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 Introduction to 'Ford Madox Brown and the Victorian Imagination'

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Abstract:

The introduction to this special issue offers a critical overview of some of the most valuable historical engagements with Brown's art. It notes how certain Victorian commentators responded to the complexity of Brown's pictorial compositions and isolates some of their broader cultural and social concerns. It goes on to argue that much contemporary criticism has attacked Brown for failing to hit a target that never aimed at. The introduction concludes with a description of the broader themes in the essays that follow.

In a particularly intriguing insight into the organization and administration of the late Victorian art world, William Bell Scott noted that Ford Madox Brown had been asked to participate in the decoration of the top niches of the South Kensington Museum. As Scott explains it,

> departmental correspondence was facilitated by the use of certain size (foolscap) paper, having printed at the corners, right and left, forms containing a number appropriate to the document and other directions to the correspondents – all this being printed within ruled and ornamental square enclosures. Brown had looked at this half-printed folio, and not finding [in] it anything he understood, at the first moment, became furious, read it wrong, and replied in a moment by cutting out of an old drawing-sheet, making some grotesque scribbles in the top corners, which had struck Mr. Cole as examples of lunacy, filling the paper below with a refusal to do any such thing as celebrate any such fool as Julio [*sic*] Romano, and posted his reply at once. [1]

This is stunning stuff, but is it a reliable vision of Brown (Figure 1)? Does it shed any light on the nature of his artistic imagination? Can it explain adequately his critical formulations, critical hostilities, or critical anxieties? Well, it captures his tendency to conflate creative energy and social angularity, an attitude underpinned by an all-purpose resentment for authority in the form of the self-congratulatory Henry Cole, Director of the South Kensington Museum, and recipient of this furious, and apparently inchoate, production. Equally, we see in this curious episode something like the unpredictable, confrontational and incendiary figure bubbling up in the margins of the writings of the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates: the one-man awkward squad; the rebellious, raw-boned bruiser; the talismanic, inspirational loner; the patron saint of estrangement, alienation and rejection; the man of vivid, violent and untameable passions who flouts cultural and social taboos.[2] All the same, Brown's bracing riposte seems to be more than a militant device to antagonize Cole: it is a judgement about the incompatibility of opposing methods of imagining, understanding, representing and participating in the world. What Brown fulminates against, then, is the vision of the artist as the impersonal manager (or is it technician?) of bits of information. His polemic takes the form of a refusal to recognize the authority of Cole's law-like model of art and art education, where aesthetic life is incorporated into bureaucratic standards of procedure. Put differently, this episode confirms a critical mentality hostile to the idea that art is improved by the imposition of abstract rationality in the form of measuring, regulating calculating, quantifying, containing and controlling experiences and practices.

Brown's formulation of Giulio Romano as instrument of artistic standardization and administrative routinization is significant. Romano, who assimilates Michelangelo and Raphael into amalgamated academic form, corporate style, is a manager of knowledge, a precursor of the fastidious, pedantic Cole and his infernal life-order. The suggestion, in other words, is that Cole and Romano belong to a world where value is equated with the utility of correctly managed forms and bodies. In place of this rationality of representation, Brown posts his mixed-mode graffito, his tumultuous and playful version of folk culture, his engagement with the grotesque as incarnation of visual authenticity, and his vision of the fiery imagination transmuted by raw handwork. The critical orientation of the cultural elite, Brown proclaims, is to communicate through a language of mastery, proficiency and skilfulness, but true sharing occurs in and through open processes, free-spirited forms of representation, those rude and unruly examples of craftsmanship opposed to control systems and machined forms. Just as in his world art cannot be constrained by the politics of

politeness, so representation, as process of imagining and understanding, must be receptive to multiple expressions of human life, human wholeness. The salvo he fires at Cole, with its spiralling scribbles, coiling lines, dynamic forms, and ripe and vigorous individualities, indicates the militancy of his imagination – and confirms his opposition to the theory of social life and political obligation found in the bureaucratic world, with its second-hand Utilitarian conceptions of truthfulness, efficiency and training. Like his art – one might say, like his life – Brown's tirade thwarts Cole's determination to convert experience into suitably emollient, etiolated cultural form. Brown's attitude to pictorial representation, technical, procedural criteria and art education is noted in the various arguments advanced in this volume by Paul Barlow, Colin Cruise, Matthew Potter, Elizabeth Prettejohn, Colin Trodd and Nicholas Tromans.

Scott clearly holds the view that Brown is a pugnacious, curmudgeonly and embattled 'trouble-maker' who is alert to the visual, material and discursive technologies that came into being with the appearance of his sworn enemy: the cultural manager as man-of-letters, the fanatic of fact as cultural mandarin *and* state bureaucrat. All the same, if Brown was outspoken, stubborn, iconoclastic and bloody-minded, then the Cole event suggests that these characteristics tended to flare-up when he was confronted by advocates of the theory that all experience should be defined in terms of utility and logical process.

More importantly, Scott's sketch of the Cole episode encapsulates four aspects of Brown's understanding of modern life: first, the characterization of experience in terms of instrumental rationality; second, the resultant alienation of humanity through the institutionalization of human relations; third, the suspicion of 'leaders' whose authority is derived from the various forms of regulation associated with institutionalization and rationality; and fourth, the rejection of managerial control systems designed to discipline or standardize creative energies. The correlate to these assumptions is the conviction, shared with Carlyle, Ruskin and Dickens, that the value of experience cannot be reduced to the quantification of human performance; that the very *idea* of human performance is inherently ridiculous. This critical framework can be extended to illustrate some of the key features of Brown's theory and method of painting.

As noted by Barlow, Prettejohn, Tromans and Trodd, Brown remained true to the conviction that paintings should record unique human situations, particular forms of life and imagination. From this perspective, the subjects in the compositional field stood at several

important interfaces, though the representation of dynamic lived experience and bodily expression was at the core of his theory and practice of art from the early 1840s. In part at least, this explains the underlying opposition, throughout Brown's art, writings and correspondence, to the view that culture and painting should be seen as examples of the rational administration of life.[3]

Among those who took seriously the critical aspirations of Brown's art we have certainly to include a number of his contemporaries. Some of these were more astute and reflective than Scott, connecting Brown's embittered suspicion of tamed and routinized expression with the need to explore the irrepressible energies of the human world. The account of Brown by the designer, architect and cultural theorist A.H. Mackmurdo is a good example of this process.

Mackmurdo's long, censorious and systematically misleading history of the Arts and Crafts movement comes alive when it takes a sideways glance at Brown's paintings.[4] These are treated as struggles to release the world of experience from imprisonment in decorous and rational form. In Mackmurdo's view, Brown's real subject is the enlargement of the imaginative texture of consciousness; his images are 'marked' by a 'new human viewpoint towards life.'[5] Brown, in looking out into the world, wants to imagine a meeting place with the fluid life he observes. In a reading guided by sensitivity and real understanding, Mackmurdo explains that Brown's focus on spatial and bodily compression confirms that he 'lives – every part of him – in the world of men and women. He is tight up against the warm flesh and blood of them ... His life was an active participation in the majestic drama of human life.'[6] To argue thus is to assert that Brown's compositions are visual experiments in recording bodily and social energies, innovative attempts to reimagine the idea of human company through compact and congested spaces of cultural exchange.[7]

Here, in some measure, Scott's priorities are inverted as Mackmurdo relates the claims of modern art with a modified Romantic aesthetic, one in which organicism and concreteness are used to question the view that subjects experience the world as separated beings. Art, in this model, is infused by life; it is projection of protean form; it fights all versions of mechanism in the name of human creativity. Comparable to this process is Brown's desire to make human energy the means by which the living community becomes the subject of painting.[8] At the same time, however, Mackmurdo reflections imply another

matter: the treatment of the painted image in terms of the relationship between surface organization and the spatial order.

Fortunately, Brown's own statements support some of the general features of Mackmurdo's hypothesis. 'On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture' (1850), which is examined by Barlow, Cruise and Prettejohn and Tromans, includes the following statements: 'plastic art claims not merely our sympathy, in its highest capacity to emit thought and sentiment; but as form, colour, light, life, and beauty; and who shall settle the claims between thought and beauty?' He continues, ' art has beauties of its own, which neither impair nor contradict the beauties of nature; but which are not of nature, and yet are, inasmuch as art itself is but part of nature: and of such, the beauties of the nature of art, is the feeling for constructive beauty.' And the conclusion, which draws on the writings of Carlyle and German critical theory (a theme noticed by Potter), makes another crucial claim: '[art] interferes not with truth or sentiment; it is not the cause of unlikely order and improbable symmetry; it is not bounded by line or rule, nor taught by theory.' The immediate implication is clear: '[art] is a feeling for proportion, ever varying from an infinity of conflicting causes, that balances the picture as it balances the Gothic edifice; it is a germ planted in the breast of the artist, that gradually expands by cultivation.'[9]

These matters, where Brown connects the idea of attentive vision to a Carlylean thesis in which processes of manufacture are explained in terms of the tension between the dynamical (wholeness and organicism) and the mechanical (rationality and functionalism), would be grasped by other commentators when they came to describe the specific features of Brown's spatial world. From around 1870, until the early decades of the twentieth century, the most robust criticism noted Brown's interest in the aesthetic imagination, pictorial construction and the composition of the mental image. This took the form of reflecting on how his model of art worked in the gap between critical form and sociological reality. This body of writing found underlying concerns in his paintings: expressions of human totality and civic life; the definition of identity in terms of social exchange and inwardness; articulations of spatial disturbance and boundless energy; a general fascination with intensely realized and lifeless things. There was, amongst the stronger critics, a general recognition of the inadequacy of the term Pre-Raphaelitism when covering the full arc of Brown's career, or explaining a system of compositional ordering where the grid-plan or tableau of history painting was superseded by something much less structural or complete: those strange

'meeting places' (*Work, The Last of England, The Stages of Cruelty*, the Manchester murals) where **c**oiling, curling, cutting forms register the surging, irrepressible vitality of life.

Two further examples of this critical attitude are worth citing. William Michael Rossetti, Brown's son-in-law, was a shrewd commentator on his primary artistic and intellectual concerns. In his view, Brown opens up a new critical space of representation by adjusting the idea of the grotesque to the expression of human life. That is, he detaches the grotesque from functions of decoration, fantasy and virtuosic power, making it a feature of the phenomenological world:

> If we think over the works which Mr. Brown has produced, and the general tone of his treatment of them, we shall find that one of his most marked characteristics is that of combining with elevated subject-matter, and a passionate, dramatic and impressive general treatment, a considerable spice of the familiar, or even the grotesque or semi-grotesque. This is the tone of a man who appreciates life, with its grave issues … at first –hand … This concrete grasp of life and its facts, with an exceptional faculty in the evolution of the subject both through its main features and through subsidiary incidents, is eminently marked in Mr. Brown's work. He has little or no tendency to the abstract – the human drama absorbs him. [10]

Rossetti's Brown is wonder-struck by the grotesque for two reasons. First, it allows him to concentrate on the subject of sensory experience in painting. Second, it is the means by which his 'marked individualism' fuses 'the familiar and the ordinary with a commanding dramatic invention'.[11] These features – the mapping of artistic perception to social vision, and the creation of kinetic designs and scrambled forms – mirror Carlyle's mobilization of the grotesque as the secularization of the strange, and as the means of representing the ontological complexity in all acts of historical and aesthetic representation.[12] Rossetti goes on to affirm that the central principle of his art may be defined as:

> a wide interest in men and things … which, while occupied with the large outlines of subject-matter large and grave, can relish none the less what is peculiar in itself … an interest which, being real and personal, neither disdains this subsidiary familiar element, nor forces the amplified dignified element into artificial and bloodless pomposity. There is a decided touch of the Carlyean in Mr. Brown's interpretation of history.[13]

Just as Brown's association of composition with the congregation of bodies undermines notions of independent bodily integrity, so his people are parts of a syndical body that is perpetually reconstituting itself from the disparate stuff of experience. In other words, the grotesque, which makes pictorial form discordant, is a cultural mode that renders things alien;

it suggests transformation without resolution; and, as mixed state or concept, it embodies the half-real, half-fantastic nature of modern life.

There is a strong connection between Rossetti's view – that Brown's motives were 'complex' and that his images concentrated on the 'realizing energy'[14] of human life – and the argument advanced by another notable figure from the next generation. The distinguished German art historian Richard Muther saw Brown's paintings as engagements with the peculiar features of modern life. At the same time, however, he found little of the fiery human wholeness noted by Mackmurdo, a point made clear in his perceptive description of *Cordelia's Portion* (reproduced in Nicholas Tromans' article):

> It stood in such sharp opposition to the traditional historical painting, that perhaps nothing was ever so sharply opposed to anything so universally accepted. The figures stand out stiff and like card kings, without fluency of line or rounded and generalized beauty. And the colouring is just as incoherent. The brown sauce, what every one had hitherto accepted like a binding law, had given way to a bright joy of colour and the half-barbaric motleyness of old miniatures. It is only when one studies the brilliant details, used merely in the service of great psychological effect, that this outwardly repellent picture takes shape as a powerful work of art, a work of primal human truth. Nothing is sacrificed to pose, graceful show, or histrionic affectation. Like the German masters of the fifteenth century, Madox Brown makes no attempt to dilute what is ugly… Every figure, whether fair or foul, is, in beauty, expression, and gesture, a character of robust and rigorous hardihood, and has that intense fullness of life which is compressed in those carved wooden figures of mediaeval altars … He knows nothing of the academic rules of composition.[15]

As we have seen previously, this approach takes seriously Brown's interest in pictorial order. Muther's draws attention to a crucial aspect of Brown's system of pictorial organization: his tendency to describe the body through enclosed contours and vivid colouration, both of which intensify the sense that figures are unconnected when placed in close proximity to each other. As a result, many of Brown's subjects overpower the spaces in which they appear; some jump out at the viewer and announce themselves as bodily presences rather than stable components of a settled narrative system; many of them are rigid rather than fully rotational. It should be noted that the process described by Muther, where some subjects are expressed in terms of spatial truncation and partial planes, runs in parallel with a another claim: that the image exists as a unified mental composition before its emergence as pictorial organization.

Some of these matters are developed when Muther turns his attention to *Work*, where he finds a pictorial order 'overloaded with restless details'. Just as the painting depicts the 'most various persons who by any association of ideas can be brought into connection with

the concept of work', so these figures are 'pressing and pushing and knocking up against each other.' [16] Almost alone among this group of critics, Muther relates the prickly loneliness of Brown figures to the formal arrangement of his compositions. In his view, Brown visualizes physical intimacy in terms of aesthetic and pictorial alienation:

> *Work* is an offensive chaos of crying colours. The bright clothes, the blue blouses, the red uniforms, have a gaudy and unquiet effect… [Brown] has produced the first modern picture of artisans after Courbet's *Stone-breakers* … [I]n bright daylight on a glowing summer afternoon artisans are digging a trench for gas-pipes … Like stage-managers who are sure of their public [the older genre painters] always set the same troop of puppets dancing… Brown's artisans are robust and raw-boned figures … The composition of his pictures is just as plain. No one poses, no one makes impassioned gestures, no one thinks of grouping himself with his neighbour in fine flowing lines… His figures have been given breath of new life… One group is piled over the other, so the frame scarcely holds them. [17]

Several points arising out of Muther's interpretation, which implies that the image is a record of unconnected episodes, require attention. First, arguments of this kind, which focus on the treatment of the pictorial world in terms of upheaval or agitation, are extremely valuable as they continue to tether this process of art-making to Brown's observation of the human world. This particular point – where pictorial logic is meant to confirm the way in which Brown sees things and understands the *overwhelming stuff* of modern life – is often missed in more recent literature. Second, this idea, in which Brown's spatial world is disordered by the life it seeks to contain, indicates that the visual experience of estrangement is at the heart of the social world. Muther relates this to Brown's use of spatial representation and surface design: his tendency to picture his subjects as a multitude of flat forms that exist unconnected and unrelated beside each other. Third, this emphasis on chaotic abundance, at the expense of quantifiable detail or unified drama, is identified as the means by which Brown calls into question the stability of representation. Finally, this sense of fragmentation is intensified when Muther notes that Brown's pictorial world is characterized by crisscrossing points of view, the conflation of pictorial confusion with human consciousness. In sum, he agrees with Rossetti: Brown's images are knitted together from dislike people, things – and viewpoints. [18]

These analyses – which declare that Brown's animated compositions function by closing figures from each other – are far more nuanced, and in many respects more cogent, than much of the recent literature on Brown. Many subsequent exegetes failed to notice the importance of the critical features that intrigued Mackmurdo, Rossetti and Muther, where the visualization of culture is identified as a *process* of disorder; instead there emerged, as

Barlow notes, a sermonizing (and expertize-inflating) discourse in which successive commentators jostled to proclaim supremacy over Brown, to assert, in a strange fusion of connoisseurship and Marxism, that his understanding of realism – or social life, or Victorian values – had been found wanting. More serious a problem here is that Brown's interests in representation and pictorial composition are side-lined, to be replaced by a culture as ideology thesis exemplified by a mould-making article by Albert Boime, whose reading of *Work* was based on the idea that realism was the critical culmination and meta-truth of European culture.[19] Under his tutelage there emerged a bifocal critical model in which political and aesthetic readings were aligned uneasily. This discourse, broadly Marxist, adhered to the principle that art exists to demonstrate the struggle between idealism and facticity, and that pure realism was the final stage of this eternal conflict, as it coincided with crisis-generating logic of bourgeois society. Realism, which prised loose art from illusion, made everything around it passé.[20] It was akin to the Hegelian vision of critical unfolding of Mind, the manifest destiny of the consciousness of humanity as World Spirit.

This insistence on the elision of critical science with pictorial integrity cast a spell over subsequent Brown criticism. Like Boime, other commentators inferred too much from a simple sociological reading of *Work*. What emerged was a form of writing in which Brown's identification of the real with irrepressible and chaotic life, gave way to a 'corrective' vision that judged his composition in relation to a hierarchy of values derived from notions of class, gender and labour. Instead of working from the weirdness of the stuff meshing *Work*, which is grounded in the nothingness of dirt, the fetching thread of 'matter' nearest the picture plane, most commentators have been content to reduce the painting to a historical document. Moreover, the critical structure of these narratives – that it is the job of the critic to make the artist more efficient in the performance of his half-understood tasks as a picture journalist – transforms Brown into a marginal figure within his own art. The results have been all too predictable. Some commentators criticize *Work* because they read it as a conflation of the social and economic lives of different subjects, others see it as a misrepresentation of middle-class culture or working-class labour. In both cases Brown remains a two-dimensional figure: he fails to fathom the crises enacted by bourgeois versions of the real because he is addicted to a futile policy of trying to reconcile materialist and idealist theories of human life.

In this pattern of thought Brown comes across as something close to a parody of Cole, an abstract thinker more interested in the quantification and classification of human performance than with the messy reality of human experience. With differing emphases,

Boime's 'crisis' discourse would be mobilized by Gerard Curtis, Joel A. Hollander, Takashi Nakamura and Tim Barringer.[21] In turn, *Work* documented a public health crisis (Curtis); demonstrated the racial crisis implicit in Victorian radicalism (Hollander); enacted a crisis of control and supervision at the centre of the Victorian administrative gaze (Nakamura); staged the crisis of Victorian masculinity through the laboured body (Barringer). There is a certain ambiguity and vacillation in this literature: on the one hand, there are genuflections to Marx, Foucault, and other accredited masters of theory; on the other hand, Brown becomes a bureaucratic figure, the purveyor of an informational system in which the art work belongs to, and is controlled by, a larger organization of values.

As these cases indicate, supporters of the culture as ideology thesis rejected far too hastily the possibility that Brown's creativity was pictorial, and that his interests in this area were expressions of a desire to reflect on the nature of artistic perception within the modern world. Instead of measuring Brown against abstractions derived from the social sciences, we hope to show how his understanding of the world in which he lived impacted on his vision of art, culture and community. That is, the contributors to this volume take seriously Brown's desire to participate in the life of ideas. What emerges is a complex and ceaselessly inventive figure fascinated at the prospect of aligning the society-shaping interests of intellectual culture with the forms of aesthetic intelligence advanced in the second half of the nineteenth century. In sum, in place of systematic theory, the essays in this volume offer practical, historical criticism. To this end, Barlow, Cruise, Potter, Prettejohn, Trodd and Tromans take seriously the intellectual and social activities of an artist who worked under a 'combination of interests', and who saw in life 'taunting contradictions'.[22] Whatever their minor disagreements, this group of writers acknowledge that these were the conditions from which Brown centred himself as an artist and imagined the human picture of painting.

This orientation corresponds to recent attempts to rethink the nature of the Victorian cultural world in terms of the expansion of ideas about human experience, human relationships, human situations, and human actions. Similar forces or impulses can be detected in other Victorian artists. Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts moved away from academic culture, which they equated with a vision of total system or logic, but they wanted to hold on to the core feature academic art theory: the idea that painting excites and convinces by addressing what is common in experience. That is, they held true to the belief that art pictures human life as a whole. As the following expositions demonstrate, this was the position from which Brown set out to translate the baffling stuff of human experience into

something resembling organizational schemata. As sketched by the contributors to this volume, Brown pictured a distinctive lifeworld, a condition where subjects are at once innerworldly and socially engaged. Similarly, what we are shown is a pictorial world where activity is at once abundant and difficult to read. Brown may have wanted his viewers to imagine that his subjects tried to make sense of the richness of the world, but his sense of pictorial composition complicated this identification in three ways. First, the arrangement of figures into heaps gives expressive impact to the collective mass rather than, as is customary in academic history painting, the principal figures. Second, the force of the figures is constantly threatened by the intrusion of forms, details and matter that refuse to be subservient to this expression of figural and material presence. Third, this concentration on material vitality, rather than compositional rules, intensifies the impression of real presence but minimizes the universality and sociality of subjects and actions. Because of this, the dynamically perceived subject of *Work*, the Manchester murals and other paintings might be described as a reflection on the coherence of the life of the human world as a whole. However we characterize his aesthetic, these matters are the key ingredients in the formal construction of his art. In the end, it is to a world of 'taunting contradictions' to which he should be returned, the world of abundant irrepressible life noted by Mackmurdo, Rossetti, Muther and the contributors to this special edition of *Visual Culture in Britain*.

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Notes

[1] See Minto, *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott*, II: 189–90.

[2] See, for instance, Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown*; and Bendiner, *The Art of Ford Madox Brown*.

[3] See Bendiner, *The Art of Ford Madox Brown*, 87-107.

[4] Mackmurdo, *A History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 180-3.

[5] Mackmurdo, *A History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 181.

[6] Mackmurdo, *A History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 181.

[7] Mackmurdo's comments, which are undated, recall George Eliot's vision of an art rooted in 'the working-day world' which brings the observer into the 'presence of living, generous humanity – mixed and erring, and self-deluding, but saved … by the salt of some noble impulse … some beam of good nature, even though grotesque or homely.' See Pinney, *The Essays of George Eliot*, 302; and Eliot, 'The Morality of *Wilhelm Meister*', 703.

[8] Some Victorian critics were distressed by this aspect of Brown's art. Tom Taylor complained about 'the overlabouring to conquer the unconquerable difficulties' of combining intense bodily expression and dramatic unity: see Taylor, 'The Pictures of 1865'; Anon., 'Exhibition of Pictures by Mr. Madox Brown', 345, where the author refers to 'awkwardly crowded' compositions'; and Anon., 'Art at the Manchester Exhibition', 91, where the author asks if the Brown's superfluity of energy is desirable and … tolerable.'

[9] Brown, 'On the Mechanism', 73. Other helpful examples of Brown's ideas on art and art history include: 'Modern vs. Ancient Art', 530-1; 'On the Influence of Antiquity on Italian Art', 580-1; *The Exhibition of WORK'*; *The Slade Professorship*; 'The Progress of English Art', 52-5; 'Self-Painted Pictures', 184-9; 'Our National Gallery', 133-6;'Of Mural Painting', 149-60. See, also, Anon. 'Mr. Ford Madox Brown on Art at the Exhibition,' 8; Cockerell, 'Ford Madox Brown on Art in Education, with Notes', 66-7; Surtees, *Diary,* and Brown's unpublished lectures and notes at the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum: F. M. B. Box 45/MLS/1775/14/174.

[10] Rossetti, 'Ford Madox Brown', 49. See, also, Rossetti, 'Mr. Madox Brown's Exhibition, and its place in our School of Painting', 598-607; and 'Mr. Madox Brown's Frescoes in Manchester', 262-63.

[11] Rossetti, 'Ford Madox Brown', 51.

[12] For more on Carlyle's concept of the grotesque, see Barlow, 'Thomas Carlyle's grotesque conceits', 37-60; and Trodd, 'Culture and energy', 61-80.

[13] Rossetti, 'Ford Madox Brown', 52.

[14] Rossetti, 'Ford Madox Brown', 48, 52.

[15] Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, II: 582-4. D. S. MacColl, art critic for *The Spectator* and *The Saturday Review*, came to a similar conclusion when he referred to Brown's 'crabbed force' in his pioneering *Nineteenth Century British Art*, 137. See, also, MacColl, 'Madox Brown', 191, where he states that 'Grim or whimsical oddity, from first to last, is the most personal characteristic of Madox Brown's art'.

[16] Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, II: 680, 679. On the other hand, Anon., 'Work and other Pictures, by Mr. Ford Madox Brown', 378, was unhappy because *Work* 'has no atmosphere, no breathing space, the figures … stick together'.

[17] Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, II: 667-8, 604-7, 680. See, also, Chesneau, 'Ford Madox Brown', *L'Art*, 162, who refers to the 'étroit espace' of Brown's compositions.

[18] These comments, which continued into the earlier decades of the twentieth century, were supported by some modernist-leaning critics. For instance, Charles Aitken, the Director of the Tate Gallery between 1911-30, and great supporter of the Impressionists, referred to Brown's 'cross-grainedness', 'crowded' compositions and 'grotesque' character. These attributes were, he claimed, 'the caustic decent humanities' of an artist who 'probe[d] into the human soul with sincere and personal insight'. See Aitken, 'English 19th Century Art at the National Gallery', 10, 3.

[19] Boime, 'Ford Madox Brown, Thomas Carlyle and Karl Marx', 116-25.

[20] This model had been advanced by others. See, for instance, the work of Klingender, who claimed, '[T]he history of art is the ceaseless struggle and mutual inter-penetration of … realism and … spiritualistic, religious or idealistic art.' Klingender, *Marxism and Modern Art*, 48.

[21] Curtis, 'Ford Madox Brown's Work: An Iconographical Analysis', 623-36; Hollander, 'Ford Madox Brown's *Work*', 100-19; Nakamura, '*Bleak House* and Brown's *Work*', 39-65; and Barringer, *Men at Work*, 21-81.

[22] Rossetti, 'Ford Madox Brown', 48, 49.