

PRE-RAPHAELITE INTERVENTIONS: MARGARET HUNT'S FEMINIST CRITIQUES
OF ART AND SOCIETY IN THORNICROFT'S MODEL

by

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PREFACE

When I first began to conceive of my thesis project, I had never heard the name Margaret Hunt. In fact, most scholars have never heard her name. I discovered Hunt while researching the publication history of fairytales: her 1884 edition of Grimms' Household Tales was the first to translate the extensive author's notes of Wilhelm Grimm into English, and consequently, she is at least known to those working in anthropology, children's literature, and folklore. She is also occasionally known as the mother of New Woman novelist Violet Hunt. As I began to look into the life and works of this woman, discovering she was friends with John Ruskin, Oscar Wilde, Andrew Lang, Robert Browning and the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, finding over twenty novels and numerous publications in periodicals, I became intrigued by an author who had been effectively erased from artistic and literary history. In fact, while my interest in Hunt initially arose from her work with folklore, I discovered in the archives that a recovery of her work would first and foremost have to focus on her fictional portrayals of the world of art.

This project investigates Hunt's most successful novel, Thornicroft's Model (1873). On the surface, the work is a fictional portrayal of the relationship between Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his fellow artist, model and wife Elizabeth Siddal. I suggest, however, that Hunt goes far beyond presenting a mere romance of the infamous pair: she uses their stories, as well as those of other historical artists and models, to voice her own critique of art and society. Her writing engages with popular modes of nineteenth-century art criticism and participates in critical conversations surrounding both the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the women they depicted in their paintings. While she often privileges these artists over others, particularly those associated with the Royal Academy, she

does not exempt her favorites from judgment. Framing her critique as a biography of the artist and his model, Hunt uses the paintings of her “Pre-Raphaelite” protagonist and his treatment of the model to question the fidelity of the brotherhood to their precept of “truth to art,” exposing that rather than represent any faithful truthfulness, the artists erase the agency of the woman and render her invisible. Turning to contemporary art criticism, historical studies of art and the figure of the model, I assert that Hunt’s novel depicts the artistic, psychological, and social constraints that nineteenth-century women encountered upon entering the world of art, both as models and as artists, and in the end, Thornicroft’s Model is a feminist intervention on behalf of all women participating in art.

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CHAPTER I

Recovering Margaret Hunt's Artistic Interventions: An Introduction to the Author and Her Art Criticism

From Rossetti to Ruskin, and from Ruskin to [...] Madox Brown, and from Madox Brown to Sir John Gilbert and the artists of the Old Water-Colour Society, and from them to Sir Charles Dilke or Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, there was not one that, from the 'seventies to the 'nineties, would not have told you that Mrs. Alfred Hunt was the wittiest woman in London. -- Ford Madox Ford¹

Despite Ford Madox Ford's prefatory accolades in Margaret Raine Hunt's last published work The Governess (1912), few at the time actually remembered her as "the wittiest woman in London." The individuals who had revered her in the final decades of the nineteenth century had died, and her daughter Violet Hunt's circle only knew her as the increasingly senile old woman who laughed hysterically at the idea of D.H. Lawrence being a poet and who took malicious pleasure in hiding Ezra Pound's shoes (Hardwick 86-87). In fact, tribute soon gave way to scandal when, within his preface, Ford had described Violet Hunt, the co-author of the text, as his wife -- much to the dismay of the woman to whom he was married.² Consequently, Ford's tribute did little to preserve the memory of the author who had "enjoyed in her day that enviable cross between literary esteem and the broad popularity which is the haven which all we novelists desire" (qtd. in Goldring 4). Eclipsed by scandal and dismissed as "queer in the head" (Goldring xi), Hunt's life and work soon disappeared into the "careful[ly] preserve[ed]" archives that Violet Hunt was creating for her own "immortality" (Hardwick 187). Indeed, it is largely within the archives that Violet Hunt created out of her family's correspondence that Margaret Hunt's prolific work as a novelist and critic has been lost.³

While there is no evidence that Violet Hunt purposely erased aspects of her mother's work, there is little in Violet Hunt's archives to document Hunt's identity as a writer. Given

Violet Hunt's obsessive collecting of family artifacts, it seems particularly shocking that only a handful of letters and two book contracts refer to the work of a woman who "averaged a novel a year" from 1874 to 1886 (Belford 33).⁴ Biographers now working to recover her daughter's life must largely construct Hunt from representations in her daughter's autobiographical novels *Their Lives* (1916) and *Their Hearts* (1921). In an effort to set herself firmly in the role of the "New Woman," Violet Hunt largely characterized her mother as a stern and prudish "Old Woman." Due to this characterization, scholars interpret Margaret Hunt as "able to accept comfortably the restrictions upon women," finding them "natural" (Hardwick xvi), and they subsequently read her domestic and romantic three-decker novels as "light Victorian fiction" (Saunders).

Yet turning to her life and her work reveals that Hunt was decidedly not in favor of the status quo. Involved with the suffrage movement, Hunt reportedly approached Robert Browning, John Everett Millais, and Edward Burne-Jones for their signatures on petitions for women's right to vote (Belford 133),⁵ and, as this thesis will show, her writing often reveals the pressures and anxieties created by women's socially-constructed positions. Hunt's short story "The Lady Journalist" (1897), for instance, focuses upon a female author who refuses to abandon her undercover journalism in order to marry a man who insists upon her pursuing more respectable (i.e., chaperoned) avenues of research. The woman is frankly appalled at her suitor's insistence, "respect[ing] herself" too much to accept his offer and announcing, "There is no harm in what I am doing, and I won't behave as if there was" (526). Social forces, however, are against the woman, and she finds herself in a rather heated situation with her research subjects turning violently and publicly against her. On one hand, Hunt portrays the moment rather comically, as a crossing-sweeper and his son fling mud and threaten to

beat the woman for stealing their “fine new broom” (526).⁶ On the other hand, the outcome is the journalist’s public disgrace. “[A]shamed” and defeated, she turns away from the condemning eyes of the gathering crowd and agrees to marry her former suitor, a witness to the whole affair (526). As he reaches for her, “[s]he shivered and shrank still further away, but he took her hand, and she did not draw it back. It was cold, limp, and irresponsive to love, friendship, or even common kindness; but the very fact of her leaving it in his showed him that he had won the battle” (526). With these words, Hunt’s story ends abruptly, and rather than portray a joyous engagement, the author presents the end of a “battle,” a noticeably uncomfortable moment in which the woman’s life as she has known it comes to an end as well. “The Lady Journalist” may not end with the character’s radical defiance of social codes, for she does abandon her work and agrees to marry the man. Her immediate physical and emotional withdrawal, however, indicates that Hunt was not an author content with conservative, prescribed roles for women.

Violet Hunt’s characterizations of her mother have further led biographers to frame Margaret Hunt’s frequent choice of artistic subjects as a selfish move to improve the status of landscapes by her husband, Alfred William Hunt. As a result, scholars have ignored the critical work that Margaret Hunt was enacting through her fiction. Alfred Hunt’s lifelong dream was to become an associate of the Royal Academy, and his letters reflect his increasing anxiety as he was consistently passed over for nomination to the institution viewed as the defining school of English art.⁷ Unquestionably, Hunt felt her husband’s disappointment, and she did actively petition her friend John Ruskin to aid her husband’s nomination. William Bell Scott even chastised her for her “persevering addresses to the R.A.” and questioned, “Is it possible that you respect Burne-Jones more now that he sticks

the humiliating letters after his name?”⁸ Despite her work to help her husband achieve the high honor afforded to a Royal Academician, however, Hunt’s wifely devotion does not appear to extend to her fiction. In her most successful novel Thornicroft’s Model, Hunt demonstrates little regard for the Academy, specifically through her text’s critical allegiance to the Pre-Raphaelites and her central protagonist, an artist who views with disdain those “humiliating letters.”

First published in 1873 by Chapman & Hall under the pseudonym Averil Beaumont, Thornicroft’s Model went through at least three editions during Hunt’s lifetime, was reissued after her death in 1912, and was the only novel of the author’s to be published for modern readers in 1984. The novel is typically described as the fictionalization of the relationship between Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his fellow artist, model and wife Elizabeth Siddal (Hardwick 12; Belford 33), an association primarily attributable to Violet Hunt’s preface to the 1912 edition which specifically connected the novel to her mother’s encounters with “the Brotherhood” and her almost hypnotic “fascinat[ion] with Dante Gabriel Rossetti” (vii-iii). Even without Violet Hunt’s preface, however, contemporary readers of the text could not miss the allusions to the famous pair. The public was well-acquainted with references to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the popular press; as Elizabeth Prettejohn notes in her study of the proliferation of art criticism in periodicals, “In the late 1850s, the most reliable way to establish a distinctive critical voice was to adopt an aggressive stance for or against Pre-Raphaelitism” (75). While the intensity of critical attacks aimed at the artists gradually lessened and the brotherhood itself officially ceased to exist in 1853,⁹ the influence and presence of Pre-Raphaelitism did not wane. In 1876, Justin McCarthy observed that “[w]e have now in London pre-Raphaelite painters, pre-Raphaelite

poets, pre-Raphaelite novelists, [and] pre-Raphaelite young ladies” (qtd. in Andres 137). In short, the artistic movement that only lasted for five years was now everywhere in both the world of high art and reader’s quotidian lives.

Furthermore, a mere two years before the publication of Thornicroft’s Model, Robert Buchanan had taken a particularly vocal stance against Rossetti’s poetry in “The Fleshy School of Poetry,” published in The Contemporary Review under the pseudonym Thomas Maitland. Hunt’s text clearly reflects an awareness of Buchanan’s criticism, for her protagonist is described as possessing “a poetical character never likely to be appreciated by the many, [but] was the delight of an ever-increasing band of followers” (4).¹⁰ Hunt’s characterization of Stephen Thornicroft as an artist with no desire to participate in any formal school of art, refusing “[o]n principle” to “exhibit his pictures” (3), is remarkably like that of Rossetti who, “[a]fter the negative reception that greeted his Ecce Ancille Domini! (1849-50) [...], ceased to make works intended for public exhibition and was known only to a small but loyal band of admirers” (Hacking 11). While Rossetti may have become only “a minor figure” for the public at large (Cherry and Pollock, “Patriarchal Power” 484), he was the consummate Pre-Raphaelite for those in Hunt’s circle. Even readers unfamiliar with his paintings in 1873 would have heard of the scandalous exhumation of Siddal’s body by Rossetti in 1869 in order to retrieve his poetic manuscript. Thus the novel’s ending, presenting the artist standing at the grave of his deceased model/wife, would easily impress the general reader as an allusion to the couple. Moreover, even if readers never associated the fictional Thornicroft with the historical Rossetti, his “clique” would be recognized by any “self-respecting Victorian” as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Hacking 11).

The Pre-Raphaelites were an apt choice for Hunt's novel, as she wished to support producers of art outside of the Royal Academy. The artists banded together over their distaste for the current state of British art, and their own creations were aimed at reinvigorating what they saw as a profusion of "somber palettes, meretricious effects and conventional subject matter" (Hacking 6). However loosely connected they would become, and despite the fact certain founding members eventually took "the humiliating letters" of R.A., the Pre-Raphaelites initially aligned themselves against the Royal Academy, dismissing the techniques endorsed by their schools as "slosh" and labeling the institution's first president Sir Joshua Reynolds "Sir Sloshua" (Andres 4; Hacking 6). In fact, the positioning of their art in opposition to the Royal Academy led to the "uproar" of competing critical voices in the periodical press (Andres 4).

In order to distinguish their works from those they perceived as the dark, clumsily depicted, traditional subjects that obstructed the progress of art, the Pre-Raphaelites composed their paintings with vibrant colors and meticulous attention to detail. Of course their subjects were not a radical departure from previous traditions; they were influenced by the same classical, medieval and social subjects that lined the walls of the Academy, leading scholars such as Cherry and Pollock to reject "the cliché of rebellious young men fired to revolutionize a moribund art work" ("Patriarchal Power" 482). Yet it was the attentiveness with which the artists approached their subjects that did in fact set them apart as innovators and earned them the label of "avant-garde." Inspired by Ruskin's call to landscape artists, they devoted themselves to "truth to nature" espoused by the famous critic who was to become their champion:

go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly,

having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remembering her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth (Modern Painters, vol. 1, sec. 6, ch. 3).

Ruskin's and the Pre-Raphaelites' devotion to detail was in stark opposition to that of Reynolds and the Academy: as Malcolm Warner notes, "Reynolds had urged the artist to avoid the particular" in order to privilege "the ideal"; however, "the Pre-Raphaelites believed that the particular was everything" (19). Rather than present idealistic representations of their subjects, their paintings approached a realism that Warner describes as "the most painstaking, warts-and-all kind of portraiture" (19). Ultimately, the artists' "lack of idealism" proved most controversial because at its core it was a rejection "of the aesthetic principles of the Royal Academy, on which mainstream British art was founded" (Andres 4). Violet Hunt positions her mother's novel within this struggle between the avant-garde brotherhood and the formidable institution. She claims that Hunt's inspiration for the character of Thornicroft was Rossetti's "one and perhaps only point of honour, the blue ribbon of his life, [his intention] to paint well and flout the Royal Academy" (ix). According to Violet Hunt, her mother decided to fictionalize Rossetti's life story in order to "hel[p] him in his crusade against the Academy by flouting severally and together with the last of her mordant tongue the Royal Academicians" (ix).

Coupled with Alfred Hunt's repeatedly dashed hopes of becoming an R.A., his wife's preferential treatment of an artist outside their ranks could be read as merely an angry reaction to the institution's exclusion of her husband. In fact, when discussing Hunt's work as a novelist, her daughter's biographers imply such a reading. Hardwick goes so far as to

assert that when her husband's paintings were rejected by the Academy, "[Hunt] had to content herself with supplementing the family income by her writing" (16, my emphasis). To describe Hunt's writing as a profession that she "had to content herself with," however, trivializes the author's creative agency. In fact, Hunt appears to have desired her own artistic career, suggesting that her critique of the R.A. and choice of artistic subjects are pursuits of her own interests rather than solely those of her husband.

At the age of twenty, Hunt began receiving formal training from William Bell Scott, director of the Government School of Design in Newcastle (Hardwick 2; Belford 20). Scott introduced Hunt to the ideas of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and he became her life-long friend and mentor (Hardwick 2, 4; Belford 23). Ruskin also became a continual advisor to Hunt; their friendship appears to have begun in late 1857 or early 1858 when she wrote to request that the critic give a lecture in her hometown of Durham, and their close friendship lasted until the final years of Ruskin's life.¹¹ Hunt's preference for the Pre-Raphaelites' attention to detail reflects her allegiance to the critic, but her failing eyesight unfortunately impeded any such meticulous artistic work. While she spent several years at a clinic in Germany in an attempt to maintain her vision, she appears to have given up hope for an artistic career around 1873 when Ruskin wrote to her husband, "I am so very sorry for Margaret's eyes -- but the novels may become very interesting work to her."¹² Hunt, therefore, appears to have made the transition from art to writing, indicating that her focus on the world of art emerges out of her own training and interest rather than from some sense of duty to Alfred Hunt's career.

In fact, Violet Hunt contends that her mother's novel Thornicroft's Model was detrimental to the career that Alfred Hunt wished to pursue (Preface ix). Both Ford Madox

Ford and Violet Hunt suggest that it was Hunt's fictional representations of art that led "the Royal Academy to boycott [Alfred Hunt]" (Violet Hunt, Preface xi).¹³ According to Violet Hunt, the portrayal of a successful "Pre-Raphaelite" in Thornicroft's Model is what most upset members of the institution:

'Thornicroft's Model' attacked what was [...] sacred -- the very sales, the very pockets of these good club-men. It was as if one should attack the funds of some Order of Buffaloes or other [...].

And it was against the material side of this brotherhood that my mother aimed her quite deadly shafts -- the really deadly one being that she represented Stephen Thornicroft as making a respectable income. If he had been represented as starving in a garret it would not have mattered. That was a conventional proceeding that might well have ended in full membership -- no doubt many of the then immortals had had hard times in their youth. But Thornicroft was a much more formidable proposition, an adult discovered painter with a following and with no inclination whatever to become even A.R.A. This meant not only that there were other markets than Burlington House, but that the public might possibly be wise in patronizing shops over the way. It was a threatening of a great monopoly (xii-iii).

On one hand, Violet Hunt's description of the Royal Academicians' reception of Thornicroft's Model suggests that the text is merely aimed at insulting the establishment and indicates that the novel could position Alfred Hunt as successful regardless of his exclusion from membership. On the other hand, she notably identifies the Royal Academy's anxieties over artistic sites operating outside their realm of influence. Hunt's novel goes beyond merely "attacking [...] the sales" of the Academy; Thornicroft's Model dramatizes ongoing

conversations about traditional forms of art produced by the Royal Academy and avant-garde Pre-Raphaelitism.

As mentioned, Thornicroft is a distinctly Pre-Raphaelite artist, decidedly setting himself apart from artists associated with formal artistic institutions, for their “practice in everything which concerned art was entirely different from his own” (3). The designation of the Royal Academy itself as the polar opposite to Thornicroft’s art becomes evident when Mr. Samuel MacScumble, R.A. is introduced into the narrative and summarily dismissed as an individual whose person and “art were the very antipodes of Thornicroft’s” (15). While MacScumble is portrayed as a sympathetic figure -- a friendly Scotsman, a close friend to Thornicroft and, at the conclusion of the novel, a defender of the eponymous model -- Thornicroft perceives the R.A.’s art and artistic views as blatantly ridiculous and even insulting. In fact, Thornicroft’s reactions to MacScumble’s art and artistic views clearly designate the former’s Pre-Raphaelite connections.

In the Pre-Raphaelites’ pursuit of what Ruskin identified as “uncompromising truth [...] down to the most minute detail” (qtd. in Warner 19), they often spent years composing their pieces of art. If counted, the number of paintings labeled “Pre-Raphaelite” would be strikingly lower than almost any other style of art given the amount of time that went into the completion of the work. MacScumble clearly has no such devotion, letting on that he has not yet begun his picture for the upcoming “Exhibition” that is “not above six weeks” away (17). Thornicroft observes that the R.A.’s paintings “grow like Jack’s bean-stalk” (i.e., overnight), and more than a mere dismissal of hastily completed work, Thornicroft’s response, when considered alongside his own approach to art, suggests that what he detects in his friend is a lack of devotion required for Pre-Raphaelite detail. Following the Ruskinian precept of

“working everything [...] from nature, and from nature only” (qtd. in Warner 19), he paints Helen as “Althæa burning the brand” with the same obsessive attention to detail as that of the Brotherhood.¹⁴ Despite the mid-summer heat, he insists upon an actual fire from which to paint the flames. While Helen complains that the coal scoop she holds “by way of a brand” is too heavy, asking for “something lighter,” Thornicroft begs her to endure for a while in order “to see if I have got your arm right” (50). Thornicroft’s insistence on the correct placement of Helen’s arm down to the strain of her muscles due to a specific weight echoes the Pre-Raphaelites’ time-consuming work with live models. Siddal is reported to have lain in a freezing bathtub for hours while John Everett Millais completed his Ophelia (Marsh, Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 31).

MacScumble’s own approach to painting is presented in stark contrast. Feeling “something [is] not quite right” with one of his pictures, he consults his dealer who succinctly informs him that all the canvas “wants” is some altering to the “trees in the middle distance” (210). Without turning to nature for a model, the R.A. immediately produces “a tube of Caledonian brown and proceeded at once to ‘breathe a browner horror o’er the woods’” (210). His choice of the somber brown to tone down the brightness of the green trees evokes the murky hues that the Pre-Raphaelites wished to expunge from British art. Furthermore, the quick “breat[h] [of] a browner horror” across the canvas indicates a narrative wink at the alleged “slosh” produced by the Royal Academy. MacScumble, however, is quite pleased with his work, pronouncing, “[B]less you, an hour’s good work does a deal at a pectewer [picture], though there’s some of them artists scratch away for months together” (210). With an effective sense of irony, Hunt both presents the Royal

Academician's critique of the Brotherhood and exercises her own critical voice upon the work of the Academy.

The Royal Academy's critique of Pre-Raphaelitism is further evidenced in MacScumble's reaction to the "best bit of dramatic painting" that Thornicroft owns by Browne Tompkins (18). The name of the painting's creator evokes artists such as Ford Madox Brown, who was closely connected to the Pre-Raphaelites socially and artistically, and Edward Burne-Jones, who has been described as belonging to "the second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism" (Marsh, Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 115). As a member of the "clique" that Thornicroft names as his artistic community outside of official institutions of art, Browne Tompkins is strongly associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (14-15). His painting's Pre-Raphaelite origins are also implicated in MacScumble's description of the woman painted "just like a mell doll [...], [a] scraggy, rough-headed creature," clearly in contrast to his preference for "a pretty face [...], or the whole thing is nothing" (17-18). The Royal Academician's desire for a "pretty face" calls to mind the idealized versions of beauty that the Pre-Raphaelites professed to work against, and his distaste echoes critiques of the brotherhood for failing to meet contemporary expectations of the ideal. For example, in 1850, Charles Dickens took particular offense at Millais' Christ in the House of His Parents, denouncing what he saw as the sacrilegious depiction of the typically idealized Christ figure as "a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown" (qtd. in Hacking 8). The R.A.'s dismissal of his prized Browne Tompkins insults Thornicroft and reveals the Academician's inability to appreciate the art privileged within the text. The sheer ignorance of MacScumble's critical stance is ultimately revealed when he treads on hallowed ground, insulting long-time Pre-Raphaelite supporter John Ruskin. In a thick Scottish accent,

MacScumble articulates his shock that “the great Mr. R-,” during a visit to his brother-in-law’s home, dismissed the new favorite of the R.A., “turn[ing] his back” on the oil painting of the budding “genius,” calling it “a bad pectewer [picture]” (16). MacScumble’s “critic[ism] [of] Thornicroft’s tutelal deities” goes a bit too far when he dares to label Ruskin’s Venice as “the nastiest hole I ever was in” without “common sense” and where “it is not fit to live” (17). Thornicroft cries “heresy,” scoffing, “[Y]ou, an R.A., to have no more feeling than that comes to for that divine city!” (17, my emphasis). MacScumble may be well meaning, but he is clearly artistically deficient.

By daring to speak against Ruskin, the R.A. positions himself against everything the Pre-Raphaelite Thornicroft subscribes to, a position evident in his refusal to paint from nature, his lack of attention to detail, and his promotion of idealized images. Furthermore, while it has been noted that the Pre-Raphaelites were far from radical in their choice of subject matter, MacScumble’s paintings clearly depict the “conventional subject matter” the Brotherhood wished to break away from:

MacScumble painted but one class of subject. It was always a young Scotch girl waiting for her sweetheart -- either pulling a flower whilst wishing he would come, or hanging over a stile, or half hiding behind a tree. Once, just by way of changing the idea a little, he had painted a young man lounging impatiently about whilst on a similar errand; but though the picture had done very well, he had not been happy or felt like himself that year, and never again did he paint anything but sweet seventeen and its stolen love meetings (209).

The trite image that the artist hastily and repeatedly produces is so lacking in originality that it is no wonder that Thornicroft as the leader of the avant-garde “clique” would position the

other man's art as "the very antipodes" of his own (15). In fact, his image evokes the very type of art that Hunt's contemporary and fellow art critic Emilie Barrington positioned in contrast to Rossetti's works in her description of "the mass of so-called art yearly produced on semi-manufacturing principles" that masks for "the public what makes art art" (951, her emphasis). For the modern reader, Hunt's depiction of the Royal Academician's paintings juxtaposed against Barrington's description of art "produced on semi-manufacturing principles" calls to mind a factory line on which canvases roll by as the artist adds a girl here and a flower there. Still Hunt further condemns this mass production of paintings posing as art for its commodification of the creative process; indeed, what makes MacScumble feel so pleased with his speedy completion of paintings is the promise of more "cheque[s] in his waistcoat pocket" (210). Consequently, Violet Hunt is partially correct in asserting that "[i]f [Thornicroft] had been represented as starving in a garret it would not have mattered" (xii), for the artist that Hunt privileges is the one who cares more for his art than his bankbook. Thus Thornicroft's Model transcends simply challenging the financial "monopoly" of the Royal Academy (Violet Hunt, Preface xiii); through its contrasting representations of the artistic allegiances and practices of Thornicroft and MacScumble, representations that evoke the critical and theoretical conversations surrounding Pre-Raphaelitism and the Royal Academy, the novel visibly functions as a form of art criticism.

Yet while I don't wish to detract from the significance of these moments, for they are rooted in the art criticism and theories of the period, I must note that there are only a few such episodes in the text. The question thus arises: how then does the entire novel function as art criticism? Indeed, Thornicroft's Model operates within many established literary traditions of the nineteenth century. The portrayal of the Pre-Raphaelites in fiction was a

popular choice throughout the century, as Sophia Andres traces in the works of authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy.¹⁵ The novel's focus on the relationship between the artist and his model was a subject that, according to Elizabeth Hollander, emerged mid-century in many literary texts as the subject of art itself became an increasingly public conversation (5). This conversation, however, was largely a debate between different factions of art critics played out before the public in the periodical press.

Prior to the late 1850s, there was “no special set of qualifications” for individual art critics, and publishers hired a variety of authors who may or may not have had “a special knowledge” of the subject (Prettejohn 74). The emergence of Ruskin as a popular critic changed the course of art criticism. Having already gained a measure of fame in Modern Painters, Ruskin began to publish his Academy Notes in 1855 and radically asserted “his claim to specialist authority” (Prettejohn 75). Elizabeth Prettejohn notably documents the influence of Ruskin's claim and the “bifurcation [that] developed between an elitist [i.e., professional] art criticism and a more popular [i.e., generalist] critical practice” (73-74). On one hand, Hunt possessed the specialized knowledge necessary for the professional art critic; in addition to her early training and frequent associations with the world of high art, she and Alfred Hunt often traveled to the Continent during which time she had access to the works of foreign artists and classical masters. Her critique of MacScumble's commercialized version of creative production reflects the emerging professional critics' “contempt for the commercialism of the majority of works” they reviewed, and her ironic treatment of the R.A.'s artistic views instills in her own voice the “superior discernment” of the professional art critic (Prettejohn 87).

Yet Hunt diverges from the writing style of the professional critics. Prettejohn observes that “[b]y the late 1860’s, professional critics could describe pictures entirely in technical terms, sometimes without commenting on the subject-matter at all” (84). While Hunt’s narrative demonstrates the author’s knowledge of artistic theory, she avoids the “esoteric” vocabulary of the professional critic who often focused solely on the more minute details of technique such as brush strokes, effect, and form (Prettejohn 84-86). Certainly Hunt’s language choices are shaped by her need to create a narrative, yet it is significantly the narrative form that many generalist critics used to frame their reviews. Prettejohn identifies that most generalist criticism “read[s] as dramatic narrativ[e],” explaining that when critic W.G.C. (only known by his initials) reviewed Millais’ The Rescue, he had

nothing to say about style or technique. He does not describe the spatial arrangement of the canvas; he does not even mention which figures are on the left or right. Instead, he elaborates his verbal characterizations of the figures into a narrative that extends both before and after the depicted moment (80).

Prettejohn is not dismissing the critic’s voice; rather, she is observing the “deliberate choice” on the part of the author who as a generalist critic eschews discussions of technique in order to “emphasi[ze] [...] art’s power to communicate its message to a wide audience” (84). For the generalists, the importance of a painting does not stem from composition but rather the story rendered, a story that “extends” beyond the frame of the canvas.

A further development occurred in the final decades of the century that similarly extended the focus of criticism away from paintings themselves. Meaghan Clarke’s recent study of women art critics notes the developing interest in biography as “a central focus of art writing” and “[a] corresponding development [in] the growing attention to artists’ studios and

homes” (59). In 1883, Helen Zimmern asserted that to “fully [...] understand an artist we must see his studio,” his “house,” and “mind” (qtd. in Clarke 59). Hunt’s novel likewise brings her readers into the artist’s studio and home, a correspondence that interestingly is suggested by the fact that Zimmern’s assertion occurs within her article on Hamo Thornycroft, a sculptor who trained with Leighton and whose name so clearly evokes that of Hunt’s protagonist. While it is tempting, but baseless, to suggest that Zimmern was inspired by Hunt’s novel, or to posit that Hunt was inspired by the historical Thornycroft, which in fact is a possibility, I find important connections between Hunt’s novel and the developing focus on artists’ biographies and homes/studios in art criticism. As a whole, the novel does function as a fictional biography of the artist, Stephen Thornicroft, and his model, Helen Morris. Thornicroft’s Model notably opens with the artist pacing inside his studio, and within the first few pages the narrator provides a lengthy description of the studio, the garden view outside of the space, the artist’s “very complex, many-sided” character, and his view of “art matters” (2-4). Indeed, the narration cannot be described in the plural as descriptions for there is no break for dialogue or narrative. Instead each topic flows seamlessly into the next, and while the account follows a detailed depiction of Thornicroft’s most recent painting, the narrative places the emphasis on the artist’s surroundings and character: the necessary “understanding” of the artist’s work resides in “his studio,” “house,” and “mind,” just as Zimmern would declare ten years later.

Yet while the majority of the emerging artistic biographies “construct[ed] [the] artist as [a] solitary genius transcending the conventions of his age” as a way of celebrating and immortalizing his/her creative independence (Cherry and Pollock, “Patriarchal Power” 484), Hunt presents a decidedly less idealized image of her artist figure. Focusing her critical gaze

upon the artist's treatment of the female model, Hunt is decidedly unsympathetic in her portrayal of Thornicroft. As my following chapters elucidate, Thornicroft relegates Helen to the role of artistic object over which he has sole control; in his art and his behavior towards her, he erases Helen as an individual with her own creative agency. On the surface, the novel reads solely as a socio-cultural critique of the marginalization of women in the art world. I don't dispute that Hunt is questioning the social forces that confine the artist's model. Rather I posit that this socio-cultural argument is an essential part of Hunt's art criticism.

Prettejohn's discussion of generalist criticism suggests how such a combination of social and artistic critique takes place as the debate she traces between professionalized and generalist voices was ultimately a "debate about art's role in society" (89). While the professional critics "appear[ed] to protest against the extension of art appreciation among the lower classes," the generalists revealed their allegiance to "the democratization of interest in art" (Prettejohn 87). While the professional critics' use of "esoteric" terminology made art "inaccessible" to the masses, the generalists "often claimed kinship with the uninformed spectator" (Prettejohn 85, 80). Significantly, generalist reviews often indicated the critic's own socio-cultural critique of a painting's "moral message [...], [and] the moral implications emerged in the [generalist's] story-telling process, as if inevitably: the critic's ability to write the story constituted an evaluation of the picture's success in communicating its message" (81). Constructed as a fictional biography, Thornicroft's Model looks beyond the artist's paintings, evaluating the artist's treatment of the model in order to evaluate the images of the woman he paints on canvas. In the end, Hunt levels her moral judgment on the transformation of the individual woman into the iconic Pre-Raphaelite "Woman" and reveals

that rather than “communicat[e] [a] message,” and rather than attend to any “truth” of a woman’s “nature,” the artist erases the model’s identity.

The popularity of Hunt’s novel allows her critique to parallel that of the generalist critic in that she provides her readers, “the uniformed spectators,” with access to the world of high art. Her position may not have been as egalitarian as that of the generalists, as her depiction of the lower classes often reveals a noticeably elitist point of view.¹⁶ Thornicroft’s Model does argue, however, for an increasing “democratization” of art. Through a focus on the female model -- a central issue in debates over the participation of women in art -- Hunt’s criticism is a feminist intervention on behalf of both models and women artists, a call for their visibility and acknowledgement.

CHAPTER II

Woman to “Woman”: The Erasure of the Female Model as Individual

If there is one image that conveys the idea of Pre-Raphaelite art it is the idea of a woman’s face, set with large, lustrous eyes and surrounded by a mass of loose hair, looking soulfully out of the canvas. Neither sad nor cheerful, but somehow charged with an intense, internal passion, this face has a brooding, haunting quality that engages attention but remains distant, remote, impersonal. -- Jan Marsh¹⁷

When Jan Marsh published the opening lines to her groundbreaking study Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood, very little was known about the women who acted as models for the brotherhood. Writing out of a need to study these women as something more than the “models and muses of the marvelous boys,” scholars such as Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn were among the first to uncover what was hidden behind the image of “Woman -- the object, icon, motif and motive of whom and from whom Pre-Raphaelitism is said to have been made” (Nunn 54). Marsh and Nunn, as well as recent feminist scholars such as Cherry and Pollock, dismiss scholarship that focuses solely on mythologies created by the images of these individual models as it “perversely masks the presence within the movement of women [as] active, executive autonomous subjects” (Nunn 54). Thornicroft’s Model adds to the argument presented by these scholars for it articulates, nearly a century before, a criticism similar to Marsh’s observation that “[a]s depicted, [the models] are silent, enigmatic, passive figures, not individuals engaged in activity but objects to be gazed upon by painter and spectator” (Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 1). Hunt argues that these women are rendered silent both by artists and society who treat them as iconic visions of “Woman” rather than as individuals with their own creative agency, and it is this treatment of the model that “perversely masks the presence [...] of women” in the world of art.

Despite this critique, Hunt does, as I have argued, favor aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism. Indeed, as her argument is aimed at the rights of women within the art world, it is apt that she should support these artists as they were closely connected to many of the earliest Victorian feminists. As Nunn observes, “the first female Pre-Raphaelites were seen as part of the ‘strong-minded’ generation which formed the women’s rights movement of the mid-century and made women’s roles a talking point in all classes” (59). These women were drawn to the brotherhood’s frequent choice of subjects of “social concern” as they indicated a “commitment not just to aesthetic reform but to social reform as well” (Marsh and Nunn 9; Andres 10). Furthermore, the group of artists “was particularly welcoming to women” who were also dedicated to challenging the “intrinsically patriarchal [...] institutions of art” such as the Royal Academy (Clarke 8; Pearce 2). Yet the avant-garde artists’ undermining of traditional, institutionalized forms of art and their separation from the Academy was one of choice. The challenge for the women of “the Pre-Raphaelite sisterhood” stemmed from a need to disrupt the overwhelmingly “exclusionary policies” against women’s artistic participation in such institutions (Pearce 2).

Women found membership to the Royal Academy particularly elusive. They petitioned Parliament in 1859 for female students to be admitted to the Academy, and, significantly, when Laura Hereford finally gained admission in July 1860, she had submitted work bearing only her initials (Marsh, “Women and Art” 12; Cherry 9). When women had access to membership, however, they had to fight a second battle to gain admission to life classes. The prevalent dictum was “that models should be made available only to professional male artists” (Smith 29), and in the ensuing debate, letters to the press often associated women’s access to the nude model with contagion (Clarke 65). As study from live

models was considered a crucial element to proper artistic training, many women such as Hunt's close friend Alice Meynell were "aware that the scandal here was not about nudity per se, but about women as spectators, consumers and indeed producers of art" (Clarke 66). Marsh notes the particular irony that women artists who "entered a world where their own images served as signifiers of beauty, holiness, pathos or domestic virtue" still had "to produce art against an already determined background, with many of the tools withheld" ("Women and Art" 19).

Importantly, while men obviously worked as live models, the female model created the most anxiety. In 1860, a proposal was put before Parliament to withhold funding from any school with nude female models (Postle, "From Academy to Art School" 12). The issue of excluding female models from institutions of art did not prevent men from observing women, as many created private schools or went abroad to the Parisian salons in order to maintain their study of the figure. Instead female models became sequestered behind closed doors, resulting in the increasing association of these women with social disgrace due to assumptions about what actually went on "behind the screens" (Smith 27). Essentially, the figure of the female model is a troubling issue for nineteenth-century women as, first, she is withheld from women artists in order to exclude them from the role of spectator and producer of art, and, second, she is relegated to a status of invisibility in order to maintain her status as an art object. I do not wish to suggest that no woman artist had access to the female model; neither do I wish to suggest that the models themselves were in fact passive, invisible objects. Rather I posit that these debates surrounding the figure of the model are part of the context Hunt observes in her critique of the male artist's gaze, for in both the exclusion of the woman artist and the marginalization of the female model, the gaze that is privileged is that

of the male artist. Furthermore, while Violet Hunt professes that her mother claimed to “forg[ive] D.G.R. everything, because of his eyes” (viii-ix), Thornicroft’s Model is clearly unforgiving of the Rossetti-esque artist and the controlling gaze he casts upon his model.

Art, by its very nature, necessitates a gaze (or gazes), either the artist’s or the viewer’s. The creation of an art object is a singularly voyeuristic experience: the artist gazes upon an initial object (whether a literal physical presence or a mental construct) and produces a different, final image that exists independent of the artist, inviting the further gaze(s) of both creator and audience. Operating quite similarly to Laura Mulvey’s description of the unfolding of a film, artistic representations “portray a hermetically sealed world [...], indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy” (17). While Mulvey has been criticized for characterizing the gaze as a solely male function, many scholars working on nineteenth-century art, women artists and art writers have found her argument useful in that the typically male-dominated “historical location[s]” of art often suggest the same “active/male and passive/female” positioning of the gaze Mulvey posits (Pollock 193; Mulvey 19).

Obviously women had access to art when visiting galleries or attending exhibitions. As prints were made of many works or were reproduced in the periodical press, women would have been able to view the images in their own homes. Meaghan Clarke’s important study of nineteenth-century women art critics reveals the highly active presence of women, and, in respect to Hunt’s focus on the Pre-Raphaelites, Marsh and Nunn’s research documents that “women artists played a crucial role in shaping, defining, developing and perpetuating the movement over its half-century” (9).¹⁸ Yet these women were frequently excluded from art institutions, and at the heart of this exclusion was the presence of the

female model: for whether posing fully clothed, draped, or nude, the female figure under the male eye typically led women in art to be perceived solely as “muse, model, mistress” rather than artist (Oliver 20). Additionally, the debates over the inclusion of women, either as artist or model, in the Royal Academy and other artistic institutions centered upon conceptions of women as objects rather than subjects of the gaze.

For Mulvey, focusing on the object of “Woman” can be a useful “political weapon” in the sense that “we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides [...], can at least advance our understanding of the status quo of the patriarchal order in which we are caught” (15). In some regards, such a strategy is almost necessary when discussing the female model, for as Jill Berk Jiminez’s ongoing research documents, it is nearly impossible to determine “[t]he precise details of many model’s lives” since “many [...] were from poor or working-class backgrounds where records were scarce” (Dictionary of Artists’ Models iv). Considering the “questionable” facts in historical representations of the model, scholars must largely shift their focus from the women themselves to how they were depicted in journals of (typically male) artists, the popular press, and other contemporary texts in order to discover how their images and actions functioned within “the patriarchal order” of the nineteenth-century art world (Jiminez, Dictionary of Artists’ Models v). While feminist scholars approach the images of Pre-Raphaelite Women in terms of Mulvey’s conception of a “political weapon,” they do not agree on whether the Pre-Raphaelite gaze undermines conventional conceptions of gender or reduces women to a “fantasy” or “sign.” For Andres, the brotherhood’s “avant-garde gaze [...] transgress[es] aesthetic, social and gender boundaries” (3). On the other hand, Griselda Pollock and Deborah Cherry argue that Rossetti’s drawings function “in the ideological process of a

redefinition of woman as image, and as visibly different” (“Woman as Sign” 160, their emphasis). Certainly there will be no single interpretation of the Pre-Raphaelite “Woman” for any audience or artist, contemporary or modern, and there is still no real way for us to fully “understand the status quo of the [nineteenth-century] patriarchal order.” Recent scholarship and theoretical tools, however, can assist in uncovering Hunt’s understanding of “the patriarchal [artistic] order” and how the female model and her images functioned in Pre-Raphaelite art and the Pre-Raphaelite social realm.

While Nunn feels that modern discussions of “Woman” as “object, icon, motif and motive” shift focus away from “active” female artistic voices of the period (54), most “active” female voices that have been recovered do in fact focus on “Woman” as image. For instance, in her discussion of the fin-de-siècle poetry of Michael Field, co-authors Katharine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper, Jill Ehnenn posits that their ekphrastic poems in Sight and Song use images of women by male artists in order to “creat[e] [...] speaking voices for female characters and artists’ models -- spaces to be perceived by female readers and spectators” (113). Hunt’s novels similarly invite a largely female audience for whom she “rewrites the histories of the figures depicted” in order to give voice to the silenced image of the female model (Ehnenn 113). By focusing on Hunt’s portrayal of the model and the male artist’s gaze, therefore, I move beyond circular debates over the images and give primacy to the “active” female artist’s voice and her interpretation of the female model’s experience when they become the iconic “bearer[s] not marker[s] of meaning,” when they cease to be perceived as an individual and are transformed into “Woman” on canvas (Mulvey 15).

According to France Borel, “[b]y catching the artist’s eye, the woman exists” (101), and yet this “woman” is not the actual model but “the woman” created in the artist’s vision.

Pre-Raphaelitism's precept of "truth to nature," however, undermines audiences' recognition of this shift. Frederic George Stephens' contemporary writings on the brotherhood's art revealing its "identification with humanity" rather than "refined" images position the paintings as representations of life-as-is rather than life-as-interpreted (qtd. in Andres 20). Malcolm Warner indicates that the artists did not intentionally create images of iconic "Woman" when he observes that "[t]he Pre-Raphaelites presented no glimpse of or 'impression' of the world; their method had more to do with collecting data than with the everyday experience of the eye" (19). Yet, critiquing the erasure of the model's independent agency, Hunt presents the artists working to capture the "nature" of "Woman" on canvas, implying that even the subversive, avant-garde brotherhood was sustaining the patriarchal status-quo.

Thornicroft's Model, notably, focuses on nature, truth and forms through its epigraph from Plato's Phaedrus:

For every soul of man has in the way of nature beheld true being; this was the condition of her passing into the form of man. But all men do not easily recall the things of the other world [...]. Few there are who retain the remembrance of them sufficiently; and they, when they behold any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement: but they are ignorant of what this means, because they have no clear perceptions. But he whose initiation is recent [...] is amazed when he sees any one having a godlike face or form, which is the expression or imitation of divine beauty [...]: then looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god, he reverences him (1).

Within a Pre-Raphaelite context, Hunt's epigraph echoes the brotherhood's precept of "truth to nature" in art. Importantly, Plato's discussion of the perceptions of "true being" has little

to do with the object perceived and overwhelmingly focuses on the man perceiving the object. Juxtaposed against this epigraph is the artist Thornicroft struggling over his painting of Iphigenia about to be sacrificed. After “two or three attempts to get to work,” he stops in frustration, for “nothing went right, and at last the very life of the picture was threatened” (1). As Thornicroft’s difficulties immediately follow Plato’s range of perceptions, his frustration may stem from a lack of “sufficient” recognition. Thornicroft, however, identifies the source of his trouble as his “consciousness that the model, from whom he had sketched his central figure, was utterly inadequate as an embodiment of his conception” (1, my emphasis). Thornicroft is “conscious” and, therefore, capable of perceiving that what threatens “the very life” of his painting is the “figure” his model presents (2). Thus Hunt presents her Pre-Raphaelite artist as not turning to nature for “truth,” but as searching through nature for the “truth” of the “Woman” he wishes to depict.

In one sense, Thornicroft’s comments on his model’s “inadequa[cies]” do reflect certain Pre-Raphaelite feminist sympathies. Complaining of “the materials [he has] to work with,” Thornicroft exclaims, “Paint the figure, indeed! why there is no figure to paint! Patent resilient bodices, sansflectum skirts, high-heeled pegged boots, and the people who inhabit them abound [...]. The body is obliged to adjust itself as best it may to its clothes, and both are alike unpicturesque” (2). In his reflections on contemporary fashions for women and the effects on the female body, Thornicroft aligns himself with those who favor the un-corseted, more flowing clothing associated with the Pre-Raphaelites and later Aesthetic movement. As Elizabeth Aslin, Talia Schaffer and Kathy Psomiades observe, women were particularly drawn to aestheticist dress as it offered them greater “bodily freedom” than more conventional fashions (Psomiades 156). Indeed, Hunt consistently favors the artistic apparel,

as did many women involved with the women's movement, for the clothing's freedom from constraints and more healthful effects on the body, and her female heroines are typically singled out for their "Pre-Raphaelite dress".¹⁹ When Thornicroft finally finds his perfect model in Helen Morris, he observes that "it was evident that the art of dress as practiced in these modern times was no pleasure to her" and the lack of "frills, flounces, bulgings out or loopings up" on Helen's clothing strongly suggests an un-corseted, un-bustled Pre-Raphaelite dress (6). The further description of her dress as "an indescribable dark blue-green," a signature color of William Morris' firm, and the association of the color with objects from nature -- "the distant sea," "shells," and "the throats of birds" -- further implicate the artistic origins of Helen's attire (Thornicroft's Model 6; Logan 57, 71).

Psomiades asserts that the choice of aesthetic dress often resulted in "women who look[ed] like paintings [...], indicating a wearer rich in cultural capital" (Psomiades 154). In fact, Helen's attire is what positions her as the proper replacement for Thornicroft's less satisfactory model, for without the corset and bulgings, she is the "[p]icturesque [...]" figure he has been seeking. Hunt could indicate that Helen has specifically chosen this dress for its artistic qualities, suggesting that her later confinement is of her own doing as she would have already erased herself by attempting to "look like a painting." Yet Hunt never depicts Helen as observing or fashioning her own appearance, and the above description of her clothing is the only extended illustration of her attire in the novel. Helen's choice of clothing likely reflects her working-class status, since the handmade garments were less expensive and required less embellishment.²⁰ Thornicroft is the one observing, accessing "her dress [...]" as being a fitting part of a perfect whole" (6). Hunt depicts Thornicroft's interest in such dress arising from his selfish interest in the "figure," revealing that his reflections on the effects of

corsets and fashionable instruments of torture are far from feminist sympathies. The Platonic “true being” he wishes to discover is solely one who will serve as “an embodiment of his conception” (1, my emphasis).

While in Plato’s Phaedrus, the “divine beauty,” the “beloved as [...] god” ultimately recognized and denoted by the masculine “him” can be read as homosexual desire, Hunt’s text implicates a more narcissistic relationship between the artist and his work. Indeed, within the context of Hunt’s narrative, the concluding line of the epigraph, “then looking upon the face of his beloved as a god, he reverences him,” suggests that the god-like beloved is not the object of the gaze but refers back to the artist as subject, the artist who “reverences” himself for his ability to capture the “true being” of the “beloved” on canvas. Rossetti’s sonnet “The Portrait” indicates how this self-reference takes place in the male artist’s perceptions of god-like control over the female object of his gaze. Invoking “Love” as a “Lord,” a god “of all compassionate control,” the artist-subject seeks to “control” the model-object’s image “under [his] hand” (Rossetti, D.G. 99). Importantly, just as Thornicroft reflects on the “perfect whole” that is Helen (6), the artist of Rossetti’s “The Portrait” hopes to “show [...] the perfect whole” of his model (99). The similarity between Rossetti’s artist and Thornicroft is further evidenced in the former’s declaration that “[t]hey that would look on her must come to me” (100), just as “those who wanted to see [Thornicroft’s] pictures must go to his own house to do so” (4). In fact, the correlations between “The Portrait” and Hunt’s text foreshadow how the Pre-Raphaelite Thornicroft will exercise his absolute control over his model’s image.

Griselda Pollock argues that Rossetti’s sonnet reveals the “lady” as a “cult image or icon,” an “object [...] which can be utterly and timelessly possessed” (185-86). Thornicroft’s

ultimate treatment of Helen similarly depicts the relationship of artist and model as that of possessor and possessed. While he may recognize what Plato designates as “divine beauty,” describing his meeting Helen as the “sudden discovery that goddesses still walked the earth,” he remarks to his cook, Hannah, that what sets Helen apart from the “rubbish” class of models is his “expect[ation] to make [his] fortune out of this one” (6, 11), indicating that her value is that she can be manipulated into a variety of rather profitable artistic “icons.” In his need to possess Helen as an art object, Thornicroft seemingly loses all interest in the woman herself. Over the course of their early working relationship, he observes that she becomes a “thin[g] which he could get easily,” and this realization causes her to “lose all charm [in his mind] save as a beautiful, tractable model” (21). Thornicroft’s observation reveals how readily he assumes his control over the woman under his gaze. Initially, he seems merely to indicate his desire for a more challenging romantic pursuit as “he had little doubt if he had told her to love him she would have obeyed” (21). Yet the description of Helen as a “thing which he could get” designates her status as a model/possession and reduces her to an object, a “thing.” Thornicroft significantly reflects that “[t]o him [...] she was Iphigenia, or Perdita, or Miranda; when she was not one of these, she was a dear little quiet thing who betook herself to a corner with a book, and put it down instantly when he called her back, and went home when he was done with her” (21).²¹ Helen thus functions as simply another object in Thornicroft’s already crowded studio. She only seemingly differs from the other objects that he can take down from a shelf and paint -- draperies, pipes, clocks, china, instruments, armor, and robes -- in her ability to come when “called” and go “home” when her use is no longer required.

In her function as object, she comes to represent solely the fictional icons of “Iphigenia, or Perdita, or Miranda” to Thornicroft, just as Pollock argues that the female model shifts in Rossetti’s “The Portrait” from woman to “image or icon” (185). In contrast to the artist in “The Portrait,” however, Thornicroft begins to grow anxious about losing sole control over Helen’s image. His anxieties begin when Mr. Sulpicius Ambergreen, a member of Thornicroft’s artistic “clique” known for his “wonderfully-made damsels, playing on dulcimers, with marigold hair,” spies Helen and immediately becomes obsessed with having her as his model (14). Ambergreen’s desire to exercise his own artistic gaze on Helen instigates Thornicroft’s concern over her “becoming the model of the clique” (14). Once the “horrible [...] idea” occurs to him, it

expanded itself quickly into tormenting proportions. Browne Tompkins would be laying her in with burnt sienna and madder brown for flesh tints, with her hair stretched out and tortured like an espalier geranium at a flower show. Then young Disbrowe, who never paints a woman less than six feet three inches, would shoot her up to the height of Alice in Wonderland; while his friend Tracy Davenport, who thinks a large jaw and thick lips and throat the whole duty of woman, would add these graces to her, and, one and all, they would make her so ugly that a worse model would do for them (14-15).

Significantly, Thornicroft’s “tormenting” reflections identify various iconic Pre-Raphaelite images of women in actual paintings. As mentioned, Browne Tompkins’ name evokes both Ford Madox Brown and Burne-Jones, and the description of his women distinctly calls to mind the works of the latter. The description of the woman’s weed-like hair and earthy flesh tones calls to mind Burne-Jones’ early work The Mermaid (1857); the mermaid, depicted in

gouache and watercolor, looks almost sickly with her pale opalescent skin picking up the brown and green hues characteristic of Burne-Jones' art. The description of Browne Tompkins' images is also suggestive of Burne-Jones' Phyllis and Demophoon, which had a rather heated reception when exhibited at the Old Water Colour Society in 1870, indicating that even if Hunt had not seen the work herself, she would have likely been aware of the painting. Marsh's description of the woman as "clasped round the body of a young man [with] parts of her drapery entangle[d] [around] his ankle and thigh, preventing his escape" applies the weed-like imagery above to the entire figure of the woman in the painting (Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 282), suggesting that Hunt is not merely observing the artist's rendering of the model's hair but rather his depiction of his own iconic "Woman."

As Hunt does connect Thornicroft to Rossetti, it is interesting to note that the fictional artist's anxieties over Helen's image under the gaze of Disbrowe and Tracy Davenport echo Rossetti's iconic representations of women. Just as Disbrowe "shoot[s]" his models "up to the height of Alice in Wonderland," Rossetti often "makes the female figure towering and monumental" (Psomiades 166); Lucinda Hawksley notes that in La Pia de Tolomei (1868), Jane Morris' "neck appears almost dislocated" as if needing to stretch itself to fit into the frame (114-15). The "large jaw and thick lips and throat" that Davenport adds to his models are typical of Rossetti's paintings as well; in La Pia de Tolomei, while Morris' square jaw is much smaller than in many of Rossetti's other paintings, her "dislocated" neck actually seems to be larger than her head with her thick mass of hair creating the impression that her neck extends far beyond a point than would be natural. In fact, writing several years after Thornicroft's Model was published, Emilie Barrington reported that many viewers felt that Rossetti's Women were distinctly "ugly": "In the drawing of the mouth often, in the drawing

of the arms and hands sometimes, and in the painting of the flesh of his later works, it is felt that there is a positive element of ugliness such as is almost incomprehensible in one whose senses were so keenly alive to beauty as a rule” (956). I don’t wish to imply that I am making my own aesthetic judgment of Rossetti’s work; rather I wish to illustrate that the factors Thornicroft observes as erasing the model’s beauty are identifiably Pre-Raphaelite images.

Consequently, at first, Thornicroft’s distaste for how these artists would render Helen “so ugly that a worse model would do for them” appears to contradict Hunt’s preference for the Pre-Raphaelites’ work against images of idealized subjects. Yet this is clearly not the case, as shortly thereafter, Thornicroft defends Browne Tompkins’ painting to the Royal Academician MacScumble as the “best bit of decorative painting I know” (18). The fact that Thornicroft’s tortured reflections read as dismissals of artists’ works that he clearly defends later demonstrates Hunt’s positioning of the artist’s jealous need to control his model’s image as that which masks his identification of his complicity in erasing her through similarly iconic images. In fact, Thornicroft’s conscious complaint is that Helen would be erased to the point that “a worse model would do for them,” a thought he then directs at Ambergreen, stating, “almost any one will do for you” (15). Certainly, Thornicroft does not believe that any model “would do” for his own paintings; his early agonies over the state of current models and his ecstasy at finding Helen are evidence enough of his dependence upon her as his muse. Thornicroft seems to believe that he alone can preserve some important essence of Helen. He appears to want to protect her from becoming one of Ambergreen’s “wonderfully-made damsels” and the hideous vision that the other “clique”-members “would make [of] her” (14-15, my emphasis). Yet as I have argued, he makes her into an artistic object himself

through relegating her to the role of a “tractable” possession able to become Iphigenia, Perdita, and Miranda, but little else.

Thornicroft’s inability to recognize his own participation in the erasure of Helen as a woman seems almost ludicrous, given his possessive claim, “I mean to keep her for myself,” and his justification that he “hate[s] seeing the same head wherever you go” (15). Hunt is possibly having a bit of fun at the Pre-Raphaelites’ expense by drawing attention to their (over) reliance on a core group of models. The visages of Fanny Cornforth, Annie Miller, Jane Burden Morris, Lizzie Siddal and Maria Zambaco were consistently featured in the brotherhood’s paintings. Yet Thornicroft does not desire to develop the artistic variety of exhibitions. Instead, Thornicroft wants to maintain sole control of her representations, to be the artist of Rossetti’s “The Portrait” who is able to profess, “They that would look at her must come to me” (100). Indeed, it is through Thornicroft’s need to possess Helen-as-object for himself and himself alone that Hunt sets up the controlling narrative of the novel.

Thornicroft’s artistic reasoning does not convince Ambergreen to forget about using Helen as model, and in order to avoid his friend’s questions, he shifts to claiming that she is not a model at all. Refusing to disclose her identity, he insists that she is merely “a lady whom I have persuaded to sit to me” (17). The designation of Helen as a “lady” rather than “model” silences Ambergreen on the subject (17), for as “a lady” she would belong to a different class of sitters. In fact, class status largely marginalized the figure of the female model and further affected the dynamics between the male artist and the subject he was painting (Hollander 6). For instance, Christina Rossetti sat for a number of the brotherhood’s paintings, yet as Cathryn Spence notes, “[a]s an unmarried middle-class woman she would have been escorted to, and chaperoned within, the studios of non-relatives [...]. No payment

would have been made for her work, as it was undertaken as a favour to her brother and his friends” (466). Most professional models “were from poor or working-class backgrounds” and had no chaperones at their sittings (Jiminez, Dictionary of Artists’ Models iv), and Elizabeth Siddal’s unchaperoned sitting to Dante Gabriel Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelite painters “imbued her with a status close to that of prostitute or ‘fallen woman’” (Oliver 21).²² As long as Ambergreen has no reason to doubt Thornicroft’s claim that Helen is “a lady,” he can assume that she has truly been “persuaded to sit,” is probably not receiving any sort of financial compensation, and very likely “will [...] not sit to any one else” (17). Events, however, soon lead Ambergreen to disbelieve Thornicroft and lead Thornicroft to resort to rather drastic measures to maintain his sole artistic rights to the model.

During the early months of their working relationship, Helen is careful to avoid any visitors to the artist’s home (23). Other than Thornicroft and his servants, the only person who has direct contact with Helen is Spencer Townley, “a kind of pupil-worshipper of Thornicroft’s, who came sometimes to paint beside him” (23). One day Helen arrives late to her sitting, acting rather strangely and wearing “a very pretty turquoise ring” (23-24). Thornicroft accuses her of “growing vain” and demands that she explain the new ring that she clearly could not afford (24). Enigmatically Helen answers, “I say, Yes” (24). Thornicroft is rather confused by this response and is further shocked to learn that his quiet and unassuming “pupil-worshipper,” Spencer Townley, has proposed to Helen by way of a letter bearing only his initials, initials that “were the same as his own” (24-25). The situation is particularly devastating for Helen, who has just professed her acceptance of a proposal that she believes comes from Thornicroft, and the painter exacerbates matters by trying to convince her to give the other man a chance (25). Declaring marriage to Townley “quite

impossible,” Helen moves to leave; however, at that precise moment, Ambergreen arrives at the house, and Thornicroft rushes the crying model “half by force” into the next room (26).

Knowing “quite well [Helen] was there” because the servant answering the door had “hint[ed]” at her presence, Ambergreen mentally determines to “wai[t]” in order to “see her in time” (25-26). Complicating matters for Thornicroft, Lord and Lady Dartmore arrive, and he is obliged to attend to his titled visitors in the drawing room (26-27). Left alone in the drawing room, Ambergreen quietly waits until Helen, and, believing him gone, she comes tearfully back into the studio. Despite her surprise at finding the painter waiting for her, Helen takes little notice of him and quickly leaves. Her tears, however, suggest to Ambergreen that his friend misrepresented the identity of the woman sitting for his paintings. Indeed, he assumes that her tears indicate the end of an intimate relationship (27). Finding an envelope left behind bearing Helen’s elusive name and address, he leaves the studio in her wake, laughing, “now [...] is the time to see if I can’t get a few sittings from this lady whom Thornicroft ‘induced to sit to him’” (28). Significantly, Ambergreen’s assumption of a romantic relationship between Thornicroft and his model indicates the tenuous reputation of contemporary artists’ models. Like Siddal, Helen is presumed to be a “prostitute or ‘fallen woman’” (Oliver 21). While Ambergreen does not make an explicit connection between Helen and prostitution, by sarcastically labeling her as the “lady Thornicroft ‘induced to sit to him,’” he insinuates a sexual relationship and implicates his rather sordid interest in the “few sittings” he hopes to get. Alison Smith notes that

modeling and prostitution were construed as interchangeable activities, since both were seen as operating outside of marriage, in private enclosed spaces, for financial gain. The widespread use of terms such as ‘procure’ and ‘hire’ in parlance

surrounding female models, together with evidence that girls were supplied via older women, added to the notoriety of the profession (Smith 27).²³

Additionally, even if models were not specifically portrayed as prostitutes, they “were presented as social victims vulnerable to male exploitation, and therefore in need of protection and reform” (Smith 28). Hunt portrays how models are confined by presumptive labels through Helen’s “vulnerab[ility]” to Ambergreen’s assumptions about her status as a model, a “vulnerability” exacerbated by Thornicroft’s initial lies about her identity and relegation of her to the “private enclosed space” of his studio. Thornicroft, however, manipulates these assumptions in order to maintain his selfish control over the woman’s image.

When Thornicroft returns to his studio and recognizes that neither Helen nor Ambergreen is there, he senses the strong probability that the two have met (29). Seized by the knowledge that he has now “se[t] Ambergreen on her track,” he worries that “if she sits to him, the whole lot of them will want her to sit to them, and there is no knowing what she may be tempted to do to get away from [her] wretched, wretched [home]” (30). Indeed, his concern over “what she may be tempted to do” specifically suggests a sexual fall from grace, and he further links this susceptibility to her class status, reflecting how her “bringing up” will cause her to “not associate any thought of sin or danger with any one who is refined and gentlemanlike” (30). Thornicroft’s anxieties send him rushing to the bookshop where Helen works and lives with her mother. Noticeably, Mrs. Morris evokes “the older women” who “supplied” the models, in fact appearing to function as her daughter’s madam. She insists that if Thornicroft wishes to discuss “payment,” then she is “the proper person for that” (30). Mrs. Morris positions herself as the receiver of Helen’s hourly rate and informs Thornicroft that

she has already hired her daughter out to the recently departed Ambergreen without so much as “consult[ing]” her daughter (31). Thornicroft believes Helen will find herself in sexual danger by modeling for Ambergreen, and there is no indication that Mrs. Morris will insist upon a chaperone for her daughter. Mrs. Morris’ exclamation, “it’s time she [Helen] did something to earn her keep,” implicates a lack of maternal concern for what the girl will have to do to “earn her keep” (31). Palpably anxious that Helen will become a prostitute, Thornicroft determines to do “anything” to save her from such a fate, “even marry her” (29). He immediately rushes “into a room where Helen was supposed to be,” professes his love, and begs her to marry him, claiming his reaction that morning was only a test of her love for him (31-32).

Yet Thornicroft protects Helen from becoming a fallen woman simply to maintain her exclusively as his model. Thornicroft’s first reaction when he notices the absence of Helen and Ambergreen from his studio is not one of concern for her well-being. Instead, he is upset by Helen’s “vexatious” misinterpretation of Townley’s letter:

If only this had not happened, they might have gone quietly on as they had done during the past months, for years perhaps to come. He was tempted to try to persuade her to return as usual, and let all go on again on the same footing; but that he knew was impossible. If ever she came back now, they could no more be on the same terms as heretofore. He knew she loved him. Could he see her daily, -- young, beautiful, and attached to him, -- and let her come and go as coldly as had been his wont? (28-29).

It is only his consternation that he and Helen will never “be on the same terms as heretofore” that leads him to think about her potentially compromised fate. Significantly, the thought of Ambergreen already “torment[ing] her with his admiration and entreaties to sit to him” draws

his attention to “the many pictures of her all around” his studio (29). Confronted by his artistic interpretations of her and the threat of another artist having access to that image, he decides to marry her (29). Thus while he initially tells himself that he is saving Helen from actual (or presumed) prostitution, he soon identifies his decision to marry her as an artistic choice.

The evening following his proposal to Helen, Thornicroft attends a dinner party at the Dartmores, and within the distinctly aristocratic surroundings, he finds the images of “Mrs. Morris, Helen, and the back parlour in Chapel Street soon vanish[ing] out of his mind so completely, that when their images came by chance to the front for a moment, they were soon swept away as dingy cobwebs stretching themselves over the bright picture of life as it should be” (35). Thornicroft’s enjoyment of the evening, however, is spoiled when Lady Dartmore urges him to find a bride, a woman she predicts will “be the ‘very roof and crown of things’” (36-37). Aware of the stark contrast between the imagined woman Lady Dartmore “expect[s]” him to marry and his now “grotesque espousals,” Thornicroft determines that Helen will never be socially accepted, but “his pride” would never allow him “to go to houses where his wife was ignored” (37). His own social future thus depressingly stretches out in front of him as one in which “he would either have to stay at home or go into lower society” (37). Yet when Thornicroft begins to ponder what his life would become if he were to marry into a family such as the Dartmores, he realizes that social concerns would lead him to “become more and more estranged from the life he wished to lead” (38). Chastising himself for allowing superficial interests to overcome “the one true aim of his life” -- “art” -- Thornicroft begins to rationalize his decision to marry Helen as a positive career move:

How much better would it be for him now to give up all such society [as the Dartmores] at once, and pursue the course he had chosen for himself, indifferent to everything outside it [...]. It was like the very guiding of Providence. They two would live for each other and art, and renounce all society, and so he would have a chance of carrying out his ideal (38-39).

At no point does Thornicroft recall his original intention to save Helen from social disgrace, and her “plebian origin” becomes the impetus for his “pursu[it] [of] the course he had chosen for himself” (45). The marriage will not even offer Helen protection from the “private enclosed spaces” that added to the “notoriety of the [modeling] profession” (27); if anything, her marriage to Thornicroft will heighten her erasure.

In all this, there is little recognition of Helen as a woman. While he appreciates that “no man need pity himself for having to marry such a girl,” his appreciation stems from her ability to “loo[k] like a queen even in that hole in Chapel Street” (39). His subsequent declaration that if the privileged lady he had observed at the Dartmores’ “were suddenly deprived of her silks and jewels [...], she would cut a very poor figure by comparison” highlights that he has regained access to Helen’s “looks” and “figure” (39, my emphasis). In fact, while Thornicroft professes art to be “the one true aim of his life,” it seemingly does not matter to him whether or not this is Helen’s “one true aim,” and her only apparent function is as the image and means by which Thornicroft can work towards “carrying out his ideal” (38-39).

Ultimately, Thornicroft effectively erases her existence as a woman from the world at large by insisting that “their marriage remain a secret” (43). Arguing that he does not want “his artist friends saying he had ruined himself for art” given the distraction “family life”

presents to artistic “devotion,” and aware that “he ha[s] nothing to marry on -- nothing to keep up any establishment with,” Thornicroft decides to “marry [Helen] at once privately, go abroad for a long, long sketching expedition, and come back with materials for some pictures, [which] when done would take the town by storm” (39-40). Believing such an outcome will suppress his friends’ accusations of “ruin” and provide him with plenty of money for a comfortable “establishment,” he reflects on the “delicious” future ahead of him in which “he would shut himself up with his beautiful wife and live a true artist’s life, far from tumult, vanity, and ambition” (40). Thornicroft’s description of the “true artist’s life” as a life free from “vanity and ambition” is clearly ironic given his vain aspirations to have “London ringing with his praises, and longing to do him honour” (40). Once again, Helen is noticeably absent from his thoughts in any other capacity than her “beauty.” In fact, the secret marriage does provide Thornicroft with the sort of god-like power sought by the artist in Rossetti’s “The Portrait”: as long as the world does not know of Helen’s existence, she is merely the “Woman” shaped into being by her artistic creator from nothing more than paint and a blank canvas.

From the first “eventful day” of her marriage, Helen seemingly vanishes as a member of society (43). “Their banns” go unnoticed, and the only one informed of the marriage is Mrs. Morris, who is conveniently “out of London” with no clear intention of returning (43). Handing over the key to her former home to an unnamed friend, Helen steps into a world where she must remain fixedly invisible (43). This invisibility is easily accomplished during their first year and half abroad; as soon as they return to London, however, Thornicroft begins to restrict her movements, only allowing her to leave the marital home “[p]rovided she was not seen leaving” (115). While many artists’ homes, such as George Boughton’s and

Frederick Leighton's, were designed with "discreet separate entrance[s] to the studio[s]" so as "to prevent family and visitors coming into contact with models" (Hardwick 30; Empire of the Nude), Helen is required to avoid contact with anyone, even in her own house. When she does travel outside the house, the experience only increases her feelings of isolation as she observes "crowds hurrying hither and thither with whose business or pleasure she had neither lot nor part; -- no house was open to her, no face brightened into a smile of recognition at the sight of her" (115). She painfully experiences her erasure from society, and while Thornicroft professes prior to their marriage that they will both shut out the world, the only one truly shut out is Helen.

Claiming that he "more than most men [...] needed the support and applause of his fellow men," Thornicroft never rejects the upper-class society that he had found so detrimental to his art (47). He takes trips to the country with Lord Cecil Carnaby because he has "been working too hard" and feels "it would do [him] good" (54). He begins to grow closer to the family and acquaintances of Rosamond Denison, a very wealthy young lady whose portrait he begins to paint, even attending a ball held in her honor (106-11), and when various invitations arrive "he either could not or would not refuse them" (114). Certainly a portion of Thornicroft's artistic success depends upon his maintaining "social relations and networks" (Codell 120), hence the reason he "could not [...] refuse" these invitations. Hunt's narrator, however, pointedly adds the possibility that he "would not refuse them," suggesting that he would attend these engagements whether or not his all-important art depended upon his being seen or not.

While Thornicroft's visibility in society increases, Helen's invisibility grows even more striking in the home she shares with her husband. Her erasure as a woman is

heightened within this space: “gradually she saw less and less of him, for friends from whom she must hide came about him, or he was busy with pictures which required other models, and even these must not see her” (115). Significantly, among Thornicroft’s models, the only one who “must not [be] see[n]” is Helen; the only public visibility Helen maintains is as the “Woman” rendered on canvas, the artistic object he must control for the god-like success he pursues. When Ambergreen asks about her, Thornicroft dismisses “the question” as “one Ambergreen had no right to put” (48, my emphasis). Yet he does not provide her with the visible protection that the socially-acknowledged label of “Mrs. Thornicroft” would afford her and that he claimed to want to provide her in the first place. Instead, Thornicroft relegates Helen to the role of mere “model,” a designation that is all too clear when he reassures Helen that if Ambergreen were to see her leaving the house, “he would only think you were a model” (48). Needing to keep her from view, he suggests that she “go out always through the gardens” rather than the front entrance of the home (49). Thus, in her marriage, Helen is maintained as an object that only her artist/husband is allowed to gaze upon. Helen remains classed as a model and only avoids literal prostitution in order to enter into what Friedrich Engels refers to as “the crassest prostitution,” a “marriage [...] determined by the class position of the participants” (742).

Thornicroft’s ownership of Helen depends upon his ability to “keep” her and his marriage a secret, and so he “fit[s] up a bower for her in his house, and keep[s] her there as a treasure whose existence was known to none but himself” (45). In part his reason for the “bower” is his anxiety over her class status and the reactions of his upper-class friends to his alliance with a woman below his social station. While Thornicroft expresses his intent to reveal their marriage, he feels that he can do so only when “he was sufficiently established in

his position as artist to command for her the place which alone he would allow her to occupy” (45). Despite his professed anxieties over the hurt Helen might experience due to his friends’ snobbery, he observes that when “at last the mighty ladies of society worked her down [...] to the grade they thought more suit[able],” he will be similarly “worked down [...] with her” (45). Not willing to sacrifice his own social station, Thornicroft relegates Helen to her “bower.” More importantly, Thornicroft identifies that it will be through “his position as artist” that he will achieve the social “place” he feels he must obtain in order to “allow her” a public role as his wife. This connection between Helen’s future visibility and Thornicroft’s artistic success indicates that the “only” place Helen will “occupy” is as the “Woman” he depicts on canvas.

Thornicroft’s treatment of his wife reveals that she is only useful to him as this “Woman.” Shortly after their day-to-day life resumes in London, he reflects that “[i]f she had not been such a good model she would have been in danger of being left sometimes for many long hours in her ‘bower.’ As it was, she was constantly wanted” (47). In fact, within the text her only extensive contact with Thornicroft is as his “constantly wanted” model, and inside their home, her only freedom of movement from her “bower” is through her function as his artistic object. While Helen has not been explicitly restricted from other areas in the house, she is only allowed to make her presence known to others within the space of her “bower” and in the studio as his model. As her room is directly above the studio, her confinement and objectification is most noticeable in these spaces.

According to Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert, nineteenth-century women writers commonly emphasized the confinement of women in marriage through the trope of Bluebeard (Madwoman in the Attic 350). In fact, Hunt explicitly connects Helen’s “bower”

and Thornicroft's studio to the locked chamber(s) of Bluebeard's dead wives, and her experience within these spaces evokes the curious wife and her gruesome discovery of her predecessors' remains. Just as the tale's narrative events are set into motion by Bluebeard's absence from the home, Helen's participation in the trope begins when Thornicroft leaves town on a hunting trip, leaving Helen alone for several days. Mrs. Morris arrives, and while her presence in the house is "contrary to Thornicroft's rules, [Helen] could not bring herself to remind her [mother] of that, or to repel her in anyway" (55). Her mother brings a gift with her, a garish tea-service clearly evocative of the mass-produced art objects that were mocked by the Aesthetes (Logan 57, 161-62). In Mrs. Morris' zeal to place her own objects on her daughter's shelf, she knocks one of Thornicroft's priceless, "choice bits of china" out of the cabinet, and in the aftermath of "the broken tazza," a letter arrives announcing Thornicroft's arrival that evening, along with "Lord Cecil Carnaby, and one or two ladies, to see his pictures and china" (59). As he clearly needs to maintain the secret of Helen's presence, he urges her to quickly "remove for the occasion [...] 'all traces of female elegance'" (59). Pointedly, the narrator remarks that "Helen felt in a moment like Mrs. Bluebeard on the eve of her lord's return, and her first thought was the broken tazza" (59).²⁴ While Bluebeard's wife disrupts her husband's locked chamber to find his murdered wives and stains the key with their blood thereby eliminating any chance of hiding her intrusion, the stain that Helen cannot erase and that signals her disruption of Thornicroft's chamber is the broken tazza. Helen's identification of herself as "Mrs. Bluebeard," coupled with her immediate "thought" of "the broken tazza" positions Thornicroft's possessions as his own former wives and reveals Helen, his current wife, as the object that has replaced the former.

Significantly, Hunt extends the Bluebeard allusion beyond the broken pieces of china to Thornicroft's paintings, as he has specifically invited Lord Carnaby and female guests to his home in order to show off both "his pictures and china" (59). While Helen leaves the house hoping to find a replacement for the tazza, Mrs. Morris finds the key to Thornicroft's studio. Determined to give the space a good cleaning, she

proceeded to the pictures themselves, and had given the large one Thornicroft was working on two or three vigorous horizontal rubs, before she perceived that the paint was wet all over, and that she was dragging across, from one side of the picture to the other, a mixture of dirt and colours. She dropped her duster in fright, then picked it up again, and with a clean corner tried to remove some of the dirt she had put on, and thus made confusion worse confounded (60).

With Helen absent from the scene, Mrs. Morris becomes the female intruder in Bluebeard's chamber, the one who cannot keep herself from opening the forbidden door with the beckoning key. Hunt's transformation of the intruder into Helen's mother further shifts the gruesome discovery to Mrs. Morris. The moment evokes the blood of Bluebeard's wives in the paint she "drag[s] across" the canvas, the "fright" of the woman who makes the discovery, and the attempt "to remove" evidence of her presence in the chamber.

Significantly, as the picture she destroys is of Helen, the moment foreshadows the end of the novel when Mrs. Morris is the one who ultimately condemns Thornicroft for the death of her daughter, and the corpse that Mrs. Morris discovers is the image of her daughter, the erasure of her as an individual through representation on canvas.

Unquestionably Hunt intensifies the portrayal of the active male artist and passive female model. Yet within Thornicroft's Model, this depiction does not render women in art

silent. Hunt's depiction of Helen gives voice to the process of silencing, how the model becomes a thing the artist can "easily get" and, as his wife, an object to be stashed away in her "bower." While Hunt's use of the Bluebeard narrative clearly allows her to make a socio-cultural critique of women's experience in marriage, she extends her novel beyond fairytale archetypes through her portrayal of the Pre-Raphaelites and the image of the female model. This extension allows for what Andres identifies as "reconfigurations, where the fictional merge[s] with the actual," in which "readers [are] drawn into not merely hypothetical issues but also questions confronting them in their quotidian lives" (xvii). In fact, Hunt's narrative is grounded in contemporary forms of and issues in art criticism. While Thornicroft's attempts to keep Helen-the-woman invisible reflects the social critique that Hunt offers through her use of biographical forms of art criticism, the very visibility of his images of Helen as "Woman" are what bring about her death. In the end, Hunt's critique is directed at the paintings themselves, for even more than the tale of Bluebeard, the allusion which dominates the novel is the story of Iphigenia, the "Woman" Helen initially becomes as Thornicroft's model.

CHAPTER III

To Live and Die for Art: The Envisioned Roles of Artist and Model

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel -- every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream. -- Christina Rossetti²⁵

Similar to Hunt's portrayal of the erasure of the individual woman in art, Christina Rossetti's "In an Artist's Studio" suggests an almost carnivorous and destructive quality of the male gaze, "feed[ing] upon [the model's] face by day and night" and rendering her "[n]ot as she is." Indeed, coupled with the destructive male gaze is the sense of others gazing upon the model's image and finding in the multiplicity of her "[o]ne face" and "[o]ne selfsame figure" -- "[t]he same one meaning." While she is unquestionably "hidden" by the erasure of her "meaning," there is also a distinct sense of her visibility in what Pollock has observed as "the obsessive quality of repetitious images of a female face" (175). Similarly, the proliferation of Helen's "face" throughout the narrative identifies her as the all too visible model, and Hunt uses the "face" of Iphigenia, the "Woman" Helen initially becomes as Thornicroft's model, in order to combine her feminist critique of the treatment of the artist's model with her critique of the artist's paintings themselves.

When Thornicroft finds Helen working in her mother's bookshop, all his early frustration over his incomplete painting dissipates at the vision of "the Iphigenia of his dreams" (6). Thornicroft's labeling of Helen as the perfect incarnation "of his dreams"

reflects, on one hand, the stereotypical artistic quest for the perfect model. As Borel notes of the historical “artist” and his “model,” “he often seems to have been unsatisfied, ever searching for a more adequate subject, one corresponding more closely to his imagination” (7).²⁶ In fact, Helen represents the end of Thornicroft’s search, the perfect “correspond[ence]” between reality and “his imagination.” Read alongside the image of a model in Christina Rossetti’s “In an Artist’s Studio” presented “[n]ot as she is, but as she fills his dreams,” Thornicroft’s Model implicates how this artistic quest effectively erases the woman through the artist’s personal fantasy/fantasies. As I have argued of Hunt’s text, Jill Ehnenn suggests that Christina Rossetti’s poem “disapproves of how painted images often supplant the model who disappears under the male spectator’s eye” (115).²⁷ Yet Thornicroft’s “dream” vision takes place before he even renders Helen on canvas and the reader is not even aware of her name until the following chapter, when she arrives at Thornicroft’s studio.

Freud’s discussion of “dream-work” provides an important theoretical tool for analyzing Thornicroft’s “displacement” of Helen, his “[inability] to discover or recognize” her as anything other than his vision of Iphigenia (Freud, “On Dreams” 157).²⁸ For Thornicroft, Helen is neither woman nor model. Instead, through the displacement process, he sees Helen and immediately conflates her with his dream “Woman”:

The Iphigenia he saw in his mind was this I-phigenia [sic] robed in saffron, standing at the altar ready crowned for death -- standing as it were, alone: but serried ranges of shields and a thorny hedge of bristling spears circling around her showed that she was hemmed in by hard, cruel, impatient men who thought it right that she should die, [and] the armed host [...] had come to see the maiden die [...]. He had not brought in

Calchas, from a feeling of repulsion -- only a part of his robe was seen on the left side, and the point of a sharp sword (2).

When Thornicroft sees Helen, she is displaced through the artist's unconscious "transposition" of her as an independent "subject," his "interchange of [Helen as] subject and [Iphigenia as] object" (Freud, "From a History" 409). This "transposition" significantly affects his treatment of Helen as his personal artistic object. By conflating her with the "Woman" he wishes to paint, Thornicroft sets into motion the controlling narrative of the text, in which Helen's fate parallels the sacrificial death of Iphigenia. Hunt's allusions to the classical subject of Iphigenia dramatize how artists "displace" their female models and how this "displacement" ultimately has disastrous consequences for women in the world of art.

As I have argued, the novel's epigraph from Plato's Phaedrus denotes a narcissistic relationship between the artist and his work, a self-referential experience of the subject-object of the gaze.²⁹ Indeed, the vision's reference to "I-phigenia" suggests that Iphigenia is actually Thornicroft: she is a product of his artistic (un)conscious. Since Freud argues that the symbolism of "dream-work" gives us "a means of obtaining knowledge [...] of the patient," the vision of Iphigenia provides a reading of Thornicroft the artist, here figured as the dreamer/patient ("An Autobiographical Study" 29). Thornicroft's early vision of Iphigenia is connected to the model he had been using prior to his discovery of Helen, the woman who had caused "the very life of the picture [to be] threatened" (1, my emphasis). Noticeably, this "threat" is closely followed by his inability to place the executioner within his painting due to a "feeling of repulsion" (2). Thus, while Thornicroft clearly depends upon the female model, she is also what "threatens" Thornicroft, and as such, Calchas can be read as the model. While "his robe" would be the typical Greek fashion for the painting's subject matter, the

ambiguity of a loose flowing garment only slightly visible “on the left side” might suggest such a gendered interpretation. In fact, the placement of Calchas outside of the vision due to “repulsion” juxtaposed with the visible “point of the sharp sword” indicates the “threat of castration” that the female model poses for the artist.³⁰ While the “threat of castration” is typically associated with a differentiation of the sexes based on anatomy, as an imminent victim, Thornicroft has not yet been sacrificed. Consequently, he is “the unhappy creature on whom the cruel punishment” will fall (Freud, “Leonardo Da Vinci” 460). He “trembles for his masculinity” and begins to “despise,” or feel repulsed by, those who, “as he supposes,” have already experienced “the cruel punishment” (Freud, “Leonardo Da Vinci” 460). This threat is, importantly, not only what woman poses to man, but what the female model poses to the male artist. Thornicroft’s identity is almost solely defined, as much of my discussion has shown, by his position as artist, and on one hand, an interpretation of Thornicroft as Iphigenia suggests his own fear of death, perhaps at the hands of the critics and public. The need to maintain his artistic identity, however, results in his compulsion to relegate the model/Calchas outside his vision. In order to assert his authority over her as his dependent subject, he must erase her from his vision, and yet he remains dependent upon her for his art. His (un)conscious recognition that he cannot entirely render her invisible “threatens” his position of god-like creator, and the implied threat of castration hints at his possible anxieties over his artistic (male) potency.

As one of Freud’s discussions of the “castration complex” can be found in a paper on the artist Leonardo da Vinci, it seems no coincidence that Thornicroft’s vision evokes, in the visible sword and the “thorny hedge of bristling spears,” the very tools of an artistic creator: the painter’s brushes, indeed, the very “bristles” of such brushes. Even the “serried ranges of

shields” conjure up the artist’s palettes (2). By envisioning his artistic tools as the weapons which threaten him, Thornicroft reveals his anxiety that the model possesses her own creative agency, or as Gilbert and Gubar might suggest, a counter to his phallic pen (Madwoman in the Attic ch. 1). Importantly, Nancy Chodorow argues that the concepts of the castration complex and penis envy are “too simple,” reducing men and women to “mirror opposites” (“Motherly” 140). An interpretation of Thornicroft as the anxious sacrificial victim indicates that the actual threat the female model poses is a disruption of these concepts, a disturbance of the “mirror opposites” of male artist and female model.

The work of scholars such as Jan Marsh, Lois Oliver, Pamela Gerrish Nunn, and Jill Berk Jiminez demonstrates that many female models were artists themselves, but due to perceived class differences, the roles of “artist and model were deemed both distinct and incompatible” (Oliver 20). Prior to their scholarship, history had largely erased these women’s artistic agency. Siddal was an accomplished artist in her own right, having “exhibited alongside John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt and Ford Madox Brown” (Oliver 20). She was pursuing an artistic career before she even met Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and while the story of her being “found” in a shop by Walter Deverell is nearly indestructible in the formulation of the mythology surrounding Siddal, she was actually “introduced” to the artist by “[his] father, Principal of the Government School of Design, to whom she had shown her drawings” (Oliver 20). Significantly, Hunt’s text (re)creates this “myth” by depicting Thornicroft coming across Helen in a bookshop. Rather than participating in the erasure of Siddal and the female model as artist, Hunt pointedly designates this space as the site of Helen’s initial “displacement” as an independent subject, her “transposition” into the object of Thornicroft’s “dreams.” Therefore, the interpretation of the executioner as the

female model-artist indicates that the threat she poses to Thornicroft is as competitor to his own artistic pursuits. By relegating her outside of his canvas, he reveals his “repulsion” as stemming from his unwillingness to recognize her own creative agency.

Consequently, within the text itself, Hunt hints at the presence of women artists while still leaving them outside the picture. I argue that she does so in order to heighten her dramatization of the treatment of the female model through the parallel she draws between Helen’s fate and that of the mythological Iphigenia. As such Thornicroft’s vision/painting offers a second interpretation, a reading of Helen as Iphigenia. Such a reading does not detract from my previous consideration of the artist as victim because both demonstrate how the woman is erased by the artist through his need for control. An interpretation of Helen as Iphigenia reveals how the woman’s personal agency is sacrificed as she is transfigured into a “Woman” to be looked upon.

Much discussion of the model links her function to the idea of sacrifice. Borel calls her “the object of an almost religious sacrifice,” suggesting that “[g]iven form, the model sacrifices herself in order to live eternally in a work of art” (96, 91). In her work to recover the biographies of the diverse historical women who worked as models, Jiminez objects to such statements, declaring that when “models are [...] characterized by their readiness and ability to sacrifice personal identity for a greater artistic vision,” they become “the quintessential ‘other’ in art history” (Dictionary of Artists’ Models vi). Despite the modern context of both Borel’s and Jiminez’s statements, Hunt’s text reflects the sacrificial relationship between the woman and the artwork she poses for. During Helen’s first session with Thornicroft, she expresses her anxiety over this “fate.” She indicates that she “know[s]” it is “silly,” but that “the story of Iphigenia has got uncomfortably on [her] mind,” and she

tells Thornicroft, “[w]hen you first placed me here in the very position in which she is standing in your picture, it seemed to me as if I were taking the first step towards a fate like hers” (12-13). When they first meet, Thornicroft uses the subject of the book Helen has been reading on Greek history to bring up his painting through the story of Iphigenia (7). Helen initially expresses irritation at the treatment of the mythological “Woman,” for “they sacrificed her to get a fair wind,” and she asks if he “think[s] it was very cruel of them to be so impatient,” personally feeling that “[t]hey might have waited” (7). Thornicroft tries to argue that her interpretation “is not quite the story” (8); his version of events, however, reads as little more than a justification of her death. He tells how “the Greeks, hav[ing] offended the goddess Artemis [...], [were] told by the oracle that unless they atoned for what they had done by sacrificing Iphigenia [...], they should never leave Aulis” (8). He designates her death as necessary in order “to restore her father [Agamemnon] to the favour of the gods, and to enable her countrymen to fight for the honour of Greece” (8). When juxtaposed with Thornicroft’s need to dramatize this story on canvas, his justification of Iphigenia’s death implicates his justification of the model’s personal sacrifice “to restore her father [or artistic creator] to the favour of the gods [or critics/public].” Early on, the text aligns Thornicroft’s view of “art matters” with a sense of national pride in that “[h]e firmly believed in the possibility of a great school of art arising in England” (3). As such, the model’s death as Iphigenia is justified by Thornicroft as allowing her artist “to fight for the honour” of some hopeful nationalistic “school of art.”

Still, Helen is not immediately convinced by Thornicroft’s explanation, arguing, “[i]t would have been nobler of Agamemnon to bear all the gods could do to him rather than take his child’s life” (8). Thornicroft dismisses this position as irrelevant because her death was

inevitable, either through “force” or “her own free will” (8). Iphigenia’s compliance, according to Thornicroft, occurs once she recognizes her inability to avoid Fate, and he remarks, “after that [she] never said another word of entreaty.” Notably, Helen’s protests simultaneously cease as if she has also been silenced from making “another word of entreaty” (8). She appears to shift the significance of the story to that of a sacrifice for love and tells Thornicroft, “I think I could die, or at any rate bear very bad things for any one I liked very much, if I knew my pain would bring him great good” (9). Helen’s later decision to marry Thornicroft, a decision that leads to her continued function as model and her final sacrifice stems from such a decision to “die.” When she accepts his proposal, she recognizes that the offer is not made out of love, but she also knows that she is “such a fool, [and she] love[s] [him] so much, that [she] can’t help letting [him] do it” (33). This moment is not the only one in which Helen sacrifices herself for love of Thornicroft; however, as I will show, in each sacrifice, she attempts to protect herself from the marked visibility of the “Woman” Iphigenia’s death.

Helen specifically qualifies her professed willingness to die for love with the awareness that “[she] could not die as [Iphigenia] did, surrounded by cruel men longing for her death,” suggesting “the most [she] could do then would be to go away and die quietly, far from them all” (9). Helen’s acceptance of Thornicroft’s marriage proposal, in fact, forecasts both her future sacrifice and her later attempt “to go away and die quietly”: she vows, “If ever I fancy you do not really love me, or that you would be happier without me, I shall just go quietly away and leave you” (42). In this moment, Helen combines both resistance and submission to the idea of sacrifice, coupling a rather independent assertion that her marriage

is conditional upon his love with a noticeably dependent need to maintain his happiness. In both cases, however, she desires to step outside the male gaze.

In both Helen's reaction to the story and Thornicroft's vision of the painting, the woman is perilously caught in a murderous male vision. Indeed, the description of the sacrificial victim "alone" and yet surrounded by hard, cruel, impatient men who [...] had come to see [her] die" intensifies "the male/female, spectator/spectacle, subject/object patriarchal [artistic] binaries that the hegemonic dynamics of the gaze dictated," binaries that Andres argues "the Pre-Raphaelites frequently destabilized" (Andres 24-25). While Andres is correct in her description of certain Pre-Raphaelite images, Hunt's depiction of her artist as distinctly Pre-Raphaelite suggests that she interprets the brotherhood as participating in the "sacrifice" of the female model. In fact, correspondence reveals that neither Hunt nor her husband was blind to certain faults of the movement. After their marriage, Alfred Hunt wrote to his wife's former fiancé, Reverend Canon Greenwell, on the subject of a painting he was planning to purchase, assuring the prospective buyer, "I do not think there is any danger of your being entirely [Alfred underlines this twice] captivated by Pre-Raphaelitism. The whole art-gospel is not contained in it."³¹ While Hunt's fiction often focuses on and privileges Pre-Raphaelitism, Thornicroft's Model does not portray the movement as containing "the whole art-gospel," particularly in relation to women and art. As I have shown, Hunt portrays the artists as straying away from the Ruskinian principle of "truth to nature," assisting in the removal of the model as an individual from the public consciousness, and transforming these women into iconic subjects. Furthermore, as the debate over professionalized and generalist critics played out, even William Michael Rossetti began to shift the focus of his art criticism away from the subjects of the paintings, so that by 1867, he was advocating the discussion of

“the art” and only “art” (Prettejohn 83). In fact, the reviews of professionalized critics played an important role in erasing the model as their focus on brushstrokes and shadow seemed to place even her image outside of the frame.

In this second interpretation of Thornicroft’s vision, his inability to place the executioner within the work foreshadows his inability to recognize his part in Helen’s death, and indicates his unconscious need to avoid admitting his participation in the erasure of the model-as-woman, since in order to maintain his creative control of the canvas, he must sustain the “castration complex” in order to keep the model-as-other. I am not arguing that Hunt is “describ[ing] the core experience or the essence of femininity or masculinity” (Chodorow, “Gender” 523). Rather, as Chodorow notes, “[m]eaning [...] is always psychologically particular to the individual” (“Gender” 517), I posit Hunt is depicting the specific psychology of the artist. In Freud’s analysis of the artist da Vinci, he turns to the Aesthete Walter Pater as a way of reading the former’s Mona Lisa (or La Gioconda), a significant move considering that Hunt’s Aesthetic connections would have unquestionably brought her into contact with Pater’s text (468). Pater asserts that the “image [of La Gioconda] defin[es] itself on the fabric of his [da Vinci’s] dreams; [...] we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last;” Freud not only finds such an idea “convincing,” but also feels it “deserves to be taken literally” (468). A “literal” interpretation of “the Iphigenia [or model] of [Thornicroft’s] dreams,” a vision of “his ideal lady, embodied and beheld,” importantly designates his “ideal” model as one sacrificed because her death must be inevitable for the sake of his art.

Yet, this is pointedly his ideal rather than the ideal. When Helen expresses her fear of following in Iphigenia’s footsteps, Thornicroft tries to glorify such an end, as well as

maintain this sacrificial function of his model, by praising her for having “a great deal of the stuff of which martyrs are made of [in her] composition” (13). Helen half-heartedly rejects this praise, sighing, “I don’t know; I think not; at any rate, it must be a very awful moment when one finds there is nothing else to do for any one one loves but die for him” (13). In the end, Helen will “die for him;” yet the novel casts blame on Thornicroft’s (the artist’s) and society’s treatment of her as a model. While both would prefer her to remain invisible, the inescapable visibility of her images places the model firmly in the public sphere, and the relegation of the model to that of visible other, object, outcast is what renders her death, just as Iphigenia’s was, inevitable.

Significantly, despite the destructive artistic gaze that dominates the novel, Hunt does depict other images of Helen beyond those completed by Thornicroft. Upon moving into her “bower,” Helen discovers that the room once belonged to the rejected suitor-artist Townley and finds “innumerable sketches of herself [...] all done by that quiet man who had apparently never raised his eyes to her face, but who had yet learnt it off by heart” (48).³² The fact that Townley “apparently never raised his eyes to her face” suggests an entirely different male gaze from Thornicroft’s. While Helen does not appear to recognize herself in Thornicroft’s images of her as “Woman,” referring to them as “the Althæa” or “the Perdita,” she clearly identifies Townley’s “sketches” as depicting “herself.” She further notes that he has “learnt [her face] by heart,” indicating that Townley’s representations of Helen do not render her identity invisible, and therefore do not displace her function as individual, independent subject. By granting Townley access to Helen’s image, the novel subverts Thornicroft’s sole control of her as his art object. Moreover, by providing an alternative male gaze and depiction of women in art, Hunt demonstrates that the death of the model is only

inevitable so long as the relationship between artist and model (or society and model) takes on the power dynamics in Thornicroft's vision of Iphigenia.

As Townley's images of Helen sustain her identity, it seems fitting that he is the only character of the novel to whom knowledge of her marriage to Thornicroft is granted and who accepts the union without hesitation. Helen herself tells Townley of the marriage after her husband disappears in Bluebeard-like fury following the destruction of his china and painting. Hearing a noise downstairs and thinking that Thornicroft has returned, Helen runs directly from bed to the studio in order to apologize (71). Townley is horrified to see her there looking so obviously "at home" and initially assumes that Helen has become Thornicroft's mistress (71). Having abandoned his art career in order to take "Holy Orders," he offers her counsel, thinking she might need to confess her sins (71). Unable to bear Townley's misinterpretation, Helen reveals the secret of her marriage, and in spite of the former artist's horror at Thornicroft's treatment of her, he swears for her sake to keep the secret (71-75). While her revelation results from the chance encounter with her ex-suitor, Hunt specifically positions Townley as the only character who is granted this knowledge, for his artistic gaze is the only gaze proven trustworthy in depicting her identity.

Others, however, immediately assume the worst and relegate Helen to her fate as sacrificial victim of the gaze. For instance, upon Thornicroft's angry departure from the house, the servants become determined

not to believe that missis was missis really; they were not married; it was all a make believe like; and master was perhaps tired of her, and she would have to go. They liked Helen very much, but they liked excitement of what they called "a rumpus in

the 'ouse" still better; it gave an agreeable impetus to the monotony of their lives (69).³³

Helen's reputation is sacrificed to the servants' need to entertain themselves with "a rumpus," the spectacle of the woman under the gaze. Significantly, while Hunt's characterization decidedly "others" these individuals as well, in contrast to her portrayal of Helen, her portrayal of Thornicroft's servants is not sympathetic, indicating that the author is not merely making a general socio-cultural argument but rather specifically arguing on behalf of the female model.

In Thornicroft's absence, Helen becomes deathly ill and miscarries the child the couple had been expecting "in some four or five months" (75). During her recovery, she attempts to confess to Thornicroft her revelation of their secret to Townley, but every time Helen broaches the subject, Thornicroft refuses to listen, telling her he wants to "bury the past" and assuring her that he "forgives her without hearing it" (99). In fact, Thornicroft is incapable of hearing Helen's confession because it would force him to recognize her existence outside of her role as model, and, in order to avoid this recognition, he keeps her effectively silenced. This leads, however, to Helen's increased anxiety and depression, and she begins to go and sit quietly in the back of a church to ease her mind. Coincidentally, she has chosen the church where Townley acts as pastor. While Helen is completely unaware of his presence there, Thornicroft accuses his wife of faking such ignorance and grows increasingly jealous of her supposed associations with the former artist-suitor (117). Partially to discover how she could have missed knowing that Townley was the pastor, Helen returns to the church one last time, where she is unfortunately spied by Ambergreen, who again becomes so desperate not to lose sight of Helen-as-model that he announces his

determination to follow her home (120). To forestall his discovery of her present home, Helen turns to Townley for assistance, and he promptly escorts her to a carriage (121). When Helen tries to tell Thornicroft about this episode, yet again, Thornicroft silences her from articulating any independent action outside of her function as his model, and it is this silencing which initiates Helen's first painful sacrifice.

Ambergreen, clearly upset that his desired model has once more slipped away from his gaze, insinuates to Thornicroft that Helen and Townley are lovers (123). Given Thornicroft's regulation of Helen to the role of mere model, a figure often socially-marked as probable prostitute or mistress, he readily believes Ambergreen's lie, replacing his vision of her as the innocent martyr Iphigenia with Ambergreen's version of her as duplicitous whore. Initially he refuses to even hint to Helen why he is so angry, and when he finally gives a reason, he merely suggests that she would rather go to her "friend Mr. Townley" (128). Helen assumes that his anger stems from his discovery that she told the pastor about their marriage, and so she apologizes, which Thornicroft interprets as a guilty admission of infidelity and refuses to hear anything else she has to say. Ultimately, each determines to leave the other -- Helen due to her earlier vow to sacrifice herself for Thornicroft's happiness and Thornicroft due to his need to leave her "alone" at the sacrificial "altar" of art as the properly punished transgressor of his gaze. Helen then vanishes from the greater portion of the remaining narrative, as the focus shifts to Thornicroft's European tour with Rosamond Denison and her traveling party.

While touring the Greek islands, Thornicroft and the party of travelers are kidnapped, a moment that parallels the inability of the Greek sailors to leave Aulis within the story of Iphigenia. As Thornicroft does not have the available income of the other hostages, he writes

to his Royal Academician friend, Samuel MacScumble, for assistance in acquiring funds for his ransom (200). In Thornicroft's absence, Helen has been working as the MacScumble's governess and discovers her husband's predicament. Desperate to help the man she loves and to maintain her invisibility, she writes to Townley, asking his assistance in sending all the money she possesses while still keeping her name out of everything (205). Observing how fatally ill Helen appears to be, Townley is again horrified at the way Thornicroft has treated Helen. Despite his pleas to allow him to help her personally, her sole request is that Thornicroft only learn of her involvement after she dies, at which point she hopes he will tell her husband how she loved him "to the very last" (206). Helen seems to experience the rather intense "displacement" of her individuality in the "Woman" Iphigenia, for in this moment her only desire is to "die for love," since through her sacrifice, her husband will manage to escape the island to which he is chained.

Townley, on the other hand, is determined to make Thornicroft recognize his wife. He sends the money, but he further sends a letter identifying Helen as the sender of the ransom funds and relaying the news of her impending death. While Thornicroft refuses to believe in even a small possibility that Helen is the actual sender of the money, he is more than willing to accept her death, which Townley's letter pointedly never describes as having already occurred, in order to pursue a romantic involvement with Rosie Denison (242). Even prior to receiving Townley's letter, he has already erased Helen from his mind, convincing himself that "[i]n the eyes of God he had no wife" so that he can "live and die [...] with his life unclouded by any murmur of Helen's wrongs" (212). Just as Thornicroft envisioned Iphigenia prior to conflating this image with Helen and perceived the model as vulnerable to sexual liaisons before projecting this view upon Helen, so he now imagines Helen as an

erased “barrier” (242), and his dream-work allows him to displace this wish onto a fabricated reality in which Helen literally dies. Significantly, Thornicroft’s “displacement” of Helen leads to his initial “wish[es] [finding their] fulfillment in [his] creative work” by affording him an alternative perception of reality in which he still has sole artistic control (Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” 442).

Convinced that he has maintained control through Helen’s assumed death, Thornicroft wastes little time in pursuing Rosie, and the pair elopes shortly after the now free band of travelers stop in Tunis. For several years, Thornicroft is able to sustain his displaced vision, particularly given Helen’s refusal to publicly announce that the recent nuptials are fraudulent. Helen’s place with the MacScumbles’ home naturally puts her in the path of the news, and while Townley begs her to speak out, if only for Miss Denison’s sake, Helen pointedly refuses. Helen appears desirous of protecting Rosie, reminding Townley that “[s]he thinks she is married and perhaps he may be very good and kind to her, and make her happy” (294). She bears no ill will towards Rosie and wishes her well in the position she had briefly occupied herself. Helen’s refusal to speak, however, stems more significantly from her desire to remain invisible, “to hide [her]self silently away” (294). While part of this desire is tied up with her sacrifice for Thornicroft’s own happiness, she clearly indicates that she wishes to preserve some sense of dignity in what she sees as “the few months of life which are left to [her]” (294). Read against her early anxieties over the visibility of Iphigenia’s death, Helen is attempting to circumvent any participation in such a spectacle. Announcing her marriage to Thornicroft would only exacerbate the visibility of everyone involved, would “drag him [Thornicroft] down with shame, and make her [Rosie’s] poor young life wretched, and [Helen’s] own more so than ever” (294). Such an experience of the gaze, Helen pleads to

Townley, “would be too much for me” (294). In the end, however, the artist’s and society’s treatment of the female model will not allow Helen to escape Iphigenia’s all-too-visible sacrificial death.

In fact, it is the model-obsessed Ambergreen who eventually thwarts Helen’s protective silence by destroying Thornicroft’s “displacement” of her existence. During a trip to the country, Ambergreen once again spies Helen, who had been spending time with her mother (327). He announces his discovery to Thornicroft, and while the latter is visibly shaken, he seems slightly more interested in pursuing the story his friend had relayed to him “about a love affair [...] between her and Townley” (327). While he clearly can longer maintain the illusion that Helen has died, he struggles to maintain Helen’s “displacement” as the cheating wife, expressing his wish that “you would tell me if you think there really was any truth in that” (327), as if begging Ambergreen to confirm the truth of his wish-fulfillment fantasy. Ambergreen, however, does not confirm truth; instead he claims he never would have seriously suggested “any such thing” (327). While Ambergreen won’t acknowledge his authorship of the story of Helen’s affair, he does appear to accept some responsibility for distorting her identity. He “advise[s]” Thornicroft to “take fifty per cent., off anything I ever told you against her, for she used to put me in such rages with her, that I am sure I should not like anything I said about her taken for gospel [...]! Besides, though I don’t know much about her, I should think she was about as good a girl as ever lived” (327-28). Ambergreen’s advice reads as an artist’s caution not to believe his visions of the female model, for they have largely arisen from his obsessive “rages with her.” Furthermore, while his advice is clearly given in connection with his revelation that Helen is still alive, he shifts into the past tense when assuring Thornicroft of his belief that “she was about as good a girl as ever

lived.” The tense shift suggests that Helen’s goodness has passed for Ambergreen, most likely through his own “transposition” of Helen to model-as-whore. Such erasure of Helen’s virtue further relegates her to the past, indicating the death of the model’s identity through an artist’s representation of her.

Thornicroft’s realization that he has indeed “wronged [...] Helen” in his own erasure of her, not altogether unlike that which Ambergreen set into motion, greatly affects Thornicroft, and he realizes “his whole life’s penitence could never atone for the wrong he had done to her” (330). This realization, however, does not lead him to truly accept any sense of blame, for “he preferred to think of himself as somewhat of a victim throughout the whole affair, -- misled by Townley’s letter -- entangled by Rosie almost against his will -- more sinned against than sinning as regarded his dealings with all the others” (330). The perpetual “victim” Thornicroft reveals his almost active construction of self as Iphigenia awaiting death and further demonstrates his inability to recognize himself in the role of executioner, a role in which he incidentally continues to function through his renewed interest in his painted image of Helen as Althæa and pointed lack of desire to announce his connection to the woman herself. In fact, he designates his rightful punishment as to “keep the lot he had chosen,” to remain in his now unhappy marriage to Rosie (340).

On one hand, this choice does stem from a sense of wrongdoing. He feels he does not deserve to return to Helen, for when he had been with her, “he had not been of a sufficiently generous nature to wield the power which her complete isolation from the world and absolute surrender of her existence into his rule and government had given him. He had been a base, overbearing tyrant; he knew that at last, and owned it with shame” (340). While Thornicroft does “shame[fully]” perceive his past actions as those of “a tyrant,” he does not dismiss the

dynamics of “power” that had existed between himself and Helen. Rather he identifies Helen’s “complete isolation from the world and absolute surrender of her existence” as her chosen and proper actions, and his “rule and government” of her as his own prerogative. These actions -- hers and his -- dramatically recreate his dream-vision of Helen as Iphigenia “surrendering” to his artistic control, yet he does not explicitly identify his own complicity in her “isolation” and “surrender.” He locates the source of wrongdoing in his lack of “a sufficiently generous nature,” a lack which leads to his inability “to wield the power [...] given him” (340). While such a lack of generosity might hint at Thornicroft-as-Iphigenia’s fear of castration in that it threatens the efficacy of his ability to “wield the power,” his identification of himself as “a base, overbearing tyrant” indicates his function as executioner, the one who threatens the female sacrificial victim with her inevitable lack. By casting her “surrender” as Helen’s rightful choice, he reveals his assumption that the model should in fact sacrifice herself to his art.

Thornicroft’s function as executioner is evident in his renewed interest in Helen’s image on canvas. Upon learning that Helen is alive, he immediately returns to “the Althæa,” taking “melancholy pleasure in adding telling little touches” (340). However, Rosie, irritated at his continual fussing over the image, becomes “very anxious to get it sold and out of the house” (340). On one hand, Rosie’s irritation indicates her mercenary, materialistic attitudes towards art. On the other, it demonstrates her growing jealousy of both the “Woman” on canvas and the woman who functioned as model. Increasingly, she insists on knowing the identity of the woman in the painting, and by giving her Helen’s name, Thornicroft only exacerbates her anxieties, for she recognizes “Helen Morris” as the same name appearing on a box of stockings she found in the house (341). Attempting to avoid further questions, he

tells his so-called wife that “[s]he was only a model,” a statement that results in a rare identification of his own complicity in Helen’s erasure as he experiences a “bitter consciousness that he was speaking very little less than the truth, and that was really all he had allowed her to be” (342, my emphasis). Indeed, the moments in which Hunt’s fictional artists identify their treatment of models are perhaps the most clearly articulated statements about the erasure of a woman’s individual agency through contemporary perceptions of, reactions to, and marginalization of the female model. Yet even as Thornicroft admits his crucial role in restricting Helen to the sole function of model, he continues to treat her as such, and her erasure is heightened by her physical absence and his refusal to admit his relationship with her. Furthermore, by giving Rosie Helen’s name, in concert with the assertion that “[s]he was only a model,” Thornicroft initiates Helen’s final and most painful sacrificial death, effectively striking Iphigenia with “the point of [his] sharp sword.”

The curious Rosie cannot forget “Helen Morris,” and during a luncheon visit to the MacScumbles’, she is shocked at the coincidence of the family’s governess possessing the same name. While it does seem a rather humorous coincidence to the group, the mood noticeably shifts when “Mrs. Thornicroft” announces her willingness to provide the governess with “a dozen or so” stockings that are “all ready marked” and lying about her husband’s home (354-55). Prior to this moment, Helen has been able to remain invisible as a model with the MacScumbles, the very individuals to whom her artist-husband wrote for help in acquiring his ransom. Mr. MacScumble has, in fact, seen representations of Helen, once when seeking an artwork to sell in order to raise money for Thornicroft and again in “a photograph of the Althæa” that he actually keeps “on [his] mantelpiece” (208, 351). Until Rosie announces her name -- a weapon Thornicroft armed her with -- Mr. MacScumble and

his wife have been unaware of her work as a model. In one sense, their lack of awareness further indicates the erasure of women in art; however, their surprise and extreme displeasure upon making the connection demonstrate society's assumptions about the model and the need to confine her visibility within a respectable home solely to artistic renderings of her image as "Woman."

Indeed, the MacScumbles' anxieties escalate once they identify Helen's face in the faces of Thornicroft's paintings -- from "the Perdita [...], and the Iphigenia, and the Althæa, and ever so many more" (355). MacScumble is shocked once "all Thornicroft's pictures were distinctly present to his memory, and he wondered how he could have been so blind, so dull, so stupid, so unlike an artist in every way, as not to recognize his Helen Morris as Thornicroft's Helen Morris" (355-56). While he attempts to avoid labeling Helen as "a regular model" and recalls Thornicroft's insistence that she was "a lady or something less come-at-able," Rosie is further armed with the second weapon Thornicroft gave her in his assertion that "[s]he was only a model (342, my emphasis). Thus she is able to strike a significant blow to Helen's reputation by describing her as "a model" and "quite a humble person, too [...], not above earning a trifle any way she could -- at least [...], she went once to stay at our house, to keep the servant company when Stephen was away. That was when she left her things" (355). As the presumed respectability of models was tenuous at best given the frequent associations made between modeling and prostitution, Rosie's description of Helen's willingness to "ear[n] a trifle any way she could," is easily misinterpreted, and the sexual implications are seemingly confirmed for the MacScumbles by "her things" left about Thornicroft's house. While Mr. MacScumble tries to believe the best of the woman he has trusted with his children, he can't help but feel that "the biggest and the blackest and most

horribly suggestive [of the evidence] were those unpleasantly obtrusive stockings which Rosie was always dragging into light” (358).

Even in his shock, MacScumble is sympathetic towards Helen, and he does try to minimize his wife’s violent reaction. He is unable to stop Mrs. MacScumble from directly accusing Helen of sexual indiscretions, quietly “whisper[ing] something in Helen’s ear” that causes her to cry out “I was not! -- most solemnly I declare it!” (362, her emphasis). Genuinely hurt that a friend and mother-figure has so quickly turned against her, Helen wishes she could “see [in Mrs. MacScumble’s face] some signs of love and regard which could trust in spite of all, without need of proof” (302). Yet Mrs. MacScumble pointedly informs Helen, “[W]e have children, and characters to keep up, and duties to perform to them and to ourselves; and now our duty is to see they have no improper people about them; and as all this has come out, you must go home and see them no more” (362). Noticeably, Mrs. MacScumble identifies the real reason Helen must leave is that “all this has come out,” and while Mr. MacScumble again tries to prevent Helen’s expulsion from the house in her current state of illness, Mrs. MacScumble is adamant. Her determination to remove “that creature” from her home clearly illustrates her anxious need to avoid contagion by association with the socially-marked figure of the model. While she claims that Helen “had no business ever to set her foot in this house,” the narrator distinctly recognizes that “if Thornicroft were to have come in, she would have let Beenie sit on one knee, and Jessie on the other, with never a thought of contamination” (363, 360). While this dramatizes the double-standard applied to men and women, it, more specifically, demonstrates the difference between society’s perception of the male artist as an acceptable, creative, independent subject and of his female model as his “contaminat[ed],” dependent object.

While Rosie's lack of discretion triggers these events, she is not malevolent towards Helen, remaining uncharacteristically silent upon discovering that Helen is quite likely closer to her presumed husband than is seemly (357). She directs her anger at Thornicroft, first by leaving him, and then, several weeks later, confronting him with Helen's "disgrace" at the MacScumble's home (375). As usual, Thornicroft refuses to accept any blame, accusing Rosie: "It is your doing and not mine; -- on you be the consequences!" (374). His blatant denial is almost laughable when he expresses his intention to "leave" Rosie, given the fact that she has already left him. He does begin, however, to assume a certain responsibility for Helen's disgrace. He goes to the MacScumbles' to defend her honor and to explain the truth of their connection and, similar to Rossetti in 1872, even becomes suicidal, only delaying to kill himself in order to give Townley his final act of confession (376-81). The narrator notes, however, that even his desire to die in "penitence was only half perfect [for he] still persisted in thinking events more to blame than himself" (379). Townley also views the artist's death wish as merely a cowardly intent to avoid "all disagreeable penitence" and suggests that it would be nobler for him to confess his sins to Helen (381). Still, Thornicroft avoids accepting the blame, an acceptance that a full confession to Helen would entail, and he is indeed only convinced to go to her and beg her forgiveness when he discovers that she still loves him. Significantly, he does not indicate that his decision stems from any genuine feelings of love on his part. Rather he merely reflects upon his "thankfulness that he had been spared the sin and folly of taking his own life -- he who wanted now so much to live!" (383). In his moments of suicidal despair, Thornicroft appears to take on the roles of both Iphigenia and Calchas, the executioner, becoming the artist who wants to annihilate himself. It is his discovery that Helen is still devoted to him that allows him to step outside of the role of the

victim Iphigenia in order to pursue his perfect model, his reinstated victim to the art for which he can now begin to live. When juxtaposed against his decision to marry Helen as a choice in favor of “the one true aim of his life” -- “art” (38), Thornicroft’s renewed desire to live and return to Helen indicates that he plans to rededicate himself to art, not Helen.

His plans are put on hold when he is, in fact, almost killed in a train wreck on his way to find his model/wife (382). Arriving at her home almost two months later, he finds it empty and decides to walk to a nearby churchyard until the occupants return (385-86). Significantly, what he finds there “chilled his life forever”: a grave, “quite new,” stands out to Thornicroft amongst the other tombstones, and the name recorded is Helen’s. The date on Helen’s grave indicates that she died weeks before Townley urged him to come and importantly places the event within the time span of her visible “disgrace,” signifying that she has died with all eyes upon her like Iphigenia (386). As the novel comes to its close, Mrs. Morris casts the final blame on Thornicroft, tearfully announcing, “for if you had done your duty by her she would not be lying there now,” and with these final words, she turns away from the grave, “leaving Thornicroft all alone” (387). As the conclusion to the tale of the model as Iphigenia, Hunt effectively denounces artistic visions that allow men to live and women to die for art. No answer is given as to whether the artist will grieve at his responsibility for her death or whether he will merely grieve her death as the event that “chilled his [artistic] life forever,” for whatever grief he does possess “showed no sign of its existence” (386). Yet Thornicroft’s Model asserts that as long as the artist does not accept his responsibility and own up to his “duty” to the model, then she will be sacrificed to the envisioned role of iconic “Woman” on canvas, erased from any role in art but that which must be kept behind closed doors and outside of the frame.

CHAPTER IV

Beyond Rossetti and Siddal: The Use of Allusion and “Condensation” in Hunt’s Biography of the Model

[T]he artistic night of Durham was mitigated by the appearance of a young man called William Bell Scott, who came to that city and gave drawing lessons in the interval of superintending and painting on the great series of frescoes at Wallingford. My mother naturally became his pupil and the life-long friend of himself and his wife. So when she married my father, who, although hand-in-glove with the Brotherhood, had never written the letters P.R.B. after his name, the soil was already prepared. He took her to see those Pre-Raphaelite paintings at Wallingford and Mr. Leathart’s pictures in the smoky drawing-room at Gateshead, [...] and her husband brought her to London, and took her to see Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She came at once under his spell; was entirely fascinated by him. Hence ‘Thornicroft’s Model.’ -- Violet Hunt³⁴

Following an extended discussion of her mother’s novel, Violet Hunt’s description of her mother in near rapturous adoration of Rossetti seems rather odd considering the unforgiving depiction of the artist Thornicroft, particularly considering that Violet Hunt makes the assertion in her preface to Thornicroft’s Model. In fact, the description of Hunt falling under a hypnotic “spell” in the very presence of Rossetti has led Violet Hunt’s biographers to position Thornicroft as the type of artistic “hero” that compelled Violet Hunt to tell Siddal’s story: according to Hardwick, “the fact that not one of her parent’s generation did other than take Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s side on the whole matter of the troubled relationship between man and wife, made Violet Hunt aware that ‘The truth about Rossetti had been told, more or less: the truth about the woman he married, never’” (177). Coming from Violet Hunt’s biographers, such assertions are understandable as they are working to recover Violet Hunt’s work, specifically The Wife of Rossetti (1932), which has largely been dismissed by modern scholars as an “attempt at biography,” “an unreliable chain of hearsay” that may include “well-researched fact” but that also presents deliberate “untru[ths]” (Marsh, “Siddal” 502; Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 17, 218). Consequently, biographies of Violet Hunt privilege her work and marginalize her mother’s novel by taking for fact Violet Hunt’s

portrayal of Hunt as obsessively working to capture Rossetti's character in fiction. While I do find important connections between Thornicroft and Rossetti, I maintain that Thornicroft's Model is not a tribute the author's favorite celebrity, or even her close friend, but rather a critique of the treatment of the female model by the Pre-Raphaelites, a critique moreover which extends to other nineteenth-century artists, art critics, and society at large. As such, I wish to extend my focus beyond Rossetti and Siddal in order to demonstrate the critical work that she is doing. Importantly, another reading of Thornicroft's vision of Iphigenia, the central image through which Hunt forms her critique, suggests that Hunt was indeed extending her own gaze beyond this central pair.

While the story of Iphigenia presented within the text is explicitly that of the classical Greek myth, there are indications that Hunt also alludes to the story of "Cymon and Iphigenia" in Giovanni Boccaccio's The Decameron.³⁵ Cymon does not live up to his father's expectations and goes to live among the servants on his father's farm. One day he comes across Iphigenia sleeping in a field and the intensity of her beauty profoundly affects him. Indeed, he remains watching her until she wakes up. While Iphigenia turns out to be engaged to another man, Cymon does not accept the fact that she might belong to another. He kidnaps her, is eventually captured, in turn escapes, and finally kidnaps her again. While Iphigenia is portrayed as significantly resisting Cymon's ownership of her, in the end, he "live[s] happily ever after with his lady" (342-52).

Cymon's need to possess Iphigenia signals the artist's need to possess the model, and the more pointed connections between the story and the novel are evident in Cymon's initial surveillance of the sleeping woman:

[L]ying asleep on the grass, he saw a most beautiful girl, attired in so flimsy a dress that scarcely an inch of her fair white body was concealed [...]. Cymon stopped in his tracks, and [...] began to stare at her, rapt in silent admiration, as though he never before set eyes on the female form. And [...] he sensed the awakening of a certain feeling which told his crude, uncultured mind that the girl was the loveliest object that any mortal being had ever seen [...]. [H]e supposed that she might be a goddess; and [as] he had sufficient mother wit to appreciate that divine things require more respect than those pertaining to earth, [h]e therefore [...] waited for her to wake up of her own accord (343-44).

Within the moment are significant parallels, or at least indications, of Thornicroft's first meeting with Helen. Cymon's discovery of Iphigenia "asleep on the grass" echoes Thornicroft's view of Helen "stretching across the rude counter [of the bookshop], intently reading" (5). Cymon's somewhat patient "wait[ing] for [Iphigenia] to wake up" echoes Thornicroft's "stand[ing] there some moments quietly looking at the little piece of her face which he could see" (5). While Cymon resists the urge to wake Iphigenia, Thornicroft's observation that "something must be done to rouse her [Helen]" distinctly alludes to the sleeping Iphigenia (5, my emphasis). Both identify the woman gazed upon as a "goddess," and both identify the woman's absolute perfection of beauty (Thornicroft's Model 6). Interestingly, Cymon's recognition of Iphigenia's beauty occurs in spite of his "crude, uncultured mind" (343), a near polar opposite of Thornicroft's "critical and exacting" artistic appreciation of Helen's beauty (6), possibly suggesting a subversion of his artistic gaze. Moreover, as each woman ultimately raises her own gaze to the men, the eyes of both make a significant impression: Cymon notes that Iphigenia's eyes "seemed to shine with a gentleness

that filled him with a feeling of joy such as he had never known before,” and Thornicroft recognizes in Helen’s eyes “the very depths of a nature which was [so] absolutely transparent from its purity [...] that he bowed down in spirit before her” (Boccaccio 344; Thornicroft’s Model 5).

My purpose in cataloguing the similarities and subtle differences between Boccaccio’s story and Hunt’s text is not to begin a further reading of the novel in the context of yet another allusion (although one could certainly be done). I am more interested in the possibility that the textual connections between the novel and the story suggest a variety of interpretations of Thornicroft through his focus on the story of Iphigenia. While I have pointed out the allusions within the text to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, it was historically his fellow artistic “brother,” John Everett Millais, who actually rendered the Greek myth of Iphigenia on canvas.³⁶ Significantly, Frederic Leighton rendered the very scene discussed from Boccaccio on canvas in Cymon and Iphigenia, and Hunt’s close friend Alice Meynell reviewed the painting in 1884. Though Hunt wrote the novel prior to Leighton’s painting and Meynell’s review, the latter suggests that both Iphigenia stories would have been fairly well-known in Hunt’s social circle and possibly the subject of discussion. Additionally, despite the medieval origins of Boccaccio’s text, both versions have the classical settings and subjects that were popular artistic choices within the nineteenth century. Thus Thornicroft’s painting could refer to a variety of artistic creators who would have chosen the story for a number of creative purposes.

Andres notes that certain artists “turn[ed] to classical gender constructs” to “express” their “resistance to women’s evolving roles,” but that “[u]nlike contemporary, classical subject painters like Frederic Leighton, Rossetti questioned patriarchal interpretations of

classical figures like Pandora, Prosperine, and Astarte Syriaca through sonnets he wrote for these paintings” (xxv). Although Thornicroft can be read as a representation of Rossetti, Hunt does not grant her artist the ability to write, and thus no subversive verse accompanies the “classical figure” of Thornicroft’s Iphigenia. Indeed, since Leighton’s painting of Iphigenia would suggest “patriarchal interpretations,” the novel works to indicate Thornicroft as Leighton, or even other classical figure painters besides Rossetti. Multiple readings of the artist do not, however, erase the relevance of Thornicroft’s Pre-Raphaelite allegiances. Hunt does notably use the allegiance to both praise and critique the brotherhood. Her composite of several artists in the character actually works towards her larger focus on the treatment of female models by indicating the multiple, varied but often destructive range of artistic gazes that worked upon these women.

An allusion to Boccaccio’s Iphigenia would further highlight a female model’s display of her body for the male gaze. The moment Cymon spies Iphigenia “the female form” is distinctly noticeable as she is “attired in so flimsy a dress that scarcely an inch of her fair white body was concealed” (343). While Hunt’s text is silent on the issue of the nude model, she would have been aware of the debates surrounding a model’s nudity, and the similarities between Cymon’s discovery of Iphigenia and Thornicroft’s discovery of Helen indicates a nod to such highly visible conversations surrounding the female model. While there were certainly models such as Helen who did not pose nude, the debates around the live model often restricted these women behind closed doors which in turn led to the associations between the profession of modeling and prostitution. Ultimately, just as the story of Iphigenia suggests historical artists other than Rossetti, Hunt significantly hints at other historical models than Siddal throughout her novel as well.

Helen's ability to pose for long stretches of time without complaining suggests Siddal's infamous ability to remain in a freezing bath in order for Millais to paint her as Ophelia; Helen's illness throughout the majority of the text reflects the common assumption that Siddal was sickly; both women have miscarriages, and the conclusion of the novel with Thornicroft standing over Helen's grave dramatically calls to mind Rossetti's exhumation of Siddal's body two years prior to the publication of Thornicroft's Model (Marsh, "Siddal" 501-2). However, Helen is also noticeably different from Siddal. While Helen's function as the artist's model prompts her marriage to Thornicroft, many of Siddal's friends such as Barbara Leigh Smith (Bodichon) observed that Rossetti's avoidance of marriage indicated that Siddal was "of course under a ban, having been a model" (qtd. in Oliver 21). Still, Rossetti did eventually marry Siddal in 1860, and despite the delay, the union was not kept a secret, in contrast to Thornicroft and Helen's. In fact, no Pre-Raphaelite model appears to be so obsessively "kept" as Helen Morris, although William Holman Hunt's treatment of Annie Miller might be suggested in Thornicroft's need to protect Helen.

After painting Miller as the "Woman" in The Awakening Conscience, Holman Hunt began to worry about the threat that Miller's class status and obvious beauty posed to her own virtue (Marsh, "Miller" 374). Like Thornicroft, Holman Hunt desired to protect Miller and decided "to train her as a suitable wife" (Marsh, "Miller" 374). When he left for the Middle East, he assigned Frederic George Stephens as a sort of chaperone. Unfortunately, he became jealous of her social encounters with other artists, and while "there is no evidence of sexual 'misconduct' on Miller's part," just as "there is no evidence" of any on Helen's, Holman Hunt eventually withdrew his proposal a few years later (Marsh, "Miller" 374-75).

Interestingly, Helen's story also indicates the life of Georgiana Burne-Jones who is often considered "the long suffering wife" of Edward Burne-Jones (Jiminez, "Burne-Jones" 92). Since Thornicroft's relationship with Rosie begins during their time in the Greek islands, Hunt perhaps hints at the historical artist's rather well-known affair with Greek model, Maria Zambaco, which ended approximately a year before Thornicroft's Model was published. Helen's never-ending devotion to Thornicroft despite his marriage to another woman could refer to Georgiana Burne-Jones' staying with her husband despite his extra-marital involvement with Zambaco. Yet Helen also parallels Georgiana Burne-Jones' "reputation for scholarship and intelligence" (Jiminez, "Burne-Jones" 94), particularly in her frequent association with reading everything from The Faerie Queen to Greek history and still further the story of Atalanta in William Morris' Earthly Paradise. The mention of William Morris necessitates recognition that Helen Morris could further allude to Jane Morris, who not only frequently modeled for Rossetti but was romantically involved with the latter from approximately 1868 to 1876 (Marsh, "Morris" 384-85).

I do not wish to suggest, however, that Hunt is literally representing these women's lives in her text. Indeed, the connections read as bread crumbs, tidbits of model's biographies, left along the trail of the narrative. Separately each crumb gives the reader little to work with. However, when each crumb is viewed as part of the whole embodiment of Helen, she can be read as an "agglomeration" of many characteristic life moments of various Pre-Raphaelite models.³⁷ By incorporating indications of actual models in Helen's story, Hunt intensifies the category of model by creating a single figure that evokes the multiple women who sat for the paintings. Indeed, this "agglomeration" can be read as what Freud terms "condensation":

the way in which two ideas [or in this case more than two] [...] which have something in common, some point of contact, are replaced [...] by a composite idea, in which a relatively distinct nucleus represents what they have in common, while indistinct subordinate details corresponds to the respects in which they differ from each other (“On Dreams” 156).

Whether this authorial process is unconscious (as dream-work is) or conscious, Helen is a “condensation” of Lizzie Siddal, Annie Miller, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Jane Morris, Fanny Cornforth, Christina Rossetti, the numerous individual women that scholars are working to uncover, and the many more that we may never know. Importantly, Hunt’s “agglomeration,” or “condensation,” of these women in the figure of Helen is very different from the “agglomeration” that “recent scholarship has suggested [of Rossetti’s] Beata Beatrix” (Jiminez, “The Eternal Vision” 35). Scholars are shifting away from analyzing the painting as Rossetti’s obsessive tribute to his deceased wife and are beginning to argue that Beata Beatrix is actually a representation “of many stunners of whom Rossetti availed himself, especially Jane Morris” (Jiminez, “The Eternal Vision” 35). The “agglomeration” of models’ images within an artwork such as Beata Beatrix only serves to exacerbate the women’s already notable erasure when rendered as “Woman.” Awareness of this erasure leads Pollock and Cherry to deny the presence of “the historical individuals” in a painting, for they are actually only “representations of woman [...], woman as sign” (161). Marie Lathers acknowledges that arguments such as Pollock and Cherry’s do not deem the model “unimportant in histories of art” but rather demonstrate the important need to recognize her function as a “sign” (54). While I follow Pollock and Cherry in observing the erasure of the model as an independent subject, I assert that the erasure of the model as “sign” does not

entirely negate the possibility of “historical individuals” in Hunt’s text. In fact, viewing Helen as a “condensation” of multiple models demonstrates that a necessary aspect of their experience includes awareness of their erasure in art.

In her call for more “life stories” of the female model, April Masten argues that when scholars “us[e] only the language and institutional practices of the male artist,” they may “tell us about the positive strategies of oppression employed by the art world, but little about what women come to know and understand as they confront ideological representations of themselves” (22). In contrast, Hunt clearly depicts Helen encountering and painfully experiencing her erasure through the various “ideological representations of [herself],” and therefore, I consider Thornicroft’s Model a biography of the model. Masten would perhaps disagree with such a definition as she specifically positions current “biographies of female artists (or models)” as more “romance” than biography, observing that “[h]istorical and social context is always seen as secondary to the real purpose of documenting the woman’s life which is to create romance” (28). If read outside its “historical and social context,” Thornicroft’s Model indeed might be interpreted as merely a tragic tale of “romance.” However, when read as the model’s story -- the novel is titled Thornicroft’s Model -- it is clear that the “historical and social context” of her existence is far from “secondary.”

In fact, the novel reads as the type of model’s “life story” that Masten suggests should be written:

Through the construction of a biographical figure [of the model] who is a socio-individual mediating and integrating the individual, cultural, ideological, intellectual and socio-economic forces which make up her or his world, biography becomes both personal and historical, as well as a site for a meeting of these two forces. This

approach makes biography a potential site for productive resistance, and of personal and social change (21).

As a “condensation” of various models, Helen is precisely this “biographical figure.” Helen’s story depicts the “culture” of the nineteenth-century art world and society, the “cultural” spaces of the studio and beyond in which the model functions both as an “individual” and image. She pointedly experiences the variety of “forces” surrounding the “socio-individual” of the model -- in the artists she encounters and/or attempts to evade, the social classes to which she belongs and/or is relegated, and the representations that are assigned to or denied her. Writing within the various contemporary debates surrounding the female model, Hunt paints a portrait of these women, and her biography of the model provides a “site for productive resistance.”

If, as Masten suggests, this form of biography gives a sense of “what women come to know and understand as they confront ideological representations of themselves” (22), what does Hunt (or her model) “come to know and understand”? And given Helen’s overt willingness to sacrifice herself, does Hunt offer a solution for “personal and social change”? In feminist terms, Helen is a somewhat troubling character. Elizabeth Hollander observes that nineteenth-century literary representations of the model are typically “angelic or demonic” stereotypes of “conventional femininity” (5), and Helen does appear to be the angelic stereotype, a victim of a selfish artist unable to recognize her as such. Yet this interpretation would imply that by depicting the dangers of the profession, Hunt advocates that all women cease to work as models. Late in the century, “moral campaigns [were] launched against the employment of the female models” in order to fight “for the education of women” (Smith 29). Hunt, however, allowed her own daughters to pose as models. Violet Hunt posed for

both Burne-Jones and George Boughton; indeed, when she first began posing for Boughton “she was always chaperoned but gradually [even] this convention was dropped” (Belford 160-61; Hardwick 29), indicating that her mother was not entirely against women working as models. I posit that, through Helen and her death, Hunt reveals how women in the art world are victimized. Yet for Hunt this victimization is not inevitable; rather it occurs due to artistic and social representations/interpretations of the female model as an object, other, outcast that needs to be kept invisible and silent.

Helen does, in fact, have moments of resistance, as evidenced by her early reactions to the story of Iphigenia. However brief, her immediate response that “they sacrificed her to get a fair wind” is rather spunky for the woman who will eventually attempt “to go away and die quietly, far from them all” (7, 9). Significantly, while her spunk is eventually erased by Thornicroft, who silences her interpretation of the story and ultimately her identity by framing her as an object for public consumption, Helen’s most heightened moment of resistance is in reaction to her (in)visibility within frames. Specifically, Hunt uses images of window frames as a trope for the relationship between the model and the world at large, frequently depicting Helen against the backdrop of a window.

When Thornicroft goes into Helen’s room above the bookshop in order to propose, he finds her sitting in a window-seat framed by the view of roofs and chimney, and the next day when he has to go back to the shop to convince her to marry him, he finds her there again (31, 41-2). In contrast, Rosie Denison first comes into Helen and Thornicroft’s lives quite literally through a window. Chasing her veil that was blowing away in the wind, Rosie becomes trapped in the garden behind the house when a gust blows the gate shut (50-51). Thornicroft unlocks the window for her, allowing her to step through the frame, and unlike

Helen, she is allowed to leave through the front door (50-53). Directly after this encounter with his future wife, Thornicroft once again observes Helen against the backdrop of a window: “When she [Rosie] was gone he went to find Helen, whose room was immediately above the studio. She was sitting in the window-seat, with her face resting against the window, looking out into the square garden” (53). Noticeably, Helen’s window does not “loo[k] out” onto the street but “look[s] out into the [locked] square garden,” meaning no one would ever see her.

Only after Thornicroft’s so-called marriage to Rosie is Helen aware of her restrictive relation to windows. Feeling the need to at least see the home in which she once lived with Thornicroft, she asks a carriage driver to bring her past the house at which point she sees Rosie standing in the front window. Helen’s reaction demonstrates her awareness of how she had been rendered invisible:

She was free to show herself, and all the world might see her going out and her comings in. Poor Helen herself had never once dared to let herself be seen near a front window! She threw herself back in the carriage, and had a sharp struggle with the agony she felt. How could he have shut her out into a world of gloom? The house had looked strong, warm and pleasant -- there he lived happy with his new love -- while she? -- and the drizzling rain beat on her face as she asked herself that question for she had opened the window to cool her burning head (350-51, Hunt’s emphasis).

While there is some indication that Helen would like to return to her former life in the “strong, warm and pleasant” house, there is an ambiguity in what she refers to as “a world of gloom.” While she could refer to the “world” outside the house itself, the juxtaposition between this “world of gloom” and her being kept out of sight when she lived in the house

suggests that Thornicroft “shut her out” long before he married the another woman. Rosie is granted the freedom to move between the two sides of a window, but Helen is noticeably “shut out” of this two-way passage as her class status as model relegates her to invisibility within the frames. In fact, the windows that Helen is depicted against function as one-way mirrors, reflecting the distorted image of her as “Woman.” Therefore, Hunt presents the victimization of the model created when artists and society “shut” models “out” of the world by erasing their individual identities, by rendering them invisible within a frame that only allows them visibility in the form of objects for public consumption.

In the end, Hunt indicates a clear need for change, and through Mrs. Morris’ final words to Thornicroft at Helen’s grave, she condemns the current invisibility of the model and hints at the solution: “for if you had done your duty by her she would not be lying there now!” (387). Helen’s death through her ironically visible-invisible status as model, her positioning as the sacrificial victim of art, is not inevitable, and thus Hunt calls upon her readers -- artists, models, and society at large -- to “d[o] [their] duty by her,” to cease the erasure of Helen from artistic and social consciousness. As I have shown, she largely lays the blame at the feet of artists. Both Ambergreen and Thornicroft significantly articulate the ways that artists have erased the model as a woman -- Ambergreen through creating exaggerated stories so that one should “take fifty per cent., off anything [he] ever told [...] against her” and Thornicroft through relegating her to the status of “only a model” because “that was really all he allowed her to be” (327, 342). Yet while Hunt demonstrates that artists are capable of recognizing the wrongs they do to the model, she also suggests they are unwilling either to do anything about it or to fully accept the blame, and so she calls upon them to “d[o] [their] duty” to the many women who work as their models. She further

indicates that models/women in art need to resist their erasure, by representing Helen's willingness to subordinate herself to Thornicroft's art. The narrator indeed observes that, during their honeymoon, "[s]he waited on him like a slave, helped him carry his sketching apparatus, and watched by his side for hours for the privilege of going to bring him clean water," and yet her "slave"-like behavior simply "strengthen[s] all that was bad in his character" (44). Thus she urges women to "d[o] [their] duty by" themselves, to stop accepting their positioning as the "slaves" of art as that only works to perpetuate their invisibility.

Additionally, as access to the model was frequently a pawn in the exclusion of women from professional institutions of art, Hunt insists that the Royal Academy and others "d[o] [their] duty" to women artists and cease hiding the model behind doors to which only men are granted access. As such, her novel participates in the debates over the female model, debates in which both her own art instructor William Bell Scott and her friend Alice Meynell participated (Postle, "From the Academy" 12; Clarke 66). Interestingly, over a decade after the novel was published, the historical artist Hamo Thornycroft began to "campaign [n] vigorously for the rights of female students to study from the nude model, and [the] introduc[tion] of mixed life classes" (Postle, "From the Academy" 32).

The historical Thornycroft's support of female artists stemmed from the fact that both his sisters and his mother were artists themselves. His mother Mary Thornycroft was a well-known sculptor who had completed busts of Queen Victoria's daughters (Clarke 40), indicating the possibility that the fictional Thornicroft may refer to both the historical Hamo and Mary Thornycroft. This possibility seems less like a coincidence when observed alongside Hunt's 1883 novel Self-Condemned and its protagonist Lewis Barrington who is

also named for a female historical figure, Emilie Barrington, a well-known art critic, whose work often “focused exclusively on renowned male artists: Rossetti, Watts and Leighton” (Clarke 40). Emilie Barrington and Mary Thornycroft were actually neighbors and friends, and in 1881, only two years before the publication of Self-Condemed (or Barrington’s Fate), Mary Thornycroft completed a portrait bust of Barrington. Since Hunt’s choice of nomenclature distinctly calls to mind women arts and art critics, I posit Hunt claims ownership of the model for women; therefore, Helen is not only a male Thornycroft’s Model, she is also a female Thornycroft’s Model. According to Clarke, “the texts of women art writers [...] frequently adopted male personae in order to assert the authority of the male gaze” (43), and I suggest that Hunt claims this “authority” for women artists like the historical Mary Thornycroft and for her artist-daughters, who Frederic George Stephens glossed over so blatantly in their mother’s obituary in order to praise her artistic son (307). Even more pointedly, Hunt demands that women in art, more than anyone else, must “d[o] [their] duty by” the female model, for through her erasure that they are erased as well. Indeed, as Barrington would later praise Rossetti’s ability to not “link” his images of women “to any crises in any individual fate” (951), Hunt aims her critique at such evaluations for they remove the Pre-Raphaelites’ pictures and the women depicted from any sense of the social and historical; in other words, they don’t exist except for in the picture. Thornycroft’s Model is a dramatic call for women to resist their invisibility; to stop sacrificing themselves to the myth of Iphigenia and that of the model; to refuse definitions of themselves as other, object, outcast; and to make themselves known as both artists and individuals with their own independent, creative agency.

NOTES

¹ Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford), preface, The Governess, by Mrs. Alfred Hunt and Violet Hunt (London: Chatto & Windus, 1912). Excerpts of Ford's preface are quoted by Douglas Goldring, South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review Circle (London: Constable, 1943) 4-5; Joan Hardwick, An Immodest Violet: The Life of Violet Hunt (London: André Deutsch, 1990) 11; and Barbara Belford, Violet: The Story of the Irrepressible Violet Hunt and Her Circle of Lovers and Friends -- Ford Madox Ford, H. G. Wells, Somerset Maugham, and Henry James (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) 187.

² See both Hardwick and Belford for an in-depth discussion of the scandal following the publication of The Governess.

³ For the sake of clarity, "Hunt" will refer solely to Margaret Hunt, and I will refer to other members of the family by their first and last names.

⁴ The Violet Hunt Papers include three letters from John Ruskin addressed to Hunt on her novel The Hazard of the Die, a letter from William Bell Scott on her first work Magdalen Wynyard, or the Provocations of a Pre-Raphaelite, and contracts with publishers for Under Seal of Confession and The Leaden Casket. Additionally, while certain effects suggest that Hunt was writing as a young girl, only hints of such work exist. A notebook-cover, for instance, reads, "Early Life of Margaret Raine. By Herself. Also glossary and notes." The juvenile biography apparently did not survive; while Violet Hunt wrote under her mother's title that the "original" could be found "in [the] cupboard under [the] stairs," it is sadly not in the archive. See Box 3, Folder 17 of The Violet Hunt Papers, Cornell U, Ithaca, NY.

⁵ Even Hardwick, who describes Hunt as “natural[ly] comfort[able]” with “the restrictions upon women,” notes that the author approached Burne-Jones for his signature (xvi, 176). As for Burne-Jones, Hardwick suggests that the artist “refused point-blank to be involved” (176).

⁶ Unquestionably, the comic effect is at the expense of the crossing-sweeper and his child. While Hunt has no trouble arguing against social attitudes that restrict and “other” women, she typically participates in “othering” the lower classes in her fiction. See specifically “The Lady Journalist” and The Leaden Casket.

⁷ See *The Violet Hunt Papers*, as well as Hardwick and Belford.

⁸ Letters from Ruskin in Violet Hunt’s archive consistently indicate that Hunt was appealing to the critic for help; his response was typically that Alfred Hunt should be more content with the fact that “[h]e sells his pictures and people like them. He makes them honestly as good as he can -- and should ask no more of Fate nor of himself” (Letter to Mrs. Alfred Hunt, 20 Feb. 1875); William Bell Scott, letter to Mrs. Alfred Hunt, 9 Apr. 1886, *Violet Hunt Papers*.

⁹ The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood consisted of seven founding members: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Thomas Woolner, Frederic George Stephens, and James Collinson (Hacking 6). As the group only self-identified with the label “PRB” from 1848 to 1853 and their works varied in subject matter and style, scholars debate whether or not the term “Pre-Raphaelitism” can actually be used to describe the artists’ work or even to identify an artistic movement (Cherry and Pollock, “Patriarchal Power” 483-84). Nonetheless, the artists and their works exerted a strong, pervasive influence on the art world and society at large, and the label of “Pre-

Raphaelitism” was readily applied to everything from paintings and poetry to clothing and home décor.

¹⁰ All page numbers come from the Chatto & Windus New Edition of Thornicroft’s Model. In my research, I was able to consult the other editions to determine the reliability of this publication.

¹¹ John Ruskin, letter to Miss Raine [Margaret Hunt], 2 Jan. 1858, Violet Hunt Papers.

¹² John Ruskin, letter to Alfred William Hunt, [1873?], Violet Hunt Papers.

¹³ Ford’s assertion was in his preface to The Governess (1912). See Belford 105n.

¹⁴ In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, the Three Sisters enchant a piece of wood, a brand, so that once it burns Althæa’s son, Meleager, will die. Meleager kills his mother’s brothers, and she places the brand in the fire, killing her own child (VIII: 451-546). The painting of Helen as Althæa ultimately functions as a further Pre-Raphaelite allusion for after Thornicroft believes Helen has died, the unfinished painting stands as an ever-present reminder of her memory and is consequently reminiscent of Rossetti’s presumed posthumous painting of Siddal, Beata Beatrix.

¹⁵ Sophia Andres, The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries (Columbus, The Ohio State UP, 2005).

¹⁶ See n6 above.

¹⁷ Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood 1.

¹⁸ See Meaghan Clarke, Critical Voices: Women and Art Criticism in Britain, 1880-1905 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), as well as Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

¹⁹ See also Self-Condemed (published in America under the title Barrington's Fate) and The Leaden Casket.

²⁰ Hardwick suggests that the inexpensive nature of aestheticist dress prompted Hunt's decision to clothe her daughters in the Pre-Raphaelite style (9).

²¹ In Greek mythology, Iphigenia was sacrificed so that a group of sailors trapped on an island could escape. Perdita is the heroine of William Shakespeare's A Winter's Tale, and Miranda's is Prospero's daughter in The Tempest.

²² See also Jan Marsh, The Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood.

²³ Ambergreen's misinterpretation of Helen also reflects the difficulty many Victorians had in visually differentiating between models and prostitutes, particularly in artistic neighborhoods: according to Linda Hughes, "the artists' colony in [St. John's] Wood attracted models who regularly tramped the streets looking for employment, sometimes indistinguishable on first glance from the prostitutes who carried out their trade a mere block away on North Bank and other nearby streets" (69).

²⁴ A tazza is a short, ornamental container.

²⁵ Christina Rossetti, "In an Artist's Studio," [Dec. 1856], Rpt. in Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art, by Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1988) 175.

²⁶ Borel, whose study covers several centuries of art history, uses the singular referents of "artist" and "model" to refer to group identities for both figures.

²⁷ Ehnenn's comments specifically refer to Michael Field's "A Portrait," but in a context of direct comparison to "In an Artist's Studio."

²⁸ In her discussion of “In an Artist’s Studio,” Pollock also suggests that a psychoanalytic reading is called for by Christina Rossetti’s references to “meaning” and “dreams” (175).

²⁹ See p. 29.

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” Gay 443-81. For Freud’s discussion of the castration threat, see specifically pages 460-61.

³¹ Letter to Reverend Canon Greenwell, [no date], Violet Hunt Papers.

³² Given my previous reading of the “bower” as Bluebeard’s chamber, Townley’s previous occupation of the bower, one could argue that he is also one of Thornicroft’s former wives. Coupled with the homosocial suggestions in a “brotherhood” and Hunt’s use of Plato’s Phaedrus, I suggest that the novel could lend itself to a queer reading. In fact, such a reading could help elucidate Thornicroft’s relationship to his art; to explore this line of argument, however, would shift my focus away from the treatment of the model.

³³ See n6 above.

³⁴ Violet Hunt, preface vii-iii.

³⁵ The story of “Cymon and Iphigenia” is the first story on the fifth day of Boccaccio’s text.

³⁶ I am grateful to Malcolm Warner for calling my attention to this painting.

³⁷ Jiminez’s discussion of Beata Beatrix as an “agglomeration” of various models suggested this argument to me (“The Eternal Vision” 35).

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ABSTRACT

PRE-RAPHAELITE INTERVENTIONS: MARGARET HUNT'S FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF ART AND SOCIETY IN THORNICROFT'S MODEL

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In her most successful novel, Thornicroft's Model (1873), Margaret Hunt fictionalizes the Pre-Raphaelite couple Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal, as well as other historical artists and models, in order to voice her own critique of art and society. Hunt engages with popular modes of art criticism and participates in conversations surrounding the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the women they depicted in their paintings. Framed as a biography of the artist and his model, Hunt's novel questions the fidelity of the brotherhood's "truth to nature," exposing that the artists erase the agency of the female model and render her invisible. Read alongside contemporary art criticism, historical studies of art and the figure of the model, Thornicroft's Model depicts the constraints that nineteenth-century women encountered, and in the end, Thornicroft's Model is a feminist intervention on behalf of all women participating in art.