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Books, Windows and Walls: exploring the Pre-Raphaelite Movement second phase influence on Frederick James Shields' decorative works

This paper aims to both examine and illustrate the evolution of the Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood at the time of the Arts and Crafts Movement, in particular its new decorative physiognomy and influence on the work of one of its most debated followers: Frederick Shields. More specifically, the article primarily focuses on the second phase of the remodelled Pre-Raphaelite ideology (and, consequently, practice), traces of which can be found in the works of Shields, a little known but extremely skilful artist and decorator. Shields' course of life as well as his achievements in decorative arts made him one of the probably most «challenging» figures in the world of Victorian decorative arts. His works in several art fields such as illustration, stained glass and wall painting are examined, compared and thoroughly contrasted to some of the major Pre-Raphaelite representatives' works, bringing into light new and valuable findings about their influence on artists who, like Shields, are of possibly lower recognition, but not lesser value.

Introduction

In the late 1850s, at the zenith of the Industrial Revolution in Victorian England, new ideologies, pursuits and perspectives in design began to create pressures that signalled the start of a new era during which the visual and applied arts should coexist fairly and in harmony through the spirit of the fledgling Arts and Crafts Movement. Under these conditions, the structure of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, or otherwise PRB, began to degrade defining the end of the first generation of its purely artistic physiognomy, which was sealed with the breakaway of many of its founding members¹. From the ashes resulting from their break with the past, the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites was born which had a very different visage and followed a completely separate course since it entailed the incorporation of ideological, moral and aesthetic standards of PRB in the functional logic of decorative arts as they began to being formed by the basic mainstays of the Arts and Crafts Movement John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896)². The pioneer of this second generation was the then famous Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) who had initially shown signs of an extraordinary painting activity within the Brotherhood.

However, his first contact with William Morris and Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) was not realized but in 1855. Both these two great *mâitres* of the 19th century decorative arts, inspired by medieval culture, the era of knights and

the search of the Divine Grail, had already recognized in the face of Rossetti their future, worthy partner as they believed that his work had a distinct, personal style and therefore its application in the field of decorative arts would lead to very promising results. Ford Madox Brown's accession several years later³, laid the foundations of the new Pre-Raphaelites ideology which helped in developing an innovative process towards the implementation of arts in environments or objects, while rejecting whatever was related to the purely artistic activity. Thus, in the early years of 1860's the «new shape» of the Pre-Raphaelites had already denounced, to a great extent, its original stand about creative inspiration and, along with it, the bright, detailed and pragmatic, technical, style of the early years.

This meant that they had then accepted the equiponderant importance of both the simple Kingdom of Nature and Fine Arts, it being why they were inspired by both. Besides their views on the uniqueness of the masters of painting in the years preceding Raphael, also began to change and they gradually recognized the importance of the great painters of the High Renaissance rendering its works of art, their style and thematology to new sources of inspiration, which helped them to embrace the greatness of ancient Greek mythology as well as the overall pagan issues that they had rejected at first.

During the remaining years of the 1860's, when all of them had begun to find their way, PRB was staffed with a number of pioneering visionaries who sought to create a new stylized decoration language suited to their deep interest in contemporary issues in the areas of architecture and applied arts. As Theuhertz has stated, the three great founders of the British history of decorative arts «*conceived of an evolved Pre-Raphaelitism responsive to the Aesthetic Movement and its mass appeal among wealthy consumers*»⁴.

So it was not long before the idea of decoration began to reconstruct and to reinvent the concept of Pre-Raphaelite painting composition but in a close connection with the function of space and objects. It should however be noted that the effect of the Aesthetic Movement was not sweeping in the ideological sentiment of PRB, but rather helpful. This means that it was a unique opportunity for the creators of this second phase to redefine their cognitive/artistic object within the context which the new order of the applied arts and architecture called for, giving it the romance and elegance that their imagination and idyllic literature allowed and to transform it into a new spiritual elevation field⁵.

So gradually through Aestheticism the ideologically reinvented second generation of the Pre-Raphaelites adopted a style of soft colours, lack of definition, imaginary, almost unrealistic shapes, patterns, fairy, knightly or pagan scenes, objects and persons bound conclusively in an effort to design unique artefacts. Over

the years, however, medieval themes began to be gradually abandoned. Even Ruskin himself concerned about this terrible obsession of artists with the Middle Ages which disenchanted them from the rich source of inspiration of the Kingdom of the Nature was worried to see them distance themselves from anything related to this theme⁶.

Notwithstanding that from the first years of its establishment PRB had set clear, serious and honest goals, the spirit that prevailed within its bosom used to be and still was during its second phase strictly androcratic, with a strong sense of male friendship and mutual support. This was expressed in various ways: from the frequent and pleasant pranks between them, smoking and their nights out in London clubs, down to the admiration they expressed for the works of fans and disciples of their ideals who were mainly men⁷. One of them was charismatic Frederick Shields whose work was influenced to a certain extent by the aesthetics and the philosophy of the Pre-Raphaelites and was also admired by themselves. On the following pages we will try to analyze this questionable, for many people, impact on Shields decorative work and thus identify any common or uncommon venues of its convergence of these great masters' works.

Living on Decoration

Although he never formally belonged to the ranks of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Shields after a long period of deprivation and orphan hood, but also attending the first art classes at night schools in Manchester and London came in contact with the two very important Pre-Raphaelites Rossetti and Madox Brown his friendship with whom lasted until the end of his life⁸. It was no long before he became a fan of the new doctrine of art and decoration professed by this second generation of Pre-Raphaelites.

Nevertheless, his relationship with the decorative side of art was not unknown to him since he began his career as an artist, under rather difficult and paradoxical circumstances: his family had very limited resources to help young Frederick to complete his studies in Fine arts in London⁹. For this reason he started working for several lithographs and graphic designers, as for example the Maclure, Macdonald & Macgregor Company with which Shields began working in 1847, creating sometimes decorative designs or even illustrations of poetry collections and novels¹⁰. Soon penury made him to turn to other cities of the English north such as Manchester, where he followed his father to find a job.

There he worked in other lithographic companies initially undertaking the thankless job of colouring posters getting a meagre salary of five shillings a week.

After the quick death of his father who, if anything else, had foresight to improve the professional status of his son, ensuring him a better position in the lithographic company Bradshaw and Blacklock's with a much higher salary per week, Frederick living alone in a foreign city continued his studies in the evening classes of the Manchester School of Design¹¹. All this happened in the first difficult years of his rather self-made path to the dream: to become a successful painter. When in 1856 he began an apprenticeship with the famous painter and architect Charles Henry Mitchel (1821-1882) and at the same time to be familiarized with the work of the Pre-Raphaelite artists through their frequent exhibitions¹² he could hardly believe that he would become widely known and, all the more so, within a short time, particularly for his works which were devoted to children. Besides his first and very important work titled *Bobber and Kibs* which was inspired from the corresponding Victorian game¹³ and which was exposed with great success at Manchester Royal Institution about the same period, was enough to mark his subsequent glowing trail in the arena of his country arts.

The Pre-Raphaelites and the Shield's Illustrations

Having already started his artistic journey from the two-dimensional decorative arts, it was expected that his first -although underpaid- important works would belong to the field of illustration. Before his strongly visual, but sporadic contributions in the form of black and white engravings in magazines of his time such as *Sunday Magazine* (1865) and *Good Words* (1868) and clearly impressed by the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites and especially by the quirky and very «advanced» illustration of Tennyson's poems titled *The Lady Of Shalott* by Rossetti, in 1858, he began the illustration of two important books. However, as Goldman¹⁴ has maintained, Shields was a rather specialized illustrator: he was fond of prose which, consequently, was the strongest source of inspiration for his pictorial works. His first comprehensive work, which he was commissioned in 1859, concerned John Bunyan's famous book *Pilgrim's Progress* which was published in 1864.

However, his work which preceded it was the illustration of the novel by Daniel Dafoe *History of the Plague of London* published a year earlier. These two works of primary art value seemed to contain common pictorial elements that were distinguished for the complexity, verisimilitude, authenticity, but mainly for the strong desire of the artist to «invade» the heart of the text drama by recognizing the characters and the situations formed around them and depict them vividly, without any allegorical hints, though. By applying primarily the technique of

engraving, but also of ink drawing, Shields soon managed to capture the characterizations of the *unusual* and *selective* illustrator who triggered with his work the already «flammable» literary material of these two books, thus placing more emphasis on the concept of storytelling. The choices of scenes of each book were generally intelligent and inventive, typically non-stationary, fragmented and rather transient, while others were full of action and alternation easily «transferring» the reader from one state to another¹⁵.

An example is the illustrations that capture in a rather melodramatic way scenes of arrivals or departures, such as the engraving titled *Imprisoned Family Escaping* from Dafoe's book. Here the synthesis is so dynamic and insurmountably representational and vivid as it looks like capturing the momentary escape of a family which uses a fallen door, as well as a lifeless body below it like a bridge to freedom. Even the use of insignificant details such as the key in the lock or the door hinge and the dramatic expression on the faces of the heroes are factors that intensify the plausibility of the moment (fig. 1).

In the woodcut titled *Christian cast down by Apollyon* from Bunyan's book¹⁶, Shields demonstrates the same, dynamically visual ability, although we could say that technically it is different from the pictures in Dafoe's book. Here the artist avoids the sharp tone and seems to invoke the dramatic contour, borrowing elements mainly from medieval manuscripts, and the stained-glass window designs of Gothic churches (fig. 2).

These two works of his were the centre of attraction and admiration of many celebrities of this field such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, but also John Ruskin, Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, i.e. the whole cycle of the second generation of the Pre-Raphaelites, whom he met in a short trip to London in 1864. Quite later from this meeting which was crucial for his subsequent artistic evolution, influenced by the creative charm of Rossetti and obviously sensitized from the legend of the great artist William Blake (1757-1827), who was an idol for the Pre-Raphaelites of both the first and second generation, Shields designed the cover of the two-volume work *Life of William Blake, Pictor Ignotus* written by Alexander Gilchrist (1828-1861). This work was praised mainly for its artistic cover by *The New York Times*¹⁷ and is now considered a very typical example of the early Art Nouveau illustration.

But was the entire pictorial work of Shields influenced only by the creative flair of the Pre-Raphaelites? Can we distinguish the sensitivity, unparalleled artistic mastery, the depth of symbolism and allegories, but also the profound psychological penetration of Pre-Raphaelitism in his early stage applied/decorative artworks? We believe that Shields as an illustrator is obviously influenced by three

very important sources of equiponderant value and importance in terms of technique, but also in terms of other issues, such as thematology.

Apart from Rossetti's pictorial work, it is evident that he was influenced by the almost linear, decorative and/or architectural designs of the Middle Ages and illustrations of the 19th century German artists such as Friedrich August Moritz Retzsch (1779-1857), Alfred Rethel (1816-59) and Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872) from whom he drew and then varied many ideas and techniques which gradually incorporated into his own work¹⁸. At the same time, he was also greatly influenced by the detailed and verbose, but effective woodcut illustrations of his English contemporary, decorative artist Antony Frederick Augustus Sandys (1829-1904).

The mix of these three seemingly identical but substantially different inspiration sources resulted in producing a totally personal iconographic style. However, the cold and perhaps superficial German handling of drawing, but also Sandys' boringly precise and windbag illustrations seem to dominate the visual performance of scenes and styles of his own illustrations. This of course contrasts not only with Rossetti's «relief», almost three-dimensional drawings which are not limited to the intensity of the outlines and the sovereignty of the linear approximation of the images, but mainly deal with the concepts of psychological depth and symbolist originality (fig. 3). Rossetti's illustrations are not as predictable as to simply represent a scene, but they dive with significant allegories both into the psychology of the heroes' characters, and into the situations that are formed around them, creating, in total, a unique psychographic style. Of course, we know that this has always been a key element in quality not only of Rossetti's work, but the overall work of the Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood, of both the first and second generation¹⁹.

Stained Glass-Windows and Murals

As a deeply religious man Shields managed to combine a sincere Christian faith with his artistic and general professional interests beyond the creation of his magnificent oil paintings and watercolours. Having already integrated into the ideological and hence aesthetic umbrella of the Pre-Raphaelites, although opposed to their revised thematology regarding painting, he began to undertake works of art beyond not only his hitherto interests, but perhaps his proven artistic abilities. It was no wonder thus that he did not hesitate to experiment with a different kind of decorative arts involving something new for him both technically and aesthetically: with the design of stained-glass windows, but also with the decoration of

the internal parts of important buildings of English neo-Gothic church architecture which had been flourishing from the first half of the 19th century. Following the example of Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris²⁰, but working independently and not as part of a collaboration with other artists, he was commissioned his first large-scale order which essentially introduced him in the real world of decorative arts. The design of the stained-glass windows and stone mosaics, but rather not of the murals, titled *Te Deum Laudamus*²¹ for the chapel of Eaton Hall, Cheshire during the time period between 1877 and 1888, was his first, but perhaps most important commission which helped him enjoy the respect of not only of many peer artists, but also of the mass taste.

This ambitious work enjoyed high funding and was to be constructed by the glass manufacturing company Heaton, Butler & Bayne²². Although initially Shields was reluctant to undertake the work, as the basic materials of glass and stone that he had to use were not particularly familiar to him, its symbolic religious subject excited his interest. Specifically, he studied and created approximately ninety compositions in the forms of the Twelve Apostles but also the Prophets and Martyrs²³, with decorative panels around them, but also smaller, colourful stained glass decorations, in a circle array on top of the total composition, which covered the windows of the south side of the nave and its apse (fig. 4). We should certainly notice that despite the strong three-dimensional, almost naturalistic features of the holy forms of these stained-glass windows such as faces, arms, leg muscles or even tunics of folds, Shields, obviously influenced by the medieval arts, seems to have also borrowed the stationarity of not only the stained-glass windows figures, but also of the statues of the Gothic church architecture, finally giving to the figures of his works a sense of divine stillness.

The holy figures, isolated from each other, seem trapped in a narrow, heavily decorated frame in which they located, being ultimately unable to form an independent image in the tangled puzzle of each composition. Instead, the respective figures of stained-glass windows created by the Pre-Raphaelite artists are distinguished for the economy of their ornamental management, giving priority to the aesthetics, but also the symbolist value of the scenes they have borrowed from the Bible without sacrificing the uniqueness of the sacred figures every time. So many of their stained-glass windows host entire scenes which appear to be underway, which involves the physical movement of the figures, creating in this way to believers a sense of convincing narrative of the Old or New Testament. If we also compared, as a guide, the designs of Ford Madox Brown for All Saints' Parish Church stained-glass windows in Brightwalton, Berkshire (1862-1863) to Shields' individual figures designs, we could still detect several differences (fig. 5).

The naturalness of their rest or motion which becomes stronger not only with the use of multi-tonal colour, but mainly with the austere decoration of the surroundings around them that is nothing more than just a rhomboid «canvas», favours the religious value of the stained-glass windows so long as it better showcases the sacred figures. So every stained-glass piece at All Saints' Parish Church begins to escape the narrow confines of decoration and seems to redefine itself through the principles of painting. It should of course be noted that the Pre-Raphaelite artists who collaborated with the company of Morris did not design stained-glass windows with exclusively religious matters only for churches, but they expanded their activities to other areas where the stained-glass skill was highly desirable as a new decorative style. So unlike Shields who was limited to purely religious themes, there were numerous cases in which Rossetti designed stained-glass works of outstanding quality and craftsmanship for private areas of eminent men of England with themes taken from William Morris's favourite thematology such as Medieval English mythology, depicting selected scenes from the story of King Arthur and his knights.

This grandiose work of Shields is considered important because it was the first major work of art which uniquely combined his deep Christian faith and art. Soon his reputation as a decoration artist and even as an «unrepentant fan» of the second generation of the Pre-Raphaelites outstripped his reputation as a simple painter and went beyond the borders of his country. In the early 1880's he was already known in the US thanks to many tributes to his work by several art and decoration magazines including the famous Bostonian *The Atlantic Monthly* which in an article reported: «...*It is in the interpretative function of art that Mr Shields has shown his great power; and the interpretation is not of a school of thought, nor of a historic tradition, nor of an individual fancy, but of a catholic and comprehensive conception of the spiritual life...*»²⁴.

His boldness to produce such large-scale masterly projects, took off the ground the perception he had until then for the art of decoration and also marked the beginning for undertaking more similar works, one of which was the mural decoration of the Chapel of the Ascension interior, Hyde Park, London (1887-1910)²⁵. It was the time when Shields began to participate as an active member at Century Guilds, a union of designers, artists and craftspeople who tried to integrate all the arts under the roof of the most important of all the arts, architecture, and handle them like Morris did: with the soul of an artist rather than with the spirit of a merchant. However, this did not prevent him from continuing to undertake on his own commissions and apply to them not just his aesthetic views but mainly his religious ideology. This last large-scale commission of his, of a decorative na-

ture, came from Mrs. Emelia Gurney, the rich widow of Russell Gurney, Recorder of London who, inspired by the Italian Renaissance, wanted to erect this chapel in memory of her late husband²⁶.

Shields' astonishingly beautiful and technically exquisite murals and ceiling paintings had an extensive thematography which derived from the people and the stories of the Bible, but was also interspersed with metaphors, as an expected influence of the symbolisms amply used by the Pre-Raphaelites in their works. He used as prominent figures the ones of the Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs he had used for the stained-glass windows and mosaics of Eaton Hall Chapel. However the mural figures embodied different roles which dominated in scenes from the Creation above the entrance, the Resurrection and the Ascension over the altar and the Burial of Jesus on the eastern wall of the chapel²⁷, and were executed technically in a strikingly masterful way. The Eaton Hall Chapel stained-glass windows figures immobility and stiffness were transformed into *vibrant movement* and *robustness*, that is two revolutionary visual values introduced into Western art by the masters of High Italian Renaissance, such as Michelangelo Buonarroti and Antonio Allegri da Correggio, the ideology of which had been accepted and adopted, as we have already seen, by the second phase Pre-Raphaelites, giving the murals a strong sense of unearthly power (fig. 6).

But looking at the overall Pre-Raphaelites work we will realize that despite their many activities in the fields of the applied / decorative arts, the murals they painted were very few indeed and, unlike those of Shields, were not performed in places of worship. Their themes varied as they included medieval or biblical themes and their role was solely decorative and cosmetic, while their painting technique remained unique. One of these is the famous mural for the bedroom of the Red House, that is the house where William Morris and his family lived. This fresco is attributed to five different artists, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his wife Lizzie Siddal. Not only did it have a highly aesthetic value, but it also constituted a strongly symbolic element that foreshadowed the future close personal and professional relationship of these artists and the beginning of a great chapter on the decorative arts in England. Another example is also the stunning series of the Oxford Union Library building murals (1857-1859) the theme of which derived from Rossetti's Arthurian illustrations for Tennyson's poetry²⁸, designed and executed by Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones and was commissioned by Ruskin himself (fig. 7).

What is also important to mention is that Shields, in order to save time and protect his work, having knowledge of the peculiarity of the British climate, preferred using the technique of marouflage, i.e. painting on huge canvas surfaces

which were then pasted in the appropriate places of the chapel walls and ceilings, rejecting the famous traditional technique of the Italian frescoes that would be particularly vulnerable to the corrosive moisture of London. As aptly Margareta Frederick commented in her article *On Frederick Shields' Chapel of the Ascension, 1887-1910*, Shields described his work as

an art begotten of such consecrated aim, saying 'Amen from the walls'. The juxtaposition of the dogmatism of the somewhat relentless evangelical message expressed in the visual program with the more liberal welcoming of all denominations for 'rest, silence and prayer' is puzzling and may be attributed to the subtly differing perspectives of patron and painter²⁹.

At the same time he used to call this last and most important decoration effort *wall illustration* and not a series of murals, as the former term sounded more familiar to him. More specifically, he used to consider the current meaning of mural, which carried the 'pointless' connotation of the decoration concept, as rather trivial. On the contrary, he believed that the illustration concept constituted another kind of high art as it reflected or inspired spiritual edification. On the whole, this proved to be his most comprehensive and meaningful work because, according to his view, it constituted a subject of aesthetic and moral differentiation from the monotonous and predictable religious hagiographic trends that dominated the churches as well as the large architectural structures interiors in general in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. He also considered this work as the epitome of his deep Christian faith, and not just another decorative application among many others of this kind. Admittedly the figures and the scenes he created, coupled with the amazing italicized architectural design of the chapel made it, before its partial destruction during the Second World War and its final demolition in 1952, «*one of the most earnest and exalted examples of monumental sacred art of modern times*»³⁰.

Conclusion

Shields' creative route in the 19th century decorative arts is characterized as unique and independent and it is distinguished for its grandeur, but also for its technical soundness. This blessed artist managed to exploit in his own way the significant possibilities of academic painting and to adapt them to the new conditions imposed by the new art and design order in Victorian England, creating some of the most masterly examples of decorative arts of his time.

But as we have already noted, the influence he accepted by the Pre-Raphaelites second generation overall work was of rather selective importance and significance. Having already presented and analyzed his main inspiration sources to his illustrations, we found out that Rossetti's work was ultimately of a minor effect. Shields, fearing of producing a Rossettian misprint was not restricted to this great artist's impressive illustration achievements, but he turned his interest in other forms of illustration which helped him to eventually create his own faddish style. Regarding the other two types of decorative arts mentioned above he acted in the same way, borrowing from the Pre-Raphaelites artists and designers only the information he considered necessary for the creation of each new project he was commissioned. However, his liberal and substantive artistic nature was tamed by his deep religious ideology which prevented his ambitions to produce innovative and dashing projects, as he stayed focused on an interesting but non evolvable religious thematography³¹. Generally speaking, the goals he sought throughout his artistic journey enabled him to largely evolve his design techniques, as he became a great draftsman, but at the same time deprived him from the opportunity to create highly sensitive, profound and romantic works, as the Pre-Raphaelites did. As Konody asserts «his later work is cold, formal, didactic and out of touch with actual life, though it is not lacking in loftiness of aim and nobility of design»³².

- 1 For example, Frederick Stevens (1847-1900) and William Rossetti (1829-1919), who was both the secretary and chronicler of the Brotherhood, abandoned painting forever and got devoted to art criticism. Thomas Woolner (1825-1892), who was a sculptor, followed his own independent, artistic path, while James Collinson (1825-1881) had already withdrawn. William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), invoking his deep religious feelings retired from painting in order to devote himself to the grace of God, while Everett Millais (1829-1896), one of the most revolutionary members of the Brotherhood, was entrenched, as a painting teacher, behind the walls of an opposing «camp» that he had previously both fought and renounced: the Royal Academy.
- 2 J. Tsoumas, *Η Ιστορία των Διακοσμητικών Τεχνών και της Αρχιτεκτονικής στην Ευρώπη και την Αμερική (1760-1914)* [*The History of the Decorative Arts and Architecture in Europe and America (1760-1914)*], Athens, 2006 p. 180.
- 3 Although he was never an official member of the Brotherhood, he contributed a lot to its reshaping after 1860 both as an active artist in the framework of the Arts and Crafts Move-

- ment and a founding member of the Morris Design Firm named *Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.*
- 4 J. Treuherz, *Pre-Raphaelite Paintings from the Manchester City Art Gallery*, London, 1980, p. 101.
 - 5 E. Cvitan, *Art in Evolution: The Association of Burne-Jones, Morris, and Rossetti in the Second Generation of Pre-Raphaelites*, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/prb/cvitan.html>> [Accessed on 23 February 2015].
 - 6 «*Gradually, the medieval theme was abandoned; Ruskin himself was concerned to see this obsession with the Middle Ages distancing artists from nature*». <<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/overview/actualities/pre-raphaelism.html#c51452>> [Accessed on 23 February 2015]. Of course Ruskin has written many critics and studies on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but in his writings in 'Pre-Raphaelite Lectures on Architecture and Painting' he seems to accuse the Movement of «*tearing down in its victory a few useful old landmarks, that we will have to build up again by and by*», meaning, inter alia, the significance of Nature in their works. (*Notes on some of the Principal Pictures Exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy 1856*, in *Pre-Raphaelitism: Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, edited by E. Rhys, J. M. Dent, London, 1906, p. 275).
 - 7 D. Roe, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, <<http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-pre-raphaelites>> [Accessed on 27 February 2015].
 - 8 M.S. Frederick, *On Frederic Shields' Chapel of the Ascension, 1887-1910*, in *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. by Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net. Web. <http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=margaretta-s-frederick-on-frederic-shields-chapel-of-the-ascension> [Accessed on 18 February 2015].
 - 9 He had begun at a very early age his education at St. Clement Danes Charity School, where he studied until the age of fourteen. The year before leaving school, he started taking drawing lessons in the evening classes of the Mechanics Institute and he won the first prize for a work of his, while his admirable faith in the sole aim of his life to be an artist, soon led him to frequent visits to many London museums and galleries where he practiced and improved his drawing abilities. He soon found himself studying at the famous Government School of Art, Somerset House, where he studied for only a few months.
 - 10 Victoria and Albert Museum: «SHIELDS, Frederic James (1833-1911)» Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design and Department of Paintings, Accessions 1926, Board of Education, London, 1927.
 - 11 E. Mills, *The Life and Letters of Frederic Shields*, London, 1912, p. 19.
 - 12 One of these was a great exhibition which took place in the city of Manchester in 1857 under the title *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition* and constituted a major effort for the cultural awareness of the British provincial public. It contained, inter alia, some very characteristic Pre-Raphaelite paintings which attracted, from the beginning, Shields's interest.
 - 13 It had its roots in ancient times and consisted of four stones of different colours and clay marbles in different coloured enamels each. Children used to play it in groups.
 - 14 P. Goldman, *Victorian Illustration: The Pre-Raphaelites, the Idyllic School and the High Victorians*, Aldershot, 2004, p. 59.
 - 15 S. Cooke, *Introduction: Shields as an Illustrator*. <<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/shields/cooke.html>> [Accessed on 25 February 2015].

- 16 J. Bunyan, *Illustrations to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, London, 1864.
- 17 The New York Times. 30.11.1919.
- 18 K. Andrews, *The Nazarenes: A Brotherhood of German Painters in Rome*, Oxford, 1964.
- 19 It should however be noted that in contrast to his illustration work, Shields uses many metaphors and symbolist elements in his pure painting work, which, as a whole, has more in common with William Holman Hunt's work rather than that of Rossetti.
- 20 These three key members of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in addition to their activities within the company, were closely involved in the rejuvenation of the stained glass art tradition in England. Their stained glass works included the windows of many renowned churches of their time such as St. Martin in the Bull Ring in Birmingham, St. Michael's Church in Brighton, All Saints Jesus Lane in Cambridge, Bradford Parish Church and many others.
- 21 This name belongs to one of the most beautiful Gregorian hymns of the early Christian period, which is also known as *Ambrosian Hymn* or *A Song of the Church*.
- 22 C. Hartwell, M. Hyde, Edward Hubbard, N. Pevsner, *Cheshire, The Buildings of England*, New Haven and London, 2011 [1971], pp. 347–348.
- 23 E. Mills, *Life and Letters of Frederic Shields*, *ibid.*, p. 226.
- 24 H. E. Scudder, *An English Interpreter*, in «The Atlantic Monthly», 50, 1882.
- 25 *Benezit Dictionary of British Graphic Artists and Illustrators*, 1, ed. by Stephen Bury, Oxford, 2012, p. 356.
- 26 For taking that commission, Shields and the architect of the chapel Herbert Horne had to travel to northern Italy to study the Italian Renaissance architecture and to get ideas that later would apply to the architectural design and decoration of the Ascension chapel.
- 27 A. Mee, *The King's England*, Gloucestershire, 2014, p. 103.
- 28 R. W. Barber, *The Holy Grail: imagination and belief*, Cambridge (MA), 2004, p. 266.
- 29 Frederick, *On Frederic Shields' Chapel of the Ascension*, 1887-1910, *ibid.*
- 30 Manchester city art gallery, *Handbook to the Frederick J Shields exhibition*, Manchester and London, 1907, p. xviii.
- 31 Shields' attitude about religious themes was totally different from his Pre-Raphaelite counterparts who in spite of other artists inclination to idealise religious figures, they used to paint them with unprecedented realism, attending to peculiarities of physiognomy and character. This would result to the fact that people could read them in terms of the model rather than in terms of the person that each model would impersonate. Their paintings of biblical subjects, full of private poetic symbolisms, also strove to revive the deep religious feeling and naive, unadorned directness of 15th-century painting of Florence and Sienna, scandalizing somehow not only the conservative Victorian viewing audience, but especially the art critics of the time many of whom saw their work disrespectful and ugly.
- 32 P. G. Konody, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, 1912.



Fig. 1: F. SHIELD, *Imprisoned Family Escape*, wood plate illustration (Daniel Defoe, *History of the Plague of London*, Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, London 1863)



Fig. 2: F. SHIELDS, *Christian Cast by Apollion*, illustration (John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Simpkin Marshall, London 1864)



Fig. 3: D.G. ROSSETTI, illustration for Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*, wood engraving on paper (Alfred Tennyson, *Poems*, D.C.L., Poet Laureate, London 1857)



Fig. 4: F. SHIELDS, Eaton Hall stained glass window on the theme *Te Deum Laudamus*, 1876-1888. Eaton Hall Chapel, Cheshire



Fig. 5: F.M. BROWN, stained glass window, 1862-1863. All Saints Parish Church, Brightwalton, Berkshire



Fig. 6: F. SHIELDS, study for *The Blind Man of Bethsaida* on the North Wall mural of the Chapel of the Ascension, Hyde Park, London, 1887-1910. Wilmington, Delaware Art Museum



Fig. 7: D.G. ROSSETTI, W. MORRIS, E. BURNE-JONES, Oxford Union Library murals, 1857-1859.
Oxford Union Library