A Sonnet is a moment’s monument,—
Memorial from the Soul’s eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,—its converse, to what Power ’tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love’s high retinue,
It serve; or, ’mid the dark wharf’s cavernous breath,
In Charon’s palm it pay the toll to Death.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Double Work of Art
CONTRIBUTORS

Susan Ball Bandelin
Jane Bayard
Susan P. Casteras
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI
AND THE
DOUBLE WORK OF ART

Maryan Wynn Ainsworth

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY
This catalogue accompanies an exhibition
at the Yale University Art Gallery
between September 23 and November 14, 1976,
sponsored by the Yale University Art Gallery,
the Yale Center for British Art and British Studies
and the Department of the History of Art,
Yale University.

Cover drawing and poem: no. 55 in this catalogue
Title-page drawing from the endpapers, and drawing on the
eSSS essay opening pages from the binding of
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Poems
(F. S. Ellis, 33 King Street, Covent Garden, London, 1870)

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One of the most intriguing problems in the realm of art history is the relation of pictorial art to other art forms such as literature. It is sometimes possible to point out general historical parallels between artistic and literary styles, but tangible connections between art and literature are often elusive and difficult to specify. The work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, however, provides a rare opportunity to study the affiliation of art and poetry. Rossetti was both a writer and artist; moreover, he frequently treated the same subject matter in both visual and literary terms. In fact, Rossetti intended that many of his later poems be experienced simultaneously with associated works of art. The purpose of this exhibition is to call attention to and illuminate the symbiotic relationship of Rossetti's art and poetry.

The idea for the exhibition and catalogue grew out of a graduate seminar on Victorian painting and architecture offered in 1975 by Professor George Hersey. Four advanced students—Maryan Ainsworth, Susan Bandelin, Susan Casteras, and Jane Bayard—selected the works of art and wrote the catalogue essays. Their work was coordinated by Ms. Ainsworth, who shouldered the responsibility for organizing the exhibition.

A joint project of the Yale University Art Gallery, the Yale Center for British Art and British Studies, and the History of Art Department, the exhibition was subsidized by generous grants from the Northeastern Pooled Common Fund and the Lehman Foundation. These two grants supported publication of the catalogue and made the numerous loans from collections in England possible. They also made financial provision for a scholarly symposium on Rossetti to be held at the time of the show. We are extremely grateful for this assistance, as well as for a grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London. Finally, we appreciate the cooperation of the numerous lenders in America and England who willingly parted with their Rossetti material to assure the success of this enterprise.

Alan Shestack, Director
Yale University Art Gallery

Edmund P. Pillsbury, Director
Yale Center for British Art
and British Studies

Anne Coffin Hanson, Chairman
History of Art Department,
Yale University
Acknowledgments

From the very beginning, this exhibition was inspired by two people whose main interests include literature and art. Professor George Hersey’s art historical methodology challenged this writer to use Rossetti’s oeuvre as a test case first in a seminar report and then on a larger scale in the present exhibition. The project is thus in large part a result of his unending enthusiasm and helpful advice at every stage of the endeavor. Janet Camp Troxell, who has gathered together over a period of years a rich collection of Pre-Raphaelite art and literature, has very generously loaned us a large selection of her Rossetti drawings, many of which are exhibited here for the first time. We are all grateful to her for her support of the project and for her gracious hospitality during many visits.

Susan Ball Bandelin, Jane Bayard, and Susan P. Casteras have joined me in writing the essays for this catalogue. Stephanie Grilli, who made valuable suggestions and helped us with our loans from England, deserves our special thanks. And we are also particularly indebted to Alan Shestack, Director of the Art Gallery, and to James Burke, Curator of Prints and Drawings, for their helpful assistance in all aspects of the project’s organization and execution.

Certain individuals should be singled out for having lent their talents to specific aspects of the exhibition and catalogue. Richard Baronio designed the installation, which was realized by Robert Soule, Gallery Superintendent, and his staff. Joseph Szaszfai photographed Mrs. Troxell’s collection. Registrar Fernande Ross, Administrative Assistant Estelle Miehle, and Mary Anne Nelson, Secretary to the Director, deserve special recognition for their help with many of the details. We are also grateful to Klaus Gemming for designing the catalogue, to June Guicharnaud and Elise K. Kenney for editing it, and to Greer Allen and Howard Gralla of the Yale University Printing Service and John Peckham of the Meriden Gravure Company for their expert supervision.

An exhibition necessarily requires the assistance of many friends and colleagues who generously offer their time and efforts. Among them, we thank Charles H. Amsworth, Jr., Marilyn Beckhorn, Elizabeth Black, Melissa Kroning, Jonathan Lovell, and Edmund P. Pillsbury.

M.W.A.
Lenders

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven
British Museum, London
City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham
City of Manchester Art Galleries
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Lyman Allyn Museum, New London
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
Sterling Memorial Library, New Haven
Tate Gallery, London
Toledo Museum of Art
Janet Camp Troxell
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow
The pictures in this exhibition are numbered consecutively according to their appearance in the essays. Other works by Rossetti referred to in the text are designated by their “S” number in Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882): A Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford, 1971).
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI
AND THE DOUBLE WORK OF ART

Maryan Wynn Ainsworth

I believe my poetry and painting prevented each other from doing much good for a long while—and now I think I could do better in either, but I can’t write, for then I sha’n’t paint.

D. G. Rossetti
to William Allingham, August 1854

Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s lifelong vacillation between the sister arts of poetry and painting caused him great anxiety. Yet out of his struggles there emerged a very personal and dynamic union of the two arts which was embodied in those pictures that Rossetti linked with certain poems. It will become clear from the works assembled in the present exhibition that such a marriage, or liaison, between poem and picture forms a kind of double work of art.

Before he was ten, Rossetti was already composing blank-verse drama and was painting illustrations of Shakespearean characters. Nine years later, when he wrote to another poet-painter, William Bell Scott, he seemed to favor one art over the other: “the object of my ambition is to deserve one day the name of painter, to which end I am at present a student of the Academy.” Yet only five months later, Rossetti sent Leigh Hunt a selection of his poems, asking for career direction. Hunt’s frequently quoted response was: “If you paint as well as you write, you may be a rich man.... But I need hardly tell you that poetry, even the very best . . . is not a thing for a man to live upon while he is in the flesh, however immortal it may render his spirit.” Anxious to be able to support his extravagant manner of living, Rossetti took Hunt’s advice.

As if to clear his conscience and reinforce the decision in his own mind, Rossetti often explained his dilemma to others. In 1851 he wrote to his aunt: “I am sure that you will agree with me that it is very necessary I should, if possible, occupy myself constantly with my real career as a painter, and put aside . . . minor employment, either in writing or designing.” Years later, reminiscing to Hall Caine, Rossetti recalled that he had given up poetry “at about 25 [in 1853], on finding that it impeded attention to what constituted another aim and livelihood into the bargain, i.e. painting.”

2 Ibid., p. 34.
4 Doughty and Wahl, I, 99.
In 1854, after Rossetti had already produced some of his best poetry (e.g. “The Blessed Damozel,” “Jenny,” and “Sister Helen”), he wrote “Lost on Both Sides,” which, according to William Michael Rossetti, “refers to my brother’s aspirations for attainment as painter and poet, partially baulked as yet.”6 “Partially baulked” is a mild assessment of a poem which expresses growing disillusionment with a failure to resolve “separate hopes.” Reinforcing the idea in the ensuing years, Rossetti explained: “I have given up poetry as a pursuit of my own.”7 The issue was settled—for a while, at least—when, because of remorse and feelings of guilt, Dante Gabriel literally buried his poems along with his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, who died in 1862.

Yet, inevitably, the old inner conflicts were revived six years later, when Rossetti was convinced by friends to exhume the manuscripts. Somewhat disillusioned not only with his painting and his patrons but with his constant efforts to balance solvency against extravagance, Rossetti again found an outlet in writing poems. In poetry, “at any rate,” he told Shields in 1869, “I have done no pot-boiling. So I am grateful to that art, and nourish against the other that base grudge which we bear for those we have treated shabbily.”8 In short, Rossetti took pride in his poetry but was bound by the financial returns of painting. Another reason for his partiality toward poetry at this time was the growing accomplishments of his colleagues. As William Rossetti observed in his diary, Gabriel “seems more anxious just now to achieve something permanent in poetry than painting—in which he now considers that at any rate two living Englishmen, Millais and [Burne-] Jones, show a higher innate executive power than himself.”9

In 1870 Rossetti’s Poems was finally published. A statement he made at the time well expresses not so much the rivalry as the cohabitation of the two arts in his work: “My own belief is that I am a poet (within the limit of my powers) primarily, and that it is my poetic tendencies that chiefly give value to my pictures: only painting being—what poetry is not—a livelihood—I have put my poetry chiefly in that form.”10 For Rossetti, to paint was “task-work,” and “to be an artist” was “just the same thing as to be a whore, as far as dependence on the whims and fancies of individuals is concerned.”11 Poetry, on the other hand, was his “true mistress,” which unfortunately had “no such nourishing savour about it as painting can boast, but is rather a hungry affair to follow.”12

Despite the frustrations and anxieties caused by Rossetti’s dual allegiances, the two arts served throughout the poet-painter’s career to reinforce and stimulate one another. He saw both arts as emanating from the same poetic source. As he said, “The feeling pervading his pictures was such as his poetry ought to suggest.”13 Certainly, the two arts shared many of the same sources and themes, and his imagery in poetry echoed that found in his painting (stars, flowers, women’s hair, etc.). Eva Tietz also argues that Rossetti made the same use of images in both arts, as can be seen in his method of composition and technique. Her major concerns are with detailed poetic description of lighting

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7 Doughty and Wahl, I, 279. 8 Ibid., II, 729. 9 Ibid., p. 745.
10 Ibid., pp. 749-50. 11 Ibid., III, 1175. 12 Ibid., p. 1348.
effects and contrasts in color, and the use of vertical and horizontal forms to achieve pictorial and decorative results. From Rossetti’s verse she cites examples of perspective as they would appear to a painter and descriptions of objects that grow weak and gray as they recede.\textsuperscript{14} Though Tietz is more interested in visual effects in poetry than in parallels of style between the poems and pictures, her study of Rossetti was one of the first to examine the relationship of the two arts.

On the other hand, there have been various controversies over which of Rossetti’s poems are “pictorial” and which of his paintings are “poetic.” The purpose of this exhibition, however, is not to revive such debates; it is rather to study that portion of Rossetti’s artistic production in which poetry and pictures are most firmly allied. This association between the two arts is evidenced in three ways: Rossetti’s translation of the poetry of others into his own idiom through pictures; his poems on paintings by other artists; and the poems he wrote to accompany his own pictures.

That for Rossetti the two arts were often inextricably bound together is clear from his visual works, as well as from his written comments about poetry and painting. This exhibition demonstrates that when Rossetti brought those two arts together, he intended that each complement or expand the other’s meaning, not that they merely illustrate or echo one another. In his earlier works Rossetti was particularly conscious of the use of poetry as a mode of elucidating his pictures. In a letter of 1864 to Charlotte L. Polidori about his paintings for the Llandaff Triptych, Rossetti says:

I have been thinking of some concise mottoes to inscribe on the stonework round the pictures, and so suggest their purpose, and have hit on the following:

(1) Christ sprang from David Shepherd, and even so
(2) From David King, being born of high and low.
(3) The Shepherd lays his crook, the King his crown,
(4) Here at Christ’s feet, and high and low bow down.

Do you not think this will help the spectator?\textsuperscript{15}

In regard to another work: “You ask me about Lilith—I suppose referring to the picture-sonnet. The picture is called Lady Lilith by rights (only I thought this would present a difficulty in print without paint to explain it).”\textsuperscript{16}

That contemporary reader-viewers no doubt appreciated this function of the poem as explanatory of the painting (or vice versa) is revealed in a certain Dr. Forsythe’s \textit{Religion in Recent Art}. Discussing Rossetti’s poem and picture \textit{Fiammetta}, Forsythe remarks: “Fortunately, here Rossetti the poet comes in aid of Rossetti the painter. Some say the one art injured the other . . . But we may say at any rate, that one helps ordinary people greatly to understand the other.”\textsuperscript{17}

Developing out of this explanatory function of poem-for-picture (or vice versa) was Rossetti’s deliberate use of the two in a symbiotic relationship. A poem could be used, for example, to convey the psychological meaning of a

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\textsuperscript{14} Eva Tietz, “Das Malerische in Rossettis Dichtung,” \textit{Anglia} LI (1927): 278–306.

\textsuperscript{15} Doughty and Wahl, I, 508-09.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., II, 850.

\textsuperscript{17} Doughty, “Rossetti’s Conception,” in \textit{Pre-Raphaelitism}, p. 155.
visual image or to explain situations not evident in the picture but which are important for a full understanding of the image. In other words, one art was used to expand the reader-viewer’s experience of the other.

Rossetti’s purpose in extending the limits of painting and poetry was to reach that reader-viewer and to involve his personality: “Above all ideal personalities with which the poet must learn to identify himself, there is one supremely real which is the most imperative of all; namely, the reader. . . . It is a spiritual contact hardly conscious yet ever renewed, and which must be part of the very act of production.”18 By making his own personal contribution to supplement the literary source of his theme in the picture, Rossetti provided an opportunity for active participation in the narrative sequence of the work of art, and facilitated the viewer’s entry into the imaginary world of the picture.

When Rossetti made pictures for the poetry of others—for example, Moxon’s 1857 edition of Tennyson’s Poems, or the translations of others’ poetry (e.g. Dante’s Vita Nuova)—he often freed the accompanying visual image from the requirements of the text so that it became more than a mere illustration. Tennyson, in fact, complained that Rossetti’s “illustrations” had nothing or very little to do with his verse (see nos. 30–32). In his picture Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante (no. 25) Rossetti created a scene that portrays figures mentioned in two separate passages from Dante’s works, the Purgatorio and the Vita Nuova. His aim was to include all the “influences of Dante’s youth—Art, Friendship and Love—with a real but non-textural incident embodying them.”19 By thus expanding the text through its accompanying image, Rossetti enriched the narrative.

Moreover, Rossetti’s own reaction to paintings by other artists took the form of poetry. When he stood before paintings that inspired him, he was impelled to write. Sometimes this interfered with his other, more “serious” poetry. In a letter to his brother while on his trip to Brussels in October 1849, Rossetti remarked: “I believe we shall see no end to these stunning things at Antwerp, Ghent, etc., and, as I am convinced they will drag me into rhyme, I almost fear that I shall not do much, if anything, to ‘Bride-Chamber Talk’ till my return.”20

The Pre-Raphaelite publication The Germ became the vehicle for some of Rossetti’s earliest expressions of the relationship between literature and visual art. The journal, of which unfortunately only four issues appeared, dealt with this theme in essays on art history, discussions and poems on aesthetics, and verse and illustrations which were meant to mutually explicate each other. Among Rossetti’s contributions were a series of “Sonnets for Pictures,” and a written record of Rossetti and Holman Hunt’s above-mentioned sojourn in Paris and Brussels in 1849. These sonnets, along with several others which Rossetti composed before and after that date,21 represent the poet-painter’s most direct translation of a picture into poetry.

19 Doughty and Wahl, I, 122-23.
20 Ibid., p. 82.
21 Other sonnets that Rossetti wrote on paintings include: “For an Annunciation, Early German” (1847); “For Our Lady of the Rocks, by Leonardo da Vinci” (1848); “For Spring, by Sandro Botticelli” (1880); “For the Holy Family, by Michelangelo” (1880); “For the Wine of Circe, by Edward Burne-Jones” (1869). A number of poems he composed to accompany his own pictures will also be discussed in this catalogue.
Rossetti’s purpose is well explained by Richard Stein: “... that great painting creates an intense experience rather than illustrating simple truths, that its complexity as a symbolic whole is finally irreducible. ... The contemplation of art in Rossetti’s sonnets raises experience to the highest level of intensity, a condition he seeks throughout his poetry.” Stein sees this experience, ultimately, as an interpretation of life through an interpretation of art, in that Rossetti’s sonnets for pictures “suggest an analogy between love, metaphysical insight and the contemplation of art.”

There are two ways in which Rossetti’s sonnets for pictures respond to the visual image. First, they record the viewer’s train of thought as he becomes progressively more involved with the picture. Secondly, they focus on the emotions conveyed by the figures depicted. “For a Venetian Pastoral, by Giorgione” (Fête Champêtre, Louvre, Paris) is a good example of the first response, by which the viewer is instructed on how to read the picture. Beginning with: “Water, for anguish of the solstice:—nay, but dip this vessel slowly...” one is directed to the nude woman fetching water at the left of the painting. “Hush! beyond all depth, / The heat lies silent at the bank of day...” moves the viewer to contemplate the background scene. Then his attention is drawn back to the viol player and his male companion in the foreground with: “Now the hand trails upon the viol-playing string, / That sobs, and the brown faces cease to sing, / Sad with the whole of pleasure.” Directly to their right is the woman expressed in the next lines:

Whither stray
Her eyes now, from whose mouth the slim pipes creep
And leave it pouting, while the shadowed grass
Is cool against her naked side?

Rather than being merely a lesson in reading a picture, the poem, through its ordering and emphasis on the interrelationship of the figures and their setting, expands the pastoral mood evoked. Fittingly, the sonnet ends with:

Be that as it was,—
Life touching lips with Immortality.

“For a Virgin and Child, by Hans Memelink,” in its study of the features of the Virgin, centers on the psychological content of the picture:

There abideth on her brow
The ended pang of knowledge, the which now
Is calm assured...

The poem brings to the picture an expanded sense of time; that is, the seemingly iconic image in the picture is contemplated in the poem with reference to events past and future:

24 All poems quoted are from the William M. Rossetti 1911 edition of Rossetti’s Works, with Preface and notes.
Since first her task began
She hath known all. What more of anguish than
Endurance oft hath lived through, the whole space
Through night till day, passed weak upon her face
While the heard lapse of darkness slowly ran?

The introduction in these verses of expanded time and imagery, which are not in the painting, allows the reader-viewer to become so involved that the picture comes to life. By way of this process, one experiences in reverse the creative process of the painter, who has reduced the psychological and narrative content to a single iconic image.

The sonnets and ballads that Rossetti wrote to accompany his own pictures are contemporary or of later date than his “Sonnets on Pictures” for The Germ. His first own double work of art was a poem, “Mary’s Girlhood,” relating to Rossetti’s first completed oil painting, The Girlhood of Mary Virgin, and a second picture, The Annunciation (also called Ecce Ancilla Domini). According to William Rossetti, Part 2 of the sonnet was inscribed on the frame of the former picture and never published otherwise. From the beginning, then, Rossetti saw the poem and painting of a particular theme as linked not only intellectually but also physically. This is important to note, since it implies Rossetti’s own inclination to see the poem and work of art inextricably bound together. To be sure, the painter-poet had in his mind the lines of a sonnet for a picture; however, his immediate compulsion to visually associate the verse with the first sketches, and later with the finished painting on the frame or canvas, shows the importance of that association for all of Rossetti’s artistic production. The reader-viewer is led to see Rossetti’s work as the maker had intended—as a double work of art.

This phenomenon applies not only to Rossetti’s own poems and pictures but also to his works of art which are meant to complement the poetry of others. In this exhibition, for example, one finds Dante’s verses inscribed on Rossetti’s drawing of Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante (no. 25), as well as lines from William Bell Scott’s “Rosabell” (renamed “Maryanne” in 1854) on his drawing The Gate of Memory (no. 35), and Rossetti’s own verses on frames and canvases, particularly those of his later period, such as La Bella Mano (no. 58), Veronica Veronese (no. 57), and Mnemosyne (no. 65).

The present exhibition is a study of both the more and the less successful examples of Rossetti’s double work of art as it developed throughout his career. The poet-painter’s works before 1863 (many argue that this was the end of his first period of poetry) reveal a mingling of a number of themes and working methods, both in poetry and in painting. From the time he trained with Hunt and joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 until his wife’s death, he produced only nine out of the more than 150 art works in which his poetry and painting were directly allied. In the ensuing years proportionately more of his poems and paintings were linked, and in the last ten years of his life almost a quarter of his art works were, in our sense, double. As with the “Sonnets for Pictures,” the majority of the poems that Rossetti wrote on his own art works followed them in date; and the most successful instances of the

picture-poem idea came to him during his last ten years. In his own words, the value of this “mixed medium” is affirmed: “Picture and poem bear the same relation to each other as beauty does in man and woman: the point of meeting where the two are most identical is the supreme perfection.”

In the late works, poetry and painting—having achieved a successful working symbiosis—together evoke a sense of mystery and enticement. Given their size, most of these canvases (La Bella Mano, Veronica Veronese, Mnemosyne) are overwhelming. The massive painted figures confront the viewer directly and, with their full, patternlike backgrounds, loom over him, refusing him entrance, as it were, into the picture’s world. The accompanying poem written on the frame breaks that barrier, first by expanding the picture’s space beyond the picture plane, and secondly, by explaining in part the history of the figure or character. The complexity common to both the poem and the painting keeps the one from being more elusive than the other; rather, they elucidate and clarify each other. As William Michael Rossetti explained: “By ‘Art’ he decidedly meant something more than ‘poetic art.’ He meant to suggest that the poems embodied conceptions and a point of view related to pictorial art.”

27 Rossetti, Works, I (1911), 661.
This is her picture as she was:
It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir,—
. . . In painting her I shrined her face
'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
Hardly at all; a covert place
Where you might think to find . . .
. . . your own footsteps meeting you . . .
Next day the memories of these things,
Like leaves through which a bird has flown,
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;
Till I must make them all my own
And paint this picture . . .
. . . Here with her face doth memory sit
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline.
Till other eyes shall look from it . . .
. . . While hope and aims long lost with her
Stand round her image side by side,
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
About the Holy Sepulchre.¹

Two poems in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s oeuvre are titled “The Portrait,” and the longer version, quoted above and drafted as early as 1847,² foreshadows with great clarity and insight the significant roles that portraiture and the double vision would play in his art. The opening lines of this dramatic monologue reveal the awe with which the creator initially approached his living subject. They also show that he presented his painted vision as an accurate representation of her “as she was,” an artistic product worthy not


² In William Michael Rossetti’s 1911 edited version of his brother’s complete works of poetry, Rossetti attributes in lengthy lists and footnotes specific dates for most of the poems, noting both the probable date of writing and the first date of publication. All forthcoming citations of the dating of poems in this catalogue are based on that standard 1911 edition. This particular poem was inspired by an adolescent work of 1841, “Mary’s Portrait,” in which the general theme of lamentation for a deceased beloved lady is the same. However, there are enough significant differences in the later version to merit its date of 1847, when the first draft of this more sophisticated, considerably revised version was written.
only of his wonder but of the beholder's. An underlying tone of authorial omnipotence pervades this poem, for the artist suggests that his own image as well as that of the one he has painted will achieve immortality through his efforts. And in the spirit of the mythological Pygmalion, he senses the power of his own eyes in bringing the portrait to life (as he has already succeeded in causing life to serve the purposes of art). This idea of the shared splendor of the creator and his creation is heightened by the assertion that by enshrining her beauty in an imaginary setting, he has created a place where one might dream of meeting one's own footsteps—implicitly, those belonging to a living double or counterfeit self.

By the act of this creation, then, dual life is simultaneously breathed into the painted subject and into the artist's slumbering alter ego; for both now exist in the world of the imagination, a complex mirror-game haunted by duplicate likenesses and blurred by the normally fine line that exists between the identical and the different, the familiar and the strange. However, as further examination will show, these "doubles" are not ghosts or wraiths portending death. The reflection of himself which the persona sees in the mirror portrait and the footsteps he imagines hearing at the iconic shrine of art are not those of a phantom self or doppelgänger, a fearful creature conjured up from folk and fairy tales, superstitions, or Gothic novels. They are instead mimetic by-products of the creative process which underscore the intimate, if not inextricable, connection between observed phenomena and visionary images in the artist's psyche.

This authorial awareness of duality, of complementary physical and psychological counterparts which exist through the imagination and manifest themselves in art, emphasizes numerous possible levels of meaning in portrait as a metaphor of the creative instinct. The persona (presumably Rossetti himself) revitalizes past memories from an inner urgency that he "must make them all my own / And paint this picture . . ." It is as if the artist is driven to possess the past—the recollected experiences, emotions, and women—in a concrete form, a written or painted equivalent. This obsession with seizing the image—to remember it, to love it, and to own it—forms a recurrent pattern in Rossetti's poems and portraits. Yet it is a possessiveness that the persona justifies with an almost reverent attitude toward the resulting image, which to him remains its own sacred monument as well as a testimony by the poet / artist, "while hopes and aims long lost . . . stand round . . . like tombs of pilgrims that have died / About the Holy Sepulchre." The literary or painted portrait thus generates an inviolable holiness or perfection which is greater than the original inspiration for the work of art.

A later poetic work of about 1868, which is the sonnet also entitled "The Portrait" and is in the "House of Life" series, amplifies several of these points more forcefully. Again there is the stance of the poet as a lover mourning his dead mistress, as well as a certain self-consciousness which verges on egotism in the artist's vaunting of his creation:

O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me. 3

The issue of the particular woman (probably Jane Burden Morris) 4 to whom
this sonnet may have been addressed or dedicated is less critical here than the
fact that she has been transformed into a personal cult-object by the artist,
who, like a courtly lover, pays homage to her attributes with his pseudo-
chivalric devotion. The consequent work of art is as much a testimony to his
own loyalty to her image as it is to her beauty itself; the portrait is thus less
important in its own right than as a crystallization of the artist’s intensified
mind and emotion. The mirror or looking-glass allusion in the 1847 poem is
extended in this later version to suggest that it is the lady’s beauty as reflected
in the lover’s eyes and talents which matters more than the existence of
feminine beauty itself. It is the artist who translates this quality into something
men can contemplate; his genius mediates as the final link between beauty and
man’s awareness of the beautiful. Rossetti clearly needs and wants a kind of
recognition; in other words, people must come directly to him, to his concept
of the beloved, to see her visage through his soulful eyes, and to worship her at
the shrine he has built.

There is an additional element which surfaces in the lines: “let my lady’s
picture . . . show / Even of her inner self the perfect whole.” 5 Rossetti writes
and paints with a sense of double vision, one which here recombines the real
and imaginary worlds into a transformed image that partakes of both spheres.
Neither the fragment of fantasy nor that of everyday appearances alone is
sufficient: it is the reforged “perfect whole,” the delicate balance of dream
and reality, which the artist strives to perceive, capture, and re-create. In other
poems the close identification of the artist with his model is similarly emphat-
ic; undoubtedly describing his relationship with Elizabeth Siddal in the 1854
poem, “The Birth Bond,” the persona remarks: “Even so, when first I saw
you, seemed it love, / That souls among allied to mine was yet / One nearer
than life hinted of.” 6 This Platonic concept of the lovers as second selves or
doubles, of Siddal as his “soul’s birth-partner,” reinforces Rossetti’s feeling
that the artist can reunite the fragmentary halves of lovers, as of art and life,
into a “perfect whole.” Such an uncanny premonition of a shared and fated
identity with Siddal is supported by Ford Madox Brown’s reminiscence.
“Rossetti once told me,” he wrote, “that when he first saw her, he felt his
destiny was defined.” 7 Although less rhapsodic and doomed in tone, a similar

4 The year after this poem was written, Rossetti executed a (presently lost) black and
red chalk drawing entitled “The Portrait,” in which Morris appears as the recognizable
subject. This work is cited as S.212 in Virginia Surtees, The Paintings and Drawings of
5 According to Surtees (p. 121), the drawing “The Portrait” is said to be inscribed
with two lines from the first two quatrains of the 1868 poem: “E’en of her inner self the
perfect whole, / The very sky and sealine of her soul.” The fact that the sitter is Morris
supports the idea that the poem was inspired by her. This is the contention of, among
others, Oswald Doughty, in A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti (London, 1960),
p. 377.
7 March 10, 1855, entry in Ford Madox Brown’s diary, as cited in William M. Ros-
idea of the incompleteness of separated lovers is evident in a poem written in 1871, nine years after Rossetti’s wife had died. In “Severed Selves,” probably inspired by the artist’s tumultuous passion for Jane Burden Morris, the persona yearns for “Two separate divided silences, / Which, brought together, would find loving voice.”8

As the women in Rossetti’s life change faces and roles, they each individually contribute to this double vision, this precarious tension which results in a new metaphor of beauty. Instead of choosing between the two distinct realms, Rossetti reconciles them with a unity that produces a new relationship within the apparent dichotomy of fact and fiction. Within or between those contradictory realms he discovers an overlapping sphere which harmonizes and brings vitality to the fragmentary halves of the observed and imaginary worlds. It is this capacity to abstract an alternative level of meaning in portraiture, a shared vision that he offers to spectators, which distinguishes Rossetti’s substantive contribution to this genre of painting.

These two poetic texts establish a literary context or parallel to which the painted metaphor is also closely allied. As might be expected, there are several dimensions of the double vision which the artist incorporated into his portraits. One category, partly outside of the scope of this essay but nonetheless an integral by-product of the Brotherhood’s practices, is the accidental portrait, the use of the Brotherhood’s own group of Pre-Raphaelite members, families, and friends to pose for the faces of personages in their compositions. Among many possible examples, Millais used Siddal for his Ophelia of 1851–52 (Tate Gallery, London); Rossetti cast his sister Christina in the role of the Virgin in The Girlhood of Mary Virgin of 1848–49 (Tate Gallery, London); Brown portrayed his wife and daughter as the figures in his Pretty Baa Lambs of 1851–59 (City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham); and Hunt included Rossetti as the vengeful hero in his Rienzi Vowing to Obtain Justice for the Death of his Brother of 1849 (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool). As provocative as the mixture of life and art may be in some of these paintings, they qualify primarily as portraits within literary, medieval, historical, or contemporary subjects, rather than as portraits in their own, independent right. The models in these works were attractive, available, nonprofessional, and within the circle of the Pre-Raphaelites. Tempting as it may be for the modern spectator to impute double significance to such choices, it seems fairer and more accurate to assume that in these cases it was role-playing, as opposed to perceived or deliberate character analogies, which occasioned the accidental portraiture. Such doubling of real life with theatrical roles is a fascinating process, but it may have been unintentional or coincidental in these compositions, and at any rate cannot definitely be thought of as the artists’ primary purpose. This is equally true of the two latent portraits in Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee of 1858: although the head of the Magdalene is based on the features of the actress Ruth Herbert, and although Burne-Jones’s face is used for Christ, it is no indication that Rossetti meant viewers to interpret Burne-Jones as a Christ figure or Herbert as a penitent prostitute. In Found, a modern counterpart to the Magdalene theme, the portrait is used more self-consciously.9 The features of the fallen woman are those of Cornforth, Rossetti’s earthy mis-

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9 See Susan Ball Bandelin’s essay, below, pp. 43–46, for further elucidation on this phenomenon in Found.
tress, who also served as the original model for *Lilith* in 1864. In the case of *Found*, the identification of the model with the role she plays seems to be a bit of ironic typecasting, for there are indications that Cornforth actually did lead a rather dissolute and, by Victorian standards, sexually wayward life. Here, the latent portrait functions both as a private symbol for Rossetti and as a logical outgrowth of the Brotherhood’s gospel of painstaking fidelity to nature.

Another classification seems to originate from the more or less casual and spontaneous pencil sketches of people whom Rossetti drew without any apparent intention to use them as studies for later or finished compositions. Some of the drawings, such as those made in the early 1860s of Fanny Cornforth, a robust, rather voluptuous mistress whom the artist much later affectionately called “elephant,” involve a decidedly direct response to and transcription of visual reality which is obviously compatible with the Pre-Raphaelite creed of thoroughness and exactitude. In an 1862 portrayal the young, flaxen-haired Cornforth (no.1)—her skirt billowing out and her hair spread over the cushion of the couch—sleeps like a beautiful child or an enchanted princess. A seated depiction of her in about 1862–65 (no.2) reveals her ample proportions beneath the ballooning skirt and sleeves. Both this and the deceptively innocent, seated image of Annie Miller (no.3), fingerling a brooch at her collar as she is lost in private thoughts, are pencil sketches with a close probable relationship to actual scenes witnessed by the artist. The “pure” likenesses of Cornforth (nos.4 and 5) and the views of Holman Hunt’s former fiancée, Annie Miller (nos.6 and 7)—with her hair loosely flowing—are reasonably devoid of double meaning and qualify in their pictorial immediacy more as personal documents or candid pictures of those individuals than as symbol-laden portraits.

The same may be said of the September 20, 1858, drawing of Ruth Herbert, a golden-haired actress at the Olympic Theatre who riveted Rossetti’s attention during her performances. This rather straightforward representation of her (no.8)—with careful delineation of such details as her snooded hair and the leaf design on her collar—was perhaps the result of one of the artist’s first sketching sessions with her. Two months later he succeeded in capturing her at more informal moments, such as in a napping or recumbent pose (S.327), which predates by a few years the sleeping odalisque of Cornforth previously discussed. Less realistic in style is an 1858–59 study (no.9) for an oil portrait which was never done, whose masklike quality is due to the fact that Rossetti deemed this an “experiment in method”—a gold-powdered background with umber touches on white paper. Although Herbert was relatively short-lived as a Rossettian stunner, a lost portrait of her, according to Burne-Jones, showed that Rossetti paid tribute to her exceptional beauty by including her name in an inscription on the border, along with those of three other renowned women: “Beatrice Helen Guenevere Herbert.”

Yet even within this framework of verisimilitude, tight handling, and fairly detailed rendering, Rossetti’s drawings often seem quite conscious of both life

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10 See Maryan Wynn Ainsworth’s essay, below, pp. 77–79, for further information on *Lilith*.
11 This inscription appears in Rossetti’s handwriting directly beneath the portrait.
and artifice. In perhaps the majority of his depictions of Elizabeth Siddal, for example, he conspicuously manipulates and heightens everyday vignettes into controlled moments of drama. This intensified reality is present in his early (about 1850) and sensitive drawing of the teen-aged Siddal (no.10)—true to life in her features, but with eerie, disembodied lips in the lower left corner which add an enigmatic quality quite distinct from mere replication of nature. Perhaps it is the intensity of the artist’s gaze and his involvement with the subject that forge images paradoxically steeped both in the factual and the fictitious. Related to this dramatic mode of portraiture is the quality of hypnotic fixation which characterizes Rossetti’s relationships with, above all, Siddal, and later, but to a lesser extent, with Jane Morris. Of the former, Brown noted in his diary in October of 1854: “Gabriel . . . drawing wonderful and lovely Guggums [Siddal’s nickname] one after another, each one a fresh charm, each one stamped with immortality.”13 And in August 1855 he noted, “Rossetti showed me a drawer full of ‘Guggums’: God knows how many . . . it is like a monomania with him.”14 It was especially with this model that Rossetti felt a shared sense of being soul-partners and was accordingly very protective and jealous in his attentions to her. After 1852 she posed for him exclusively, and it has been suggested that after her death in 1862 Rossetti made “no attempt to see beneath the surface”15 of the other women he painted. Siddal’s haunting face is the basis for a sensitive drawing of the figure of Delia (no.11), a woman awaiting her lover, in The Return of Tibullus to Delia of about 1853. The slightly tilted-back pose of the head, the closed eyes, and the parted lips evoke an almost trancelike state which reappears in Rossetti’s most famous image of Siddal, his 1864 painting Beata Beatrix, a highly personal memorial to her visionary beauty and to their turbulent love affair.

As has been suggested in poems already cited, Rossetti’s relationship with Siddal fostered a curious symbiosis of passion and shared identity. The doubling motif in the artist’s 1860 work entitled Bonifazio’s Mistress (no.12), however, cannot be dismissed as totally accidental; in this case coincidence borders on the prophetic in its details of a strange scene from St. Agnes of Intercession, an unfinished work of about 1850 intended for publication in The Germ. In that prose tale by Rossetti the hero discovers some four-hundred-year-old portraits that are twin likenesses of himself and his lady; and the dramatic moment in the drawing focuses on the beloved, who dies as her lover paints her portrait. This situation of blighted love and a fatally ill woman bears a striking resemblance to the plight of the constantly ailing Siddal, who, in a June 2, 1854, sketch (no.13), is seen isolated, as a frail, mysterious young lady who pensively reclines in an adjustable chaise longue, wholly engrossed in a book. Rossetti’s correspondence confirms that “the Sid” traveled to Hastings for a few months in the spring of 1854 to recuperate from a bout of illness at the country home of Barbara Leigh-Smith. In numerous other drawings—S.466, S.467, S.489, and S.511—Siddal’s physically weak body is viewed in some languishing pose: she is continually shown seated either reading or transported in a moment of secret reverie or drugged lethargy. In another sensitive

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13 Brown’s October 6, 1854, entry, as cited in W. M. Rossetti, ed., Ruskin, Rossetti, Pre-Raphaelitism, p. 19.
14 Brown’s entry, as cited in ibid., p. 40.
pen-and-ink drawing (no. 14), also executed at Hastings in May of 1854, the invalid woman is shown leaning against a table near a window, ostensibly brooding about the melancholy of life or perhaps simply exhausted by the constant demands of love and art. Throughout these works the mistress's declining health, dove-like passivity, and inspirational loveliness form a recurring pattern; and the fluctuating passions and morbid withdrawals from the world into love or into thoughts of death are all biographical events chronicled in Rossetti's relationship with Siddal, which are also part of the story of Bonifazio's mistress.

Carl Peterson and other scholars have noted that in about 1858-59 Rossetti's art underwent a marked change. The earlier ascetic and medievalizing ideal of womanhood, the Arthurian legends, the Dantesque themes, and the angular, Gothic body proportions were succeeded by larger-than-life, close-up allegorical paintings of full-lipped, sensuous, inscrutable women with abundant tresses. All of these women share a trancelike, heavy-lidded expression and seem to beckon with overt sexual allure from within their crowded niches or from behind their parapetlike windows. In the poignant close-up drawing of Siddal's face (no. 15) and in several other pre-1860 drawings of her (S.462, S.465, S.472, S.476, and S.489, to cite a few), the slender and remote figure continually averts her glance from the spectator's scrutiny, guarding her privacy with half-closed eyes. In contrast, Fanny Cornforth, in the pivotal work of 1859, Bocca Baciata, and in such paintings as Fair Rosamund of 1861 or The Blue Bower of 1865, brazenly stares out at the viewer from a richly patterned background. Similarly, Jane Morris in Monna Vanna of 1866, Astarte Syriaca of 1877, and many other works gazes mesmerized at the beholder from a highly decorative backdrop of exotic props, materials, and flowers.

The remaining category of portrait drawings reflects this profound alteration in Rossetti's approach, which seems to foster an entirely different artistic attitude toward the subject. In the 1862 pencil sketch of Fanny Cornforth entitled Venus Verticordia (no. 16), for example, the shift is notable in the fanciful Italianate title, which magically transforms the subject into a personification or romantic femme fatale. This newly acquired form of appellation is also manifest in the 1878 watercolor (probably begun a decade earlier) of Bruna Brunelleschi (no. 17), an enchanting and queenly image of Jane Morris, whom Rossetti first met at Oxford in 1857 and later grew to love deeply. Probably a study for an 1868 portrait of that model, this watercolor is related in Morris's pose to studies for Mariana, which was executed in 1870. The Shakespearean subject illustrates the beginning of Act IV in Measure for Measure, in which Mariana, the hypocritical Angelo's jilted fiancée, turns from her embroidery to listen to a page's lilting song, "Take, O take, those lips away."

The red and black chalk study for Mariana (no. 18) shows the sitter with a sycamore branch in her hands, an element which is eliminated in the oil painting; the vase of vine leaves and roses in the upper right corner is replaced in the final version by the page's head.

In these products of the late 1860s, a barrier of self-conscious artifice places experience at a greater distance than in the works previously discussed, with

17 Surtees, I, 122.
the result that art seems to be mirroring art or a dream of life more than it reflects actual life. This tendency becomes even more pronounced in Silence (no. 19), an 1870 representation of Morris in an enclosed shrine; here Silence reposes as she draws the curtain which separates her from the outside world. Related to the shrine of ideal love and beauty which the artist exalts in "The Portrait," this drawing embodies the very process of distillation of reality through the artist’s imagination into private symbol. Morris’s face, which was in ascendancy over those of other women in the period from about 1866 to 1875–76, is subtly idealized here. Pencil sketches of her (such as no. 20 of 1869–70, no. 21 of 1860, and no. 22 of 1860), when compared to contemporary photographs of the sitter, reveal how the artist has toned down the strong jaw, heavy eyebrows, and wiry mass of dark hair. Other variations of Morris’s idealized visage recur frequently, notably in La Donna Della Fiamma, Pandora, and Perlascura, all of which show an increase in the artist’s distance from actual experience (i.e. the real facial characteristics) to a point at which there is greater proximity to symbol in a countenance which is at once part myth and part Jane Morris. Water Willow (no. 23), dated 1871, suggests how this emblematic mode of expression is quite often joined by a concomitant idealization of features: here a softened and subdued “twin sister” to Morris confronts the viewer as a Renaissance or Venetian type of woman. Behind her lies the River Thames, with the gable rooftops of Kelmscott Manor—the home which Rossetti and the Morrises briefly co-owned—visible on the left bank. As Rossetti explained, “There is little to say as to any ‘subject’ in the Water-Willow picture. The figure is meant to be, as it were, speaking to you, and embodying in her expression the penetrating sweetness of the scene and season.”

In addition to this tendency to generalize and mitigate individual features, Rossetti occasionally conflated several women’s faces into a composite countenance of sensual allure. In Desdemona’s Death Song (S. 254I) of about 1880, for example, the basic features may be those of the artist Marie Spartali Stillman, but the long neck and light hair also partly derive from Morris and Cornforth respectively. For Mnemosyne of 1881 (no. 65) the recognizably crisp outline of Morris’s hair is combined with more generalized or stereotyped Pre-Raphaelite features—the rosebud mouth, the sweeping curve of the neck, and the suffocatingly sensuous and ethereal expression—a departure from the sitter’s actual features.

The chalk and pastel drawing of The Day Dream (at first called Monna Primavera, 21 which was begun as early as 1872 and probably was worked on again in 1878, led to a commission made by the Greek patron Constantine Ionides for an oil composition of 1880 (no. 24). The accompanying poem, written in 1880 and first published the following year, aptly describes the retreat from reality, the exquisite dream of beauty which is so characteristic of Rossetti’s paintings of this period.

18 Bernard Shaw supposedly described Morris in the following pithy manner: “She was not a talker; in fact she was the silentest woman I have ever met” (cited in Doughty, p. 371).
19 See footnotes 4 and 5.
20 As cited in Doughty, p. 534.
21 The artist renamed the work after it was completed, according to correspondence cited in Surtees, I, 115.
Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn; yet none be
Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-fann'd.
Lo! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her look,
She dreams; till now on her forgotten book
Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand. 22

Here the female protagonist, much like Rossetti himself, has such an arresting
dream that it causes her to forget both art and nature and to languish instead in
"the branching shade of Reverie." The highly finished head and hands of
Morris in this drawing suggest the method by which the artist arrived at his
choice of a model: the woman had to fit the embodiment as much as the
abstract conception had to be fused with the woman's beautiful qualities.

Treffry Dunn, a studio assistant, described the process by which Rossetti
merged myth with the model as follows:

When a design germinated in his brain, it was all thought out
and shaped into a pen-and-ink reality before the subject was
transferred to the canvas. When the sketch was to his liking,
then came the question, which model was best fitted for the
subject? And exercising the same fastidiousness as when com-
posing poetry, several drawings of the model's face would be
made ere he was satisfied. 23

This process reveals how the artist often selected the precise sitter only after he
had a clear mental notion of how he wished the incarnation or symbol to
appear in human form. It is probably true, however, in spite of Dunn's recol-
clections, that the ideal embodiment was also accommodated to the model, for
the personal and magnetic influence of certain subjects, particularly Jane Mor-
ris, cannot be discounted for their potential impact upon, and flesh-and-blood
inspiration for, a poem or personification in a painting. Interestingly, Hunt's
version of this method is decidedly less sympathetic and approving in tone
than Dunn's:

Rossetti's tendency then in sketching a face was to convert the
features of his sitter to his favorite ideal type, and if he finished
on these lines, the drawing was extremely charming, but you
had to make believe a good deal to see the likeness, while if the
sitter's features would not lend themselves to the preordained
form, he, when time allowed, went through a stage of reluc-
tant twisting of lines and quantities to make the drawing
satisfactory. 24

There are numerous examples that reinforce Rossetti's labors to reconcile or
remold the actual face with his visionary mental conception. In La Pia De'To-
lomei of 1868, for example, he alternated studies for the figure from both Alexa
Wilding and Jane Morris, ending up with the latter's features. 25 Four years

23 As cited in Peterson, Poetry and Painting, p. 67.
24 William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood I (London,
1905-06): 341.
25 Surtees, I, 118-20.
earlier he had depicted Cornforth as Lady Lilith (no.54), only to repaint the entire image on canvas in 1872 with Wilding’s head. Similarly, there are different models for the female in A Loving Cup of 1867: Wilding’s face triumphs on the final oil painting, but three watercolor replicas executed in the same year portray Ellen Smith in the same role. In 1867 Wilding’s face was painted over another sitter’s features in Venus Verticordia, which was originally begun in 1864. And letters indicate that The Beloved, conceived in 1863 as a Beatrice, was transformed a few years later into a different painting when the pale features of Marie Ford, a professional model, seemed better suited, in Rossetti’s opinion, to Solomon’s bride.

Whether celebrated in a poem or a painting, Rossetti’s susceptibility to feminine beauty pervades all his works without abatement. The result is a tension between the actual model and the written or painted object that the artist utilized in order to re-create an alternative metaphor of exquisite beauty which fused real and imaginary viewpoints. Since in his personal life this principle of tension seemed also to reign, his portraits of women appear ultimately to reveal more about him than they do about the specific sitters, for they divulge Rossetti’s need to be enamored not only of the living models he painted, but also of the reforged myths they helped him to create. This curious personal synthesis united the public with the private metaphor and produced a brooding paradox of the ideal and the sensual, a voluptuously exotic image of woman, which served as the prototype for the femme fatale in Art Nouveau.

The early, fairly straightforward portraits, whether accidental or unintentionally documentary in nature, were supplanted first by a dramatically posed, intensified type and later by haunting, monumental abstractions which attest to the multiple perspectives of Rossetti’s vision of portraiture. By the late 1860s the portrait was no longer unmixed with allegory, nor was the face untouched by past echoes of other Rossetti heroines. Indeed, the ambiguity sustained in these works is double-edged, a fusion of experienced fact and unfulfilled dreams. The metamorphosis—from the act of creation heralded in the two poems entitled “The Portrait” to the visual work of art—was complete: real-life features were infused with hallucinatory, abstract qualities in portraiture at the same time as the boundaries of the dream were penetrated by realities which Rossetti had either seen or experienced. Perhaps Christina Rossetti, the artist’s gifted sister, most succinctly prefigured and immortalized in her 1856 sonnet, “In an Artist’s Studio,” the eternal relationship of love which her brother relentlessly pursued in his life and in his art:

He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true, kind eyes looks back on him...
Not wan with waiting, nor with sorrow dim,
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

26 Ibid., pp. 116–18.  27 Ibid., pp. 115–16.  28 Ibid., pp. 98–100.
29 July 2, 1863, letter from Rossetti to Ellen Heaton, explaining how this model was more appropriate as Solomon’s bride than as Beatrice; cited in Mander, “Rossetti’s Models,” p. 22.
Lent by Janet Camp Troxell.

Lent by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

5. Fanny Cornforth. ca. 1862–65. Pencil, 5½ x 4¼ in.
Lent by Janet Camp Troxell.

7. Annie Miller. ca. 1860-63. Pen and ink, with some pencil, 8 x 5 in. Lent by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
8. Ruth Herbert. Monogrammed and dated “Sept. 20 1858.” Pen and ink, 10⅓ x 7⅜ in.
Lent by the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Watercolor, 9¾ x 6¾ in.
Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.

10. Elizabeth Siddal. ca. 1850.
Pencil, 6½ x 4½ in.
Lent by Janet Camp Troxell.
O Lord of all compassionate control,
O Love! let this my lady’s picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
That he who seeks her beauty’s furthest goal,
Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw
And refluent wave of the sweet smile, may know
The very sky and sea-line of her soul.

Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat
The mouth’s mould testifies of voice and kiss.
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
Pencil, with some pen and ink, 8⅞ x 7⅞ in.
Lent by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

This is her picture as she was:
   It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
   Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir,—
   Until mine eyes almost aver
That now, even now, the sweet lips part
   To breathe the words of the sweet heart:
And yet the earth is over her.

D. G. Rossetti,
17. **Bruna Brunelleschi.** Monogrammed and dated 1878. Watercolor, $13\frac{3}{4}$ x 12 in. Lent by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Red and black chalk, with some white, 35 3/4 x 30 3/4 in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Dated “28 July 1870.” Pencil, 19\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 13\(\frac{7}{8}\) in.
Lent by the City of Manchester Art Galleries.


The thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore
  Still bear young leaflets half the summer through;
From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden blue
Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy core,
The embowered throstle's urgent wood-notes soar
  Through summer silence. Still the leaves come new;
Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which drew
Their spiral tongues from spring-buds heretofore.

Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn; yet none be
  Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-fann'd.
Lo! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her look,
She dreams; till now on her forgotten book
  Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand.

D. G. Rossetti, "The Day-Dream."
Lent by the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
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For Dante Gabriel Rossetti the decade of the 1850s was one of artistic experimentation, a period when the young artist was struggling to come to terms with poetic and visual influences, and to find his own personal muse. The variety of Rossetti’s media (paintings, sketches, designs for wood engravings, highly finished drawings, etc.) and the number of works that remained in fragments or incomplete mark this period as one of both exploration and indecision. Although the subject matter was highly varied—scenes from Dante, the Bible, Homer, Latin literature, Shakespeare, Keats, and Tennyson, as well as contemporary morality—the ways in which Rossetti handled his subjects reveal a fairly consistent preoccupation with moments of anticipation and with the themes of separation and absence. Again and again Rossetti chose to represent moments anticipating the severing of a union and, alternatively, moments anticipating reunion.

Rossetti’s experimentation during this period consisted in exploring two related problems. First, he chose eclectic subject matter and sources in an attempt to bring materials from the past into a meaningful relation with the present by reaffirming an historical continuity that places each successive moment on the verge of “something evermore to be,” in Wordsworth’s phrase (Prelude VI, line 608). Secondly, Rossetti used the broken unions of spouses, lovers, and friends to repeat on a thematic level the tension between his pictorial and poetic texts; and those double works of art reveal his desire not only to bring together the visual and verbal aspects of imaginative experience but to make that experience fully accessible to his audience—to re-present it.

The most important early influence on Rossetti was Dante, with “whose works and life he is beyond doubt better acquainted than any man in the world.” 1 Rossetti, who was introduced to Dante at an early age by his father, a well-known Dante scholar, began translating him as well as other Italian poets by about 1846. When, in the 1850s, Rossetti adapted the romance of Dante and Beatrice as his own, attempting to make Elizabeth Siddal his Beatrice, his personal life would often seem inseparable from his subject. In the 1852 drawing Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante (no.25) he conflated an historical event (Seymour Kirkup’s discovery in 1839 of a portrait of Dante by Giotto in Flor-

enence) and two unrelated texts by Dante, inscribing lines from both on the drawing. As Rossetti himself described it:

The main incident is that old one of mine, of Giotto painting Dante, but treated quite differently from anything you have seen. . . . It illustrates a passage in Purgatory . . . where Dante speaks of Cimabue, Giotto, the two Guidos (Guinicelli and Cavalcante, the latter of whom I have made reading aloud the poems of the former who was then dead) and, by implication of himself. For the introduction of Beatrice . . . I quote a passage from the Vita Nuova. I have thus all the influences of Dante's youth—Art, Friendship, and Love—with a real incident embodying them. The combination is the best which has yet occurred to me in illustration of this period of the poet's life.3

The sentence “that old one [theme] of mine . . . treated quite differently from anything you have seen” refers both to his conflation of the Purgatorio and Vita Nuova passages and to his partial transformation of the “historical” event. The letter also explains the motive behind Rossetti's combination of the two passages,—that is, his desire to show “all the influences of Dante's youth,”—whereas the closing statement is prophetic of his method of combining unrelated images, both visual and literary, for the purpose of making a new synthesis.

Taken separately, the two passages are revealing about Rossetti's youth. The first, a complex statement of poetic and artistic influence—of pupil surpassing master—would indicate not only that Giotto and Dante were Rossetti's artistic and literary heroes, but that given the lines from the Purgatorio, he was aware of the transitory element in fame—“Si che la fama di colui è oscura”—and concerned with the question of influence, which is implied in many of his early works.

The second passage cited, from the Vita Nuova, refers both to the love of Dante and Beatrice and, in a broader sense, to Rossetti and his own concept of love, the seeds of which are found in his translations of The Early Italian Poets, begun in 1846 and finally published in 1861. Robert Johnston points out the connection in these translated poems between the physical and the spiritual, the duality of love and death, the desire to be with the beloved after death, and the equation of the love object and the Virgin, all aspects of Rossetti's concept, which was crystallized in Dante's beatification of Beatrice.4

The thirteenth century poem Le Roman de la Rose, in the same tradition of chivalric love poetry, was the source for Rossetti's design The Rose Garden of 1860–61 (nos. 26, 27, 28) for the frontispiece to The Early Italian Poets. Linda Hewitt suggests that he may have seen the allegory as an appropriate symbol

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for his translations because of its theme of chivalric love: a young man, in search of the love of his lady, enters a rose garden ruled by the god of love, and tries to pluck a beautiful rose—a traditional symbol of the beloved, and one often used by Rossetti. In the final design for the frontispiece (no.28) the beloved bends down to kiss her kneeling lover. The wattle fence and rosebush of the related drawings have been reduced here to a repeated decorative pattern of hearts and X's within circles, with one emblematic rose in the upper left corner and roses on the lady's dress. Along the side, in Italian, are the lines:

My Lady, God made Thee, God keep Thee,
My Lady, God honor Thee, God exalt Thee,
My Lady, God grant Thee Thy wishes.

Within the framework of the courtly love tradition, the scene Rossetti depicted must not be read as the moment of success in the young knight's search for his lady. Rather, the lady here is merely a visual personification of the allegorical rose. The quest is only just beginning. Rossetti had chosen, as he so often would again, to depict a moment fraught with tensions of presence / absence and union / separation. The illustration contains implications from centuries of medieval romantic poetry and is indeed a fitting symbol for Rossetti's translations.

That his preoccupation with romantic medievalism was at its height from 1855 to 1858 is apparent in his use of both medieval themes and, especially, accessories, such as costume, heraldic devices, armor, and geometric patterning, the sources for which included medieval manuscripts and ballads as well as contemporary medieval-inspired works—above all, those by Keats and Tennyson. In 1855 Rossetti made a drawing (no.29) inscribed with lines from Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci":

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend and sing
A fairies' song.

When considering his illustrations of this poem, one must be particularly aware of how important Keats was not only to him but to the Pre-Raphaelites in general. Indeed, Rossetti considered Keats "the one true heir to Shakespeare," admiring especially "La Belle Dame sans Merci," which was "my favorite piece in his works... [showing] astonishingly real medievalism for

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6 A comparison with an earlier design for the frontispiece (no.27) reveals the amount of condensation required by the actual physical limitations of the page size. (See the foot in the right-hand margin and the skirt on the left.) Subsequent versions, Loves Greeting, ca. 1861 (S. 126) and Le Roman de la Rose, 1864 (S. 126R.1), are more detailed and elaborate. Working within the allotted space also proved to be a problem for Rossetti when designing the Moxon Tennyson illustrations.

7 In The PRB Journal (Oxford, 1975) William Fredeman notes the Pre-Raphaelites, and especially Rossetti's, early interest in "La Belle Dame sans Merci." Comments and criticism of an earlier Rossetti illustration of La Belle Dame (S.32) are dated 1848. PRB Journal, 108.

8 George Ford, Keats and the Victorians (New Haven, 1944), p. 108.
one not bred as an artist." And yet it is characteristic of Rossetti that the poem’s appeal to him lay less in its superficial medievalism than in its concern with enchanted suffering. Mario Praz, in The Romantic Agony, put his finger on it when he described Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci” as “a poem which in the magical, painful mystery it expresses (the subject is obviously that of Tannhäuser) contains in embryo the whole world of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Symbolists.”

Significantly enough, while the lines inscribed on the drawing set only the physical scene, the psychological and emotional intensity come from Rossetti’s knowledge of the entire poem and also of the tradition to which it belongs—the Tannhäuser myth. However much the illustration draws on other descriptive lines in the poem—the “knight-at-arms,” who is “so haggard and so woe-begone,” and the lady whose “hair was long” and “eyes were wild”—the most significant clue to Rossetti’s reading of the scene and the most bizarre characteristic in his image is not depicted in Keats’s poem at all; it is the woman’s long hair encircling the knight’s neck, the image of long hair as one of the femme fatale’s methods of ensnaring or trapping the innocent male victim. Even in the depiction of a moment in the ballad that is not yet foreboding, Rossetti projects the dread of the Knight’s impending doom, mostly by his introduction of the encircling-hair motif.

The following year, 1856, in his five designs for illustrations for the 1857 Moxon edition of Tennyson’s Poems, Rossetti again dwelt on the theme of union and separation. Not only is his choice of poems revealing, but so also is his approach to the illustrations, which he explained in a letter of 1855: “I have not begun designing for them [Tennyson’s Poems] yet, but fancy I shall try the ‘Vision of Sin’ [not realized] and ‘The Palace of Art’ [St. Cecilia, King Arthur and the Weeping Queens]—those where one can allegorize on one’s own hook on the subject of the poem, without killing for oneself and everyone else a distinct idea of the poet’s.” Thus to him the poem and the picture were equally important.

In addition to “The Palace of Art,” Rossetti also illustrated “Sir Galahad,” “Mariana in the South,” and “The Lady of Shalott.” The Lady of Shalott (no. 30) and King Arthur (no. 31) are the most straightforward of his illustrations. The former specifically depicts the last quatrain of Tennyson’s poem:

> But Launcelot mused a little space;  
> He said, “She has a lovely face;  
> God in his mercy lend her grace,  
> The Lady of Shalott.”

And although, as Elizabeth Black has pointed out, his illustration makes reference to other lines in the poem, which accounts for the abundance of detail in the small engraving, nothing more aptly shows the importance Rossetti at-

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11 1819 version; the 1829 version reads “wretched wight.”
12 Doughty and Wall, eds., Letters I, 239.
13 Tennyson, on the other hand, as Oswald Doughty notes, regarded all illustration to his works as supererogatory and could never decipher what Rossetti’s St. Cecilia “meant.” See his A Victorian Romantic (London, 1949), p. 219.
14 Elizabeth Black, “Rossetti and Illustration” (forthcoming).
tributed to the concept of union and separation, of love and death, than his preparatory drawing, in which he depicted nothing but Launcelot and the Lady (no.30), who died because she disobeyed, because she broke her web to be with Launcelot.

*King Arthur and the Weeping Queens*, which deals with the same concept, illustrates a quatrain from "The Palace of Art":

> Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son  
> In some fair space of sloping greens  
> Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,  
> And watch'd by weeping queens.

Tennyson preferred this design to the others, for it does nothing more than illustrate the lines, with the emphasis on decorative and formal values. Yet it is in fact less successful than the others, for Rossetti was not really "allegorizing on his own hook." However visually exquisite, it is somewhat confused, with Arthur lost amid a decorative sea of crowns, flowing hair, vegetation, and queens with the face of Elizabeth Siddal, all repeated over and over, as a refrain.

The other illustration for "The Palace of Art," *St. Cecilia* (no.32), is usually criticized for being incomprehensible or, at best, obscure. The lines concerned are:

> Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,  
> Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
> Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
> An angel look'd at her.

William Michael Rossetti's explanation of the picture as a "kiss of death" scene inspired by a drawing by Elizabeth Siddal\(^\text{15}\) seems somewhat tenuous, since Siddal's drawing is unlocated and William Michael's account was not corroborated by Rossetti. Far more convincing is Black's explanation, which draws upon other lines in "The Palace of Art" as well as on the traditional Christian St. Cecilia iconography to describe the illustration's complex imagery as a contrast between the virgin martyr and the "lordly pleasure house," complete with their combined implications.\(^\text{16}\) Black's interpretation is made even more credible, I believe, by the fact that the picture is placed at the beginning of the poem, five pages and twenty-five stanzas before the lines it was meant to illustrate. (All the others are either on the same or on a facing page.) Tennyson describes the pleasure house; Rossetti provides the contrast, cryptically embodying both in the tiny illustration. And the overtly sensuous nature of the Angel's kiss may also refer, sacrilegiously, to the pleasure house. However content St. Cecilia may sound in Tennyson's quatrain, legend tells us (and Rossetti reminds us) that she will be martyred and separated from her chaste husband and her guardian angel.

By 1858 Ruskin's alarm at the excessive medievalizing of Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones perhaps had its affect, for Rossetti virtually abandoned such themes, retaining only medievalizing remnants in the form of accessories.

\(^{15}\) William Michael wrote in 1900, "As she [St. Cecilia] plays on her hand organ an Angel gives her a kiss, which is the kiss of death. This is what Rossetti meant." In 1903 he recorded that Siddal's drawing preceded Rossetti's, and that the "detail of invention" was hers. (See Surtees, p. 48.)

\(^{16}\) Black, "Rossetti and Illustration."
which he used from time to time, as in his *Hamlet and Ophelia* of 1858 (no.33), with its distinctly medieval setting and costumes. Of course, he loaded the scene (*Hamlet* III, i.) with Christian symbols, referring to the knowledge of evil and its consequences, which stem from his desire "to symbolize the character and situation, as well as to represent the incident." Thus Hamlet kneels, yet extends his hands in imitation of the crucified Christ depicted beside him. On the surface, Ophelia is returning Hamlet’s gifts; and their dialogue, originally inscribed on the frame, is about love and deception. To the left of the drawing is written:

**Hamlet.** I did love you once.

**Ophelia.** Indeed my lord. You made me believe so.

**Hamlet.** You should not have believed me: for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock that we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

And to the right of the drawing:

**Hamlet.** Get thee to a nunnery; why shouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indiff'erent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me. . . . What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?

To Shakespeare’s lines Rossetti juxtaposed a biblical text from *Ecclesiasticus* 6. In its entirety, *Ecclesiasticus* 6 deals with the value of true- as opposed to fair-weather friends. Verse 2—"Extol not thyself in the counsel of thine own heart, that thy soul be not torn in pieces"—originally inscribed on the frame, relates to the lines at the left whereas verse 3—"Thou shalt eat up thy leaves and lose thy fruit, and leave thyself as a dry tree"—which was also originally inscribed on the frame, relates to Hamlet’s lines at the right.

In the same scene, however, immediately before the dialogue represented by Rossetti, Hamlet has delivered his “To be or not to be” soliloquy, and after the dialogue, Ophelia delivers her soliloquy about knowledge, which ends with the lines, “O woe is me / T’have seen what I have seen, see what I see.” Rossetti, then, emphasizes the theme of knowledge, the theme that Shakespeare also emphasized not only in the depicted dialogue but throughout Act II, i. The surface scene, the incident depicted, was merely a way of getting both Hamlet and Ophelia together so as to refer to those important soliloquies, which deal, like Rossetti’s symbols, with the theme of the secret knowledge of evil.

Rossetti had to add props to make it clear to the viewer why he chose the scene and precisely what he wanted to stress. He thus depicted on one of the misericords two biblical scenes of knowledge and its consequences carved in the seat beside Hamlet: Uzzah, who died after disobediently touching the Ark of the Covenant and the Tree of Knowledge, around which slithers the serpent, who wears a crown (perhaps a reference to Claudius), and flanked by two angels with swords (a double reference to St. Michael, the avenging angel of God, who expelled Adam and Eve from Eden). For even further clarification, the words “Eritis sicut deus scientes bonum et malum” (You will be like

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17 One exception to this “abandonment” is *The Rose Garden* of 1860–61 (nos.27, 28) and related works.

18 Letter to George Eliot, quoted in Surtees, p. 61.
God, knowing good and evil) are added between the two carved scenes. Rossetti added such complicated detail because the basic visual representation—the incident—needed to be enriched in order to "symbolize the character and situation" of Shakespeare's scene. When the mere representation of the event was not adequate, he provided a psychological and moral context for it. Elsewhere, he provided his own written text to accompany his pictures, thus remaining true to his principle of the double work of art.

Among the first pictures for which there is a corresponding or closely related poem by Rossetti himself, a picture that indicates an attempt to establish a dialogue between the written and pictorial texts, is *Found* (no.34), which he began in 1854. In 1880 he wrote the sonnet "Found (For a Picture)" to accompany and metaphorically complete the unfinished painting. It is necessary, however, to consider the painting's original literary sources, since it existed without the sonnet for twenty-three years.

Inspiration for it came partially from William Bell Scott's "Rosabell," concerning a harlot in Edinburgh, and also from Rossetti's own poem "Jenny," begun in 1847, and which was inspired by Browning and Blake, both of whom greatly influenced him early in his life. In discussing William Bell Scott's poem "Rosabell," Rossetti suggested to Scott that he incorporate the actual meeting (in his poem) of the former lovers—harlot and drover. In 1853 Scott wrote: "[Rossetti] asked me; and when I declined trying such a scene, he said he would paint it." Rossetti also offered to illustrate "Rosabell" for an edition of Scott's poems published in 1854. According to Scott, "the design for my poem, representing the abandoned girl seeing a group of street children dancing, he painted in watercolors and called it The Gate of Memory." The watercolor (no.36), done in 1857, is an example of one of Rossetti's more straightforward illustrations of a poem by another poet, suggesting that this was indeed the belated design intended to accompany Scott's poem. It clearly depicts the lines in Part 13 of "Rosabell":

She leaned herself against the door
Of a poison-palace lighting up;
A band of girls were still at play
Beyond it: in the midst sat one,
While a circle hand in hand advanced
To the sitter and retired again
At every rhyme they sang.

Come all ye pretty maidens
And dance along with this

19 William Clyde de Vane, "The Harlot and the Thoughtful Young Man," *Studies in Philology* XXIX (1932): 463-84. From Browning came the form—dramatic monologue—while a quatrain from Blake's poem "London" may have been "the seed from which Jenny sprang."


21 Ibid., p. 293. Rossetti did not complete this in time for inclusion in Scott's publication. A comparison of *The Gate of Memory* (nos.35, 36) and *Found* discredits Scott's charges that *Found* was plagiarized from "Rosabell."
The last two lines are inscribed on the pencil drawing (no.35) for the watercolor.

A comparison of the drawing and watercolor reveals Rossetti’s habit of often changing the psychological states of the characters in different versions of the same picture. In the later version of *The Gate of Memory*, the watercolor, the plight of Rosabell is made even more poignant, for while her body is still lost in the foreboding shadows, she leans her head out farther to watch the playing children, who are correspondingly illuminated and brought forward in the composition, emphasizing even more the contrast between Rosabell and the reminders of her own youth.

Rossetti’s poem “Jenny” starts off with an epigraph from Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor* (IV, i, lines 64–65):

Vengeance of Jenny’s case! Fie on her! never name her child!—(Mrs. Quickly).

Interestingly, Rossetti cut short the quotation, for the line should read, “Never name her, child, if she be a whore,” thereby omitting the explicit reference to “whore,” yet referring to it implicitly by the quotation. Then there are the following lines from “Jenny,” especially the descriptive lines 233–36, which are reflected throughout the genesis and development of the painting *Found*:

Fair shines the gilded aureole
In which our highest painters place
Some living woman’s simple face.
And the stilled features thus descried
As Jenny’s long throat droops aside,—
The shadows where the cheeks are thin,
And pure wide curve from ear to chin.

Lines 253–75, in which Rosetti refers to rose symbolism, emphasizing sexuality, are picked up in *Found*, where the fallen woman’s dress is patterned with plucked roses. Similarly, lines 304–06 evoke something of the temporal scene of the painting: “And there’s an early waggon drawn / To market, and some sheep . . .” although the picture has a calf, not sheep, and the poem adds a barking dog. Finally, lines 326–32 refer to the painted incident in a more general sense:

And now without, as if some word
Had called upon them that they heard,
The London sparrows far and nigh
Clamour together suddenly;
And Jenny’s cage-bird grown awake
Here in their song his part must take,
Because here too the day doth break.

This passage contains reference to Jenny’s profession, repeated in Rossetti’s use of bird symbolism, an allusion recalled in two completed designs for the painting in which the sparrows are included (no.37 and S.64A). Stressing the moral implications, Rossetti inscribed a biblical text on the two drawings: “I remember thee: the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal”
Those implications are heightened by the partially legible words on one of the tombstones at the corner of the graveyard wall: “There is joy . . . the angels in he . . . one sinner that . . .” The biblical inscription does not appear on the final painting and the graveyard has been omitted altogether.

*Found* was one of Rossetti’s only true contributions to Pre-Raphaelite realism and, aside from the related *The Gate of Memory*, his only depiction of a contemporary scene. His discomfort with a modern event may in part explain why he never completed *Found*. On the other hand, the basic thesis—the fallen woman, as well as union and separation—which he appears to have been obsessed, may be seen as an explanation for his continual work on it from 1853 to 1880, which eventually resulted in the sonnet that accompanied it.

Following Pre-Raphaelite tenets, Rossetti painted everything “from Nature.” As George Hersey notes in his forthcoming study “A Dream of Fair Women: Hunt, Rossetti, and Annie Miller,” all the elements in the picture in fact make up a portrait; the component parts are real, but they come together as a whole only in the painting. In 1894 F. G. Stephens analyzed the symbolic qualities of those component parts:

> Among these are that the girl crouches against a wall of a churchyard—“where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest”; that the brightening dawn symbolizes as it may be, peace (with forgiveness) on earth, or in Heaven, after sorrow; while the calf trammelled in the net, and, helpless, carried in the cart to its death, points to the past and present life of the girl.

Anticipating such implicit observations, as well as some that were more explicit concerning the similarity in theme between his painting and Hunt’s *Awakening Conscience*, Rossetti, in 1855, wrote to Hunt in Palestine, informing him that he was working on a painting whose subject “had been sometime designed before you left England and will be thought, by anyone who sees it when (and if) finished, to follow in the wake of your ‘Awakened Conscience,’ but not by yourself, as you know I had long had in view subjects taking the same direction as my present one.” As Hersey convincingly demonstrates, Rossetti’s painting and poem as a unit comprise almost “a point-for-point rejection of [Hunt’s] Christian optimism.”

While Stephens’s reading of the scene from the visual data was fairly accurate, Hersey, in reading the visual and literary portions of this double work as “responding to each other, their responses mutually modify-

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22 Rossetti wrote to Hunt in Jerusalem in 1855 that his sister Maria (a nun) had “found me a most lovely motto from Jeremiah” (in William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood II* [London, 1913]: 2). Rossetti altered the biblical “espousal” to “betrothal” to make the text more applicable to his picture.


24 The painting was called *Awakened Conscience* from 1853 to 1856; and from 1857 on, *Awakening Conscience*.


ing,” arrives at a more specific, and in the end, more successful interpreta-

tion: “Hence a final reciprocal pairing in Rossetti’s picture-cum-poem is

between the poem and the painting themselves.” He goes on to modify

somewhat this statement by emphasizing the dialogue between Rossetti’s

*Found* and Hunt’s *Awakening Conscience*, stating that “the real point of depar-
ture between [the two] lies in the concept of impossible redemption. In the

*Awakening Conscience* redemption is superficially possible; but discovery in

*Found* does not lead to redemption.”

Rossetti also used the theme of redemption in a drawing that was begun,

according to H. C. Marillier, as early as 1853, and completed in 1858—*Mary

Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* (no.38). By 1858 Rossetti had com-

pleted three religious pictures—*Mary Magdalene* and *The Passover in the Holy

Family*, each with a related sonnet, “For a Drawing,” and *Mary in the House of

St. John*, on which he inscribed a biblical text. The choice of subject and the
dramatic moment in each reflects his preoccupation with the themes of pre-
sence and absence. The specific scene represented in each, like the works dis-
cussed above, is one that has no pictorial precedent, for although each is based
ultimately on a biblical text, the specificity of the event is partly, or com-
pletely, Rossetti’s own invention.

The *Mary Magdalene* is especially interesting in light of the above discussion
of *Found* and the *Awakening Conscience*. Since Rossetti’s failure to see the pos-
sibility of salvation in a “modern” incident resulted in his reversal of the Christian optimism of Hunt’s painting and perhaps in his inability to finish *Found*,
that failure may also have influenced his representation of this prototypical,
and biblical, awakening / awakened conscience theme—*Mary Magdalene at the house of the Pharisee* (*Luke* 7:36–50). In sum, Rossetti appears to be
saying that redemption is possible only in the Bible. The impossibility of sal-
vation of the modern Magdalene is expressed in the revised version of Scott’s

*“Rosabell”* (1892):

*Would any mourn with her although*

*She water’d the earth with her tears?*

*She cannot wash Christ’s feet with them,*

*For he has gone to heaven.*

And while *Found* represents a confrontation between a Magdalene and a
Pharisee—a harlot and a drover—Christ, as in the Scott poem, is missing. The distinction between the biblical and the modern fallen woman is emphasized in the last lines of the sonnets accompanying *Found* and *Mary Magdalene*. The former ends with the woman crying “in her locked heart,— / ‘Leave me—I
do not know you—go away!’ ”; whereas the latter ends with the Magdalene

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27 Ibid.
29 Rossetti used the description “drawing” for all works on paper, including watercolors.
30 In Victorian times prostitution was called “Magdalenism,” suggesting a more specific relation to modern concerns than is usually granted this drawing.
31 These lines are (significantly) omitted from the versions of “Rosabell” before 1892, indicating Rossetti’s influence on Scott, and not, as Scott maintained, the other way round.
saying to her just-rejected lover, "He [Christ] needs me, calls me, loves me: let me go!"—just what the woman in *Awakening Conscience* may indeed be saying to her lover.

Temporally, the drawing is poised at the instant between the Magdalene’s moment of insight and Christ’s forgiveness of her sins. The composition points up the contrasts between the “before” and “after” moments: the richness of Mary’s former life on the left as against the simplicity of Christ’s life on the right; the opulence and the crowd of people on the left functioning as a metaphorical wall (blocking salvation) as against the actual wall on the right, which doesn’t function as a barrier, despite the doubting Pharisee blocking the entrance. Rossetti’s emphasis on anticipation—post-Epiphan but prefulfillment—is heightened by the vacuum in the center of the drawing. Directly to the left of the blank space is the head of Mary, and to the right are lilies, a symbol of purity, and sunflowers, a symbol of multiple loving. The Magdalene’s purity is achieved through her having loved much and therefore been forgiven much (*Luke* 7:47). Between the lilies and sunflowers, however, stands Simon the Pharisee, his face expressing doubt: “This man [Christ] if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is” (*Luke* 7:39). The head of Christ, with its radiating aureole, fills the window on the right, itself resembling a sunflower and answering all doubts.

As a double work of art the combined drawing and poem intensify the temporal tension of the drawing. As I noted with regard to *Found*, the relationship between Rossetti’s written texts and pictures can be problematical, especially—as in *Mary Magdalene*—when both texts seem to insist on their own autonomy. There is thus a dual tension within which the poem and the picture carry on a dialogue, while at the same time there are indications of an attempt to make them mutually exclusive. The contest between them is primarily for temporal priority, because they don’t represent the same moment. The poem, also poised between revelation and forgiveness, anticipates the time of the drawing, but leads up to it. In the sonnet Mary’s dialogue with her lover in the octave will be eclipsed by her dialogue, or actions, with Christ in the Gospel itself. These dialogues have meaning primarily as an anticipation of a future event, and, as such, are a counterpart to the emptiness at the center of the drawing.

The dialogue between the lover and Mary has been completed in the drawing: he has been rejected. Owing to their lack of synchronization, the poem and drawing vie for their own autonomy. Indeed, Rossetti’s struggle to coordinate them is evident if we compare the preliminary studies (nos.39,40) with the finished one (no. 38). The action in the former takes place at an earlier moment in time, when the lover is actually trying to detain the Magdalene, implying a closer temporal correspondence to the sonnet. Rossetti ultimately chose, however, to emphasize the Magdalene’s psychological state of anticipation—the moment poised between insight and fulfillment—rather than the confrontation between her and her former lover. There is thus a shift of accent from the *awakening* to the *awakened* conscience, which once again is a reversal of Hunt.

The viability of such a dialogue is problematical in Rossetti’s early works, in which both poem and picture demand, in a sense, to stand on their own, resisting the other’s attempt to impose an interpretation on it. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of *Mary in the House of St. John* and the poem “Ave.”
second problem is the fact that a dialogue can be established by almost any arbitrary juxtaposition of two texts, especially when the two works are related in terms of subject matter, theme, structure, and so on.

Although "Ave" is commonly juxtaposed with Mary in the House of St. John (no. 41), Rossetti chose to forego any reference to this earlier poem related to the same biblical subject, and included instead a quotation from the biblical text which is inscribed on the frame of the painting. On the sides of the frame, next to Mary and to John, Christ's words at the Crucifixion describe the past and present of the picture:

He saith unto his Mother, "Woman behold thy son!"
then saith he to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!"
John 19:26–27

And from that hour that disciple took her into his home. On the top and bottom, above and beneath the cross formed by the window frame, and serving to further emphasize the emptiness at the center of the painting, are the words:

A little while, and ye shall not see me
A little while, and ye shall see me
John 16:19

The words "not see" and "see," when read in relation to the void at the center and the bare cross in view, refer again to the absence of or separation from Christ and to his anticipated presence, as well as to Mary and John's anticipated reunion with him.

It is especially significant to this reading of the painting and the biblical text to note that Rossetti explicitly chose the latter, even though he had an altogether applicable text of his own, "Ave." The words of Christ inscribed at the top of the painting, "A little while, and ye shall not see me," refer to the present, which must be patiently endured, for there is the anticipation of the future, "A little while and ye shall see me," inscribed at the bottom. This promise points up the theme of the painting—the patient endurance of Christ's absence in anticipation of his future presence. Moreover, the fact that Rossetti rejected his own poem was an attempt to avoid any misinterpretation of either Mary in the House of St. John or "Ave." The poem, by its very nature as an invocation, is an expression of impatience, whereas the painting and text emphasize patience in the face of the portentous absence of Christ, an absence for which the sensuous richness of the foreground and distant background cannot compensate either pictorially or spiritually.

In contrast, Rossetti, in The Passover in the Holy Family of 1855–56 (no. 42), attempts to bring both poem and picture into the closest possible conjunction. The web of connection between the linguistic and pictorial texts is even more complex in the watercolor The Passover and the sonnet "The Passover in the Holy Family (For a Drawing)," for a biblical text is incorporated into the poem:

Eating, thou shalt stand,
Feet shod, loins girt, thy road-staff in thine hand,
With blood-stained door and lintel.
Exodus 12:11
Since it is almost wholly descriptive, one must know the larger biblical context from which that particular quotation was taken. It is made explicit in the poem that the text itself represents God's words mediated by Moses; by implication, then, Moses's words are here mediated by Rossetti. Moreover, this double work of art involves knowledge of the events to which the New Testament looks forward, as well as recognition of the socio-religious tradition in the observance of Passover. Again, Rossetti has chosen an incident poised between the past and the future, between the original Passover and the Crucifixion. Passover is referred to in the biblical text, just as its memorial observance is, in the present of the picture, and also the Crucifixion, in the use of New Testament symbols—the cross, the vine, the bread and wine on the table, and the "slain lamb" (the blood) who "confronts the Lamb to slay" (the young Jesus holding the bowl of lamb's blood).

Thus in both poem and painting there is a conflation of past and future, of the Old and New Testaments, to stress anticipation. The opening lines of the poem, "Here meet together the prefiguring day / And day prefigured," are the initial conflation of text and visual scene. The "now" in the sixth line of the poem can be read as a sign of a wished-for presence that nevertheless disappears, receding into the future, so that the "now," which initially seems to signify fulfillment, in fact signifies nonfulfillment or anticipation:

\[
\text{And now, where this poor household doth comprise} \\
\text{At Paschal-Feast two kindred families,—} \\
\text{Lo! the slain lamb confronts the Lamb to slay.}
\]

With the basic sign in the painting—the blood—revitalized, its meaningfulness is projected into the future (Crucifixion) rather than left in the past (Passover), and thus becomes a sign of anticipation rather than remembrance.

The relationship between poem and picture is most problematical in Rossetti's religious poems and paintings, because in them he had more at stake. The secular past and the historical past are of a different order from the religious past: both refer to the material world. So that the religious works, especially The Passover, have a greater tension, in large part because Rossetti is concerned with a kind of transcendence from the material world to a spiritual world.

In 1861, with Cassandra (no.43), Rossetti returned to the treatment of a secular subject, and one which continued his interest in motives of separation and anticipation. The poem and drawing, like Mary Magdalene and The Passover, generate their energies by dealing with an intense moment of poise, an instant balanced against two other moments—past and future—collapsed together and thus creating the necessary tension. The two moments are Cassandra's prophecy and the destruction of Troy. But in comparing Cassandra and Mary Magdalene for an insight into Rossetti's approach to secular and religious subjects, one finds that Cassandra is, in a sense, a mirror image of Mary Magdalene: Mary Magdalene has paid heed to her insight, but Hector has not heeded Cassandra's; Mary faces salvation, whereas Hector faces death; the other people in the Magdalene drawing are laughing, while those in Cassandra are weeping.

Rossetti's Cassandra is said to have been initially inspired by George
Meredith’s poem of the same name, which begins and ends with the quatrain:

Captive on a foreign shore,
Far from Ilion’s hoary wave,
Agamemnon’s bridal slave
Speaks Futurity no more:
Death is busy with her grave.

In his typical fashion Rossetti transformed the original image, pushing it back in time, and thus giving his own drawing and poem—his double work of art—its characteristic temporal tension, intensified by his conflation of two past moments and two future moments, both of which are implied in the drawing and specifically stated in the poem: in the past are the prophecy and its rejection; in the future are Hector’s imminent departure and the burning of Troy. Moreover, in the poem the past and present verb tenses emphasize the fact that the whole sequence of events is balanced on that moment.

The poem’s intensity is focused on Hector’s right foot, which almost steps out of the drawing and implies his rejection of Cassandra’s prophecy and, by implication, the burning of Troy. To emphasize the foot, Rossetti gave it a rather large blank space in the left foreground in an otherwise very crowded composition, and poised it against a background of activity. Hector defiantly looks at Cassandra, who rends her hair and garments, while he points emphatically to his forward striding foot, enacting the line, “he will go.” “Will” here means volition as well as future tense. Rossetti stressed the strong diagonals created by gazes and swords, all of which are directed at Hector’s defiantly striding foot. On the right are the eyes of the mocking Paris, the eyes of Helen as she arms him, the eyes of the black slave, of the soldier behind the wall, and of the soldier in the foreground—all focused on Hector’s foot. The swords of the soldiers at the left point toward Hector, while Andromache, clutching her baby, gazes pitifully at Hector “as tear / On tear make salt the warm last kiss he gave.” Then, at the end of the poem, the present instant is lost, for “He goes.” The second sonnet in the pair written for this drawing foreshadows the death of Hector and the ruin of Troy.

Whether Rossetti found it difficult to resolve the problem of bringing two different sign systems together—one written, one visual; whether the leap from the material world to the spiritual world in his religious works gave them a different kind of tension than we find in his secular, historical works; whether Rossetti finally reached a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the dialogue between the poem and the picture; or whether, as

32 George Meredith wrote in 1861, “Rossetti is going to illustrate my ‘Cassandra,’ which pome [sic] has taken his heart” (The Works of George Meredith III [Westminster, 1898]: 55, no. XXXI).

33 In a preparatory drawing of Hector (S.127A) Rossetti, as in the studies for Mary Magdalene (nos.38, 39), depicted an earlier moment in time, and one less fraught with anticipatory tension. Although Hector’s foot is in a similar position, his left hand is not defiantly pointing to it, but rather is placed on his left cheek, his expression and gesture implying hesitation and indecision—that is, at the moment before his final rejection of Cassandra’s fatal prophecy. Likewise, his appearance—loin cloth, bare feet, unruly hair—is less emphatic than the Roman armor and helmet of the final drawing.
we suspect, the truth lies in some combination of those factors—the drawing *Cassandra* and the sonnet “Cassandra (For a Drawing)” work together far better than his earlier double works of art. Such success, as we shall see in the subsequent essays, is repeated and improved upon in Rossetti’s later oeuvre.
Credette Cimabue nella pittura
Tener lo campo; ed ora ha Giotto il grido,
Si che la fama di colui è oscura.
Così ha tolto l’uno all’altro Guido
La gloria della lingua; e forse è nato
Chi l’uno e l’altro cacerà di nido.

Dante, *Purgatorio*,
Canto XI, lines 94–99.

Vede perfettamente ogni salute
Chi la mia donna—tra le donne—vede.

Dante, *Vita Nuova*,
XXVII, lines 10–11.

Once, Cimabue thought to hold the field
In painting; Giotto’s all the rage to-day;
The other’s fame lies in the dust concealed.
Guido from Guido wrests our native bay,
And born, belike, already is that same
Shall chase both songsters from the nest away.

Dorothy L. Sayers,
translation of Dante, *Purgatory*.

For certain he hath seen all perfectness
Who among other ladies hath seen mine.

D. G. Rossetti,
translation of Dante, “Vita Nuova,”
in *The Early Italian Poets*. 
25. Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante.
Signed and dated 1852. Pen and ink, 8 x 7 in.
Lent by the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London.
Pencil, 7 x 5¼ in.  
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Print Dept. Special Fund.

27. The Rose Garden. 1860-61.  
Pen and ink,  
with some pencil, 6½ x 5¼ in.  
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Print Dept. Special Fund.

Madonna Dio vi fece, Dio vi Guardi
Madonna Dio v'onori, Dio v'inalzi,
Madonna, Dio vi dia le voglie vostre.

My Lady, God made Thee, God keep Thee,
My Lady, God honor Thee, God exalt Thee,
My Lady, God grant Thee Thy wishes.

Source of lines unknown, possibly D. G. Rossetti.
I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend and sing
A faery's song.

John Keats,
“La Belle Dame sans Merci,”
lines 21–24 (original version, 1819).

29. *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. ca. 1855. Pencil, pen and wash, 13 x 17 in.
Lent by the Trustees of the British Museum, London.
30. The Lady of Shalott. 1856–57. Pen and ink, 4 1/16 x 3 1/2 in.
Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower’d Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river’s dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
    The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro’ the noises of the night
    She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
    They heard her singing her last song,
        The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken’d wholly,
    Turn’d to tower’d Camelot.
For ere she reach’d upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
    Singing in her song she died,
        The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
    Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
    The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross’d themselves for fear,
    All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, “She has a lovely face;
    God in his mercy lend her grace,
        The Lady of Shalott.”

Alfred Tennyson,
“The Lady of Shalott,”
Part IV, lines 118–171.


Or mythic Uther’s deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watch’d by weeping queens.

Alfred Tennyson,

Or in a clear-wall’d city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept Saint Cecily;
An angel look’d at her.

Alfred Tennyson,
“The Palace of Art,” lines 97–100.
Extol not thyself in the counsel of thine own heart, 
that thy soul be not torn in pieces.

Thou shalt eat up thy leaves and lose thy fruit, 
and leave thyself as a dry tree.

Ecclesiasticus 6:2-3.

Hamlet:
I did love you once.

Ophelia:
Indeed my lord. You made me believe so.

Hamlet:
You should not have believed me: for virtue
cannot so inoculate our old stock
that we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

Ophelia:
I was the more deceived.

Hamlet:
Get thee to a nunnery;
why shouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?
I am myself indifferent honest;
but yet I could accuse me of such things,
that it were better my mother had not borne me. . . .
What should such fellows as I do
crawling between earth and heaven?

William Shakespeare,
Hamlet III, i, lines 114-126.
Pen and brown ink, brown wash, some India ink, and touched with white, 8\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 7\(\frac{1}{4}\) in.
Lent by the Trustees of the British Museum, London.

“*There is a budding morrow in midnight:*”—
So sang our Keats, our English nightingale.
And here, as lamps across the bridge turn pale
In London’s smokeless resurrection-light,
Dark breaks to dawn. But o’er the deadly blight
Of love deflowered and sorrow of none avail
Which makes this man gasp and this woman quail,
Can day from darkness ever again take flight?

Ah! gave not these two hearts their mutual pledge,
Under one mantle sheltered ‘neath the hedge
In gloaming courtship? And O God! to-day
He only knows he holds her;—but what part
Can life now take? She cries in her locked heart,
“Leave me—I do not know you—go away!”

D. G. Rossetti, “*Found.*”
34. *Found*. Begun 1854. Oil, 36 x 31 1/2 in.
Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.
She leaned herself against the door  
Of a poison-palace lighting up;  
A band of girls were still at play  
Beyond it: in the midst sat one,  
While a circle hand in hand advanced  
To the sitter and retired again  
At every rhyme they sang.

Water, water wall flower,  
Growing there so high,  
We are little maidens,  
We must all die.  
Especially Rosabella,  
She is the whitest flower,  
She can skip, and she can sing  
And ding us, ding us ower!

A diss, a diss o’ green grass,  
A daisy diss, a diss!  
Come all pretty maidens  
And dance along with this,  
And you shall have a duck so blue,  
And you shall have a drake,  
And you shall have a pretty young man  
A-dancing for your sake.

She heard them to the end, she stood  
As she were dead while still they sang:  
Then ran among them with a shriek  
And cursed their innocence.

William Bell Scott,  
“Rosabell,” Part 13, lines 16–42.
36. *The Gate of Memory.* Monogrammed and dated 1864. Watercolor, 13\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 10\(\frac{1}{2}\) in. Lent by Janet Camp Troxell.
Why wilt thou cast the roses from thine hair?
Nay, be thou all a rose,—wreath, lips, and cheek.
Nay, not this house,—that banquet-house we seek;
See how they kiss and enter; come thou there.
This delicate day of love we two will share
Till at our ear love's whispering night shall speak.
What, sweet one,—hold'st thou still the foolish freak?
Nay, when I kiss thy feet they'll leave the stair.

Oh loose me! Seest thou not my Bridegroom's face
That draws me to Him? For His feet my kiss,
My hair, my tears He craves to-day:—and oh!
What words can tell what other day and place
Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His?
He needs me, calls me, loves me: let me go!

D. G. Rossetti,
"Mary Magdalene at the Door
of Simon the Pharisee."
39. Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee, ca. 1857-58. Pencil, pen and ink, and slight wash, $7\frac{7}{16}$ x $4\frac{13}{16}$ in. Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

40. Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee, ca. 1857-58. Pen and brown ink, $9\frac{3}{4}$ x $7\frac{1}{4}$ in. Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

Text appearing around the picture is from

*John 19:26-27* [sides]; *John 16:19* [top and bottom].
Here meet together the prefiguring day
And day prefigured. "Eating, thou shalt stand,
Feet shod, loins girt, thy road-staff in thine hand,
With blood-stained door and lintel,"—did God say
By Moses' mouth in ages passed away.
And now, where this poor household doth comprise
At Paschal-Feast two kindred families,—
Lo! the slain lamb confronts the Lamb to slay.

The pyre is piled. What agony's crown attained,
What shadow of Death the Boy's fair brow subdues
Who holds that blood wherewith the porch is stained
By Zachary the priest? John binds the shoes
He deemed himself not worthy to unloose;
And Mary culls the bitter herbs ordained.

D. G. Rossetti,
"The Passover in the Holy Family."

42. The Passover in the Holy Family: Gathering Bitter Herbs. 1855-56.
Watercolor, 16 x 17 in. Lent by the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London.
I

Rend, rend thine hair, Cassandra: he will go.
Yea, rend thy garments, wring thine hands, and cry
From Troy still towered to the unreddened sky.
See, all but she that bore thee mock thy woe:
He most whom that fair woman arms, with show
Of wrath on her bent brows; for in this place
This hour thou bad'st all men in Helen's face
The ravished ravishing prize of Death to know.

What eyes, what ears hath sweet Andromache,
Save for her Hector's form and step; as tear
On tear make salt the warm last kiss he gave?
He goes. Cassandra's words beat heavily
Like crows above his crest, and at his ear
Ring hollow in the shield that shall not save.

II

"O Hector, gone, gone, gone! O Hector, thee
Two chariots wait, in Troy long bless'd and curs'd;
And Grecian spear and Phrygian sand athirst
Crave from thy veins the blood of victory.
Lo! long upon our hearth the brand had we,
Lit for the roof-tree's ruin: and to-day
The ground-stone quits the wall,—the wind hath way,—
And higher and higher the wings of fire are free.

"O Paris, Paris! O thou burning brand,
Thou beacon of the sea whence Venus rose,
Lighting thy race to shipwreck! Even that hand
Wherewith she took thine apple let her close
Within thy curls at last, and while Troy glows
Lift thee her trophy to the sea and land."

D. G. Rossetti, "Cassandra."
Pen and ink, touched with white, 13 x 18⅓ in.
Lent by the Trustees of the British Museum, London.
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The years between the interment of Rossetti’s poetic manuscripts with Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti in 1862 and the publication of his Poems in 1870 were a time of flux and indecisiveness for the poet-painter, who abandoned any significant efforts at writing verse until around 1868, and developed instead his other art. In 1864 Rossetti finished the Llandaff triptych (a major commission), turned to a new manner of painting based on sumptuous figures of women, and made replicas of them as well as others of his paintings, all of which brought increasingly higher prices. During this period he developed the double work of art in two ways: he recapitulated and reworked previous themes, and he formulated new thematic directions in some major poems (after 1868) and pictures that prefigure his late works.

It has already been shown how Rossetti, when creating visual images for the poetry of others, took liberties with his representations. As with his illustrations of Tennyson’s Poems, he often expanded the meaning of the verse or measurably altered it to suit his own fuller interpretation of the poem. This was the case when in 1865 he returned to his 1853 composition Hesterna Rosa to produce a replica of it. Directly beneath the preliminary pen-and-ink drawing (no. 44) appear eight lines from Sir Henry Taylor’s play Philip van Artevelde (Part II, V, i). The words sung by Elena, a mistress of Philip in his military camp, express the psychological antithesis of the scene represented. The opposition of heart and mind is established, as the “tongue of neither maid nor wife” (i.e. mistress) says to the heart, “Lead we not here a jolly life . . . ?” The heart responds to the tongue with pangs of conscience (“I am worn with strife”) and feels like “flowers that fade” (i.e. “Yesterday’s Rose”). From a very long poem-play Rossetti singled out the verse that represented a theme about which he himself often wrote—the struggle between the heart and the mind at a dramatically charged moment.

Characteristically, Rossetti’s drawing and the later watercolor (no.45) do not directly illustrate either Sir Henry Taylor’s lines or any action in the play that precedes or follows those verses. Rather, he again expanded the message of the poem via its visual counterpart in order that one might complement the other. The scene represents the close of a night’s revel in a pleasure tent as dawn approaches. Bordered by symbols of innocence and depravity (respectively, a child playing the lute and an ape scratching itself), one woman turns her head away and bemoans her lost innocence, while the other looks up to

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contemplate the "jolly life" without facing its immorality. Oblivious to their emotions, two men continue to throw dice.

As with the poem, the composition is split evenly into two parts, one of which taunts, as it were, and echoes the other. Moreover, both picture and poem are linked by a tension between the timeless psychological state of mind represented in the poem and the portrayal of an actual event (the picture) related to it. In this instance Rossetti chose the poem and picture as complementary partners for his own purposes of representing a specific theme. Thus the double work does not clearly elucidate Taylor’s play, but does reflect Rossetti’s own invention as inspired by it.

During the period when Rossetti was working on his replica of Hesterna Rosa, he was also directing his sister’s efforts on a new volume of poetry, The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems. The title poem, along with “Goblin Market,” which was published earlier, are traditionally considered Christina Rossetti’s most typically Pre-Raphaelite works. Christina took advice from her brother concerning not only the content and arrangement of her new volume but also some changes in her existing poems and the elimination and retrieval of others. Indeed, she received constant criticism with regard to both her style and tone. Even the suggestion that she turn a dirge-song of 1861 into a lengthy narrative poem, “The Prince’s Progress,” came from Gabriel. It was, as William Rossetti said, “almost the only instance in which she wrote anything so as to meet directly the views of another person.”

Rossetti’s influence on the poem, for which he made accompanying drawings, is quite apparent. Like most of his own, his sister’s work deals with instants of intense and momentous inner experience. A tale of the adventures of a prince on his way to his betrothed, “The Prince’s Progress” returns intermittently to the unending vigil of the forlorn maiden who awaits him, with the narrative culminating at its most dramatic moment, as the prince, who arrives too late, finds his betrothed dead. “You should have wept her yesterday / Wasting upon her bed:” is the response of the princess’s attendants. Through not only his counsel and his editing but also his drawings for the poem, Rossetti made it partly his own. Again, he showed himself to be far less interested in telling a story or merely illustrating it than in suggesting a state of mind by way of character and situation. The portrayal of an intense psychological state was of primary importance to Rossetti, as is evidenced by his drawings. In his sketches for the title page (nos.46,47) of Christina’s volume he experimented with the psychological mood of the waiting princess. For example, he changed her pose slightly (each alteration creating a subtle change in mood), from her anxiously leaning out of the window (S.186F) to a kind of forlorn withdrawal and patient watch (no.46), to a dreamy glance heavenward, full of contemplation (no.47), thus greatly enhancing the meaning of the accompanying lines: “The long hours go and come and go.”

The studies for Rossetti’s frontispiece for “The Prince’s Progress” reflect that same interest in psychological states. In this exhibition there are two studies for the figure of the returning prince. Each one shows experimentation  

with his intense grief through subtle changes—for example, in a raised or lowered hand or in a slightly revealed or completely hidden visage (nos. 48, 49)—before the final result was reached (no. 50). The amplification of the psychological moment by the addition of six mourning attendants leading to the princess’s bed is Rossetti’s own dramatic invention. Again, the poem and pictorial image complement each other so that the reader-viewer may participate in the situation as fully as possible.

To the late sixties and early seventies belong several double works of art that Rossetti was never able to bring to completion. A clue to the reason for his abandonment of these projects may be linked to his own creative process. As this exhibition suggests, the poems Rossetti wrote directly after, or simultaneously with, his pictures seem the most successful in relating symbiotically with the visual work, whereas those paintings or drawings that followed or preceded the poems by a substantial length of time are often less successful as double works of art. “Michael Scott’s Wooing” and “Sister Helen,” of the early fifties, are examples of Rossetti’s returning to the composition of a poem and reworking it almost twenty years later—in this case, around 1870. “Michael Scott’s Wooing” first appeared in 1853 as a pen-and-ink drawing representing a man seated by a woman who is having her hair dressed; both regard the figure of Love at the left playing an instrument. In 1869 Rossetti made at least four different studies for this subject, one of which is the red chalk drawing exhibited here (no. 51). On the other hand, a watercolor of the subject commissioned by F. Craven in 1867 and an oil painting requested in 1871 by F. R. Leyland were never even started; and a poem written “for a drawing” in 1869 never got beyond the first stanza. These remains of “Michael Scott’s Wooing”—compositions that were never definitive and a poem that was never finished—might have been abandoned because of the fact that Rossetti ultimately wrote a complete prose version of the theme. Perhaps William Bell Scott was right when he claimed that Rossetti’s use of detailed prose versions, from which he wrote some of his poems, destroyed his “impulse and invention.” Certainly, there are several instances of unfinished sketches and designs and proposed thematic poems that never evolved from the prose stage—“Orchard Pit,” for example, or “The Doom of Sirens” and “The Bride’s Prelude.”

Unfortunately, in the case of “Michael Scott’s Wooing” the picture does little to illuminate the prose version. As for the one-stanza, never-completed poem, it pales beside the rich and enigmatic red chalk composition. As a result, the symbolism of the picture is only partially clear. It would appear that Janet, by entering into an earthly love union with Michael Scott (represented by his placing of the ring on her finger in the presence of Cupid directly above, playing an instrument), relinquishes her spiritual love union (shown at the right, where the tall figure severs a crucifix from a chain around her waist)—an explication that is supported by the prose version of the theme. But attempts at discovering the full meaning of the other figures pictured can be no more than idle speculation.

“Sister Helen,” a poem first written in 1851, was one of Rossetti’s best works. He continued to revise the poem throughout his career until a final

4 See Surtees, S. 222.
5 W. B. Scott, Autobiographical Notes II (London, 1892): 159.
version was published in 1880.\footnote{See Janet Camp Troxell, ed., *Rossetti's Sister Helen* (New Haven, 1939), for a detailed account of the manuscript versions.} It was not, however, until 1870 that he worked on a visual image to accompany the poem, but it never developed beyond a preliminary sketch (no. 52). Again, one may ask the question of whether it had already passed the point at which a complementary relationship between the two arts could exist—in other words, whether Rossetti had already totally worked out his meaning in poetry and saw no appreciable gain in the production of a visual image. Whatever, the relationship of the drawing to the poem in 1870 is an important one to note, for it marks one of the first appearances of that Rossettian woman who is instrumental in the downfall or death of her lover—a theme very characteristic of the poet-painter's later works. Here, Sister Helen melts a waxen figure of her false lover, while her young brother looks on in horror.

After 1851 the image of Sister Helen underwent a change in the form of additions to the poem. Originally, the witch took sinister delight in torturing her lover. Owing to the changes made around 1870, Sister Helen takes on a different character, and becomes a woman who, in destroying her lover, also condemns herself. The Helen we see in the drawing is the witch changed back into a remorseful woman. At her left the waxen image melts, as a reminder of her iniquitous deed. The image is balanced by that of the child, her brother, at the upper right, who is a symbol of innocence counteracting the evil force, and who, throughout the poem, links Helen to human rather than to wicked supernatural emotions. In the drawing, Sister Helen is seen in that remorseful state in which the soul is "Lost, lost, all lost between Hell and Heaven!" The juxtaposition of her lover below and her child-brother above seems to underline that eternal purgatory in which Helen resides. Had Rossetti done more than this sketch for his ballad, the relationship between the two arts in "Sister Helen" might have been stronger. Yet even in this abbreviated form, the drawing does add substantially to the mood of the poetic image.

That interest in the joys of love alternating with remorse and selfish willfulness became an important subject of Rossetti's at the time, and one reflected in two other of his poems of 1869, "Troy Town" and "Eden Bower," along with their accompanying pictures, *Troy Town* and *Lady Lilith*. As with *Sister Helen*, a drawing for *Troy Town* (no. 53) was the only visual image he produced for the poem. In this case, it seems, the reason Rossetti never painted the subject (which he had intended to do)? was probably not that he had already exhausted it in poetry,\footnote{When Browning mentioned to Rossetti his interest in the subject, the latter said, "I'll paint it." See R. Curle, ed., *Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood* (London, 1937), pp. 78-79.} but, what is more likely, that he was afraid his reader-viewer would not understand the intention of the narrative. In February 1870 Rossetti wrote to Swinburne that he had added an explanatory note to "Troy Town," which he cut out because Pliny had referred to Minerva instead of to Venus. He sought an explanation of what he thought to be an outlandish notion of a cup resembling a breast, and suggested resorting to a French motto (composed by himself, title and all):\footnote{The poem, however, did come to him before the picture was conceived, and the double work may succumb to the theory associated with the *Sister Helen* poem and drawing.\footnote{Swinburne liked to invent fake medieval French sources and quotations for epigraphs to...}
This, and some confusion about where Helen lived, Rossetti finally settled by adding an introductory stanza to the poem:

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta’s queen,
(O Troy Town!)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart’s desire:
All Love’s lordship lay between.
(O Troy’s down,
Tall Troy’s on fire!)

This section of the poem, with which the drawing is most closely associated, consists of the three stanzas directly following the one cited above, and tells of Helen’s kneeling before Venus’s shrine to offer her a double cup molded on the form of her breasts. The sensuality of the visual image and certainly the sensuousness of the poem challenge the reader-viewer to become immersed in the drama. Indeed, the lines: “He that sees it may not rest, / Rest at all for his heart’s desire,” seem not to be meant for Paris alone. Beginning at this high pitch of sensuality, the poem progresses to a point of uncontrollable passion, which is achieved through the poetic devices of sexual suggestion, symbolism, and repetition. And those same devices are used in the drawing. Helen’s breast is bared before the cup, echoing the revealed breast of the image of Venus she has before her. Behind the curtain stand Cupid and Venus, who, leaning forward and gazing at Helen, set up a repetitive directional force, along with the statue, all emphasizing Helen’s allure. A curtain between her and Venus and Cupid separates Helen from the heavenly realm, where a decision concerning her plea for Paris will be made. Owing to the absence of any definable background in the picture, and because of Rossetti’s placement of the main figures on the front plane, the imagery of the drawing is pushed forward into the reader-viewer’s space. Thus we, too, are impelled by both poem and drawing to study Helen’s gift and to judge her choice of Paris.

Lady Lilith, like the poem “Troy Town,” is bound up with destruction and death, and, like “Sister Helen,” is involved with passionate revenge. Closely associated with the large, sensuous figures of Rossetti’s late paintings, its literary associations are many. The subject originated in Assyrian and Hebrew legend, and Rossetti came across it also in the translations of Goethe’s Faust (1866). He himself had used it in his 1867 sonnet “Body’s Beauty” (number LXXVIII from the “House of Life”) as well as in a poem of 1869 called “Eden Bower.” The poet-painter’s first attempt at a visual complement for the Lilith story apparently was begun in 1864, with Fanny Cornforth as the model. It

poems. Rossetti more than once thought of doing the same. See also the example of Veronica Veronese (no.57) in this exhibition.

Surtees, S.205.
predates, then, Rossetti’s own verse on Lilith, another case of a poem following a pictorial image.

The 1867 watercolor in this exhibition (no.54), like the painting which preceded it (S.205), “represents,” in Rossetti’s words, “a Modern Lilith combing out her abundant golden hair and gazing on herself in the glass with that self-absorption by whose strange fascination such natures draw others within their own circle.” On the back of the watercolor is the following label in Rossetti’s handwriting:


Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks
And when she twines them round a young man’s neck
She will not ever set him free again.

Goethe

Most closely allied with the watercolor Lilith are those lines from Goethe and also Rossetti’s sonnet “Body’s Beauty,” which, according to William Michael, embodies “some particulars which are strictly indicative of details to be seen in the pictures.” “Eden Bower,” he says, is concerned with Lilith as a serpent changed into a woman, the wife of Adam before Eve, and that this, along with Goethe’s passage above, should be kept in mind when reading “Body’s Beauty.” While “Eden Bower” recounts the entire narrative associated with Lilith, “Body’s Beauty,” which concentrates on Lilith alone as a woman who ensnares and kills her victims, is a more generalized account of what she was like and a warning to all who would be drawn into her web.

However different in intent, the two poems do complement each other. The title “Eden Bower” establishes the setting, suggesting a shelter or the lady’s room in which the drama begins. A sense of horror in the events of the poem is contrasted with refrains suggesting the beautiful environment (“Sing Eden Bower”), while stanza 10 brings out Lilith’s true motives when she refers to her “fair body” in relationship to Adam and Eve: for her the only relationship possible is a physical one. This charged verse leads to “Body’s Beauty” and the method of Lilith’s evil deeds.

“Body’s Beauty” depicts Rossetti’s universalized femme fatale, the words drawing the reader-viewer further into the picture: “[She] Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave, / Till heart and body and life are in its hold.” But once having been drawn into it, we are repelled by the tightness of the enclosed space and the huge figure of Lilith, both of which make her own space impenetrable. To the left a pleasant scene of woods appears as an outlet; but one soon realizes that this is a mirror of the reader-viewer’s space. We are within Eden Bower, caught in Lilith’s snare. The following stanza of the poem tells of the passion and death (rose and poppy) within that snare, and of one, like us, who is entranced and then strangled by Lilith’s enticing beauty, recal-

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ling the warning found in Goethe's lines: "Beware of her hair, for she excels / All women in the magic of her locks."

Thus the idyllic mood of the picture, which portrays a beautiful woman, is altered by the poem, which expresses her evil traits. Once we are unsuspectingly drawn into the visual image, the poem tells us it is too late to escape. This specific association of the roles of poem and picture makes for one of Rossetti's most successful double works of art, which includes the reader-viewer in the full, beautiful, and terrifying experience of the legend and personality of Lilith.
44. *Hesterna Rosa*. Signed and dated 1853. Pen and ink, 7½ x 9¼ in.
Lent by the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, London.
45. *Hestema Rosa*. Monogrammed and dated 1865. Watercolor, $10\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$ in. Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.

*Quoth tongue of neither maid nor wife*
*To heart of neither wife nor maid:*
*“Lead we not here a jolly life*  
*Bewixt the shine and shade?”*

*Quoth heart of neither maid nor wife*  
*To tongue of neither wife nor maid:*
*“Thou wag’st, but I am worn with strife,*  
*And feel like flowers that fade.”*

Sir Henry Taylor,  
*Philip van Artevelde,*  
Part II, V, i, lines 1–8.
‘Too late for love, too late for joy,
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
   You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
   Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
   Slept, died, behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
   You made it wait.

‘Ten years ago, five years ago,
   One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
   Though somewhat slow;
Then you had known her living face
   Which now you cannot know:
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
   The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
   To melt the snow.

‘Is she fair now as she lies?
   Once she was fair;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
   With gold-dust on her hair.
Now these are poppies in her locks,
   White poppies she must wear;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
   And the want graven there:
Or is the hunger fed at length,
   Cast off the care?

‘We never saw her with a smile
   Or with a frown;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
   Though tossed of down;
She little heeded what she wore,
   Kirtle, or wreath, or gown;
We think her white brows often ached
   Beneath her crown,
Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
   That used to be so brown.

‘We never heard her speak in haste;
   Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
   As it was meet:
Her heart sat silent through the noise
   And concourse of the street.

There was no hurry in her hands,  
    No hurry in her feet;  
There was no bliss drew nigh to her,  
    That she might run to greet.

‘You should have wept her yesterday  
    Wasting upon her bed:  
But wherefore should you weep to-day  
    That she is dead?  
Lo we who love weep not to-day,  
    But crown her royal head.  
Let be these poppies that we strew,  
    Your roses are too red:  
Let be these poppies, not for you  
    Cut down and spread.’

C. G. Rossetti,
“The Prince’s Progress,”
lines 481–540.
50. *The Prince's Progress* (study for the frontispiece).
Dated “Dec. 1865.” Pencil, and pen with India ink, 6 3/4 x 4 9/16 in.
Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
49. (right) *The Prince's Progress* (study for the frontispiece), ca. 1865–66. Pencil, and pen with India ink, 6 1/8 x 3 3/16 in. Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

48. (below) *The Prince's Progress* (study for the frontispiece), ca. 1865–66. Pencil, and pen with India ink, 6 13/16 x 2 7/8 in. Lent by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
Rose-sheathed beside the rosebud tongue
Lurks the young adder's tooth;
Milk-mild from new-born hemlock-bluth
The earliest drops are wrung:
And sweet the flower of his first youth
When Michael Scott was young.

D. G. Rossetti,
"Michael Scott's Wooing."

Lent by the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow.
"Why did you melt your waxen man,
  Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
  Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But if you have done your work aright,
  Sister Helen,
You'll let me play, for you said I might."
"Be very still in your play to-night,
  Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

"You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
  Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well."
"Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
  Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
  Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!"
"Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
  Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

"See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
  Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"
"Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
  Little brother?"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
  Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door."
"Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
  Little Brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)
"Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me."
"Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta's queen,
(O Troy Town!)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
All Love's lordship lay between.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,
(O Troy Town!)
Saying, "A little gift is mine,
A little gift for a heart's desire.
Hear me speak and make me a sign!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Look, I bring thee a carven cup;
(O Troy Town!)
See it here as I hold it up,—
Shaped it is to the heart's desire,
Fit to fill when the gods would sup.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"It was moulded like my breast;
(O Troy Town!)
He that sees it may not rest,
Rest at all for his heart's desire.
O give ear to my heart's behest!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

D. G. Rossetti,
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Helen and Alice Colburn Fund.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks
And when she twines them round a young man's neck
She will not ever set him free again.

Goethe
Written on a label
on the back of the watercolor
in Rossetti's handwriting.

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

D. G. Rossetti, "Body's Beauty."
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A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark whirlp's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll of Death. 1

In April 1880 Rossetti gave his mother a copy of David Main's *Treasury of Sonnets*, in which he had inserted a drawing illustrative of his own well-known poem “The Sonnet.” This drawing, now lost, portrayed a winged female figure labeled “Anima,” which represented the soul. 2 She held a harp with fourteen strings, one for each line of the sonnet form, and a winged hourglass, a symbol of the “one dead deathless hour.” Around the body of the poem ran a rosebush, whose spreading branches depicted the “all embracing aspects of life which the sonnet can apprehend and embody,” and suspended from this was a double-faced coin. 3 On one side was a butterfly, symbol of the soul, and on the reverse, an alpha and omega surrounded by a snake biting its tail, representing eternity. 4 A preliminary sketch for the figure of “Anima” (no.55), as well as a drawing for an alternate design (S.258B), are preserved in the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, and in the collection of Mrs. Virginia Surtees, respectively.

Rossetti’s poem “The Sonnet,” which he considered “his special vehicle in

2 Although only preparatory drawings now exist, the design was engraved as a frontispiece to William Sharp's *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, A Record and a Study* (London, 1882). A photograph of the lost drawing is reproduced in H. C. Marillier’s *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: An Illustrated Memorial of His Art and Life* (London, 1899), facing p. 199.
3 Sharp, Rossetti, p. 260.
verse,” and its pictorial equivalent, the drawing, exemplify the dual nature of his art.\(^5\) In his later works, the symbiotic relationship which had always existed between his painting and poetry was more evident than ever before. By 1870, when the first volume of his poetry was published, Rossetti realized that his writing and painting arose from the same poetic source, and he used them conjointly to embrace all possible facets of his vision. Although illness and mental breakdowns reduced his production during this period, the number of successful double works of art continued to rise.

For Rossetti, “The Sonnet” was symbolic of personal experience, a memory made tangible through the agency of the poet, and carried, concretely, into the drawing through the hourglass, a symbol of time past. Rossetti emphasized the quasi-religious nature of the sonnet by his use of such phrases as “lustral rite or dire portent” and “arduous fulness reverent.” The theme is picked up even more plainly in the complementary drawing, in which the soul is portrayed as a winged angel, and the hourglass, or “dead deathless hour,” is also winged and immortal. In the sestet the relation of the poet to his work is explained by the coin metaphor. The obverse of the coin depicts the soul of the poet, symbolized—in the drawing—by the butterfly. Rossetti stressed the all-important part of the soul by enlarging and reiterating it in the winged figure of “Anima.” Thus in both sonnet and drawing the artist’s soul is re-created.

The reverse of the coin portrays the power that motivated the poet—his experience of life, love, or death, which was expanded in the drawing by the snake-symbol of eternity. Thus Rossetti combined a portrait of his own soul with his vision of these forces to create a union of poetic ideal and reality. The result is an intense, idealized dual vision—an icon of the poet-painter’s experience and a memorial to his art.

During the last ten years of his life Rossetti’s art, which had always been inspired by women, was dominated by a new breed of females. In his paintings monumental goddesses with sensuous lips and melancholy eyes replace the smaller, less voluptuous characters in the earlier watercolors of medieval scenes. The features of these women, which earlier had been recognizable portraits of individual models, become increasingly stylized into a type: long necks, heavy masses of hair, protuberant lips, and deep soulful eyes through which Rossetti projects his own meaning and emotion. The same concerns that inform his poetry at this time—his passion for Jane Morris, his past happiness and present melancholy, and his hope of love’s final consummation beyond death—all are included in the symbolism of his late paintings. These portray not merely simple images of women but figures which, to be fully understood, must be seen in relation to the poems or writings that accompany them. Rossetti usually placed them in close physical conjunction. In the case of “The Sonnet” he employed the drawing to act as a frame for the poem, and in his later paintings he inscribed the pertinent lines on the frame—a device that was meant not only to lead the reader-viewer into the scene but also to act as part of a highly decorative scheme involving painting, poetry, and the golden frame. The effect as a whole was to lighten and make more accessible the mysterious goddesses who predominate in his later work.

Using both poetry and paintings, Rossetti created complex icons—telescoped, concentrated personal visions, energized by his dreams and ex-

perience, and surrounded by symbols that are rich in meaning. However, he did not always succeed in carrying through his double works of art. Take, for example, Desdemona's Death Song (no.56), which never progressed much beyond compositional drawings and studies. In choosing to depict Desdemona singing the willow song, a lover’s lament which foreshadows her murder and Othello’s suicide, Rossetti may have been thinking of a parallel in his own life. In 1862 his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, died from an overdose of laudanum, and he became so obsessed by guilt that he tried to take his own life in the same manner in 1872. Just a few months before his attempted suicide, Rossetti had begun to make compositional studies for Desdemona, placing her figure exactly as she is described by Shakespeare, with “her head all at one side”; but his mental collapse in June 1872 interrupted his work, which he took up again only intermittently after 1874. Although Rossetti was interested enough in the subject to return to it in the last summer of his life, the initial impetus was gone. Indeed, he never managed to make more out of it than an illustration of melancholy beauty and innocence.

Another design in which innocence figures, this time symbolized by daffodils, is the painting Veronica Veronese (no.57) of 1872. Here, according to his brother William, Rossetti wished to express the concept of art as an emotional reaction to some element in nature. The woman is Rossetti’s icon for the artistic soul in the act of creation. And though he himself was indifferent to music, he chose to make it the symbol of fine art, perhaps at the suggestion of F. R. Leyland, who commissioned the painting. Inspired by the bird’s song, the woman is about to take down her violin and play, but she pauses, letting her fingers wander over the strings as if searching for a motif to create. Rossetti’s need to express the idea both pictorially and in written form led him to append a passage to the bottom of the frame. Composed either by Swinburne or Rossetti himself, the motto was said by the latter to be a quotation from a nonexistent French book, The Letters of Girolamo Ridolfi. Rossetti never explained why he used that subterfuge, but the invented phrases capture the picture’s crucial moment: “It was the marriage of the voices of nature and the soul—the dawn of a mystic creation.” In describing the scene, the passage not only expands it but lends further significance to the static figure of the woman, whose attitude of motionless reverie is given new meaning when the reader-viewer realizes that the woman has been arrested at the very moment of creation.

As in few other cases, Veronica Veronese elaborates the double nature of Rossetti’s art, for it is one of a pair of paintings. Its complementary half is The Sea Spell (S.248), which was also commissioned by Leyland and finished in 1877. In the latter, Rossetti reverses the roles of inspirer and listener: “Thus

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7 Othello IV, iv.
here the bird listens to the player, as in the other picture the player does to the
bird.” 12 The figure represented is more than the complementary half of Ver-
onica Veronese; she is also her antithesis. Rather than a representation of inno-
cence and purity in the act of creation, she is a figure of destruction, a siren who
lures men to their death. Her long floating hair, as in Lilith (no.54), is a trap,
and her song, like the woman’s in “The Orchard Pit,” entices her victims to
approach and fall under her spell. Both images of women—the pure, virginal
Veronica Veronese and the femme fatale of The Sea Spell—appealed to Rossetti,
whose lifelong ideal of woman was just such a blend of sensual and spiritual
beauty. Spurred on by his vision of physical and intellectual perfection, he
incorporated the two types into one of his finest later works, La Bella Mano of
1875 (no.58), which, in the single figure of a beautiful woman washing her
hands, combines the spiritual attractions of a Beatrice with the sexual allure of
a Lilith. Although the story told through the poem and picture was new, two
older designs were used to create the setting for La Bella Mano—a watercolor
of 1860, Lucrezia Borgia (S.124), and a design known as Washing Hands (no.59)
of 1865. As for the figures in the painting, Rossetti made elaborate preparatory
drawings of both models—Alexa Wilding as the main figure (no.60), and, as
her attendant, May Morris (no.61).

Like the painting, the sonnet entitled “La Bella Mano” contains a mixture
of two seemingly opposed images, virginal and pagan, which must be read in
conjunction with the picture if Rossetti’s meaning is to be understood. The
opening lines of the poem not only describe the scene, they also make clear a
connection only hinted at in the painting. The woman washes her hands in a
shell-shaped bowl filled with water, which in the poem is a “pure and proper
element, / Whence erst the Lady of Love’s high advent / Was born, and end-
less fires sprang from the wave:—” Thus Venus, the goddess of love, is
brought into the picture and is allied with the woman through the elements
they share: water, in which the deity was born and the lady washes; and fire
(symbolic of passion) reflected in the mirror and illuminating the painted
scene. A few lines further on they are connected through “her Loves, ” or
cupids, who wait on the woman while “each / Looks at those lips . . . / The
fount, and of more bliss than man may crave.” The woman’s inherent sensual-
ity is again emphasized in the sestet, when Rossetti calls her “A flower of
Venus’ own virginity,”—in other words, a courtesan. In the light of the
poem’s erotic suggestiveness, the woman in the painting certainly can be seen
by the viewer as a highly paid prostitute. This opinion is supported by the two
figures who attend her—two cupids, who, as in the poem, stare at her lips—as
well as by her opulent dress, jewelry, and the other luxurious objects which
surround her.

On the other hand, Rossetti did not intend that she should be seen in a
physical manner only. He also wished to portray her as a Christian figure and
virgin—or as the Virgin—the embodiment of purity and salvation. Although
the poem does contain suggestions of the woman’s spiritual nature in such
lines as “thy pure and proper element,” and “Go shine among thy sisterly
sweet band; / In maiden-minded converse delicately / Evermore white and
soft;” it is in the painting that the viewer is most strongly confirmed of her
inviolate and innocent state. Most prominent in support of this interpretation

are the two winged figures, who can be seen as attendant angels, like the standard-bearing seraph atop the cistern.

Water and the act of washing hands both signify purity, while the arrangement of the basin, cistern, and hanging towel was borrowed directly from the sixteenth century art of Germany and the Netherlands, in which it was commonly depicted as a mark of the sanctity of the Virgin in Annunciation scenes. Other attributes of Mary are included in the picture: the rosebush, the lemon tree, and the iris, or sword lily, are her symbols, while the mirror behind the woman’s head (which acts as a halo) is a sign of her purity as a reflection of God.

Rossetti himself viewed the figure of La Bella Mano both as a pure and fallen woman, and was doubly aroused by the combination of the physical and spiritual appeal of her figure. Just as in his early poem “Jenny,” Rossetti likened the woman in La Bella Mano to a Madonna and called her a flower; so at the same time he saw embodied in her figure his own physical desires. La Bella Mano is a symbol “of man’s changeless sum / Of lust, past, present, and to come,” but that lust which the woman aroused was not only due to her bodily grace; it was also a desire for spiritual beauty. For Rossetti the two were not mutually exclusive: they coexisted and complemented each other in his mind, and thus both found expression in his art. The intensely personal nature of La Bella Mano is revealed in the reflection of the mirror, which would indicate that the scene took place in Rossetti’s own bedroom, exactly as it was depicted by H. T. Dunn, who made drawings of the interior of the house in Cheyne Walk immediately after Rossetti’s death.

Continually searching for sympathetic characters or literary frameworks, Rossetti projected into them his own ideas of beauty and love. Dante’s poetry, especially the Vita Nuova, which Rossetti had translated in 1860, was one of his favorite and most frequently employed sources for borrowed subjects. From this book he chose several key scenes that had particular appeal for him, and then retold them in graphic terms. He did not merely illustrate Dante, but also enlarged and reinterpreted the tale to suit his own notion of Beatrice—a notion which, as in La Bella Mano, was an ideal just as physical as it was spiritual. The scene that was most significant for Rossetti, and into which he could best project his own imaginings, was The Salutation of Beatrice (no.62). As H. C. Marillier points out, there are three episodes in the Vita Nuova in which Beatrice salutes Dante, and all of them were painted by Rossetti. His last unfinished version, which depicts the third salutation of Beatrice, is connected to the lines from Dante’s sonnet:

My lady looks so gentle and so pure  
When yielding salutation by the way,

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13 In his article “Early German Sources for Pre-Raphaelite Designs,” Art Quarterly XXXVI (Summer 1973): 56–83, John Christian points out that Rossetti originally got the motif from Dürer’s woodcut of The Birth of the Virgin.
14 Rossetti, Works, I, 41.
15 Doughty, A Victorian Romantic, p. 673. Dunn’s drawing of Rossetti’s bedroom is reproduced in his Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, facing p. 35.
That tongue trembles and has nought to say,
And the eyes, which fain would see, may not endure.\textsuperscript{17}

These lines are inscribed on the painting's frame, both in Rossetti's English version and in the original Italian.\textsuperscript{18}

Missal in hand, Beatrice is pictured walking through a street in Florence. Rossetti, who was fond of elaborate plant symbolism, lined her way with jasmine and roses, thus enhancing her purity by way of floral emblems. For the architectural background of the scene, Rossetti, who had never been to Italy, worked from photographs supplied to him by Fairfax Murray. In the background he added a vignette not mentioned by Dante, but which conformed to his own vision of the scene: the winged figure of Love sheltering the poet under his wings. Rossetti's implication in his expansion of the written scene is that Dante—his namesake—is protected and comforted by his love for Beatrice, and that through his passion for her, he will be purified and reborn. This is symbolized in the painting by the well upon which the figure of Love is seated. The dominant figure, Beatrice, is in fact a stylized portrait of Jane Morris. Reflected in her eyes is the melancholy sense of peace that Rossetti himself derived from the contemplation of his love ideal, which was perfectly expressed in Dante's lines, "She showed herself so gentle and so full of perfection, that she bred in those who looked upon her a soothing quiet beyond any speech; neither could any look upon her without sighing immediately."\textsuperscript{19}

Perhaps the most unusual work of Rossetti's later period is \textit{The Question}, which was done in the same year as \textit{La Bella Mano}. Two versions of the subject are preserved: a highly finished pencil design in the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham (no.63), and a pencil sketch in the Fogg Museum, Cambridge (no.64). The depiction, one of the few in which Rossetti portrayed full-length nudes, is altogether different in execution and intent from his early watercolors and also from his later single-figure paintings of women. In \textit{The Question} Rossetti was not trying to reinterpret a character taken from a literary source, as he did in \textit{The Salutation of Beatrice}, nor was he creating an embodiment of his ideal of physical and spiritual beauty, as in \textit{La Bella Mano}. Instead, he wished to express in the two drawings some of the emotions voiced in his poetry of the same period, in which he articulated his feelings about the mystery of life and death. Rossetti points out the parallel between his poems and \textit{The Question} in a letter to Jane Morris: "the subject is in fact the same as that of my little poem 'Cloud Confines': 'And eyes fixed ever in vain / On the pitiless eyes of Fate.' " He continues, describing the theme as follows:

The idea is that of man questioning the unknown . . . .
In the design, a youth, a mature man, and an old man, have made their way up a rocky ascent to a platform embowered

\textsuperscript{17} Rossetti, \textit{Works II}, 74.
\textsuperscript{18} "'Painting and frame must always be seen as a unity; when reproduced without their frames his late works tend to emanate an air of gloom and menace but this is a false impression for it ignores the decorative aspect of his work'" (Alastair Grieve, "The Applied Art of D. G. Rossetti—His Picture Frames," \textit{Burlington} CXV [January 1973]: 23).
\textsuperscript{19} Rossetti, \textit{Works II}, 73.
with laurels which is the shrine of the Sphinx. The youth has fallen in death before he can question the oracle—the man peers into her eyes with his question, but they have no answer, staring at the unseen sky beyond the horizon of the picture... meanwhile the old man toils up toward the Sphinx, eager to the last for her secret.  

The drawings embody Rossetti's belief in the futility of human life—from the first endeavors of youth to the last tremulous hopes of old age.

According to William Rossetti, "in representing the dying stripling, Rossetti was thinking of the premature fate of Oliver Madox Brown, the youth of singular promise, both as painter and as writer, who had ended his brief life of less than twenty years in the November of 1874." Rossetti had written a sonnet on the young man's death, "Untimely Lost," but it has little or nothing to do with the drawings. After 1875 Rossetti dropped the subject, and he apparently did not think of expanding it, either into a painting or a poem, until his last illness in 1882. Most probably he realized that the composition owed too large a debt to the painting of Ingres, *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (Louvre, Paris), and he did not want to be accused of copying another artist's design.

Five days before his death, Rossetti dictated two feeble sonnets for the drawing to Hall Caine. He had meant to give these, together with the design, to Watts-Dunton for a volume of poetry they were preparing, but he died before the project was completed. The fact that these two sonnets—Rossetti's last poetic efforts—were only mediocre, bears out a point that Maryan Ainsworth makes in her essay above, "'The Prince's Progress': Works From 1863 to 1871." Indeed Rossetti's double works of art were rarely as successful when there was an appreciable lapse of time between the creation of the drawing and that of the poem. With regard to *The Question*, Rossetti had already fully worked out his idea in the drawings, leaving little reason for the addition of the sonnets. Rather than expanding or even illustrating the design, they merely describe the scene and so add nothing to the concept itself. "The question they ask and cannot answer is that so long haunting Rossetti's own mind, an indication of his obsessive desire for the non-existent key to the riddle of human life."

As he grew increasingly isolated and sick, Rossetti turned inward to his memories of love. But for him love was no longer a "Paphian Venus... silver shrouded in silvery grove," nor was it the sheltering figure Rossetti had added to the *Salutation of Beatrice*. It had become a "Mystery: Lo! Betwixt sun and moon / Astarte of the Syrians: Venus Queen / Ere Aphrodite was." That was the dispirited mood Rossetti was in when he began to paint *Venus Astarte* (S.249), the ancient goddess of love—mysterious, cruel, and fatal. In 1879 he reworked "a first commencement of the Astarte," turning it into a figure of *Mnemosyne* (no.65), the goddess of memory, a highly appropriate

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20 See Footnote 3 and letter to F. G. Stephens, both in Surtees, I, 140.
22 Rossetti saw a painting by Ingres in 1855 when it was on display at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. For a discussion of *The Question*, and *Oedipus and the Sphinx* by Ingres, see Carl A. Peterson, "Rossetti and the Sphinx," *Apollo* LXXXV (January 1967): 48-53.
23 See Maryan Wynn Ainsworth's essay above, p. 73.
26 Ibid., p. 226.
image for the last years of his career. Written on the frame are two lines composed for the painting: “Thou fill’st from the winged chalice of the soul / Thy lamp, O Memory, fire-winged to its goal.” Rossetti thus embodied his own soul in Mnemosyne; she is his past, once fresh in reality, but in the end, tinged with sadness. Indeed, her eyes reflect his dream with a fixed and melancholy gaze that is utterly self-absorbed.

Brooding on past happiness and present suffering, Rossetti wrote, “Is memory most of miseries miserable, / Or the one flower of ease in bitterest hell?” He introduced that notion into the painting by way of the symbolic pansy, the “one flower” of memory, and by the word “Ricordanza” written at the upper left. The couplet echoes Francesca da Rimini’s lament to Dante in Hell: “The bitterest woe of woes / Is to remember in our wretchedness / Old happy times,” but Rossetti again expanded the idea, by suggesting a hope that his memories of love would somehow ease his pain and justify his present misery.

A Sonnet is a moment's monument, —
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul, —its converse, to what Power 'tis due: —
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

D. G. Rossetti, “The Sonnet.”
Desdemona [Singing]:
'The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow:
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;
Sing willow, willow, willow:
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;'
Lay by these.—
[Singing] 'Sing willow, willow, willow:' —
Prithee, hie thee; he'll come anon.—
[Singing]
'Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve,' —
Nay, that's not next. Hark! who is it that knocks?
Emil: It is the wind.
Desdemona [Singing]:
'I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.'

William Shakespeare,
Othello IV, iii, lines 42–58.
56. Desdemona’s Death Song. ca. 1874. Pen and brown ink, 17⅞ x 13⅛ in. 
Lent by Janet Camp Troxell.
Suddenly leaning forward, the Lady Veronica rapidly wrote the first notes on the virgin page. Then she took the bow of the violin to make her dream reality; but before commencing to play the instrument hanging from her hand, she remained quiet a few moments, listening to the inspiring bird, while her left hand strayed over the strings searching for the supreme melody, still illusive. It was the marriage of the voices of nature and the soul—the dawn of a mystic creation.

D. G. Rossetti
57. *Veronica Veronese*. Initialed and dated 1872. Oil, 43 x 35 in.
Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.
O Bella Mano, che ti lavi e piaci
   In quel medesmo tuo puro elemento
Donde la Dea dell’ amoroso avvento
Nacque, (e dall’ onda s’infuocar le faci
Di mille inspegnibili fornaci):—
   Come a Venere a te l’oro e l’argento
Offron gli Amori; e ognun riguarda attento
La bocca che sorride e te che taci.

In dolce modo dove onor t’ invii
   Vattene adorna, e porta insiem fra tante
Di Venere e di vergine sembiante;
Umilemente in luoghi onesti e pii
Bianca e soave ognora; infin che sii,
   O Mano, mansueta in man d’amante.

D. G. Rossetti,
   “La Bella Mano.”

O lovely hand, that thy sweet self dost lave
   In that thy pure and proper element,
Whence erst the Lady of Love’s high advent
Was born, and endless fires sprang from the wave:—
Even as her Loves to her their offerings gave,
   For thee the jewelled gifts they bear; while each
Looks to those lips, of music-measured speech
The fount, and of more bliss than man may crave.

In royal wise ring-girt and bracelet-spann’d,
   A flower of Venus’ own virginity,
Go shine among thy sisterly sweet band;
In maiden-minded converse delicately
Evermore white and soft; until thou be,
   O hand! heart-handsel’d in a lover’s hand.

D. G. Rossetti,
   “La Bella Mano.”
Lent by the Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection.

My lady looks so gentle and so pure
When yielding salutation by the way,
That the tongue trembles and has nought to say,
And the eyes, which fain would see, may not endure.
And still, amid the praise she hears secure,
She walks with humbleness for her array;
Seeming a creature sent from Heaven to stay
On earth, and show a miracle made sure.
She is so pleasant in the eyes of men
That through the sight the inmost heart doth gain
A sweetness which needs proof to know it by;
And from between her lips there seems to move
A soothing essence that is full of love,
Saying for ever to the spirit, "Sigh!"

Dante, *Vita Nuova*, II.
Lent by the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.
I

This sea, deep furrowed as the face of Time,
Mirrors the ghost of the removed moon;
The peaks stand bristling round the waste lagune;
While up the difficult summit steeply climb
Youth, Manhood, Age, one triple labouring mime;
And to the measure of some mystic rune
Hark how the restless waters importune
These echoing steeps with chime and counter-chime.
What seek they? Lo, upreared against the rock
The Sphinx, Time's visible silence, frontleted

With Psyche wings, with eagle plumes arched o'er.
Ah, when those everlasting lips unlock
And the old riddle of the world is read,
What shall man find? or seeks he evermore?
II

Lo, the three seekers! Youth has sprung the first
To question the Unknown: but see! he sinks
Prone to the earth—becomes himself a sphinx,—
A riddle of early death no love may burst.
Sorely anhungered, heavily athirst
For knowledge, Manhood next to reach the Truth
Peers in those eyes; till haggard and uncouth
Weak Eld renews that question long rehearsed.

Oh! and what answer? From the sad sea brim
The eyes o' the Sphinx stare through the midnight spell,
Unwavering,—man's eternal quest to quell:
While round the rock-steps of her throne doth swim
Through the wind-serried wave the moon's faint rim,
Sole answer from the heaven invisible.

D. G. Rossetti, "The Question."
Thou fill'st from the winged chalice of the soul
Thy lamp, O Memory, fire-winged to its goal.

D. G. Rossetti,
"Mnemosyne."

Maggior dolore è ben la Ricordanza,
O nell’ amaro inferno amena stanza?

D. G. Rossetti,
"La Ricordanza."

Is Memory most of miseries miserable,
Or the one flower of ease in bitterest hell?

D. G. Rossetti,
"Memory."
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