite objections to Reynolds who warmly praised the Carracci, and it was especially “the Carracci” in its conventional and symbolic implications that aroused Hunt’s enmity.

For all their avowed antagonism to the legacy of “the Carracci,” notwithstanding, the Pre-Raphaelites must have abided an ambivalent attitude toward the immediate person of Annibale and his family. The critic Hazlitt, whom they admired, had expressed enthusiastic veneration for Annibale, and celebrated his wholesome influence. Reynolds made clear Annibale’s fidelity to “the peculiarities of the individual model,” and even Ruskin—whose denunciation of the Bolognese influenced Hunt’s attitude—grudgingly admitted that the Carracci approached nature humbly, although in his view they spent too much time contemplating the seamy side of life. Annibale himself was held in high esteem by such disparate figures as Lawrence, Turner, Constable, and most surprisingly, by Blake, who, in the attempt to convince his patron Thomas Butts of his own merit, wrote: “I... also Know & Understand & can assuredly affirm that the works I have done for You are Equal to Carrache or Rafael...” Despite a somewhat facetious tone in Blake’s letter, it is evident that in his mind and that of his public Carracci was the man to beat.

Significantly, the sympathetic Opie had recommended to his students Annibale’s advice on drawing: “First make a good outline, and then (whatever you do in the middle) it must be a good picture.” Millais’s own lucid outlines may have ultimately derived from this outlook, since at Sass’s, where he first received formal training, students were required to copy the outlines of engravings after Carracci. The Pre-Raphaelites could have easily accepted Annibale’s formal clarity, his sense for reality in all its aspects and his taste for caricature. As a group they might even have identified with the Carracci academy, Accademia degli Incamminati, which issued from conditions similar to those of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Initially a sort of “family” enterprise directed by Annibale, his brother Agostino and their cousin Lodovico, the Carracci academy represented a youthful protest against the anti-naturalistic tendencies of late Mannerism. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, it formed the nexus of an intellectual community, where artists, writers and philosophical thinkers met to exchange ideas. Above all, the Carracci were engrossed in the study of nature and made everyday life the point of departure for their Academy. The Pre-Raphaelites could hardly disagree with the Carracci program: their contempt for its so-called “corrupting” influence was nothing more than a reflection of the common prejudice against the Carracci disciples. Indeed, when confronted directly with a work by Annibale, Hunt’s—and even Ruskin’s—attitude was one of veneration.

The Pre-Raphaelites were often at pains to disabuse the public of the notion that their outlook was exclusively an affair of quattrocentism, and a disinterested look at the Raboteur discloses many features entirely compatible with their position. We have already mentioned the unpretentious-
ness of Carracci’s treatment: the scene is depicted without conventional trappings, and Christ himself is presented in a human, plebeian context. The workshop iconography must have had a special appeal to the disciples of Ruskin’s arts-and-crafts morality, which became a national obsession when the Great Exhibition was inaugurated in 1851.\(^{33}\) Carracci’s medieval setting, identified by the Romanesque-type window, and the rendering of a manual laborer plying his trade would have assuredly struck a responsive chord. As a youth, Hunt’s favorite text in Modern Painters was Ruskin’s discussion of the symbolism of Tintoretto’s Annunciation in the lower hall of the Scuola di San Rocco, where the author interprets the unused tools and the new building being erected as representing the emergence of Christianity on the ruins of Judaism. Hunt inferred from the passage that St. Joseph was meant to represent the “new builder,” and he communicated his insight to Millais.\(^{34}\) He never forgot the excitement of this intellectual experience, and years later he recalled it with the same enthusiasm in the presence of Ruskin before the very work itself.\(^{35}\) It is therefore not unexpected to learn that Raboteur influenced Hunt’s work as well. He exploited the motif in the vignette at the right of his Finding of Christ in the Temple (fig. 9),\(^{36}\) and also as the basis of his later painting, Shadow of Death (fig. 10). As in Millais’s Carpenter’s Shop, Hunt focused on
progressively achieved through the various stages of preparatory drawing. Just as Hunt might have employed a Boucher motif for his *Hirpling Shepherd* to contrast the French painter’s artifice with his personal brand of “truth,” so Millais seems to justify his use of Carracci’s invention by infusing it with Pre-Raphaelite sentiment. The *Raboteur* was thus transmuted into a Pre-Raphaelite manifesto.

Perhaps it was the public’s very familiarity with the *Raboteur* which predisposed it negatively to Millais’s conception. Yet this cannot wholly explain the intense hostility with which press and public greeted the work: something in the painting touched a nerve center deep in the Victorian consciousness. It is never mentioned as a significant problem, but the fact that the Pre-Raphaelites use as models members of their own family has much to do with the effect their work

the wood shavings and tools—this time, however, as signs of the new dispensation—and like his colleague, intimated the presentiment of anguish the Virgin was condemned to suffer.

Both Millais and Hunt dramatically transform the generalized types of the *Raboteur* into the photographic likenesses of their family, friends and carefully selected models. Millais’s scrupulous reconstruction of a contemporary carpenter’s shop and the verisimilitude of his protagonists stand out in stark contrast with the Carracci types. As if to carry the Carracci program to its logical conclusion, Millais strives for the highest level of naturalism imaginable. Not surprisingly, the earliest studies are far more idealized than the final product—the resulting work having been

![Fig. 9 — William Holman Hunt, Finding of Christ in the Temple, 1854-1865, detail. Canvas. Birmingham, City Museum and Art Gallery. Phot. of the Museum. The Raboteur influenced Hunt’s work as well; he exploited the motif at the right of the painting.](image1)

![Fig. 10 — W.H. Hunt, The Shadow of Death, 1870-1871. Canvas, 83 ½ x 66 in. Manchester, City Art Gallery. Phot. of the Museum. As in Millais’s *Carpenter’s Shop*, Hunt focused on the wood shavings and tools, and intimated the presentiment of anguish the Virgin was condemned to suffer.](image2)
more initiative than the society was willing to tolerate.

It was inevitable, moreover, that the fantasy should involve the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Inherent in Pre-Raphaelitism is the tense psychological drama of familial encounters. The Christ in the House of His Parents is a paradigmatic example: Millais’s father sat for the head of St. Joseph; his cousin Edwin Everett modeled for John the Baptist; and although Mrs. Henry Hodgkinson, the wife of Millais’s half-brother, sat for Mary, it seems certain that Millais’s mother posed for the Virgin’s head. Mrs. Hodgkinson was too young for the Virgin’s head, which can be seen from a portrait of 1843 (fig. 11) and from the fact that she is the Isabella in Millais’s work of 1849, Lorenzo and Isabella, where the youthful looking damsel accords well with her real-life counterpart. Conversely, a late portrait of Millais’s mother reproduced in his son’s biography, bears a strong resemblance to the Virgin: they share

creates. The discomfiture they often make us feel is inherent in the self-conscious attitudes of the pictorial protagonists and ultimately to their relationship with the artist and to each other. Millais’s extensive use of his family, as well as their deep personal involvement in Carpenter’s Shop, partially explains the awkward gestures and its sense of constraint. This employment of family members and intimate friends served a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, it guaranteed the natural characterizations their program required, and on the other—perhaps most important of all—it permitted the romantic dream projection of the artist and his circle into an ideal universe. While much Pre-Raphaelite work was negatively charged in its denunciation of the contemporary moral climate, it also had the positive virtue of projecting the painters and their kinsmen in the role of medieval heroes and allowing a vicarious existence in this fantasy world. This called for

FIG. 11 — J.E. MILLAIS [?], Portrait of Mary Hodgkinson, ca. 1843. Although Mrs. Henry Hodgkinson, the wife of Millais’s half-brother, sat for Mary, it seems certain that Millais’s mother provided the Virgin’s head (cf. fig. 12).

FIG. 12 — WILLIAM MILLAIS, Portrait of Mary Millais, ca. 1869. She bears a strong resemblance to the Virgin.
such features as the long face, high cheek bones, wrinkled brow, thin nose with slightly arched bridge, as well as the slight build—a description which fits the written record (fig. 12). (Perhaps not fortuitously, Mrs. Millais, who was christened Emily Mary, was called “Mary” at home.) Millais’s brother William posed for the position of the apprentice, but he had previously modeled for John the Baptist in Millais’s painting of 1847 *The Widow’s Mite*, and the artist once remarked to Hunt that William was perfectly “suited” for St. John. And while the Christ child was modeled after a friend’s son, it is most probable that he is a projection of Millais himself. The principal difficulty Millais had in the final stages of the painting was related to the heads of the Virgin and Christ; at first she was represented being openly kissed by the child, but finally she was changed to the very ambiguous position of the present picture. These two figures were constantly painted and repainted in various combinations, and completed only a short time before the picture was exhibited. Their resolution is so unsatisfactory, that critics became entangled in their reading of the motif.

The subject of Millais’s picture was based on a verse from Zechariah, which served as its title in the *Royal Academy Exhibition* of 1850: “And one shall say unto him, what are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” As erroneously interpreted by the artist, this verse foretells the passion of Christ and his sufferings at the hands of his own people. Millais illustrates the prophecy by having the young Jesus injure his hand on a nail which pierces the workbench, and showing a drop of blood on Christ’s foot. The mother’s face reflects profound anguish over both her immediate failure to protect the child and her prescience of future events. In an ambiguous and half-hearted gesture, the child makes an effort to assuage her sense of guilt and pain. Meanwhile, the father, in an almost bemused fashion, grabs Christ’s hand from behind and turns it back for closer examination. St. Anne reaches over the table toward the pincers, perhaps to withdraw the nail, but her face also betrays resignation and sorrow. As he brings water to wash the wound, St. John casts a knowing glance at the entire event.

In actual life, Millais’s mother played the dominant role in the family. The father was somewhat ineffectual, and young Millais treated him as a kind of buffoon. Mrs. Millais, on the other hand, swayed the household to her wishes, and it was her ambition for her youngest son “Johnnie” that brought the family to London and caused the whole family to revolve around him. She encouraged his nascent precocity and undertook the greater part of his education. Her aggressiveness got him into the Academy at the tender age of eleven, and then she continued to help him win all the available honors. She criticized his work, provided him with subjects, and even did research for him at the British Museum. In order to facilitate contact with her son she kept a work-table in his studio, where akin to the Virgin in *Raboteur* and the preliminary sketches for *Carpenter’s Shop*, she did her crocheting. Thus there can be no doubt as to the major role Mrs. Millais played in her son’s development, and in later years he was quoted as saying, “I owe everything to my mother.” Both mother and son, however, must have had second thoughts about the choice of profession throughout the latter part of 1849 and early 1850. The *Lorenzo and Isabella* was generally regarded as “a prime joke,” and subjected the young artist to an avalanche of negative criticism. Now as he painted *Christ in the House of His Parents*, determined against his mother’s wishes to proceed along Pre-Raphaelite lines, he must have anticipated more adverse reaction. Sir Martin Archer Shee, who sponsored Johnnie’s entrance in the Academy, told his mother before their interview to make him rather a “chimney sweep” than a painter, and in Millais’s disappointment of the period he may have indeed questioned the wisdom of his choice. He did not sustain criticism well, and his later career is a testimony to his need for popular acclaim. Millais was also feeling cramped by his lack of independence in the household, and once before he had closed his parents out of the studio, a gesture which deeply offended his mother. He told Hunt that he ob-
jected to the transformation of his studio “into the general sitting-room.” Subjected to the pressures of his mother, and frustrated over the reception of his work, Millais projected these feelings in the painting: the dense, claustrophobic crowd of figures literally “closes in” on the protagonist and is responsible for his wound. At the same time, the artist intimates ultimate triumph by the presence of the dove and the flock of sheep advancing toward the house to receive their shepherd. Curiously, when Mrs. Millais read the reviews of the Carpenter’s Shop she denounced them as “blasphemous” insults to the Holy Family, a projection of her own distress and guilt. She tried to blame Rossetti for corrupting her son, and attributed the adverse reaction to Johnnie’s change in style.88

Dickens’s irrational response to Millais’s work is directly related to the undisguised depiction of factual people and their personal conflicts in the context of the sacred theme. The obtrusiveness of these features threatened his idealized vision of the Holy Family. As he declared in his attack: “You come... to the contemplation of a Holy Family. You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations; and to prepare yourselves, as befits such a subject—Pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting.”59

It is not generally known, but in the period immediately prior to Millais’s development of Carpenter’s Shop, Dickens had been preparing his own version of the life of Christ for his children.60 A highly glossy, saccharine account, it conspicuously omits all references to the profession of St. Joseph and the young Jesus. Undoubtedly, Dickens’s totally idealized vision has symbolic significance in terms of his own childhood. The son of an aspirant to the gentry who could never make ends meet, Dickens was put to work when only eleven years old—ironically, the same age as Millais on entering the Academy—in Warren’s blacking warehouse in the Strand.61 The painful effects of this experience etched themselves deeply into his consciousness, and years later the memory haunted him, so much so that he deliberately concealed it from his wife and children. He blamed his parents—and especially his mother, who did not wish him to quit the factory—for having blocked his designs for a classical education and forcing him to engage early in commercial pursuits.62 The debilitating consequences of the factory environment and the drudgery to which he was assigned are poignantly articulated in this statement:

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; ...and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless... cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of life.63

The autobiographical intent of David Copperfield, a work conceived in the same year as Carpenter’s Shop, was Dickens’s attempt to work out his trauma by absorbing the painful experiences in an idealized context. David Copperfield, blessed with outstanding ability and a sensitive nature, is turned at the age of ten into a “laboring hind” in the service of “Murdstone and Grinby’s.” His mother, indirectly responsible for the catastrophe, is never relieved of her burden of guilt, and eventually dies from the cruel treatment of the stepfather.

But if Dickens permitted a partially disguised form for working out his personal trauma, he could not permit the violation in any form of the sacred boyhood of Jesus. The one perfect childhood which unfolded according to divine plan was a substitute fulfillment for his unhappy experience. No wonder then, preoccupied by these thoughts, that Dickens reacted so violently to Millais’s picture, which not only undermined the fantasy of Christ’s juvenescence, but also exposed his own unhealed childhood wounds. In the same way, Millais aroused the wrath of Victorian society in general. The Victorian ideal of domestic bliss, a vision of a loving family of several gener-
ations under the same roof, and the sheltered life it implied, found its most succinct embodiment in the theme of the Holy Family. Millais’s exposure of his family’s psychological conflicts in the context of this theme, and the disconcerting unhappiness conveyed by the picture, threatened one of the illusions upon which the Victorian outlook owed its adhesion and moral force.64

Later, Millais, like Frith and Dickens, decided it was easier satisfying the public than outraging it, and in a short time he became one of the most fashionable painters in Victorian society. But for that brief moment between the formation of the Brotherhood and his election to the Academy as A.R.A., Millais challenged that society on its most vulnerable level. An astonishing parallel exists between Millais and the French painter Manet: both yearned for official acclaim and respected convention, yet their pioneering works outraged the public precisely because of their treatment of traditional themes. However, just as Manet unwittingly provoked fresh insights into the standards of his society, so Millais anticipated not David Copperfield, but Hardy’s Tractarian stonemason, Jude Fawley.

A.B.

NOTES


2. C. Dickens, Old Lamps for New Ones, in Household Words, 1, June 15, 1850, pp. 265-266; J. Ruskin, Letters to The Times, May 13, 30, 1851. While Ruskin did not care for the picture either, he defended the principles which he felt were operative in its genesis as well as other Pre-Raphaelite pictures. See also Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism, London, 1851.

3. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, in The Times, May 9, 1850.


16. Ibid., p. 188; Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. O. Doughty and J.W. Wahl, Oxford, 1965, I, 66. Hunt wrote that Flandrin's paintings in St. Germain-des-Prés "were undoubtedly the highest examples of religious art of the day," while Rossetti guessed that the French artist had executed "the most perfect works" that he and Hunt had ever seen.

17. Hunt, loc. cit., p. 137, II, 491; I, 91; and especially II, 491.


22. J. Ruskin, Works, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, London, 1903 et seq., IV (Modern Painting, II, 1846), 491. Ruskin, however, felt that the Carracci and their followers were "art weeds" on the Venetian tradition. Ibid., pp. XXXV, 214. Note (referring to Leigh Hunt's criticism); V (Modern Painting, III, 1846), 400; VIII (The Seven Lamps of Architecture, 1849), 207-208, 151. Here he decried the Carracci's fidelity to natural drapery effects as "base".


26. William Blake, Poetry and Prose, ed. D.V. Erdman, New York, 1970, p. 690. Letter to Thomas Butts, November 22, 1802. The ambivalence of the Pre-Raphaelites toward the Carracci is evident from this observation on Blake's remarks by William Rossetti: "Of course many of us at the present day will think that Blake's works are more than equal in various regards, including some of the highest) to those of the Carracci; whom, indeed, Blake himself did not greatly reverence, though he here couples their name with Raphael's. This was probably an argumentum ad hominem." See W.M. Rossetti, The Poetical Works of William Blake, London, 1891, p. lxxii, note 2. This work was first published in 1874.


28. W.P. Frith, My Autobiography and Reminiscences, London, 1887-1888, I, 37. Naturally, the entire academic tradition stressed outline drawing, but my main point is that Millais would have been sympathetic to this element of his training. He generally prepared elaborate pen-drawn cartoons for his pictures. See H. Hubbard, Some Victorian Draughtsmen, Cambridge, 1944, p. 23.


32. Hunt, op. cit., II, p. 217; Ruskin, Works, XII, pp. 476, 467-468. In his notes of the 1840's, Ruskin praised Annibale's landscape technique as well as specific pictures.

33. There is a similar composition by the Ferrarese painter and contemporary of Carracci, Lo Scarsellino, entitled Sacra Famiglia al lavoro, and presently in Dresden. St. Joseph is shown kneeling on the table sawing a plank, while the young Jesus works at his side under the watchful
eye of the Virgin. The table, however, differs from the Carracci picture in its diagonal disposition. For a reproduction of this work, see M. A. Novelli, Lo Scarello, Milan, 1964, No. 25, fig. 18. I am grateful to Professor Posner for having brought this example to my attention. The early Pre-Raphaelite “do-it-yourself” outlook is discussed in Hunt, op. cit., I, 151, 202, II, 406.

34. Ibid., I, 90; Ruskin, Works, IV, 264-265.
37. Hunt, op. cit., II, pp. 273 ff. In his Triumph of the Innocents, Hunt used Carracci’s saw for the type carried by St. Joseph. Hunt personally was fascinated by the theme of the carpenter (Ibid., p. 32), and like Millais, sketched the details from actual carpenter shops. See Walker Art Gallery, op. cit., Nos. 43-46.
38. Mary Bennett organized the studies in the following order: 1) the Victoria and Albert sketch, 2) the Fitzwilliam pencil study, 3) the Tate pen and ink drawing, 4) the Tate study of the separate figures. See Walker Art Gallery, John Everett Millais 1829-1896, Liverpool, 1967, Nos. 252-255.

40. It may not be coincidental that Millais’s Lorenzo and Isabella of 1849 displays thirteen figures, exactly one over the number stipulated by Annibale for figure compositions—a convention supported by Reynolds. See Discourses, op. cit., p. 65 and note.
42. Ibid., p. 5; Hunt, op. cit., I, p. 59. Although the portrait dates from the late 1860’s, it still bears a striking resemblance to the Mary in the Carpenter’s Shop.
43. Mrs. Hodgkinson’s forename was also Mary, but she was familiar to Millais by her family name.
45. Millais, op. cit., p. 78. The sketches, however, reveal no ambiguity, and Ford Madox Hueffer suggests that the change was brought about by friends who were outraged by what they took to signify adoration of the Virgin. See F.M. Hueffer, The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, London, n.d., p. 113.
46. Curiously, both Millais and Hueffer erroneously asserted that the final work shows the “mother kissing her son.” Millais, op. cit., p. 78; Hueffer, op. cit., p. 113.
47. Zechariah xiii, 6. The entire book of Zechariah is a rich compendium of metaphors for building, carpentry and reconstruction.
48. A close reading of the context of the passage shows that it deals not with the Messiah but with false prophets who wish to conceal their identity. The false prophet repudiates his profession when it is no longer fashionable, and provides an excuse for wounds which were probably self-inflicted in a ritual ceremony. Edward Morris demonstrated that Millais’s inaccurate interpretation was influenced by Pusey and the Oxford Movement, and could ultimately be traced to the medieval mystic, Rupert of Deutz. See E. Morris, The Subject of Millais’s “Christ in the House of His Parents”, in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Vol. XXXIII, 1970, pp. 143 ff. It should not be overlooked, however, that Zechariah does contain a passage of messianic portent relevant to Millais’s picture, XII, 10, cited in John XIX, 37: “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”
49. For the symbolism of this picture see Grosvenor Gallery, 14-15; Spielmann, 99-100. Also the most recent study of the work in the context of Anglican High Church influences: A. Grieve, The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Anglican High Church, in Burlington Magazine, 101, 1969, pp. 294-295.
50. R. Watkinson, Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design, Greenwich, Conn., 1970, p. 44.
51. Hunt, op. cit., I, pp. 61, 92-93.
52. Watkinson, op. cit., p. 44.
53. Millais, op. cit., p. 3.
55. Millais, op. cit., p. 3.
56. Ibid., p. 73.
59. Dickens, op. cit., p. 265.
60. Dickens, The Life of Our Lord, New York, 1934. It was originally written during the years 1846-1849, but withheld from publication because of its personal intent. The manuscript was ultimately bequeathed to Sir Henry Fielding Dickens with the admonition that it should not be published while any child of Dickens lived. Sir Henry’s widow and children, however, were not bound by this will and permitted its publication. Ibid., pp. 3 ff. I am grateful to Professor Joseph Bennett for bringing this work to my attention.
63. Forster, op. cit., pp. 22-23.