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Saintly Ecstasies

The Appropriation and Secularisation of Saintly
Imagery in the Paintings and Poems of Dante
Gabriel Rossetti

Joanna Meacock

History of Art Department, Glasgow University
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Abstract

Using unpublished source material at Princeton University, the University of British Columbia, the British Library and the National Art Library in the V&A, this thesis aims to broaden current scholarly understanding regarding Rossetti's exposure to, interest in, and subsequent appropriation of aspects of monastic life and saintly legend in his religious and secular paintings and poems.

The intention of part one of this thesis is to discuss and analyse Rossetti's early interest in monasticism and the legends of the saints. Rossetti's attraction to Catholic ritual and ceremony, both in terms of its aesthetic impact and the feelings of awe it engendered, will form the background to a discussion of his admiration for pre-Reformation art. The concern which he displayed in his own paintings and poems for saintly legend and theological mysteries will be shown to have its origins in early Christian art, as well as in the apocryphal lives of the saints and the writings of the Church Fathers, which had seen a resurgence in popularity in the wake of the Oxford Movement.

Rossetti's growing fascination with art as a vehicle for the conveyance of religious ideas will be considered in relation to the early and mid-nineteenth century revival of interest in the medieval painter-monk and in the practice of illumination. Rossetti's 1856 watercolour *Fra Pace* will be examined in this context. The pertinence of the example of St Luke, who used his art as a preaching tool, will also be considered, Rossetti having returned to this concept directly, and obliquely, throughout his career in both his visual and poetic art. The influence of the quasi-monastic Nazarene painters, also called the German Brotherhood of St Luke, will be examined.

Rossetti's suggestion of "Brotherhood" as an appendage to "Pre-Raphaelite" will be considered within a specifically monastic context, looking at the artist's family history, analogous artistic communities, and the revival of interest in ascetic institutions within the nineteenth century. The extent to which the works of the Pre-Raphaelite group showed a bias towards asceticism will be analysed, as will contemporary reactions to this. The legend of St Elizabeth of Hungary, treated in a favourable light by the Pre-Raphaelites but transformed into an anti-Catholic tool by Charles Kingsley, will underpin this discussion. Rossetti's interest in the monastic model, on an increasingly secular level, will be examined through his involvement with the Working Men's

College, the Oxford Union mural scheme, the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and the publisher F. S. Ellis.

The purpose of the second part of this thesis is to demonstrate that following the disbandment of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Rossetti did not turn his back on saintly subject matter although he pursued greater sensuality in both his poetry and visual art. Rossetti's attraction to the merging of spiritual and sensual experience within Catholic legend, particularly the idea of spiritual marriage, will be examined. A discussion of Rossetti's incorporation of such themes into his work, most notably in his designs for Moxon's edition of Tennyson, in which he eschewed the traditional role of illustrator in order to concentrate on themes of the Bride and Groom and religious ecstasy, will follow.

The subsequent development of his art will be discussed in terms of a secularisation of saintly iconography. Discussion will focus on works such as *Beata Beatrix* and *The Beloved*, as well as lesser known images. Rossetti's oil *Venus Verticordia* will instigate discussion on the renewal of interest in the lives of the ecstatic saints, most notably St Teresa. Rossetti's friendship with Swinburne, who introduced a Catholic quality to his sexually sadistic practices and writings, will be considered in the context of Rossetti's increasingly subversive paintings and poems. The dichotomy evident in his *oeuvre* between respect for Christian iconography and increasing religious scepticism will be examined in a discussion of his approach to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The connection between the sexual and spiritual will also form the basis for a discussion of the influence of Swedenborg on Rossetti's paintings and poems. The extent to which Rossetti's artistic output was influenced by Swedenborgian concepts will be analysed, taking into account the proliferation of such ideas among his contemporaries. Rossetti's interest in spiritualism will also be considered with particular emphasis on the phenomena of spirit writing and drawing. His 1863 oil *Joan of Arc* will be discussed in terms of spiritual mediumship. Through an examination of spiritualism's relation to Christianity and the associations made with the miracles of saintly legend within contemporary criticism, it will be shown that this was a further facet of Rossetti's interest in the mystical lives of the saints.

Finally, an examination will be made of Rossetti's appropriation of musical imagery as a signifier of the divine and the development of this theme in his mature secular works in which he sought to intimate the sacramental nature of love. This will be advanced through a discussion of the value which his family placed on sacred music and also of

the importance of music in the medieval world. Paintings such as *A Christmas Carol* and *Veronica Veronese* will be considered in relation to both the development of aesthetic theory in art and literature and the musical analogies made by mystical writers to describe their encounters with God. The discussion will be put in the context of the traditional associations made between music and erotic love.

The thesis will conclude by demonstrating that whereas Rossetti's style noticeably changed throughout his career, he remained intrigued with monasticism and with the legends of the saints which had seduced him as a young man, with the result that his works continued to attract Christian patrons and to be described in religious terms, although the religion he propounded was not Christian or pious in any conventional sense.

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Introduction

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was brought up under the auspices of the Anglican church. His father, Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti, a political exile from Italy, was a Roman Catholic, but a disillusioned one, who expressed his anti-papal sentiments in the poems and pamphlets that he wrote.¹ Corresponding with Charles Lyell on 12 May 1828, a fortnight after the birth of his second child, he affectionately referred to Gabriel Charles Dante, as his son was baptised, as "my little Protestant". Indeed, Lyell was named Rossetti's spiritual guardian, the family seeking to follow in the Anglican tradition of godparents.² Rossetti's mother, Frances Mary Lavinia, although half-Italian, had been brought up a Protestant. She was a strong Christian woman, and it was to her that Gabriele entrusted the education of his children. With her, Rossetti attended in his childhood years a number of prominent Anglican churches: Trinity Church, Marylebone Road; St Katherine's, Regent's Park; and Christ Church, Albany Street.³

Rossetti began his education at a firmly Protestant establishment in 1836, the school of Rev. Paul, Foley Street, Portland Place, where he learnt to respect the authority of the Bible.⁴ In 1837 he became a pupil of King's College, which was "of strict Church of England principle", and where every morning a chapter of the Bible was read and prayers offered. The majority of the teaching staff were clergymen; numbered among these were distinguished churchmen, including the Headmaster, Rev. Dr Major, and the Principal, Dr Lonsdale, Bishop of Lichfield. Dr Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was known on occasion to award the end of year prizes to the students. Rossetti remained within this staunchly Anglican establishment until 1842.⁵

However, Rossetti was to show as he grew up an increasing interest in his Roman Catholic heritage. Tirebuck, one of Rossetti's first biographers, declared, "Without effort, almost without consciousness, we associate him with Madonnas, illuminated manuscripts, altarpieces, and cloisters".⁶ Although William Michael Rossetti criticised

¹W. M. Rossetti (trans.), *Gabriele Rossetti* (London: Sands, 1901), pp. 65-71. R. D. Waller, *The Rossetti Family* (Manchester University Press, 1932), p. 79.

²J. Purves, "Dante Rossetti and his Godfather", *University of Edinburgh Journal*, vol. 4 (1931), p. 112. W. M. Rossetti, *Family Letters with a Memoir*, 2 vols. (London: Ellis & Elvey, 1895), vol. 1, p. 3.

³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 21, 72.

⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 68-70.

⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 70-72.

⁶W. Tirebuck, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Stock, 1882), p. 7.

Tirebuck's book as being "overloaded in literary style", he admitted that in terms of substance it was "sincere" and "intelligent".⁷ The nineteenth century had seen a widespread revival of interest in the medieval age, which had revealed itself in such diverse forms as the Eglinton Tournament; Victoria and Albert's 1842 fancy dress ball at Buckingham Palace; the novels of Sir Walter Scott; the political chivalry expressed in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley; the architectural and interior design of the new Houses of Parliament; and the poetry of Alfred Tennyson.⁸ This thesis aims to examine D. G. Rossetti's concern for monasticism and the lives of the saints, which, whilst being an aspect of this Gothic revivalism, had a more comprehensive origin and a wider compass, Rossetti having been greatly influenced by his spiritual heritage, by current religious trends and by the notion of artistic community.

Bringing new evidence and source material to bear on his *oeuvre*, this thesis augments previous scholarship that has acknowledged Rossetti's poetic and pictorial debt to contemporary religious debates and sacred iconography. Alastair Grieve has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the relation between the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and contemporary High Church issues.⁹ Rossetti's use of Marian iconography, Old and New Testament allusion within his political poems, and the recurrent image of the religious Pilgrim has been closely studied by D. M. R. Bentley.¹⁰ Landow has conducted extensive research into the way in which the writings of Ruskin and the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites correspond with a general revival of interest in typological symbolism in Victorian Britain. He has specifically interpreted Rossetti's work as a secularisation of biblical typology.¹¹ It is the intention of this present work to re-evaluate Rossetti's secular output in terms of his early attraction to the legends of the saints and to ascetic life. The aim of part one of this

⁷W. M. Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 21 July 1882 (Helen Rossetti Angeli - Imogene Dennis Collection, University of British Columbia, box 13: folder 5).

⁸M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot* (Yale University Press, 1981).

⁹A. I. Grieve, *The Art of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Pre-Raphaelite Period, 1848-50* (Hingham: Real World, 1973); "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Anglican High Church", *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 111 (1969).

¹⁰D. M. R. Bentley, "The Blessed Damozel: A Young Man's Fantasy", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 20 (autumn-winter 1982), pp. 31-43; *Religious Themes and Images in the Work of D. G. Rossetti* (London: King's College, PhD thesis, 1974); "Rossetti's *Ave* and Related Pictures", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 15 (1977), pp. 21-35.

¹¹G. P. Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (Yale University Press, 1979).

thesis is to construct a detailed picture of Rossetti's saintly interest, in order to explain in part two the subsequent direction of his mature work.

Rossetti's fascination with Catholic architecture and decoration, which emerged on his boyhood trips to France, will be discussed in the first chapter of part one, Rossetti's initial awakening of interest in saints being intimately connected with the images he encountered within church interiors. Examining his response to Memling's *St John Altarpiece*, this chapter aims to demonstrate the dual nature of his admiration for pre-Reformation art, Rossetti reacting on an aesthetic level to the colour and finish, but evincing an equally theological appreciation of the symbolic programme. The subject of St Catherine will be shown to have attracted him as a result of his church connections in London, his knowledge of saintly legend and his awareness of the writings of the Church Fathers. The influence that the Oxford Movement, with its emphasis on early and medieval church theology, had on High Church Anglicanism of the 1850s will be taken into consideration.

Chapter two deals with Rossetti's intrigue with the notion of the religious artist and the idea of art as a vehicle for the communication of spiritual concepts. It will be demonstrated that Rossetti, regarding the Middle Ages as a period notable for its profound spirituality, turned to the example of the medieval artist, and, in order to emphasise the notion of religious motivation, focused on monastic precedent. *Fra Pace*, an imaginative and romantic portrayal of a monk illuminating a manuscript, will be shown to have been a product of contemporary interest in medieval monastic life and in the illuminated missal, but to have had its principle roots in a concern for art as an expression of faith. Rossetti's interest in Fra Angelico, directly represented in *Fra Angelico Painting*, and indirectly in "Hand and Soul", will be discussed as an extension of this idea but with historical foundation, Rossetti drawing on the writings of Vasari, Jameson and Lindsay in which the spirituality of the fifteenth century painter's life and work were related. Rossetti's treatment of the legend of St Luke will also be discussed, the gospel writer viewing art as an important preaching tool.

Rossetti returned throughout his career to the example of St Luke, and a further aspect of this will be examined in chapter three in connection with the German Brotherhood of St Luke. In September 1848 Rossetti, along with his fellow students in art John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, established an artistic brotherhood which looked for inspiration to early Renaissance art. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood notably drew into its membership F. G. Stephens, who evinced a marked predilection towards early Italian painting, and the religious-minded artist James Collinson, as well

as the sculptor Thomas Woolner and Rossetti's brother William Michael.¹² The extent to which the Pre-Raphaelites followed the German Nazarene painters and the perception of contemporary critics concerning this will be discussed. The influence of Ford Madox Brown and William Cave Thomas, painters in the wider Pre-Raphaelite circle who had had direct contact with the St Luke Brotherhood, will be considered. The doctrines of the Nazarenes will be shown to have gained currency in the writings of Rumohr and Rio, and in Britain through the works of Ruskin, Jameson and Lindsay.

In chapter four the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood will be discussed in relation to Rossetti's attraction towards monastic communities, and the general renewal of interest in ascetic communities in the mid-nineteenth century. The significance which monasticism held for the Rossetti family in terms of ancestry and recent family history will be considered, as will the attraction of Rossetti's sisters to aspects of the monastic life. Rossetti's first oils as a member of the PRB will be shown to reflect the current vogue for sisterhoods and monastic establishments, and the Pre-Raphaelites in general to have responded to Anglo-Catholic debates, in this way attracting Tractarian patrons.

The Brotherhood can be seen to have explored the notion of asceticism in art, both in terms of subject matter and style, and this will be demonstrated in chapter five which focuses on the subject of the renunciation of St Elizabeth of Hungary which attracted the attention of the Pre-Raphaelite group. In contrast to Charles Kingsley, who had turned to the theme in 1848, the Pre-Raphaelites, drawing on Catholic sources, celebrated the asceticism of the saint. It will be shown that the subject of nuns and novices had gained a measure of popularity, but that the style of the Pre-Raphaelites, directly linked to the art of a Catholic age, resulted in heavy criticism, being bound up in the eyes of critics with ascetic practices. This chapter aims to show that Hunt and Millais in particular had fundamental misgivings concerning Catholicism and responded to criticism by emphasising Protestant ideas in their subsequent paintings. Although demonstrating an interest in Gothic literature, which often portrayed Catholicism in a negative light, Rossetti in contrast continued to show a marked sympathy for the tenets of Catholicism.

The PRB was short lived, but out of Rossetti's attraction to ascetic communities grew a concern for artistic fellowship. In the final chapter of part one, the artistic alliances which Rossetti formed throughout his career will be re-evaluated in terms of his concern for brotherhood. Particular emphasis will be given to his associations with the

¹²W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 131-33.

Working Men's College, the Oxford Union project, the decorative arts firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., and the publisher F. S. Ellis. This will be put in the context of contemporary enthusiasm for semi-secular communities and utopian societies, as evinced by Anna Jameson, John Ruskin and Charles Rowley. Demonstrating an increasing concern on the part of Rossetti for civil over sacred models, this section introduces the theme of secularisation that will be developed in part two.

Rossetti's early drawings and writings show that he was as much drawn to devils and spectres as to saints and Madonnas. As early as August 1843 he was composing a diabolic tale, *Sorretino*, inspired by works such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and *Tales of Terror and Mystery* (1799, 1801), Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), and the poems of Edgar Allan Poe.¹³ His enthusiasm for Poe is evident from the many marginal notes and comments which marked his personal copy of Poe's *The Raven and other Poems* and from the number of drawings he made in the late 1840s illustrating this text.

Yet the aspect of Rossetti's character which relished such mysterious and supernatural tales was not so distant from that which appreciated the legends of the saints. Rossetti, in a personal marginal note to himself, declared that "The Raven" "stands for spiritual mysticism and a certain solemn unearthliness above anything I have ever read."¹⁴ As his early drawings illustrating the poems of Poe exhibited a preoccupation with supernatural interactions between the spiritual and physical worlds, so Rossetti evinced a concern in his later saintly pictures and poems with moments of epiphany. In chapter one of part two Rossetti's interest in the merging of spiritual and sensual experience will be considered primarily through an examination of his designs for Moxon's 1857 edition of the poems of Tennyson. It will be shown that Rossetti was less concerned to produce accurate illustrations than to allude to ideas with which he was preoccupied throughout the 1850s, those being themes of spiritual marriage and of the quasi-erotic nature of saintly legend. This discussion, which culminates with Rossetti's *St Cecilia* design, endeavours to demonstrate that any subversive intention is tempered by a genuine interest in mystical Catholic theology.

¹³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 60, 86, 100, 101, 103. Rossetti also owned an anonymous, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London, 1802), which he had annotated (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:9).

¹⁴E. A. Poe, *The Raven and other Poems* (London: Wiley & Putnam, 1846, 1st English edition). Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:9.

In chapter two Rossetti's approach to secular themes will be shown to have been fundamentally affected by his familiarity with saintly iconography. Even while pursuing an increasing sensuality in his paintings and poems from the late 1850s, Rossetti continued to treat themes of sainthood and spiritual marriage, and this will be discussed. Works such as *Beata Beatrix* and *The Beloved* will be considered as images dealing with saintly ecstasy and the tradition of the Bride and Groom of the Canticles. Rossetti's desire to contrast physical and spiritual espousement will be demonstrated through a discussion of *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*. It will be shown that in the early to mid 1860s Rossetti's was beginning to imply that physical love could be redemptive. Literary influences will be taken into consideration.

Venus Verticordia, an erotic image which draws on the iconography of the Virgin, Venus, Eve and St Teresa, will initiate discussion on the increasingly subversive tendencies in Rossetti's work. This third chapter will look at the renewal of interest in the ecstatic saints, particularly St Teresa, and Rossetti's friendship with Swinburne who was drawn to the sensuality of Catholic legend. Swinburne's obsession with flagellation, which took on a Catholic tone in his letters and poems, will be considered in the context of ascetic practice. The influence of his increasingly blasphemous allusions to Christian martyrdom and redemption on Rossetti will be discussed. The extent to which Rossetti's frequent use of eucharistic imagery should be seen as an undermining of Christian tradition will be taken into consideration.

Rossetti's fascination with the interconnected nature of physical and spiritual phenomena will be shown to be tied up with contemporary interest in the philosophies of Swedenborg. Paintings such as *The Blessed Damozel* and poems like "Love Lily" will be shown to embody concepts that cohere with the writings of the Swedish mystic, for example the notion of the soul partner and true conjugal union. It will be demonstrated that many of Rossetti's closest contacts, such as James Smetham, Coventry Patmore and the Brownings, were influenced by Swedenborg's theories, as indeed were Rossetti's own father and William Blake, who was held in great esteem by the artist.

The following chapter deals with Rossetti's interest in spiritualism which had seen a corresponding resurgence in popularity. Rossetti's attendance at seances and his developing friendship with the Howitts will be discussed. Attention will focus on the phenomena of spirit writing and drawing which held a degree of fascination for Rossetti as an artist interested in the spiritually inspired image. A specimen of apparent automatic writing which was sent to Rossetti by Anna Mary Howitt will be considered,

and its religious tone will lead into a discussion of the connection between spiritualism and Christianity. It will be demonstrated that whereas many in the church were wary of this occult practice, others saw it as substantiating Christian belief. Contemporary links with the supernatural accounts of the saints will be examined. Rossetti's *Joan of Arc* will be viewed as embodying the artist's concern for spiritual mediumship; his interest in spirit communication will be related to his disposition following the death of Elizabeth Siddal.

Rossetti's mature theories on the nature of physical love were bound up with notions of a supernatural encounter with the godhead. It is in this context that Rossetti continually returned to the theme of music, which for him symbolised all that was mystical and divine. The importance which sacred music held for the Rossetti family, affecting their choice of place of worship, will be considered, as will their friendship with contemporary musicians. Rossetti's collection of rare and beautiful musical instruments and the musical references made by critics discussing his work will be contrasted with a lack of true appreciation for music as an art form. It will be demonstrated that for Rossetti music was tied up with his fascination with the medieval world, as well as current trends in aesthetic theory which advocated a purely emotional and sensory appreciation of art. Paintings such as *A Christmas Carol* and *Veronica Veronese* will be discussed in this context. Most notably, however, analogies will be advanced with the writings of Christian mystics, who utilised the evocative power of music in order to describe their transcendental encounters with God. Finally, Rossetti's preoccupation with music will be related to the traditional symbolism surrounding erotic love.

Part 1: The Monastic Ideal

Ch. 1: Early Mysticism

Sent to Boulogne in 1843 and again in 1844 to recuperate from ill health, Dante Gabriel stayed with a friend of the Rossetti family, Signor Maenza, also a political refugee. Rossetti's time in the Maenza household was influential for him in terms of art, in which the family had a keen interest, and also religion. Maenza painted landscapes in watercolour, and Rossetti set about copying these. Rossetti also spent time with Maenza's son, Peppino, who was three or four years older than himself and wanted to become a painter.¹⁵ In a letter dated 26 October 1843 to his grandfather, Gaetano Polidori, Rossetti wrote that after only a week with this artistic family he had been inspired to make "several purchases... both of books and prints".¹⁶ Boulogne was certainly "a splendid place for an artist", Rossetti declared in a letter of the following year to his brother William. This was partly due to the availability of engravings, which were not very numerous in his own house, but, more than this, Rossetti's early aesthetic sensibilities were impressed by the picturesqueness of the French fishing town and especially of the local Catholic Church.¹⁷ Having experienced "mass or vespers or whatever they call it", his response was that it was "solemn and impressive".¹⁸

Although Madame Maenza wrote to his mother of "the novelty of a Continental Town to his well-cultivated mind", it was probably not Rossetti's first time in a Catholic church.¹⁹ Their maternal uncle, Henry Polidori, was a very strict Roman Catholic, who "made at times some endeavours (not of a surreptitious kind) to convert my sisters to the Roman Church". He never did so with William Michael, but the latter "occasionally attended a Catholic chapel in his company."²⁰ It would be unlikely that

¹⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 19-23. During Rossetti's 1843 stay Peppino drew an almost full length sketch of Rossetti, seated and in near profile (W. M. Rossetti, "The Portraits of Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Magazine of Art*, vol. 12 (1889), p. 23).

¹⁶Janet Camp Troxell Collection (CO189), Princeton University Library, box 8: folder 33.

¹⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 61.

¹⁸O. Doughty & J. R. Wahl (eds.), *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁹Clarissa Maenza to F. M. L. Rossetti, 26 October 1843 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:15).

²⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Some Reminiscences*, 2 vols. (London: Brown Langham, 1906), vol. 1, p. 119.

Rossetti would have been treated differently, and so it seems safe to assume that Rossetti, who was certainly more interested in religion than William Michael, on occasion attended chapel with his uncle. He may even have sat through mass with his mother, who was known to attend the Roman Catholic chapel in Warwick Street on rare occasions, in order to satisfy family obligations.²¹ Respecting both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant believers within their families, Rossetti's mother and father had been married by Brother Baldacconi according to the Catholic rite on 4 April 1826, and again in the Anglican Church of St James, Westminster, a week later on 11 April.²²

Rossetti's early attraction to gilding suggests his familiarity with Catholic images and ceremonial furnishings. Maria Rossetti wrote to her mother on 15 June 1835, "Papa took us to the gilt shop near Grandpapa's, and bought him (Gabriel) for his birthday, a shilling's worth of gilt... It was at Gabriel's own request."²³ Staying with his Uncle Henry at Chalfont-St-Giles in September 1842, Rossetti wrote of his intention to make "a sketch of the church, which I think exceedingly pretty", and in Boulogne in 1844 it was once again the church which held his attention.²⁴ He wrote enthusiastically of,

... the fine old Gothic interior, adorned with pictures and images of saints - the music and the chanting - the magnificent groups of old fisherwomen, whose intense devotion has in it something sublime - and the "dim religious light" of the lamps placed against the Gothic pillars, which glimmered faintly up and struggled through the gathering darkness - ²⁵

From an early age Rossetti demonstrated an innate attraction to the outward display of Catholic ritual, its saintly images, candles and music, and the feelings of awe and mystery these engendered.

In 1848, inspired by his readings of *Faust*, Rossetti made a pen and ink drawing of Gretchen tempted by Mephistopheles during a church service (S.34A; fig. 1), and he revelled in the opportunity to depict a lavish Gothic interior, crowded with arches, arcades, paintings and statues.²⁶ He may well have had in mind the series of

²¹F. M. L. Rossetti notebook, 23 November [n.d.] (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:16).

²²H. F. Polidori, *A Brief Account of H. F. Polidori and his Family* (unpublished), p. 11 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 13:2 - copy in hand of Mackenzie Bell, to whom W. M. Rossetti had been lent the document, dated February 1878). W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 31.

²³Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:9.

²⁴Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 7.

²⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 24.

²⁶V. Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Oxford:

controversial papers Wiseman was writing for the *Dublin Review* at this time, Wiseman declaring that "the beauties and artistic elements of the Catholic ceremonial, as well as the poetry of our ritual and forms of prayer" are all "eminently conducive" to the creation of art.²⁷ Rossetti had been accepted as a student into the Antique School of the Royal Academy in July 1846, and Wiseman's articles may have become familiar to him through William Holman Hunt, a fellow student, who had contact with Wiseman through his friend Telfer.²⁸ Indeed, it was Wiseman's copy of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* which Telfer lent to Hunt in 1847.²⁹

Whilst in Paris with Hunt in the autumn of 1849, Rossetti was to express sentiments similar to Wiseman's when he exclaimed of Notre Dame, "The Cathedral itself is inconceivably stunning, and contains most glorious things to put in pictures."³⁰ This trip to the continent, made in the company of Hunt in 1849, proved to be of immense significance for Rossetti. The effusive letters which he sent back home show what a great artistic impression this trip made on his young mind. The works by Fra Angelico, Van Eyck and Memling that he saw in Paris, Brussels and Bruges were "wonderful", "tremendous" and the architecture "first-rate".³¹ Memling's *Saint John Altarpiece* (fig. 5) in the Hospital of St John, the centre piece of which showed *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine to the Infant Saviour*, particularly astounded him. He described it as "miraculous", and himself as "stunned":

I shall not attempt any description; I assure you that the perfection of character and even drawing, the astounding finish, the glory of colour, and above all the pure religious sentiment and ecstatic poetry of these works, is not to be conceived or described.³²

It is significant that Rossetti should have used the word "poetry" here. Poetry was closely allied to painting in Rossetti's mind, and he often felt that the only appropriate

Clarendon Press, 1971), S.34A.

²⁷[N. Wiseman] "Christian Art", *Dublin Review*, vol. 22 (June 1847), p. 487.

²⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 93.

²⁹W. H. Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1905), vol. 1, p. 73.

³⁰Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 64-65.

³¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 109. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 64-66, 82.

³²W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1900), pp. 13-14. In their closed state, the wings of this triptych show two donor monks and two nuns, with their patron saints, James the Great, Anthony the Great, Agnes and Clare (D. de Vos, *Hans Memling* (Antwerp & Bruges: Ludion, 1994), p. 77).

way to respond to a work of art was through its sister medium. This idea he had expressed the year previous in a prose tale entitled "St Agnes of Intercession". In this story, an art critic, looking around the annual Royal Academy exhibition with the narrator, stops before a painting and shows the narrator a manuscript poem, explaining that the only way he felt he could justly respond to this picture was to write a poem for it: "I mean to print them in our next number, as being the only species of criticism adequate to such a work."³³

Looking at Memling's altarpiece, like the critic in his own story, Rossetti felt that he could not describe the painting in such a way as to do it justice. The only way he felt capable of responding to it was by writing a poem for it:

Mystery: Catherine the bride of Christ.
 She kneels, and on her hand the holy Child
 Setteth the ring. Her life is sad and mild,
 Laid in God's knowledge - ever unenticed
 From Him, and in the end thus fitly priced.
 Awe, and the music that is near her, wrought
 Of Angels, have possessed her eyes in thought:

Her utter joy is her's, and hath sufficed.
 There is a pause while Mary Virgin turns
 The leaf, and reads. With eyes on the spread book,
 That damsel at her knees reads after her.
 John whom He loved, and John His harbinger,
 Listen and watch. Whereon soe'er thou look,
 The light is starred in gems and the gold burns.³⁴

The final two lines of the poem give an impression of the aesthetic experience which had such an impact on Rossetti. Looking at Memling's painting with its painstaking detail, bright colouring and patterning, he desired to emulate its brilliance. This longing for artistic kinship he expressed in his poem "Carrillon: Antwerp and Bruges":

John Memmeling and John van Eyck
 Hold state at Bruges. In sore shame
 I scanned the works that keep their name.
 The Carillon, which then did strike

³³W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 2 vols. (London: Ellis & Scrutton, 1886), vol. 1, pp. 405-6.

³⁴W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Germ* (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), no. 4 (May 1850), p. 180.

Mine ears, was heard of theirs alike:
It set me closer unto them.³⁵

However, Rossetti was not simply attracted to the decorative qualities of sacred art, and, likewise, of ecclesiastical architecture. To return to his 1848 *Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopheles in the Church*, Rossetti, in this design, made an intelligent interpretation of the text of *Faust* and demonstrated an appreciation of the emotional impact generated by the magnificence of Gothic church architecture. Rossetti's idea of including ecclesiastical architecture as an internal frame within his works was probably influenced by works such as Ford Madox Brown's *Seeds and Fruits of English Poetry* (fig. 2), begun in 1845, and his *Wycliffe Reading to John of Gaunt* (fig. 3), begun in 1847. The way in which the figures of Goldsmith and Thompson look down from the the Gothic roundels in the former, and figures representing the Protestant and Catholic faiths in the latter, was used by Rossetti in his 1848 drawing for the figures of Faust and Mephistopheles. However, Rossetti went beyond Brown, applying the device to suggest the physical claustrophobia that Gretchen began to feel as the evil spirit whispered in her ear and as her conscience weighed down upon her:

Would I were gone from here!
The organ overwhelms me,
Crushes my breath...
The very pillars
Close in upon me,
The vaulted roof
Comes crowding down.
Pray you, air!³⁶

Rossetti's 1848 drawing has a number of features in common with Plate 21 of Retzsch's *Faust* (fig. 4), which Rossetti had become familiar with as a young boy.³⁷ "Through these, with their accompanying text in English, my brother got to know, and to admire, something of *Faust*", wrote William Michael.³⁸ However, Rossetti's composition was the result of a personal response to Goethe's text. From 1842-48 Rossetti had received German lessons from Dr Adolf Heimann, a friend of his father's and professor of

³⁵D. G. Rossetti, "The Carillon: Antwerp and Bruges", *Germ*, no. 3 (March 1850), p. 126.

³⁶J. W. von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. P. Wayne (London: Penguin, 1949), part 1, p. 166.

³⁷M. Retzsch, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust* (Stuttgart & Hapsburg, 1836), Plate 21.

³⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 59.

German at University College, London, and so was able to read *Faust* in its original.³⁹ Rossetti displayed a greater concern for dramatic conflict than Retzsch, and the architecture for him was in no way a mere background set, but an integral part of the design. Indeed, William Holman Hunt declared of a further 1848 drawing by Rossetti of *Gretchen and Mephistopheles in the Church*, "This design is in such perfect feeling as to give me a far higher idea of Goethe than I have before obtained either from a translation, or the artificial illustrations of Retsch [sic]."⁴⁰ The subject must have pleased Rossetti for it was one of those scenes which he considered working up into his first oil.⁴¹

Similarly, Rossetti was not one of those 'moderns' whom the art historian Anna Jameson criticised as seeing in a medieval painting "nothing save flowing lines and correct drawing and gorgeous colour".⁴² He certainly was attracted to the visual beauty of Catholic art, but this was bound up with an equal fascination with medieval theology. Although in his letter to James Collinson in October 1849 Rossetti rejoiced in "the astounding finish" and "the glory of colour" of Memling's *St. Catherine*, it was "the pure religious sentiment and ecstatic poetry" of the work that fascinated him the most as a young man of twenty one. Indeed, Hunt, who became known for his religious zeal, described Rossetti on their Continental trip as having "a greater respect for dogma than myself".⁴³ The "Godlike completeness" of the composition "at first bewildered" the aesthetic sensibilities of Rossetti, but given time to compose himself he found that his "awe and admiration" was "much increased by analysis".⁴⁴

Memling's painting is crowded with symbolic detail. Reference is made to the Atonement, to the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, and to the legends surrounding the four saints depicted, St John the Evangelist, St John the Baptist, St Catherine and St Barbara. This would have inevitably appealed to Rossetti whose *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (fig. 6) had been exhibited at the Free Exhibition, near Hyde Park Corner, in the spring of that year. This painting, replete with detail, "each with a symbolic or spiritual meaning", specifically sought to emulate the pictorial manner of the early Christian painters.⁴⁵

³⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 104.

⁴⁰W. E. Fredeman (ed.), *The PRB Journal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 110.

⁴¹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 118.

⁴²A. Jameson, *The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1848), vol. 1, p. xxiv.

⁴³Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 188.

⁴⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 143.

The significance of the symbolism in Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* is evident from the depth of critical debate it has excited. Grieve suggests that within the painting there may be a number of references to contemporary religious debates within the High Anglican Church, such as the revival of church organ music, flowers on the altar, the embroidering of ecclesiastical vestments, the use of Latin and the revival of religious orders.⁴⁶ Heffner discusses the symbolism of the ivy, the city on the hill, the screen and the colouring, but most interestingly suggests the absence of Justitia from the theological and cardinal virtues written on the spines of the books stacked on the floor at the Virgin's feet in terms of Ambrosian theology, which described the age of Justice as beginning only at the birth of Christ. Heffner also refers to the popular medieval allegory of the four daughters of God in which Mercy vanquishes Justice, and further finds a potential solution in Neo-Platonic thought, Justice being removed from the other cardinal virtues, being foundational to them all.⁴⁷

It should be noted that Rossetti also appeared to have in his mind the tradition of emblem literature. W. M. Rossetti owned two emblem books by Francis Quarles, *Divine Poems* (1669) and *Emblems* (extracts 1648), and Rossetti himself owned a modern emblem book, which deliberately sought to model itself on the work of Quarles, using "the same quaintness of language, and grotesqueness in drawing".⁴⁸ Rossetti may have regarded his own artistic endeavours as akin to this. Indeed, Rossetti composed two sonnets for his painting and printed these on a piece of gilded paper which he attached to the frame, and in this way he supplied the viewer with a written key to the symbolic programme, in a manner comparable to the didactic approach of emblem books:

These are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre, is the Tripoint, - perfect each
Except the second of its points, to teach
That Christ is not yet born...⁴⁹

⁴⁶Grieve, 1973, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷D. T. Heffner, "Additional Typological Symbolism in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*", *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, vol. 5 (May 1985), pp. 68-80.

⁴⁸[J. Birch] J. Abricht, *Divine Emblems* (London: Ward, 1838), p. 2. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:9. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁴⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 354. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 143. W. Lottes, "Take Out the Picture and Frame the Sonnet", *Anglia*, vol. 96 (1978), p. 109. Heffner, p. 70.

However, the first sonnet, which was also printed in the catalogue to the 1849 Free Exhibition, is akin in spirit to that which he wrote for Memling's painting.⁵⁰ Rossetti opened his poem with a theological statement, "This is that blessed Mary, pre-elect / God's Virgin", and then went on to describe her devout character in order to demonstrate her fitness to be the *Theotokos*. He described her as "An angel-watered lily, that near God / Grows and is quiet". This is similar to his sonnet on St Catherine which he began by stating her position as the "bride of Christ", and then describing her life as "hushed and mild, / Laid in God's knowledge". Religious awe is a significant element in the poem Rossetti wrote for his own painting:

She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all, - yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:
Because the fulness of time was come.⁵¹

This is a feature he saw in Memling's altarpiece: "Awe, and the music that is near her, wrought / Of angels, have possessed her eyes in thought". Rossetti, inspired by the work of such fifteenth century artists, appropriated similar concerns into his work: theology, mystery, awe. This was recognised by contemporary critics. The *Athenaeum* wrote of *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*:

The picture, which is full of allegory, has much of that sacred mysticism inseparable from the works of the early masters, and much of the tone of the poets of the same time...⁵²

John Orchard, in the two sonnets he wrote contemporaneously for Rossetti's *Girlhood*, paid tribute to the medieval spirit of Rossetti's symbolism: "all of Earth for thee hath Tongues of Light, / Christ-Utterances and Truths God-High".⁵³

In his early years Rossetti used the term "Early Christian" to describe his work, in order to show the extent to which he wanted his output to be considered in a religious and medieval light, much to the annoyance of Hunt who wanted to stress the modernity of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.⁵⁴ When exhibited, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* had

⁵⁰No. 368, *Catalogue of the Free Exhibition of Modern Art, Hyde Park Corner* (1849), quoted in W. M. Rossetti, *Bibliography of the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Ellis, 1905), p. 6.

⁵¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 353.

⁵²"Free Exhibition of Modern Art", *Athenaeum* (7 April 1849), p. 362. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 147.

⁵³Fredeman, 1975, pp. 12, 200. McGann draws attention to the conscious medievalism of *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* sonnets, arguing that they "are not so much an interpretation as the representation of an interpretive field" (J. McGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must be Lost* (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 29).

⁵⁴Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 140.

an arched top (fig. 7), perhaps to suggest an altarpiece like Memling's.⁵⁵ Side panels were often used for altarpieces to provide context for the central panel. Memling in his wings showed, on the left the decapitation of John the Baptist, and on the right John the Evangelist's vision at Patmos. William Michael recorded in his journal on 28 August 1849, "Gabriel thinks of taking, as the incidents for the two side-pieces in his picture, the Virgin planting a lily and a rose, and the Virgin in St. John's house after the crucifixion, as illustrating the periods of her life before the birth and after the death of Christ."⁵⁶

Although having encountered numerous early Christian works on his tour of France and Belgium, Rossetti was particularly attracted to Memling's *St John* triptych, because of the central incident, the mystical marriage of St Catherine of Alexandria. St Catherine was a well known saint in Britain, the saint's feast day, 25 November, having become a popular holiday. In London many old streets and lanes were named after her, for example, Catherine Wheel Lane. The capital also held her in renown as the patron saint of bell-founders. She was one of the most common patron saints, and all over the country churches were dedicated in her honour. The nineteenth century saw twenty three new churches built under her name. In London alone there were three churches of significance identifying her as their patron: S. Catherine Coleman, S. Catherine Cree and S. Katherine's Chapel, Regent's Park.⁵⁷

In the early 1840s Rossetti attended with his family S. Katherine's, Regent's Park, and there he would have learnt something of the legend of its popular patron saint. Indeed, the church, which had been founded by Queen Matilda in 1148 in Eastminster, had a historical significance which was closely tied up with its saint. A religious community of Sisters dedicated to St Catherine had been established in the twelfth century along with the chapel, and in the later Middle Ages this had wielded a great deal of power. Surviving the Reformation, the community gained respect as an almshouse. Re-located in 1825 to the Outer Circle in Regent's Park, it continued as a charitable institution with school and hospital under the name The Foundation of S. Katherine.⁵⁸ The church would have had a statue, painting, stained glass window or plaque in the honour of St Catherine. It had brought some highly ornate furnishings dating back to the

⁵⁵Surtees, 1971, p. 11.

⁵⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1900, p. 203.

⁵⁷F. Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, 3 vols. (London: Skeffington, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 117-122. F. Bond, *Dedications of English Churches, Ecclesiastical Symbolism, Saints and Emblems* (Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 219.

⁵⁸E. & W. Young, *Old London Churches* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), pp. 74, 289-90.

fourteenth century from the old chapel and monastic buildings. The stained glass certainly made an impression on W. M. Rossetti, who specifically recalled that he used to gaze at "a large and rich-tinted stained-glass window" during the singing of the *Te Deum*.⁵⁹

Arnold-Forster writes of St Catherine in her book on patron saints that "selections from her Acts were put into the form of lessons to be publically read in church."⁶⁰ This would no doubt have been adhered to at S. Katherine's, Regent's Park, a church which had revealingly preferred to retain the pre-Reformation spelling of Katherine, rather than adopt the Protestant Catherine.⁶¹ Indeed, the service appeared to have been too Catholic for Frances Rossetti, who eventually decided to take her family elsewhere. W. M. Rossetti wrote that his mother's "faith was of that simple and thorough kind which assumes, without finessing, the absolute and divine truth of everything to be found in the Old and New Testaments", and that she could not accept "every irrational dogma propounded by old women in or out of cassocks".⁶²

The legend of St Catherine was related by Anna Jameson in the second volume of her *Sacred and Legendary Art*. This work had been reviewed in several of the main journals, Jameson having gained renown as a writer on art. Directly relating to the legends of the saints as represented in the fine arts, her research proved a valuable resource for Victorian artists, and no less for Rossetti. Burne-Jones recalled as a young artist seeing Jameson's *The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art* in Rossetti's studio.⁶³ Marsh writes that he not only read Jameson's book, but that whilst in Belgium he and Hunt wrote notes in the margins of their copy.⁶⁴

Jameson related that St Catherine, the daughter of King Costis of Alexandria, became Queen when only fourteen years old. When urged to take a husband with whom to jointly rule, she set such impossible criteria that the only fitting husband could be Christ himself.⁶⁵ According to the legend the Virgin Mary appeared to a holy hermit to

⁵⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, pp. 126-27.

⁶⁰Arnold-Forster, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁶¹Arnold-Forster, vol. 1, p. 119 n; vol. 3, p. 234. It should be noted that Rossetti also chose to use the medieval spelling in his poem published in the *Germ*, although W. M. Rossetti changed the spelling to St Catherine in his *Collected Works*.

⁶²W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 127.

⁶³J. Christian, *The Oxford Union Murals* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 16.

⁶⁴J. Marsh, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), pp. 64, 67.

⁶⁵Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 81. J. de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, trans. W. Caxton,

inform him that her Son was to be the Queen's espoused. Catherine then had a dream in which Christ placed a ring on her finger as a sign of their betrothal. Awakening and finding a ring on her finger, she considered herself from that time on to be wedded to Christ. Maximin, a persecutor of Christians, became inflamed with lust for Catherine and "offered to make her his empress, and mistress of the whole world, if she would repudiate the name of Christ."⁶⁶ This offer being refused with scorn, Catherine was martyred. She prayed that her death might bring glory to God. Rossetti made reference to this in the lines, "ever unenticed / From God, and in the end thus fitly priced."

In his poem Rossetti wrote not only as inspired by the pictorial information in Memling's painting, but from a familiarity with the legend of St Catherine itself. According to Jameson, St Catherine's faith in God brought her peace so that when facing death she was enabled to declare to her tormentor Maximin, "Miserable are those who place faith where they can neither find help in the moment of danger nor comfort in the hour of tribulation!"⁶⁷ Similarly, Rossetti, reflected on the saint's composure which was the result of her faith in God and His divine revelation to her: "Her life is hushed and mild, / Laid in God's knowledge". Hunt recognised that it was his companion's intrigue with the enigma of divine manifestation as expressed in the legends of the saints that had attracted him to the works of Memling in Bruges, declaring that he "was led to love these paintings beyond their real claim by reason of the mystery of the subjects."⁶⁸ Indeed, Rossetti opened his poem, "Mystery: Catherine the bride of Christ".⁶⁹

Rossetti's second sonnet for *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* closed with a statement of wonder that Mary should actually bear the Son of God: "yea, God the Lord / Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son."⁷⁰ In his early poetry as well as his painting Rossetti revelled in theological mysteries. In "The Blessed Damozel", a poem probably begun around 1847, which Leigh Hunt recognised as being based on medieval

(Westmestre, 1483); A. Butler's *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*, 4 vols. (London: Butler, 1757-56); and F. W. Faber's *The Saints and Servants of God*, 42 vols. (London: St Philip Neri, 1847-56) were also available for Rossetti to consult. Such books were of increasing popularity in nineteenth century Britain.

⁶⁶Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, pp. 82-86.

⁶⁷Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 84.

⁶⁸Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 192-93.

⁶⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 349.

⁷⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1905, p. 6.

prototypes, he talked of "them / Who are just born, being dead."⁷¹ The personage and role of the Virgin Mary was explored in "For an Annunciation: Early German".⁷² In "Ave" Rossetti imaginatively, and in true Catholic spirit, described the Virgin as "Thyself a woman Trinity".⁷³ In this latter poem he also made reference to the mystery of the incarnation, prayer and God's omnipresence in the beautifully compact and meaningful lines,

Until a folding sense, like prayer,
Which is, as God is, everywhere,
Gathered about thee...⁷⁴

Writing in 1870 Swinburne disputed Rossetti's grasp of theology, "Alone among the higher artists of his age, Mr Rossetti has felt and given the mere physical charm of Christianity, with no admixture of doctrine or doubt."⁷⁵ However, Spens, writing in 1902, described Rossetti as "a true theological poet".⁷⁶

Indeed, Rossetti's poems as a whole demonstrate that he had gleaned not only from the apocryphal stories surrounding the lives of the saints, but also from the theological writings of the Church Fathers and from Catholic tradition. In the Biblical account of Christ's birth as related in the gospel of *St Luke*, Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit,

⁷¹According to Hall Caine, "The Blessed Damozel" was written for the family magazine, *Hodgepodge*, when Rossetti was nineteen (W. M. Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer* (London: Cassell, 1889), p. 125). Letter to D. G. R. from Leigh Hunt, 31 March 1848 (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 122-23). D. G. Rossetti, "The Blessed Damozel", *Germ*, no. 2 (February 1850), p. 82.

⁷²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 343.

⁷³In his paintings and poems Rossetti frequently returned to the Catholic idea of Mary as intercessor. In "The Bride's Prelude", begun in 1848, Amelotte kneeling to pray, opened her petition with, "'Queen Mary, hear,' she said, 'and say / To Jesus the Lord Christ...'" Similarly in his "For an Annunciation: Early German" of 1847 Rossetti not only described the painting, "there she kneels to pray", but added the theological explanation, "Who wafts our prayers to God". In "Ave" the poem ends with the plea, "Hear us at last, O Mary Queen" (W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 37, 343, 247). The intercessory role of Mary was given even greater emphasis in an earlier version of "Ave", entitled "Mater Pulchrae Delectionis" (one version in Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:21; different version in W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Ellis, 1911), pp. 661-62 n.).

⁷⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 244.

⁷⁵A. C. Swinburne, "The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Fortnightly Review*, N. S. vol. 7 (May 1870), p. 563; *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), p. 82. A. K. Juhnke, *Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Love, Death and Faith* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, 1966), p. 64.

⁷⁶J. Spens, "The Ethical Significance of Rossetti's Poetry", *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. 12 (1902), p. 219.

tells Mary that she is Blessed because she believed what the Lord had told her.⁷⁷ However, following Catholic tradition, Rossetti exalted Mary to almost divine status, suggesting her omniscience, as in for example his poem "For a Virgin and Child by Hans Memmelinck": "Since first her task began / She hath known all".⁷⁸ Rossetti converged received visual information with learned theological knowledge, his statement bringing to mind in particular the doctrines of St Bernard, who declared of the mother of God, "she was fully instructed by heaven about all the mysteries from the beginning." Rossetti could have read this and similar quotes in *The Golden Legend*, as related by the thirteenth century Dominican monk, Voragine.⁷⁹

Rossetti's father was well versed in the writings of the Church Fathers. In a letter to Charles Lyell, dated 13 January 1836, he wrote, "Recently I have been applying myself to a study of the first Holy Fathers of the primitive Church", which explain "the *mysteries* of religion".⁸⁰ In subsequent letters to Lyell he made specific reference to the writings of Origen, Tertullian, Synesius Bishop of Cyrene and Bernard of Clairvaux.⁸¹ Rossetti himself would have been aware of the personage of St Bernard through his readings of Dante, the great exponent of Mariolatry making his appearance in the *Divine Comedy* to plead Dante's case before the Virgin herself.⁸² However, the influence of his father was no doubt of significance.

More generally, the Oxford Movement had revived interest in the writings of the Church Fathers and the legends of the saints.⁸³ Edward B. Pusey, summarising Tractarian belief, described as amongst its chief features, "Reverence for and deference to the ancient Church... instead of the Reformers, as the ultimate expounder of meaning of our Church."⁸⁴ Pusey, who became known as the *doctor mysticus* of the Movement, frequently drew on the writings of the saints in his sermons and tracts, including those of Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Catherine of Siena, Thomas à

⁷⁷Luke 1: 45.

⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 348.

⁷⁹St Bernard quoted in J. de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. W. G. Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1993), vol. 2, p. 253.

⁸⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, pp. 139, 143.

⁸¹W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 140.

⁸²Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Rev. H. F. Cary (London: Warne, 1844), canto XXXI-II, pp. 473-74.

⁸³Y. Brilioth, *The Anglican Revival* (London: Longmans & Green, 1925), p. 295. O. Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 30.

⁸⁴Chadwick, 1992, p. 42.

Kempis, Bernard of Clairvaux, Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross.⁸⁵ Rossetti's preoccupation with awe and mystery can be seen to have had its heritage in the writings of the Oxford men, particularly in the teachings of J. H. Newman.⁸⁶ In his tract "On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church", Newman criticised those who dismissed the early Church Fathers on the grounds of mysticism alone, without understanding the theology.⁸⁷ He went on to write a history of the early Church, *The Church of the Fathers*, published in 1840, and edited a sixteen volumed *Lives of the English Saints* in 1844-45.⁸⁸

The Rossetti family were greatly influenced by the Oxford Tractarians. Rossetti's mother, who came to own a copy of Newman's 1864 *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, was known to copy out extracts from the *Tracts for the Times* in her *Literary Diary*.⁸⁹ Among the books to be found in the personal library of W. M. Rossetti in 1897 was an 1848 edition of Bishop Andrews' *Devotions*. This had been recommended in the volume of *Tracts for the Times* containing Newman's "On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers" as one of those books which "will be found more or less to uphold or elucidate the general doctrines inculcated in these Tracts".⁹⁰ Further W. M. Rossetti possessed Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Select Sermons* of 1834 and *Holy Living and Dying with prayers* of 1837, the writings of whom had also been endorsed by Rivington as being in sympathy with the writings of the Tractarians, and he also owned John Keble's *Christian Year* (1827).⁹¹ Although it is unknown when and by whom these books were purchased, as a young man W. M. Rossetti was certainly familiar with such literature. In July 1843 he wrote that he had, "read a great part of Mr

⁸⁵Chadwick, 1992, p. 39. Brilioth, pp. 296-97.

⁸⁶Chadwick, 1992, pp. 32-36.

⁸⁷J. H. Newman, "On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church", *Tracts for the Times*, vol. 6, no. 89 (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1841), pp. 3-6, 104.

⁸⁸J. H. Newman, *The Church of the Fathers* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840); *Lives of the English Saints*, 16 vols. (London: James Toovey, 1844-45).

⁸⁹F. M. L. Rossetti, *The Literary Diary: or, Complete Common-Place Book, With an Explanation, and an Alphabet of two Letters on a Leaf* (London: Taylor & Hessey, 1816 - to be filled in by purchaser), pp. 292-95. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17; 12:18.

⁹⁰In 1860 Maria drew her Bible's Class' attention to the wisdom of Andrews (M. F. Rossetti, *Letters to my Bible Class* (London: S.P.C.K. [1872]), p. 49). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁹¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

Newman's third volume" of *Parochial Sermons* and was much pleased by it. He also declared, "Keble's Version of the Psalms is truly excellent".⁹²

Following Pusey's death in 1882, the Rossetti family was to make a contribution to his Memorial fund, and Christina was to declare on 15 July 1890 that, "My *Mistero dell' Amor Platonico* I wish to be offered to the Pusey Library at Oxford".⁹³ However, of the Tractarians, Christina Rossetti owed a particular debt to Newman, and at his death in 1890 she addressed him in a poem published in the *Athenaeum* as "weary Champion of the Cross".⁹⁴ As for D. G. Rossetti, a contemporary likened his hymn to the Virgin, "Ave", to the devotional writings of Frederick William Faber, who, under the influence of Newman, had entered the Catholic Church in 1845.⁹⁵ The poem has also frequently been likened to "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary" in Keble's *Christian Year*.⁹⁶ W. M. Rossetti admitted, "Of all Rossetti's poems, this is the one which seems most to indicate definite Christian belief, and of a strongly Roman Catholic kind".⁹⁷

Christ Church, Albany Street, the Anglican Church which Rossetti's mother and sisters attended from 1843, at times accompanied by Dante Gabriel, had been set up in 1837 with the help of Pusey.⁹⁸ The *Edinburgh Review* in 1874 described it as "a principal centre of High Church religionism in the metropolis."⁹⁹ Its first vicar William Dodsworth had been a long standing friend of Pusey, and had been much influenced by him. He considered Pusey to be "amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles." Although Dodsworth disagreed with the stance taken by Pusey on the Gorham controversy over baptismal regeneration, he praised Pusey for seeking to

⁹²J. H. Newman, *Parochial Sermons*, 6 vols. (London: Rivington, 1834-42). J. Keble, *Psalms: The Psalter or Psalms of David, in English Verse* (Oxford, 1840). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3.

⁹³F. M. L. Rossetti's book of accounts, entry 21 September 1884 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:1). C. G. Rossetti, "Memoranda for my Executor" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:1).

⁹⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:4. R. W. Crump (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, 3 vols. (Louisiana State University Press, 1990), vol. 3, p. 52. L. M. Packer, *Christina Rossetti* (Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 7.

⁹⁵J. C. Earle, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti [sic]", *The Catholic World*, vol. 19 (May 1874), p. 265.

⁹⁶Grieve, 1973, p. 10. Bentley, 1974, p. 78.

⁹⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 661 n. C. Davies, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Merton Press, 1925), pp. 50-52.

⁹⁸Grieve, 1973, p. 10.

⁹⁹"Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 139 (January 1874), p. 63. Packer, p. 7. W. M. Rossetti owned an 1842 edition of S. T. Coleridge's *Contributions to the Revival of Catholic Truths* (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

reintroduce Catholic sacramentalism in to the Anglican church service "by your introduction of Roman Catholic books 'adapted to the use of our Church;' by encouraging the use of rosaries and crucifixes... and seeking to restore, with more or less fulness, the conventual or monastic life".¹⁰⁰ Rossetti designed a window for Christ Church in 1861, *The Sermon on the Mount* (S.142; fig. 8), in which he made a subtle acknowledgment of Dodsworth's Anglo-Catholic influence. He depicted Christ with a select band of disciples, His Mother and Mary Magdalene, haloed and accompanied with descriptive titles in Latin. The use of Latin had been controversially introduced into the High Church service.¹⁰¹ Further, Rossetti pointedly used the Catholic abbreviation 'S' for 'Saint' rather than the Protestant 'St'.¹⁰²

Dodsworth, who eventually seceded to Rome in 1850 following the Gorham case, not only endorsed 'Catholic' ritual, but was a keen propounder of Catholic doctrine.¹⁰³ The *Edinburgh Review* described him, along with Newman and H. E. Manning, as one of the "nominal members of the English Church".¹⁰⁴ Under his curacy Christ Church sanctioned the veneration of saints.¹⁰⁵ Holy Communion was held on every Saint's Day, and stories were told of Christian courage and martyrdom.¹⁰⁶ The Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, in a letter to Maltby, Bishop of Durham, dated 4 November 1850, criticised this "honour paid to Saints", which he felt to be symptomatic of "the late aggression of the POPE upon our Protestantism", making reference to the recent publication of the Papal Brief announcing the restoration of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain.¹⁰⁷ Dodsworth also introduced flowers on his

¹⁰⁰W. Dodsworth, *A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey* (London: Pickering, 1850), pp. 3, 16-17.

¹⁰¹Grieve, 1973, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰²A. C. Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle*, 2 vols. (Yale University Press, 1975), vol. 2, p. 167.

¹⁰³H. P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans & Green, 1894), vol. 3, pp. 291, 301.

¹⁰⁴*Edinburgh Review*, 1874, p. 62. Dodsworth had a number of prominent Tractarian leaders come to preach at Christ Church, including Manning and Pusey (B. Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church 1839-1872* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970), p. 126). His own sermons appeared to make an impression on W. M. Rossetti, who wrote to his mother on 5 July 1843, "We went to Church yesterday, and heard an admirable sermon from Mr Dodsworth, on the text, 'Think not that I will accuse you'" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3).

¹⁰⁵B. F. L. Clarke, *Parish Churches of London* (London: Batsford, 1966), pp. 140-41.

¹⁰⁶Rainbow, p. 126. Packer, p. 7. J. Marsh, *Christina Rossetti* (London: Cape, 1994), p. 57.

¹⁰⁷On 29 September 1850 Pope Pius IX re-established a Roman Catholic hierarchy into Britain, the first since the Reformation, under Cardinal Wiseman (Owen

altar around 1843, a practice which greatly concerned the Bishop, being, he felt, also to do with the commemoration of saints, since certain colours were chosen for particular festivals.¹⁰⁸

Influenced by this background of saintly devotion, Christina wrote a number of poems on the subject of sainthood: "A Martyr" was composed on 23 April 1856, "Martyr's Song" on 20 March 1863, and "A Martyr: The Vigil of the Feast", an undated poem, was included in her 1881 edition. The latter was composed as a prayer uttered by a saint on the night before her martyrdom, and displays a degree of knowledge concerning the legends which related the cruel deaths suffered by those who would not abjure their faith.¹⁰⁹ In *Annus Domini*, which Christina published in 1874, the devotions were prefaced by a poem in which Christ was addressed as the "King of Saints". Four of the prayers she recommended should be read on Saint's Days, and in these she thanked God for the "saints and penitents" who had gone before, and asked for strength to live lives of "righteousness and self-denial" like them.¹¹⁰ In 1881 she was to publish *Called to be Saints* in which, using both the Scriptures and apocryphal legend, an account was given of the lives of each of the apostolic saints who were mentioned in *The Book of Common Prayer*. She wrote that she had not "hesitated partly to construct my so-called 'Memorials' on a legendary foundation".¹¹¹

Princeton University holds various notes made by Christina on apocryphal legends of saints: for example, St Prisca, "a Roman virgin", who "aged 13 endured martyrdom under the first Emperor Claudius"; St Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste, who "suffered for the Faith early in the 4th century, being decapitated, perhaps in the year 316"; and the Bishop of Alexandria, who "suffered a glorious martyrdom", being "beset by a heathen mob". Christina attributed value to such legends, as presenting devotional and moral

Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols. (London: Black, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 250-71, 291). The "Durham Letter", quoted in F. Bennett, *The Story of W. J. E. Bennett* (London: Longmans & Green, 1909), p. 100. *Punch*, which came down very heavily on Anglo-Catholics in 1850, particularly Pusey who was the butt of many quips, quoted this letter in the introduction to vol. 19 (see also "A Dream of Whitefriars", "The Monastery of Pimlico", "Puseyite Cosmetics", "The Puseyite Moth and Roman Candle", "The Hot Poker", "The Cat's Paw; or, Poor Pu(s)sey", "Parody for Puseyites", *Punch*, vol. 19 (July-December 1850), pp. 184-85, 189, 199, 217, 237, 247, 250.

¹⁰⁸F. Bennett, p. 190.

¹⁰⁹Crump, vol. 1, pp. 182-84, 230, 295, 313; vol. 3, pp. 250, 458.

¹¹⁰C. G. Rossetti, *Annus Domini* (London: Parker, 1874), pp. 28, 39, 261, 353.

¹¹¹C. G. Rossetti, *Called to be Saints* (London: S.P.C.K., 1881), p. xvi.

lessons for the reader. "Such histories or such legends exhibit the impregnable safety of Innocence", she wrote following her relation of the story of St Prisca.¹¹²

In his 1849 "Vox Ecclesiae, Vox Christi", D. G. Rossetti also alluded to such stories of Christian martyrdom and likened these sacrifices to Christ's:

Therefore the wine cup at the altar is
As Christ's own blood indeed, and as the blood
Of Christ's elect, at divers seasons spilt
On the altar-stone...

Rossetti headed his poem with a quote from *Revelation* 6: 9, 10, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God..."¹¹³ Similarly Hunt in his *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids* (fig. 9), begun in 1849, made a visual comparison between the early Christian priest and the figure of Christ in a traditional Pieta scene. The priest sags into the arms of the women behind him and significantly holds his side with his left hand whilst grasping a small effigy of a cross with his right. Hunt further alluded to Christ's passion, depicting a young girl untangling a thorn branch from his feet, and an older woman holding a wet sponge to his face. In this way both Hunt and Rossetti demonstrated their reverence for the early Christian saints.

Although attracted to the visual brilliance of the accessories of the Roman Catholic faith, for Rossetti Memling's *St John Altarpiece* represented much more than an object of mere artistic beauty. He valued it as a work premised upon pre-Reformation theology and preoccupied with mystery and awe, and he appreciated the reverence and honour paid to the early Christian martyrs, not only St Catherine but also St Barbara and the two St Johns. Charles Kingsley was no doubt thinking of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, with whom he had little sympathy, when he wrote in 1849:

The young... are reading the histories of the middle ages...
They are reading the old legends, and when we call them
superstitious - they grant it, and then produce passages in
which the highest doctrines of Christianity are embodied in
the most pathetic and noble stories.

¹¹²Troxell Coll., Princeton, 1:27, 1:32. The Rossetti family as a whole was intrigued by martyrology. Even W. M. Rossetti, the least interested, came to own an 1850 edition of W. Palmer's *A Compendious Ecclesiastical History* (London: Burns, 1843) which described the persecution of early Christian saints and martyrs (pp. 20-34, 79-100), and Arthur James Mason's *The Historic Martyrs of the Primitive Church* (London: Longman's & Green, 1905). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹¹³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 265.

For, he continued:

They are looking for themselves at the ante-Raphaelic artists, and when we tell them that Fra Angelico's pictures are weak, affected, ill-drawn, ill-coloured - they grant it, and then ask us if we can deny the sweetness, the purity, the rapt devotion, the saintly virtue, which shines forth from his faces... They ask us why they are to deny the excellence of tales and pictures which make men more pure and humble, more earnest and noble. They tell us truly that all beauty is God's stamp, and that beauty ought to be consecrated to his service.¹¹⁴

The title Kingsley chose for his article, "The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art", is revealing. In his mind there appears to have been little doubt that Jameson's two volumed 1848 account of the lives of the saints and their early depictions was a sourcebook for Rossetti and his Pre-Raphaelite fellows.

¹¹⁴C. Kingsley, "The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art", *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 39 (1849), p. 285.

Ch. 2: Hand and Soul

On Rossetti's return from Brussels to Paris on 18 October 1849 he sent a letter to William Michael, to which he appended a poem inspired by a roadside shrine:

Upon a Flemish road, when noon was deep,
 I passed a little consecrated shrine,
 Where, among simple pictures ranged in line,
 The blessed Mary holds her child asleep.
 To kneel here, shepherd-maidens leave their sheep
 When they feel grave because of the sunshine,
 And again kneel here in the day's decline;
 And here, when their life ails them, come to weep.¹¹⁵

The idea that art was a significant facet of spiritual experience was an attractive one for Rossetti. From an early age he had owned biblical prints, and he saw the pictorial medium as useful for conveying sacred concepts.¹¹⁶ Thus he wrote his poem "Ave" in 1847 with the aim of developing the theological ideas expressed within pictorial form. This he explained in 1869, when he decided to include the poem in his forthcoming edition of poems: "This hymn was written as a prologue to a series of designs. Art still identifies herself with all faiths for her own purposes: and the emotional influence here employed demands above all an inner standing point."¹¹⁷ Rossetti continually returned to the idea of religion as seen in relation to art, and when he turned to the legends of the saints for subject matter for his paintings and drawings he chose to depict St Catherine and St Cecilia, who were both muses of the poetic arts, Catherine of literature and philosophy, and Cecilia of music.

He found the legend of St Catherine particularly appealing because of the part played in it by an actual work of art. It was the medium of painting which was used to make known to Catherine her future husband. Rather than Christ first appearing to Catherine in a vision or dream, a picture representing the Virgin and her Son was presented to Catherine by a hermit, to whom the Virgin Mary had appeared with the news of

¹¹⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 81.

¹¹⁶F. M. L. Rossetti to Eliza Polidori, 11 September 1830, "I have bought her [Maria] Mrs Trimmer's Sacred Prints, and both she and Gabriel already know the subject of several of the pictures" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:14). W. M. Rossetti wrote that "Later on, and never tired of, came *Martin and Westall's Illustrations of the Bible*; and to his last day Dante would have told you that Martin was an imaginative pictorial genius of no mean power" (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 61).

¹¹⁷Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1. W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 661 n.

Catherine's divine betrothal. Paint was shown to be a powerful medium, one which could arouse wonder, contemplation and desire.

... when Catherine beheld the heavenly face of the
Redeemer of the world, her heart filled with love of his
beauty and innocence: she forgot her books, her spheres,
and her philosophers...¹¹⁸

Christ appeared to Catherine in a dream that night and the following night, with the result that the saint received a ring as symbol of her divine betrothal. It appears to have been the actual presence of the picture in Catherine's study that inspired the vision: "She placed the picture in her study, and that night as she slept upon her bed she had a dream."

In his own 1857 painting of *St Catherine* (S.89; fig. 10) Rossetti demonstrated the importance he gave to the place of art in religion. It was not a simple symbolic depiction of the saint such as had been common since the Middle Ages, although Rossetti depicted a woman in a rich robe with two of the traditional emblems of St Catherine, the palm branch and the wheel, symbols of her martyrdom.¹¹⁹ Rather Rossetti, wanting to present art as a conveyor of religious faith and tradition, showed a medieval artist at work on an easel, painting a model who was posing as St Catherine. Behind 'St Catherine' we can see a group of young artists chalking up an outline for a painting of the martyrdom of St Sebastian. Rossetti drew the viewer's attention to the actual act of painting, and specifically brought to the foreground the issue of religious motivation.

In *St Catherine* Rossetti dressed the artist in a rather ostentatious medieval costume with a velvet hat, long feathered sleeves and pointed shoes. William Michael wrote, "the costume of the fifteenth-century artist is probably not such a working-garb as the man would really have assumed to paint in."¹²⁰ The quaintness of the outfit, which

¹¹⁸Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 82.

¹¹⁹The famous collector Walter Davenport Bromley owned a typical emblematic painting of *St Catherine* by Simone Martini, a description of which was published in 1854. It was described as a work of "the purest religious feeling", and the saint's dress, not unlike in Rossetti's work, "consists of a richly-patterned gold stuff" (G. F. Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols. (London: Murray, 1854), vol. 3, p. 373). Rossetti was certainly aware of this important collection, at Bromley's death in 1863 being amongst those who made purchases from its treasures (*The Valuable Contents of the Residence of Dante G. Rossetti (Deceased)* (T. G. Wharton & Martin, 1882), p. 18, lot 319). J. Turner (ed.), *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1996), vol. 8, p. 549.

¹²⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Designer and Writer*, 1889, p. 31.

Faxon suggests Rossetti appropriated from the British Museum's *Dance of Mirth* illustration in the *Roman de la Rose* of c. 1490-1500 (fig. 11), may have appealed to Rossetti, but more than this the costume stressed the painting's medievalism, and invited the viewer to consider the painting's religious dimension.¹²¹ Ruskin had declared in his Edinburgh lecture of 18 November 1853 on Pre-Raphaelitism, "I do not say that ancient art was *more* religious than modern art. There is no question of degree in this matter. Ancient art was religious art; modern art is profane art... this is the great distinction between medieaval and modern art".¹²² Rossetti emphasised the medievalism of his subject because, like many Victorians, he believed the Middle Ages to have been a time of great religious art.

In 1848 an article entitled "Monks and Monasteries" appeared in the *People's Journal*, giving a summary of monastic life in the Middle Ages. It described the monks, who, beside devotional activities, occupied their daily lives with writing histories and lives of the saints, as "the treasurers of learning". The article's expressed intention was "to direct the mind of the reader to further inquiries into the subject".¹²³ In Rossetti's case it may well have done so. In 1856 he produced *Fra Pace* (S.80; fig. 12), a watercolour depicting a monk in a plain cowled habit, at work in his cell illuminating a manuscript. In the same year the *Art Journal* published a paper on monks in the middle ages, but more specifically in relation to art. Illustrated, and detailed in its descriptions, the article aimed to "give a view of the familiar life of ordinary monks in their monasteries ...such as an Art-student might wish to have".¹²⁴

This latter article perhaps came too late to be directly influential for Rossetti's watercolour but Rossetti may have made use of Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* and Hollar's "well known series of prints of monastic costumes" to which the *People's Journal* referred the reader.¹²⁵ Jameson, although opening her volume with

¹²¹Rossetti frequented the museum's collection (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 105, 109, 115; vol. 2, p. 51). A. C. Faxon, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Abbeville, new ed. 1994), p. 103.

¹²²E. T. Cook & A. Wedderburn (ed.), *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols. (London: Allen, 1903-12), vol. 12, *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1853), p. 143.

¹²³E. L. Blanchard, "Monks and Monasteries", *People's Journal*, vol. 6 (1848), pp. 153-54.

¹²⁴Rev. E. L. Cutts, "The Monks of the Middle Ages", *Art Journal*, vol. 2 (1856), p. 285.

¹²⁵Hollar's prints appeared as illustrations in Sir William Dugdale's 3 volumed *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655-73), and his plates were re-engraved by W. Finden for the 6 volumed 1817-30 edition (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown). It should be noted that whilst in Antwerp Hollar made many engravings, probably

the statement, "Monachism is not the consecration of the beautiful, even in idea; it is the apotheosis of deformity and suffering. What can be more unpromising, as subjects for the artist, than the religious Orders of the Middle Ages, where the first thing demanded was the absence of beauty and the absence of colour", yet presented monks as not only the first artists, but as lavish patrons of the arts. Furthermore, she wrote of monasteries as being centres of scientific experiment, where some of the finest of colours were discovered and prepared.¹²⁶ It is perhaps significant that in *Fra Pace* Rossetti sought to represent this dual interest in the sciences and the arts, showing his monk carefully scrutinising a dead mouse for an illuminated page.

When in the 1880s F. M. Brown designed a personification of "Science" for Victoria University in Manchester, it was to the figure of a monk that he turned, painting the thirteenth century Franciscan Roger Bacon examining a triangular prism and holding a great tome and a labelled oak branch (fig. 13). Listed amongst the books in W. M. Rossetti's library in 1897 was W. Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers* of 1834, a book which may well have originally belonged to Rossetti's father, who had an interest in the subject of necromancy and magic.¹²⁷ In this book Rossetti may have read of the thirteenth century Dominican monk Albertus Magnus, and of his near-contemporary Roger Bacon, who were distinguished for their "incessant earnestness in learning and science".¹²⁸ Bacon excelled in languages, and made many discoveries in the fields of chemistry, optics, and astrology.¹²⁹ W. M. Rossetti also owned, once again possibly from his father, a first edition of R. Greene's *Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay* of 1594,

commissioned by local Catholics, from paintings of virgin martyrs and saints. Some of these could be seen in George Vertue's *Description of the Works of the Ingenious Delineator and Engraver Wenceslaus Hollar*, which appeared in London in 1745 and in an enlarged format in 1759 (K. S. Van Eerde, *Wenceslaus Hollar* (University Press of Virginia, 1970), pp. 39, 111.).

¹²⁶A. Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (London: Longmans, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1850), pp. xviii, xxiii. Jameson was criticised in an article in the *Spectator*, reproduced in *Littell's Living Age*, for producing a "drawingroom book" which sacrificed "critical truth in making the virtues so much more prominent than the errors or the crimes", although admitting that it constituted "a good introduction for those who wish to pursue the study of monastic history or monastic art" ("Mrs Jameson's Legends of the Monastic Orders", *Littell's Living Age*, vol. 27 (1850), pp. 17-18). *Sharpe's London Magazine*, less critical in its approach, claimed that Jameson, "irresistibly compels her readers onward in the pursuit of a theme" ("Legends of the Monastic Orders", vol. 13 (1851), p. 16).

¹²⁷W. Godwin, *Lives of the Necromancers* (London: Mason, 1834). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 64.

¹²⁸W. Godwin, p. 260.

¹²⁹W. Godwin, pp. 263-64.

which Freind in *The History of Physick* described as "one of the earliest productions to which the art of printing was applied in England".¹³⁰ In this popular play Bacon's great learning attracted the attention of the country's most renowned academics, who came to his "secret Cell" to ascertain whether his knowledge was the result of "Magicks mysterie".¹³¹

Although there is a link between the learning of Friar Bacon and *Fra Pace*, Rossetti's design differed in essence, being a devotional image. The painting is replete with devotional accessories, rosary, prayer book, crucifix, and a stained glass Virgin and Child, and Rossetti had a ray of light fall on the monk, a common device in medieval art to suggest divine blessing.¹³² He depicted the monk on his knees, further connoting that it was from his religious devotion that the monk's work stemmed. It was this painting which Burne-Jones saw in progress when he first visited Rossetti's studio early in 1856 and became convinced that he should alter his vocation from a clergyman to a painter.¹³³

In *Legends of the Monastic Orders* Jameson made reference to "Theophilus the Monk, whose most curious and important treatise on the fine arts and chemistry was written in the twelfth century and lately republished in France and England, was a Benedictine".¹³⁴ The treatise to which Jameson referred, *An Essay Upon Various Arts*, offered instruction in painting the human figure, church decoration, stained glass production, building work, and, importantly in this context, book illumination. This presents a more likely influence for Rossetti. It may have especially attracted Rossetti because of its concentration on the mixing of colours. Theophilus gave detailed instructions concerning the mixing of pigments in order to get the perfect flesh colour. Rossetti in a letter to Hall Caine expressed his enjoyment in the preparation of colours, for example, in "knowing how to mix vermilion and ultramarine for a flesh-grey".¹³⁵ Ruskin wrote of Rossetti's "speciality of colour-method" as "founded on missal

¹³⁰Freind, *The History of Physick*, vol. 2, pp. 234-39, quoted in W. Godwin, p. 265. R. Greene, *The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay* (London: Edward White, 1594).

¹³¹Greene, scene 2, line 188.

¹³²M. Meiss, "Light as Form and Symbol in some Fifteenth Century Paintings", *Art Bulletin*, vol. 27 (1945), pp. 175-81.

¹³³G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 129-30.

¹³⁴Jameson, 1850, p. xxiii-iv.

¹³⁵C. Davies, p. 67.

painting".¹³⁶ Of possible consequence for *Fra Pace*, Hendrie, the translator of the 1847 edition of Theophilus, drew particular attention to miniature painting, discussing in his introduction the historical background of illuminated manuscripts.

As Rossetti suggested his monk's work to be an act of devotion to God, so Theophilus, whose very name means 'lover of God', emphasised that his motivations lay in his desire to do God's will. He prefaced his treatise with a clear statement of his aims, beginning, "I, Theophilus, an humble priest, servant of the servants of God..." Anxious that he should not "glorify himself", he declared his artistic ability to be "Divine breath" which at the creation of the world had been gifted to humanity which was made in "the image and likeness of God".¹³⁷ Interestingly, Theophilus believed, "whoever would supply care and application might be able to acquire a capability of every art and science, as by an hereditary right". This was close to Rossetti's philosophy that every man should be able to paint. Morris wrote in a letter to Cornell Price of July 1856, "Rossetti says I ought to paint, he says I shall be able; now as he is a very great man, and speaks with authority and not as the scribes, I *must* try..."¹³⁸

The nineteenth century witnessed a general renewal of interest in the notion of the medieval monk. Thomas Carlyle declared in his *Past and Present* of 1843, "We have heard so much of Monks; everywhere, in real and fictitious History, from Muratori Annals to Radcliffe Romances".¹³⁹ He himself, feeling that the Victorian age had something to learn from medieval monastic society, drew in *Past and Present* from the example of Abbot Samson as related by Jocelinus de Brakelonda, a late twelfth century monk of Bury St Edmunds whose account had been published by the Camden Society in 1840.¹⁴⁰ Although Carlyle was critical of Catholic "idolatry and blasphemy", he recognised that for the twelfth century monk religion was "a great heaven-high Unquestionability, encompassing, interpenetrating the whole of Life".¹⁴¹ He presented Brother Samson as "A learned man, of devout grave nature" who had

¹³⁶Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 33, *The Art of England* (1883), p. 271.

¹³⁷R. Hendrie (ed. & trans.), *An Essay Upon Various Arts, by Theophilus* (London: Murray, 1847), pp. xv, xlv-xlvii, 3.

¹³⁸J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, 2 vols. (London: Longman's & Green, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 106-7.

¹³⁹T. Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman & Hall, new ed., 1889), p. 37.

¹⁴⁰Jocelinus de Brakelonda, *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda, de rebus gestis Samsonis Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Edmundi*, ed. John Gage Rokewood (London: Camden Society, 1840). Carlyle, 1889, p. 35 n. Rossetti was familiar with Carlyle, owning his 3 volumed *History of the French Revolution* of 1837 (W. M. Rossetti, vol. 1, p. 103).

¹⁴¹Carlyle, 1889, pp. 42, 58.

"studied in Paris", who had been made convent librarian as he was "passionately fond of Books", and who had subsequently been named Abbot.¹⁴²

The writings of Walter Scott, influenced by old Border tales and ballads, involving monks, nuns and abbeys, had been admired by Rossetti from an early age.¹⁴³

Described by Keble as "Catholic" in their outlook, they were regarded by G. E. Street as central to the Gothic Revival in art.¹⁴⁴ More recently, Browning, inspired by

Vasari, had published in volume one of his *Men and Women* (1855) the poem "Fra Lippo Lippi", a humorous account of a painter monk with a sensual appetite.¹⁴⁵ In

1855 Rossetti had seen much of the Brownings, who had returned to London on account of the cholera in Florence. Particularly memorable for Rossetti had been a visit on 27 September 1855 at which Browning had read "Fra Lippo Lippi".¹⁴⁶

Although evincing a considerably different view of monasticism to himself, Rossetti declared to Allingham on 25 November 1855 that *Men and Women* was "a magnificent series".¹⁴⁷

Ruskin wrote to Rossetti in April 1855 to say, "I have all this winter been launching out in a very heedless way, buying missals and Albert Durers", and Rossetti may well have borne this in mind whilst painting *Fra Pace*.¹⁴⁸ Ruskin's first purchase had been a fourteenth century *Hours of the Virgin* in 1850-51, and he wrote enthusiastically of "The new worlds which every leaf of this book opened to me, and the joy I had..."¹⁴⁹ Ruskin had in fact demonstrated an interest in illuminated manuscripts as early as 1846, and he went on to impart this enthusiasm to others, giving lectures on the art of illumination to artisans at the Architectural Museum.¹⁵⁰ In his chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" in *The Stones of Venice*, which had been published in 1853, he praised the

¹⁴²Carlyle, 1889, pp. 61, 63, 71.

¹⁴³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁴G. E. Street, "On the Future of Art in England", *The Ecclesiologist*, N.S., vol. 16 (August 1858), p. 233. M. Hill, *The Religious Order* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 155.

¹⁴⁵I. Jack & R. Inglesfield (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), vol. 5, pp. 31-53.

¹⁴⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 236.

¹⁴⁷G. Birkbeck Hill, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham 1854-1870* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1897), p. 156.

¹⁴⁸W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *Ruskin, Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism: Papers 1854 to 1862* (London: Allen, 1899), pp. 74-75.

¹⁴⁹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita*, vol. 3, pp. 490-91.

¹⁵⁰J. S. Dearden, *John Ruskin, the Collector* (London: Bibliographic Society, 1966), p. 125. Christian, 1981, p. 48.

medieval craftsman, who looked to nature for inspiration, who diligently worked for God's glory and who found satisfaction in his labour.¹⁵¹ W. M. Rossetti, who had read and reviewed this book in July 1853, expressed his strong admiration for it, particularly "the chapters on St Mark's, the nature of Gothic, & the Ducal Palace". He notably appreciated the "deep considerations on art & character from a thoroughly Christian point of view".¹⁵²

In the mid-nineteenth century there existed in certain circles a romantic notion of the life of the monastic artist. *Blackwood's Magazine*, which was fast becoming one of the leading monthlies of the time, made the declaration in 1851, "Lovers of the Fine Arts... owe an especial regard and reverence to the Monastic Orders, without whom there would have been, and would be now, no Art at all."¹⁵³ In *Fra Pace* Rossetti created a romantic idyll of beauty and medieval devotion calculated to appeal to Victorian sensibilities. Indeed, Lawrence wrote in 1849 that "the illuminated manuscript is now the object of almost fashionable admiration", with Longmans and other eminent publishers currently offering books illustrated in the missal style.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 10, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2 (1853), pp. 180-269. In May 1854 the entire works of Ruskin had been gifted to Rossetti by Ruskin himself (W. M. Rossetti, 1899, pp. 2-3).

¹⁵²In true Ruskinian style W. M. Rossetti ended his letter to his mother, dated 20 July 1853, with a comment on the correct use of ornament in the medieval church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois and a diatribe against "the barbarism of restorers" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3).

¹⁵³"Legends of the Monastic Orders, as Represented in the Fine Arts", *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 69 (March 1851), p. 305. Mackail, vol. 1, p. 68. In Dugdale's ponderous *Monasticon* there were only three artist monks mentioned, and these very briefly: the twelfth century Master Hugo, an illuminator and goldsmith; Brother William, a Cambridge monk-artist and goldsmith; and Abbot Mannius of Evesham, who was skilled in music, writing, painting and metalwork (Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. 3, pp. 162-63; vol. 4, p. 215; vol. 1, p. 151, quoted in R. E. Swartwout, *The Monastic Craftsman* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1932), pp. 52, 63).

¹⁵⁴H. Lawrence, "Illuminated Manuscripts of the Middle Ages", *British Quarterly Review*, vol. 9 (1849), p. 73. Scholars were also conducting research into the subject, eg. H. N. Humphreys, *The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, 1844); *The Art of Illumination and Missal Painting* (London, 1849); *The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing* (London: Ingram & Cooke, 1853). W. M. Rossetti possessed Séroux d'Agincourt's *History of Art by its Monuments*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1847), volume three of which was heavily illustrated with engravings of miniatures, and Franz Kugler's *Handbook of Painting: The Italian Schools, with the Dutch, Flemish, and German Schools*, ed. Charles Eastlake, illustrated by Scharf, 2 vols. (1846-55), which discussed Anglo-Saxon illuminated missals. He also came to own M. D. Wyatt's *The Art of Illuminating* (London: Day, 1859). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

More specifically, however, Rossetti hoped *Fra Pace* would appeal to Ruskin. Ruskin, who throughout the 1840s evinced a positive view of life within the cloisters, had been disappointed on his visit to the Grande Chartreuse in 1849 because the monastery had been "meanly designed and confusedly grouped", there had been "not a picture, not a statue, not a bit of old glass, or well-wrought vestment or jewelry", and "the monk who showed us through the corridors had no cowl worth the wearing, no beard worth the wagging, no expression but superciliousness without sagacity, and an ungracious manner, showing that he was much tired of the place".¹⁵⁵ Ruskin particularly regretted that the monks did not attempt to introduce natural details into their illuminations. All these things were corrected in *Fra Pace*, and on its completion Rossetti gave the watercolour to the art critic.

However, *Fra Pace* was sent back with the message, "If you would but do the things I *want* it would be much easier."¹⁵⁶ In 1855 Ruskin was having discussions with Rev. William Waring on the subject of religious art, and Rossetti's *Nativity* (S.71; 1855) and *Passover in the Holy Family* (S.78; 1855-56; fig. 14) appealed to him as being able to illustrate certain points of his case. These works fitted in neatly with the dictums expressed in the third volume of *Modern Painters* (January 1856), in which Ruskin had declared that the painter should be primarily concerned in his work "to call up the scenes and facts in which we are commanded to believe, and be present, as if in the body, at every recorded event of the history of the Redeemer", and secondly "to give to all mental truths some visible type in allegory, simile, or personification, which shall more deeply enforce them".¹⁵⁷

Rossetti's *Passover* design, which has been much discussed in terms of its use of typological symbolism, followed both of these latter precepts.¹⁵⁸ This was especially brought out in the poem which Rossetti wrote for the picture in 1869:

Here meet together the prefiguring day
And day prefigured...
Lo! the slain lamb confronts the Lamb to slay.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita*, vol. 2, p. 439; vol. 3, pp. 475-77.

¹⁵⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1899, pp. 108-9.

¹⁵⁷Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 5, *Modern Painters* (1856), vol. 3, pp. 72-73; vol. 36, *Letters I: 1827-1869*, p. 227 n.

¹⁵⁸Ladow, 1980, p. 131. H. L. Sussman, *Fact into Figure* (Ohio State University Press, 1979), pp. 67-69.

¹⁵⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 355. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 217.

Fra Pace, in contrast, did neither. It was not taken from Scriptural history, nor was it didactic. It showed a tendency towards retrogression of which Ruskin did not approve. In 1847, reviewing Lindsay's new volumes on early Christian art, Ruskin had maintained of art that, "if worth doing, it will be something altogether different from what has ever been done before. The visions of the cloister must depart with its superstitious peace - the quick, apprehensive symbolism of early Faith must yield to the abstract teachings of disciplined Reason."¹⁶⁰

However, in 1856 Ruskin wrote with grudging approval of the medievalism of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, declaring in volume four of *Modern Painters*, that "Longfellow in *The Golden Legend* has entered more closely into the temper of the Monk, for good and for evil, than ever yet theological writer or historian, though they may have given their life's labour to the analysis".¹⁶¹ As in *Fra Pace*, one scene of *The Golden Legend* takes place within a Scriptorium, Longfellow introducing the reader to the conceited Friar Pacificus, who was transcribing and illuminating the Gospel of John:

What treasures of art these pages hold,
All ablaze with crimson and gold,
God forgive me! I seem to feel a certain satisfaction steal
Into my heart...¹⁶²

Longfellow had been included in the Pre-Raphaelite's List of Immortals formulated by Rossetti and Hunt in August 1848, and Hunt and Rossetti c. 1851 had both become involved with a scheme to illustrate an edition of his works.¹⁶³ Around 1857-58 Rossetti was to take the subject of a pen and ink drawing, *The Skeleton in Armour* (S.103), from a ballad by Longfellow. Yet Rossetti expressed disdain for the poet in a letter of April 1856, specifically in the context of the passage in *Modern Painters*. Ruskin's rejection of Rossetti's romanticised view of monastic life, but appreciation of Longfellow's 'historical' approach, can only have riled Rossetti. A letter from Anna

¹⁶⁰J. Ruskin, "Lord Lindsay on the History of Christian Art", *Quarterly Review*, vol. 81 (June 1847), p. 57.

¹⁶¹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 6, *Modern Painters*, vol. 4, p. 446.

¹⁶²H. W. Longfellow, *The Golden Legend* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed & Fields, 1851), act 4.

¹⁶³Birkbeck Hill, p. 181. W. H. Hunt, "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art", *Contemporary Review*, vol. 49 (May 1886), p. 747. Marsh, 1999, p. 81.

Rossetti took a keen interest in medieval mystery plays, as will be discussed, and would have appreciated Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, which contained within its structure such a miracle play (Longfellow, 1851, act 3).

Mary Howitt to Rossetti in the spring of 1858 suggested that Rossetti had certainly been sharing his grievances concerning the critic:

Ruskin unto thee did give
Lashes of a cruel kind...¹⁶⁴

Although responding to what he felt to be the interests of his patron, and influenced by contemporary literature, the very basic impulse behind *Fra Pace* was a fascination with the idea of the monastic artist working out his faith in his pictorial labour. Indeed, this theme had been the basis of his *Fra Angelico Painting* (S.694; fig. 15), a pen and ink drawing of c. 1853, in which he had depicted the fifteenth century artist monk, reverently on his knees, painting a picture of the Virgin and Child. Another monk was depicted standing to the side of the easel reading, possibly from a passage in the Bible in order to inspire his fellow. In the background there appears to be a rough outline of a crucifix. At Lichfield House in 1851, H. Stanley had exhibited an oil of Fra Angelico on his knees painting with a second monk in the background playing an organ. Rossetti mentioned this painting, *Angelico da Fiesole Painting in the Convent*, in his article, "The Modern Pictures of all Countries, at Lichfield House", which was published in *The Spectator* that year.¹⁶⁵ He did not think very much of this painting, which was "hard in outline and monotonous in colour", and "somewhat tasteless and wanting in interest". But he did like the figure of the second monk, which he considered "the best incident" of the painting, and this perhaps was the inspiration for the second figure in his own composition.

Interestingly, Fra Angelico was the only artist before Raphael to have been included in Hunt and Rossetti's List of Immortals.¹⁶⁶ F. G. Stephens felt that Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (S.44; fig. 16), which had been begun in 1849, had been painted in "the mood of Angelico".¹⁶⁷ Although Hunt and Rossetti had had the opportunity to view two paintings attributed to Fra Angelico in the exhibition at the British Institution in June 1848, Hunt wrote that they had "seen nothing of this artist's original work" before their trip to the Low Countries in the autumn of 1849.¹⁶⁸ On this trip, visiting the Louvre, they came across Fra Angelico's altarpiece, *The Coronation of the Virgin*,

¹⁶⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 24.

¹⁶⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, pp. 482-83, 520.

¹⁶⁶Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 42. Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 158.

¹⁶⁷F. G. Stephens, "Ecce Ancilla Domini! by Dante Gabriel Charles Rossetti", *The Portfolio* (1888), p. 125.

¹⁶⁸51. *Ascension of the Virgin*, W. Fuller Maitland Coll., and 75. *Salome Dancing Before Herod*, Samuel Rogers Coll. (A. Graves, *A Century of Loan Exhibitions 1813-1912*, 5 vols. (London: Graves, 1913), vol. 1, p. 19). Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 190.

purchased by the museum in 1812, which Jameson mentioned as magnificently dominating the Long Gallery.¹⁶⁹ Hunt declared that it was "of peerless grace and sweetness in the eyes of us both."¹⁷⁰ W. M. Rossetti wrote home from France in July 1853, "Do you remember the truly heavenly 'Coronation of the Virgin' by Fra Angelico?", perhaps re-igniting his brother's enthusiasm for the artist-monk.¹⁷¹

The impetus may equally have come from Ford Madox Brown, who had spent some time in Italy in the mid 1840s and had been taken with the examples of early Renaissance art that he had seen there. According to Hueffer, Brown's *The Seeds and Fruits of English Poetry* (1845-51, 1853) was intended to rival in stature the magnificent works of the Italian painters which he had seen in Italy. The memory of the impact the works of the early Italian masters had made stayed with him. On 3 January 1865 he wrote to George Rae, "what remains strongest printed in my mind are the wall-paintings of Giotto wherever they are to be found *un-restored*, the frescoes of Masaccio, in the Brancacci Chapel at Florence... The paintings of Fra Angelico, executed on the walls of his convent in Florence".¹⁷² In March 1848 Rossetti had requested to be taken on as a pupil of Brown.¹⁷³ Although the arrangement had been short lived, it inaugurated a lasting friendship.¹⁷⁴ Brown's accounts of his Italian visit, so vivid to him, may well have been inspirational to his friend and former pupil.

However, Fra Angelico was the archetypal monastic painter, and, deeply concerned with art as a natural extension of faith, it is not surprising that Rossetti should have turned to his example. Jameson in her *Early Italian Painters* wrote that for Fra Angelico painting was "a hymn of praise, and every creation of his pencil [was] an act of piety and charity".¹⁷⁵ In volume two of *Modern Painters* (1847), Ruskin described

¹⁶⁹A. Jameson, *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters* (London: Murray, 1859), pp. 75-76.

¹⁷⁰Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 190.

¹⁷¹W. M. Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 20 July 1853 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3). note 157. Rev. Matthew Pilkington's *The Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painters* (London, 1798, new edition), was listed in the inventory W. M. Rossetti made of his library in 1897, and may or may not have been in his possession in the 1850s (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

¹⁷²F. M. Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown* (London: Longmans & Green, 1896), p. 41.

¹⁷³Hueffer, 1896, pp. 50-52.

¹⁷⁴W. M. Rossetti described Brown as his brother's "chief intimate throughout his life" (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. xiii).

¹⁷⁵Jameson, 1859, p. 72. Published in serial form in *Penny Magazine* in 1843. Rossetti could also have read a very similar account in Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (1850), p. 417.

Fra Angelico's work as the "full outpouring of the sacred spirit".¹⁷⁶ Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* was translated into English in 1850-52 and Rossetti could have read in volume two, either after 1851 in English or before in Italian, of the "pure holiness" of Fra Angelico, who painted as directed by the will of God. Vasari maintained that, "he would never take the pencil in hand until he had first offered a prayer."¹⁷⁷

As in *Fra Pace*, Rossetti emphasised that the monk's painting was an act of worship, and one blessed by God. Showing the monk at an open window, he drew on the metaphor of light as divine inspiration and indeed blessing, and he also suggested an analogy between nature, that is, God's creation, and the artist's work. Rossetti depicted Fra Angelico on his knees with his face very close to the easel on which he worked, in order to suggest both the devotion and the intensity with which he set about his work. He depicted the moment when Fra Angelico carefully painted in the Virgin's halo, the mark of her godliness, and in this way brought the monk's own holiness to the foreground. The crucifix recalls Vasari's statement that, "He is said to have never painted a Crucifix without tears streaming from his eyes".¹⁷⁸

Rossetti's 1847 prose tale "Hand and Soul", written about the fictional thirteenth century Italian artist Chiaro dell' Erma, suggests that Rossetti had been reading accounts of the lives of the early Christian painters, most likely by Vasari, Jameson and Lord Lindsay.¹⁷⁹ It was written in the manner of a documentary record. As Lindsay began his account of Fra Angelico by saying, "This celebrated artist... was born at Vicchio, in the district of Mugello, near Florence...", so Rossetti opened, "This Chiaro dell' Erma was a young man of a very honourable family in Arezzo". He added little details in order to enhance the reality of the tale, such as, "It was here, and at this time, that Chiaro painted the Dresden pictures" mentioned in "the eloquent pamphlet of Dr. Aemmster". He also wrote of Chiaro's works in fresco, "I believe that no traces remain to us of any of these latter", although "D'Agincourt mentions having seen some

¹⁷⁶Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 4, *Modern Painters* (1846), vol. 2, p. 212.

¹⁷⁷G. Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Mrs J. Foster, 5 vols. (London: Bohn, 1850-52), vol. 2, p. 34.

¹⁷⁸Vasari, vol. 2, pp. 34-35.

¹⁷⁹Lord Lindsay's *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, 3 vols. (London: Murray, 1847). On its publication Lindsay's book was reviewed in some detail by Ruskin, who declared, "As a contribution to the History of Art, his work is unquestionably the most valuable which has yet appeared in England" (Ruskin, 1847, p. 4). J. Steegman, "Lord Lindsay's *History of Christian Art*", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 10 (1947), p. 123.

portions of a fresco by him which originally had its place above the high altar in the Church of the Certosa".¹⁸⁰

Rossetti seemed to have been looking particularly to the stories surrounding the life of Fra Angelico for the character of Chiaro. Rossetti described Chiaro's lifestyle as almost monastic, "living entirely to himself", and only walking at night "in the most solitary places he could find". His room was presented as little more than a cell, containing only his art materials, a few books and "a small consecrated image of St. Mary Virgin wrought out of silver", before which he placed during the summer months a lily and a rose. In Chiaro's work, Rossetti wrote, "there had always been a feeling of worship and service. It was the peace-offering that he made to God". Lindsay described the art of Angelico as being the product of "that religious rapture or ecstasy produced by the action of the Spirit", so Rossetti too talked of "the ecstasy of prayer" and of Chiaro's art as alighting "on his soul like the dove of the Trinity".¹⁸¹

Rossetti, at the end of "Hand and Soul", assuming the role of a British tourist visiting Florence, wrote of the picture that he saw there by Chiaro dell' Erma, "The face and hands in this picture, though wrought with great delicacy, have the appearance of being painted at once, in a single sitting: the drapery is unfinished."¹⁸² This recalls Fra Angelico whose habit it was, as Vasari wrote, "to abstain from retouching or improving any painting once finished. He altered nothing, but left all as it was done the first time, believing as he said, that such was the will of God."¹⁸³ By means of the vision which he had Chiaro experience, Rossetti also placed him within the tradition of the painter monk of Fiesole, of whom Jameson declared in her *Legends of the Monastic Orders*, "Well has he been named IL BEATO and ANGELICO, whose life was 'participate with angels' even in this world!"¹⁸⁴ Ennemoser related in his *History of Magic* how Angelico "often fell into ecstatic states while painting, and had in them ideal visions".¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰D. G. Rossetti, "Hand and Soul", *Germ*, no. 1 (January 1850), pp. 23, 25. See note 154.

¹⁸¹Lindsay, vol. 3, p. 151.

¹⁸²*Germ*, January 1850, p. 32.

¹⁸³Vasari, vol. 2, pp. 34-35.

¹⁸⁴Jameson, 1850, p. 417.

¹⁸⁵J. Ennemoser, *The History of Magic*, trans. W. Howitt, 2 vols. (London: Bohn, 1854), p. 85. Rossetti, as will be discussed subsequently, was regarded very highly by the Howitt family.

When "Hand and Soul" was published in *The Germ* in 1850 and *The Fortnightly Review* in 1870, Rossetti certainly managed to deceive some readers into thinking his narrative was a verified account of an early Renaissance master in the vein of Jameson and Lord Lindsay.¹⁸⁶ The painting by Chiaro, which "Hand and Soul" primarily concerned, was stated to be in Florence. Rossetti, who never had and never was to visit Italy in his lifetime, wrote, "In the Spring of 1847 I was at Florence. Such as were there at the same time with myself - those at least, to whom Art is something, - will recollect how many rooms of the Pitti Gallery were closed through the season, in order that some of the pictures they contained might be examined, and repaired without the necessity of removal." He described the aforementioned work by Chiaro as hung "immediately beneath that head by Raphael so long known as the 'Berrettino,' and now said to be the portrait of Cecco Ciulli."¹⁸⁷ W. M. Rossetti related that a certain lady from Kidderminster, who became the wife of the landscape painter Andrew McCallum, enquired after Chiaro's painting in the Pitti whilst she was in Florence, and was "grievously disconcerted" to find no knowledge of such a work.¹⁸⁸ William Sharp mentioned one particular lady who "had lately been in Florence and distinctly remembered having seen the picture in question".¹⁸⁹

Rossetti had a wealth of family knowledge of Italy from which to draw to make his tale appear authentic. Before fleeing to his home country, Rossetti's father had held a post within the Neapolitan Royal Collection, a "treasure-house of arts", where he had "met with Kings and met with Emperors, / Conspicuous artists, men of lettered fame," following which he had been summoned to Rome by King Joachim where he had gained renown as an improvising poet.¹⁹⁰ On a less grand scale, Rossetti's uncle Dr J. Polidori had written the text to accompany R. Bridgens' 1821 *Sketches Illustrative of the Manners & Costumes of France, Switzerland and Italy*, which would have been accessible to Rossetti.¹⁹¹ There were also the experiences of his Aunt Charlotte Polidori, who would read her foreign journals to the family.¹⁹² Rossetti may also have made use of contemporary guide books and personal accounts of Florence, such as Jameson's *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, and H. Coxe's *Picture of Italy*.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶D. G. Rossetti, "Hand and Soul", *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 14 (December 1870), pp. 692-702.

¹⁸⁷*Germ*, January 1850, p. 32.

¹⁸⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 155.

¹⁸⁹W. Sharp, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Macmillan, 1882), p. 286.

¹⁹⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, pp. 18-19, 35-36.

¹⁹¹Certainly W. M. Rossetti came to own a copy (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

¹⁹²Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25.

¹⁹³A. Jameson, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, 4 vols. (London: Saunders

W. M. Rossetti listed an illustrated *Guide de Florence* (1825) as among his brother's collection in 1866.¹⁹⁴ In *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (S.42; fig. 17), dated 1849, Rossetti demonstrated his knowledge of Florence and Florentine art, drawing an image of St Reparata with a flag identifying her as the city's patroness, which she was from 680 to 1298. Jameson declared, "I have never seen any representation of Santa Reparata except in the old Florentine pictures".¹⁹⁵

However, Rossetti at times displayed more of a concern for the conveyance of an historical mood, rather than for historical accuracy. He may have chosen to set "Hand and Soul" in the thirteenth century rather than Angelico's century, the former being an age which witnessed, "some of the grandest productions of human genius that the world ever saw... cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries, massive in their proportions, exquisite in their rich and delicate carvings... [and] evincing the depth of human feeling and the fervor of human faith".¹⁹⁶ Yet Rossetti lacked knowledge of specific details of that century. W. M. Rossetti had to point out to him that he could not have a thirteenth century church dedicated to San Rocco, a fourteenth century saint. Rossetti changed the name to San Petronio when "Hand and Soul" was republished in 1870. This incident certainly undermines Rossetti's authority. He wrote to his brother on 27 August 1869, "Please suggest a new saint", and decided to play it safe by selecting an apostolic one.¹⁹⁷

Rossetti was primarily concerned to resurrect interest in the religious spirit of the Middle Ages. In 1845-47 he had translated a sonnet, "To the Blessed Virgin Mary", by Fra Guittone D'Arezzo, who although not a monk was a member of the religious and military order of *Cavalieri di Santa Maria*.¹⁹⁸ This devotional poem, which advocated sacred over profane love, was published in 1861 in his *Early Italian Poets*, interestingly mirroring in title Jameson's *Early Italian Painters*, which had come out two years previously. The *Ecclesiastic Theologian* recommended Rossetti's volume to its readers as helping "to render the 'sacred art' of various ages and peoples the common heritage of all mankind".¹⁹⁹ It was precisely on this basis that Rossetti frequently returned to

& Otley, 1834), vol. 4, pp. 246-47. H. Coxe, *Picture of Italy* (London: Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1815), pp. 377-408.

¹⁹⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

¹⁹⁵Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 272.

¹⁹⁶*Sharpe's London Magazine*, 1851, p. 18.

¹⁹⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 207, 211. The name of the church was changed in August 1869 in the second of the Penkill proofs (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:2).

¹⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 236.

¹⁹⁹"Poems by Mr and Miss Rossetti", *Ecclesiastic Theologian*, vol. 24 (September

the example of Fra Angelico. Significantly Burne-Jones declared, "Until I saw Rossetti's work and Fra Angelico's... I never supposed that I liked painting".²⁰⁰

In 1849 Rossetti wrote three sonnets, "St. Luke the Painter", "Not as These" and "The Husbandman", which he named collectively *Old and New Art*. In these poems Rossetti expressed the view that art was the nobler for having a religious purpose. This he saw as perfectly exemplified in the art of the Middle Ages, and it was this tenor which he hoped to recreate in his own art. William Michael noted this debt to medieval art, "These three sonnets testify to a highly religious (not necessarily dogmatic) view of the function of Art, to love of the old painters, and revolt against the more modern ones, and to a modest and yet resolute desire to aid in reinstating the Art in its legitimate place."²⁰¹ In "St Luke" Rossetti suggested that the medieval spirit may be once more attained through art which was "God's priest":

Yet now, in this the twilight, she might still
Kneel in the latter grass to pray again...

In this poem Rossetti stated his familiarity with the legend of St Luke:

Give honour unto Luke Evangelist;
For he it was (the aged legends say)
Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray.²⁰²

Rossetti could have read in Butler's *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Saints*, amongst other sources, the various stories surrounding St Luke's artistic practices and the dissemination of his paintings.²⁰³ However, the poem in itself does not prove that Rossetti had read the legends himself. It was well known among artists that the legends stated the writer of the third gospel to have been a painter and to have had the honour of painting the Virgin Mary. Indeed, it was on this basis that Luke had become the patron saint of painters, and guilds and academies had been placed under his protection.²⁰⁴ Further, the subject of St Luke painting the Virgin had been a popular one since the fourteenth century.

1862), p. 427.

²⁰⁰O. Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic* (London: Muller, 1949), p. 205.

²⁰¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 144.

²⁰²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 214.

²⁰³Butler cited important authorities, such as the Emperor Basil, Nicephorus, Metaphrastes and Theodorus Lector (Butler, 1757, vol. 4, p. 371).

²⁰⁴In a letter of October 1879 Rossetti showed his awareness of the fifteenth century painter Jean de Mabuse who had been a member of the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1669).

Rossetti may have known of the version of *St Luke Painting the Virgin and Child* attributed to Raphael in the Academy of St Luke, Rome, or that ascribed to Raphael in the London collection of the Marquess of Westminster. This collection, described by Jameson as "long celebrated through all Europe for the splendour and variety of its treasures", was first opened to the public in 1808.²⁰⁵ The artist David Scott, brother of Rossetti's friend William Bell Scott, saw whilst in Italy in 1832-34 one of the paintings believed to be by St Luke at Ara Coeli.²⁰⁶ W. M. Rossetti declared of D. Scott's *Memoirs* (1850) in which this visit was recorded, "My brother read this book as soon as it came out", and Rossetti declared to W. B. Scott on 2 May 1850 his desire to review it.²⁰⁷ Rossetti certainly had ample means to obtain information concerning the St Luke tradition.

According to apocryphal accounts Luke carried around with him for preaching purposes two portraits painted by himself, one of Christ and the other of the Virgin. These he found to be powerful preaching tools and thus gained many converts to Christianity.²⁰⁸ Rossetti, moving away from conventional representations of the saint, contemplated a picture focusing on this less commonly painted aspect of the legend, in which art was a religious tool. His intention, as recorded by W. M. Rossetti, was to produce a picture "of Luke preaching, having beside him pictures, his own work, of Christ and the Virgin Mary".²⁰⁹ Rossetti may have seen the panel by the Master of the Legend of St Ursula depicting *St Luke Preaching with a Portrait of the Virgin*, whilst he was in Bruges in 1849. The painting belonged to the Convent of Black Sisters, an establishment which Hunt and Rossetti may have visited, as they had a Béguinage in Ghent.²¹⁰ He certainly would have seen John Callcott Horsley's *St Augustine Preaching* (fig. 18), which was awarded a £200 premium when it was submitted to the Westminster cartoon competition of 1843. It showed St Augustine preaching to Ethelbert by means of an icon of Christ, "while the attendant monks made the air resound with their melodious anthems, which they sang in alternate choirs".²¹¹

²⁰⁵A. Jameson, *Companion to the most Celebrated Private Galleries* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1844), pp. 227-28.

²⁰⁶Journal entry 23 December 1833, W. B. Scott (ed.), *Memoir of David Scott* (Edinburgh: Black, 1850), p. 155. In Edinburgh Scott was a member of a St. Luke's Club for artists (W. B. Scott, 1850, p. 46).

²⁰⁷Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:6. W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 683. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1679 n.

²⁰⁸Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. 124. C. Rossetti, 1881, p. 452.

²⁰⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 144.

²¹⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 16-17.

²¹¹J. J. & W. Linnell, *Catalogue of the Prize Cartoons* (London, 1843), cat. no. 4. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 13-16. W. Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English*

Interestingly, there are similarities between "Hand and Soul" and the legend of St Luke. Chiaro had a vision in which a woman appeared to him, declaring herself to be an image of his own soul. She stood before him as a Muse, providing him with fresh inspiration at a time when his art had brought him to despair. She said, "take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am to know me... so shall thy soul stand before thee always and perplex thee no more."²¹² She was also presented as a quasi-Madonna figure who came with a message from God and brought Chiaro to his knees in awe.

Eisler points out that precedents for representations of Luke painting the Virgin Mary could be traced to early Christian manuscripts, such as the Codex Rossanensis, in which St Mark was depicted in his study with a female figure, thought to represent Inspiration. The idea can be found even earlier in antique representations of the poet and his Muse, as in the Sarcophagus of the Muses in the Capitoline Museum, Rome.²¹³ Both traditions were brought together in "Hand and Soul", the mystical woman of Chiaro's vision merging elements of the Madonna and Muse. There is a further link with a myth which circulated in the Middle Ages claiming that not only had St Luke painted the Virgin in her lifetime, but that she had later appeared to him in a vision with a portrait of herself divinely painted.

There was a strong tradition of Mariological appearances from which Rossetti could have drawn. According to legend, St Bernard, who was renowned for his devotion to the Virgin, whilst writing his homilies in her honour, reached such a point of illness and exhaustion that he could not continue. At this point the Virgin appeared to him to comfort him, giving him renewed vigour to continue his writing. This incident was rendered by Giotto and Fra Filippo Lippi, etchings of which appeared in Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (figs. 19, 20).²¹⁴ In Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers* Rossetti could have read how the monk Albertus Magnus was on the point of leaving the Dominican order in despair of his slowness of learning "when the blessed virgin appeared to him in a vision". She gave him such wisdom in matters of philosophy that he became a figure of considerable renown, eventually becoming Bishop of Ratisborn.²¹⁵

Art (Yale University Press, 1979), p. 209.

²¹²*Germ*, January 1850, p. 31.

²¹³C. Eisler, "Portrait of the Artist as St Luke", *Art News* (December 1959), pp. 27-28.

²¹⁴Jameson, 1850, p. 153.

²¹⁵W. Godwin, pp. 260-61.

Warner writes that the Virgin appeared in the visions of saints and mystics more frequently than any other figure.²¹⁶ In 1847, the date of "Hand and Soul", the Virgin had apparently made a miraculous appearance at La Salette, initiating a series of similar miraculous reports.²¹⁷ Chiaro's vision was interpreted as an apparition of the Virgin by at least one nineteenth century critic. Gurney, a prominent Anglo-Catholic clergyman, and correspondent with the Rossetti family, wrote, "It comes to him, observe, from the lips of a woman, whom I take to be (for we are not limited surely to one meaning) the Divine Wisdom, a Virgin-Mother".²¹⁸ Gurney's interpretation, which he personally delivered to the Rossetti family, was not met with scorn.²¹⁹ Indeed, W. M. Rossetti came to own Gurney's "A Painter's Day-Dream" and "A Dream of Fair Women", both specifically Marian interpretations of his brother's work.²²⁰

It is most likely that Rossetti had in mind the tradition of St Luke, as this figure specifically preoccupied his thoughts at this time. He certainly suggested that there was a spiritual power in Chiaro's painting. In the guise of a tourist in the Pitti, he wrote, "As soon as I saw the figure, it drew awe upon me, like shadow in water", recalling the moment when Chiaro first sensed the presence of the female apparition, "suddenly he found awe within him... and a living freshness like rain."²²¹ In "Hand and Soul" art was the basis of a religious experience for Chiaro, but not only for him but for the mid-Victorian viewer, six centuries later. Indeed, William Sharp saw the story's contemporary relevance, stating, apparently on the authority of the artist, that it constituted an "artistic *confessio fidei*".²²² Rossetti had also made a connection between medieval and Victorian art in "St Agnes of Intercession", begun c. 1848, in which the artist-speaker discovered his life and work was strangely repeating that of

²¹⁶M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), p. 301.

²¹⁷A. Seltzer, *Alphonse Legros* (Ann Arbor, microfilm: University of New York, PhD thesis, 1980), p. 291.

²¹⁸Rev. A. Gurney, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *The Monthly Packet*, vol. 9 (January 1885), p. 189. Bentley, 1982, p. 38. F. Bennett, p. 143. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:31.

²¹⁹F. M. L. Rossetti recorded in her diary on 9 June 1883, "William came to meet Mr Alfred Gurney who read us his remarks on Gabriel's 'Hand and Soul'. These remarks form part of a lecture delivered by him to the Somerville Club last Tuesday, the next being his already-printed 'Dream of Fair Women'" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17).

²²⁰Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

²²¹*Germ*, January 1850, pp. 29, 32.

²²²W. Sharp, p. 297.

the medieval Italian artist Bucciolo d'Orli Angiolieri.²²³ Rossetti, at the outset of his career as an painter, saw art as a potentially powerful channel for religious experience in Victorian Britain, as it had been in medieval Italy. Thus his *oeuvre* in the 1840s and 1850s was punctuated by key figures such as Fra Pace, Fra Angelico, Chiaro and St Luke.

²²³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 399-426.

Ch. 3: Brotherhood of St Luke

The medieval concept of a brotherhood of religious painters working together under the protection of St Luke had been revived in the early nineteenth century by a group of six disillusioned arts students from the Vienna Academy. Friedrich Overbeck, Franz Pforr, Ludwig Vogel, Johann Konrad Hottinger, Joseph Wintergerst and Joseph Sutter would meet together to discuss and criticise each other's work, and on 10 July 1809 they formed the Brotherhood of St Luke.²²⁴ Overbeck designed a seal which was to be placed on the back of their paintings. This was not unlike the secret initialling agreed by the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to unite the work of the group when exhibiting, whilst creating a certain air of mystery. The PRB too was initiated by disgruntled art students, who sought to rebel against their contemporaries by reviving in modern times the spirit of the early masters. Like the Nazarene brotherhood, the group also had its origins in an informal artistic forum for encouragement and criticism, the Cyclographic Society. This sketching society, which Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and Thomas Woolner joined in 1848, relied on its members submitting drawings to be passed round for comment on formal Criticism Sheets.²²⁵

Although containing more detail and human interest, compositionally Rossetti's watercolour *Fra Pace* is very similar to the seal of the Brotherhood of St Luke (fig. 21), in which their patron saint was depicted in his dual role as chronicler and painter of the life of Christ. Religious devotion is expressed in each by the inclusion of a Madonna and Child. It is unknown as to whether Rossetti had actually seen the Brotherhood of St Luke's insignia, but *Fra Pace* certainly highlights a similarity of intent between Rossetti and the German group. Both saw art as having a specifically religious purpose, and this within a Catholic context.

Hueffer wrote concerning the art of the Brotherhood of St Luke, "it may be doubted whether its immediate causes were more essentially artistic than religious."²²⁶ Indeed, the members of the Guild of St Luke were to earn the title, 'The Nazarenes', whilst in Rome, on account of their long hair and monastic way of life, the group inhabiting the deserted monastery of San Isidoro on the Pincio.²²⁷ Their productions were motivated

²²⁴K. Andrews, *The Nazarenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 20.

²²⁵Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 18:7. Fredeman, 1975, p. 110. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 120-22.

²²⁶Hueffer, 1896, p. 44.

²²⁷Christian, 1981, p. 3.

by Roman Catholic fervour. Sutter and Wintergerst wanted their works to inspire goodness in the beholder, and Pforr desired that his paintings should stimulate religious meditation. Overbeck, the principal figure in this group, who became known as the brotherhood's Priest, was convinced that art could only flourish based on Christian doctrine. It was this idea which formed the basis of his *Triumph of Religion in the Arts* of 1833-40 (fig. 22), commissioned for the Städel Art Institute, Frankfurt, twenty-four years after the founding of the original Brotherhood.²²⁸

Andrews suggests that in painting the *Triumph of Religion in the Arts* Overbeck may have had in mind August Wilhelm Schlegel's poem "The Alliance of the Church with the Arts" of 1800, in which a large crowd celebrates Art as inspired by Religion.²²⁹ Overbeck's painting shows the Virgin and Christ Child seated on a celestial throne, surrounded by artists and patrons whose contribution to the Arts had been motivated by a desire to serve and glorify God. Included are Fra Angelico, Gozzoli, Dürer, Van Eyck and Memling, all artists greatly admired by Rossetti. Most significant is the presence of St Luke, shown in a privileged position kneeling on a cloud at the feet of Mary, in the act of painting her portrait. Rossetti may well have been familiar with this painting as it provoked much critical debate. A description of it appeared in the *Art Journal* in 1849, and the cartoon was bought by Prince Albert, through Ludwig Gruner the engraver, for Queen Victoria in the Christmas of 1847.²³⁰

Pugin had written in his *Contrasts* of 1836 concerning Overbeck, "All those who are interested in the revival of Catholic art should possess engravings from the work of this great artist, the reviver of Christian painting in Rome."²³¹ In his article on "Christian Art" in the *Dublin Review* in June 1847, Wiseman mentioned "Curmer's designs from Overbeck", which had "been re-engraved at Derby, and published by Messrs. Richardson with their usual spirit." He also noted that the works of the German artist had been "exquisitely engraved by Keller and his school".²³² The *Art Journal* described Professor Amsler's engraving of Overbeck's *Triumph of Religion in the Arts* as "very faithful" and as giving "a perfect idea of the work of Overbeck and the genius of his Art."²³³ It is quite conceivable that Rossetti had seen Overbeck's composition.

²²⁸ Andrews, p. 26.

²²⁹ Andrews, p. 126.

²³⁰ "Art in Continental States", *Art Journal*, vol. 11 (1849), p. 108. Andrews, p. 126.

²³¹ A. W. N. Pugin, *Contrasts* (Salisbury: Pugin, 1836). A. W. Pugin, *Contrasts* (London: Dolman, 2nd rev. ed., 1841), p. 18.

²³² Wiseman, 1847, p. 489.

²³³ "Art in Continental States", *Art Journal*, 1849, p. 108.

Wiseman specifically mentioned that his prints were widely available, and affordable to those "of every rank", not just to wealthy art collectors.

Rossetti had certainly seen works painted in the spirit of the Nazarenes. Hippolyte Flandrin, Ingres' most renowned pupil, when commissioned in 1842 to paint a series of frescoes in the sanctuary and choir of the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, based his style on his master's 'Nazarene' works.²³⁴ These murals Rossetti had seen and wondered at on his trip to Paris with Hunt in the autumn of 1849. Rossetti, writing home to his brother, declared, "Hunt and I solemnly decided that the most perfect works, taken *in toto*, that we have seen in our lives, are two pictures by Hippolyte Flandrin (representing Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, and his departure to death) in the church of S. Germain des Prés. Wonderful! wonderful!! wonderful!!!"²³⁵ The enthusiasm seems to have come mainly from Rossetti. Hunt, whilst admitting that Flandrin's murals, "were undoubtedly the highest examples of religious art of the day", held some reservations. He saw them as "marred by theatrical taste", and rather condescendingly wrote in retrospect that unlike himself Rossetti "did not at the time recognise the real limitation of their excellence".²³⁶

Hunt was careful to stress that the work of the PRB was not imitation, that it was Pre-Raphaelitism as opposed to Pre-Raphaelism.²³⁷ He was concerned that art should be modern and relevant, and wrote, "Revivalism, whether it be of classicism or of medievalism, is a seeking after dry bones."²³⁸ Rossetti sought such revivalism, and

²³⁴Whilst in Rome Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres had come into contact with the work of the German Nazarene painters. There is an obvious debt to their manner in Ingres' *Christ Giving the Keys to Peter*, commissioned in 1817 for the chapel of the convent of SS. Trinità dei Monti, which stood opposite the Casa Bartholdy where the Nazarenes had only just completed a fresco cycle (M. P. Driskel, *Representing Belief* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 124-28; Andrews, pp. 73-74).

²³⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 66. Colvin recognised the importance of Flandrin for Rossetti in his youth (S. Colvin, "Rossetti as a Painter", *Magazine of Art*, vol. 6 (1883), p. 179).

²³⁶Writing his memoirs after the death of Rossetti, Hunt adopted a markedly superior and self-satisfied attitude in his discussions of Rossetti's early artistic taste and the influence which he exerted over the Pre-Raphaelite group (Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 188-89).

²³⁷Charles Dickens, who was very scathing of Catholicism and medievalism, condemned the retrogressive nature of the PRB, and insisted on describing them as the Pre-Raphael Brotherhood (C. Dickens, "Old Lamps for New Ones", *Household Words*, no. 12 (15 June 1850), pp. 265-67; *Pictures from Italy* (London: Chapman & Hall, n.d., 1st publ. *Daily News*, 1846), pp. 233-35, 252-58).

²³⁸Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 87. In "Religion and Art" Hunt talked scathingly of "saint

called his work "Early Christian", that is Pre-Raphael rather than Pre-Raphaelite, following the example of the Nazarenes. This annoyed Hunt, who criticised the German Brotherhood for setting "themselves to imitate all the child-like immaturities and limitations of the German and Italian quattrocentists".²³⁹

However, critics at once made the connection between the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Nazarenes. In the second edition of his *Contrasts* (1841), first published in 1836, Pugin had praised "The great Overbeck, that prince of Christian painters", who, "has raised up a school of mystical and religious artists, who are fast putting to utter shame the natural and sensual school of art".²⁴⁰ Likewise Masson, writing in 1852, described the PRB as "rescuing Art from the degraded position of being a mere minister to sensuous gratification and elevating it into an agency of high spiritual education".²⁴¹

The Pre-Raphaelites, like the Nazarenes, were interested in portraying noble and elevated themes, and scorned frivolous subject matter. This is evident in the first oils they produced as members of the group: Hunt's *Rienzi Vowing to Obtain Justice*, Millais' *Lorenzo and Isabella*, and Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. These works, presenting a balance of historical, literary and religious subject matter, can be seen as representative of their output as a whole, which remained within the realm of history painting, respecting the established hierarchy of genres. The group's high mindedness was reflected in their statement of aims, as recorded by W. M. Rossetti:

1. To have genuine ideas to express;
2. to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them;
3. to sympathise with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote;
4. and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good

factories", "second-hand translations" and "galvanised resurrections" (W. H. Hunt, "Religion and Art", *Contemporary Review*, vol. 71 (1897), pp. 48-49). In 1850 he began to design a subject from Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 26:4).

²³⁹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 122.

²⁴⁰Pugin, *Contrasts*, 1841, p. 18. Andrews, pp. 77-78.

²⁴¹D. Masson, "Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Literature" (1852), *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. A. J. Sambrook (University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 82.

pictures and statues.²⁴²

William Michael wrote in his *Family Letters*, "That the Praeraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious, or sensual description". Hunt went on in the 1890s to support a group of young artists, who, like the PRB nearly half a century earlier, "have thought it high time to combine to denounce the prevalent taste, and to strive to serve religious thought with designs of original conception", and had formed the "Clergy and Artists Association".²⁴³

However, W. M. Rossetti noted that the PRB did not "limit the province of art to the spiritual or the moral."²⁴⁴ This is in opposition to the Nazarenes who, following the medieval monastic painters, were primarily concerned to paint religious subjects.

Further, in contrast to the Nazarenes who were greatly influenced by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's fictional *Effusions of an Art-loving Monk*, as Andrews points out, and worked and lived in cells, were sworn to celibacy and would not paint from the nude model, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood practised no self-abnegation and had no rules for morality.²⁴⁵ Brown recalled from his visit to Overbeck's studio in 1846, that in the Nazarene artist's paintings, "where any naked flesh was shown it looked exactly like wooden dolls' or lay-figures'. I heard him explain that he never drew these parts from nature, on the principle of avoiding the sensuous in religious art."²⁴⁶ The Pre-Raphaelites never adhered to such principals, and even Rossetti, whose aims were closest to the Nazarenes, had no qualms about drawing from the nude before tackling a major work, in accordance with established academic practice.²⁴⁷

William Michael Rossetti wrote that, "the so-called German Praeraphaelites - such as Schnorr, Overbeck, and Cornelius - were in no repute with the young British artists."²⁴⁸ This is true if considering the PRB collectively; as a body they had not established any links with the Nazarenes. However, that is not to say that individuals

²⁴²W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 135.

²⁴³Hunt, 1897, p. 51.

²⁴⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 135.

²⁴⁵[Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder] *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797), quoted in Andrews, p. 13. A. C. Amor, *William Holman Hunt* (London: Constable, 1989), p. 38.

²⁴⁶*Universal Review* (May 1888), quoted in Hueffer, 1896, p. 45.

²⁴⁷See nude study for *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* in Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery (S. 44B).

²⁴⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 134-35.

did not bear similarities in their outlook with the Brotherhood of St Luke. Rossetti was the only member of the group who had exhibited only religious oils, and these were of a Roman Catholic nature, and Fra Angelico, the painter-monk who so captivated the imagination of Rossetti, was the artist elevated by the St. Luke Brotherhood as its ideal. It may be significant that the drawing which Rossetti made c.1853 of Fra Angelico painting came into the collection of Ford Madox Brown, for whom the German Nazarene painters had been important.²⁴⁹ Indeed, it was apparently Brown who encouraged Rossetti to use the Nazarene term 'Early Christian' to describe his work.²⁵⁰

Ford Madox Brown and William Cave Thomas, both painters in the wider circle of the Pre-Raphaelites, had had direct contact with the German Nazarene group. Brown's work on his return from Italy in 1847 was obviously influenced by the Nazarene style.²⁵¹ Andrews suggests that the fountain in *Seeds and Fruits* may be derived from Overbeck's *Triumph of Religion in the Arts*, representing the fountain of knowledge.²⁵² Brown's *Wycliffe Reading his Translation of the New Testament to John of Gaunt* (1847-48) shows more obviously the influence of the Nazarenes with its stylised frontal poses, pale chalky colours, Gothic spandrels and religious subject.²⁵³ Wycliffe was shown with bare feet and wearing a cassock. When Brown visited the studio of Overbeck he found the artist rather conspicuously dressed in a long robe, reminiscent of the monastic attire which the group at one time wore, "He was habited in a black velvet dressing-gown down to the ground, corded round the waist". Brown continued, "He bore exactly the appearance of some figure of the fifteenth century. When he spoke to me it was with the humility of a saint."²⁵⁴ Such a description would certainly have appealed to the romantic sensibilities of Rossetti.²⁵⁵

Hueffer wrote that when Brown visited Rome the Catholic fervour of the Nazarenes had somewhat cooled down. However, William Cave Thomas had made their

²⁴⁹F. M. Brown Sale, 1 St Edmund's Terrace, Regent's Park, 29 May 1894, lot 93 (Surtees, 1971, p. 224).

²⁵⁰Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 140.

²⁵¹Hueffer, 1896, pp. 43-46.

²⁵²Andrews, p. 167. In "Notices of Painters: Madox Brown (1851)" Rossetti expressed his admiration in particular for "The fountain whose clear jet rises in the foreground" (W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 500).

²⁵³The painting was retouched 1859-61 and its delicate colouring was replaced with brighter hues.

²⁵⁴*Universal Review* (May 1888), quoted in Hueffer, 1896, p. 45.

²⁵⁵David Scott, whilst in Rome in 1833, gave a similar description of Overbeck (W. B. Scott, 1850, p. 111).

acquaintance whilst they were still in Germany and zealous for their religion. Arriving in July 1840, he was introduced to Cornelius, Director of the Munich Academy of Art, who granted him entrance into the Academy. Working alongside Hess in the Basilica on a fresco series of the life of St Boniface, he imbibed much of the philosophy of the Nazarene school.²⁵⁶ On his return to Britain Thomas came to the attention of Rossetti through the cartoons which he submitted to the competition for the decoration of the Houses of Parliament.

In July 1843 Rossetti wrote to tell his mother, "On Monday last (the first of opening) I visited the exhibition at Westminster Hall of the cartoons for decorating the new Houses of Parliament... The subjects are taken chiefly from English history, and a great part of them relate to the times of the ancient Britons and the introduction of Christianity."²⁵⁷ Thomas' *St. Augustine Preaching to the Saxons* (fig. 23) was one of these. It was a well conceived cartoon and was awarded a £100 premium.²⁵⁸ Thomas had brought to his work much of what he had learned from the Nazarene group. In fact it was described as the most strongly Germanic of the cartoons. Augustine was shown haloed and in profile, preaching in his monk's habit.²⁵⁹ Rossetti wrote to his mother, "Taken on a whole, this exhibition may be considered as a proof that High Art and high talent are not confined to the Continent."

Thomas was frequently mentioned in Brown's journal from September 1847 onwards, and it is likely that it was through Brown that Thomas' friendship with the Pre-Raphaelites truly began. W. M. Rossetti wrote in his diary on 15 October 1849, "Ford Brown, to whose study I went in the evening, and Cave Thomas, whom I met there, will subscribe."²⁶⁰ Thomas appears to have had some influence on the group of young painters, and in fact was responsible for giving the Pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*, its name. His first idea had been to call the journal, *The Seed*, a name which has specifically religious connotations, recalling the Gospel parable of the Sower, and indeed, Thomas had designed a figure of a sower for the frontispiece.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶"British Artists: Their Style and Character - No. 84: William Cave Thomas", *Art Journal*, vol. 8 (1869), p. 217.

²⁵⁷Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 13-14.

²⁵⁸C. Wood, *Dictionary of British Art: IV. Victorian Painters*, 2 vols. (Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 2nd rev. ed., 1998), vol. 1, p. 522.

²⁵⁹Vaughan, pp. 208-9.

²⁶⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 67 ff. Fredeman, 1975, p. 20.

²⁶¹Fredeman, 1975, p. 113.

Rossetti was particularly impressed by a painting of Thomas' which was exhibited in Pall Mall East in 1851, in which "the last watchers of the earth are gathered together in a chamber, while outside the Son of Man is seen, habited as a pilgrim, coming noiselessly through the moonlight". He described it in the article he wrote for *The Spectator*, as "among the loftiest embodiments which art has yet attempted from Scripture. The mere selection of the glorious words of the text (Mark, ch. xiii, v. 34) is in itself a proof of a fine and penetrative mind."²⁶² Art for Thomas was very much tied up with religion and this is apparent in his 1860 pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism Tested by the Principles of Christianity*.²⁶³ At the crux of this essay were the principles which he had absorbed from the Brotherhood of German Nazarenes. This was all too evident to the reviewer of the *Art Journal* who condescendingly decried the German 'Pre-Raphaelite' influence.²⁶⁴

The doctrine of the Nazarenes, that art should be put to the service of religion, had also been given currency in the writings of the art historian Baron Karl Friedrich von Rumohr, friend and patron of Overbeck, who believed in the interconnection of art and Christianity, and who had extensively studied the work of the early masters.²⁶⁵ This concern was passed on in the work of Alexis-François Rio, in his *De la poésie chrétienne* (1836) and *De l'art chrétien* (1851). Rio attempted to overturn the traditional bias against the 'primitives', and held that it was the religious hope that lay behind the work of these early masters rather than their technique that was important.²⁶⁶

Although *De la poésie chrétienne* was not translated into English until 1854, its ideas were discussed in journals in Britain and influenced writers on art such as John Ruskin, Lord Lindsay and Anna Jameson. Jameson mentioned "my friend M. Rio" in the introduction to her *Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art*, and Ruskin referred the reader to the French critic's writings in the second volume of his *Modern Painters*.²⁶⁷

²⁶²D. G. Rossetti, "Exhibition of Sketches and Drawings in Pall Mall East, 1851", *The Spectator* (6 September 1851), pp. 859-60. W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 486.

²⁶³W. C. Thomas, *Pre-Raphaelitism Tested by the Principles of Christianity* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh & Hunt, 1860).

²⁶⁴"Pre-Raphaelitism Tested by the Principles of Christianity", *Art Journal*, vol. 23 (1861), p. 100. It should be noted however that Thomas approached art from a considerably more Protestant angle.

²⁶⁵Andrews, pp. 40, 75.

²⁶⁶A. F. Rio, *The Poetry of Christian Art*, trans. anon. (London: Bosworth, 1854), pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁷Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xxxii. Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 4, *Modern Painters*, vol. 2, pp. 193, 212.

Ruskin had browsed Rio's book in 1843 and read it in full in the winter of 1844-45, and it was this that had largely inspired his second volume of *Modern Painters*.²⁶⁸

Following Rio's example, Lord Lindsay in *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, discussed early Renaissance art with new credibility, putting forward his belief that art inspired by Christian sentiment was morally and intellectually superior to art that was not; it was "an immortal Spirit, conversing with its God."²⁶⁹ He concluded with the declaration, "For with genius and God's blessing nothing is impossible."²⁷⁰

Similar ideas had been expressed in ecclesiastical architecture and design, both Catholic and Protestant, by A. W. Pugin and J. M. Neale respectively. Neale, who had founded the Cambridge Camden Society in 1839, declared in the introduction to his *Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, "We are not prepared to say that none but monks ought to design churches... But we do protest against the merely business-like spirit of the modern profession, and demand from them a more elevated and directly religious habit of mind".²⁷¹ Many of Neale's ideas had their foundation in Pugin, for whom architecture and faith were inseparable.²⁷² Pugin lamented the fact that, "Almost all the celebrated artists of the last three centuries, instead of producing their works from feelings of devotion and a desire of instructing the faithful, merely sought for a display of their art and the increase of fame".²⁷³ He wanted to revive the medieval spirit so that art would become once again the product of Christian, specifically Catholic, devotion. The art critic, Ralph Wornum, saw the Pre-Raphaelites as following in the footsteps of Pugin and the other neo-Gothicists, who were preaching the dogma that "we must devote our Art-labour to the Church, as a sacrifice to the Diety, and in no sense for its own sake as regards its operation on ourselves."²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 4, diary entry 20 November 1843, p. xx; vol. 35, *Præterita*, vol. 2, p. 340. G. P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 28.

²⁶⁹Lindsay, vol. 1, p. xiv.

²⁷⁰Lindsay, vol. 3, p. 420.

²⁷¹J. M. Neale & B. Webb (ed.), *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (Leeds: Green, 1843), p. xxiii. See also J. M. Neale, *A Few Words to Church Wardens on Churches and Church Ornaments* (Cambridge University Press, 4th rev. ed. 1842). *Victorian Church Art* (London: V&A, 1971), pp. xiv-xv.

²⁷²P. Stanton, *Pugin* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), p. 26. M. Belcher, "Pugin Writing", *Pugin*, ed. P. Atterbury & C. Wainwright (Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 105-116.

²⁷³Pugin, *Contrasts*, 1841, p. 8. A. W. Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (London: Weale, 1841), p. 42.

²⁷⁴R. N. Wornum, "Modern Moves in Art", *Art Journal* (1 September, 1850), p. 269. Brown consulted Pugin for the furniture in his *Wycliffe Reading his Translation of the New Testament to John of Gaunt*. This was primarily due to a concern for historical

Rossetti called himself an Art Catholic, suggesting the interconnection between art and faith. At the end of March 1847 he sent a collection of his poetry to W. B. Scott under the title, "Songs of the Art-Catholic". Of this collection Scott wrote:

The mastery in rhythm and the invention in these poems were both equally astonishing to me... But the title applied to the poems collectively - 'Songs of the Art-Catholic' - was most perplexing...²⁷⁵

Wiseman's description of Protestantism, although a little extreme, perhaps helps us to see what Rossetti meant when he called himself an Art Catholic.

It excludes as legendary all the most beautiful histories of the early saints: it has quenched all sympathy for the favourite themes of mediaeval painting... it allows no communion with Saints in heaven, and consequently no interest in having their effigies before our eyes... All ecstasy, supernatural contemplation, vision, and rapturous prayer... in fine, all the poetry of art is coldly cut out, nay, strangled and quenched by the hard hand of protestantism.²⁷⁶

Included in Rossetti's "Songs of the Art-Catholic" were "The Blessed Damozel" and "My Sister's Sleep", and William Michael conjectured also "Bride-Chamber Talk" and "Ave". "The Blessed Damozel" was written by Rossetti, as he himself said, "in a kind of Gothic manner", and it dealt with "the celestial regions".²⁷⁷ The reader is presented with, "the groves / Where the lady Mary is, / With her five handmaidens", and where

accuracy, having also consulted Henry Shaw's *Specimen's of Ancient Furniture* (1836), *Handbook of Medieval Alphabets and Devices* (1845) and *Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages* (1843). But in turning to Pugin, Brown visually suggested an affinity with Pugin's theories concerning religious art. The *tromp l'oeil* architectural framework of the painting was also Puginesque, and in this way the whole was metaphorically enclosed within Pugin's ideological framework (L. Parris (ed.), *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery, 1996), pp. 55-56). This was the painting, which, when exhibited at the Free Exhibition in 1848, had filled Rossetti with such admiration that he had written to Brown in ecstatic terms imploring him to be taken on as his pupil (Hueffer, 1896, pp. 49-52). W. M. Rossetti also showed a direct interest, acquiring B. Ferrey's *Recollections of A. N. Welby Pugin* (London: Stanford, 1861). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

²⁷⁵W. Minto (ed.), *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott*, 2 vols. (London: Osgood & McIlvaine, 1892), vol. 1, p. 245.

²⁷⁶Wiseman, 1847, p. 510.

²⁷⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 38.

angels "sing / To their citherns and citoles".²⁷⁸ There is ecstasy, "souls, mounting up to God", and also supernatural contemplation and rapturous prayer:

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps tremble continually
With prayer sent up to God.'²⁷⁹

In fact, if one goes by Wiseman's criteria, the poem is most un-Protestant.

In "My Sister's Sleep" Rossetti made use of the imagery of ritual. The moon "Seemed hollow like an altar-cup". There is quiet contemplation, "I knew the calm as of a choice / Made in God for me, to abide", and heartfelt prayer, "A moment that the soul may touch".²⁸⁰ The bedchamber of the bride in "Bride-Chamber Talk" was described as "like the inner altar-niche / Whose dimness worship has made rich", and Rossetti had the bride call out to "Queen Mary" to hear her.²⁸¹ "Ave" is unmistakably Catholic in its veneration of Mary:

Mother of the Fair Delight,
Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight...
Thou headstone of humanity,
Groundstone of the great Mystery,
Fashioned like us, yet more than we!

The poem ends with an ecstatic vision of Mary as Queen of Heaven:

Soul, is it Faith, or Love, or Hope,
That lets me see her standing up
Where the light of the Throne is bright?

and a final prayer to "Hear us... O Mary Virgin, full of grace!"²⁸² However, W. M. Rossetti was anxious to play down the specifically religious aspects of the poems as a whole, and he claimed that in using the term "Art Catholic" his brother had:

... meant to suggest that the poems embodied conceptions
and a point of view related to pictorial art - also that this art
was, in sentiment though not necessarily in dogma, Catholic -
medieval and unmodern. He never was, and never affected
to be, a Roman-catholic, nor yet an Anglican-catholic.²⁸³

²⁷⁸*Germ*, February 1850, pp. 82, 83.

²⁷⁹*Germ*, February 1850, p. 81.

²⁸⁰*Germ*, January 1850, pp. 21, 22.

²⁸¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 35, 37.

²⁸²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 244, 247.

²⁸³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 114.

In June 1853 Rossetti paid a visit to William Bell Scott in Newcastle, and Scott noted that "With regard to his poetry, the spirit that had made him choose *Songs of the Art Catholic* as a general title died out. The only sign of it among the manuscripts he had brought with him was to be found in two sonnets called 'The Church-Porches', Nos I and II."²⁸⁴ In the first "Church Porch", which was dedicated to his sister Maria, Rossetti alluded to the quiet religious beauty of an Anglo-Catholic church interior:

... having entered in, we shall find there
Silence and lighted tapers and deep prayer,
And faces of crowned angels all about.²⁸⁵

The second, in which he declared a preference for "the world outside", did not appear with Rossetti's other verse in *Poems* (1870), but was published posthumously by Gosse in *The Century Magazine* in 1882.²⁸⁶ W. M. Rossetti later wrote that his brother had viewed it "with some disfavour".²⁸⁷ It was the poem which displayed an air of spiritual reverence, again in connection with deference for the faith of medieval saints, that D. G. Rossetti saw fit to publish:

Sister, first shake we off the dust we have
Upon our feet, lest it defile the stones
Inscriptured, covering their sacred bones
Who lie i' the aisles which keep the names they gave,
Their trust abiding round them in the grave;
Whom painters paint for visible orisons,
And to whom sculptors pray in stone and bronze;
Their voices echo still like a spent wave.

A similar situation in which Rossetti gave the spiritual preference over the secular occurred with his poem "Pax Vobis", written mid-October 1849 in the church of St Bavon, Ghent. It was retitled "World's Worth" for *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881) and the final lines were changed, so that the monk realised that the world was nothing without

²⁸⁴Minto, vol. 1, p. 290.

²⁸⁵Copy made by W. B. Scott (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4:7). Rossetti had sent a version of the poem to W. B. Scott in 1852 which showed a couple of variants, the second last line at first having read, "Silence, and lighted candles, and deep prayer", and then "Silence, and sudden dimness, and deep prayer" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 5:5). The latter was the version which Rossetti finally decided on in 1853 (W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 272; W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 198).

²⁸⁶E. W. Gosse, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *The Century Magazine* (September 1882). W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 198.

²⁸⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1905, p. 27.

God, in contrast to the first version in which he decided that meaning could only be found in the world outside:

And now the sacring bell rang clear
And ceased; and all was awe, - the breath
Of God in man that warranteth
The inmost utmost things of faith.
He said: 'O God, my world in Thee!'²⁸⁸

Rather than:

He could not pray. The bell shook clear
And ceased. All was great awe, - the breath
Of God in man, that warranteth
Wholly the inner things of Faith.
He said: 'There is the world outside!'²⁸⁹

However, even this version was described by Swinburne as "a delicate and subtle study of religious passion, with the colour and perfume in it of the choral air of a cathedral, lit with latticed glories of saints, and tremulous with low music of burning prayers".²⁹⁰

The 'dying out' of Rossetti's Art-Catholic poetry, to which Scott referred, can not be attributed to any lack of concern for the spiritual on the part of Rossetti. He wrote to his brother on 1 July 1853 concerning a trip he and Scott had made to Wetheral, Carlisle, and Hexham, "I rather think I shall settle at either the first or the last for a little while".²⁹¹ Hexham was a "charming, old-fashioned, ancient place", and Wetheral "a perfect village with an old church", with the added attraction of its red sandstone cliffs into which was carved "a unique example of a monastic settlement".²⁹² Although not exactly 'unique', monks having hollowed themselves hermitages out of mountain sides since the second century, nor much of a 'settlement', being little more than "a cell for three monks", Wetheral brought some excitement.²⁹³ Scott declared that amongst the initials and dates incised into the soft stone of the cliffs he had "found dates running as far back as the sixteen-hundreds." Rossetti talked of beginning a picture there.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 251.

²⁸⁹*Germ*, May 1850, pp. 176-77.

²⁹⁰Swinburne, 1870, p. 568.

²⁹¹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 146.

²⁹²Minto, vol. 1, pp. 291, 222. Marsh, 1999, p. 103.

²⁹³W. M. Rossetti owned a copy of T. Percy's *The Hermit of Warkworth* (London: Davies, 1771), which centred on a medieval monk residing in a Northumberland hermitage hollowed out of a cliff (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

²⁹⁴Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 146.

F. M. Brown wrote in his journal that Scott merely liked to "chaff" Rossetti about his religion.²⁹⁵ Pictorially there was no wane in his interest in religious subjects. It was during this time that he produced *Fra Angelico Painting*, *Fra Pace* and *St Catherine*. In the aforementioned letter to his brother, Rossetti made reference to the religious pictures *Mary in the House of St John* and *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* which he was planning. He also discussed returning to Belgium, where he had been so impressed by Memling's religious paintings, and of going on to visit Nuremberg to see the Dürers there. Rossetti had in no way deserted the themes that had appeared in his poetry in the late 40s and early 50s.

William Michael noted that the poem "St. Luke", which Rossetti composed in 1849, "was intended to illustrate a picture (never painted) of Luke preaching".²⁹⁶ However some kind of design had been made at that early stage as William Michael wrote in his diary on 20 September 1849, "Cottingham has actually advised him [Woolner] to execute in marble the figure of St. Luke Gabriel designed some time back for the picture he contemplated doing of St. Luke preaching with the pictures of Christ and the Virgin."²⁹⁷ Almost a decade later in 1857 Rossetti appears to have returned to this theme, for Surtees catalogues a crayon drawing, *St Luke the Painter* (S.102), as possibly dating from this year. This is supported by Wood, who, in her 1894 account of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, mentioned a work entitled *St Luke the Painter*, dating from 1857, although she described it as "Rossetti's first success in coloured chalk" rather than crayon.²⁹⁸

When Rossetti moved to Cheyne Walk in 1862 he entered the Parish of Saint Luke, Chelsea, a fact which was specifically written on certain legal documentation concerning Tudor House.²⁹⁹ The Gothic Revival church, designed by James Savage, claimed much critical attention when it was completed in 1824, being the first in England to consciously emulate the churches of the Middle Ages, with its stone vaulting, flying buttresses, triforium and clerestory.³⁰⁰ The large ornamental tower

²⁹⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1899, p. 40.

²⁹⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 144.

²⁹⁷Fredeman, 1975, p. 15.

²⁹⁸E. Wood, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (London: Sampson, Low & Marston, 1894), p. 117.

²⁹⁹Writ issued to Charles Strong concerning use of coachhouse and stables, 28 February 1866 (Library of Congress, LC4/2777).

³⁰⁰Clarke, p. 51. E. & W. Young, p. 184. Rossetti owned T. Faulkner's *An Historical and Topographical Description of Chelsea and its Environs*, 2 vols. (Chelsea: Faulkner, 1829), in which both the ancient and new church of St Luke were discussed

could be seen at some distance, and the bells, which could be heard from within Rossetti's house, would have been a constant reminder to him of the saint that had held his interest since the 1840s, especially as his parrot would respond with, "You should be in church now".³⁰¹

Rossetti continually returned to the theme of art as used in the service of religion. In 1869 he had "Hand and Soul" privately reprinted by Strangeways & Walden, Leicester Square, with a selection of his poems, including "The Blessed Damozel", "Mary's Girlhood" and "Ave".³⁰² He had a note printed to preface this collection, in which he wrote, "Most of these poems were written between 1847 and 1853; and are here printed, if not without revision, yet much in their original state."³⁰³ Justifying the inclusion of these poems, Rossetti declared to W. B. Scott in a letter of 28 September 1869, "I would not print one line old or new, that I did not think worthy to stand by the rest as finished art."³⁰⁴ He also had "Hand and Soul" reprinted separately as a pamphlet.³⁰⁵

The previous year Rossetti, composing two sonnets jointly entitled "Newborn Death", which were to form the penultimate sonnets of *The House of Life*, wrote to James Smetham, his devout Christian friend, to ask his opinion concerning a line with which he was having some trouble. It is significant that it was Smetham to whom Rossetti turned. Smetham greatly admired the second volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* in

in terms of their architecture, decoration, monuments and history (vol. 1, pp. 200-41; vol. 2, pp. 64-156). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

³⁰¹H. Treffry Dunn, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his Circle*, ed. R. Mander (Westerham: Dalrymple Press, 1984), p. 29.

³⁰²It was decided that these poems, which Rossetti described to the American publisher Ticknor Fields on 7 January 1870 as those "as please me best", should also be included in a collection of original poems for general publication that year. Rossetti also proposed their publication in America (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:14). At one point Rossetti appears to have considered writing a note to accompany "Ave", "disclaiming a share in the blessing purchased by the blood of your Redeemer", as Swinburne put it, but this idea was abandoned (transcript in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:40).

³⁰³Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1. W. M. Rossetti, 1905, p. 16. Bancroft, the American Pre-Raphaelite collector, made contact with Fanny Cornforth in England c. 1892, and bought from her a book of poems entitled *Hand and Soul* (R. Elzea, *The Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft, Jr. and Related Pre-Raphaelite Collections* (Delaware Art Museum, 1978), p. 14).

³⁰⁴Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7.

³⁰⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1905, p. 17. O. Doughty (ed.), *The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to his Publisher F. S. Ellis* (London: Scholartis Press, 1928), p. 6 n.

which it was declared that Art's true function was to glorify God. Smetham reiterated the central doctrine of this book in his declaration to Ruskin on 16 November 1854, "I love Art, and ardently aspire, not after its reputation (I think), but the realisation of its power on my own soul and on the souls of others".³⁰⁶

The line which worried Rossetti concerned once again the idea of art as used in the service of God. Which line was better, he wanted to know, "Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair", or "Art, whose glance met God's & found Him fair".³⁰⁷ This cannot but recall "Hand and Soul" in which Chiaro dreams of when "his own gracious and holy Italian art - with her virginal bosom, and her unfathomable eyes, and the thread of sunlight round her brows - should pass, through the sun that never sets, into the circle of the shadow of the tree of life, and be seen of God, and found good".³⁰⁸

Although similarly worded, the two lines of "Newborn Death" which Rossetti put to Smetham were different in import, in the former God giving Art his benediction, whilst in the latter Art taking the superior position, making a judgement over God. Successive versions of this line became increasingly subversive, Rossetti suggesting that it was up to Art to make her own God, eg. "Art, whose glance shaped God & found him fair", or "Art, whose eyes made God & found him fair". There are no capitals used for the personal pronoun in either of these versions, Rossetti eschewing all traditional marks of reverence.³⁰⁹ Rossetti finally chose for publication the line, "Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair". This may have been merely to avoid controversy, as there was no doubt that Rossetti's notions concerning the person and existence of God had changed. He increasingly reinvented God in secular things; when, in a letter of 1871 to Franz Hüffer, he talked of "my Christian Muse", one can detect a note of sarcasm.³¹⁰

However, it would be fair to say that Rossetti never abandoned the idea of Art as being a highly spiritual activity, a product not only of the hand but of the soul, whether that

³⁰⁶S. Smetham & W. Davies (ed.), *Letters of James Smetham* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 7.

³⁰⁷Rossetti to Smetham, 10 August 1868 (Letters of D. G. Rossetti to James Smetham, 31 May 1861 - 22 November 1873, Victoria & Albert Museum, no. 10).

³⁰⁸*Germ*, January 1850, p. 26.

³⁰⁹Trial Books, Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:5-7:1, quoted in J. H. Gardner, "Rossetti as Wordsmith: the 'Newborn Death' Sonnets of *The House of Life*", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 20 (Autumn-Winter 1982), p. 22).

³¹⁰Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1231.

soul should be held in relation to traditional notions of a Christian God or not. Therefore he submitted "Hand and Soul" for publication in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1870, albeit in a new revised form, in which the original religious context was tempered. Morse described the alterations as "negligible", declaring "the main argument of the story has been left unaltered".³¹¹ However, significantly, phrases such as "ecstasy of prayer" and "dove of the Trinity" were omitted, as was the description of Chiaro's room with its image of the Virgin and of the sounds of the music and chanting from the nearby church.³¹² The changes were obviously of consequence for Rossetti, who wrote to Ellis in 1871, "I should never wish it to be reprinted except as in the *Fortnightly*".³¹³ However, the lines which declare Chiaro's creativity to be worship and service to God, and those in which God gives his approval of Art, were retained.

It is of some significance that when called upon to design a cross for Rossetti's grave, following his death in April 1882 in Birchington-on-Sea, F. M. Brown created a memorial which relied on this theme. At the request of Rossetti's mother the monument took the shape of a cross, but the rest was left to Brown.³¹⁴ He created a highly ornamented Celtic cross, embellished with Rossetti's monogram, and three tableaux: firstly, the Tree of Knowledge, laden with fruit, with Lilith entwined in its branches, and with Adam, Eve and Gabriel below; secondly, a winged ox, the emblem of St Luke; and finally, St Luke himself, haloed, with palette and easel (fig. 24).³¹⁵

³¹¹B. J. Morse, "A Note on the Autobiographical Elements in Rossetti's 'Hand and Soul'", *Anglia*, vol. 42 (September 1930), p. 331.

³¹²D. G. Rossetti, *Fortnightly Review*, 1870, pp. 694-95. In the 1869 Penkill proofs Rossetti's actual workings are visible, with "ecstasy of prayer" etc. crossed out (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1, 6:2).

³¹³Doughty, 1928, p. 98.

³¹⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:5.

³¹⁵Photograph in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:27.

Ch. 4: The 'New Holy Brotherhood'

The art critic of the *Athenaeum* wrote in June 1850 of, "a school of artists whose younger members unconsciously write its condemnation in the very title which they adopt."³¹⁶ Yet, it was not the Pre-Raphaelites themselves who first used this name. William Michael recorded Hunt's claim that the title "had first been used as a term of contempt by our enemies".³¹⁷ If this is true it provides a further parallel with the Nazarenes, whose name was initially adopted as a derogatory term by critics. However, Hunt described the event in much more genial terms. Some art students, hearing himself and Millais criticising Raphael's *Transfiguration*, had commented that they then must be Pre-Raphaelites, "Referring to this as we worked side by side, Millais and I laughingly agreed that the designation must be accepted."³¹⁸

Describing themselves as 'Pre-Raphaelites' this group of young artists aligned themselves with a pre-Reformation age, that is, a Catholic one, bringing much contention. Wornum, one of the Pre-Raphaelites' fiercest critics, talked of the Middle Ages as "a superstitious priest-ridden age".³¹⁹ Out of the group Rossetti, as we have seen, had the greatest interest in a medieval form of spirituality. Hunt declared that he possessed, "a true novice's devotion to poetic mysticism and beauty".³²⁰ It was Rossetti who was apparently behind the medieval and monastic sounding 'Brotherhood' part of the title. Hunt wrote, "Gabriel improved upon previous suggestion with the word Brotherhood, overruling the objection that it savoured of clericalism."³²¹

In proposing to the group the term "Brotherhood" Rossetti may have been inspired by his own rather romantic family history.³²² In the sixteenth century, one of his mother's family members, Caterina, had been an Italian nun who had distinguished herself in poetry and religious reform, and who had been commissioned by Pope Julius III to reform the Convent of St Tomas in Perugia.³²³ Rossetti owned a sixteenth century

³¹⁶F. Stone, "The Royal Academy", *Athenaeum* (June 1850), p. 590.

³¹⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 127.

³¹⁸Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 100-1.

³¹⁹Wornum, 1850, p. 270.

³²⁰Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 139.

³²¹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 141. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 127.

³²²Rodger Drew argues for a provenance in the secret societies of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry (R. Drew, *Symbolism and Sources in the Painting and Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (University of Glasgow, PhD thesis, 1996), pp. 196-97).

³²³Packer, p. 2.

Italian treatise on celibacy, *Regole del viver nello stato virginale*, which may have been passed down within his family from Caterina.³²⁴

Rossetti's maternal uncles John William, Philip Robert and Henry Francis Polidori had all been educated at Ampleforth College, twenty miles north of York, which was run by Benedictine monks. Rossetti's grandparents, Gaetano Polidori and Anna Maria Pierce had decided to bring up their sons to be Catholic like their father, and their daughters Anglican like their mother.³²⁵ Although he later expressed doubts as to the system of education at Ampleforth, H. F. Polidori, who had spent four and a half years there, could not but admire the Brothers, "whose first and principal thought and endeavour was to serve their God and to train up those committed to their charge in the way of virtue and the paths of religion". Eight years later, in 1828, he returned to Ampleforth, spending three months there at the invitation of its current Prior, Rev. Thomas Burgess.³²⁶ Rossetti, who often visited his Uncle Henry, and made a pen and ink portrait of him in April 1855 (S.417), had frequent opportunity to hear his uncle's accounts.³²⁷

Dr J. W. Polidori's time at Ampleforth appears to have been to some degree memorable for him also, and he favourably recalled the guidance he had received from one of the monks there, Brother Peter Augustine Baines, who was to become Bishop of Siga.³²⁸ J. W. Polidori was a particularly romantic and influential figure in the eyes of his young nephew as a willful, young art student. His mother's favourite brother, he had become the travelling physician of Lord Byron in April 1816 and an acquaintance of Shelley, and had committed suicide in August 1821 by swallowing poison.³²⁹

³²⁴*Conforto spirituale de' laminanti a Porto di Salute - Regole del viver nello stato virginale* (Venice, 1505) was listed among the books in Rossetti's library in 1866, along with *Lima Spirituale* (Bologna, 1515) (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2).

³²⁵H. F. Polidori, pp. 3, 6, 12-13 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 13:2).

³²⁶H. F. Polidori, pp. 13-15. H. F. Polidori appears to have been in contact with monks of other Orders aswell, as a letter from Father Fessesi of the Order of S. Dominic, dated 29 November 1871 demonstrates (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4:5).

³²⁷Whilst their father was ill in the early 1840s, the Rossetti boys were often sent to stay with their Uncle Henry in Chalfont St Giles-Genards, and continued to do so in the 1850s (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3).

³²⁸H. F. Polidori, p. 7.

³²⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 32-33. Birkbeck Hill, p. 116. The family owned an oil portrait of Dr J. W. Polidori which later came into the possession of C. G. Rossetti, and a diary dating from 1816 which was passed on to W. M. Rossetti (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:1; 26:14).

Byron himself, whom Rossetti described in 1842 as "his favourite poet", was well known for having spent time as a guest in the Armenian Benedictine Monastery at Venice.³³⁰ There were also precedents in the art world of which Rossetti may have been aware. A "Guild or Brotherhood of Saint Mary the Virgin" had been founded in Oxford in 1844 with the purpose of studying ecclesiastical art.³³¹ Furthermore, in 1848, inspired by the example of the Nazarenes, the distinguished neo-Gothic architect George Edmund Street, along with some friends, proposed to set up a college cum monastery, the motivating force behind which was the uniting of religion and art. Following the quasi-monastic St Luke Brotherhood of the German Nazarenes, the students were to "be under certain religious ordinances and live a life in strict accord with the lofty character of their work".³³² Mackail wrote that Street's project, "and similar schemes of others, had obtained a large currency."³³³ Ten years later Street was to write, "the Pre-Raphaelite movement is identical with our own".³³⁴ There was also a Société de St Jean, which Andrews mentions as having been set up in Rome in the mid 1840s in emulation of the Nazarenes. This was led by a Dominican priest, R. P. Lacordaire, and amongst its body were several pupils of Ingres.³³⁵

'Clique' or 'Association' had been alternative suggestions put forward for the name of the new Pre-Raphaelite group, and these would certainly have carried less ascetic connotations.³³⁶ Charles Dickens in his 1850 article, "Old Lamps for New Ones", mockingly wrote of "this new Holy Brotherhood".³³⁷ Hunt, although anxious to deny

³³⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 100; vol. 2, p. 8. C. Rowley, *A Workshop Paradise and other Papers* (London & Manchester: Sheratt & Hughes, 1905), p. 96.

³³¹Grieve, "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Anglican High Church", 1969, p. 294, n. 4.

³³²A. E. Street, *Memoir of George Edmund Street* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1972, 1st publ. 1888), p. 56. Andrews, p. 78. There is some confusion as to the date of this plan. Mackail says Street was 26 years old when the project was envisaged, which would mean a date of 1850 (Mackail, vol. 1, p. 62). The PRB were certainly interested in Street's example, Rossetti later obtaining a copy of Street's *The New Courts of Justice* (London: Rivingtons, 1872), and his brother purchasing A. E. Street's *Memoir* (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 27, lot 553; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

³³³Mackail, vol. 1, p. 63.

³³⁴Street, 1858, p. 234.

³³⁵J. T. Foisset, *La Vie de R. P. Lacordaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1870), vol. 2, p. 4, quoted in Andrews, p. 78.

³³⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 128. W. H. Hunt, "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art", *Contemporary Review*, vol. 49 (April 1886), p. 481.

³³⁷C. Dickens, "Old Lamps for New Ones", 1850, p. 265.

any such ascetic connection, enhanced the suggestion of a secret Catholic group, choosing to liken the meeting at which they drew up their List of Immortals to that called by cardinals in order to elect a pope, "Once, in a studio conclave..."³³⁸ Further, in an article which Hunt wrote on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood for the *Contemporary Review* in 1886, he talked of the initials PRB as "the mystic monogram" of the group.³³⁹ In their early letters, the members of the group even signed themselves, "Brother".³⁴⁰

On 6 November 1849 Hunt and Rossetti, having only recently returned from their trip to France and Belgium where they had visited the Béguinage Convent in Ghent, went with F. G. Stephens to inspect a house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, with plans to instate a quasi-monastic existence of their own, apart from "the profane". "It is capable of furnishing 4 good studios, with a bed room and a little room that would do for a library attached to each", wrote W. M. Rossetti in the PRB Journal. "Gabriel, Hunt and myself, think of going at once, and Stephens and Collinson would join after April. We think of likewise getting Deverell."³⁴¹ Their "mystic monogram" would be written on the door bell, where only the initiated would recognise that it did not stand for "please ring the bell". *The Germ*, which was to be the mouthpiece for this artistic brotherhood, would welcome spiritual contributions. W. M. Rossetti continued, "Among other subjects, we spoke of admitting anything at all referring to politics or religion into our magazine".³⁴²

A Béguinage, to quote Ludlow, "usually consisted of a single house, distributed into separate cells, but with a common refectory and dormitory", and the Brothers or Sisters who made it up were not sworn to a life of celibacy and poverty, although they were devoted to prayer and meditation. They could be married, and were expected to

³³⁸Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 158. Hunt frequently made light use of hagiographic figures of speech, for example, in a letter to Rossetti dated 22 November 1852, "it will be necessary to undergo another martyrdom in the dentist's hands" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 26:4). This became part of the Pre-Raphaelite patois, Millais writing of his "martyrdom" in a letter of 2 July 1851 to Mrs Combe, in reference to the mosquitoes in Kingston, Surrey, and of the "Oxonian martyrdoms", with regard to the hospitality of Mrs King of Botley (J. G. Millais, *Life and Letters of John Everett Millais*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 119, 88).

³³⁹Hunt, May 1886, p. 744.

³⁴⁰R. G. Grylls, "The Correspondence of F. G. Stephens - II. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood", *Times Literary Supplement* (12 April 1957), p. 232. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:27.

³⁴¹Fredeman, 1975, pp. 22-23.

³⁴²Fredeman, 1975, p. 23.

work at a craft in order to earn their living.³⁴³ The impetus for the artistic community which the Pre-Raphaelite brothers envisaged may well have come from Rossetti and Hunt's trip to Ghent. The Convent there had certainly impressed Wister, who in her 1872 review of *Sisterhoods* declared, "my mind still goes back to the quaint and quiet Béguinage of Ghent as the best framework."³⁴⁴

In Britain there were many other possible sources of inspiration. The Community of Trappist monks that had been established in Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire since 1837, and Newman's monastery which he had set up at Littlemore in 1841, had aroused much curiosity and controversy.³⁴⁵ This renewal of concern for monastic communities received literary support; S. Fox in his historical *Monks and Monasteries* (1845) and D. Wackerbarth in his *The Revival of Monastic Institutions* of the early 1840s both advocated their revival.³⁴⁶ Rossetti was certainly familiar with the work of J. M. Neale, who had argued in favour of ascetic establishments in his 1843 novel *Ayton Priory*, and who went on to found the Sisterhood of St Margaret, East Grinstead, in 1855.³⁴⁷ Indeed, W. M. Rossetti came to possess an 1859 edition of Neale's *The Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix, Monk of Cluny, on the Celestial Country*, which was dedicated "To the Sisters of Saint Margaret's Convent, East Grinstead, and of Saint Margaret's of Scotland, Aberdeen".³⁴⁸

There was certainly a resurgence of interest in Sisterhoods.³⁴⁹ Women, following in the footsteps of such female saints as St Catherine, were turning their backs on

³⁴³J. M. Ludlow, "Sisterhoods", *Good Words*, vol. 4 (1863), pp. 495-96.

³⁴⁴S. B. Wister, "Sisterhoods in England", *Lippincott's Magazine*, vol. 9 (May 1872), p. 571.

³⁴⁵J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 157-62. P. F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), pp. 29-46.

³⁴⁶Samuel Fox, *Monks and Monasteries: Being an Account of English Monachism* (London: James Burns, 1845). Rev. Dietrich Wackerbarth, *The Revival of Monastic Institutions and their Bearing upon Society Considered with Reference to the Present Condition of the Anglican Church* (n.d. - early 1840s). Hill, pp. 164, 186 n.

³⁴⁷J. M. Neale, *Ayton Priory: or, The Restored Monastery* (Cambridge: Deightons, 1843).

³⁴⁸J. M. Neale, *The Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix, Monk of Cluny, on the Celestial Country* (London: J. T. Hayes, 7th ed. 1866, 1st ed. 1858). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14. Maria also quoted in letters from Neale's *History of the Holy Eastern Church and Commentary on the Psalms* (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:8). J. M. Neale, *The History of the Holy Eastern Church*, 2 vols. (London: Joseph Masters, 1850, 1st ed. 1847).

³⁴⁹Newman's plan for a monastery at Littlemore was intended to prepare the way for such female establishments. Newman to Pusey, 17 March 1840, (Liddon, vol. 2, p.

traditional roles of wife and mother to become espoused to God and the Church. In 1849 A. P. Forbes publically indicated his support for this movement, writing his *Plea for Sisterhoods*.³⁵⁰ F. W. Faber translating from French a life of St Rose of Lima in 1850, dedicated it to "the Nuns of England".³⁵¹ However, an article in the *British Quarterly Review* in 1850 expressed alarm.³⁵² In articles such as "Convent of the Belgravians" and "No Business of Ours", and in illustrated poems such as "Taking the Veil" (fig. 25), *Punch* satirised young women who gave over their entire dowries to nunneries, "taking the church for her bridegroom".³⁵³

Kingsley complained of the "pernicious effect" of the medieval legends which elevated celibacy, in many cases the women in these stories preferring death to matrimony. Victorian society held married life to be sanctified, a religious sacrament, and thus Kingsley wrote in emotive terms of the women who entered these sisterhoods as "deserting the post" which God had ordained.³⁵⁴ Newman however advocated Sisterhoods on the principle that that they could "give dignity and independence to the position of women in society", and that they could provide a refuge for "defenceless" single females.³⁵⁵ The issue was a controversial one in mid-Victorian Britain, and remained so as an article in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1871 showed. The article, which began, "There can be no doubt that the *Woman question* is one of the most prominent, if not one of the most important, of the social problems of the day", attacked a recent publication, *The Service of the Poor*, by a Miss Stephen, for describing Sisterhoods as unbiblical and "a hindrance to the performance of works of mercy".³⁵⁶

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³⁵⁰Alexander Penrose Forbes, *A Plea for Sisterhoods* (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), quoted in Hill, pp. 182, 188.

³⁵¹The idea that the severe penitential practices of St Rose would be taken up by British nuns, was held up for ridicule in *Punch* ("To the Nuns of St Pusey", *Punch*, vol. 20 (January-June 1851), p. 60.

³⁵²Legends of the Monastic Orders", 1850, pp. 492-93.

³⁵³"Convent of the Belgravians", *Punch*, vol. 19 (July-December 1850), p. 163; "No Business of Ours", vol. 20 (January-June 1851), p. 125; "Taking the Veil", vol. 20 (January-June 1851), pp. 132-33. Wister mentioned that in the Anglican Sisterhood of Clewer the nuns chose to wear mystic rings (Wister, p. 569).

³⁵⁴C. Kingsley, 1849, p. 291. C. Kingsley, "Why Should We Fear the Romish Priests", *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 37 (1848), pp. 467-74.

³⁵⁵[J. H. Newman] "Letters on the Church of The Fathers", *British Magazine*, vol. 7 (June 1835), p. 667. S. Casteras, "Virgin Vows: The Early Victorian Artists Portrayal of Nuns and Novices", *Victorian Studies*, vol. 23 (winter 1981), p. 159.

³⁵⁶Anon., "Sisters and Sisterhoods", *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 4 (November 1871), pp. 638, 640-41. W. M. Rossetti began to contribute articles to *Fraser's Magazine* in the 1860s (W. M. Rossetti, *Rossetti Papers: 1862 to 1870* (London: Sands, 1903), p. 15).

The first Anglican Sisterhood, the Sisterhood of the Holy Cross, had been established on 26 March 1845 at 17 Park Village West, Regent's Park, under the governing of Miss Langston.³⁵⁷ Pusey, who had become convinced of the value of Sisterhoods through his readings of St Augustine and St Jerome, had been instrumental in its establishment, together with Gladstone and Dodsworth.³⁵⁸ Whilst in France in 1840 Pusey's friend, W. Greenhill, had obtained for him the rules of the Sisters of the Orders of St Augustine and St Vincent de Paul.³⁵⁹ This had been of great use to Pusey, as had been the experiences of Marian Hughes, Rev. C Seager and Mrs Seager, who had travelled to Normandy in 1841 specifically to study female religious communities in France.³⁶⁰ Park Village West was where Rossetti's two maternal aunts, Margaret and Eliza Polidori, lived.³⁶¹ The Sisters of Mercy of Park Village, dressed in their black habits, attended services at Christ Church, Albany Street, where the Rossettis worshipped, so the Rossetti family were certainly familiar with this controversial community.³⁶² In fact both of Rossetti's sisters, Maria and Christina, "whose feelings and habits always pointed to religion as the needle to the pole", showed a marked interest in such establishments.³⁶³

Maria was described by those who knew her as the most pious of the sisters. Her religious allegory, *The Rivulets*, written when she was only nineteen, was admired by Rev. W. Adams, a popular writer of moral tales, as displaying, "far more knowledge of the human heart & the temptations to which it is exposed than I should expect from your description of the writer for you call her a *girl*."³⁶⁴ It seems that Maria had

³⁵⁷Liddon, vol. 3, p. 17. It should be noted that the Sisters daily said the seven Hours of the Breviary, but it was translated and adapted for use within the Anglican Church, with all references to legendary matter and intercession of the saints omitted. Yet its Roman Catholic origins still worried some (Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 24-25, 191). A. M. Allchin, *The Silent Rebellion* (London: S.C.M., 1958), p. 253.

³⁵⁸Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 1-2, 17. Grieve, 1973, p. 11.

³⁵⁹Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 7-8.

³⁶⁰Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 10-11.

³⁶¹W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 127.

³⁶²The wearing of a habit was a matter of some controversy, making some suspicious of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Antagonism caused a temporary cessation in attendance by the nuns at Christ Church in November 1845 (Liddon, vol. 3, p. 26-27). Anson, 1964, p. 220. Grieve, 1973, p. 11.

³⁶³W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 121. Christina's and Maria's piety is evident from an examination of their writings and private documents, which are scattered with the sign of the cross, eg. "† Maria Francesca Novice of All SS", c. 1874 (Angeli-Dennis Coll, U.B.C., 13:19).

³⁶⁴Rev. W. Adams to Lady Charles Thynne, n.d. (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:11).

shown an early leaning towards High Church/Catholic ritual, possessing at a young age works by Keble.³⁶⁵ Rossetti writing from Boulogne in 1844 of his experience of the Catholic church there, declared that Maria "might have gone a Protestant, but would most certainly have returned a Catholic".³⁶⁶ In 1842, the year of her Confirmation and first Communion, she had undertaken to translate her father's *Rome towards the middle of the XIX century*, which constituted a vehement diatribe against the abuses of Catholicism, most notably the celibacy of the clergy.³⁶⁷ Yet Maria demonstrated that these were not her feelings. In the letters which she wrote to her Bible Class in 1860 she exhorted the girls to a life of self-denial.³⁶⁸ In October 1873 she took a vow of chastity, and entered All Saint's Sisterhood, a High Anglican convent, as a novice, an action which W. B. Scott described as a "curious fact in a protestant country".³⁶⁹

In 1871 the Dominican monk, Father Fessesi, had been quite taken aback by the extent of Maria's knowledge of Catholic theology which she displayed in her book, *The Shadow of Dante*: "What astonishes me is that she has been able to enter into & to so fully appreciate the essentially Catholic ideas of Dante. Had Miss R. been a Catholic, of course this would not be surprising, but being a Protestant..."³⁷⁰ According to William Michael, like one of the early Christian martyrs, "She would I believe (though born rather timid than otherwise) have gone to the stake with the greatest intrepidity for any religious tenet which she held precious - such as the real presence of Christ in the eucharist."³⁷¹ In a pencil drawing W. M. Rossetti made of her in middle age, she was depicted with a very prominent rosary around her neck (fig. 26).³⁷² When she died on 24 November 1876, W. B. Scott, writing her obituary, described her as, "one

³⁶⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 13. Unfortunately, before entering All Saint's Sisterhood, Maria destroyed a large body of letters and private documents (C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 25 August 1882, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:8).

³⁶⁶Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 24.

³⁶⁷G. Rossetti, *Rome towards the middle of the XIX century*, trans. M. F. Rossetti (London, 1842), p. 4. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:7. Maria was Confirmed into the Anglican church on 2 May 1842, and received her first Holy Communion on 8 May 1842 (M. F. Rossetti's First Communion Card, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:11).

³⁶⁸M. F. Rossetti, pp. 48-49, 77, 128.

³⁶⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 295. W. B. Scott to Alice Boyd, 31 October 1873 (W. E. Fredeman, "Prelude to the Last Decade: Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the Summer of 1872: II", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 53 (spring 1971), p. 279 n.). By this time there were nearly forty Sisterhoods in existence in England (Wister, p. 564).

³⁷⁰Father Fessesi to H. F. Polidori, 29 November 1871 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4:5).

³⁷¹W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 2, pp. 427-28.

³⁷²W. M. Rossetti modestly wrote beside the drawing at a later date, "This must be mine - meant apparently for Maria - very bad work" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 1:16).

of the richest ornaments and most esteemed Sisters" of All Saints'.³⁷³ She had viewed her premature death, "with solemn gladness... longing to be with Christ."³⁷⁴

Hunt, talking of Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, described Christina as "exactly the pure and docile-hearted damsel that her brother portrayed God's Virgin pre-elect to be."³⁷⁵ Kenyon wrote in his 1896 article in the *Methodist Review* of "the austere beauty of a chaste and nun-like spirit" evident in Christina's poetry.³⁷⁶ Such naive statements lack credibility, but they do reflect a truth. From an early age Christina demonstrated that she was thinking about ascetic issues. In 1847 she composed a poem called "A Novice", in which the cloister was chosen over an amorous relationship. In 1850 she again approached the theme, writing a prose story for young girls, *Maude*, which discussed the decision of a young girl, Magdalen Ellis, to join a Sisterhood. The heroine, who bore a marked resemblance to Christina herself, declared, "Sometimes I think whether such a life can be suited to me".³⁷⁷ In W. M. Rossetti's preface to *Maude* he wrote, "It appears to me that my sister's main object in delineating Maude was to exhibit what she regarded as defects in her own character, and her attitude towards her social circle and her religious obligations".³⁷⁸ In Christina's "The Convent Threshold" (1858), which Rossetti called "a very splendid piece of feminine ascetic passion", the speaker urged her former love to follow her example and "choose the stairs that mount above".³⁷⁹

Like her sister, Christina was intrigued by things Catholic although remaining within the bounds of the Anglican Church.³⁸⁰ F. M. L. Rossetti recorded in her diary on 16

³⁷³W. B. Scott, 2 December 1876 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 12:4). Will of M. F. Rossetti, "late of All Saints' Home, No. 82 Margaret Street, Cavendish Square" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:6).

³⁷⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 2, p. 427. During the acute stages of her illness, when she was removed to All Saints' Hospital, Eastbourne, her sister described her as continually "heavenly-minded, brave & calm" (C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 12 October 1876, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1). At death, her attitude was one almost of "rapture" (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 346).

³⁷⁵Amor, 1989, p. 41.

³⁷⁶J. B. Kenyon, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his Sister Christina", *Methodist Review*, vol. 78 (September 1896), p. 750.

³⁷⁷E. Showalter (ed.), *Christina Rossetti "Maude"* (London: William Pickering, 1993), p. 29.

³⁷⁸Packer, pp. 25, 27.

³⁷⁹Crump, vol. 1, p. 255. A. Symons, *Dramatis Personae* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1923), p. 128.

³⁸⁰"Many readers will learn with surprise that Christina Rossetti was not a Roman Catholic, and her brother admits his own thought, that her proper place was in the

April 1884 that her daughter had gone "to meet Dr Barry a Roman Catholic Priest who lives near Oxford".³⁸¹ In April 1882 R. H. Stoddard likened Christina's poetry to that written in "monkish cells, and in solitary places among the fathers of the desert."³⁸² Christina did at times live in nun-like seclusion. In 1865, writing to Rossetti from Hastings, she informed him that she was "down here in my hermitage".³⁸³ Critics picked up on this theme. Hueffer described her in her later life in Torrington Square, London, as living like "a mediæval nun" in "cloistral seclusion" in dark box-like rooms, "practising acts of charity and piety".³⁸⁴ One newspaper wrote at her death in 1894 that she had "died the death of a recluse and an ascetic, as she had chosen to live".³⁸⁵

The charitable side of the work of a Sister certainly appealed to Christina. In 1854 as well as involving herself with visiting the poor in the parish of Christ Church, she volunteered for a corps of nurses organised by St Saviour's Sisterhood which was to go out to a war hospital in Scutari, under the auspices of Florence Nightingale. However, whilst her Aunt Eliza Polidori was accepted, the inexperienced Christina was not.³⁸⁶ In the 1860s she did volunteer work for the St Mary Magdalen Home for Fallen Women in Highgate Hill.³⁸⁷ Being considered an "Associate" of this penitentiary she wore the habit of a Sister, which consisted of a simple black dress, cap and veil.³⁸⁸ Christina's desire not only to show Christian charity, but to experience some kind of female community, was played out by her membership of Mrs Chamber's Young

Roman Church" (Lounger, "Christina Rossetti", newspaper cutting [1894?], in Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:4).

³⁸¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17.

³⁸²Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:16.

³⁸³Troxell Coll., Princeton, 12:6. W. M. Rossetti, 1903, pp. 72-73.

³⁸⁴F. M. Hueffer, "Christina Rossetti", *Fortnightly Review*, N.S. vol. 89 (March 1911), pp. 424-26.

³⁸⁵The article saw the same spirit as having inspired "her brother's grewsome [sic] love of the ghastly stories of saints" (Anon. newspaper clipping, Troxell Coll., Princeton, 3:6).

³⁸⁶Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1. Packer, p. 92.

³⁸⁷Women were exorted to involve themselves in such activities. See for example Archdeacon Allen's lecture, "On the Every-Day Work of Ladies" and Rev. J. S. Brewer's on "Workhouse Visiting" (F. D. Maurice, *Lectures to Ladies on Practical Subjects* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1856, 1st publ. 1855), pp. 188-212, pp. 262-83). Marsh sees Christina's "Goblin Market", "a poem about temptation, resistance and redemption" as inspired by her work at Highgate Hill (Marsh, 1994, pp. 229, 235-37).

³⁸⁸Letitia Scott described Christina's outfit as "quite becoming to her" (Minto, vol. 2, p. 59; Packer, pp. 153, 155).

Women's Friendly Society, which set out to organise a programme of leisure and spiritual activities for young servant girls on Sunday afternoons.³⁸⁹

Christina, along with her mother and Eliza Polidori, remained involved in the work at Highgate Hill and of an offshoot at Farnham for child penitents into the 1880s. Continuing the legacy of Maria, they also supported the work of All Saints Sisterhood, and in fact Frances Rossetti died in the care of the Sisters in April 1886.³⁹⁰ In June 1884 Christina had her poem "Roses and Roses" printed in aid of a Boys' Home at Barnet, Gillingham.³⁹¹ Christina's account books for 1892-94 show her to have given considerable sums towards Christian work in her later life. Beneficiaries included Bishop of London's Fund Society, St Cyprian's Poor, Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Highgate Penitentiary, and Poor Relief Fund. Many more wrote asking for money, having heard of her generous patronage.³⁹² W. M. Rossetti, for the sake of his sister, declared that if he came into £8000 from Christina's will, and providing his children were not in want, he would give £500 to All Saints' Sisterhood and £500 to St Cyprian's.³⁹³ A postcard from the Supervisor of Nursing Sisters of the Poor, dated 10 April 1907, thanking him for his continued charity, shows that W. M. Rossetti did donate money towards certain Sisterhoods.³⁹⁴

Gabriele Rossetti described his children in a letter of 3 July 1844 to J. H. Frere as having been "educated by their mother in the principles of religion and honour", and indeed W. M. Rossetti noted that whilst he and his brother had been growing up, "Our mother kept us adequately supplied with books having a directly religious or didactic aim".³⁹⁵ As the last surviving member of the immediate family who would have inherited the books of his parents and siblings, the inventory which W. M. Rossetti made of his library in 1897 is of great interest, showing a vast number of sacred dramas, poems, hymns, sermons, religious treatises and ecclesiastical histories.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁹Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:12. Packer, p. 422 n.

³⁹⁰Receipt for £7.15.0 from All Saints' Home for five weeks nursing care, 9 April 1886 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:17). F. M. L. Rossetti's diary, 1883-86 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17).

³⁹¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:4.

³⁹²Thomas Huckley to C. G. Rossetti, S. Luke's Vicarage, Leeds, n.d. (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:1). Account of money set aside for religious uses, 1892-94 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:1).

³⁹³W. M. Rossetti, 23 August 1894 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:2).

³⁹⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:13.

³⁹⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 61. G. Festing, *John Hookham Frere and his Friends* (London: John Nisbet, 1899), p. 337.

³⁹⁶Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

Amongst these books was listed an 1805 edition of Edgeworth's three volume *Popular Tales*. This included stories such as "The Limerick Gloves" (1799) which was intended to light-heartedly counter anti-Catholic sentiment.³⁹⁷ W. M. Rossetti specifically recalled the tales of Maria Edgeworth as being part of his brother's early reading, and he himself came to own Maria and Richard E. Edgeworth's *Memoirs of R. L. Edgeworth*.³⁹⁸ Ruskin remembered with pleasure Miss Edgeworth's *Madame de Fleury*, a story set within a school run by Sister Frances for poor girls, "which, read over and over again through all my childhood, fixed in me the knowledge of what a good sister of charity can be".³⁹⁹ Such tales may have encouraged Rossetti's sisters' interest in ascetic communities.

It would seem likely that as a boy Rossetti preferred tales of mystery and adventure, and this is born out by the subjects of his youthful drawings.⁴⁰⁰ However, amongst the books listed in the collection of W. M. Rossetti in 1897 was R. H. Barham's *The Ingoldsby Legends* (1840) which included tales such as "The Spectre of Tappington", "The Witches Frolic" and "The Dead Drummer", which were calculated to appeal to the lively imaginations of young children.⁴⁰¹ This may well have remained in W. M. Rossetti's library from boyhood. The book was not only full of references to monasticism, Catholicism and saintly pilgrimage, but gave exhaustive lists of Catholic paraphernalia: mitres, dalmatics and maniples, crosiers, cowls, copes, rochets and palls, matins and vespers, scrips, cockles, and staffs; and this accompanied by the lively

³⁹⁷M. Edgeworth, *Popular Tales*, 3 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 2nd ed., 1805, 1st ed. 1804). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

³⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 61. Maria & Richard L. Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth*, 2 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1820). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14. Edgeworth's *Memoirs* may well have been inherited from F. M. L. Rossetti, a notebook belonging to her showing her to have been aware of details of Edgeworth's family history (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:16). Francis Rossetti quoted from Edgeworth's *Comic Dramas* in her *Literary Diary* and made reference to her *Parody* in one of her notebooks (F. M. L. Rossetti, *Literary Diary*, p. 44; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:18; notebook, 6:16).

³⁹⁹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita*, vol. 3, p. 477. M. Edgeworth, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, 6 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1809-12), vol. 2, pp. 179-328.

⁴⁰⁰On 1 February 1842 he sent his Aunt Charlotte twelve drawings for a Bazaar, which he listed, "Julian Peveril, the Turk, the Pigmy, the Brigand, Barnaby Rudge, the Butterfly, the Huntsman, the Harp, & the Shamrock, are copied: Quentin Durward, the Highlander, & the Dandy, are originals" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:5).

⁴⁰¹T. Ingoldsby [R. H. Barham], *The Ingoldsby Legends*, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1840), vol. 1, pp. 1-42, 161-80; vol. 2, pp. 195-210. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 24:16.

illustrations of John Tenniel, John Leech and George Cruikshank, as engraved by the Dalziel brothers.⁴⁰²

Many of the stories were of a humorous nature, for example "The Brothers of Birchington" which pivoted on the misdeeds of a pious Prior's identical brother, and the story of "The Jackdaw of Rheims" who stole the Cardinal's ring and became cursed, but on gaining absolution was made a saint: "So they cannonized him by the name of Jem Crow!"⁴⁰³ However, the tales may also have put Rossetti in mind of contemporary issues, as, for example, "The Lay of St Odille":

But Odille was devout, and, before she was nine,
Had experienced a call, she consider'd divine,
To put on the veil at St Ermengarde's shrine -⁴⁰⁴

This tale, which ends with the saint miraculously appearing and saving Odille from those who threatened her with marriage, would certainly have appealed to Rossetti on a dramatic and supernatural level, whilst also introducing the theme of Sisterhoods.

In 1883 Colvin described both *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, in which Christina acted as model, as being "as interesting an expression as can be found of fervent and ascetic Christian piety".⁴⁰⁵ Bentley suggested that Rossetti, depicting Mary dressed in an austere grey robe in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, intended to reflect the prevailing controversy concerning Sisters of Mercy.⁴⁰⁶ Linton, writing at the outset of the twentieth century, also saw Rossetti as making a connection with Sisterhoods, describing the scene as "cloistral" and as demonstrating an "early-Victorian outlook on women's life and woman's work".⁴⁰⁷ Rossetti did come to own, at some point before 1866, a treatise entitled, *The Rules and Regulations of Magdalen Charity* (1769).⁴⁰⁸ In a letter to Charles Lyell dated 14 November 1848 Rossetti declared of *The Girlhood*, "It belongs to the religious class which has always appeared to me the most adapted and most worthy to interest the members of a Christian community."⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰²G. & E. Dalziel, *The Brothers Dalziel* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 47.

⁴⁰³Ingoldsby, vol. 3, pp. 255-72; vol. 1, p. 222.

⁴⁰⁴Ingoldsby, vol. 1, p. 251.

⁴⁰⁵Colvin, 1883, p. 179.

⁴⁰⁶Bentley, 1974, p. 97.

⁴⁰⁷Rev. J. Linton, *The Cross in Modern Art* (London: Duckworth, 1916), p. 44.

⁴⁰⁸Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

⁴⁰⁹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 47-48.

The choice of word "community" in this comment is evocative.⁴¹⁰ Rossetti may have merely intended to demonstrate that he had gauged his market before painting *The Girlhood*, meaning Christians in a general sense by "community" rather than a monastic establishment, but he chose to write "a Christian community", rather than "the Christian community". Rossetti opted to depict Mary sewing, a simple honest activity of the kind in which Sisters would have engaged.⁴¹¹ Wister wrote in her article "Sisterhoods in England" that nuns would involve themselves in "a little ecclesiastical upholstery". St Margaret's Convent, London actually ran a School of Ecclesiastical Embroidery.⁴¹² Rossetti was aware of such practice, and in his poem "The Bride's Prelude", which he began around 1847, the fallen and despairing Aloyse recalled that as a girl growing up within a convent she would spend her time in meditation and embroidery:

I had but preachings of the rood
And Aves told in solitude
To spend my heart on: and my hand
Had but the weary skill
To eke out upon silken cloth
Christ's visage, or the long bright growth
Of Mary's hair, or Satan wroth.⁴¹³

Carlyle, in his 1850 tirade against *Jesuitism*, a copy of which Rossetti owned, spoke scathingly of the "Distressed Needlewomen" of the Romish Church. He criticised Anglo-Catholicism with its "Bishops, Gorham Controversies, and richly endowed Churches and Church practices", its "dramaturgic fogle-worship", and "kissing of the closed Bible", and declared that the Fine Arts, which "are by some thought to be a kind of religion", were "wedded almost professedly to Falsehood", that is, Jesuitism.⁴¹⁴ This may have been a direct reference to Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and also its successor, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, which was exhibited at the National Institution in this year, and bore Latin mottoes on its frame. In the latter painting, the Virgin was

⁴¹⁰"His mind is a cloister, out of which most of his images and pictures come" (J. Benton, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Apostle of Beauty", *Manhattan*, vol. 2 (September, 1883), p. 251).

⁴¹¹Lambert noted that during the Middle Ages "the female part of the religious communities - the nuns - were skilful in all kinds of needlework and embroidery" (F. S. Lambert, *Church Needlework* (London: Murray, 1844), p. 10).

⁴¹²Wister, 1872, p. 565. The girls of Highgate Penitentiary were taught sewing by the nuns (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:16).

⁴¹³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 41.

⁴¹⁴T. Carlyle, *Latter-day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1850), *Jesuitism*, no. 8 (August 1850), pp. 3-4, 26. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

depicted in a monkish-looking cell with the completed embroidery at the foot of her bed. Indeed, Hancock specifically recalled that *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* "was satirised as 'A distressed needlewoman'".⁴¹⁵

In both paintings by Rossetti there are a number of possible symbolic allusions to current religious debates, and Sisterhoods may well be one of them. Rossetti may also have intended an allusion to contemporary debates concerning church furnishings.⁴¹⁶ One of the outcomes of the Oxford Movement had been a new concern for beauty within the sanctuary, and ordinary women began to engage themselves with church upholstery. In 1844 Lambert published a book entitled *Church Needlework*, giving advice to young women who desired to become more involved in such work in the church.⁴¹⁷ *The Ecclesiologist* also gave practical suggestions on the subject. A Ladies' Ecclesiastical Embroidery Society, linked to the Ecclesiological Society, of which Dodsworth was a member, established itself.⁴¹⁸ Anson wrote, "No holier employment could be found for the early Victorian virgins than the making of altar frontals and church embroidery."⁴¹⁹ References to both church ceremonial and sisterhoods would not have been lost on the Marchioness Dowager of Bath, a prominent Tractarian and "friend of Keble, Pusey, and other leaders of the Church", who bought *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* for £80 after it was exhibited in the Free Exhibition at Hyde Park Corner.⁴²⁰ Such allusions may indeed have been what drew her to the work.

Lady Bath also admired the works of Christina in which ascetic ideas were expounded. Although Christina wrote to William Michael in January 1850 that "Lady Bath is not highly delighted with *Maude*", it was the lengthy conversations to which she objected and not the subject. The three poems making up the "Three Nuns", and the sonnet written on St Andrew's Church in which Christina expressed her argument in a

⁴¹⁵T. Hancock, "Dante G. Rossetti", *The Academy*, vol. 21 (6 May 1882), p. 323.

⁴¹⁶Christina also was to show a public interest in current High Church controversies concerning ecclesiastical furnishing. In a letter to F. S. Ellis, dated 12 April 1869, she mentioned a prose work she had written entitled, *Some Pros and Cons about Pews* (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:8).

⁴¹⁷Lambert, pp. 40-41. Grieve, 1973, p. 10.

⁴¹⁸Clarke, 1966, pp. 140-41. "Ecclesiological Society", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, N.S. vol. 11 (August 1861), p. 154.

⁴¹⁹P. F. Anson, *Fashions in Church Furnishings 1840-1940* (London: Faith Press, 1960), pp. 59, 61.

⁴²⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 148. F. Bennett, 1909, p. 160. Bentley, 1974, p. 63.

condensed form, Lady Bath considered to be "more to her taste".⁴²¹ Indeed, in 1851 the Marchioness Dowager was controversially to lend her support to Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, who had the previous year established a Sisterhood in his parish of S. Barnabas'.⁴²²

In 1849 Bennett had been described as "the most distinguished Tractarian in London".⁴²³ He delighted in church decoration, "rood screen surmounted by great cross, sedilia, credence, piscina, altar lights, altar cross, elaborate painting, diapering", as promoting the sanctity of worship.⁴²⁴ Advocating the revival of vestments, he had the choir wear black cassocks and surplices, himself donned a surplice in the pulpit, and argued for the return of the cope for the celebration of the Eucharist.⁴²⁵ Further he endorsed the more controversial aspects of church ritual, such as the eastward position of the celebrant, the Invocation at the outset of the sermon, and the crossing of oneself.⁴²⁶

W. M. Rossetti recalled that, "This clergyman had excited a great amount of animosity in London", and indeed, Bennett found himself a target of the 1850 "No Popery" riots.⁴²⁷ Lord Ashley made a speech on 5 December 1850 in which he declared, "I would rather worship with Lydia on the banks of the river than with a hundred surpliced priests in the gorgeous Temple of S. Barnabas'".⁴²⁸ *Punch* published a cartoon in which the Pope was shown attempting to blow up England using Anglo-Catholic mitres, on one of which was imprinted "Pimlico", as ammunition (fig. 27).⁴²⁹ However, Lady Bath, who sympathised with Bennett's views, courageously offered him the pastorate of Frome-Selwood, Somerset, following his resignation of S. Barnabas'. The Rossetti family too was in sympathy with Bennett. "It was partly in connection with this matter," wrote W. M. Rossetti, "that my mother with Christina had selected

⁴²¹Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25.

⁴²²F. Bennett, p. 92. He had also set up a Community of Sisters whilst curate of the neighbouring S. Paul's, Knightsbridge, 1843-47 (Rainbow, p. 149).

⁴²³F. Bennett, p. v.

⁴²⁴W. J. E. Bennett, "Consecration of S. Barnabas" (F. Bennett, pp. 78-79).

⁴²⁵F. Bennett, pp. 193-96. Bishop Blomfield of London had stated in 1842 that the surplice could be worn during Holy Communion but not in the pulpit (Anson, 1960, p. 84).

⁴²⁶The eastward position was also used by Dodsworth (F. Bennett, pp. 88, 195).

⁴²⁷Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25. F. Bennett, pp. 92-93, 97 ff.

⁴²⁸F. Bennett, p. 107.

⁴²⁹"The Guy Fawkes of 1850", *Punch*, vol. 19 (July-December 1850), p. 197. See also "Popery in Pimlico" (p. 229).

Frome as a place of residence, combined with their project for a day-school".⁴³⁰

Frances Rossetti continued to support the work of S. Barnabas' financially until her death in 1886.⁴³¹

William Bell Scott described Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* as "a subject wholly in the spirit of the poems, which had reached me under a cover inscribed 'Songs of an Art-Catholic.'" ⁴³² The *Athenaeum* felt it formed "a fitting pendant" to John R. Herbert's *Our Saviour Subject to His Parents at Nazareth* (fig. 28), which was praised by *The Illustrated London News* for its "religious beauty", and singled out by Wiseman as having "given us [Catholics] our first ray of hope on the practical possibility of establishing a Catholic school of art."⁴³³ Although W. M. Rossetti maintained concerning his brother, "All the then excited debates concerning 'Puseyism,' Tractarianism, and afterwards ritualism, passed by him like the idle wind", Rossetti could not have been unaware of the current Anglo-Catholic debates.⁴³⁴ It is upon this term that Rossetti drew, calling himself an "Art-Catholic". Indeed, Scott had declared concerning Rossetti's "Art-Catholic" poems, the title of which had puzzled him so much, "it seemed that somehow or other the Oxford tractarianism just then distracting weak intellects had possibly already undermined that of this wonderfully gifted boy!"⁴³⁵

Christ Church, Albany Street, was at the centre of Anglo-Catholic contention, and Rossetti even continued to attend in the 1850s following the departure of Dodsworth, when Henry William Burrows, later Canon of Rochester, was appointed curate.⁴³⁶ On one occasion, accompanied by his sister Maria, he sought out Burrows after a service, presumably in order to have some kind of religious discussion.⁴³⁷ Following the

⁴³⁰Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25. In his letters written to his mother throughout the spring and summer of 1853 Rossetti frequently expressed his desire to pay a visit to Frome (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:7).

⁴³¹F. M. L. Rossetti's Book of Accounts (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:1).

⁴³²Minto, vol. 1, p. 249.

⁴³³*The Illustrated London News* (8 May 1847), quoted in Grieve, 1973, pp. 29-30, n. 36. "Free Exhibition of Modern Art", 1849, p. 362. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 147. Wiseman, 1847, p. 505.

⁴³⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 114.

⁴³⁵Minto, vol. 1, pp. 245-46.

⁴³⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 127.

⁴³⁷Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:6; W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 121. Maria certainly approved of Burrows' theology, and on 1 March 1853 sent a short synopsis of his latest sermon to her mother (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:9). W. M. Rossetti came to own Burrows' *Hymns for use in Church* (London: Skeffington, 1855) and his *Half-Century of Christ Church, St Pancras, Albany Street* (London: Skeffington,

Gorham controversy the Rossetti family also began to attend St Andrew's Church, Wells Street, which, under its new incumbent Rev. James Murray, was renowned for its "services of more than common musical beauty".⁴³⁸ The former curate, Rev. T. M. Fallow, had been a founder member of the Society for Promoting Church Music along with Robert Druitt and W. J. E. Bennett. Millais wrote of St Andrew's, "the service there is better performed than any other", and in *Maude* Christina described the services as "perhaps the nearest English approach to vocal perfection".⁴³⁹ Rossetti at times attended these with his mother and sisters.⁴⁴⁰

Rather than avoiding Anglo-Catholicism, the Pre-Raphaelites courted it. According to J. G. Millais, it was the prominent Tractarian Thomas Combe, also head of the Clarendon Press in Oxford, and his wife Pat, who were among the first to give recognition and support to the PRB group.⁴⁴¹ Combe's sympathy is evident in the very name to which Millais referred to him in his letters, "The Early Christian".⁴⁴² Grieve has suggested that he may have been at the heart of the group's "Romanist and Tractarian tendencies" which Ruskin criticised in his 13 May 1851 letter to the *Times* in defence of the PRB.⁴⁴³ Combe bought Hunt's *A Converted British Family* and *The Light of the World*, Millais' *Mariana* (fig. 29) and *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, and Collins' *Convent Thoughts*. Grieve proposes that the triptych and censer Millais displayed on the private altar in *Mariana* may have actually come from the Combes', who collected such ritualistic items, as the sale of their belongings in 1894 showed.⁴⁴⁴ In 1851 it was to Thomas Combe that Millais wrote:

I think I shall adopt the motto 'In coelo quies', and go over to Cardinal Wiseman, as all the metropolitan High Church clergymen are sending in their resignations. To-morrow (Sunday) Collins and myself are going to dine with a University man whose brother has just seceded, and afterwards to hear the Cardinal's second discourse... The Cardinal

1887). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁴³⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 97. Rainbow, pp. 170-73.

⁴³⁹Millais to the Combes, 2 December 1850 (Millais, vol. 1, p. 90). Showalter, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 98.

⁴⁴¹Millais, vol. 1, pp. 87-88. In 1844 Combe edited series of papers on symbolism of church fonts for Cambridge Camden Society. Thomas Combe, *Illustrations of Baptismal Fonts* (London, 1844). Grieve, "PRB and Anglican High Church", 1969, p. 295. V. Schuster, "The Pre-Raphaelites in Oxford", *Oxford Art Journal*, no. 1 (1978), pp. 7-13.

⁴⁴²Millais, vol. 1, pp. 88, 91, 94 ff.

⁴⁴³J. Ruskin, "To the Editor of the 'Times'", *Times* (13 May 1851), p. 8.

⁴⁴⁴Millais, vol. 1, p. 109. Grieve, "PRB and Anglican High Church", 1969, p. 295.

preaches in his mitre and full vestments, so there will be a great display of pomp as well as knowledge..."⁴⁴⁵

Hunt, who in later life was to become adviser to the Anglican Church on matters of Religion and Art, wrote that in 1851, "I was at the very centre of the then High Church party in Oxford; what they had done hitherto in introducing certain changes in the furniture of churches and in breaking down what may be called the beadledom of Church Service was altogether to my taste".⁴⁴⁶ In the early 1850s the members of the PRB were not only mingling in a Tractarian milieu, but incorporating Tractarian ideas into their works. Hunt spent the Christmas of 1851 with the Combes in Oxford, and was commissioned by them to paint a portrait of John David Jenkins, a friend of the Combes' and Hunt's, who was to become curate of the Tractarian St Paul's, Oxford in 1852.⁴⁴⁷

The revival of ecclesiastical vestments by Tractarians alarmed those who suspected certain Oxford men of collusion with Rome, and provided endless satirical opportunities for *Punch*. In "Trimblings for Tractarians" of 1850 *Punch* introduced the fictional company of Messieurs Noses and Son, specialists in Tractarian costume:

In the first style of fashion prevailing in Rome
Every article's cut - so they'll feel quite at home.⁴⁴⁸

In *New College Cloisters* (1852; fig. 30) Hunt controversially chose to depict Jenkins in his High Church robes, walking in the cloisters of New College. Through the beautifully bound Bible which he had Jenkins hold, Hunt also made reference to the reintroduction of ornamental accessories within Tractarian ritual. The picture forms a public assertion of not only his friendship with Jenkins but his allegiance to Tractarianism, Hunt framing the curate's head with ivy, symbolic of fellowship in the Victorian language of flowers.⁴⁴⁹ Collins, who was with Hunt in Oxford, also drew a picture of Jenkins dressed up in his ecclesiastical vestments (fig. 31).

Hunt's *Light of the World* (fig. 32) is an Anglo-Catholic painting in its very essence. Hunt declared in 1878, "I felt very determined to make the figure mystic in aspect".⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁵Millais, vol. 1, p. 93.

⁴⁴⁶Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 323.

⁴⁴⁷Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 311. Hunt to Mrs Combe, May 1852 (British Museum), quoted in Parris, p. 105.

⁴⁴⁸"Trimblings for Tractarians", *Punch*, vol. 19 (July-December 1850), p. 264.

⁴⁴⁹Parris, p. 106.

⁴⁵⁰Hunt to J. L. Tupper, 20 June 1878 (Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California), quoted in Parris, p. 119.

Carlyle had called it "a mere papistical fantasy" when he had visited Hunt's studio in 1853, and had declared, "if you realised His character at all you wouldn't try to make people go back and worship the image that the priests have invented of Him".⁴⁵¹ Rossetti, displaying his bias for Catholicism, praised Hunt's work in 1853 as "the best thing he has as yet done."⁴⁵² Elizabeth Siddal had the previous year commented on its likeness to an image she had seen in a Catholic bookshop.⁴⁵³ Indeed, the wounds displayed on Christ's hands are suggestive of a Catholic icon.

Hunt's picture, with its rounded top, glowing colours, and Christ's golden halo and appealing gaze, was the nearest Hunt came to creating a religious icon. A sketch on the back of an envelope (fig. 33), postmarked September 1851, suggests that he may have originally conceived this painting as part of a triptych.⁴⁵⁴ Although the priestly robe which Hunt had Christ wear, with its breast plate consisting of the Jewish and Gentile breastplates linked with a cross, was presumably intended to illustrate Paul's doctrine that, in Christ, Gentiles were fellow heirs of God's kingdom, it also recalled the contemporary debate concerning priestly vestments.⁴⁵⁵

Although some have strongly allied the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to Protestantism and rationalism, for example, Carter in "The Pre-Raphaelites as Religious Painters", there can be found many such mystic, saintly images in their *oeuvre*.⁴⁵⁶ The *Athenaeum*, writing of Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, noted its "sacred mysticism" and declared it reminiscent of the work of "the early Florentine monastic painters".⁴⁵⁷ Hunt was perhaps thinking of works such as *Retro me Sathana* (S.37; fig. 34) and *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (S.42) when he wrote concerning Rossetti, "He possessed, as was already proved in his black and white designs, a true novice's devotion to poetic mysticism and beauty".⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵¹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 355.

⁴⁵²Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 135.

⁴⁵³Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 307.

⁴⁵⁴J. Maas, *Holman Hunt and the Light of the World* (London & Berkeley: Scolar, 1984), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁵*Ephesians* 3.6. Parris, p. 119.

⁴⁵⁶C. Carter, "The Pre-Raphaelites as Religious Painters", *Quarterly Review*, vol. 286 (1948), pp. 248-61.

⁴⁵⁷"Free Exhibition of Modern Art", 1849, p. 362. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 147-48.

⁴⁵⁸Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 139.

Both *Retro me Sathana* and *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* have arched tops, lending them an ecclesiastical air. In *Retro me Sathana*, dated July 1848, Rossetti depicted a young woman with hands clasped prayerfully, gazing at a cross held by a robed priest, who with his other hand blesses her and forms a barrier between her and a devilish figure lurking in the shadows. A heraldic device inscribed with the motto 'Ex Nocte Dies' suggests Rossetti intended to depict a conversion scene. The *Beatrice* design, dated 1849, is mystical in the extreme, and is a representative emblem for the youthful Brotherhood, uniting as it does artistic and monastic concerns. St Reparata is shown with her hands reverently clasped and her head crowned in order to symbolise her espousement to Christ, and a monk with a cross embroidered on his cowled head bends over to look at the image Dante had drawn of an angel with hands and head ecstatically raised.

Ch. 5: Asceticism

In an 1849 preparatory drawing for his 1850 oil, *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary* (fig. 35), Hunt directed sympathy towards the nun-like figure who tenderly sponges the lips of the hunted priest, thus making favourable allusion to both historical and contemporary Sisters of Mercy.⁴⁵⁹ Millais adopted a similar strategy in his contemporaneous drawing *The Disentombment of Queen Matilda* (fig. 36), which W. M. Rossetti referred to as Millais' *Caen Nunnery* design.⁴⁶⁰ The subject was taken from Agnes Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England* (1840), which related the events of the life of Matilda of Flanders, Queen of William the Conqueror. Strickland described how the Calvinists under Chastillon took Caen in 1562 and opened up the tomb of William and then proceeded to ravage the grave of Matilda.⁴⁶¹ Yet Millais directed the viewer's sympathy more toward the nuns whose church he showed being desecrated than the dishonour paid to the Queen. In the background can be seen murals of the crucifixion of Christ, and the martyrdoms of St Catherine, St Laurence and St Bartholomew. In this way Millais likened the nuns to those Christian heroes who had suffered for their faith, and most poignantly to the Son of God who Himself suffered at the hands of an angry mob. In his emphatic use of the medieval setting Millais also gave significance to early Christian art.

In the 1850s the PRB remained concerned with the notion of establishing a quasi-monastic community, and Thomas Combe appears to have been at the centre of this. In a letter to Mrs Combe, dated 30 December 1850, Millais wrote, "Get the Early Christian, in his idle moments, to design the monastery and draw up the rules..."⁴⁶² In the same letter he called his friend Charles Collins, "Fra Carlo".⁴⁶³ In September 1851 Millais wrote to Mrs Combe from Worcester Park, Surrey, where he was working on his *Ophelia* and *Huguenot* in the company of Hunt, Collins and William Millais, that "We all live together as happily as ancient monastic brethren", Collins abstaining from eating pastry, "on religious principles."⁴⁶⁴ There was no doubt a twinkle of humour in these letters, but the monastic model remained of concern for the PRB and ascetic images proliferated in their *oeuvre*.

⁴⁵⁹Parris, p. 246.

⁴⁶⁰Fredeman, 1975, pp. 3, 5.

⁴⁶¹A. Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 12 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 2nd ed., 1842), vol. 1, p. 119. Parris, p. 247.

⁴⁶²Millais, vol. 1, p. 94.

⁴⁶³Millais, vol. 1, p. 98.

⁴⁶⁴Millais, vol. 1, pp. 123-24.

In *Claudio and Isabella* (1851; fig. 37) Hunt showed Isabella, a figure of moral rectitude, standing tall and straight in her nun's habit, whilst Claudio, who has been imprisoned for an illicit relationship, was shown with head lowered and body twisted. A nun was again the subject chosen by Millais in *St Agnes' Eve* (fig. 38) of 1854. She was shown standing at an open window looking out on the snow covered grounds of the convent, longing to join her heavenly bridegroom:

Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.⁴⁶⁵

Her hands lie on a Bible or prayer book, and beside her can be seen a small private altar with a silver caster, candle and crucifix.

The theme of earthly renunciation for spiritual passion had already been taken up by James Collinson in his *Renunciation of St Elizabeth of Hungary* (fig. 39) of 1848-50 and by Rossetti in his 1849 drawing of *Dorothy and Theophilus* (S.43). Little is known of Rossetti's composition, but it presumably depicted a scene from the martyrdom of St Dorothea.⁴⁶⁶ According to legend, as St Dorothea was being brought to the governor of Cesarea to face death, a young lawyer named Theophilus mocked her saying, "Ha! fair maiden, goest thou to join thy bridegroom?" Although known for her beauty, the virgin Dorothea spent her life in prayer and fasting, and welcomed death as she longed to be united her with "Christ, my espoused!"⁴⁶⁷

Similarly Collinson had turned to the story of the thirteenth century Queen Elizabeth of Hungary, who desired to give up her rule for the sake of Christ. The tale had been given currency by Charles Kingsley's play *The Saint's Tragedy*, which had been published in 1848.⁴⁶⁸ However, Kingsley in his tale and "manly preface", as one admirer described it, showed little sympathy for the asceticism of the saint.⁴⁶⁹ In his preface Kingsley wrote of the "Manichean contempt with which a celibate clergy would

⁴⁶⁵A. Tennyson, *Poems and Plays*, ed. T. H. Warren (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 102.

⁴⁶⁶Marillier described the design as a pen and ink drawing, whilst Sharp called it, "an interesting study in pencil" (H. C. Marillier, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Bell, 1899), no. 13; W. Sharp, p. 270; Surtees, p. 12).

⁴⁶⁷Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, pp. 184-85.

⁴⁶⁸C. Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy* (London: John W. Parker, 1848). The subject had been a popular one in German art (Jameson, 1850, p. 327).

⁴⁶⁹F. E. Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley* (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 61.

have all men regard the names of husband, wife and parent." He declared the aim of his play to be, "To exhibit this latter falsehood in its miserable consequences".⁴⁷⁰ Kingsley viewed marriage as "spiritual and timeless", "pure and mysterious", and the marriage bed as an "altar" and "sacrament", and argued that Elizabeth had failed in her duties towards not only her husband but her country in renouncing her crown for a monastic life. Desiring to emphasise the unnaturalness of Elizabeth's behaviour, Kingsley opened the scene directly after the wedding feast with Elizabeth lying on the floor "within a step of bliss", while Lewis slept alone in their marriage bed.⁴⁷¹

Kingsley composed a prose life of Elizabeth of Hungary, never finished, for his wife Fanny, who herself had contemplated entering a convent, as a present on the occasion of their marriage. It was accompanied by drawings of the self-tortured St Elizabeth. The frontispiece showed her crucified naked on a cross which also appeared to be an anchor suspended from heaven into hell (fig. 40). One drawing showed her being flagellated in a room full of medieval accessories, altar, crucifix, prie-dieu (fig. 41), and another depicted the saint, naked again, carrying a cross up a rugged mountain side (fig. 42).⁴⁷² It was presented as absurd that anyone should prefer such torment over marital union. Kingsley wrote, "Man is a sexual animal. Sense tells us this, independent of Scripture, and Scripture confirms it... to know how Christ loved the Church, we must have wives to love, and love them; else why has God used those relations as symbols of the highest mysteries".⁴⁷³ He drew for Fanny a picture of Elizabeth sleeping naked whilst her husband looked on (fig. 43). In the background a dragon is being slain which Maynard suggests was Elizabeth's husband subduing his sexual desire out of love for his ascetic wife.

Collinson did not call his painting *The Saint's Tragedy* after the emotive title of Kingsley's play. At the National Free Exhibition in 1851 the painting was entitled simply *An Incident in the Life of St Elizabeth of Hungary*, and at the Manchester Institution in the same year and at the Liverpool Academy in 1852 it was respectfully entitled *The Humility of St Elizabeth*. This idea of the saint's humble self-denial was extended in its subsequent title, *The Renunciation of St Elizabeth of Hungary*.⁴⁷⁴ Collinson made it clear that he was looking to an alternative source. A version of the

⁴⁷⁰C. Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, p. xvii.

⁴⁷¹C. Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, p. 66.

⁴⁷²J. Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 92 ff, figs. 7, 11, 12, 16. Chadwick, 1992, pp. 125-26.

⁴⁷³F. E. Kingsley, 1892, pp. 73-77.

⁴⁷⁴V. A. Cox, "The Works of James Collinson: 1825-1881", *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society*, vol. 4 (Autumn 1996), p. 2.

story had been written by Charles Forbes René, Le Comte de Montalembert, in 1836, based primarily on the studies of the thirteenth century Dominican monk, Theodoric of Thuringia.⁴⁷⁵ It had been very well received by Roman and Anglo-Catholics in Britain.⁴⁷⁶ The *Dublin Review* in 1837 applauded the book's "research", "rich poetical genius" and "deep religious tone", and above all commended the "enthusiastic devotion" of the writer. The article declared its aim to be "to rouse the curiosity of the religious reader to a perusal of the entire work; and, if possible, to induce some one among them to translate the entire book into our language".⁴⁷⁷ Two years later *The Life of St Elizabeth* was translated into English by Ambrose Lisle Phillips, who guaranteed an audience, astutely dedicating the book to Queen Victoria and bringing to the reader's attention the shared lineage of the two Queens.⁴⁷⁸

In this account the saint was extolled as a faithful Queen, wife and Catholic: "The holy love of a sister blends in her heart with the ardent tenderness of a spouse".⁴⁷⁹ This was a theme to which Montalembert constantly returned: "of all the souls whom the Church hath crowned with the glory of her altars, none is there who presents so perfect a model of the Christian spouse".⁴⁸⁰ Elizabeth's bodily mortifications were treated by Montalembert in a very positive way, as a heaping up of "that superabundant treasure of merit and of grace", which would leave her "full of joy and serenity".⁴⁸¹ Further, her husband Lewis was himself presented as an active patron of monasticism and a participator in ascetic practice, so that together they formed "the most touching, the

⁴⁷⁵Theodoric Turingi, *Ordinis Prædicatorum, libri octo de Sanctâ Elizabethâ, Andreæ Regis Hungarorum filiâ* in *Thesaurus Monumentorum* (Canisius, 1725), tom. iv, pp. 116-152. Montalembert also drew on Voragine's *Golden Legend*, the fourteenth century *Passional*, Jacobus Montanus Spirensis' *Vita illustris et divæ Elisabeth, regis Hungarorum filiæ*, various contemporary letters, legal documents, sermons and poetry, as well as many post-Reformation writings, both Catholic and Protestant (C. F. Montalembert, *The Chronicle of the Life of St Elizabeth of Hungary*, trans. A. L. Phillips, 2 vols. (London: Booker & Dolman, 1839), vol. 1, pp. lxxxiii-lxxxvii).

⁴⁷⁶Vaughan describes Montalembert, who was elected a member of the Camden Society in 1844, as "courted" by Anglo-Catholics (Vaughan, p. 92; C. F. Montalembert, *A Letter Addressed to a Reverend Member of the Camden Society* (Liverpool, 1844), p. 3).

⁴⁷⁷"Montalembert's St Elizabeth", *Dublin Review*, vol. 3 (October 1837), pp. 384, 394.

⁴⁷⁸Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, dedication. A. I. Grieve, "A Notice on Illustrations to Charles Kingsley's 'The Saint's Tragedy' by Three Pre-Raphaelite Artists", *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 111 (1969), pp. 290-93.

⁴⁷⁹Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. liv.

⁴⁸⁰Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. 99.

⁴⁸¹Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 34-35.

most edifying, spectacle".⁴⁸² This is in marked contrast to Kingsley's version in which Elizabeth's asceticism brings marital and spiritual heartache: "What if mine heavenly spouse in jealous ire / Should smite mine earthly spouse?"⁴⁸³

Collinson appended a long extract from Montalembert's *Chronicle* to his title in the Portland Gallery exhibition catalogue.⁴⁸⁴ In his painting, which appears to have been literally modelled on the illustrations engraved by Hauser within Montalembert's book (figs. 44, 45), he set about creating a positive image in the manner of Montalembert's tale, depicting St Elizabeth in the church of St George in Eisenach during Mass, kneeling at the foot of a crucifix, with her cheek placed lovingly on Christ's feet, and symbolically placing her crown on the floor, despite the displeasure of her future mother-in-law, the Duchess Sophia.⁴⁸⁵ Rays of light from the stained glass window fall on Elizabeth as divine benediction. Beside her with face bowed to the ground can be seen a figure of a monk, alluding perhaps to Elizabeth's friendship with St Francis, whom she considered to be "her patron and spiritual father", and to the path of celibacy which she would herself take under his Order at Marburg in Hesse.⁴⁸⁶ This Collinson also intimated by dressing Elizabeth in a dark robe with a white undergarment and headcloth, so visually she resembled a conventual Sister.

The pro-Catholic standpoint of the painting was criticised by W. B. Scott, who declared, "In all respects the picture resembled the *feckless* dilettantism of the converts who were then dropping out of their places in Oxford and Cambridge into Mariolatry and Jesuitism."⁴⁸⁷ Similarly Wood took a dislike to the Catholicism of the painting, "so mystical in conception and so hysterical in sentiment".⁴⁸⁸ Collinson certainly was not sparing in his Catholic imagery. He had Elizabeth's attendants prominently display their rosary beads. To Elizabeth's left he placed a statue of the Virgin before which he positioned a young mother and her children standing in meditation.⁴⁸⁹ Behind Elizabeth were placed a couple of rows of monks in their cassocks with hands raised in

⁴⁸²Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 26-27, 31, 33, 95.

⁴⁸³Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, p. 67.

⁴⁸⁴Parris, p. 250.

⁴⁸⁵Whereas Montalembert detailed this incident and provided an illustration, Kingsley merely referred to it in passing (Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 16-19; Kingsley, *Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, pp. 56-57).

⁴⁸⁶Elizabeth became one of the eight principle saints of the Franciscan order (Jameson, 1850, pp. 310-333).

⁴⁸⁷Minto, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁴⁸⁸E. Wood, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁹Montalembert stated the day to have been a special feast day to the Virgin Mary (Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. 17).

worship. The priest conducting the service was shown in his full ornamental robing. Collinson even had the tiled floor display images of martyred saints.

It is not surprising that Collinson turned to Montalembert's version, which not only placed great value on early Christian art and medieval ritual, but on the Catholic faith.⁴⁹⁰ Of the Pre-Raphaelite group, James Collinson, who in January 1853 was to enter the Society of Jesus at Hodder Place in Lancashire as a novice, was the most deeply affected by ascetic thought and practice.⁴⁹¹ He was a regular attender of Christ Church, Albany Street, marked for his "heedful and devout bearing", and was known to flagellate himself.⁴⁹² William Michael recorded that shortly before the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Collinson had become a Roman Catholic, influenced by the teachings of Cardinal Wiseman.⁴⁹³ Having fallen in love with Christina and hoping to marry her, he returned to the Anglican Church around November 1848, but in May 1850 he decided to leave it once again for Roman Catholicism.⁴⁹⁴ Collinson's Catholic ideology is transparent in his poem, "The Child Jesus: A Record Typical of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries", which was printed in no. 2 of *The Germ*, even though at this time he had resettled in the Anglican Church. Its subject was Christ's childhood foretaste of the Five Dolorous Mysteries taught within the Catholic faith.⁴⁹⁵ Rossetti and Christina "thought highly of this poem".⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁰Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. ii-iv, xliii-xliv.

⁴⁹¹Collinson moved to Beaumont near Windsor in September 1854, but he did not stay with the Jesuits for long. He left at some point between September 1854 and January 1855 (V. A. Cox, "The Life of James Collinson (1825-1881), *Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society*, vol. 3 (Autumn 1995), p. 7). Rossetti wrote to Allingham on 11 May 1855, the year of *Fra Pace*, "What do you think? Collinson is back in London, and has two pictures in the R.A. The Jesuits have found him fittest for painting, and restore him to an eager world" (Birkbeck Hill, p. 126). This coheres with the view Rossetti expressed in *Fra Pace* concerning monasticism as embracing the arts. Collinson may have been inspirational for Rossetti's monk painting, especially as Collinson had just painted a monk picture, *St Stanislaus*, patron saint of novices (Cox, 1996, p. 3).

⁴⁹²M. B. Smith, "Bernhard Smith and his Connection with Art: or, the Seven Founders of the P.R.B.", 1917 (British Library), quoted in Cox, 1995, p. 6. Lord John Russell, in the "Durham Letter" of 1850, mentioned that certain High Anglican Churches were advocating a system "of penance and absolution" (F. Bennett, p. 100). W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 65.

⁴⁹³W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 65. T. Bodkin, "James Collinson", *Apollo*, vol. 31 (May 1940), p. 129.

⁴⁹⁴W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti* (London: Brown & Langham, 1908), p. x.

⁴⁹⁵*Germ*, February 1850, pp. 49-57.

⁴⁹⁶Sydney Race, "James Collinson of Mansfield", *Nottingham Guardian* (11

Although Wood, writing of Collinson's *St Elizabeth* painting, maintained that "the sound and practical good sense which tempered the mysticism of Rossetti revolted at once from the extravagance of such a style", Rossetti greatly admired Collinson's *Elizabeth* composition.⁴⁹⁷ Christina wrote to William Michael on 20 June 1889 recalling, "Gabriel spoke (at Herne Bay, 1877) with considerable esteem of the 'St Elizabeth,' thinking in whose hands it might be."⁴⁹⁸ Rossetti greatly admired his friend, calling him "a born stunner".⁴⁹⁹ It was he who had recommended Collinson's inclusion in the Brotherhood, and it was to Collinson that he sent the letters that he wrote to the PRB from his Continental tour.⁵⁰⁰ He knew that Collinson would appreciate the religious sentiments expressed within these.⁵⁰¹

W. M. Rossetti's journal shows Collinson to have had considerable influence on his brother in the late 1840s. His entry on 16 August 1849 records:

Gabriel made a study, from a girl whom Collinson recommended to him, for the head of the Angel in his picture, which head he means to do over again...⁵⁰²

The picture referred to was Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. It appears that Rossetti often followed Collinson's advice, and in November 1849 William Michael again reported that Rossetti, working on the cartoon for his picture, *The Passover in the Holy Family*, was drawing from a model that had been suggested by Collinson.⁵⁰³ Rossetti also took Collinson's lead at times regarding subject matter. In his diary entry for 24 July 1849 William Michael documented:

Collinson, who came to us in the evening, says he is about to make a Christian Art design of Zachariah reading the Scriptures to the Holy Family.⁵⁰⁴

November 1952).

⁴⁹⁷E. Wood, p. 93.

⁴⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti* (London: Brown & Langham, 1908), p. 172; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:4.

⁴⁹⁹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 161.

⁵⁰⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁰¹Rossetti may have related to Collinson that St Elizabeth was the patron saint of the Béguines, when he visited the Béguinage in Bruges (Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. xxxvii).

⁵⁰²Fredeman, 1975, p. 11.

⁵⁰³W. M. Rossetti, 1900, p. 231.

⁵⁰⁴Fredeman, 1975, p. 9.

A month later, on Wednesday 29 August 1849 William Michael wrote that Rossetti was now thinking of composing a picture of Zachariah, Elizabeth and the Holy Family eating the passover.⁵⁰⁵

It is therefore not surprising to learn that Rossetti may have had it in mind to paint a picture of St Elizabeth as Collinson had done. Grieve believes that an unfinished sketch (S.691; fig. 46), now in Birmingham, which Surtees calls *A Design for an Unknown Subject*, shows St Elizabeth in her bedchamber in the Castle of Wartburg, kneeling at a prie-dieu with her nurse, Guta, and her companion, Ysentrude de Hirseltgau, praying for her husband at the time agreed with him before he left for the Crusades, not knowing that she was about to be informed of his death.⁵⁰⁶ Grieve may well be correct in believing the drawing to represent St Elizabeth, but the precise moment depicted is less certain, as according to Montalembert, Elizabeth desired "to overcome the flesh by penitential watchings", and therefore, "Whenever her husband was absent, she would watch the whole night with Jesus, the spouse of her soul."⁵⁰⁷

The tale of the ascetic Elizabeth was a popular subject with the other Pre-Raphaelites. Millais also drew a picture of the saint, *St. Elizabeth of Hungary Washing the Feet of Pilgrims* (c. 1849; fig. 47). In this drawing Millais used a very similar technique to that which he had employed in his *Disentombment of Queen Matilda*. The viewer is made to understand Elizabeth's reward for her sacrifices through the images on the wall behind her: Elizabeth can be seen, in heaven, kneeling before the throne of God the Father. At the R.A. in 1852, Charles Collins exhibited *The Devout Childhood of St Elizabeth of Hungary* (fig. 48), in which an adolescent Elizabeth was shown kneeling in prayer with a missal beside her at the door of the palace chapel. Kingsley, primarily relying on the text of Dietrich who was "eloquent about her youthful inclination for holy places, and church doors, even when shut", opened *The Saint's Tragedy* with Elizabeth sitting on the steps of a closed chapel praying.⁵⁰⁸ However, Collins was not following Kingsley's text, rather he turned to the Catholic *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Saints* of Butler for inspiration, and quoted a section of the work in the R.A. catalogue: "No. 1091... 'If she found the doors of the chapel in the palace shut, not to lose her labour she would kneel down at the threshold...'"⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵Fredeman, 1975, p. 13.

⁵⁰⁶Grieve, "Saint's Tragedy", 1969, p. 293.

⁵⁰⁷Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. 35.

⁵⁰⁸*Eight Books concerning Saint Elizabeth by Dietrich the Thuringian* in Basnage's *Canisius* (Antwerp, 1725), vol. 4, p. 113. Kingsley, *Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, pp. 31-32, 245 n.

⁵⁰⁹Butler, 1757, vol. 4, p. 721. A. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts*, 8 vols.

Christina Rossetti was also interested in St Elizabeth and wrote to William to enquire about the progress of Collinson's painting in a couple of letters dating from August 1850.⁵¹⁰ In his letter of 14 August Christina mentioned having written "two or three scraps", which William Michael noted probably referred to the poems "Annie" and "St. Elizabeth of Hungary" which had been written in September and November of 1850 respectively.⁵¹¹ The inspiration for the latter poem appears to have come from Collinson. Christina wrote to William in a letter he dated 26 September 1849, "I have heard of *The Saint's Tragedy* from Mr. Collinson."⁵¹²

In January 1850 Christina wrote to William Michael from Longleat, the seat of the Marchioness of Bath, where her Aunt Charlotte Polidori was governess, "Lady Bath was discussing *The Saint's Tragedy* with me the other night, and she has lent me a very interesting Life of St Elizabeth by Montalembert". Referring to chapter two where Montalembert wrote that as a child Elizabeth used to revel in her lack of height compared to her peers in order that she might "humble herself before God", Christina wrote to William Michael, "Does not the Poem and its notes give you the idea that the Saint was a *little* woman?", showing her familiarity with other versions of the tale.⁵¹³ She also quoted sections in French to her brother from Père Archange's *La Vie de Sainte Elisabeth*, which Montalembert listed as a source for his book, describing it as breathing a "spirit of devotion and affectionate tenderness towards this holy Saint."⁵¹⁴

Christina's relationship with Collinson may have had something to do with her interest, but the story of St Elizabeth would have also appealed to her for spiritual and artistic reasons. Benson noted that in Christina's own poetry there was a "note of self-sacrifice, the deliberate, almost ecstatic, turning of the back on material pleasure". He also wrote, "She enjoyed her faith, if I may use the expression, with all the rapture of a

(London: Henry Graves & George Bell, 1905), vol. 2, p. 110. "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1852", *Art Journal* (1 June 1852), p. 174.

⁵¹⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1908, pp. 13,14.

⁵¹¹W. M. Rossetti, 1908, p. 13.

⁵¹²W. M. Rossetti, 1908, p. 12.

⁵¹³Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 11-12. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25. A number of poetic versions of the legend of St Elizabeth were known to exist, including the thirteenth century Thuringian poem *Auctor Rytmicus de Vita S. Elisabethæ*, and two fourteenth century German poems *Sente Elsebet Leben* and *Von Sente Elysabethen* (Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, pp. lxxxv, xcvi).

⁵¹⁴Père Archange, *La Vie de Sainte Elisabeth* in *Religieux penitent du troisième Ordre de S. François* (Paris, 1692). Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. lxxxix.

medieval saint".⁵¹⁵ The latter comment was picked out and quoted in the preface to the 1904 edition of Christina's poems collated by William Michael.⁵¹⁶ Christina's poem, "St. Elizabeth", is a wholly positive portrayal of a woman longing for union with her heavenly lover:

Hush, she is a holy thing:
Hush, her soul is in her eyes
Seeking far in Paradise
For her Light, her Love, her King.⁵¹⁷

Charles Collins' *Convent Thoughts* of 1851 (fig. 49), and Rossetti's *Arthur's Tomb* (S.73; fig. 50) of 1855 also centre around the concept of spiritual union as opposed to physical. In Rossetti's watercolour, Lancelot, attempting one last kiss, is rejected by Guinevere who is shown wearing a nun's habit having entered a convent to atone for her sinful life. Kneeling on the grass, her pose is one symbolic of piety and penance, whereas Lancelot's strained pose as he leans across Arthur's tomb is one of passionate yearning. A snake in the lower left hand corner reminds the viewer of original sin as does the apple tree underneath which the action takes place. In *Morte d'Arthur* after Arthur's death and the destruction of the Round Table, the final meeting between Lancelot and Guinevere takes place actually in the nunnery. Rossetti, always with a keen sense of drama, pictured the event as happening at Arthur's tomb in order to make a contrast between physical and spiritual love. Rossetti further heightened the drama of the scene by the reliefs on Arthur's tomb which show the King knighting Lancelot and the vision of the Holy Grail. This increases the sense of betrayal and the viewer is reminded that the reason Lancelot was unable to reach the Holy Grail was precisely because of his adulterous relationship with the Queen.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵A. C. Benson, *Rossetti* (London: Macmillan, 1904), pp. 135, 143.

⁵¹⁶William Michael also included a quotation from *The Baptist Magazine*, which wrote of Christina, "More remote and unworldly, dwelling far from the tumult and the strife, as in dim religious light in the atmosphere of the aisle and the cloister... Miss Rossetti had the vision of a seer, the self-distrust of a penitent, and the rapture of a saint." W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *Poems of Christina Rossetti* (London: Macmillan, 1904), pp. xix, xvii.

⁵¹⁷Crump, vol. 3, p. 202.

⁵¹⁸This work was important to Rossetti, and in the 1870s he became anxious to buy it back from George Butterworth, who had received it from Ruskin in the 60s. Rossetti successfully repurchased it in 1878, had Shields make a copy, and resold it to William Graham (E. Mills (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Frederic Shields* (London: Longmans & Green, 1912), p. 234).

In Collins' painting a nun can be seen contemplating a passion flower, pondering her virgin state. Beside her, growing tall and straight, is a patch of lilies, symbolic of her sexual purity, but behind these grow red roses, turk's-cap lilies and gladioli, suggestive of physical passion. The missal which the nun holds in her hand is held open at a meditation on Christ's passion, but a finger keeps the place of a devotion on the Annunciation. Thus Collins sought to remind the viewer that in becoming a nun she had chosen to become a Virgin Bride of Christ, rather than a conventional bride, and this is highlighted by the Latin inscription on the frame, *Sicut Lilium*, 'As the lily', which makes obvious reference to the nun's sexual purity. The phrase is taken from *Song of Songs* 2.2 which uses the image, "As the lily among the thorns", to describe the person of the Bride, who has been interpreted by theologians since the Middle Ages as referring to the Bride of Christ. The painting thus forms a meditation on chastity.⁵¹⁹

Ruskin did not like the subject matter of "Collins's lady in white".⁵²⁰ Preferring a more Protestant theme, he suggested in his second letter to the *Times* on 26 May 1851 that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was a more appropriate subject for "these times."⁵²¹ However, the works of the PRB were not unusual in terms of subject matter. With the increasing interest in religious establishments created in the wake of the Oxford Movement, nuns, monks and other 'Catholic' subject matter had become popular with artists in the 1840s and 50s. On another level, pretty, frivolous and rather patronising images of monks and nuns regularly appeared in keepsake annuals and popular magazines. In the Royal Academy exhibition in 1849, the first at which the PRB exhibited, there were a number of explicitly Catholic works: Solomon Alexander Hart's *A Sister of Charity of Ravenna* (93), *The Summons to the Conclave* (205) and *The Pilgrim* (172); Penry Williams' *A Mother Praying to the Madonna for the Recovery of her Sick Child* (132) and *The Italian Mother* (152); and Alfred W. Elmore's *Religious Controversy in the Time of Louis XIV* (23).⁵²² Casteras writes that after 1839 in the Royal Academy or British Institution exhibitions there was to be found at least one depiction of a convent scene nearly every year until the end of the century.⁵²³

⁵¹⁹In 1852 Collinson exhibited at the RA a painting with a similar theme, a young girl dressed in white, "apparently assuming the robe of a devotee", against a background of blue, as inspired by Keble's "Lyra Innocentium" (*Art Journal*, 1852, p. 171). E. Wood, p. 126.

⁵²⁰Ruskin, "The Pre-Raphaelite Brethren", 1851, p. 8.

⁵²¹John Ruskin, "To the Editor of the 'Times'", *Times* (30 May 1851), pp. 8-9.

⁵²²"The Royal Academy", *Art Journal*, vol. 11 (1849), pp. 165-176.

⁵²³Casteras, 1981, p. 167.

These works were not badly reviewed. The critic of the *Art Journal* wrote of Hart's *Sister of Charity*:

This small picture exhibits the figure kneeling in a devotional attitude. She is attired in a white religious habit, that seems to have been studied with much care. The entire interest centres in the face, which is characterised by great beauty.⁵²⁴

The *Athenaeum*, which called the painting "one of Mr. Hart's best works", admiringly commented on its "character" and "fine suggestion".⁵²⁵ The *Athenaeum* also noted the "care and precision" of Williams' *A Mother Praying*. This latter painting was described by the *Art Journal* as "an Italian woman who, while holding her sick child, tells her rosary before an image of the Virgin", and admired as "extremely brilliant in colour, and... executed with a finish singularly careful".⁵²⁶ This perhaps helps to explain why Rossetti's *Girlhood* which was potentially problematic in terms of its Marian theme, received such encouraging reviews. The only paper which did not approve of it was *The Morning Chronicle*, and this was on the grounds of the adoption of what was described as "a defunct style".⁵²⁷

Indeed, it was style rather than subject matter that inaugurated the harsh criticism brought against the PRB. "None can hail with more delight than we do their recourse to the higher realms of sentiment for their subjects", wrote Wornum.⁵²⁸ However, in terms of style their compositions were criticised on the grounds that they lacked perspective and depth. The Pre-Raphaelites, wrote the *Athenaeum*, looked to "a time when knowledge of light and shade and of the means of imparting due relief by the systematic conduct of aërial perspective had not [been] obtained".⁵²⁹ And more importantly their works were castigated because it was said that their figures lacked substance and reality. The *Illustrated London News* talked of "saints squeezed out perfectly flat".⁵³⁰ The insubstantiality of their figures was attributed to the influence of Catholic asceticism. Kingsley talked of the "ascetic and emasculate tone" peculiar to

⁵²⁴"The Royal Academy", *Art Journal*, 1849, p. 167. Rossetti was familiar with the work of "Mr. Hart and other members of the Academy" (Purves, p. 117; Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 47).

⁵²⁵"Royal Academy", *Athenaeum* (12 May 1849), p. 495.

⁵²⁶"The Royal Academy", *Art Journal*, 1849, p. 168. "Royal Academy", *Athenaeum* (26 May 1849), p. 547.

⁵²⁷*The Morning Chronicle* (26 March 1849), p. 5 (S. N. Ghose, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Contemporary Criticism* (Dijon: Impimerie Darantiere, 1929), p. 24).

⁵²⁸Wornum, 1850, p. 270.

⁵²⁹"Royal Academy", *Athenaeum* (26 May 1849), p. 548.

⁵³⁰Angus Reach, *Illustrated London News* (4 May 1850), quoted in Amor, p. 66.

the early Renaissance painters from Giotto to Raphael, who "prudishly despised the anatomic study of the human figure".⁵³¹ Wornum talked of "transplanting the most morbid asceticism of the cell to the hitherto glowing face of Art." In his eyes the style of the Pre-Raphaelites was directly comparable to "mortification of the body".⁵³²

Although W. M. Rossetti recorded in the PRB Journal on 17 May 1849 concerning Millais' "Caen Nunnery design" that Millais had "put in some fat men, finding his general tendency to be towards thin ones", the nuns in this image still look as though lacking in bodies beneath their robes.⁵³³ The particular holiness of the abbess appears to have required in Millais' eyes the depiction of an even more attenuated figure. The unconvincing corporeality of the nun in Charles Collins' *Convent Thoughts* is also worthy of comment. There is a drawing in the British Museum, predating the painting, in which the female figure was given a solidity and grace not in the finished painting (fig. 51). Significantly in this drawing she was not depicted in a nun's habit.⁵³⁴ Hunt explained, "When he [Collins] left Oxford he got hipped about a fancied love affair, and becoming a High Churchman, changed the subject of his picture from being an illustration of the lady in Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*,

Who out of the cups of the heavy flowers

Emptied the rain of the thunder showers,

to a picture of a nun with a missal in her hand, studying the significance of the passion flower."⁵³⁵ With a change in subject came a change in style. Like the Prior in Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" who says, "Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh. / Your business is to paint the souls of men -", Collins obviously felt that flat insubstantiality was the appropriate mode for a painting of an ascetic nun.⁵³⁶ The resultant figure looks remarkably similar to the two-dimensional image of the Virgin Annunciate in the window of Millais' *Mariana*, and was irresistably parodiable.

Indeed, such images provided ample fodder for the satirical wit of *Punch*, which, presenting the reader with its version of Collins' painting (fig. 52), declared that "by the

⁵³¹C. Kingsley, 1849, p. 295.

⁵³²Wornum, 1850, p. 269. J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry and Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) discusses contemporary attitudes to Pre-Raphaelite paintings, in terms of diseased and unhealthy bodies.

⁵³³Fredeman, 1975, p. 3.

⁵³⁴J. A. Gere, *Pre-Raphaelite Drawings in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), pp. 101-3.

⁵³⁵Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 294.

⁵³⁶Jack & Inglesfield, vol. 5, p. 43.

utter absence of form and limb under the robe, he subtilly [sic] conveys that she has given up all thoughts of making a figure in the world."⁵³⁷ In humorous poems such as "The Saints of Old" *Punch* mocked the prevailing asceticism:

For Paradise they thought to merit, through the frame's attenuation,
And Heaven's beatitude inherit by diurnal flagellation...
On their chins saints nourished bristles, but they often shaved their heads;
Used to sleep on thorns and thistles, or of nettles made their beds;
Or else would pass the livelong night in kneeling upon bare flint-stones,
O'er and o'er again reciting gibberish on their marrow-bones.⁵³⁸

Accompanying this poem was a drawing based on Brown's *Seeds and Fruits of English Poetry* and also on his *Wycliffe*, which was filled with the emaciated figures of pilgrims, priests and monks, as well as a few fat ones to insinuate that this was also the age of corruption (fig. 53).

In Rossetti's *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice*, the suggestion of Catholic asceticism in the elongated and angular figures is enhanced by the hooded robes, the crucifix, the statuette of St Reparata, and the stained glass window with its figures of kneeling angels. It is no wonder that the art of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites was seen to be bound up with 'Papal aggression'. On 2 April 1850 F. G. Stephens wrote to W. M. Rossetti:

There is a notion abroad, I fancy, that the B__d is connected
with 'The Foreigners' and that we desire to alter the Established
Church, which Johnny Millais is to propose to the Queen while
painting her portrait...⁵³⁹

However, the members of the PRB were not serious when they talked of converting to Catholicism, and in fact they showed much ignorance and deep seated prejudices concerning the Roman Church.⁵⁴⁰ This was demonstrated by Brown's cartoon *The Body of Harold Brought Before William the Conqueror* (fig. 54), which was designed in 1844 for the Westminster Hall competition. In it Brown, obviously not familiar with the Catholic tradition of relics, portrayed William the Conqueror as a kind of barbarian; "Brown had adopted a glaring unreasonable reading in the fact that William went into battle with the bones of the saints round his neck, over which relics Harold had made

⁵³⁷"Punch Among the Painters", *Punch*, vol. 20 (January-June 1851), p. 219.

⁵³⁸"The Saints of Old: A Chant for the Times", *Punch*, vol. 20 (January-June 1851), p. 122.

⁵³⁹W. E. Fredeman, *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 242-43.

⁵⁴⁰Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 252.

his renunciation of the crown. Instead of painting a reliquary, he had hung femur, tibia, humerus, and other large bones dangling loose on the hero's breast".⁵⁴¹

Rossetti and Hunt, visiting the Convent of Béguinage, Ghent in 1849, had laughed to see the names of individual saints written over the doors of the living quarters. Rossetti relating the incident to Collinson, declared that they had been tempted to knock and ask if the saint was at home but had refrained "as it was rather late, and we feared he might have gone to bed."⁵⁴² Attending the vesper service Rossetti and Hunt had mockingly likened the music to popular tunes; "we could recognize 'Jim Crow' and 'Nix my dolly'". The headdress of the nuns Rossetti described as "a kind of towel", and wrote to Collinson that "during the service, a rather sloshy one goes about with a policeman's bull's eye, collecting coppers." However, he related how on entering and leaving the church Hunt had "dipped his fingers in the holy-water stoup and commenced some violent gesticulations", which had embarrassed even Rossetti.⁵⁴³

Collinson had been reluctantly dragged into participating in such irreverencies. Rossetti wrote to his mother towards September 1848 regarding the Cyclographic Society, "The folio of the great Cyclographic continues its rounds. It is now with Collinson. Calling on him this morning, and finding that he had no sketch ready and did not mean to make one, I designed an angular saint, which we mean to send round under his name, to the mystification and sore disgust, no doubt, of the members in general. I expect we shall end by being kicked out."⁵⁴⁴ When Collinson wrote to Gabriel on Whit Monday 1850 to announce to his friend his resignation from the PRB, it was on account of the lack of reverence paid to the saints:

I am uneasy about it. I love and reverence God's faith, and I love His holy Saints; and I cannot bear any longer the self-accusation that, to gratify a little vanity, I am helping to dishonour them, and lower their merits, if not absolutely to bring their sanctity into ridicule...⁵⁴⁵

Millais hinted that one day he might secede to Rome, writing to Combe in 1851, "I do not mean to turn Roman Catholic just yet...". However, he certainly was not serious,

⁵⁴¹Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 120. Brown's sources, Hume and Auguste Thierry, were quoted in the *Catalogue of Frescoes* (1844), no. 7 (Hueffer, 1896, p. 33).

⁵⁴²W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁴³W. M. Rossetti, 1900, p. 17.

⁵⁴⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 44.

⁵⁴⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1900, pp. 275-76.

being quite anti-Catholic at heart.⁵⁴⁶ He teased Charles Collins for refusing the blackberry pudding given to them whilst paying Mrs Drury a visit:

'You know you like blackberry pudding as much as I do, and it is this preposterous rule of supererogation which you have adopted in your high-churchism which made you go without it. I have no doubt you will think it necessary to have a scourge and take the discipline for having had any dinner at all.'

Millais described such signs of asceticism as "'monkish nonsense'", and saw it as doing Collins "'a deal of harm'".⁵⁴⁷

Millias' wife Effie wrote that on their honeymoon in 1855 descending a hill by Loch Awe from Inverary they had been inspired by the ruin of a monastery on one of the islands and had:

... imagined to ourselves the beauty of the picturesque features of the Roman Catholic religion... white-robed nuns in boats, singing in the water in the quiet summer evenings, and chanting holy songs...⁵⁴⁸

However, overall, Millais did not present a very favourable view of monasticism. His 1854 *St Agnes' Eve* was a logical continuation in theme of his *Mariana* (1850-51), which shows a young woman standing at a stained glass window longing for reunion with her earthly lover. Mariana lived in enforced isolation, having been deserted by her lover, and the nun in *St Agnes Eve* lived in voluntary isolation, awaiting consummation with her spiritual groom. The window in *Mariana*, with its stylised images of Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate, explicitly contrasts ideas of chastity with Mariana's imposed celibacy. Drawing a parallel in this way between the unhappy abandoned lover and the virgin nun, Millais did not suggest the nun's existence to be a happy one. His *St Agnes Eve* does not bring to mind Newman's defence of contemporary Sisterhoods as "institutions which give dignity and independence to the position of women in society", nor Jameson's positive description of medieval communities of Sisters as places of protection and education.⁵⁴⁹ Rather, Millais' nun longs for death.

⁵⁴⁶Millais, vol. 1, p. 93.

⁵⁴⁷Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 289.

⁵⁴⁸Millais, vol. 1, p. 329.

⁵⁴⁹Newman, 1835, p. 667. Jameson declared that monachism "did more for the general cause of womanhood, than all the boasted institutions of chivalry" (Jameson, 1850, p. xx).

Similarly *The Vale of Rest* (fig. 55), which Millais painted in 1858, is mournful in tone, being set at twilight, and the nuns were depicted digging a grave. The rosary of the seated nun has a skull attached to it as well as a cross. With hands solemnly clasped on her lap, she stares out sombrely at the viewer. Again Millais implied that the nuns long for death in order to be united with Christ. Casteras proposes that they are in fact digging their own graves.⁵⁵⁰ Malcolm Warner suggests that the yellow funerary wreaths visually bring to mind wedding garlands and therefore spiritual marriage.⁵⁵¹ Certainly yellow was the colour of "initiation, or marriage" as noted by Jameson.⁵⁵² The theme came to Millais whilst on his honeymoon, indicating that Millais was mentally contrasting physical and spiritual passion.⁵⁵³

When it was rumoured that Millais had converted to Catholicism and that his *Return of the Dove to the Ark* (1851; fig. 56), in which one of the young girls wears a habit-like garment, was meant to indicate his return to the mother Church, Millais indignantly wrote, "a very convenient construction to put upon it! I have no doubt that likewise they will turn the subject I at present about to their advantage."⁵⁵⁴ In this particular work, *A Huguenot on St Bartholomew's Day* (1851-52; fig. 57), he attempted to make his personal beliefs clear, drawing on one of the notorious incidents in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, when the Protestant subjects of King Charles IX of France were massacred. Millais depicted a Protestant staunchly willing to face death rather than join, even nominally, the Catholic Church.⁵⁵⁵ Likewise in 1857 Millais turned to the subject of the Inquisition, painting *The Escape of a Heretic, 1559*.⁵⁵⁶

Similarly in his *The Hireling Shepherd* of 1851-52 (fig. 58), Hunt, whose work had been singled out by the *Art Journal* as being "more austere in its denials than any of the others we have observed", sought to demonstrate his firm Protestantism to the art critics, painting a seductive shepherdess taking a shepherd away from his real duty of looking after the sheep.⁵⁵⁷ Dressed in red, the shepherdess would have been seen to

⁵⁵⁰Casteras, 1981, p. 178.

⁵⁵¹Parris, p. 175.

⁵⁵²Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xlv.

⁵⁵³Millais, vol. 1, p. 328.

⁵⁵⁴Millais, vol. 1, p. 135.

⁵⁵⁵He emphasised his stance in the R.A. catalogue in which he referred the reader to a good Protestant book on the subject, "See the *Protestant Reformation in France*, vol. 2, p. 352" (Graves, 1905, vol. 5, p. 244).

⁵⁵⁶Graves, 1905, vol. 5, p. 245.

⁵⁵⁷*Art Journal*, 1849, p. 171. Hunt also alluded to Ruskin's *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* (London: Smith & Elder, 1851) which attacked the Roman Catholic Church (Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 12, pp. 511-58; Parris, p. 96).

stand for the Whore of Babylon described in the book of Revelations, who, as many Evangelicals believed, was no less than the Roman Catholic Church. It was felt that like the shepherdess the Catholic Church was luring people away from the truth. Maturin, referring to the passage concerning the Whore of Babylon in Revelation 15, declared that "amid all the gorgeous colouring of poetic diction - amid all the mystic adumbrations of prophetic obscurity - the portrait of the Church of Rome is so vividly drawn".⁵⁵⁸ Similar views were expressed in the sermons of Henry Melvill, who was in 1852 chaplain to Queen Victoria.⁵⁵⁹ Rossetti's father too had, in his *Rome towards the middle of the XIX century* of 1842, likened the Catholic Church to the Whore of Babylon, "who is not only unchaste, but triumphantly displays her immodesty".⁵⁶⁰ However, most notably, in 1850 *Punch* had made a direct allusion to Rome as both a false shepherdess and the Whore of Revelation, writing of "The Pope in his scarlet audacity", as having, "stretched out his crozier, and pulled the stray English sheep into his fold."⁵⁶¹

Hunt became increasingly concerned with anti-Catholic criticism, and according to Rev. Richard Glover, incumbent of Holy Trinity, Maidstone, at some point prior to 1862 he began exhibiting his *Light of the World* (1851-53) under the title *The Light of the Word*, placing the work firmly within Protestant tradition with its emphasis on Biblical exegesis.⁵⁶² In this way Hunt drew attention to the lantern in the left hand of Hunt's Christ which was intended to signify the edifying power of the Bible, illustrating *Psalms* 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Rossetti's "The Ballad of Jan Van Hunks", written in 1846 or 1847, revolves around a wager the protagonist makes with the Devil, and ends with the Devil rather gruesomely slicing off the top of the Dutchman's head to make a pipe for him to smoke. Rossetti described this action as giving him a "Worse tonsure than a monk's".⁵⁶³ Much was made of Catholic abuses in Gothic tales of terror, from which this was inspired, and

⁵⁵⁸C. R. Maturin, *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* (Dublin: William Curry, 1826, 2nd ed.), pp. 122-24, 156.

⁵⁵⁹Henry Melvill, "Protestantism and Popery", *Sermons* (1854), vol. 1, pp. 307-19 (Landon, 1971, pp. 245-46).

⁵⁶⁰G. Rossetti, 1842 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:7).

⁵⁶¹"A Short Way with the Pope's Puppets", *Punch*, vol. 19 (July-December 1850), p. 205.

⁵⁶²Rev. Richard Glover, *The Light of the Word* (1862), quoted in Maas, p. 76.

⁵⁶³D. G. Rossetti, *The Ballad of Jan Van Hunks* (London: printed by T. Watts-Dunton for private circulation only, 1912 - 30 copies only), p. 21. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4:5. Interestingly Rossetti took this poem up again on his death bed (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 108).

these continued to hold an interest for Rossetti. In Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Ambrosio, the well respected Abbot of the Capuchins in Madrid, known as "The Man of Holiness", formed a pact with Satan, and this action was seen to be symptomatic of the corruption of the whole Catholic church. Although Catholic ceremony was described with great beauty, the church was shown to be full of hypocrisy and vice. Lovers were cruelly separated by monastic vows and the Abbess was found guilty of treachery and murder. Drawing a scene from *Faust* in July 1848 (S.34; fig. 59), Rossetti included a devil disguised in a cowl, a detail not from *Faust*, but probably inspired by Lewis' *The Monk*.

Another such book which Rossetti admired was Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), which involved a further deal with the Devil.⁵⁶⁴ William Michael called it Rossetti's "supreme delight".⁵⁶⁵ In this "blood-curdling romance" the Catholic Church was presented as a sinister controlling force, and a large portion was devoted to the relation of Monçada's forced monastic vow.⁵⁶⁶ Rossetti owned a second edition (1821) of Maturin's *Sermons* (1819), which included a chapter on "Reasons for Preferring the Communion of the Church of England", and also Maturin's *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* (1824), in which the clergyman criticised the "anti-scriptural errors of the Church of Rome", including the headship of the Pope, the doctrine of the merit of works, the worship of the saints, the celibacy of the priests, extreme unction, penance, transubstantiation, confession, masses for the dead and indulgences.⁵⁶⁷

In *Five Sermons* Maturin also censured the "numberless Orders of abbots, and priors, and monks, and friars, and abesses, and prioresses, and canonesses, nuns, and novices", and listed the atrocities enacted under Roman Catholicism including assassinations, massacres and the Inquisition.⁵⁶⁸ Rossetti could have read similar anti-Catholic sentiments in John Fox's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian Church* (1563), a 1632 edition of which his brother came to own.⁵⁶⁹ Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, which was

⁵⁶⁴M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 117-19.

⁵⁶⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. xxviii.

⁵⁶⁶C. R. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶⁷C. R. Maturin, *Sermons* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819), p. 402. Maturin, 1826, p. 15. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

⁵⁶⁸Maturin, 1826, pp. 69, 110-17.

⁵⁶⁹W. M. Rossetti also acquired *Plain Reasons against Joining the Church of Rome* (London: S.P.C.K., 1880), by R. F. Littledale, incumbent of All Saints, which attacked the Roman Catholic Church on very similar grounds to Maturin (Angeli-Dennis Coll.,

contained within *Acts and Monuments*, listed all the horrors of the Inquisition. Malham made it clear in his preface to the 1813 edition that the book sought to alert people to "the history of martyrdom, as exercised by papists on protestants of different denominations", precisely because of the perceived rising threat of Roman Catholicism in Britain.⁵⁷⁰

It has already been mentioned that Rossetti owned Carlyle's 1850 pamphlet denouncing *Jesuitism*. In this Carlyle brutally attacked what he termed "Cannibal Connaughts" and "Saints of the Romish Calendar, three-hatted Holy Fathers, and uncertain Thaumaturgic Entities".⁵⁷¹ However, this book, in which Carlyle denounced the work of artists like Rossetti as evincing Jesuit sympathies, perfectly illustrates the fact that physical ownership did not equate with intellectual ownership. Rossetti thought highly of the Jesuit education, and his interest in ritualism has been demonstrated.⁵⁷² Of all the Pre-Raphaelite group, Rossetti was the one who remained consistently intrigued with monasticism and Catholic mysticism.⁵⁷³ When Swinburne wrote to W. M. Rossetti in 1869 asking him to send his name with his own in support of an Anti-Catholic council of Naples, significantly Rossetti was not involved.⁵⁷⁴ Benson, writing in the 1890s, declared, "had D. G. Rossetti, to use the uncouth Puritan phrase, 'found religion,' there is no doubt that he... would have reverted to the Church of his fathers".⁵⁷⁵

U.B.C., 26:14).

⁵⁷⁰J. Fox, *The Book of Martyrs*, ed. Rev. W. Gregory, intro. J. Mallam (London: James Goodwin & S. A. Oddy, 1813), preface. However, W. M. Rossetti possessed books from both Protestant and Catholic viewpoints. For example, he owned both J. Pollock's *The Popish Plot: A Study in the History of the Reign of Charles II* (London: Duckworth, 1903) and *Remonstrances of Piety and Innocence: Protestations of Roman Catholics Executed for the Plot* (1683) (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

⁵⁷¹Carlyle, 1850, pp. 3-4, 26. Carlyle's *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1847), vol. 4, was also listed as being among the books in Rossetti's library in 1866 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2).

⁵⁷²Rossetti to F. M. Brown [July 1874] (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:1).

⁵⁷³W. M. Rossetti cataloguing his library contents in 1893, listed Charles Butler's *The Book of the Roman Catholic Church* (London: John Murray, 1825) and a *Catholic Annual* (1830). It is uncertain when he came to own these and whether they were books he had bought or inherited. The latter seems very likely, in which case his brother would have had access to them (Angeli-Dennis Coll. U.B.C., 26:14).

⁵⁷⁴C. Y. Lang (ed.), *The Swinburne Letters*, 6 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), vol. 2, pp. 35, 53-54. W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 410.

⁵⁷⁵A. C. Benson, "Christina Rossetti", *The New Ireland Review*, vol. 24 (n.d.), p. 757.

Ch. 6: Art Fellowship

In the autumn of 1851 Mr Combe had suggested that he might finance a painting trip to the Holy Land for Hunt and Millais.⁵⁷⁶ However, Rossetti had not been included in the plans. "I have just heard from William, with great surprise, something about you & Millais being commissioned by Mr Combe, for pictures to be painted in Palestine", he wrote to Hunt, "I hope to God - and I use the words most solemnly, as concerning one of the dearest hopes I have - that you are not going to start before the next exhibition, in order that I may at least have a chance, by the sale of the picture I shall then have ready, of accompanying you on your journey."⁵⁷⁷ He declared that he would join them later should they require to depart immediately.

It may at first seem strange that Rossetti, who did not relish painting from nature, should desire to go on such a trip, but the reason becomes apparent as the letter continues. "For indeed, should this not happen at all, of which I have thought much, I feel that it would seem as if the fellowship between us were taken from me, and my life rejected." The idea of artistic fellowship was very important to Rossetti, and he appealed to Hunt, declaring that these were "the most serious words I ever wrote in my life."⁵⁷⁸ The Combe's project never materialised, but Hunt remained determined to make the journey, and set off alone in February 1854.⁵⁷⁹ This time there was no suggestion of Rossetti accompanying him, but in December 1853, before Hunt's departure, Rossetti gave his friend a daguerreotype of *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* as a farewell, accompanied by a quote from *Philip van Artevelde*, in which he sought to convey his feelings concerning his artistic brother and the idea of brotherhood in general:

There's that betwixt us been, which men remember
Till they forget themselves, till all's forgot,
Till the deep sleep falls on them in that bed
From which no morrow's mischief knocks them up.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶Millais, vol. 1, p. 124.

⁵⁷⁷Rossetti to Hunt, 17 Newman Street, n.d. (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:24).

⁵⁷⁸Rossetti, embarrassed by such a display of emotion, wrote a hasty postscript, "You had better burn this, for I find it reads childishly" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:24).

⁵⁷⁹He had arranged to meet up with Thomas Seddon in Cairo (Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 362, 366, 373).

⁵⁸⁰Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 365.

Courtesy of Edward Bateman, Rossetti worked for some time in the early 1850s in the Hermitage, West Hill, Highgate, before it became the home of the Howitts. It was a significant choice of residence for Rossetti with its dark, lofty rooms, latticed windows and its intimation of some kind of a monastic history, for Rossetti remained interested in the idea of brotherhood beyond the PRB.⁵⁸¹ Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), which was saturated with Tractarian ideology, and presented monastic institutions in a favourable light, was influential for him. Guy Morville, the hero of the book, left £5,000 to Elizabeth Wellwood so that she could found a sisterhood.⁵⁸² Frances Jane Horner, née Graham, declared that Rossetti "loved" the book of "Miss Yonge".⁵⁸³

Rossetti was also enthusiastic about Anna Mary Howitt's idea of setting up a Sisterhood in Art, the possibility of which she discussed in an article in the *Magazine of Art* in 1853.⁵⁸⁴ In her memoirs, *An Art-Student in Munich*, using words which stressed her identification with the Pre-Raphaelite group, Howitt declared that "the germ of a beautiful sisterhood in Art" had been something of which she had "dreamed long".⁵⁸⁵ Her imagination had been quickened on her arrival in Munich in June 1850, when she had entered the studio of Wilhelm von Kaulbach, a pupil of Cornelius, whose medieval scenes of priests, monks and pilgrims had been left around the studio for her to examine.⁵⁸⁶ Munich was the capital of Catholic Bavaria, and there Howitt, who had been brought up in England within a Quaker environ, was suddenly in daily contact with the beauty and mystery of the Roman Catholic world of monasteries and saints.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸¹A. Lee, *Laurels and Rosemary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 205.

⁵⁸²C. M. Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1853), vol. 2, pp. 204, 225.

⁵⁸³F. Horner, *Time Remembered* (London: William Heinemann, 1933), p. 8. Allchin, p. 119.

⁵⁸⁴Marsh, 1999, pp. 101, 116.

⁵⁸⁵A. M. Howitt, *An Art-Student in Munich*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1853), vol. 1, p. 91. Marsh, 1999, p. 101.

⁵⁸⁶A. M. Howitt, 1853, vol. 1, pp. 11-15. Kaulbach's *Head of a Monk*, from the collection of Phillip Henry Howard, was exhibited in the 1843 *Exhibition of Ancient Masters* in the British Institution, as an example of the modern German school (Vaughan, p. 61).

⁵⁸⁷Lee, 1955, p. 190. "It is not an advantage to any lover of the arts to have two or three generations of Quaker ancestry" (Albert H. Smyth, *American Men of Letters: Bayard Taylor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896), quoted in Elzea, p. 12). However, Howitt's Quaker heritage may have concurrently encouraged notions of a sisterhood. The Society of Friends, which had in 1840 proposed to supply nurses to Guy's Hospital in the manner of Sisters of Mercy, had been influential for Pusey in the setting up of the first Anglican Sisterhood (Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 8-9).

She witnessed religious processions, the sacramental beauty of which, she said, "calmed and exalted" her soul:

Banners, tapestry, garlands, floated from the windows of the houses, which were often converted into shrines with burning tapers, golden crucifixes, pictures and flowers. The air was filled with the sound of hymns and the pealing bells; altars were erected at the corners of the streets, at the fountains, and before the churches. Through the gay street wound the long train; priests in their gorgeous robes, scarlet, white, and gold, under gorgeous canopies; Franciscan monks in their grave-coloured garbs; Sisters of Mercy; various brotherhoods in quaint picturesque attire, all with gay floating banners and silver crucifixes.⁵⁸⁸

She recorded her attendance at a miracle-play in Ober-Ammergau, where the medieval world of the early Christian painters was being kept alive. She declared the actors appeared as though directly from "the works of Giotto and Perugino, and not living men and women". She further related how in order to reach her living quarters she had to proceed through what she called "a sort of old curiosity shop" which was "full of gilt crucifixes, picture-frames, and huge painted saints larger than life, and glittering with gold."⁵⁸⁹

It was whilst in this environment, where "life and art seemed so holy and beautiful", that Howitt, along with her friends Justina, Elizabeth and Clare, began to define her ideas concerning the notion of a group of female artists working together within an almost monastic structure.⁵⁹⁰ Mary Howitt wrote to her daughter on 30 November 1850, to express her concern that her accounts of life in Munich, which were to be published in the *Athenaeum* and *Household Words*, were "too gloriously papistical for the present time in England".⁵⁹¹ In 1858 Mary Howitt wrote an article in the *English Woman's Journal* on a Penitentiary run by a group of Sisters in Highgate, and was careful to stress the establishment to be a Protestant one, despite "the ornamental cross over the entrance gate" which had "unfortunately created a prejudice in some minds".⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸A. M. Howitt, 1853, vol. 1, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁸⁹A. M. Howitt, 1853, vol. 1, pp. 3, 17, 60.

⁵⁹⁰A. M. Howitt, 1853, vol. 1, pp. 5, 91-92.

⁵⁹¹M. Howitt (ed.), *Mary Howitt*, 2 vols. (Boston & New York: Houghton & Mifflin, 1889), vol. 2, p. 64.

⁵⁹²[M. Howitt] "A House of Mercy", *English Woman's Journal* (March 1858), p. 13.

Despite the current resurgence of Catholic intolerance, Rossetti greatly admired Anna Mary Howitt's *An Art-Student in Munich*, the book published from the articles she had written. Indeed, Rossetti wrote in April 1853 to his brother suggesting that Howitt's book be reviewed in the *Spectator*.⁵⁹³

Rossetti's continued interest in a kind of monastic fellowship can be most clearly seen in the various artistic collaborations with which he became involved in the 1850s and beyond. As the aim of the Béguine communities had been to introduce a monastic spirit into society, so Rossetti sought to establish something of the nature of a brotherhood within his everyday life.⁵⁹⁴ This was given initial expression in his involvement from 1855 with the Working Men's College, founded by Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice at 31 Red Lion Square.

In 1835, writing to Rev. R. C. Trench, Maurice had mentioned that a convent, which "has just started up within two miles of me", was giving him cause for thought at a time when newspapers were taking a markedly anti-Catholic stance.⁵⁹⁵ Despite the fact that Maurice contributed in 1848 a preface to Kingsley's *Saint's Tragedy*, a play intended to show Kingsley's Protestant contempt for monastic life, Maurice did not hold typically Reformed views on monasticism.⁵⁹⁶ He wrote to Kingsley on 10 December 1847:

I saw in the notes to your play, or one of them, something which seemed to me almost like a sneer at the idea of a Spiritual Bridegroom. Now I feel deeply that the only corrective of the error of the Middle Ages lies in more closely connecting human relationships with divine... I cannot bear to see anything which throws the least doubt or slur upon what seems to me a part, an integral, essential part of Christianity, touching its very essence... I almost wish you could throw off the burden of my preface...⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 98. The book was reviewed, but not by W. M. Rossetti. On 7 February 1854 Rossetti again wrote to William Michael, "I suppose you know that Miss Howitt's book, *The Art Student in Munich*, has been very successful" (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 174). Indeed, it reached a number of editions, W. M. Rossetti himself owning a copy of the 1880 edition. He also owned extracts from Howitt's 1847 journal (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

⁵⁹⁴Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. xxxvii.

⁵⁹⁵F. Maurice (ed.), *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1884), vol. 1, p. 187.

⁵⁹⁶C. Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*, 1848, p. viii.

⁵⁹⁷F. Maurice, 1884, vol. 1, pp. 446-47.

In a sermon entitled "Priests and Saints" which he gave on 30 October 1859, Maurice reminded his audience that Luther, the great man of the Reformation, had himself been a monk, and he praised, in an article of 1863, those monastic institutions which involved themselves in the everyday needs of the community, although he felt he could not condone actual ascetic practice.⁵⁹⁸ Most notably in this latter article he gave his support to the controversial Devonport Sisterhood, which had been recently attacked for its supposed Roman Catholic practices.⁵⁹⁹

In the 1850s, Jameson, a woman greatly admired by Maurice, had been advocating the secularisation of female monastic establishments, having carried out research into the matter in Britain and France.⁶⁰⁰ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in a letter from Paris to her sister Henrietta, dated 6 December 1855, declared, "Mrs Jameson is still here... She has taken up the woman-occupation question, and the possibility of using the Sister of charity institution, with modifications on English ground. Also she has been enquiring a good deal into the state of French charities - which are wonderfully organised and most fertile."⁶⁰¹ In a couple of lectures of 1855 on the "Social Employments of Women", Jameson had argued that the concept of a community, giving strength, support and fellowship to its members, and charitable aid to those around about it, should be extended into a secular context. Sisters of Charity, who had already taken it on themselves to run hospitals, prisons, workhouses, had proved the female capacity for learning, hard work and organisation within a semi-secular

⁵⁹⁸F. D. Maurice, *Sermons Preached in Lincoln's Inn Chapel*, 6 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1891), vol. 6, p. 215. In *The Kingdom of Christ* Maurice had already made the point that Luther's concerns had been with justification and faith not popes or masses (F. D. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 2 vols. (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 2nd ed., 1842, 1st publ. 1838), vol. 1, p. 305). F. Maurice, 1884, vol. 1, p. 206. O. J. Brose, *Frederick Denison Maurice* (Ohio University Press, 1971), pp. 135-36.

⁵⁹⁹F. D. Maurice, "On Sisterhoods", *Victoriana Magazine*, vol. 1 (August 1863), p. 296. M. Hill, p. 165. Allchin, p. 66. Devonport, which had the support of Pusey, was to merge with Park Village Sisterhood in the Rossettis' parish (Liddon, vol. 3, pp. 193-95; Packer, p. 55).

⁶⁰⁰France had experienced significant growth in religious orders due to the Falloux Laws which were passed in 1850 (Seltzer, p. 290).

⁶⁰¹L. Huxley (ed.), *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: John Murray, 1931, reprint of 1st ed. 1929), p. 236. Jameson was a close friend of the Brownings, even accompanying them on their honeymoon in 1847, and it is interesting to speculate whether Rossetti had come into contact with her through them. She was affectionately referred to by E. B. Browning in her letters as "My dearest Mona Nina" (F. G. Kenyon (ed.), *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 2 vols. (London: Smith & Elder, 1897), vol. 2, pp. 227 ff.; Huxley, pp. 1, 18-19).

environment. Jameson anticipated criticism from both Catholics and Evangelicals, but did not consider the concept of Sisterhood to be inextricable from its Roman Catholic parentage.⁶⁰² When Jameson's lectures were republished by Longman in 1859 they were accompanied by a prefatory letter to Lord John Russell in which Jameson emphasised her belief in the inappropriateness of gender-based segregation in the modern world, claiming that the sexes needed to work together.⁶⁰³ Maurice declared that "These lectures happily attracted some serious attention."⁶⁰⁴

Maurice had plans himself to set up a female College, which was in some way to provide an alternative for both those who desired "free entrance into the College of Physicians and the Inns of Court", and those who "sigh[ed] for Romish sisterhoods". He gave a lecture to this effect "to a class of ladies" at the Working Men's College on 21 May 1855, in which he admitted his indebtedness, "to Mrs Jameson's book on Sister's of Charity for so many hints".⁶⁰⁵ His plan certainly found approval with Jameson who declared, "this noble design has struck me with the deepest emotion, the deepest thankfulness".⁶⁰⁶

In the lecture to ladies just cited, Maurice declared that the intention of the Men's College had been to impart not only "instruction on certain subjects", but also a "sense of fellowship".⁶⁰⁷ The notion of brotherhood occupied Maurice's thoughts throughout his life, being tied up with his Christian Socialism, the Pauline idea of all being one in Christ.⁶⁰⁸ He wrote to Ludlow in August 1849, "Communism, in whatever sense it is a principle of the New Moral World, is a most important principle of the old world, and that every monastic institution - properly so called - was a Communist institution to all

⁶⁰²A. Jameson, *The Communion of Labour* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856), pp. 133-40. See also *On Sisters of Charity at Home and Abroad* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1855).

⁶⁰³A. Jameson, *Sisters of Charity and the Communion of Labour* (London: Longman, new enlarged ed., 1858), quoted in F. D. Maurice, "Female School of Art: Mrs Jameson", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 2 (July 1860), pp. 232-33.

⁶⁰⁴F. D. Maurice, 1860, p. 231.

⁶⁰⁵"Plan of a Female College for the Help of the Rich and the Poor", F. D. Maurice, 1856, pp. 14-16. F. Maurice, 1884, vol. 2, p. 260.

⁶⁰⁶Jameson, 1856, p. 125.

⁶⁰⁷F. D. Maurice, 1856, pp. 3-4. W. M. Rossetti came to own Raymond Blathwayt's diary account of *The Working Men's College* (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

⁶⁰⁸*Galatians* 3.28. This was a favourite subject in Maurice's sermons, eg. "The Faith of Catholics", 26 April 1857; and "The Body and the Members", 20 March 1859 (F. D. Maurice, 1891, vol. 2, pp. 16-29; vol. 5, pp. 229-42). Frank Maudlin McClain, *Maurice* (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), p. 114.

intents and purposes. The idea of Christian Communism has been a most vigorous and generative one in all ages, and must be destined to a full development in ours."⁶⁰⁹

Ruskin, who in 1855 was formulating ideas for the establishment of his own artistic brotherhood based on the medieval prototype of the monastic *scriptorium*, also taught at Maurice's Working Men's College.⁶¹⁰ He wrote in 1855 to William Ward, a pupil of his at the College, and later to become under drawing-master, "I am so glad you are thinking of the Protestant Convent plan. I have *no doubt* we shall carry it out, and that all over the country".⁶¹¹ His plans to revive the craft of illumination spilled over into his teaching at the College, where he had his class copying fifteenth century Gothic missals, as well as Dürer's great and small passions, *Saint Hubert* and *Saint Jerome*.⁶¹²

In 1855 Rossetti, encouraged by Ruskin, began teaching figure and watercolour painting at the Men's College. "The class proceeds quite on a family footing", Rossetti declared to William Allingham on 23 January, after his first evening of teaching.⁶¹³ Indeed, Burne-Jones, who ventured there to make his first acquaintance with Rossetti in 1856, noted the sense of "fellowship" he experienced.⁶¹⁴ He appears to have transferred an almost monastic identity on to the older artist, who had coincidentally turned to the subject of monachism for his most recent watercolour. Visiting Rossetti in his studio in 1856, Burne-Jones recalled to Francis Horner, "my work that day was to sit behind his blessed back and watch him paint, and he was painting Fra Pace..."⁶¹⁵ It is also noteworthy that Rossetti's *Arthur's Tomb* of 1855, in which Guinevere is dressed in the habit of a nun, was acquired by a pupil at the Working Men's College, George Butterworth, from Ruskin.⁶¹⁶ Furthermore, the Tractarian Lady Bath took an active interest in Rossetti's work at the College. Charlotte Polidori informed her

⁶⁰⁹F. Maurice, 1884, vol. 2, p. 7.

⁶¹⁰Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *The Guild and Museum of St George: Reports, Catalogues, and Other Papers*, p. lv n.

⁶¹¹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 36, *Letters I: 1827-1869*, p. 186. Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *Reports, Catalogues, and Other Papers*, p. lv. Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 15, *The Elements of Drawing and Perspective*, p. 18.

⁶¹²Thomas Sulman, "A Memorable Art Class", *Good Words* (August 1897), p. 548. *Catalogue of Old Engravings... The Property of the late Professor John Ruskin* (London: Sotheby, 12 May 1931), pp. 9-10.

⁶¹³Birkbeck Hill, p. 98. Ruskin gave Rossetti credit as being "the only one of our modern painters who taught disciples for love of them" (Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita*, vol. 3, p. 486.

⁶¹⁴Mackail, vol. 1, p. 100.

⁶¹⁵Horner, p. 20.

⁶¹⁶Surtees, 1971, p. 34.

nephew in May 1855 that Lady Bath and her brother Lord Ashburton wished to come to view his class.⁶¹⁷

The spiritually minded James Smetham, whose intention it was "to combine art, literature, and the religious life all in one", chose to attend Rossetti's class.⁶¹⁸

Smetham recognised monastic analogies in his own work, describing the artistic practice which he had developed, which he called "Squaring", as akin to that of a monk illuminating a manuscript.⁶¹⁹ He went on to paint a number of monkish subjects, including *The Nun Prioress* of 1864 (fig. 60).⁶²⁰ "With artists generally I have not felt drawn to associate", Smetham wrote in 1854, but his feelings towards Rossetti were a very different matter, both master and pupil feeling an attraction towards a mystical medieval spirituality.⁶²¹ Thomas Sulman, also a pupil of Rossetti's, astutely wrote of his teacher in an article of 1897 in terms which suggest a quiet, almost monastic devotion to art, "He was very kind and sincere; he spoke little and with a mournful inflection of voice". Yet Sulman recognised that his master's involvement with the Working Men's College, although an approximation in his mind of the idea of a fraternity of artists, was on a secular level. He sagaciously declared, "Art was his religion".⁶²²

Rossetti gently mocked established religion. Inspired by the arrival of a winged bull at the British Museum in September 1850, which had been discovered by the explorer Layard on his trip to Assyria in 1845-47, Rossetti wrote his poem "The Burden of Nineveh".⁶²³ In this poem Rossetti questioned what made this statue divine: "could all

⁶¹⁷Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:5. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 136-37. Lord and Lady Ashburton were also influenced by Anglo-Catholicism. Rossetti commented on Lady Ashburton's fasting in a letter to Ellen Heaton of 28 October 1864 (Surtees, 1971, p. 92). In 1856 Lady Bath also wished to visit Rossetti's studio to see his *Monk* (Rossetti to Charlotte Polidori, 19 May 1856, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:5).

⁶¹⁸S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 13. S. P. Casteras, *James Smetham* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995), p. 15. Sulman, p. 547.

⁶¹⁹S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 93. "Squaring" was what Smetham called his systematic pictorial recording of his experiences, thoughts and Biblical meditations. He became one of Rossetti's close friends, and not only used his system of "Squaring" in his letters to Rossetti, but explained to him its essential features (Smetham to Rossetti, 9 December 1865, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:24).

⁶²⁰This picture is not without a hint of criticism, the Prioress and Abbott being shown tucking into a good meal.

⁶²¹S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 7.

⁶²²Sulman, p. 549. Doughty, p. 167.

⁶²³Austin Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1849). Bentley, 1974, p. 189.

thy priests have shown / Such proof to make thy godhead known?" The huge wings of the beast, "So sure of flight, which do not fly", were for Rossetti symbolic of the impotence of this pagan god, a mere "dead disbowelled mystery" which was created for "man's need". He transferred the same principals to Christianity. One day, he speculated, the religious relics of London might sit side by side with those from Nineveh, Greece, Egypt, Rome, "When some may question which was first, / Of London or of Nineveh." The poem was constructed around the supposition that one day all religions would become obsolete, "All relics here together". It should be noted however that whereas religions died, Rossetti made the point that works of art, "images / Of awe and worship", lived on, "Art for ever in fresh wise".⁶²⁴

At the time of his connection with the Working Men's College Rossetti lived in accommodation at Blackfriars Bridge, an arrangement which lasted until 1862, and W. B. Scott, jovially alluding to the district's monastic history, declared in that year, "I ventured to tell him I never thought him fitted for a Benedict".⁶²⁵ Rossetti regarded art as of more lasting value than religion, and it was on this level alone that he joined an attempt to revive the old Pre-Raphaelite group, along with allied artists, in 1854, a sketching club being proposed on the lines of the old Cyclographic Society, and again in 1857, an exhibition of PRB works being arranged at Russell Place, Fitzroy Square.⁶²⁶ Rossetti had made further personal efforts to reunite the Brotherhood in 1855, drawing in Woolner and Munro to teach modelling at the Working Men's College.⁶²⁷ When he left the college in November 1858, in order to devote more time to his art, he had Brown, a kindred spirit of the original Brotherhood and included in the earlier schemes, take over his drawing class.⁶²⁸ Rossetti remained reluctant to renounce associations with the group, and maintained a degree of involvement with the college until 1862.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 266-71. Millais to Mrs Combe, 22 November 1851, mentioned that an artist assistant was required by "Layard, the winged-bull discoverer", and that Hunt was thinking of applying as it would give him the opportunity to paint scenes from Biblical history" (Millais, vol. 1, p. 134). C. G. Rossetti wrote to W. M. Rossetti on 14 August 1850 to say that she had borrowed "the first volume of Layard's *Nineveh*" (W. M. Rossetti, 1908, p. 14).

⁶²⁵Minto, vol. 2, p. 65.

⁶²⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 166, 200.

⁶²⁷Rossetti to Charlotte Polidori, 3 May 1855 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:5).

⁶²⁸Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:12. Hueffer, 1896, p. 159. Rowley described Brown as "a sort of father confessor" to the PRB (C. Rowley, *Fifty Years of Work without Wages* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), p. 134).

⁶²⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 194.

Although it was a secular painter's fraternity that Rossetti sought to develop, in February 1857 he joined up with the members of another envisaged fellowship of brothers headed by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, which had a specifically religious motivation. Morris and Burne-Jones had both come to Oxford with the intention of entering the Church, and were very well read in matters of theology and church history.⁶³⁰ Burne-Jones, inspired by Newman, had wanted to set up a celibate religious community as his mentor had done at Littlemore.⁶³¹ He had been even more profoundly influenced by Yonge's *Heir of Redclyffe* than Rossetti.⁶³² In May 1853 Burne-Jones wrote to his friend Cornell Price, "Remember I have set my heart on our founding a Brotherhood. Learn Sir Galahad by heart. He is to be the patron of our Order."⁶³³ Guy Morville, the hero of Yonge's novel, had also modelled himself on the virtuous Sir Galahad.⁶³⁴ As for Morris, Burne-Jones recalled, "When I first knew Morris nothing would content him but being a monk, and getting to Rome".⁶³⁵ In 1854 Morris fully intended to use his inheritance to found a monastery.⁶³⁶ Writing to Price in October 1854, Burne-Jones declared, "The Monastery, Crom, stands a fairer chance than ever of being founded - I know that it will some day." Indeed, he wrote of himself, "Monk as I am and unlettered in the world's etiquette...", and talked of "Morris and his glorious little company of martyrs".⁶³⁷ Significantly, the two men had wanted to call *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, the literary journal with which they had become involved, *The Brotherhood*.⁶³⁸

Early in 1857 Rossetti, subtly acknowledging the monastic undercurrents of Maurice's scheme, contemplated setting up with Burne-Jones and Morris an artistic "College" in London. The plans were developed in the direction of a community, the college members working and living together in one building, and Brown and Hunt were to be involved, thus creating a link with Rossetti's ideas toward a reconstitution of the PRB.

⁶³⁰Mackail, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

⁶³¹Burne-Jones had first been introduced to the writings of Newman whilst a teenager in Birmingham by Rev. John Goss, an Oxford man (G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, p. 39). At a later date Burne-Jones told Frances Horner that Newman had taught him, "things that will never be out of me" (Horner, p. 120).

⁶³²G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, p. 142.

⁶³³G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, p. 77. At a later date F. Horner would call Burne-Jones, "Angelico", after the fifteenth century Dominican painter-friar (Horner, p. 112).

⁶³⁴Yonge, vol. 1, pp. 176-77; vol. 2, pp. 29, 130, 187. C. Poulson, *Quest for the Grail* (Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 76.

⁶³⁵Horner, p. 14.

⁶³⁶Mackail, vol. 1, p. 62.

⁶³⁷G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, pp. 102-3.

⁶³⁸Mackail, vol. 1, p. 68.

There were a number of problems with the project, however, one of which being that Siddal refused to live under the same roof as Hunt.⁶³⁹ Rossetti, desirous that their artistic fellowship should be continued, proposed an alternative scheme. Oxford in the 1850s, according to Mackail, still "breathed from its towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages", and Rossetti suggested that himself, Burne-Jones and Morris, like medieval monastic craftsmen, should work together to provide murals for Benjamin Woodward's new Venetian Gothic Debating Hall at the Oxford Union.⁶⁴⁰ As Woodward's building was designed in the Gothic style but modified for "modern English uses", so the community Rossetti sought was based on medieval prototypes but adapted to a secular context.⁶⁴¹ Val Prinsep, who joined the group at this stage with John Hungerford Pollen and Roddam Spencer Stanhope, described the Oxford Union team as "the Brethren", suggesting also continuity with the previous scheme.⁶⁴²

Prinsep recognised that Rossetti's design "was conceived in the spirit of an illumination in a thirteenth century missal."⁶⁴³ Similarly Patmore likened the murals to "the margin of a highly-illuminated manuscript".⁶⁴⁴ Morris had begun illuminating in 1856, and Rossetti described his design as "full of fine medieval wonderfulness".⁶⁴⁵ The subjects of the murals were secular, but there was a religious dimension to the scene chosen to be illustrated by Rossetti. The designs were all taken from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, a book with which Morris and Burne-Jones had been captivated ever since the latter's discovery in 1855 of Robert Southey's 1817 edition of *Morte d'Arthur* in a Birmingham bookshop. Georgiana Burne-Jones described the book as her husband's "own

⁶³⁹Rossetti to F. M. Brown, 26 February 1857 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:12; Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, pp. 319-20).

⁶⁴⁰Mackail, vol. 1, p. 31. Writing in retrospect to Alexander Gilchrist in 1861, Rossetti likened Woodward to a medieval builder, who loved Art "more dearly than his life, and his life only for its sake", and who desired as much surface space as possible to be filled with decoration. However, deciding Woodward did not look much like a monk, Rossetti added that he was "handsome in a thoughtful but not ascetic way" (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, pp. 405-7).

⁶⁴¹Coventry Patmore, "Walls and Wall Painting at Oxford", *Saturday Review* (26 December 1857), p. 583.

⁶⁴²V. C. Prinsep, "A Chapter from a Painter's Reminiscence: The Oxford Circle: Rossetti, Burne-Jones and William Morris", *Magazine of Art*, N.S. vol. 2 (1904), p. 168. Christian, 1981, pp. 20-23, 29.

⁶⁴³Prinsep, "The Oxford Circle", 1904, p. 172.

⁶⁴⁴Patmore, 1857, p. 584.

⁶⁴⁵Mackail, vol. 1, p. 103. Rossetti to W. B. Scott, c. 1857 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:6).

birthright", its "strength and beauty, its mystical religion and noble chivalry of action" becoming "literally a part of himself".⁶⁴⁶

Burne-Jones' sense of medievalism had first been awakened by his readings of Chaucer, but it was Malory who had stirred his very being, and he was delighted to discover that Rossetti shared his passion. He recalled how at mealtimes they would go to an inn in Cheapside which offered "Dinners for 4d.", and Rossetti would "pull out of his pocket a *Morte d'Arthur* and read bits aloud whilst we ate."⁶⁴⁷ Rossetti maintained Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and the Bible to be "the two greatest books in the world".⁶⁴⁸ This disturbed Frances Horner, who "wished he would not say the Bible, for it savoured to me of my early youth, and my upbringing, and I wondered a little at him, but since Gabriel said it I accepted it and stowed it up as a precept in life."⁶⁴⁹ Although in a letter to W. B. Scott c. 1858 Rossetti was anxious to separate the two, declaring, "For Heaven's sake let the Bible be the Bible & the *Morte d'Arthur* the *Morte d'Arthur* & let modern poets seek & hold their own", in his Oxford mural design Rossetti followed the opposite course.⁶⁵⁰

Coventry Patmore in his review of the murals noted of Rossetti's design *Lancelot's Vision of the Sanct Grael* (fig. 61) that "The Queen while she regards Lancelot has her arms among the branches of an apple-tree - apparently to remind us of man's first temptation".⁶⁵¹ In his design, Rossetti made a subtle use of not only scriptural texts but medieval writings and transformed the theology of these to a secular context. He depicted Guinevere as an Eve-like figure of temptation, standing between Lancelot and the Sanct Grael, and, furthermore, he presented her as a Christ-figure, appearing crucified against the tree, to suggest Love's capacity for redemption. Paul had linked Christ with the Fall in Genesis, stating in 1 *Corinthians* 15.22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive", but it was St Irenaeus who first made the link between the Tree of Knowledge and the Cross at Golgotha.⁶⁵² The two became inextricably connected in the medieval imagination. Middle English poetry and mystery plays often centred on such symmetries within Adam and Christ typology.⁶⁵³ Rossetti

⁶⁴⁶G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, pp. 116-17.

⁶⁴⁷Horner, p. 22. Poulson, p. 79.

⁶⁴⁸Mackail, vol. 1, p. 81. Doughty, 1949, p. 207.

⁶⁴⁹Horner, p. 22.

⁶⁵⁰Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:6.

⁶⁵¹Patmore, 1857, p. 584.

⁶⁵²Newman, 1841, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁵³O. F. Emerson (ed.), *A Middle English Reader* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), pp. 64 ff.

owned an 1836 edition of *The Towneley Mysteries*, in which this idea was given expression:

ffor reson wytt that ther be thre,
A man, a madyn, and a tre,
Man for man, tre for tre,
Maydn for maydn; thus shal it be...⁶⁵⁴

Yet the venture was essentially light hearted, and any 'blasphemies' on Rossetti's part were not seriously made. Rossetti, writing to Gilchrist, styled the project as the "jovial campaign".⁶⁵⁵ Prinsep, writing of this Oxford circle, of which he himself was a part, declared, we "loved our little jokes". He recorded that the group had even "found humour in the Coventry mysteries!"⁶⁵⁶ The Coventry Mystery Plays, written in 1468 and housed in the Cottonian collection of manuscripts at the British Museum, constituted one of three collections of ancient English mystery plays then known to be preserved. The Rossetti clique was probably familiar with the cycle through the Shakespeare Society's publication of the text in 1841.⁶⁵⁷ They may also have been aware of Sharp's analysis of the plays, published in 1825.⁶⁵⁸ The Coventry mystery plays, performed by the Grey Friars of Coventry on the Feast of Corpus Christi, told the story of Christ's redemptive mission, set in the context of the events of *Genesis* and coming Doomsday. The event was meant to be treated with great solemnity. In the prologue God's blessing was evoked for the play and all those who "sytt and sese, / And lystenyth to oure talkyng with sylens style and sad".⁶⁵⁹ Yet Rossetti and his friends had joked about its contents.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁴George England (ed.), *The Towneley Plays* (London: Early English Text Society; Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1897), p. 87. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2. Rossetti was also familiar with the poetry of John Donne, who wrote in "A Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness", "We think that Paradise and Calvary, / Christ's Cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place" (*John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by A. J. Smith (London, 1986), lines 21-22, p. 348).

⁶⁵⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 406.

⁶⁵⁶Prinsep, "Oxford Circle", 1904, p. 167.

⁶⁵⁷J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps (ed.), *Ludus Coventriæ* (London: Shakespeare Society, 1841).

⁶⁵⁸T. Sharp, *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry* (Coventry: Merridew, 1825).

⁶⁵⁹Halliwell-Phillipps, 1841, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁰Prinsep, "Oxford Circle", 1904, p. 167.

W. M. Rossetti declared that his brother was "keenly alive also to the laughable as well as the grave or solemn side of things".⁶⁶¹ According to Doughty, having drawn up the controversial List of Immortals along with Hunt in 1848, Rossetti had "gloated over the dismay their hair-raising heresy would arouse, and this indeed was probably its chief *raison d'être*".⁶⁶² At times he showed little respect for traditional saintly stories and images:

Hunt and myself race at full speed
 Along the Louvre, and yawn from school to school,
 Wishing worn-out those masters known as old...⁶⁶³

A similar lack of reverence is evident in *Fra Pace*, in which the young boy ignores the devotional book open on his lap and leans over to tease the cat, who has irreverently used the cloak of the monk's habit as its bed, and in *St Catherine*, in which the little studio assistant cheekily eats a piece of pie. W. M. Rossetti admitted of the latter, "It is no doubt a quaint invention, not without a twinkle of humour in the treatment".⁶⁶⁴ Smetham too had detected this side to Rossetti, "It is impossible to tell whether, in such inexplicable pictures as 'The Tune of the Seven Towers,' and 'The Marriage of St. George', he is in solemn earnest, and intends to teach mysteries; or whether, out of their wizard shades, his face does not peer in sly laughter at the baffled, inquisitive wonder of the spectator".⁶⁶⁵

It is not surprising that among the books listed in D. G. Rossetti's library in 1866 was an 1821 edition of J. H. Frere's mock epic, *The Monks and the Giants*, which had also been admired by Scott, Byron and W. S. Rose.⁶⁶⁶ Set in the 'glorious' days of King Arthur, the medieval monks, who take the centre stage in the third canto of the poem, were not the idealised monks who had captured the nineteenth century imagination, but those of Chaucerian tradition. Rather than being learned, holy, and ascetic, they were presented as theologically shallow ("Those Monks were poor proficient in divinity"), ill-educated ("There was not, from the Prior to the Cook, / A single soul that car'd about a book"), quarrelsome ("petty malice in that monkish pile, / (The warfare of the cowl and gown)"), greedy ("a wish, throughout those sacred cells, / For bells of larger size, and louder tone"), and gluttonous ("nourish'd by superfluous warmth and

⁶⁶¹W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. xi.

⁶⁶²Doughty, 1949, p. 75.

⁶⁶³Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 70.

⁶⁶⁴W. M. Rossetti, *Designer and Writer*, 1889, p. 31.

⁶⁶⁵J. Smetham, "Modern Sacred Art in England", *London Review*, vol. 18 (1862), p. 65.

⁶⁶⁶Festing, p. 204. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

moisture").⁶⁶⁷ The honour paid to saints was presented as farcical, mere superstition, the monks arbitrarily declaring unexplained incidents to be the result of miraculous interventions by their own patron saint, "It was ascrib'd to causes multifarious, / To saints, as Jerom, George and Januarius". Some accounted for events by "Ave-Maries, and our Lady's Psalter", others "new wax candles plac'd upon the altar".⁶⁶⁸

Despite their youthful humour, the members of the group retained their strong attraction to monastic art, whilst in Oxford and beyond. In Rome in 1860 Prinsep was impressed by "a charming Capuchin monk" with "a passion for painting" whom he met in the studio of the French artist, Edouard Brandon.⁶⁶⁹ Rossetti too found a continued appeal in monasticism. Burne-Jones, speaking in retrospect of the influence Newman had on his life, declared, "In an age of sofas and cushions he taught me to be indifferent to comfort; and in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen".⁶⁷⁰ Around 1860 Rossetti designed a sofa (S.122A; fig. 62), which appeared in his pen and ink drawing *Joseph Accused before Potiphar* (S.122; fig. 63) of 1860, and was exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition. This design, which he regarded as "a master piece", was criticised by the press precisely for its primitive and ascetic qualities.⁶⁷¹

The *Illustrated London News* wrote that the design, "consisting only of rectangular bars is simply absurd" and that it was intended "to rob us of our domestic comfort."⁶⁷² Charles Dickens, singling the sofa out to exemplify what he felt to be the absurdity of the Exhibition's medievalisms in what was an age of progress, described Rossetti's design as, "straight and angular, and stuffed, possibly, with discarded horse-hair shirts."⁶⁷³ It is noteworthy that Rossetti's primary source of inspiration for his drawing, *Joseph Accused before Potiphar*, was a dramatic poem by Charles Wells, a

⁶⁶⁷J. H. Frere, *King Arthur and the Round Table* (London: John Murray, 4th ed., 1821, 1st published 1817-18), III: xv, xxvii, xxxii, xlv, 1.

⁶⁶⁸Frere, IV: lii, liv. W. M. Rossetti owned Mary Pilkington's *Tales of the Hermitage: Written for the Instruction and Amusement of the Rising Generation* (1807).

⁶⁶⁹V. C. Prinsep, "An Artist's Life in Italy in 1860", *Magazine of Art*, N.S. vol. 2 (1904), p. 418.

⁶⁷⁰Horner, p. 120.

⁶⁷¹Rossetti to W. B. Scott, c. April 1862 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7).

⁶⁷²*Illustrated London News* (27 September 1862), p. 351. J. Banham & J. Harris (eds.), *William Morris and the Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 137.

⁶⁷³C. Dickens, "Small-beer Chronicles", *All the Year Round*, vol. 7 (30 August 1862), p. 584.

man who had sympathies with ascetic communities, his daughter having entered a French Convent, and with whom Rossetti was in contact.⁶⁷⁴

Rossetti's "horse-hair" couch was exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition amongst the wares of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., of which Rossetti had become a member in 1860. In the firm's prospectus the members of the group proclaimed themselves, "Artists of reputation", who were seeking to use their talents in the decorative arts.⁶⁷⁵ In this they can be seen to have been responding to Henry Cole's assertion that the condition of the decorative arts would not improve until the professional artist became involved in design, and also to Ruskin, who in his *The Two Paths* (1859) had talked of the "companionship" of the fine and decorative arts. They were also responding to medieval ideas of craftsmanship, community and dignity of labour. Morris was to write in his *Dream of John Ball* (1888), "Forsooth, brothers Fellowship is Heaven and lack of Fellowship is hell", and indeed to an extent the firm was set up to fulfill Morris' dream of a Brotherhood.⁶⁷⁶ As Mackail wrote, "the monastery of his Oxford dreams rose into being as a workshop, and the Brotherhood became a firm registered under the Companies Acts."⁶⁷⁷ However, W. M. Rossetti also saw the influence of his brother as important. He not only pointed out that the firm paralleled the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in revolutionary fervour and size of membership, but claimed that the original idea, which had been Peter Paul Marshall's, had been passed on firstly to Rossetti, who had then been responsible for enthusing others.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁴D. G. Rossetti, "Notes on C. J. Wells" (Ashley Collection (1414), British Library, p. 5). C. Wells, *Joseph and his Brethren* (London: Oxford University Press, 1908, reprint of 1876 ed. (introduction by A. C. Swinburne) with added essay by Theodore Watts-Dunton). Swinburne, lamenting the poem's obscurity, wrote an article on it in 1860, and informed Monckton Milnes that he had made use of "a MS. copy sent to Rossetti by the author" (E. Gosse & T. J. Wise (eds.), *The Letters of Charles Algernon Swinburne*, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1918), vol. 1, p. 8).

⁶⁷⁵C. Harvey & J. Press, *William Morris* (Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 31. G. Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

⁶⁷⁶K. Coman, "The Ancoats Brotherhood", *Chautauquan*, vol. 44 (1907), p. 377. Morris joined Street's architectural office in January 1856, where he may have learned something of Street's earlier plans for a brotherhood (Mackail, vol. 1, pp. 63, 102). Further expressions of this can be discerned in Morris' projects at Merton Abbey and in his "Kelmscott paradise" (Rowley, 1905, p. 149).

⁶⁷⁷Mackail, vol. 1, p. 144.

⁶⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 217.

It was Morris though who put up the money, and it was his house, the Red House, a modern red brick house designed by Philip Webb using elements of the English vernacular, which was initially to have become the centre of this little community. It appropriately had a romantic, whimsical aspect and numerous gothicising details. Also being situated at Upton, near Bexley Heath, Kent, it lay on the route once taken by medieval pilgrims travelling from London to Canterbury.⁶⁷⁹ However, the size and location proved impractical, and the firm established itself in 1861 at Red Lion Square, appropriately where Rossetti had taught at the Working Men's College, and where in 1857 Morris and Burne-Jones had designed their "intensely medieval furniture... tables and chairs like incubi and succubi".⁶⁸⁰ Rossetti wrote excitedly to Norton in 1862, "we really hope to have a shop like Giotto! and a sign on the door!!"⁶⁸¹ This analogy was also made by the press. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which described itself as "the earliest and most consistent advocate for the revival of the arts of the Middle Ages", described the firm as "an association of architects and painters, who have set up a shop in Red Lion Square, in the same manner as the Italian painters, such as Giotto, did in the Middle Ages".⁶⁸² In the summer of 1862 in Italy W. M. Rossetti had not only noted in his diary, "Saw over shops the names Botticelli and F. Lippi", but had commented on the many frescoes of saints by Giotto he had seen in the Campo Santo, including "Young male saint... with head bowed as in adoration" and an "Elderly female saint, in monastic drapery".⁶⁸³

The firm's first real commissions were in the realm of church decoration. The Gothic Revival in church building was at its height and therefore there was great demand for artists and designers to provide stained glass, murals, furniture and other accessories for the interiors of church buildings. Between 1861 and 1864 Rossetti was particularly involved with the production of stained glass. Amongst the cartoons he made were the *Parable of the Vineyard* series for St Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough (1861), *The Sermon on the Mount*, *Censing and Minstreling Angels* and *The Visitation* for All Saints, Selsey (1861), *Abraham's Sacrifice* and *Joseph Lifted from the Pit* for Peterburgh Cathedral (1862), and *Christ in Majesty*, *Daniel*, *Ezekiel*, *Jacob*, *Martha* and *Mary Magdalene* for Bradford Cathedral (1863).⁶⁸⁴ Not all the work Rossetti

⁶⁷⁹A. Vallance, *The Life and Work of William Morris* (London: George Bell, 1897), p. 43.

⁶⁸⁰Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 312.

⁶⁸¹Rossetti to C. E. Norton, 9 January 1862 (W. M. Rossetti, 1899, p. 307).

⁶⁸²W. Burges, "The International Exhibition", *Gentleman's Magazine*, N.S. vol. 12 (June 1862), p. 663; vol. 13 (July 1862), p. 4. Banham & Harris, p. 128.

⁶⁸³W. M. Rossetti, 1903, pp. 10-12.

⁶⁸⁴Sewter, 1975, vol. 1, pp. 66-67; vol. 2, pp. 29, 168, 172, 248. A. C. Sewter, "D. G.

produced for the firm was of an ecclesiastical nature. Yet the spirit of comradeship in which Rossetti and his friends undertook commissions was recognised and its underlying religious influences hinted at. Alongside Brown and Burne-Jones, Rossetti had become involved in 1861 with the decoration of *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet*, and this was likened in the popular press to "the collaboration of Jacopo della Quercia, Ghiberti, and Donatello in the great Font, still in its place, in the Baptistery of S. Giovanni at Siena."⁶⁸⁵

Rossetti's continued intrigue in the notion of artistic community may have influenced his decision to move into Tudor House, 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, in October 1862 following his wife's death. This was the very house which he and Hunt had in November 1849 envisaged turning into a kind of artistic *béguinage*. In 1862 Ruskin, himself desirous of fellowship, had entertained the idea of moving in with Rossetti at Cheyne Walk, but Rossetti had preferred the more bohemian company of Swinburne and George Meredith.⁶⁸⁶ However, Ruskin again approached Rossetti in 1869, hoping to include him in a scheme to establish a community based on the prototype of Sir John Hawkwood's White Company, the idea of which had been gradually evolving in his mind.⁶⁸⁷ "Ruskin called the other day, & seemed to tend towards a grand proposal of banding together for the regeneration of the world", Rossetti wrote to W. B. Scott on 28 September 1869.⁶⁸⁸ However, Rossetti had no desire to become involved in a scheme that retained the religious dimension of monachism. Although Ruskin wrote of his Company of St George, "they are not to be monks or nuns", it was important that the members had a "sincere devotion".⁶⁸⁹ The denomination however did not matter, "Catholic, or Church-of-England, or Presbyterian, I do not in the least care".⁶⁹⁰

Rossetti's Designs for Stained Glass", *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass-Painters*, vol. 13 (1960-61), pp. 419-24. R. G. Grylls, *Portrait of Rossetti* (London: Macdonald, 1964), appendix, pp. 229-33. L. Parry (ed.), *William Morris* (London: Philip Wilson, 1996), pp. 106, 119.

⁶⁸⁵J. P. Seddon, *King René's Honeymoon Cabinet* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1898), p. vii.

⁶⁸⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1903, pp. 12-13. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 228.

⁶⁸⁷Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 27, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 2 (May 1872), pp. 295-96. Sir John Hawkwood was regarded as a kind of Italian Robin Hood (Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 27, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 1 (January 1871), p. 16).

⁶⁸⁸Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7.

⁶⁸⁹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *Abstract of the Objects and Constitution of St George's Guild* (20 December 1877), p. 3.

⁶⁹⁰Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 28, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 4 (January 1874), p. 19; vol. 27, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 2 (May 1872), p. 296.

In fact they were required to make a religious oath, the first article of which followed the Nicene Creed, "I trust in the Living God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things and creatures visible and invisible..."⁶⁹¹ Ruskin also declared that the community was "to be consistently monastic in its principles of labour".⁶⁹² As brothers and sisters together every member was to look after the interests of the others. As the Church taught the principle of tithing, so every member was to give a tenth of what they had to the St George's Fund. It also had a missionary aim, Ruskin envisaging that under the name of the Society of Mont Rose the Guild would "extend its operations over the continent of Europe, and number its members ultimately by myriads."⁶⁹³ Links were certainly made with monasticism. Admirers referred to Ruskin as "St Chrysostom", the fourth century Greek preacher and ascetic who was also called John, and Scudder in his article on St George's Company, likened him to a religious hermit, who isolated himself from the rest of the world in a cave, forecasting doom.⁶⁹⁴ Hilton sees Ruskin as analogous to a Franciscan monk, "a preacher but not a priest, directly in contact with the peasantry and the natural world, wedded to poverty and a lover of Christ more than the Church", and this he saw to have direct bearing on foundation of the St George's Guild.⁶⁹⁵

It is not surprising that Ruskin sought to interest Rossetti in his scheme, as he saw art as a significant aspect of his Utopian community. Placing emphasis on its spiritual character, he considered it important that people should have art in their homes, along with classic works of literature.⁶⁹⁶ Plans to establish a Museum of St George from select objects personally chosen by Ruskin, for the education of those within and without the community, were announced in 1875.⁶⁹⁷ Walkley, near Sheffield was the

⁶⁹¹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 28, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 5 (October 1875), p. 419.

⁶⁹²Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 28, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 4 (January 1874), p. 19.

⁶⁹³Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 27, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 2 (May 1872), p. 296.

⁶⁹⁴This was probably more of a comment on Ruskin's reputation as an outspoken orator than on his sexual abstinence. Rosie la Touche affectionately corrupted St Chrysostom to "St Crumpet" (Horner, pp. 55, 125). W. F. Hook, *An Ecclesiastical Biography*, 8 vols. (London: F. & J. Rivington, 1845), vol. 4, pp. 21-74. H. E. Scudder, "St George's Company", *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 42 (July 1878), p. 48.

⁶⁹⁵Ruskin had been deeply impressed by his visit to Assisi in 1874, and had formed friendships with two brothers of the order of St Francis (T. Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years 1860-1900*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 277).

⁶⁹⁶C. Newall, *Victorian Watercolours* (London: Phaidon, 1992), p. 70.

⁶⁹⁷Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *The Scheme of St George's Museum: Letter from Ruskin* (1875), p. 305). Of the twelve illuminated manuscripts in the collection, three-quarters were originally bought by Ruskin for himself (Dearden, p. 126).

chosen site, being "within easy reach of beautiful natural scenery, and of the best art of English hands".⁶⁹⁸ It was presided over by a former pupil of Ruskin's from the Working Men's College, Henry Swan, who was a specialist in the craft of manuscript illumination, and whom Ruskin had entrusted with engraving plates for his *Modern Painters*. According to T. Hancock, who had joined the priesthood under the influence of Swan, his mentor had become a Quaker having seen in the sect's simplicity a spiritual kinship with medieval monastic art. Indeed, Swan was well known for his asceticism when it came to dietary matters, refusing to eat meat, and for his unworldly attitude to life.⁶⁹⁹

The religious works in the museum were of prime importance. Showing Prince Leopold of Bavaria around the collection in 1879, Ruskin drew special attention to Verrocchio's *Madonna and Child*, as encapsulating his ideas on art, notably in symbolising the reverence due to Christ. He also singled out for examination an intricately illuminated English manuscript of the Vulgate, Carpaccio's *St Ursula and Death of St Jerome*, and the Baskerville and the German Zurich Bibles illustrated by Holbein and Dürer, which Ruskin believed to be "unequalled for perfect illustration of the meaning of the Scriptures".⁷⁰⁰ Ruskin talked of the community itself creating its own works of art, and suggested that these should be dedicated to God, likening the people to "rude Magi, presenting at such Nativity gifts of gold and frankincense."⁷⁰¹

Indeed, Ruskin gathered around him a group of enthusiastic young artists, including George Allen, John W. Bunney, Arthur Burgess, William Hackstoun, Charles Fairfax Murray, T. M. Rooke and Arthur Severn, an action which Cook and Wedderburn specifically interpreted as a realisation of his 1855 plans for a brotherhood of artists.⁷⁰² Ruskin himself made the link, expressing in January 1874 his disappointment at the lack

⁶⁹⁸It was envisaged that it would be the first of several such museums, and indeed when the collection outgrew its modest accomodation in Walkley, a new building was planned in Sheffield and another on Guild land in Bewdley, Worcester (Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *General Statement Explaining the Nature and Purposes of St George's Guild* (1882), p. 52; *Reports, Catalogues, and Other Papers*, p. xlv).

⁶⁹⁹"The 'Faithful Steward' of the Ruskin Museum (by One who Knew Him)", *Pall Mall Gazette* (2 April 1889), p. 2. Rev. T. Hancock, "Henry Swan, the Quaker: Some Personal Reminiscences of Mr Ruskin's 'Curator'" *Pall Mall Gazette* (3 April 1889), p. 6. Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *Reports, Catalogues, and Other Papers*, pp. xli-xliv.

⁷⁰⁰Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, "Visit of Prince Leopold to the Walkley Museum" (1879), pp. 311-12.

⁷⁰¹Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 27, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 1 (May 1871), pp. 96-97. Scudder, p. 41.

⁷⁰²Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 30, *Reports, Catalogues, and Other Papers*, pp. lv-lix.

of support he had received from the Working Men's College, where he had first shared his vision of an artistic fellowship.⁷⁰³ William Ward, who had been specifically approached about the scheme in 1855, was once again drawn in. Rossetti too was considered to be a potential participant in the St George project. However, Rossetti, whilst continuing to see deep spiritual significance in art, no longer regarded it specifically as functioning in relation to a Christian God. Neither did he comply with Ruskin's humanitarian aims. "I told him at once that any individual *I* came near was sure to be the worse for it", he declared to Scott.⁷⁰⁴

Rossetti may not have been attracted to Ruskin's scheme, but the idea of some kind of artistic community had not lost its appeal, and he quickly scribbled down in one of his notebooks of the 70s the phrase, "The Art Fellowship".⁷⁰⁵ He was friendly in the 70s with the philanthropist Charles Rowley, who was to found the Ancoats Brotherhood in Manchester later in that decade.⁷⁰⁶ Under the pseudonym, Roland Gilderoy, Rowley wrote reviews of the year's art, *The Pictures of the Year: Notes on the Academy, the Grosvenor, and other exhibitions*, in 1877 and 1878, in which he particularly aligned himself with the group around Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Brown, praising their work which he felt went against the "flimsy popular art of the day".⁷⁰⁷ In 1875 he bought Brown's *Cordelia's Portion*, and in 1876 he commissioned *Christ and Peter* and in 1877 *Milton and Cromwell*.⁷⁰⁸ In 1885 he had Brown paint his portrait.⁷⁰⁹ W. M. Rossetti described him as having "a quick eye for what is good in art and literature". The Ancoats Brotherhood was founded with aim of bringing this knowledge of art and culture to the working classes.

⁷⁰³Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 28, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 4 (January 1874), p. 25.

⁷⁰⁴Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7.

⁷⁰⁵D. G. Rossetti notebook, 1871-81 (Ashley Collection, British Library, no. 3, p. 5). See letter of c. 1866 to Cayley for further use of the term "good fellowship" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:8).

⁷⁰⁶Rowley, 1911, p. 211. A. C. Faxon, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Photography: Some Newly-Discovered Correspondence", *Apollo*, vol. 140 (July 1994), p. 26.

⁷⁰⁷Hueffer, 1896, pp. 316-17. Roland Gilderoy, *The Pictures of the Year: Notes on the Academy, the Grosvenor, and other exhibitions* (London, 1877, microfilm, Bodleian Library, Oxford), and *The Pictures of the Year...* (Manchester, 1878, microfilm, Bodleian Library, Oxford). Rowley's *Fifty Years of Work without Wages* (1911) included a chapter on "The Rossettis". W. M. Rossetti obtained a copy for his personal library (List of books in the personal library of W. M. Rossetti, 1897, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

⁷⁰⁸Hueffer, 1896, pp. 302, 307, 315-16.

⁷⁰⁹Rowley, 1911, frontispiece.

Rowley set about organising art exhibitions in Manchester and compiled three illustrated and beautifully printed anthologies of English lyrics in an attempt to interest the ordinary working people of Manchester in poetry and art.⁷¹⁰ One of the poetry anthologies, *A Treasury for the Young of All Ages*, he distributed to teachers and pupils in local schools.⁷¹¹ This desire that the arts should be enjoyed by the masses was also the motivation behind his twelve year membership of the Free Libraries Committee, the production of high standard, yet affordable books by the Ancoats Brotherhood, and his organisation of local reading and discussion groups.⁷¹² He drafted in men such as William Morris, Ford Madox Brown and Walter Crane, who were to give lectures on Sunday afternoons, and had Burne-Jones contribute a series of studies to the Brotherhood's yearly pamphlet.⁷¹³

Although he stressed that the Ancoats Brotherhood was not a "Settlement", and although he had in 1877 commissioned a painting with a particularly Protestant subject from Brown, *Milton and Cromwell*, Rowley, whom Walter Crane styled "Sanctus Goblinus" (fig. 64), was attracted to monachism on a number of levels.⁷¹⁴ Believing that Christianity "still remains the greatest moral and social force of the West", he admired the equality, lack of material concern and sense of community to be found in monastic establishments.⁷¹⁵ He firmly believed that "You must live among folk if you are to do them and yourself any good".⁷¹⁶ He also admired the spiritual and physical beauty of the monastic world. Visiting Amalfi, he stayed in its monastery, which was hewn out of the cliffs above the sea. He described the place as "enchanting" and a "shrine of beauty". He and his travelling companions were so enraptured by the community of brothers that they were tempted "to remain all our time in the old monastery there... What a place it is!"⁷¹⁷ Rowley also visited the Cappucine monastery in Altdorf, where he was much impressed by the varied talents and industry of the "robust brothers".⁷¹⁸ The Benedictine Monastery in Venice, where the monks

⁷¹⁰Coman, pp. 370. Rowley wrote the introduction for the catalogue of a 1905 Burne-Jones exhibition in Manchester (*Drawings by the Late Sir E. Burne-Jones* (Manchester: Municipal School of Art, 1905)).

⁷¹¹C. Rowley (ed.), *A Treasury for the Young of All Ages* (Manchester: Sheratt & Hughes, 1903). Rowley, 1905, p. 150.

⁷¹²Rowley, 1905, pp. 151-52. Coman, p. 373. C. Rowley, *Fifty Years of Ancoats* (privately printed, 1899).

⁷¹³Coman, pp. 372-73. Rowley, 1905, p. 185. Mackail, vol. 2, p. 114.

⁷¹⁴Rowley, 1911, pp. 166-67. Coman, p. 374.

⁷¹⁵Rowley, 1905, pp. 174, 181.

⁷¹⁶Rowley, 1911, p. 49.

⁷¹⁷Rowley, 1905, p. 76.

⁷¹⁸Rowley, 1905, p. 86.

practised printing and bookbinding, he called "a veritable paradise", a place of "religious peace and profound beauty".⁷¹⁹

Rowley's admiration for such establishments manifested itself in his writings, which took on much of the language of monasticism, albeit applied to secular contexts. For example, he declared in an essay on "William Tell and Altdorf" that he had, "a weakness for making pilgrimages to the shrines of heroes", his "saints".⁷²⁰ His establishment of the Ancoats Brotherhood could be seen along similar lines, as an appropriation of elements of monastic existence, although it was not a specifically religious organisation. The Committee reported that "We have among our members representatives of all creeds and all beliefs, religious, social and political. We have Christians, and Jews, Agnostics and Freethinkers, Socialists and so-called Anarchists, Tories and Radicals".⁷²¹ Yet Rowley did invite a number of prestigious Churchmen to Ancoats to speak, including Dean Cowie, Dr Stubbs - Dean of Ely and then Bishop of Truro, Archdeacon Wilson, Canon Hicks, Canon Rawnsley, and Canon Gorton.⁷²² A design E. Gertrude Thomson made for the Ancoats Brotherhood, showing St George killing the Dragon, declared "The Kingdom of God is Within You - Death Rather than False Faith" (fig. 65).⁷²³ Similarly in a design by Crane, the motto was a specifically Christian one, "Peace on Earth, Good Will Towards Men" (fig. 66).⁷²⁴ Crane suggested Rowley's dual concern for religion and social justice in a cartoon in which he drew him as the "RIGHT REV DR C. ROW(LIE) D.D. CANT - U-AR. ARCHB.", wearing exaggerated ecclesiastical vestments, and holding in his left hand an Education Bill (fig. 67).⁷²⁵

W. M. Rossetti praised the establishment of the Ancoats Brotherhood as a "splendid foundation", and wrote, "Soon we were all very intimate with Mr Rowley and his wife."⁷²⁶ In fact Rowley was known to stay with W. M. Rossetti when he was in London, W. M. Rossetti recognising him as "a very good fellow" and "a sincere

⁷¹⁹Rowley, 1905, pp. 96-98.

⁷²⁰Rowley, 1905, pp. 84-85.

⁷²¹Committee Report, quoted in Coman, p. 376. One of Rowley's good friends, Margaret Noble, had joined a religious order in India. She did not give up her Christianity, but lived in sympathy with the Indian women, and became known as Sister Nivedita (Rowley, 1911, p. 187).

⁷²²Rowley, 1911, p. 199.

⁷²³Rowley, 1911, p. 207.

⁷²⁴Luke 2.14. Rowley, 1911, p. 194.

⁷²⁵Rowley, 1911, p. 242. W. M. Rossetti came to own a copy of Crane's *The Socialist Ideal in Art* (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

⁷²⁶W. M. Rossetti, vol. 2, 1906, p. 493.

admirer of Gabriel".⁷²⁷ In a letter of autumn 1875 to Brown, D. G. Rossetti mentioned Rowley having paid him a visit.⁷²⁸ By 1878 Rowley was a regular guest, and in his letters had dropped the formal "Sir" for "Rossetti".⁷²⁹ Rowley was an influential figure for Rossetti. He managed to persuade Rossetti to have his chalk drawing *Silence* (S.214), which Rowley had bought from Rossetti in 1876 for £210, reproduced by the English Picture Publishing Company, despite the fact that Rossetti had written to him on 27 April 1876, "It would not suit me, after so many years of non-exhibition, to allow the publication of work of mine in any form".⁷³⁰ On 9 November 1877 Rowley wrote to Rossetti, "I have asked the Autotype Co to send you a copy of the *Silence*. I hope you will agree with all of us that it comes out splendidly." He added rather boldly, "When are we to see an Exhibition of your works - Could I not arrange this for you & make it the Event of the next London Season?"⁷³¹

When Rossetti was trying to find a buyer for his large *Dante's Dream* (S.81 R.1), it was Rowley who approached the Chairman of Manchester Art Gallery on behalf of the artist.⁷³² Rowley was also involved with making frames for Rossetti, and there appears to have been a certain camaraderie between the two men: "We had great fun over these orders," Rowley recalled, adding, "though he took the question of workmanship in the frame as seriously as in the canvas".⁷³³ Rossetti was well informed concerning the Ancoats Brotherhood. Rowley wrote to him on 2 February 1878, "I sent you to-day a pamphlet describing a new movement I am very busy with just now. It is an attempt to show what may be done for the general public in the way of showing them nothing but what is good in Music, Art or Literature... When you have read the scheme I should very much like a word of encouragement from you for our Committee".⁷³⁴

⁷²⁷W. M. Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 13 October 1882 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:5).

⁷²⁸Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:2.

⁷²⁹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:3, 3:18.

⁷³⁰Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 1:16. Surtees, 1971, p. 122.

⁷³¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:18.

⁷³²Rowley, 1911, p. 114.

⁷³³Rowley, 1911, p. 114.

⁷³⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:18. Rowley continued to send W. M. Rossetti literature from the Ancoats Brotherhood subsequent to Rossetti's death. Included in W. M. Rossetti's library were an Ancoats Brotherhood Programme (no. 183), and a 2-volumed report of the Ancoats Committee (no. 195), both dating from 1907-11 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

Interestingly, Rossetti continued to seek fellowship amongst the religious. In 1875 Rossetti re-established links with Canon Richard Watson Dixon, a distinguished clergyman and church historian, who had been part of Rossetti's Oxford group of the 1850s and who had in 1861 published a volume of poetry entitled *Christ's Company and other Poems*, which included "A Nun's Story" and "A Monk's Story".⁷³⁵ Rossetti not only encouraged Dixon in his poetic efforts with effusive praise, but wrote in 1881 to Hall Caine, who was preparing for publication a poetry anthology entitled *Sonnets of Three Centuries*, strongly recommending that Caine include an example from the work of Dixon. He stated his own intention "to write something about him in some quarter when I can", and lent him *Christ's Company* as well as Dixon's *Historical Odes and Other Poems* (1864).⁷³⁶

But, in a firmly secular context, around 1870 Rossetti was concerned with developing and maintaining a sense of community within two specific groups. He wrote to W. B. Scott on 10 August 1870 concerning what he termed "the Penkill conclave". This group, consisting of W. B. Scott, Alice Boyd and Alicia Losh of Ravenside, was "something in which I had a vested interest", Rossetti declared.⁷³⁷ This was partly on a mercenary level, Losh meeting Rossetti's need for funds, but more than this, it provided a sense of fellowship at a time of general discouragement, not least because of the increasing problems he was having with his eyes. Rossetti stayed at Penkill Castle, Ayrshire, the ancestral home of Boyd, in the late summer and autumn of 1868 and 1869. There he slept late, took long walks in the castle grounds, and in the evening joined the others playing whist and reading aloud.⁷³⁸ Scott, Boyd and Losh "did a great deal to cheer and divert Rossetti", wrote his brother.⁷³⁹ He announced that Penkill was "simply paradise", with "joy and mystery in all its corners", and attempted to entice Brown to join the "jolly" company. "Now do come at once", he

⁷³⁵R. W. Dixon, *Christ's Company and Other Poems* (London: Smith & Elder, 1861), pp. 105-9. Dixon was to go on to write a six-volumed *History of the Church of England From the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction* (London: George Routledge, 1878). A. J. Sambrook, "Notes et Documents: D. G. Rossetti and R. W. Dixon", *Études Anglaises*, vol. 14 (October-December 1961), p. 331.

⁷³⁶T. Hall Caine, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Stock, 1882), p. 258. Sambrook, 1961, p. 337.

⁷³⁷Rossetti to W. B. Scott, 10 August 1870 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7).

⁷³⁸Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 6 October 1868 (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 198).

⁷³⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 265-67.

declared with mock severity.⁷⁴⁰ In a more serious vein, he wrote to Frederick Shields declaring that at Penkill he had found "peace, friendship, and art".⁷⁴¹

In London, Rossetti envisaged the establishment of a second conclave. He wrote to Christina of his plans to gather together "a little knot of congenial writers", under the publisher F. S. Ellis of King Street, Covent Garden, a man whom William Michael described as "of very good literary taste".⁷⁴² Rossetti persuaded Christina to leave Macmillan for Ellis, and convinced Swinburne to leave Hotten.⁷⁴³ Morris and Scott, who were already with Ellis, expanded the company. Unlike Rowley or Ruskin, Rossetti was not motivated by socialist thinking.⁷⁴⁴ Rossetti calculated that together the group of writers could form a stronger entity to stand against the criticism he was anticipating. In a like manner he sought to pre-empt antagonism by not advertising his new book, *Poems*, which was published that year, until just before its appearance, by which time favourable views could be written and ready. Morris, Swinburne and John Westland Marston were engaged to write laudatory papers in the *Academy*, *Fortnightly Review* and *Athenaeum*.⁷⁴⁵ Rossetti's many letters to Ellis concerning the publication show him to have been highly anxious about their reception. However, behind Rossetti's manoeuvres was also the ubiquitous idea of a brotherhood.

On 3 May 1870, following Swinburne's article in the *Fortnightly*, Rossetti wrote to his friend thanking him for his "brotherly review".⁷⁴⁶ Rossetti was certainly thinking on a chivalric as well as a monastic model. "This might be managed if a few good men were in the field at the outset", he wrote to Ellis on 14 February 1870.⁷⁴⁷ Rossetti was familiar with the history of the Knights Templars. W. M. Rossetti owned Thomas

⁷⁴⁰Rossetti to Brown, 7 October 1868 (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 668).

⁷⁴¹Rossetti to Frederic Shields, 27 August 1869 (Mills, p. 127).

⁷⁴²Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7. Packer, p. 273. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 276.

⁷⁴³Doughty, 1928, p. xxx.

⁷⁴⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1905, pp. 13-14. Rossetti did not subscribe to socialism, although in 1863 he had contributed to a volume sold in aid of the sufferers of the cotton famine which had been brought on by the American Civil War (Isa Craig (ed.), *Poems: an Offering to Lancashire* (London: Victoria Press, 1863)). He also came to possess a two-volumed *London Labour and London Poor* (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 29, lot 615). In a letter to F. M. Brown, dated 4 February 1873, Rossetti wrote, "you dont [sic] say whether you saw the wonderful Almshouses in the Nile End Road close by. It is a pity if you missed them" (D. G. Rossetti Coll., Princeton, 1:AM18430).

⁷⁴⁵Doughty, 1928, pp. 5, 17.

⁷⁴⁶Transcript in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:42.

⁷⁴⁷Doughty, 1928, p. 5.

Fuller's 1640 *History of the Holy War* and an 1805 edition of *Mémoires Historiques sur les Templiers*.⁷⁴⁸ He quoted a passage from T. Speght's *Chaucer's Life* to Brown in 1876 which stated Chaucer and Gower to have been "of the Inner Temple".⁷⁴⁹ Rossetti had seen the formation of the PRB as something of a religious crusade, writing "So now the whole Round Table is dissolved!" at the break up of the PRB.⁷⁵⁰ However, ultimately Rossetti was concerned about *artistic* fellowship. When Ellis raised questions about the suitability of a number of Swinburne's poems for publication, it was Rossetti who, anxious that the group should stick together, attempted to smooth things out, as "it wd be greatly to be regretted if the little group of authors were broken up by his secession."⁷⁵¹

In 1871 Whistler showed his ground-breaking *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* (1871; YMSM.101) to a close circle of friends, amongst whom was Rossetti.⁷⁵² This very year Whistler chose to publish his *Thames Set* through Ellis. The influence of Rossetti in this decision can only be a subject of speculation. However, it is not unlikely that Rossetti had encouraged the younger artist in that direction, in order to bolster his 'fellowship' of artists. From March 1863, when Whistler had moved to 7 Lindsey Row, Chelsea, the two men had seen each other nearly every day, and their closeness was commented on in that year by Du Maurier, who described them as forming their own little "Society".⁷⁵³

Rossetti went out of his way for the young artist, urging James Leathart in December 1863 to buy *Wapping* (1861; YMSM.35), and in the following year taking into his studio Whistler's *La Princesse du pays de la porcelain* (1864; YMSM.50) in order to show to a prospective client.⁷⁵⁴ This particular client did not purchase *La Princesse*, rather it came into the hands of Frederick Leyland, but Whistler was to later claim that

⁷⁴⁸Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁷⁴⁹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1405.

⁷⁵⁰Rossetti to C. G. Rossetti, 8 November 1853 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:6; Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 163). "PRB Round Table: A New View of the Knights: Critic in Search of a Tragedy", *Times Literary Supplement* (25 April 1942), pp. 210, 214. W. Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream* (London: Reprint Society, 1943).

⁷⁵¹Doughty, 1928, p. 56. It is worth noting that Ellis had a personal interest in the medieval era, in 1880 and 1883 writing monographs on *The Pembroke Book of Hours* and *The Hours of Albert Brandenburg* respectively (Doughty, 1928, p. xv).

⁷⁵²A. M. Young, M. F. MacDonald, R. Spencer & H. Miles, *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 59-60.

⁷⁵³George Du Maurier to Thomas Armstrong, 11 October 1863 (L. Merrill, *The Peacock Room* (Yale University Press, 1998), p. 51).

⁷⁵⁴Young, MacDonald, Spencer & Miles, pp. 14, 26.

even this was due to the persuasive efforts of Rossetti.⁷⁵⁵ When Whistler was expelled from the Burlington Arts Club in December 1867 as a result of a dispute with his brother-in-law, Seymour Haden, Rossetti and his brother left in support.⁷⁵⁶ At the Whistler-Ruskin trial in 1878 Rossetti wrote supportively of Whistler, declaring that "he shone in the box", in contrast to "the fool of an Attorney-General".⁷⁵⁷ W. M. Rossetti's comment that his brother had found Whistler "eminently endowed with good-fellowship" only strengthens the suggestion that he had seen Whistler as potential member of an artistic brotherhood.⁷⁵⁸ Indeed, this phrase "good-fellowship" reappears in W. M. Rossetti's assessment of his brother's relationship with Whistler from 1862 to 1872.⁷⁵⁹

Rossetti was well known for the encouragement and financial aid which he bestowed on his fellow artists, particularly on the young and struggling, and this was a pertinent part of his belief in an artistic brotherhood. In the context of this thesis, the most interesting relationships Rossetti cultivated were with two artists, one seven years older, the other five years younger, James Smetham and Frederic Shields respectively. Both were devout, religious men. Smetham had known of Rossetti since 1843 while at Cary's Academy, but Rossetti did not meet him until 1854 at the Working Men's College.⁷⁶⁰ In 1860 Rossetti was among the proposed subscribers to Smetham's *Studies from an Artist's Sketchbook*, which was published by Williams and Lloyd in 1861-62.⁷⁶¹ "I want the society of those who can perceive and sympathise with my aims", Smetham had declared in 1850.⁷⁶² In 1863 Rossetti invited him to spend Wednesday afternoons painting in his studio, and in the evening to socialise with his friends.⁷⁶³ In a letter to Rossetti, dated 12 December 1865, Smetham declared, "Professionally I should be very glad of a niche in the charming art-circle where you are fixed. For want of it - since 1855 - life has been a scramble instead of a journey... I look on that circle of things & thoughts as the only one that I could be in the least allured by".⁷⁶⁴ Smetham considered Rossetti to have "many things in the same line as

⁷⁵⁵Whistler to unknown newspaper editor [May 1892?] (Glasgow University Library, Whistler Collection, X24).

⁷⁵⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 256. Young, MacDonald, Spencer & Miles, p. lxi.

⁷⁵⁷Rossetti to Shields, November 1878 (Mills, p. 236).

⁷⁵⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 2, p. 316.

⁷⁵⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 237.

⁷⁶⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 193. S. Smetham & W. Davies, pp. 5, 12, 26.

⁷⁶¹Casteras, 1995, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁶²S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 16.

⁷⁶³S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 27. Casteras, 1995, p. 24.

⁷⁶⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:24.

myself which makes me thankful for some awakening intercourse on Art".⁷⁶⁵

Smetham's *The Knight's Bridal* (fig. 68) of 1865, with its depiction of monks, incense and ritual, and its subject, a vow of celibacy, was "clearly inspired by Rossetti's 'chivalric' watercolours", and indirectly perhaps by his desire for brotherhood.⁷⁶⁶

Smetham, who continued to work in Rossetti's studio until 1868, often quoted Scripture and sermonised to his friend, as he explained, "I only see two ways of intercourse - utter restraint or utter freedom". He firmly stated, "I will believe the Bible till some one brings me something more plausible - & yet my belief in the Bible has got past being conditional - I have tasted the 'power' & the 'life' of it & *know* it to be true".⁷⁶⁷ Rossetti in no way agreed with Smetham's religious standpoint. He declared, "art must be its own comforter". Yet he valued their friendship. For him, "No purer or sweeter or more loving soul than his has ever been among us".⁷⁶⁸ Further, he regarded Smetham as possessing, "high poetic powers", and was prepared to go to any lengths for his 'brother'.⁷⁶⁹

In 1864 Rossetti introduced him to the art dealer Gambart.⁷⁷⁰ In 1869 he offered to take Smetham's newly finished oil painting *Hymn of the Lord's Supper*, considered by the latter to be his best work, into his studio in order to be seen by visitors, and he also had a word with Frederic Leighton to ensure its favourable hanging at the R.A.⁷⁷¹ In the late 1870s when Smetham became ill and could not work, Rossetti showed considerable kindness to his wife, Sarah Smetham, and made great efforts to secure buyers for Smetham's paintings and raise funds. He managed to persuade Vernon Lushington to buy *Morning* for 65 guineas and William Cowper-Temple to purchase *Peter's Protestation* for £100. Further patrons were sought in Aglaia Coronio, Constantine Ionides, Edward Poynter, L. P. Valpy and William Graham.⁷⁷² Rossetti also worked on some of Smetham's unfinished canvases in order that these too might find buyers.⁷⁷³ Shields declared to him after fresh attempts in 1879, "It is so

⁷⁶⁵Smetham to Rossetti, 8 December 1865 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:24).

⁷⁶⁶Gere, 1994, p. 138.

⁷⁶⁷Smetham to Rossetti, 12 December 1865 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:24).

⁷⁶⁸Rossetti to Anne Gilchrist, 25 March 1863 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:15).

⁷⁶⁹Rossetti to Aglaia Coronio, 29 February 1878 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:9).

⁷⁷⁰Rossetti to Smetham, 11 November 1864 (V&A, no. 3). Casteras, 1995, p. 153.

⁷⁷¹Rossetti to Smetham [1869] (V&A, no. 17). Casteras, 1995, pp. 141-44.

⁷⁷²Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, pp. 1555-56. Casteras, 1995, p. 83.

⁷⁷³Mills, pp. 227-28.

perseveringly hopeful on your part to make a new effort for the disposal of some of Smetham's pictures".⁷⁷⁴

Like Smetham, Shields was known for his piety, and also had a leaning towards asceticism. Mills writes of his "rigid self-denial".⁷⁷⁵ When Shields left Manchester in 1874 for London, it was in order to devote himself to the painting of sacred subjects. "He was fully possessed with the idea that God had given him his rare gift to be devoted to that alone", wrote Rowley, who was his close friend.⁷⁷⁶ Rossetti, first met Shields in May 1864 at a sale of Hunt's paintings and sketches at Christie's. That winter Rossetti attempted to persuade his brother to write a favourable review of Shields' *Pilgrim's Progress* designs in the *Reader*. He also endeavoured to draw Shields into the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Neither of these projects came to fruition, but Rossetti did not give up in his attempts to advance the career of his fellow.⁷⁷⁷ In 1869 he sought to interest William Graham in Shields' work.⁷⁷⁸ He selflessly offered money to the struggling artist whenever his own works were selling well, and equally generously shared his artistic knowledge.⁷⁷⁹ Shields became one of Rossetti's closest friends.⁷⁸⁰

However, the two did not concur on matters of religion. This Brown recognised, writing to Shields, "there is a radical difference in your natures".⁷⁸¹ Yet they shared a desire to be removed from the pressures of hectic London social life, preferring quieter artistic companionship. Sharp linked the two as men pre-eminently following "in the footsteps of Newman, Pusey and Keble".⁷⁸² Mills likened Shields to a monk, who "would have been more suitably environed by a peaceful hermit's cell, where, like Fra Angelico, he could have spent his days in painting to the glory of God".⁷⁸³ In 1867 Shields moved to Cornbrook Park, Manchester, in an attempt to attain to the peaceful life he desired. Rossetti expressed a degree of envy:

I congratulate you supremely on having attained at last to

⁷⁷⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:20.

⁷⁷⁵Mills, p. 43. Casteras, 1995, p. 79.

⁷⁷⁶Rowley, 1911, p. 84.

⁷⁷⁷Rossetti to Shields, 11 January 1865 (Mills, pp. 97-98).

⁷⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 478. Mills, pp. 130-31.

⁷⁷⁹Mills, pp. 128-29, 223.

⁷⁸⁰At Rossetti's death Shields revealed that he had regularly prayed for his friend (Shields to F. M. L. Rossetti, 10 April 1882, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:16).

⁷⁸¹Mills, pp. 79, 135.

⁷⁸²W. Sharp, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁸³Mills, p. 277.

complete desolation as regards social propinquity. I suppose from what you say that you can even take good walks without seeing or hearing your kind. Nothing could suit me better, and I still hope to be an outcast from humanity one of these days.⁷⁸⁴

However, Rossetti's letters of the 1860s to Frederic Shields show that he valued the opportunity for the two artists to compare works, and in 1870 he invited Shields to work in his studio. This arrangement, which lasted until 1880, meant that the two could often be found working side by side, a secular equivalent to a monastic brethren in a *scriptorium*.⁷⁸⁵

Writing of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1895, W. M. Rossetti declared, "I do not exaggerate in saying that every member of the fraternity was just as much intent upon furthering the advance and promoting the interests of his 'Brothers' as his own."⁷⁸⁶

Although Rossetti declared to Hall Caine in 1880 of the PRB that "the banding together under that title was all a joke", he had in no way renounced the group's desire for artistic fellowship, nor its self-sacrificing spirit, both of which carried faint suggestions of a monastic past.⁷⁸⁷ Frances Horner, who as a girl would excitedly accompany her father to Rossetti's studio at Cheyne Walk on Saturday afternoons, remembered Tudor House as being a "mysterious romantic house", and Rossetti as receiving them "in slippers, and a sort of dressing-gown". This was no doubt a reflection of the rather bohemian lifestyle of the artist, but it also recalls the quasi-monastic descriptions of Overbeck in his studio.⁷⁸⁸ Nevertheless, despite Rossetti's many friendships with persons of strong religious persuasions and his attraction to elements of monasticism, it was artistic rather than spiritual nourishment that he sought and which was the defining feature of his lifelong search for fellowship.

⁷⁸⁴Rossetti to Shields, 16 November 1867 (Mills, p. 114).

⁷⁸⁵Mills, pp. 83, 116, 141, 211, 240-41, 263. W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 345.

⁷⁸⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 133.

⁷⁸⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 135.

⁷⁸⁸Horner, pp. 8, 9.

Part 2: Mystical Marriage

Ch. 1: Heavenly Bridegroom

Apart from the Brotherhood aspect of monachism, Rossetti had been interested since the beginning of his career in the merging of spiritual and sensual experience in Catholic legend, as is evidenced in his early paintings, poems and prose tales. In "Hand and Soul" he had described Chiaro's heavenly vision in strangely physical and amorous terms. The apparition, which appeared to have been from God, declared to Chiaro, "What He hath set in thine heart to do, that do thou... it is this sacrifice that He asketh of thee, and His flame is upon it for a sign." Yet the whole episode carried a definite sexual undercurrent. Rossetti described the "fair woman" of the vision as being one with the painter, an entity who was "as much with him as his breath". Rossetti viewed hair as being directly connected with sexuality, and he wrote of the vision that "he knew her hair to be the golden veil through which he beheld his dreams." More than this the vision "came to him, and cast her hair over him".⁷⁸⁹ She directed Chiaro to "paint me thus, as I am, to know me". To 'know' in Biblical terms could mean to have a sexual encounter. We are told of Mary in *Matthew* 1.25 that Joseph "knew her not till she had brought forth her first born son". Rossetti wrote that Chiaro was "abashed" at the vision's "intimate presence". Having finished painting the vision, Chiaro fell asleep and "the beautiful woman came to him, and sat at his head, gazing, and quieted his sleep with her voice."⁷⁹⁰

In "Ave", "Mary's Girlhood" and *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* Rossetti displayed an intrigue with the idea of Mary as the wife of God. In "Ave" the Annunciation was described in sexual terms, Mary dreaming of her divine lover whilst in her bed. To emphasise this Rossetti drew on the amorous language of the *Song of Songs*:

To whose white bed had come the dream
That He was thine and thou wast His
Who feeds among the field-lilies.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁹D. Sonstroem, *Rossetti and the Fair Lady* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1970). R. V. M. Allen, *The Femme Fatale* (New York: Troy, 1983); "'One Strangling Golden Hair'", *Art Bulletin* (June 1984), pp. 285-94.

⁷⁹⁰*Germ*, January 1850, pp. 29-32.

⁷⁹¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 245.

This idea he continued in his 1855 watercolour, *The Annunciation* (S.69; fig. 69), in which he depicted Mary bathing in a stream banked by lilies, and to which he appended a paraphrase of the texts *Song of Songs* 2.16 and *Luke* 1.28, "My Beloved is mine and I am his: He feedeth among the lilies. Hail thou art highly favoured; blessed art thou among women" to the frame.⁷⁹² In "Mary's Girlhood" as in "Ave" Rossetti had the Annunciation take place in bed:

She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all, - yet wept until sunshine, and felt awed:
Because the fulness of the time was come.⁷⁹³

Again in *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* it was whilst the Virgin was in "her white bed" that Rossetti had the angel Gabriel appear. W. M. Rossetti recorded in the PRB Journal, "The Virgin is to be in bed, but without any bedclothes on... The picture, and its companion of the Virgin's Death, will be almost entirely white."⁷⁹⁴ This unconventional treatment attested to Rossetti's early concern for the meeting of the secular and the sacred, of physical and spiritual passion.

St Bernard of Clairvaux had claimed that at Gabriel's entrance Mary had been studying *Isaiah* 7.14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive..."⁷⁹⁵ Therefore, the Madonna Annunciate was traditionally depicted on her knees before a *prie-dieu* either praying or reading from a prayer book or the Holy Scriptures in order to emphasise her piety, as indeed Rossetti showed her in a pen and ink drawing of c. 1852 (S.688; fig. 70). At times however the Virgin was shown seated on a throne or in an enclosed rose garden.⁷⁹⁶ Ruskin declared that Rossetti's painting "differs from every previous

⁷⁹²Surtees, 1971, p. 33. This watercolour bears witness to Rossetti's knowledge of Catholic legend. In the apocryphal *Book of James*, it was related how Mary, being one of the seven virgins of the House of David chosen to make a veil for the temple, was required to fetch some water: "And she took the pitcher and went forth to fill it with water: and lo a voice saying: Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (*Book of James*, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 43). Rossetti wrote in a footnote to "Ave" that he had made use of "A Church legend of the Blessed Virgin's death" (W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 246). W. M. Rossetti owned Howe's 1820 Apocryphal New Testament, and an 1841 edition of the Bible with Apocrypha (Angeli-Dennis Coll. U.B.C., 26:14). In February 1878 Rossetti wrote to his brother asking again to borrow his Latin Bible (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1551).

⁷⁹³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 353.

⁷⁹⁴Fredeman, 1975, p. 29.

⁷⁹⁵A. Jameson, *Legends of the Madonna* (London: Longmans & Green, 1857, 2nd ed., 1st publ. 1852), p. 181.

⁷⁹⁶Jameson, 1857, p. 172. E. Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game* (London: Gollancz, 1969), pp. 105 ff.

conception of the scene known to me, in representing the angel as waking the Virgin from sleep."⁷⁹⁷ Perhaps Rossetti wished to create a visual analogy with the second scene he proposed treating, the Virgin's Death. Yet there is a definite sexual insinuation in *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* The angel is visibly naked under his robe and he points the lily at the Virgin's womb suggesting her impregnation.

Rossetti did a very similar thing in his more blatantly sexual image, *Sir Lancelot in the Queen's Chamber* (S.95; fig. 71) of 1857, in which Lancelot standing before an unmade bed points his sword at the swooning Guinevere. In a similar manner in "The Blessed Damozel" of 1847 Rossetti described the damozel in heaven, a figure modelled on the Virgin Mary, as a sensuous figure whose bosom "made / The bar she leaned on warm."⁷⁹⁸ H. Buxton Forman writing in *Tinsley's Magazine* in 1869, described the poem as "as vivid and tender as the pure delicate angel-pieces of Angelico", but with "a much stronger implication of flesh and blood than ever showed itself through the tempera of the monk".⁷⁹⁹

Coventry Patmore, who had become known to the Rossettis in 1844 when his first volume of poems had been published, and who had in 1851 persuaded Ruskin to speak out on behalf of the Pre-Raphaelites, was also interested in the Annunciation and spiritual marriage; "The soul becomes nuptially united with God and impregnated by Him the instant she perfectly submits and says, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word'".⁸⁰⁰ This concept, which had been a prominent feature in the writings of the saints, most notably those of St Bernard, increasingly intrigued Rossetti.

The Rossetti family owned a manuscript poem, entitled "Of Cleane Maidenhood", dating from c. 1370, which constituted an advocacy of celibacy, and pivoted on the metaphor of marriage, recommending spiritual union with God over a physical human relationship: "Of cleane maidenhood, / To be weddet cleanly to God." The earthly lover was described as "fickle, false, and frough", and his love "wol not with thee abide", whereas the heavenly spouse, "meek & mild", presents his bride with "all the

⁷⁹⁷J. Ruskin, "The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism", *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 4 (winter 1878), p. 925.

⁷⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 232.

⁷⁹⁹[H. B. Forman] "Dante Rossetti", *Tinsley's Magazine* (September 1869), pp. 142-51, quoted in Ghose, p. 102.

⁸⁰⁰B. Champneys, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, 2 vols. (London: Bell, 1900), vol. 2, p. 70. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 179.

joy of heaven-reich".⁸⁰¹ In 1853 Rossetti was sent a copy of his father's *Arpa Evangelica*, which also relied on the metaphor of the celestial bridegroom. He responded:

I would not have delayed so long in answering your dear and affectionate letter, but that I was wishing to speak somewhat, in my reply, about the *Arpa Evangelica*, and to read it in full before writing to you.⁸⁰²

Rossetti was not the only one to have appreciated this devotional work. Christina Rossetti translated and adapted a section in which God was addressed as a physical lover upon whom the speaker relied for sustenance, "My Lord, my Love!... My Manna and my Spouse".⁸⁰³ In 1853 Rossetti also read St Augustine's *Confessions*, in which Augustine related the battles he fought to overcome his libidinous desires and take up his monastic calling:

I could see the chaste beauty of Continence in all her serene, unsullied joy, as she modestly beckoned me to cross over and to hesitate no more. She stretched out loving hands to welcome and embrace me... [she was] not barren but a fruitful mother of children, of joys born of you, O Lord, her Spouse.⁸⁰⁴

Rossetti declared to Thomas Woolner in April 1853 that it was "a delightful book".⁸⁰⁵

The notion of a heavenly lover was one which dominated Rossetti's output of the 1850s, most notably his Tennyson designs. In 1855, along with Millais, Hunt, Landseer, Maclise, Mulready and others, he became involved in a scheme to illustrate an edition of Tennyson for the publisher Moxon.⁸⁰⁶ "Each artist, it seems is to do

⁸⁰¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:7.

⁸⁰²W. M. Rossetti, vol. 2, p. 114. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 158.

⁸⁰³C. G. Rossetti, "Imitated from the *Arpa Evangelica*: Page 121" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 1:12).

⁸⁰⁴Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), bk. 8, ch.11, p. 176.

⁸⁰⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 137. Rossetti was certainly no adherent of self-abnegation. This was one aspect of St Augustine's *Confessions* which he admitted to W. B. Scott he found repugnant; "As soon as the Saint is struck by the fact that he has been wallowing, and inducing others to wallow, it is horrible together" (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 418). The volume had attracted Christina at an early age. Augustine had been read to the Rossettis as children, being a favourite of their mother's (Packer, pp. 13, 142).

⁸⁰⁶Birkbeck Hill, p. 97.

about half-a-dozen," Rossetti wrote to William Allingham.⁸⁰⁷ Of the three Pre-Raphaelites involved, Millais completed the most, eighteen in all. Hunt designed seven, and Rossetti five. Rossetti, who completed a design for "The Lady of Shalott", "Mariana in the South" and "Sir Galahad", and two for "The Palace of Art", was the most imaginative but the least accurate as an illustrator. However, accuracy was not his aim. He wrote to Allingham on 23 January 1855 that he had specifically chosen designs in which "one can allegorize on one's own hook".⁸⁰⁸

Rossetti's illustrations demonstrate how he sought to transfer monastic and saintly imagery to the secular love experience. In his design, *Mariana in the South* (S.86; fig. 72) Rossetti added details which suited his own personal vision rather than Tennyson's. In Tennyson's poem, it is to the Virgin Mary that Mariana cried out in her unhappiness:

And 'Ave Mary,' was her moan,
'Madonna, sad is night and morn...'

And it is before a "Still-lighted", "secret shrine" to the Madonna that she knelt:

Low on her knees herself she cast,
Before Our Lady murmur'd she;
Complaining, 'Mother, give me grace
To help me of my weary load.'⁸⁰⁹

Rossetti depicted Mariana on her knees as indicated by the poem, but not before a statue of Mary, rather a crucifix. This at first seems strange considering Rossetti's predilection for Marian themes. In the past Rossetti had actually made changes in order to heighten the Mariolatry of a text. In June 1844, inspired by the German lessons which he had received from Dr Heimann aged only sixteen, he had attempted his first translation from German, a version of G. A. Bürger's *Lenore*.⁸¹⁰ In this he had substituted an "Ave Marie" for the Lord's Prayer.⁸¹¹ However, in his Tennyson illustration the change Rossetti made in favour of a crucifix rather than a Madonna can be explained by Rossetti's desire to blur the boundaries between spiritual and physical love.

In Tennyson's poem Mariana gazed at her reflection in the water:

⁸⁰⁷Birkbeck Hill, p. 97.

⁸⁰⁸Birkbeck Hill, p. 97.

⁸⁰⁹Tennyson, p. 28.

⁸¹⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1905, p. 37.

⁸¹¹L. A. Willoughby, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and German Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), p. 13. Rossetti's translation with a Prefatory Note by W. M. Rossetti was published posthumously by Ellis and Elvey in 1900 (W. M. Rossetti, 1905, pp. 36-37). W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 502, 678.

And on the liquid mirror glow'd
The clear perfection of her face.
'Is this the form,' she made her moan,
'That won his praises night and morn?'

In Rossetti's design he included a real mirror, in which can be seen the back of Mariana rather than her face, and instead of reflecting her beauty which was her downfall, the mirror shows the crucifix at which she kneels. In doing so Rossetti brought a new emphasis to the concluding lines of the poem:

'The night comes on that knows not morn,
When I shall cease to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'⁸¹²

Rather than being a final declaration of Mariana's despair, her desire to die and suffer no more, Rossetti suggested that Mariana would again be loved. Showing Mariana on her knees with a beatific expression on her face, kissing the feet of Christ whilst clasping her love letters to her chest, Rossetti evoked the idea of Christ as the mystical bridegroom and lover whom Mariana would join.⁸¹³ The composition significantly recalls Collinson's *The Renunciation of St Elizabeth of Hungary* in which the Queen was shown on her knees at a crucifix lovingly leaning her cheek on Christ's feet.

It is interesting to note the numerous images of nuns and novices exhibited at the Royal Academy and British Institution in the 1840s and 1850s in which nuns were portrayed as disappointed lovers driven to seek comfort in religion. Alexander Johnston's *The Novice* (fig. 73) was exhibited in 1850 at the British Institution accompanied by the following lines:

This vestal shall fold my fading bloom,
Of virgin vows and purity the token;
This cell sepulchral-like shall be the tomb
Of withered hopes, Vows broken as soon as spoken,
Of love despised, peace destroyed, and of a heart quite broken.⁸¹⁴

An anonymous article in *Woman's Mission* in 1840 declared, "The convent was too often the refuge of disappointed worldliness, the grave of blasted hopes".⁸¹⁵

⁸¹²Tennyson, pp. 28-29.

⁸¹³In this context the mirror operates on another level to suggest that the present is only a reflection of what is to come: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 *Corinthians* 13.12).

⁸¹⁴A. Graves (ed.), *The British Institution 1806-1867* (London: George Bell, 1908), p. 304. Casteras, 1981, pp. 169-70.

⁸¹⁵Anonymous, *Woman's Mission* (Boston: William Crosby, 1840), p. 70, quoted in Casteras, 1981, p. 164.

As Millais made a connection between his *Mariana*, in which Tennyson's heroine pines for Angelo, and his *St Agnes Eve*, in which the nun longs to be reunited with her heavenly spouse, so the two subjects concurrently concerned Rossetti in the 1850s. An undated pen and ink drawing by him (S.733; fig. 74) depicting a nun gazing rapturously through a quatrefoil window may well have been his version of *St Agnes' Eve*. It is significant that Elizabeth Siddal's watercolour of *St Agnes' Eve* (fig. 75) bears similarities with Rossetti's *Mariana* design. The nun depicted is an angelic-looking creature who gazes in beatific rapture through the open window. In the bottom left corner of the composition can be seen a chapel in which there is a large crucifix, and thus Siddal declared the nature of the nun's ecstasy. Rossetti and Siddal were intimately involved at this time, having become engaged before the close of 1851, and a reciprocal influence can be seen in their artistic designs in the 1850s.⁸¹⁶

To turn back to Moxon's *Tennyson*, it is not surprising that of the poems available for illustration Rossetti should have chosen Tennyson's "Sir Galahad" in which a knight was described who spurned earthly passion for that of heaven:

My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.⁸¹⁷

In his *Sir Galahad* design, which was worked up into a watercolour in 1859 (S.115; fig. 76), Rossetti illustrated the following stanza:

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,

⁸¹⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 173. Jan Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (London: Quartet, 1985), p. 45. Rossetti wanted Siddal to be included in Moxon's *Tennyson* project (Jan Marsh, *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* (London: Quartet, 1989), pp. 184-85). Rossetti declared in 1854, "Her fecundity of invention and facility are quite wonderful - much greater than mine" (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 175-76). As an indication of the value he placed on her designs, following her death Rossetti had all her paintings and drawings photographed for posterity; an album of such is held in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and a number of photographs and negatives in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Faxon, *Apollo*, 1994, p. 26).

⁸¹⁷Tennyson, pp. 102-3. Rossetti had intended to do a second design for *Sir Galahad* (Birkbeck Hill, p. 191).

I hear a noise of hymns:
 Then by some secret shrine I ride;
 I hear a voice but none are there;
 The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
 The tapers burning fair.
 Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
 The silver vessels sparkle clean,
 The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
 And solemn chaunts resound between.

Following the poem, Rossetti showed Sir Galahad kneeling at a wayside shrine. Rossetti gave his sword prominence in accord with Tennyson who had opened his poem by setting the knight up as a mighty warrior whose "good blade carves the casques of men". Rossetti placed him with his back to an apple tree, to symbolise his worldly and specifically his sexual renunciation. This far Rossetti stayed close to the spirit of the poem.

However, whereas in Tennyson's poem Galahad says, "I hear a voice but none are there", Rossetti showed beneath the altar a row of angels. In doing so Rossetti created a far greater sense of mysticism. The image brings to mind the revised version of Rossetti's 1853 poem "The Church Porch", which ends with the lines, "we shall find there / Silence, and sudden dimness, and deep prayer, / And faces of crowned angels all about."⁸¹⁸ The angels in the *Sir Galahad* watercolour glow red, enhancing the otherworldliness of the scene.

The angels Rossetti included in his design perhaps suggest a source for the chanting Galahad heard, but none are depicted singing. Their purpose was not to explain the text, but to set up the idea of a spiritual love relationship. As Rossetti had Mariana kneel before an effigy of Christ rather than the Virgin in order to present the suggestion of a spiritual alternative to physical passion, so Rossetti had Sir Galahad, who had "never felt the kiss of [earthly] love", kneel before young female angels. This did not contradict the text, as Tennyson's Galahad claims that "Me mightier transports move and thrill", but it put a different bias on the poem and made it conform to the notions prevailing in much of Rossetti's output of the 1850s. In a pen and ink drawing of 1857, *Sir Galahad and an Angel* (S.96; fig. 77), Rossetti showed an angel actually kissing the knight.

⁸¹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 272.

It has been acknowledged that Burne-Jones' *Merciful Knight* (fig. 78) of 1863, in which a wooden effigy of Christ miraculously bends down to embrace the eleventh century Italian knight St John Gualberto in the church of San Miniato, was indebted to Rossetti's *Sir Galahad*, and therefore it is interesting to find a pencil study for Burne-Jones' composition which shows an androgenous, youthful Christ kissing the knight on the lips (fig. 79). The knight's head is shown raised in ecstasy, in contrast to the final design in which it is humbly bowed while he receives his chaste embrace. Burne-Jones may well have perceived the amatory undertones of Rossetti's design. An article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1850, which set out to review Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders*, expressed regret that "the beautiful incident" in the life of Gualberto, "has never been worthily treated".⁸¹⁹ This may have encouraged Burne-Jones to turn to the subject, but his primary source was Kenelm Digby's *Broadstone of Honour*. This was a far more sensual rendition of the tale than Jameson's in which the effigy of Christ merely bowed its head in acknowledgment of Gualberto's prayer.⁸²⁰

Both Burne-Jones and Rossetti, the former perhaps influenced by the latter, were intrigued by stories of quasi-erotic saintly experiences and of the animation of works of art. St Catherine of Siena received an erotic kiss from Christ, a "mysterious kiss that infused into her spirit the sweetness of ineffable delight", as did St Margaret.⁸²¹ The Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernard when he was writing his homilies on the *Song of Songs* and refreshed him with milk from her breasts. This incident formed the subject of a well known painting by Murillo in Seville, a calotype of which appeared in Stirling Maxwell's *Annals of the Artists of Spain*.⁸²² The work was also discussed and reproduced in Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (fig. 80), as was Murillo's

⁸¹⁹"Legends of the Monastic Orders", *British Quarterly Review*, vol. 12 (November 1850), p. 480.

⁸²⁰Jameson, 1850, p. 126. K. H. Digby, *The Broadstone of Honour* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1822). Burne-Jones, vol. 2, p. 56. S. Wildman & J. Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), p. 93. William S. Knickerbocker, *Creative Oxford: Its Influence in Victorian Literature* (New York University Press, 1925), p. 75.

⁸²¹Fra Tommaso Caffarini, *Supplemento alla vulgata leggenda di S. Caterina da Siena*, trans. from Latin by P. Ambrogio Ansano Tantucci, in Girolamo Gigli, *Opere della Serafica Santa Caterina da Siena*, (Lucca, 1754; reprinted in Rome, 1866), vol. 5. Quoted in E. G. Gardner, *Saint Catherine of Siena* (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), p. 16. C. W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone, 1992), p. 82.

⁸²²Sir William Stirling Maxwell, *Annals of the Artists of Spain*, 3 vols. (London, 1848). A version of the subject in the Royal Museum, Madrid, was mentioned in M. C. Blanc's *The History of the Painters of all Nations* (London: Cassell, 1852), p. 15, which W. M. Rossetti owned (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

painting of St Francis receiving a mystical embrace from a statue of Christ.⁸²³

Jameson characterised this latter saint as leading "that school which so strangely combined the spiritual with the sensual".⁸²⁴

Rossetti for a while acted in some official capacity on behalf of the non-English speaking Alphonse Legros, and thus had in his studio in 1864 a watercolour by the French artist of *The Death of St Francis*, which he sold to William Clabburn in December of that year.⁸²⁵ Legros, who had made some reputation in Paris with his archaic images of monks, martyrs, priests and pious peasants, received little recognition in London when he arrived in 1863.⁸²⁶ However, it is significant that he was welcomed by Rossetti.⁸²⁷ W. M. Rossetti mentioned that a painting by Legros had been "abiding for some mo[nth]s in the passage of Gabriel's house".⁸²⁸ This was one of many as Rossetti regularly accepted Legros' paintings into his studio in order to entice prospective patrons. He succeeded in encouraging interest in not only Clabburn, but also James Anderson Rose, William Graham, Frederick R. Leyland, J. H. Trist and James Leathart. He wrote enthusiastically to Leathart on 15 January 1864, describing Legros' *La vocation de saint François* (1861; fig. 81), as a painting "full of poetry and vigour".⁸²⁹

Legros showed an especial attraction to the figure of St Francis, producing in a variety of media scenes from the life of the saint (fig. 82). This interest was shared by Rossetti. Rossetti had in 1847-49 translated a cantica on divine love by St Francis, which he described in his *Early Italian Poets* as "half ecstatic", although recognising

⁸²³Jameson, 1850, pp. 151, 155, 267.

⁸²⁴Jameson, 1850, p. xxii.

⁸²⁵"You must know that I have generally been his business secretary," Rossetti wrote to W. Clabburn in December 1864 (H. J. Clabburn, "Some Relics of Rossetti", *Pall Mall Budget* (22 January 1891), p. 14). Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:16.

⁸²⁶D. S. MacColl, *Exhibition of Works by Alphonse Legros* (London: Fine Art Society, 1912), p. 4. *Loan Exhibition of the Works of Alphonse Legros* (City of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, 1913), p. 5. Seltzer, p. 290.

⁸²⁷"M. Legros used often to visit a monastery in Paris. He studied the monks after nature..." (Philippe Burty, "M. Legros' Etchings", *Academy*, vol. 10 (22 July 1876), p. 92; Seltzer, p. 294). Legros to Fantin-Latour, 12 March 1858, near Dijon: "I have been introduced to the village priest and I have promised him a Christ for his church for which the nuns have posed for me" (Paris, Doucet, Peintres file, carton 20, quoted in Seltzer, p. 295).

⁸²⁸W. M. Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 9 June [1864?] (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:4).

⁸²⁹T. Wilcox, *Alphonse Legros* (Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1987), pp. 61-62, 65-66, 70).

that it was "hardly appreciable now".⁸³⁰ St Francis remained in Rossetti's mind in the 1850s when he was concerned with the merging of spiritual and sensual experience. He wrote to Allingham in 1856 regretting the fact that in the present materialistic age the self-denial of St Francis was met with little understanding or recognition.⁸³¹

In *Mary Magdalene at the House of Simon the Pharisee* (S.109; fig. 83), a pen and ink drawing of 1858, Rossetti once again aligned spiritual and sexual awakening. The Magdalen, modelled on the actress Ruth Herbert with whom Rossetti was infatuated at this time, was shown transfixed by Christ's potent gaze. The poem which Rossetti wrote in 1869 to accompany his design complements this idea. The earthly lover, calling Mary Magdalene his "rose", attempts to entice her with promises of a "delicate day of love", but she answers with a passionate urgency:

'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 these blood-stained feet of His?
He needs me, calls me, loves me: let me go!'⁸³²

In neither drawing or poem did Rossetti present the saint as a sorrowful, self-defacing penitent, but rather as a sensual, impatient lover. Similarly in a later oil of 1877 (S.250; fig. 84) Mary Magdalene, shown holding to her chest the precious jar of ointment with which she will anoint Christ's feet, was depicted with large pouting lips and sensual

⁸³⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 258.

⁸³¹Birkbeck Hill, p. 189. Murillo's *Ecstasy of Saint Francis* (Royal Museum, Madrid) was illustrated in engraved form within W. M. Rossetti's edition of Blanc (p. 14).

⁸³²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 356. Christina Rossetti often returned to the idea of the heavenly Bridegroom calling. "The Master is Come and Calleth for Thee" [n.d.], which was written at the request of Rev. Dr Littledale for "one entering her novitiate", ends with the stanza: "Who calleth? - Thy Bridegroom calleth, / Soar, O Bride, with the Seraphim: / He Who loves thee as no man loveth / Bids thee give up thy heart to Him" (Crump, vol. 1, p. 226; Marsh, 1994, p. 417). Packer sees Christina as a mystic following in the tradition of erotic mystical literature (Packer, p. 383). Tynan, in an article in which she awarded her mentor the title, "Santa", presented Christina Rossetti to the reader as a woman who "might have married two or three times", but who did not desire earthly love: "she was of the women who are called to be Brides of Christ, own sister to St Teresa and St Catherine of Siena" (K. Tynan, "Santa Christina", *The Bookman*, vol. 41, supplement (January 1912), pp. 188-89). Indeed, Christina wore a ring on her wedding finger, like St Catherine. Towards the end of her life she wore three, and these she significantly desired to be put into the Church Offertory at her death ("Memoranda for my Executor", 15 July 1890, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:1).

gaze. Rossetti was made to modify his 1863 *Mary Magdalene* stained glass design for Bradford Cathedral "on account of its inappropriateness for its destination". Sewter writes, "Presumably, she was exposing too much flesh."⁸³³

Mary Magdalene at the House of Simon the Pharisee proved popular amongst Rossetti's patrons. John Heugh and William Clabburn were struck by the beauty of this image of religious passion and commissioned oil replicas, Clabburn in June 1863, and Heugh at some point during 1862-63. Heugh's commission came to nothing, although a replica was made. Rossetti presented the disappointed Clabburn with a "mere 'sketch'", which Clabburn doubted to be by Rossetti's hand.⁸³⁴ William Graham also desired an enlarged oil version of the picture, and Rossetti wrote to him on 24 December 1880 to declare that "the desirability of taking up the Magdalene on a fair scale is very much my own view", mentioning that Laurie, a Glasgow picture dealer, who in April 1876 was in possession of one of the oil replicas, "did well with that slight version of the Magdalene subject".⁸³⁵

When Frederic Shields adapted Rossetti's 1858 *Mary Magdalene* design for a memorial window at Birchington for the artist, the vicar, Rev. Alcock, objected to it saying, "I do not think this picture is likely to inspire devotional thoughts and feelings, and fear that in some cases it might rather do the reverse."⁸³⁶ Although eventually acquiescing with Alcock's demands, Rossetti's mother, who had commissioned the window, had thought Shields' design a "beautiful adaption".⁸³⁷ Neither did Shields find offence in the design, declaring, "My friend Rossetti himself would have shrunk with shuddering at any supposition that the design could have any impure effect".⁸³⁸ Rossetti may not have been attempting anything blasphemous, but on the contrary to literally give flesh to concepts prevalent in the Bible and in the teachings of the Church Fathers. Indeed,

⁸³³22 April 1863, Morris firm minute book, 10 December 1862 - 23 October 1874 (Sewter, 1975, vol. 1, p. 68).

⁸³⁴Clabburn, p. 14. Surtees, 1971, p. 65.

⁸³⁵Horner, p. 24.

⁸³⁶Mills, p. 281.

⁸³⁷F. M. L. Rossetti's diary, 10 December 1883 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17). The theme was one of which Frances Rossetti had approved. She had copied in her *Literary Diary* a poem entitled "Mary Magdalene", translated by William Cullen Bryant from the Spanish of Bartolome Leonardo de Agensola, in which the Magdalen was presented as a broken-hearted lover and likened to a rose (F. M. L. Rossetti, *Literary Diary*, p. 337; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:18).

⁸³⁸Mills, pp. 281-82.

Swinburne described Rossetti's "Mary Magdalene" in a letter of 1870 as a "sacred poem... which perpetuates Catholic verity".⁸³⁹

Tennyson saw his "Palace of Art" as "a sort of allegory... of a soul", and it was for this poem that Rossetti decided to compose two designs.⁸⁴⁰ The poem was constructed on a moral premise, the soul building for itself "a lordly pleasure-house", but in the end recognising its folly and making penance for its life of pleasure:

'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,
'Where I may mourn and pray.'⁸⁴¹

Rossetti ignored this moral structure in his illustrations for the poem, and chose instead to concentrate on two isolated tableaux, *King Arthur and the Weeping Queens* (S.84) and *St. Cecilia* (S.83; fig. 85). Depicting these scenes, which appear in the poem as descriptions of pictures on the palace walls, Rossetti can be seen to have chosen to remove himself from the narrative of the poem.

W. M. Rossetti declared:

It must be said also that himself only, and not Tennyson, was
his guide. He drew just what he chose, taking from his author's
text nothing more than a hint and an opportunity.⁸⁴²

Rossetti showed St Cecilia with roses in her hair, on the city walls with her organ and the sea in the background as stated in the poem:

... 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.⁸⁴³

However, in Rossetti's design St Cecilia does not sleep and the angel, who is notably a male, does not only look at St Cecilia but passionately kisses the saint whom he holds in his arms. Layard described him as "seemingly munching the fair face of the lovely martyr."⁸⁴⁴ Charles Fairfax Murray suggested that the angel's open mouth was the result of an engraving error and that the hands of the angel were wrapped in his cloak

⁸³⁹Lang, vol. 2, p. 97.

⁸⁴⁰R. L. Stein, "The Pre-Raphaelite Tennyson", *Victorian Studies*, vol. 24 (1981), p. 290.

⁸⁴¹Tennyson, p. 46.

⁸⁴²W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 189.

⁸⁴³Tennyson, p. 43.

⁸⁴⁴G. S. Layard, *Tennyson and his Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators* (London: Ellis & Stock, 1894), p. 56.

in order to emphasise his reverence for the saint.⁸⁴⁵ However, a pen and ink drawing of the subject (S.83A; fig. 86) would seem to disprove this theory. It also shows the angel with his mouth pressed against the forehead of St Cecilia. Further the guard in the bottom left hand corner of the engraving, who appears oblivious to what is happening behind him, is shown eating an apple, an object which often carried sexual connotations in Rossetti's works.

William Michael wrote that his brother's *St Cecilia* design "puzzled" Tennyson "not a little", and that "he had to give up the problem of what it had to do with his verses."⁸⁴⁶ Rossetti more strongly wrote, "T. loathes mine".⁸⁴⁷ However, according to William Michael, Tennyson's opinion did not count for very much as he did not have "any particularly insight into matters of pictorial art".⁸⁴⁸ Lord John Russell did not think very much of Tennyson's art appreciation either. He recounted that he had asked Tennyson how he had liked Florence, and was given the reply, "I liked it very much... but I was bothered because I could not get any English tobacco for love or money. A lady told me that I could smuggle some from an English ship if I heavily bribed the Custom-house officers; but I didn't do that, and came away."⁸⁴⁹

Rossetti's Tennyson designs stand in contrast to those of Hunt, who sought in his compositions to reflect something of the moral tone of Tennyson, albeit at times he took the lessons further than the poet intended. This is most notable in Hunt's design for "The Lady of Shalott" (fig. 87). Hunt showed the moment when the mirror broke and the tapestry fell apart, the curse having come upon the Lady of Shalott who had looked down on the dashing figure of Lancelot. "'My dear Hunt,' said Tennyson, when he first saw this illustration, 'I never said that the young woman's hair was flying all over the shop.'"⁸⁵⁰ But, as Stein points out, for Hunt the wild, loose hair was symbolic of the Lady's loss of moral control and it echoed the entangled wools of her tapestry.⁸⁵¹

On either side of the circular mirror Hunt placed oval paintings of Christ, the one on the left showing him enthroned in heaven, and that on the right depicting him on the cross. In this way Hunt highlighted the moral dimension of the poem and set up an

⁸⁴⁵G. S. Layard, p. 56 n.

⁸⁴⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 190. W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 254.

⁸⁴⁷Undated letter (Birkbeck Hill, p. 104).

⁸⁴⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 254.

⁸⁴⁹G. S. Layard, p. 7.

⁸⁵⁰G. S. Layard, p. 41.

⁸⁵¹Stein, p. 295.

apparent choice between Lancelot and Christ. Hunt specifically saw the poem as a parable, as he declared concerning his later oil of the subject which was based on his 1857 design, "The parable, as interpreted in this painting, illustrates the failure of a human Soul towards its accepted responsibility."⁸⁵² Rossetti disliked such moralising. Brown wrote on 17 March 1855 in a diary entry in which he discussed the Moxon Tennyson designs, "Conversation between Seddon, Millais, and Collins, highly moral and religious... Rossetti off early..."⁸⁵³

Layard described Rossetti's composition as "a sort of travesty of the story of St Cecily".⁸⁵⁴ St Cecilia, along with St Agnes, St Agatha and St Lucia, was one of the Four Great Virgins of the Latin Church. According to the ancient legend of St Cecilia, as Jameson related, the saint:

... made a secret but solemn vow to preserve her chastity, devoting herself to heavenly things, and shunning the pleasures and vanities of the world. As she excelled in music, she turned her good gift to the glory of God, and composed hymns, which she sang herself with such ravishing sweetness that even the angels descended from heaven to listen to her, or to join their voices with hers.⁸⁵⁵

For Ruskin, who owned an antiphonaire from the Convent of Beau Pré dating from 1290 and illustrated with a miniature of St Cecilia, and who had visited the chapel built in Rome on the site of the house of the saint, St Cecilia was the greatest of saints as not only the patron saint of music but also of morality.⁸⁵⁶ Inspired by Dryden's "A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day", John Tenniel had painted a mural of St Cecilia in fresco in the Upper Waiting Hall of the Palace of Westminster in 1850 (fig. 88). In it St Cecilia's pure, virginal state was emphasised by means of a severity in outline and posture, and pale, chalky colours. She was depicted on her knees playing daintily on her organ, with her eyes devoutly uplifted. This was what Rossetti's design stood up against. Layard felt that in some way he had to explain the sensuousness of Rossetti's scene, and asserted that rather than an angel Rossetti had drawn "a man masquerading as an angel" attempting to seduce the saint. He argued that the poorly rendered wings of the

⁸⁵²Stein, p. 292. M. Bennett, *William Holman Hunt* (Liverpool: Walker Gallery, 1969), pp. 57-58.

⁸⁵³W. M. Rossetti, 1899, p. 34.

⁸⁵⁴G. S. Layard, p. 58.

⁸⁵⁵Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 202.

⁸⁵⁶Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 33, *The Pleasures of England* (1884), pp. 489-90; vol. 35, *Præterita* (1886), vol. 2, pp. 284-85. A. M. Wakefield (ed.), *Ruskin on Music* (London: George Allen, 1894), pp. 138-40.

angel could not have been intended to have been real ones since Rossetti was "such a master of design".⁸⁵⁷

However, there was room within the legend of St Cecilia for spiritual ecstasy. Jameson suggested such when she wrote of "the rapt inspiration of St Cecilia". Most representations of the saint had shown her looking heavenward with an ecstatic expression on her face. Further, Jameson recorded that when forced to marry, St Cecilia had told her husband that "she had a guardian angel who watched over her night and day, and would suffer no earthly lover to approach her."⁸⁵⁸ In *The Golden Legend* St Cecilia not only told her husband that her guardian angel would not allow her to be touched by an earthly lover, but specifically declared that *he* was her heavenly lover: "I have a lover, an angel of God, who watches over my body with exceeding zeal".⁸⁵⁹ Rossetti may also have been drawing from Chaucer's account of the story in "The Second Nun's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales*, in which St Cecilia announced:

'I have an aungel which that loveth me,
That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.'⁸⁶⁰

Rossetti was not the first artist to allude to the tradition's sensual undertones.

Although Antonio Correggio depicted infant angels in his *St Cecilia*, shown at the British Institution in 1851, the picture was described as "anything but saintly", the saint being "dissolved in an enervating bliss".⁸⁶¹

Despite Layard's theory, Rossetti specifically implied that it was a heavenly being who embraced St Cecilia rather than an imposter by the inclusion of the dove which can be seen flying from the dungeon. This possibly signified the saint's death, birds being symbolic of the soul, and if so the kiss which St Cecilia received from the angel could

⁸⁵⁷G. S. Layard, p. 58.

⁸⁵⁸Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, pp. 201, 203.

⁸⁵⁹Voragine, 1993, vol. 2, p. 319.

⁸⁶⁰Chaucer, "The Second Nun's Tale", *The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1992), p. 264. *Canterbury Tales* was one of the books included in Rossetti's 1866 inventory of his library (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2). He had also made reference to Chaucer ("The Prioress' Tale") in his 1855 sonnet "Beauty and the Bird": "And like the child in Chaucer, on whose tongue / The Blessed Virgin laid, when he was dead, / A grain" (W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 286). "Saints and their legends are given prominence in the *Canterbury Tales*, not by their number, but by their exclusive association with the work's religious female tellers of tales" (R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski & T. Szell (eds.), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 136).

⁸⁶¹"British Institution: Exhibition of Old Pictures", *Spectator* (14 June 1851), p. 570.

be seen as the kiss of death. Indeed, he had already made a design for the death of St Dorothea. He may have been aware of Jameson's description of Giulio Procaccino's painting of the death of St Cecilia, in Milan, in which St Cecilia "leans back, dying in the arms of an angel; her hands bound, her hair dishevelled; the countenance raised to heaven, full of tender enthusiastic faith".⁸⁶² W. M. Rossetti, in his *Bibliography of the Works of D. G. R.*, actually took it upon himself to give Rossetti's illustration the title *The Death of St Cecilia*, adding, "The St Cecilia design, representing the saint expiring as she is kissed by the Angel of Death, may be regarded as Rossetti's own invention, for there is nothing to correspond in Tennyson's poem."⁸⁶³

However, in his design Rossetti depicted St Cecilia playing on her organ rather than bound, thus recalling the legend that she played her music to the glory of God. Rossetti intended to intimate, not specifically her death, although this is not negated, but her communion with the divine, the dove being primarily a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Depicting religious experience in such a markedly physical and amorous way, he demonstrated his awareness of mystical Catholic theology in which the physical and spiritual were innately linked. Pater certainly made this connection, locating Rossetti's sensual approach to religious subjects within the bounds of Catholic tradition which "by its aesthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter".⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶²Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 215.

⁸⁶³W. M. Rossetti, 1905, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁶⁴W. Pater, *Appreciations with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 236.

Ch. 2: Secularised Saints

Rossetti's treatment of secular subjects was affected at a fundamental level by his familiarity with saintly imagery. This was recognised by his contemporaries. The writer of "Two Pictures", an article which appeared in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in August 1856, likened the figure of Beatrice in Rossetti's 1856 watercolour *Dante's Dream at the Time of the Death of Beatrice* (S.81; fig. 89) to early depictions of deceased saints: "the fair taper hands meet palm to palm, in that sweet attitude of faithful resignation in which the Christians of the thirteenth century loved to portray the dying believer."⁸⁶⁵ There were precedents for such appropriation of religious iconography.⁸⁶⁶ In *Rienzi* of 1848-49 Hunt had adopted a pietà-like compositional scheme in order to enhance the sense of tragedy at the death of the young Italian.⁸⁶⁷ Contemporaneously to Rossetti, Henry Wallis in his 1855-56 depiction of Chatterton, the precocious young poet who had committed suicide on 24 August 1770, had evoked the dead Christ, causing the *Literary Gazette* to express moral concerns.⁸⁶⁸

Rossetti would have been aware of these examples, but Thomas Percy's *Hermit of Warkworth* (1771), which W. M. Rossetti owned, may have had a more direct influence. As a northern ballad concerning a monk and a tragic romance, Percy's poem would have held immediate appeal for Rossetti.⁸⁶⁹ Of central significance in the monk's tale was a tomb "on the top of which lies a Female Figure extended in the manner that effigies are usually exhibited praying on ancient tombs." Rossetti may well have had this monument in mind in *Dante's Dream*, the tomb being erected in honour of the monk's dead lover and neatly drawing the reader's attention to the deceased lady's holiness whilst creating a sense of pathos. Indeed, an interesting compositional analogy is created between Rossetti's design in which the figure of Love bends over the dead Beatrice and a bereaved Dante stands quietly to the side, and the tomb in which:

A kneeling Angel fairly carv'd
Lean'd hovering o'er her breast;
A weeping warrior at her feet...⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁵"Two Pictures", *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (August 1856), p. 480.

⁸⁶⁶Ladow, 1980, p. 141.

⁸⁶⁷Parris, p. 68.

⁸⁶⁸*Literary Gazette* (17 May 1856), p. 284, quoted in Parris, p. 144.

⁸⁶⁹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁸⁷⁰Percy, 1771, pp. vi, 17.

Rossetti had ample recourse to the iconography of tomb sculpture. W. M. Rossetti owned an 1847 English edition of Séroux d'Agincourt's three-volumed *History of Art by its Monuments*, and Rossetti himself came to possess an original edition of Stothard's *Monumental Effigies*, complete with coloured engravings.⁸⁷¹ Rossetti also owned a folio scrapbook, which came from either W. B. Scott or W. J. Linton, which contained engravings, sketches and watercolours of ancient monuments. When this item came up for sale at Rossetti's death, the advertisement declared, "Any relics of the gifted Pre-Raphaelite Poet and Painter more interesting than the Scrap Book can hardly be conceived, containing as it does evidence of the workings of his mind and of the methods of his study".⁸⁷² This makes persuasive selling, but it is true that such a book would have provided basic inspiration for Rossetti as he sought to pictorially convey the saintliness of Beatrice.

In "Two Pictures", the writer constantly returned to the concept of mystery in the context of spiritual marriage in his discussion of *Dante's Dream*. It is not without significance that he declared, "And as we look, we see there is no marriage ring: Beatrice has died unwedded." Rossetti wrote in the notes of his translation of *Vita Nuova* that at the age of twenty-one Beatrice had married Simone de' Bardi.⁸⁷³ However, depicting Beatrice unwedded, Rossetti emphasised her purity and alluded to her union with a heavenly spouse.⁸⁷⁴ In *Dantis Amor* (S.117; fig. 90) of 1860 Rossetti drew attention to this very idea, depicting Christ and Beatrice gazing at each other from opposite corners of the heraldic design, Christ crowned as the Sun of Righteousness and Beatrice contained within a crescent moon, through which Rossetti linked her with the Virgin Mary who was both the *luna sancta* and the Bride of

⁸⁷¹Charles Alfred Stothard, *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain: Selected from our Cathedrals and Churches from the Norman Conquest to the Reign of Henry VII*, with descriptions by Alfred John Kempe (London, 1817-32). Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 24, lot 486. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14. See note 154. Certainly later in his career Rossetti made direct reference to his admiration for tomb sculpture (Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti [September 1866], Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:7).

⁸⁷²The scrapbook also contained drawings of medieval costumes and weaponry, and images of Druids, priests, monarchs and knights (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:12).

⁸⁷³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁸⁷⁴In 1856 Rossetti was already toying with notions of secular versus sacred bridal relationships, in this year producing a pencil drawing of a *Bride and Bridegroom* seated together in a window seat (*Catalogue of the Remaining Works of the Painter and Poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Deceased* (London: William Clowes, 1883), no. 130, p. 14; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:20).

Christ.⁸⁷⁵ This idea was also the basis for a watch design by Rossetti (S.747; fig. 91). Origen, Ambrose and Augustine had seen the harmonious relationship between the sun and moon as providing a fitting symbol for the love between Christ and his Bride.⁸⁷⁶ Christina frequently alluded to this idea. In *Seek and Find* she specifically made a link between "sun and moon, man and woman; or to ascend to the supreme instance, Christ and His Church".⁸⁷⁷ She also often used sun and moon imagery to suggest sexual attraction.⁸⁷⁸

On 12 March 1856 Rossetti wrote to Ellen Heaton that *Dante's Dream* was intended to illustrate the following lines from Dante's *Vita Nuova*:

These idle fantasies
Then carried me to see my lady dead;
And when I entered,
With a white veil her friends were covering her;
And in her mild look was a quietness
Which seemed as if it said, I have found peace.⁸⁷⁹

It is significant that Rossetti chose to illustrate these lines, in which the "white veil" carries suggestions of betrothal. In his watercolour Rossetti emphasised the purity and peacefulness of Beatrice, placing her bed on a raised platform in order to suggest a holy set-apartness, and dressing her in white. He had the figure of Love chastely kiss her on the forehead. The writer of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* commented on the closeness of this figure iconographically to an angel from the Christian tradition. Indeed, Rossetti placed the scallop shell of a Christian pilgrim on his shoulder.⁸⁸⁰

For Rossetti the theme of sainthood and divine espousement held a continued fascination. In *Beata Beatrix* (S.168; c. 1862-70; fig. 92) Beatrice appears like a beatified saint, a suggestion enhanced by the name of the painting. Rossetti, who seems to have made use of a photograph of his dead wife in composing *Beata Beatrix*

⁸⁷⁵H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 103. H. Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, trans. S. Bullough (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), pp. 40-41, 120. Warner, pp. 256-57.

⁸⁷⁶Warner, p. 257.

⁸⁷⁷C. G. Rossetti, *Seek and Find* (London: S.P.C.K., 1879), p. 30.

⁸⁷⁸Packer, p. 136.

⁸⁷⁹Letter in Heaton Collection, quoted in Surtees, 1971, p. 42.

⁸⁸⁰"Two Pictures", p. 481. Rossetti himself describes Love as "an angelic figure" in his March 1856 letter to Heaton (Surtees, 1971, p. 42). Edward Hughes, a nephew of Arthur Hughes, modelled for Love in the 1871 version but "His face was discarded for having too much of the Greek Adonis about it (Dunn, p. 55).

(fig. 93), may have been inspired by a sonnet he had translated in the late 1840s by Guido Guinicelli, "He will Praise his Lady", which had just been published in his *Early Italian Poets* (1861). In this poem the speaker eulogising of his mistress declared, "She is beneath even as her Saint above".⁸⁸¹ Rossetti may also have had in mind the tradition of painting dramatic saintly portraits, in which persons conferred desired attributes on themselves.⁸⁸² He may have seen in the Louvre J. M. Nattier's portrait of Countess de Mailly as Magdalen (fig. 94).⁸⁸³ There were earlier precedents too, such as the late fifteenth century portrait Madonnas, censured by Savonarola.⁸⁸⁴ The painted photograph in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, shows Elizabeth Siddal in a pose resonant with spiritual intensity with clasped hands, closed eyes and uplifted face.⁸⁸⁵

The theme of the sanctification of the lover had concerned Rossetti since the late 1840s. In his prose tale "St Agnes of Intercession", begun in 1848, the narrator describes a painting in which the fictional fifteenth century Florentine painter Bucciolo had depicted his mistress Blanziflore dall' Ambra as St Agnes. The narrator, a nineteenth century painter whose life mysteriously mirrors that of Bucciolo, has a dream in which Mary, his beloved, actually becomes the saint.⁸⁸⁶ This theme gained fresh impetus for Rossetti following Siddal's death in 1862. Responding to the dubious

⁸⁸¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 266. W. M. Rossetti described *Beata Beatrix* to Frank W. Burgess on 11 March 1898 as "an *exact portrait* of... Gabriel's own wife" (M. C. Stratton, *The Rossettis* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1996), p. 33).

⁸⁸²E. Wind, "Studies in Allegorical Portraiture I", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 1 (1937-38), pp. 138-39. Such saintly portraits were gaining in currency. John William Millais, who had in 1850 objected to "the Rossetti Gothicism", in 1870 had himself photographed as a medieval hermit, sitting on a rock in a monk's cassock, clutching a rosary (Millais, vol. 1, p. 3; Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 220).

⁸⁸³F. Bardon, "Le Thème de la Madeleine Pénitente au XVIIème Siècle en France", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 31 (1968), p. 304.

⁸⁸⁴Jameson, 1857, p. xxxi. This incident had been recently fictionalised within "Agnes of Sorrento", a prose tale serialised in 1861 which concerned the artist-monk Fra Antonio (*Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 4 (August 1861), pp. 203-17).

⁸⁸⁵Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:26. The 1850s had seen a great deal of photographic experimentation, and no less in the realm of role playing. John Edwin Mayall had shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851 a series of ten daguerreotypes dramatising the Lord's Prayer. The first of these was described in the exhibition catalogue as "a Lady on her knees before the Altar, her eyes directed to the Catholic emblem of the Redeemer... the pure expression of humility and penitence in the countenance and attitude finely embodies the opening sentiment of the prayer" (H. Gernsheim, *Creative Photography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1962), p. 73).

⁸⁸⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 415, 420.

circumstances surrounding her overdose of laudanum, Rossetti painted an image which sacramentalised his beloved. He depicted Siddal leaning forward with all her bodily senses alert as though she were a saint in ecstasy. With her mouth open, her eyes closed and her head sensuously tilted back exposing her throat, she follows the type first presented in Rossetti's *St Cecilia*. A dove is once again present, dropping a white poppy into her lap. A golden glow emanates from around her head, recalling those stories in which saints, communing with the divine, emit a heavenly radiance.

In the years in which Rossetti was painting *Beata Beatrix*, Rossetti demonstrated that the idea of saintly union was very much on his mind, acquiring from the Davenport Bromley Sale in 1863 a gilded panel, dating from c. 1400, entitled *The Triumph of Chastity*. It displayed "a beautiful saint-like damsel on a car drawn by two unicorns" with "Cupid bound as a captive", and "a numerous procession of ladies".⁸⁸⁷

Furthermore, in 1868 he had been among the few who had shown appreciation for Patmore's ode, "Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore", which had been printed for private circulation.⁸⁸⁸ Focusing on the heavenly nuptials which greeted those who had remained chaste in body and mind whilst on earth, "Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore" extolled the Virgin Mary who had heard the call of the "Husband of the Heavens". The ode described this call as being "Heard yet in many a cell where brides of Christ / Lie hid, emparadised".⁸⁸⁹ Rossetti pronounced Patmore's work "a great pleasure" to read, and declared that it contained "much that is also very harmonious with my feelings".⁸⁹⁰

However, Rossetti consciously moved away from the angularity and asceticism of his earlier figural designs to compositions notable for their sensual physicality. He wrote to Allingham on 31 July 1860, "Sawdust... is the fashion of the day; __'s wooden puppet-show of enlarged views instead of Veronese's flesh, blood and slight stupidity. Give me the latter, however".⁸⁹¹ In the same year Rossetti sent his "Jenny" MS., a poem about a prostitute, to Ruskin and asked him to send it to the *Cornhill* after he had read it rather than "the mystical ones" which Ruskin preferred.⁸⁹² Robert

⁸⁸⁷Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 18, lot 319. Waagen, vol. 3, p. 371.

⁸⁸⁸E. H. W. Meyerstein, "Rossetti on Patmore's Odes (1868)", *Times Literary Supplement* (28 April 1950), p. 268. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11.16.

⁸⁸⁹C. Patmore, *The Unknown Eros* (London: George Bell, 3rd ed., 1890, 1st ed. 1877), II. ix, pp. 76-80.

⁸⁹⁰Rossetti to Patmore, 25 May 1868 (Meyerstein, p. 268).

⁸⁹¹Birkbeck Hill, pp. 227-28.

⁸⁹²Birkbeck Hill, p. 232. It was the loss of "Jenny" in particular that convinced Rossetti in 1869 that the MS poems which had been buried with his wife should be finally recovered (Minto, vol. 2, pp. 116-17; W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 472).

Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry" of 1871 was to claim that the aim of Rossetti and his school had been "to extol fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art". He asserted that Rossetti had elevated the body over the soul, and that the only mysteries on which he elucidated were on "the most secret mysteries of sexual connection".⁸⁹³ However, Rossetti did not see eroticism as in opposition to religious subject matter. In *Life of Blake* he praised Blake's angels precisely for their full-bodied, sensual qualities, declaring this to be "the natural breath of sacred art".⁸⁹⁴

In *Beata Beatrix* Rossetti purposely sought to combine the saintly and the erotic. The composition is comparable to the studies he had made for a painting of sexual anticipation, *The Return of Tibullus to Delia* (c. 1853), in which Siddall as Delia is shown with head back, eyes closed and with a strand of hair sensuously in her mouth, awaiting with longing the return of her lover Tibullus who is away on a military campaign (S.62 E; fig. 95). *Beata Beatrix* also bears notable similarities with a number of saintly works. Firstly, Murillo's *Mary Magdalene* in the Louvre, in which the saint was represented as a penitent figure but one which retains a sense of sensuality.

Rossetti could have seen this painting whilst in Paris in 1849 and 1855, or in engraved form in Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art* (fig. 96).⁸⁹⁵ Further, there are links with Filippo Pistrucci's personification of Saintliness in his *Iconologia* (fig. 97), which shows a female figure with face to the sky, hands clasped, and dressed in green, the colour of hope in immortality.⁸⁹⁶ Radiance is depicted shining down on her face and a dove is shown hovering above.⁸⁹⁷ Rossetti was quite familiar with Pistrucci's prints, and had in the past borrowed from them. In August 1843 he had admitted to his mother that his *Death of Virginia* had been copied from Pistrucci.⁸⁹⁸ W. M. Rossetti, who declared that in their early years "no prints were more frequently in Dante's hands", noted that his brother's *William and Marie*, which he had "offered for publication to the Editor of some magazine - I fancy *Smallwood's Magazine*", was taken from Pistrucci's *Rape of the Sabines*.⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹³T. Maitland [R. W. Buchanan], "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti", *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 18 (October 1871), pp. 335, 338. This was expanded into pamphlet form in 1872 (R. W. Buchanan, *The Fleshly School of Poetry, and Other Phenomena of the Day* (London: Strahan, 1872)).

⁸⁹⁴Gilchrist, vol. 1, pp. 287-88. W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 471.

⁸⁹⁵Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. 352.

⁸⁹⁶Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xlv.

⁸⁹⁷F. Pistrucci, *Iconologia* (Milano: Presso Paolo Antonio Tosi e Comp., 1821), no. 220, p. 200. Bentley, 1974, pp. 19-20, 281.

⁸⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 18.

⁸⁹⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 62, 85. W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 36.

In bringing together the sensual and the saintly in works like *Beata Beatrix* Rossetti reacted against what was considered acceptable religious imagery at the time. *Beata Beatrix* formed a marked contrast to a work such as Hunt's near-contemporary *Morning Prayer*, which was admired by the *Athenaeum* in 1865 for its pious rendering of a young girl half-kneeling beside her bed at her morning devotions.⁹⁰⁰ In painting *Beata Beatrix* Rossetti had no doubt had in mind Dante's *La Vita Nuova* which he had translated in 1847-48, in which Beatrice, after whom Dante passionately yearned, was described as so holy that she also evoked desire in God the Father.⁹⁰¹ Rossetti depicted Beatrice at the moment of death as though yearning for her heavenly lover. Writing to Georgiana Cowper-Temple on 26 March 1871, he quoted from *Vita Nuova* in an attempt to explain his composition: "'Quella beata Beatrice... gloriosamente mira nella fascia die colui est per omnia soecula benedictus'" ["that blessed Beatrice... now gazeth continually on His countenance who is blessed throughout all ages"].⁹⁰²

The idea was reversed in a pen and ink study for *The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice* (S.116 F; c. 1852; fig. 98), in which it was Dante who was shown on knees with his head straining up towards the figure of Beatrice, rather than Beatrice to an unseen Godhead. Beatrice, unveiling herself like the God who deigned to be involved with his creation, bends over him. Dante's hands, which are outstretched on his lap, powerfully symbolise his longing for her, as in *Beata Beatrix* hers had for God. Significantly the study became the basis of the predella commissioned by Graham in 1872 for his version of *Beata Beatrix* (S.168 R3 A; fig. 99), so that in this instance a direct link was made between Beatrice's saintly, ecstatic love for the Divine and Dante's love for Beatrice, between sacred and profane. Rossetti further extended the link, inscribing below the predella a phrase from the *Song of Songs*, that of the heavenly Bridegroom calling his mystical bride, "Veni Sponsa de Libano". Rossetti wrote to Graham on 11 March 1873, "I hope you have kindly pardoned all this delay in sending you the Beata Beatrix, but I assure you the picture has been the gainer by it".⁹⁰³

Rossetti made a sensual return to the theme of the soul as the Bride of Christ in *The Beloved* (S.182; fig. 100) of 1865-66, in which he showed the Bride from the *Song of Songs* unveiling for Christ, her Mystical Groom.⁹⁰⁴ He inscribed on the frame a

⁹⁰⁰"Fine Art Gossip", *Athenaeum*, no. 1989 (9 December 1865), p. 811.

⁹⁰¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 80.

⁹⁰²Surtees, 1971, p. 94. W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 95.

⁹⁰³Horner, p. 25.

⁹⁰⁴In early and medieval theology the *Song of Songs* was consistently read as an

paraphrase of some of the Bible's most sensuous lines, from both the Canticles and *Psalm* 45 which was a royal epithalamium:

My Beloved is mine and I am his.
 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
 for thy love is better than wine.
 She shall be brought unto the King
 in raiment of needlework: the virgins
 that be her fellows shall bear her
 company, and shall be brought unto thee.⁹⁰⁵

Through the lilies and branches which he had frame and contain the exotic "green Japanese lady's dress", the delicate Peruvian featherwork headpiece with its flowers and golden butterflies, the dark green bridal headdress, and the gilt casket holding delicate pink and yellow roses, in the midst of which Marie Ford's features emerge, Rossetti suggested the luxuriant abundance and exoticism of the texts. He also gave a sense of the enclosure spoken of in the Canticles to symbolise the sexual state of the Beloved:

A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up,
 a fountain sealed.⁹⁰⁶

The beautiful woman in the centre of Rossetti's composition adorned with exotic costume jewelry accorded with the text in which the Beloved declares to his Bride, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold".⁹⁰⁷

The necklace worn by the right hand bridesmaid, who was modelled on Frederick Sandys' gypsy mistress Keomi, is reminiscent of a rosary, being made up of alternate precious stones and hung with a pendant.⁹⁰⁸ Since the time of St Ambrose the Bride of the Canticles had been identified with the Virgin, most famously by St Bernard in his sermons on the *Song of Songs*. Rossetti's awareness of this theology is evidenced by "Ave" and his 1855 *Annunciation* in which he drew on the language of the *Song of Songs*. Jameson had opened *Legends of the Madonna* with a description of the Virgin

allegory of the love between Christ and the Church, or the individual Soul. This can be seen in the writings of Methodius of Olympus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose. Rossetti owned a copy of "*Quia Amore Languet*", a poem based on the *Song of Songs*, dating from around the fifteenth century, in which Christ speaks directly to the Soul (F. J. Furnivall (ed.), *Political, Religious and Love Poems from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth MS. and other Sources* (London: Early English Text Society, 1866), p. 181; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2).

⁹⁰⁵*Song of Songs* 2.16; 1.2; *Psalm* 45.14.

⁹⁰⁶*Song of Songs* 4.12.

⁹⁰⁷*Song of Songs* 1.10.

⁹⁰⁸Wilkins, pp. 44 ff. A rosary was listed as amongst Rossetti's belongings at his death (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 19, lot 346).

as "the mystical Spouse of the Canticles; the glorified Bride of a celestial Bridegroom".⁹⁰⁹ It is not unlikely that it was from this source that Rossetti had had the idea to link *Psalm* 45.15 with the Canticles. Jameson, describing the robes worn by the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, quoted from this *Psalm*:

Her blue tunic is richly embroidered with gold and gems, or lined with ermine or stuff of various colours, in accordance with a text of Scripture: 'The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in a vesture of needlework'.⁹¹⁰

The Beloved was originally to have been a *Beatrice*, but Rossetti had set his heart on painting the Bride from the Canticles.⁹¹¹ It may have been Ellen Heaton, who commissioned the painting, who had originally specified *Beatrice* as the subject matter. Indeed, she had commissioned a number of Dante subjects from Rossetti. She was certainly reluctant to give up the original scheme, and finally lost interest when Rossetti continued with his own plans for *The Beloved*. In his letters Rossetti continually tried to soothe Heaton, for example, writing on 4 July 1863, "I believe you will be tempted to stick to it [*The Beloved*], but if not, I will paint you a *Beatrice* instead whenever I find a suitable model."⁹¹² But he proceeded with his own plans. On 1 August he wrote, "All things considered, I think it would be better to suspend decision till the work is more forward. I might possibly be beginning a *Beatrice* if a model turns up." In his letter of 22 December 1863, having found a possible alternative buyer for his painting, Rossetti enquired, "so, may I consider your interest in the picture to have ceased?"⁹¹³

Rossetti never intended to paint anything other than the Bride from the *Song of Songs*. His excuses were weak from the start. He had written to Heaton on 2 July 1863 reasoning that the model, Marie Ford, did "not turn out to make a perfect *Beatrice*". But the blue-eyed, red-haired Ford as pictured in the final rendering of the Bride accorded perfectly with Dante's description of *Beatrice* as fair and soulful eyed. She certainly did not make a perfect Shulamite, as the Bride from the *Song of Songs* was

⁹⁰⁹Jameson, 1857, p. 4.

⁹¹⁰Jameson, 1857, p. li.

⁹¹¹It was not a huge leap from *Beatrice* to the Bride of the Canticles. In *The Divine Comedy* Dante aligned *Beatrice* with the Bride, having her hailed by angels singing, "Come, spouse! from Libanus" (Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Canto XXX, line 12, p. 309; *Song of Songs* 4.8).

⁹¹²Surtees, 1971, p. 105.

⁹¹³Surtees, 1971, p. 105.

"black, but comely".⁹¹⁴ However, Rossetti admitted, "the *Bride* from *Solomon's Song* is specially in my head".⁹¹⁵ He may have received an impetus in his choice of subject from Shields who had just made a translation of *Song of Songs*, a copy of which he sent to Rossetti, or gained inspiration from an 1859 translation, *The Book of Canticles*, owned by his brother, but the Soul and her mystical Spouse was a subject which, as Rossetti stated in his next letter to Shields, "I myself delight in and have always had an eye to".⁹¹⁶

When organising his bedroom at Cheyne Walk, it was to this theme that Rossetti returned. Treffry Dunn in his *Recollections of Rossetti* described "an old fashioned sofa" which was to be found in this room, which had "three little panels let into the back whereon Rossetti had painted the figures of Love, The Lover and The Beloved" (fig. 101). This may have been a purely secular design. However, Rossetti did own a copy of Jonathan Birch's *Divine Emblems* in which a cupid with a halo was given to represent the Divine Spirit or Bridegroom.⁹¹⁷ Rossetti also hung on the wall of his room a painting in which the Soul was personified as a female figure guided by a golden hand towards the Promised Land.⁹¹⁸

Rossetti's desire to contrast notions of the physical and the spiritual spouse became increasingly evident in the 1860s. In 1861, as a member of the newly established Morris firm, he designed a panel for an oak cabinet by J. P. Seddon, which was exhibited at the Medieval Court of the 1862 International Exhibition, London (fig. 102). This panel was one of ten which adorned the cabinet, all with subjects taken from the life of King René of Anjou. Brown, who suggested the series and designed the panel intended to represent *Architecture*, related something of the history of the king: "King René was titular king of Naples, Sicily, Jerusalem, and Cyprus, and father of our celebrated and unfortunate Margaret, Queen to Henry VI of England. He was a poet, architect, painter, sculptor, and musician..."⁹¹⁹ It was on the basis of this interest in the arts that the panels were conceived.

Among the other collaborating artists were Burne-Jones, who designed the panels representing *Painting* and *Sculpture*; Morris, who created the decorative backgrounds

⁹¹⁴*Song of Songs* 1.5

⁹¹⁵Surtees, 1971, p. 105.

⁹¹⁶Mills, p. 91. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁹¹⁷Birch adopted the amorous language of the Canticles for the explanatory texts of this book (Birch, pp. 1, 59).

⁹¹⁸Dunn, pp. 24-25.

⁹¹⁹F. M. Brown, 1865 exh. cat., No. 191 Picadilly (Seddon, p. 6).

for each panel; and Val Prinsep, who executed many of the smaller quatrefoil panels. Rossetti's design, *Music* (fig. 103), was the only one of the four main panels in which it was not King René but his wife Isabella of Lorraine who was shown engaged in the particular art form.⁹²⁰ This was strange as King René was notable as a keen musician. In the source probably most familiar to Rossetti, Walter Scott's *Anne of Geierstein*, Margaret of Anjou related how in old age it was "in sonnets and in music... in harping and rhyming" that her father yet found comfort.⁹²¹ However, by having Queen Isabella play the chamber organ rather than her husband Rossetti created an image which essentially developed the ideas he had expressed in his 1857 design for "The Palace of Art", albeit a secular heroine replaced St Cecilia, and it was no longer an angel but a human lover, King René, who stole a kiss. It is perhaps appropriate that King René, who had been responsible for the restoration of the Carmelite monastery at Angers and also the Carmelite church at Loudun, should have been represented in a scene which mirrored a saintly image.⁹²² In the "Missal of René of Anjou" in the British Museum, it was stated that King René, who "was not only a patron of art but a most exquisite illuminator", had himself painted many "graceful female saints". Further, Lawrence, writing in 1849, had wondered whether these saints had also been portraits.⁹²³ Rossetti's *Music* design exemplified the way in which Rossetti was to secularise many saintly images. He had King René work the bellows to the organ, in this way literally becoming the force behind the Queen's music. In so doing Rossetti provided a direct correlation with St Cecilia's reliance on the power of God, who was in turn her Spouse.

Rossetti took this secularisation even further in the oil painting which he worked up in 1864 from the panel, on the commission of John Hamilton Trist of Brighton (S.175; fig. 104). Using the King's arms, EN DIEU EN SOI, "Of God, of self", which had been inscribed in roundels in the top right hand corners of each of the four main panels of this cabinet, and punning the King's name, René, Rossetti suggested that physical love might somehow attain to the nature of the divine and become redemptive.⁹²⁴ He

⁹²⁰D. G. Rossetti's King René's Honeymoon", *Apollo*, vol. 34 (Dec 1941), p. 153.

⁹²¹W. Scott, *Anne of Geierstein*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1829), vol. 3, p. 20.

⁹²²E. Harris, "Mary in the Burning Bush: Nicholas Froment's Triptych at Aix-en-Provence", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 1 (1937-38), p. 282 n. This was also perhaps appropriate for Seddon's cabinet as a whole, the arts at times being likened to a religious sisterhood, eg. "But the Arts do not stand alone - are themselves a sisterhood, if we may so speak - many orders, but one religion" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 69 (March 1851), p. 305).

⁹²³H. Lawrence, pp. 96-98.

⁹²⁴Vallance, p. 61. Surtees, 1971, p. 101. Seddon, p. 10.

placed a banner winding itself around the organ which read, IN DEO IN SE RENAIVS, "Born again in God and self".⁹²⁵

The cabinet itself had mixed the religious and the secular. It had been designed as an architectural desk for Seddon with his family's amorial bearings given prominence on the adjustable easel at the centre, yet it had also included such features as an inlaid copy of the maze from the floor of Amiens Cathedral. The exhibition spaces of which it became a part echoed this duality. When the cabinet was first exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition, the exhibition building brought something of the sacred to the secular. Designed by Captain Fowke, it was described by Burges in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in ecclesiastical terms as "a double-aisled nave, terminated at either end by a dome, with transepts and choir."⁹²⁶ Furthermore, when exhibited in the New Gallery, Regent Street in 1898, the cabinet was given a prime position in the Central Hall before two busts depicting the Madonna and Child, and a sculpted figure of a young Christ, holding a banner with which he asserted his identity as the Light of the World (fig. 105).⁹²⁷ This was appropriate considering René's religious orientation. The Virgin had been the chief object of devotion for the Carmelites whom René had patronised, and in the missal he had illuminated he had depicted himself as being watched over by Christ. However, the situation was also ironic considering Rossetti's rather subversive intentions.

An important influence for Rossetti was Thomas Gordon Hake's *Vates, or The Philosophy of Madness* (1840). Although it was in 1844 that the novel had first made its impression, twenty five years later Rossetti still regarded it as a "masterpiece", and declared that he hoped to "make a friend of" its author.⁹²⁸ He had attempted to discover the writer in 1860, but although Rossetti had found out his identity, Hake's presence abroad had meant that he had been unable to gain any personal

⁹²⁵In his smaller *Gardening* design for the cabinet Rossetti also may have intended to desacramentalise conventional religious imagery. Seddon considered the design awkward, the Queen being "quite 'up a tree'" (Seddon, p. 12). King René had commissioned an altarpiece for the Church of the Grands Carmes at Aix, the centrepiece of which showed Mary seated within the Tree of Life. Interestingly in 1857 a pamphlet had been published in Paris by Abbé Poquet, *Iconographie de l'Arbe de Jessé*, which had dealt with this particular symbolism. Three years later an article also appeared in *Revue de l'Art chrétien* by Abbé Corblet with the title, "Étude iconographique sur l'Arbe de Jessé". (A. Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. vii).

⁹²⁶Burges, 1862, p. 664.

⁹²⁷Seddon, pp. 1-2, vii-viii.

⁹²⁸Rossetti to W. B. Scott, 9 October 1869 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7).

introduction.⁹²⁹ Hake developed his tale around a confession to a monk, Fra Pulci. The speaker, whose own sister had been an inmate of a Florentine convent, expressed to Fra Pulci his passion for Maria Ferrini in terms of religious devotion, "I seemed seated in the aisles of a cathedral overcome with religious fear. The anthem flowed into the remote chancel; its prayer kissed the vaulted roof... As if in prayer to the Holy Virgin, I thought not of, but towards my Maria, as if to affect her, a heavenly being, with remote sympathy".⁹³⁰

In the insane world of *Vates*, Hake had his protagonist attempt to convince his second lover, Giuditta dell' Angelo, of his actual divinity. Therefore Vates artificially illuminated his head so that "the mock radiance appeared as streams around the head of a Saint". Owning a statue of Christ carrying the Cross, he also exchanged the head for his own bust. He declared to Giuditta, "we shall shortly be united for ever... Our union will not be terrestrial, for I am not of this world. Our bonds will be spiritual... Let thy hours be spent in fasting and prayer." Using artifice, Vates had an apparition of the Saviour, with his face, appear to Giuditta and declare, "'Thou art my beloved bride!'"⁹³¹ Vates' daring and blasphemous actions were all pursued in the name of artistic beauty, and appropriately the work was renamed *Valdarno, or The Ordeal of Art-worship* when it appeared as the first part of a trilogy by Hake in *Ainsworth's Magazine* from 1850 to 1854, along with *St Veronica; or the Ordeal of Fire*, and *Velthinas; or the Ordeal of Sacrifice*.⁹³² W. M. Rossetti described Hake's book as a work which "seethed in my brother's head".⁹³³

This merging of the religious and sexual had also been a feature of another Gothic novel familiar to Rossetti, Lewis' *The Monk*. In this book Antonia's anticipation of Ambrosio's sermon verged on the amatory: Antonia "felt a pleasure fluttering in her bosom which till then had been unknown to her", and when Ambrosio began to speak "the sound of his voice seemed to penetrate her very soul".⁹³⁴ Later, Matilda, in order to gain a place in Ambrosio's affections, modelled as the Virgin Mary and had the resultant painting delivered to the Abbot as his personal icon. The painting provoked disturbing, sexual dreams as Ambrosio slept, dreams in which the painting, Pygmalion-

⁹²⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁹³⁰T. G. Hake, *Vates: or the Philosophy of Madness* (London: J. W. Southgate, 1840), pp. 9-10, 12.

⁹³¹T. G. Hake, 1840, pp. 27-31.

⁹³²T. G. Hake, 1840, pp. 99-100. Rossetti to W. B. Scott, 9 October 1869 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7).

⁹³³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁹³⁴M. Lewis, *The Monk* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 18.

like, came to life. When Matilda then revealed herself, Ambrosio easily succumbed to her seductions.⁹³⁵

Similarly Rossetti was taken with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) in which religious and sexual ecstasy were interwoven. Rodolphe, with whom Madame Bovary had her first love affair, compared her to "a madonna on a pedestal, in a high place, secure and immaculate".⁹³⁶ Madame Bovary herself, who had been educated in a convent, declared to Léon, "I would very much like... to be a Sister of Mercy".⁹³⁷ She arranged her first clandestine meeting with Léon in the cathedral of Notre Dame which would be transformed into her shrine: "The church was arranged about her; the vaulting was curving over to receive into its shadow the confession of her love; the windows were blazing to illuminate her face, and the incense would be burning that she might bear the appearance of an angel, in a perfumed cloud."⁹³⁸ Indeed, Bovary found religious and secular devotion to be not so far removed, between love affairs turning to religion as a suitable outlet for her passion: "Whenever she went to kneel at her Gothic prie-dieu, she called upon her Lord in the same sweet words she had once murmured to her lover, in the raptures of adultery."⁹³⁹ A two volumed 1859 edition of *Madame Bovary* was among the books listed in Rossetti's library in 1866.⁹⁴⁰ It continued to hold a fascination for the artist, who wrote to his brother on 3 January 1873, "Have I still Madame Bovary at Chelsea?"⁹⁴¹

Rossetti's 1873 oil *La Ghirlandata* (S.232; fig. 106) is to all intents and purposes a sensualised, secularised St Cecilia.⁹⁴² Angels listen to the figure playing her harp, on which has been placed a rose garland, a common symbol of female martyrdom. Rossetti specifically called the attendant figures "angels", rather than "cupids", in a

⁹³⁵M. Lewis, pp. 81-82, 69.

⁹³⁶G. Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 129.

⁹³⁷Flaubert, 1992, p. 189.

⁹³⁸Flaubert, 1992, pp. 193-95.

⁹³⁹Flaubert, 1992, p. 173.

⁹⁴⁰Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

⁹⁴¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 274.

⁹⁴²Grieve has suggested that Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata* (S. 114) may have had its origin in Giovanni Bellini's *S. Dominic* (1515) which had become part of the collection of the South Kensington Museum in 1856. He also notes similarities between Rossetti's illustrations for his sister's *Goblin Market* (1862) and Titian's *Madonna and Child with S. John the Baptist and S. Catherine* which the National Gallery acquired in 1860 (E. Prettejohn (ed.), *After the Pre-Raphaelites* (Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 22, 24).

letter to W. B. Scott of 1873.⁹⁴³ William Davies had written enthusiastically to Rossetti in April 1873 of the Italian tour he had just made, mentioning Raphael's *Santa Cecilia* in Bologna amongst the sights his friend "must not fail to see", and in doing so he may well have renewed Rossetti's interest in the subject.⁹⁴⁴ Rossetti made a crayon drawing around 1873 of St Cecilia playing on a stringed instrument, described in a subsequent sale catalogue as:

12 ST CELIA She plays on a musical instrument with two plectra, while an infant Angel murmurs a tune to her. Half-figure, partially completed...⁹⁴⁵

Rossetti may have been aware of Jameson's discussion of how saintly iconography was often derived from pagan sources: "The Church found herself obliged to accept and mould to her own objects the exotic elements she could not eradicate".⁹⁴⁶ This idea was refuted by men like Kingsley: "Shame on those who, calling themselves Christians, repine that a Cecilia or a Magdalen replaced an Isis and a Venus".⁹⁴⁷ However, rather than making any direct allusion to this debate, Rossetti demonstrated in his sensual images a more fundamental intrigue with notions of spiritual espousement which he discovered could lend poignancy to descriptions of physical passion. In his poem "The Kiss", published in his 1870 poems, Rossetti returned to the theme of a spiritual wedding in order to describe a physical, sexual experience:

What...
Can rob this body of honour, or denude
This soul of wedding-raiment worn to-day?
For lo! even now my lady's lips did play
With these my lips...⁹⁴⁸

Similarly, in "First Love Remembered" Rossetti alluded to chaste spiritual union, "Innocent maidenhood awoke / To married innocence", to commemorate a physical love relationship.⁹⁴⁹ William Michael wrote that his brother intended *La Ghirlandata* to be "worthy of a celestial audience", but painting Alexa Wilding gazing siren-like out at the spectator, Rossetti did not suggest that it was only angels she sought to

⁹⁴³Rossetti to W. B. Scott [summer 1873?] (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:9).

⁹⁴⁴Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 2:19.

⁹⁴⁵*Catalogue of the Remaining Works of... D. G. Rossetti...*, 1883, no. 12, p. 4 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:20).

⁹⁴⁶Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xix.

⁹⁴⁷Kingsley, 1849, p. 291.

⁹⁴⁸D. G. Rossetti, *Poems* (1870), *Early Italian Poets* (1861) & *Dante and his Circle* (1874), ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent, 1904), p. 104.

⁹⁴⁹D. G. Rossetti, 1904, p. 128.

allure.⁹⁵⁰ Rather Rossetti flagrantly portrayed her as an object of physical desire. The crown of roses may gently allude to the martyr's crown, but it also evokes amatory celebrations. It was certainly no accident that Rossetti interlaced this garland with honeysuckle, "virgin lamps of scent and dew".⁹⁵¹ The references to saintly legend and divine communion only serve to elevate the nature of sexual love experience.

⁹⁵⁰W. M. Rossetti, "Notes on Rossetti and His Works", *Art Journal*, vol. 46 (May 1884), p. 206.

⁹⁵¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 298.

Ch. 3: Delicious Wounds

In *Venus Verticordia* (S.173; fig. 107) of 1864-68, Rossetti potently brought together in a painting of considerable eroticism images of Venus, Eve, the Madonna and Saints in ecstasy.⁹⁵² Firstly, and most obviously, he presented the viewer with Venus, the goddess of love, with her attributes of rose, apple of Discord and Cupid's arrow. He also looked to representations of Eve, Alexa Wilding representing a long haired *femme fatale* surrounded by lush vegetation and flowers suggestive of a Garden of Eden, and holding possibly the forbidden fruit in her hand. In having Venus expose one breast only, Rossetti contentiously drew from the language of the Renaissance painters of Madonnas who wanted to emphasise the Mary's role as nurturing mother and 'Ever-Virgin'.⁹⁵³ In a letter Rossetti wrote to Watts-Dunton in October 1877 Rossetti referred to *Venus Verticordia* as "Mary and her Bubs".⁹⁵⁴

Rossetti's composition also bears similarities with representations of the Madonna Dolorosa, in which the Virgin was depicted swooning in a state of pain which appeared close to ecstasy, and in which a dagger was aimed at her heart either by an angel or the Virgin herself.⁹⁵⁵ Interestingly in 1847-49 Rossetti had translated a sonnet by the

⁹⁵²Rossetti owned a copy of a short early English poem entitled, "Eve, Mary and Paradise" (Leaf 143, MS. Harl. 7322, in F. J. Furnivall, p. 257).

⁹⁵³M. R. Miles, *Carnal Knowledge: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Tunbridge Wells: Burnes & Oates, 1992), pp. 139-41. M. R. Miles, "The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Female Nudity and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture", *The Female Body in Western Culture*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 193-208.

⁹⁵⁴Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1517. "Bubs, bubbies (common), a woman's breasts. From bub, drink" (A. Barrière & C. G. Leland, *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant*, 2 vols. (London: George Bell, 1897), vol. 1, p. 178). However, *Venus Verticordia* was repainted in 1877 and Surtees points out a similarity between this head and Rossetti's *Mary Magdalene* (S. 250) of the same year, for which a housemaid "Mary" possibly modelled (letter 10 March 1977; Elzea, p. 124). Prinsep wrote that for Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones, "all maids were always called Mary, whatever name might have been bestowed on them" (Prinsep, "Oxford Circle", 1904, p. 171).

⁹⁵⁵Venus was not normally depicted holding an arrow except to tease Cupid or when handing an arrow to him. Neither was she traditionally shown piercing herself. Cupid was sometimes represented pointing an arrow at Venus, as in A. van der Werff's *Venus and Cupid*, which Rossetti may have seen in the collection of the Duke of Wellington at Apsley House, London. A far more common image was that of the Virgin's heart being piercing by a single sword or seven swords surrounding and pointing towards her in a stylised manner to represent her seven sorrows.

thirteenth century poet, Fra Guittone D'Arezzo, entitled "To the Blessed Virgin Mary", in which the "Lady of Heaven", Eve and Cupid's arrows were juxtaposed:

Lady of Heaven, the mother glorified
Of glory, which is Jesus, - He whose death
Us from the gates of Hell delivereth
And our first parents error sets aside: -
Behold this earthly Love, how his darts glide -
How sharpened - to what fate - throughout this earth!⁹⁵⁶

However, most significant in the context of this discussion, was the link which Rossetti made with the experience of St Teresa of Ávila, who had a vision in which an angel plunged a long golden dart into her heart leaving her "utterly consumed by the great love of God." Teresa declared that the "pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans", and the "sweetness... so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease".⁹⁵⁷ She described this experience as a "wooing" between God and the soul.⁹⁵⁸ This idea became a keynote in the writings of St John of the Cross, Teresa's most well known follower, who was admired by the aesthete Arthur Symons. Symons declared, "this monk can give lessons to lovers."⁹⁵⁹ Like Teresa, St John of the Cross in his mystical love poems described spiritual ecstasy as an arrow piercing his breast:

O flame of living love,
That dost eternally
Pierce through my soul with consuming heat,
Since there's no help above,
Make thou an end of me,
And break the bond of this encounter sweet.

Symons found these lines to "ache with desire".⁹⁶⁰

In Rossetti's painting, Alexa Wilding was shown haloed and sensualised, pointing an arrow at her bare left breast. Over her head flies a bird, suggestive of spiritual experience. In a painting of St Teresa by Fra Juan de la Miseria, in the possession of

⁹⁵⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 2, p. 306.

⁹⁵⁷Saint Teresa, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila*, trans. by J. M. Cohen (Middlesex: Penguin, 1957), p. 210.

⁹⁵⁸R. Ford, *Handbook for Travellers in Spain*, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1855, 3rd rev. ed.), vol. 2, pp. 746-47.

⁹⁵⁹Symons owned an original edition of St John of the Cross' *Obras Espirituales* (1618). A. Symons, "The Poetry of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz", *Contemporary Review*, vol. 75 (April 1899), pp. 545-46.

⁹⁶⁰Symons, 1899, p. 545.

the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Valladolid, a bird was depicted flying down towards Teresa, in order to symbolise her contact with the divine. Indeed, in her writings Teresa likened the soul in a state of ecstasy to a "small bird", "volatile and delicate... going whither the Lord wills".⁹⁶¹ Ford, to whom Jameson on occasion referred, wrote in his Spanish handbook that St Teresa was "a great favourite with Spanish artists, who generally represent her as dying away, while an angel touches her heart with a fire-tipped arrow", or "writing at a table, while a dove at her ear whispers 'News from her spouse.'"⁹⁶²

Rossetti may have been familiar with the writings of St Teresa through his father's interest in mystical treatises. "I could send you a hundred things of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which I have amassed in my extracts", Gabriele Rossetti wrote to Charles Lyell on 21 July 1840.⁹⁶³ W. M. Rossetti himself owned a biography of St Teresa by Alexandre Dumas.⁹⁶⁴ There had been a renewal of interest during the nineteenth century in the ecstatic saints. Rossetti's friend Patmore was one of those to display a marked interest in such. Like Rossetti, he was intrigued by the link between profane and saintly love:

Who is this Fair
Whom each hath seen?
What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty be
Not thou, but God?⁹⁶⁵

In his autobiography Patmore described his study of "ancient Catholic books of devotion", and of "the writings of Catholic saints and doctors".⁹⁶⁶ Symons clearly saw Patmore's mysticism to have "its counterpart in the writings of certain of the Catholic mystics: it has at once the clear-eyed dialectic of the Schoolmen and the august heat of

⁹⁶¹G. C. Graham, *Santa Teresa*, 2 vols. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1894), vol. 1, pp. 197-98.

⁹⁶²Ford, vol. 2, p. 745. Rossetti may also have looked to Bernini's famous *Ecstasy of St Teresa* in Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. The work of Bernini was familiar to Rossetti, as a sculpture by him, the tomb of Lady Jane Cheyne, was situated in the Chelsea Old Church, which was in close proximity to Tudor House on the intersection between Old Church Street and Cheyne Walk.

⁹⁶³W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 141.

⁹⁶⁴Alexandre Dumas, *Térésa* (Caligula, 1838). Later on he also acquired Helen H. Colvill's illustrated *St Teresa of Spain* (1909). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

⁹⁶⁵Champneys, 1990, vol. 2, p. 3.

⁹⁶⁶Champneys, 1990, vol. 2, pp. 49, 53.

Saint Theresa".⁹⁶⁷ Champneys too noted Patmore's debt to such writings, specifically those of St John of the Cross.⁹⁶⁸

Richard Crashaw's three poems devoted to St Teresa, "The Flaming Heart" (1648), "An Apologie" (1646), and "A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa" (1646) were well known. In the latter, which was in part quoted in Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders*, the poet described how "Love touched her heart... she breathes all fire; / Her weak breast heaves with strong desire".⁹⁶⁹ Addressing the saint herself, Crashaw declared, "Thou art Love's victim... His is the dart must make the death... A dart thrice dipped in that rich flame / Which writes thy Spouse's radiant name". For Crashaw the angelic dart which pierced Teresa's breast was one with Cupid's. The death he described can not be separated from sexual orgasm:

... a death, in which who dies
Loves his death and dies again,
And would for ever so be slain...

Indeed, Crashaw talked of "delicious wounds" and of kissing "the sweetly killing dart!" In Rossetti's painting Venus stares compellingly out at the viewer, and this too has a parallel in Crashaw's poem, in which the poet anticipated:

What joys shall seize thy soul when she,
Bending her blessed eyes on thee,
Those second smiles of heaven, shall dart
Her mild rays through thy melting heart!⁹⁷⁰

With this poem and Crashaw's "Flaming Heart" in mind, it is interesting that there should be a correlation between the heart emblem in Rossetti's 1866 *Regina Cordium* (S.190; fig. 108) and the heart containing the name of Jesus, I.H.S. which was often placed in paintings of St Teresa.⁹⁷¹ Rossetti replaced the insignia of Christ with an image of Cupid.

J. A. Froude, writing an appraisal of St Teresa's life in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1862 declared, "The materials of her history are so excellent that we can examine her actions as if they were the incidents of yesterday."⁹⁷² An English translation had been made of

⁹⁶⁷Symons, 1923, p. 194.

⁹⁶⁸Champneys, 1900, vol. 2, p. 5.

⁹⁶⁹Jameson, 1850, p. 433.

⁹⁷⁰G. W. Williams (ed.), *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York University Press, 1972), pp. 52-58.

⁹⁷¹Jameson, 1850, p. 441.

⁹⁷²J. A. Froude, "Santa Teresa: A Psychological Study", *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 65 (January 1862), p. 59.

the writings of the saint by T. Matthew in 1642, and A. Woodhead had written an account of her life in 1671.⁹⁷³ In the nineteenth century J. Dalton had published an incomplete edition of letters, as well as a number of translations of the saint's work.⁹⁷⁴ Having become an increasingly popular figure in the nineteenth century, St Teresa was the subject of a number of articles in contemporary journals, Catholic, Protestant and secular. Osgood made a survey of her life, writings and influence in an article in the *Christian Examiner* in 1849, using as his principal source Abbé Migne's *Complete Works of the Ascetic School of Spain*, which, published in Paris earlier that decade, provided a cheap, accessible and fairly comprehensive study of St Teresa.⁹⁷⁵ A new French three volumed edition of her letters with a biography, the most complete and faithful to date, was the subject of a paper in the *Dublin Review* in 1863.⁹⁷⁶

Rossetti was known to have kept up to date with *Fraser's Magazine* in which Christina and himself were often reviewed, and Froude's description of St Teresa in this journal would have had particular appeal for him.⁹⁷⁷ Froude related how as children Teresa and her brother Roderick were enamoured of knights and ladies, as well as saints and martyrs, and would compose love songs and romantic tales, and build themselves hermit cells in the garden. As an adult, Froude described Teresa as "of a passionate impulsive nature" with "wild views and imaginations", a woman who fell in love with God.⁹⁷⁸

The love which twines its links within my breast
Makes God my prisoner, gives my own heart rest.
Oh Bliss to see my God my captive lie.
Oh death to live, Oh life to die.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷³Sir Tobias Matthew (trans.), *The Flaming Hart, or the Life of... S. Teresa* (London, 1862). Abraham Woodhead, *The Life of the Holy Mother S. Teresa* (London, 1671).

⁹⁷⁴Rev John Dalton (trans.), *Book of the Foundations* (London, 1853); *The Interior Castle; or, the Mansions* (London, 1852); *The Letters of Saint Teresa* (London, 1853); *The Life of Saint Teresa* (London, 1851); *The Way of Perfection and Conceptions of Divine Love* (London, 1852). "The Letters of S. Teresa", *Dublin Review*, vol. 53 (October 1863), pp. 419-20.

⁹⁷⁵M. Migne (ed.), *Oeuvres très-complètes de Sainte Thérèse,... de S. Pierre d'Alcantara, de S. Jean de la Croix et du Bienheureux Jean d'Avila...*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1840-45). S. Osgood, "St Teresa and the Devotees of Spain", *Christian Examiner*, vol. 46 (March 1849), pp. 200-228.

⁹⁷⁶P. Marcel Bouix (ed.), *Lettres de Sainte Tèrese*, 3 vols. (Paris: Lecoffre, 1863). "Letters", *Dublin Review*, 1863, pp. 419-57.

⁹⁷⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 177, 227.

⁹⁷⁸Froude, pp. 60, 64, 65.

⁹⁷⁹Froude, p. 72.

This hymn by Teresa, quoted by Froude, draws on themes to be found in the sonnet which Rossetti wrote for *Venus Verticordia*, which, as with so many of Rossetti's other poems and prose tales, concerns love, death and enthrallment. These themes Rossetti most cogently expressed in "The Orchard Pit" (c. 1871), an iconographical development of *Venus Verticordia*. In this scheme for a poem, the Siren calls first "Come to Love", then "Come to Life", and finally "Come to Death", and in which "Death's name... was the very swoon of all sweetest things that be."⁹⁸⁰

The story of St Teresa may have attracted Rossetti on a fundamental level because of the importance she placed on art. She wrote, "I had so little aptitude for picturing things in my mind that, if I did not actually see a thing, I could make no use at all of my imagination... This is why I was so fond of pictures." For her edification she hung round the walls of her cell many such devotional images. She compared the pleasure she gained from gazing on these images of Christ to the way in which "worldly men enjoy gazing on portraits of those whom they love".⁹⁸¹ Indeed, it could be argued that it was these images which provoked her ecstatic visions. Ford declared, "In Spain, where the passions are fierce, the monks, victims of unnatural celibacy, fell in love with paintings and images of the Virgin, as the Pagans did with those of Venus".⁹⁸² In *Venus Verticordia*, a painting of considerable eroticism which brought together the saintly and pagan, it is significant that Rossetti alluded to a figure derided by Protestants for her sensual response to art.

Swinburne, with whom Rossetti was in close contact from 1857, and who came to live with the artist at Tudor House for a short time from 1862, was struck by the latent sexuality of Catholic legend. Deciding to write a poem which gave "a pat to the Papist interest", he deliberately chose a legend in which sexual and spiritual worlds merge, that of St Dorothy and Theophilus.⁹⁸³ He may well have seen Rossetti's composition

⁹⁸⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 430.

⁹⁸¹St Teresa, 1957, p. 68.

⁹⁸²Ford, vol. 2, p. 747.

⁹⁸³Lang, vol. 1, p. 38. Swinburne tended to mock Catholic tradition. In a 1869 letter to Rossetti he had included a quote which he claimed to have been taken from a medieval carol:

Hark, the herald angels crow

Here's a boy - but not for Joe!

Not for Joseph - Oh no, no! (Lang, vol. 2, p. 72).

Making oblique references to the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*, he again wrote to Rossetti in 1870 claiming to have found a "fragment of an address from S. Joseph to S. Mary... in the Breviarium S. Mariae in Silvis, ed. R[everend]issimus Pater Severinus":

So this is your bloody religion -

dealing with the subject. St Dorothea, beautiful and eloquent, refused to denounce Christ at the order of the governor of Caesarea, Sapritius. She did not fear martyrdom because it would bring her all the quicker before her heavenly bridegroom. Adopting the language of the *Song of Songs* she declared, "by his side are joys eternal; and in his garden grow celestial fruits and roses that never fade."⁹⁸⁴ In Swinburne's poem Dorothy was lusted after by Theophilus and King Gabalus as "a soft thing for a man to touch", but prayed to God, "Let me die maiden". Christ was her Bridegroom, and heaven "a red mouth as fair / As may be kissed with lips".⁹⁸⁵ Rossetti admired this poem as among Swinburne's "best pieces".⁹⁸⁶

In a letter to Edmund Gosse, Swinburne expressed amusement that Newman as a Catholic leader had found "'amorousness' and 'religion such irreconcilable elements'":

... has he never heard of the last goddess of his Church,

Marie Alacoque, the type and incarnation of *furor uterinus*?

Swinburne described the Catholic Church as "the nursing mother of 'pale religious lechery,'" and of "holy priapism and virginal nymphomania". He would not have been shocked at the allusion to St Teresa in Rossetti's erotic *Venus Verticordia*, writing in his letter to Gosse concerning:

... the filthy visions of the rampant and rabid nun who founded 'the worship of the Sacred Heart' (she called it heart; in the phallic processions they called it by a more and less proper name), ... passages from St. Theresa which certainly justify from a carnal point of view her surname of the Christian Sappho. There is much detail, if I mistake not (judging by extracts), in her invocation of her Phaon - Jesus Christ - as in the *Ode to Anactoria* itself - ⁹⁸⁷

To father your kid on a pigeon? (Lang, vol. 2, p. 98).

Yet Swinburne made frequent reference to the saints and church fathers in both his published and private writings. In the 1890s he wrote to Burne-Jones of the frequent letters he had composed to him in his head, "such letters, my dear Ned, as St Jerome might have indited [sic] to St Augustine if they had been contemporaries" (Horner, p. 134).

⁹⁸⁴Jameson, 1848, vol. 2, p. 185.

⁹⁸⁵A. C. Swinburne, *Poems*, 6 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 243, 248.

⁹⁸⁶Lang, vol. 1, p. 38.

⁹⁸⁷Swinburne to Edmund Gosse, 14 January [1876] (Gosse & Wise, vol. 1, pp. 258-60). St Margaret Mary Alacoque, *Method of Honouring the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, trans. Father of Society of Jesus (London: Richardson, 1852).

Swinburne's carnality has been the subject of much controversy, and is well documented, but it is worth considering his obsession with flagellation in the context of ascetism.⁹⁸⁸ His penchant for erotic punishment was plainly expressed in his letters, particularly those to Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Charles Augustus Howell and Simeon Solomon. Monckton Milnes, who owned an extensive library of erotica, had introduced Swinburne to the writings of the Marquis de Sade in August 1862.⁹⁸⁹ However, Swinburne was disappointed with *Justine*, which he read over with Rossetti, because, as he declared to Milnes, although Sade may have graphically described the erotic excitement of flogging, his work lacked "some sharp and subtle analysis of lust - some keen dissection of pain and pleasure".⁹⁹⁰ Despite Lord Redesdale's rosy account of life at Eton, where Swinburne had boarded from 1849-53, Swinburne had received numerous beatings there, and he wrote that a schoolboy could have "made more of a sharp short school flogging of two or three dozen cuts" than he believed Sade had in *Justine*.⁹⁹¹ However, the many references to this book in Swinburne's letters show that it had made a lasting impression on him.

Swinburne remained obsessed with stories of youthful beatings and in 1865 requested that Howell compose for him an imaginary account of a flogging by a schoolmaster, "to the last *cut* and painful buttoning up".⁹⁹² He himself made contributions to flagellation literature, collaborating with the publisher John Camden Hotten who later attempted to blackmail him over certain explicit letters and drawings, on works entitled *Flagellation and Flagellants* and *Romance of the Rod*.⁹⁹³ By this time Swinburne had begun to satisfy his masochistic tendencies at brothels, most notably Verbena Lodge, St John's Wood, known as "The Grove of the Beloved Disciple".⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁸⁸Allen, 1983, p. 116. M. W. Fisch, "Swinburne's Divine Bitches: Agents of Destruction and Synthesis", *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, vol. 7 (May 1987), pp. 1-2.

⁹⁸⁹In the summer of 1861 Milnes also acquainted Swinburne with Richard Burton, who shared their interest in flagellation (J. Pope-Hennessy, *Monckton Milnes*, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1951), vol. 2, pp. 128, 133-34).

⁹⁹⁰Lang, vol. 1, pp. 54-55.

⁹⁹¹Lord Redesdale, "Swinburne at Eton" (E. Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 318, 322). Lang, vol. 1, pp. 55, 78, 121-22.

⁹⁹²Lang, vol. 1, p. 123.

⁹⁹³Lang, vol. 1, p. xlviii. Gosse, "Swinburne's Agitation" (Lang, vol. 6, p. 247). Gosse admitted that in 1920 he and Wise had found two poems on the subject of flagellation, "The End of a Half" and "The Schoolboy's Tragedy", which they had destroyed (E. Gosse, "Swinburne's Agitation", Lang, vol. 6, pp. 234, 245).

⁹⁹⁴Lang, vol. 2, pp. 2, 133-34. A. E. Housman to Gosse, 20 January 1919 (Henry Maas (ed.), *The Letters of A. E. Housman* (London: Hart-Davis, 1971), p. 160). P.

Solomon, with whom Swinburne regularly corresponded on matters of flagellation from 1869, commented in November 1869 on the "fervent Catholic tone" of his latest letter, and declared that he "could hardly resist showing it to Sister Letitia who would have had an extasy [sic] on the spot".⁹⁹⁵ There is no doubt a hint of sarcasm in this remark, but Swinburne encouraged such connections between masochism and asceticism. Neale's "Jerusalem, My Happy Home", "an old English Catholic hymn on Paradise", appealed to him precisely for its suggestion of pleasure mixed with pain.⁹⁹⁶ In the same letter to W. M. Rossetti of 1866, in which he wrote of his "natural bias towards the Christian religion", Swinburne described flogging as one of those "established and divine institutions".⁹⁹⁷ Edwin Hatch had received a letter from him in 1858 in which he had recommended "the improving recreation of canes and chemistry, Gregorians and castigations".⁹⁹⁸

Swinburne lamented that Christians regarded St Francis to be the polar opposite to Sade.⁹⁹⁹ He was familiar with the Catholic legends of the saints as related by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*, in which were detailed the ascetic practices of the saints and the joy with which they greeted their cruel martyrdoms. He was also aware of the stories of Protestant saints, specifically through John Fox's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), in which the torturings and burnings of Protestants by Catholics were catalogued and gruesomely illustrated. In Swinburne's eyes Sade was no more than "a Christian ascetic bent on earning the salvation of the soul through mortification of the flesh".¹⁰⁰⁰ He wrote to W. M. Rossetti on 9 October 1866 of "the Blessed Donatien-Alphonse-Françoise, Marquis de Sade".¹⁰⁰¹

Henderson, *Swinburne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 127-30.

⁹⁹⁵Lang, vol. 2, p. 50.

⁹⁹⁶J. M. Neale (trans. & ed.), *Hymns Chiefly Medieval, on the Joys and Glories of Paradise* (London: J. T. Hayes, 1865). Lang, vol. 1, p. 188.

⁹⁹⁷Lang, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁹⁹⁸Hatch, who was one of the Birmingham group surrounding Burne-Jones, and a friend of Benjamin Jowett, was ordained in 1858. He later became vice-principal of Saint Mary Hall, Oxford (Lang, vol. 1, pp. 19, 14 n).

⁹⁹⁹Lang, vol. 1, p. 193.

¹⁰⁰⁰Lang, vol. 1, pp. 196-97, 57.

¹⁰⁰¹Lang, vol. 1, p. 194. Christina Rossetti sent Swinburne a copy of her *Called to be Saints*, which he "acknowledged with consummate graciousness", pointing out his particular enjoyment of "the verses for St Barnabas, Holy Innocents, SS. Philip & John" (C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 28 July 1882, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1).

In "Faustine" and "Dolores", poems which focused on the pleasure derived from bodily pain, Swinburne included many allusions to martyrdom, Christian faith and redemption:

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.¹⁰⁰²

Pain melted in tears and was pleasure;
Death mingled with blood and was life.¹⁰⁰³

In the opening dedications of both poems he specifically drew on the cult of the Virgin Mary, presenting the reader with "Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs", and declaring "Ave Faustina". This theme he developed especially in "Dolores" in which the refrain of every second stanza described Dolores as "Our Lady of Pain". She was also a "mystical rose" and afflicted with "seventy times seven" sorrows.¹⁰⁰⁴ This parallels Rossetti's mingling of Christian and pagan iconography in his poetry and painting of the time. Interestingly in a letter to Rossetti of 22 December 1869 in which Swinburne expressed his admiration for Rossetti's seditious poem "God's Graal", Swinburne directly conveyed to Rossetti his enthusiasm for a new subversive martyrology. He related a hiding received by his young cousin on being discovered reading Swinburne's poems, and, drawing from Tertullian's *Apologeticus* ("The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"), declared:

I was much tickled (otherwise tickled than he was, and elsewhere) at the idea of the blood of a young disciple having already watered the roots of the Church planted by me; and we know that '*Sanguis martyrum semen* (so to speak) *ecclesiae*.'¹⁰⁰⁵

Gosse declared that "D. G. Rossetti, from whom Swinburne had no secrets, was fully aware of his appetite for flagellation, and of the excitement which the mere idea of it caused him".¹⁰⁰⁶ Rossetti appeared to have participated to some extent in such banter, Swinburne writing to him on 12 February 1870, "I hope, though you say nothing about

¹⁰⁰²A. C. Swinburne, "Faustine", *Spectator* (31 May 1862), p. 608.

¹⁰⁰³A. C. Swinburne, "Dolores", *Poems and Ballads* (London: Moxon, 1866), pp. 178-195.

¹⁰⁰⁴Swinburne, 1862, p. 607. Swinburne, 1866, pp. 178-79.

¹⁰⁰⁵Lang, vol. 2, p. 76. Rev. Temple Chevallier (trans.), *A Translation of the Epistles of Clement of Rome, Polycarp and Ignatius; and of the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian* (London: F. & J. Rivington, 1833 - new edition, 1851).

¹⁰⁰⁶Gosse, "Swinburne's Agitation" (Lang, vol. 6, p. 244).

it, you have given up any Justino-Josianic ideas of inflicting 'une mutilation pénale' on that young lady by curtailing her natural members".¹⁰⁰⁷ In one of his notebooks of the early 1870s, Rossetti jotted down the phrase, "mouth like the lips of a wound", possibly for use within a later poem.¹⁰⁰⁸ He may have had in mind the custom of saints to meditate on each wound of the Passion as an expression of devotion, a practice which was retained as part of the Catholic ceremonial. This had had at one point a certain currency in the Anglican Church. Dodsworth mentioned that among the "special devotions to our Lord" which Pusey controversially introduced into High Anglican ritual, was the adoration of "His Five Wounds".¹⁰⁰⁹ Further, Rossetti may have had in mind the many examples of bleeding wounds amongst the saints, most notably the stigmatisation of St Catherine of Siena and St Francis of Assisi, which were ultimately declarations of their love for and identification with Christ, and which Rossetti may have felt had the potential to enhance a secular love sonnet.¹⁰¹⁰ However, Rossetti may have been thinking along the lines of the sado-masochism practised by Swinburne. It is perhaps significant that the phrase did not appear in any of Rossetti's subsequent poetry.

Unlike Swinburne, Rossetti was not stimulated by violence. Flaubert's *Salammbô*, which was listed among the books in Rossetti's library in 1866, he described as "destitute of pity" and "teeming... with inconceivable horrors". He found it hard to believe "that such an element existed or ever had existed in human nature". As far as he was concerned it was "the work of a nation from which mercy had been cast out".¹⁰¹¹ Further, he was anxious to counter any rumour that he himself was the catalyst behind Swinburne's excesses, and wrote to Tennyson on 6 October 1866, "As

¹⁰⁰⁷Transcript in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:40.

¹⁰⁰⁸Rossetti notebooks (British Library, no. 1, p. 19).

¹⁰⁰⁹Dodsworth, p. 17. W. M. Rossetti owned copies of W. F. Hook's *A Church Dictionary* (London: Murray, 1854) and his eight-volumed *An Ecclesiastical Biography* (London: F. & J. Rivington, 1852) which presumably D. G. Rossetti would have been at liberty to consult (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

¹⁰¹⁰The Earl of Shrewsbury had published a volume on cases of stigmatisation (*The Estatica of Youghal Compared with the Wonders of the Tyrol, in a Letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury* (London: W. H. Dalton, 1843); W. Howitt, *The History of the Supernatural*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863), vol. 1, p. 480). Ennemoser, vol. 1, p. 106.

¹⁰¹¹Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 3 January 1873 (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 272-74). His copy of *Salammbô* was an 1864 edition (1st ed. 1862) (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2). In contrast Swinburne was anxious to review the book, declaring "The tortures, battles and massacres, and Moloch-sacrifices are stunning" (Swinburne to M. Rodin, 21 January 1863, Lang, vol. 1, pp. 76-77).

no one delights more keenly in his genius than I do, I have also a right to say that no one has more strenuously combatted its wayward existence in certain instances, to the extent of having repeatedly begged him not to read me portions of his writings when in M.S."¹⁰¹²

Nevertheless, Rossetti and Swinburne, who were in frequent correspondence during the preparation of Rossetti's poems for publication, were mutually influential at this time. On 21 December 1869 Rossetti wrote to Swinburne concerning his plans to follow up the theme of his 1857 Oxford Union mural, in which he had evoked the Fall but displayed Guinevere as the triumphant Christ figure. He intended to write a poem, "God's Graal", in which "God and Guinevere will be weighed against each other by another table of weights and measures".¹⁰¹³ Swinburne responded by proceeding himself to write early in 1870 "Hymn of Man", which he described as "a hymn on the Fall of God compared to which my previous blasphemies are effusions in the style of Watts, Morris, or Keble - the three Christian singers of England".¹⁰¹⁴ Following this Rossetti wrote again to Swinburne on 9 March 1870 emphasising the subversive nature of "God's Graal", which was to also show the demise of the traditional Christian *Theos*, "The poem I shall do (if any) will be, I believe, *God's Graal* - ie. the loss of the Sangraal by Lancelot - a theme chosen to emphasise the marked superiority of Guinevere over God".¹⁰¹⁵ Further, writing to his publisher Ellis on 23 March 1870, Rossetti expressed his desire to have his *Poems* "for harmony to be bound in white & gold... like the first edition of Swinburne's *Atlanta*".¹⁰¹⁶

At Swinburne's death in 1909, a document was found which Swinburne had written on Rossetti entitled *A Record of Friendship*, probably dating from 1882, the year of Rossetti's death. Estranged from Rossetti since his friend's breakdown in 1872 following Robert Buchanan's infamous attack in the *Contemporary Review*, Swinburne yet wrote warmly of the "affectionate intimacy" of their early days. He described Rossetti's "cordial kindness and exuberant generosity" towards himself as a younger man, and on Swinburne's part "gratitude as loyal and admiration as fervent as ever strove and ever failed to express 'all the sweet and sudden passion of youth toward greatness in its elder.'" ¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹²Troxell Coll., Princeton, 10:2.

¹⁰¹³Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 779. Only 19 lines of "God's Graal" were ever written (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 239, 672).

¹⁰¹⁴Lang, vol. 2, p. 89.

¹⁰¹⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 812.

¹⁰¹⁶Doughty, 1928, p. 14.

¹⁰¹⁷A. C. Swinburne, *A Record of Friendship* (London: printed by Thomas J. Wise for

An unpublished ballad, "The Laird of Waristoun", dating from c. 1861, which can be found amongst the manuscripts in Princeton University, testifies to the friendship and artistic reciprocity that had existed between Rossetti and Swinburne. It was a collaborative effort, written partly in the hand of Rossetti and partly in that of Swinburne. In many ways it was the descendent of such ballads as Rossetti's "The Bride's Prelude" (1848, 1859), "The Staff and the Scrip" (1851-52) and "Sister Helen" (1851) with its use of archaic language, debt to the folk tale, and its preoccupation with the seductive, miscreant woman.¹⁰¹⁸ However, intertwined with this was Swinburne's influence, particularly his penchant for the bloody and the masochistic. The Laird of Waristoun's lady, who was to eventually burn for killing her husband, was likened to an instrument of pain, "a little birken wand / For a boy's body to bear... a little rod of birk / That gars a young boy greet". The Laird too was described as freely meting out punishment, "And the lord smote her on the mouth / He garred the blood spin out."¹⁰¹⁹ Both these ideas were repeated with slight variations throughout the ballad giving the suggestion of an old-world refrain, but also indicating a certain delight in physical pain.¹⁰²⁰

In "The House of Life" Rossetti made frequent, subversive returns to ideas of religious ecstasy in order to express something of the secular love experience. In this he was perhaps encouraged by Swinburne. In "Soul-Light" (1871) he described "the fulness of

private circulation, 1910 - only 20 copies). Troxell Coll., Princeton, 5.1. This gesture may have been sparked by Rossetti's will, by which Swinburne was given leave to choose for himself from Rossetti's belongings a small drawing or other small article as a memento (D. G. Rossetti's Will, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:1).

¹⁰¹⁸Rossetti's influence can also be seen in the fact that the ballad was set in Scotland. Rossetti owned a two volumed *Ballads of Scotland*, ed. W. E. Aytoun (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1858). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2. His mother had long had an interest in the poetry of Robert Burns, and Rossetti had recently gained an appreciation (F. M. L. Rossetti's *Literary Diary*, pp. 60-61; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C. 12:18).

¹⁰¹⁹The description of the lady was written by Rossetti, although with interjections by Swinburne, and that of the Laird by Swinburne (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:7).

¹⁰²⁰Rossetti had in 1853 shown a degree of interest in the subject of fleshly mortification, writing of his father's *Arpa Evangelica*, "I have read the whole second series, the *Solemnities of the Church*, which I liked well; but more perhaps than any of the compositions there I liked the last composition in the fifth series, *The Penitent Woman on the Crucifix*, which appeared to me very fine" (W. M. Rossetti, vol. 2, p. 114. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 158). Included in the free translation which Christina Rossetti made of a section *Arpa Evangelica* were the lines, "My Lord, my Love! in pleasant pain / How often have I said..." (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 1:12).

rapture", and similarly in "Last Fire" (1871) the "sun of rapture".¹⁰²¹ In "Mid-Rapture" (1871) love was described as "a hand laid softly on the soul".¹⁰²² In "Heart's Hope" (1871) he drew on the language of the ecstatic saints, "Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor / Thee from myself, neither our love from God."¹⁰²³ St Catherine of Genoa had declared, "Sometimes I do not see or feel myself to have either soul, body, heart, will or taste, or any other thing except Pure Love."¹⁰²⁴ Similarly in "Love Lily" (1869), the speaker intermingling the physical and spiritual features of his love, "Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice", declares that in Love there is no distinction between body and soul.¹⁰²⁵ The ecstasies experienced a love of God so intense that it had verged on the sexual. Rossetti sought to mirror this idea, presenting physical love as inducing a pleasure so profound that it touched one's very spiritual essence. Thus in "Love's Testament" (1869), a poem of passionate rapture, he drew on the images of the Holy Spirit's fire and religious ritual:

O Thou who at Love's hour ecstatically
 Unto my heart dost evermore present,
 Clothed with his fire, thy heart his testament;
 Whom I have neared and felt thy breath to be
 The inmost incense of his sanctuary...¹⁰²⁶

Of all religious practices the one which Rossetti constantly foraged for ecstatic imagery was the Eucharist. In *Beata Beatrix* Rossetti depicted Beatrice in a state of ecstatic spiritual receptivity and bodily craving. He may have intended to indicate simply spiritual hunger, a saintly desire for spiritual food, but, with her mouth open and hands upheld, Beatrice looks as though ready to receive Holy Communion.¹⁰²⁷ Mystics often had ecstatic experiences during or following Communion. St Teresa found that having participated in the Eucharist her mystic sense was most active, and often then wrote in an automatic fashion. At such times, according to her fellow Sisters, her face would shine in an unearthly way, as indeed Beatrice's does in *Beata Beatrix*.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 190, 191.

¹⁰²²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 189.

¹⁰²³W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 179.

¹⁰²⁴St Catherine of Genoa, *Vita e Dottrina*, quoted in E. Underhill, *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 4th ed., 1912), p. 297. Thomas C. Upham, *Life of Madame Catherine Adorna* (London, 1855).

¹⁰²⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 315.

¹⁰²⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 178.

¹⁰²⁷A. M. Howitt described Siddal in a letter to Rossetti c. 1856 as "Saint of the Holy Countenance" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 26).

¹⁰²⁸G. C. Graham, vol. 1, pp. 202-4. Underhill, pp. 352-53.

Rossetti may have read in the *Christian Examiner* in 1849 how Teresa's confessor Ferdinand Alvarez was forced "to restrict her attendance at that hallowed table which was the source of so much of her inspiration", because of her many raptures.¹⁰²⁹ St Catherine of Siena, of whom Rossetti may have heard through Patmore, lived for many years eating only the Host which she received at Communion.¹⁰³⁰ Further, Montalembert related how St Elizabeth of Hungary, whose desire to do good works was "each day renewed upon the altar", on one occasion "during the canon of Mass, whilst she was praying with fervour, her hands modestly joined... her veil lifted up, in order to contemplate the adorable Sacrament, a heavenly light shone around her."¹⁰³¹ In secular literature, Flaubert described Madame Bovary as, "swooning with celestial joy as she parted her lips to receive the body of the Saviour offered to her".¹⁰³²

Rossetti may have heard of similar tales of the mysterious power of the eucharist in his more immediate circle.¹⁰³³ Swinburne, who had been "as a child and boy brought up a *quasi-Catholic*", described how he had gone in for "well-nigh to unaffected and unshamed ecstasies of adoration when receiving Sacrament".¹⁰³⁴ David Scott, in his 1850 memoirs, related the effect produced on a young novice on taking Holy Communion, declaring, "The mystery of the body of Christ" was "too great for her"; in a letter of the 1860s Rossetti specifically requested that he be sent Scott's book.¹⁰³⁵ Furthermore, Maria showed a great interest in the Eucharist. In the letters she wrote to her Bible Class in 1860 she talked of "the unspeakable happiness of the Holy

¹⁰²⁹Osgood, 1849, pp. 209, 215.

¹⁰³⁰Gardner, p. 12. Underhill, p. 71. Patmore's familiarity with the works of St Catherine was expressed in his writings; for example, he wrote, "Some works (like St. Catherine's treatise on purgatory) though not by any ordained teacher, have been accepted by the Church as almost canonical" (Champneys, vol. 2, p. 69).

¹⁰³¹Montalembert, 1839, vol. 1, p. 49.

¹⁰³²Flaubert, 1992, p. 172.

¹⁰³³St Ethelreda's Sisterhood, London, had been established specifically for the purpose of "promoting the reverence due to our Lord in His Blessed Sacrament" (Wister, p. 565).

¹⁰³⁴Gosse & Wise, vol. 1, p. 208. Swinburne took great pleasure in his youth in receiving the Eucharist (Swinburne to father, 2 April 1854, Lang, vol. 1, p. 1).

¹⁰³⁵W. B. Scott, 1850, p. 124. Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, n.d. (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:7). Rossetti wrote to his mother in October 1879 requesting Scott's *Memoirs* be left out for him as he had a need for it, and to Shields the following month offering to lend it to him (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1679). In 1878-79 Rossetti composed notes on the book. These were fairly critical in nature, but W. M. Rossetti declared that his brother, "entertained a very hearty admiration of him [D. Scott] from some points of view, intellectual as well as pictorial" (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 639-42, 683).

Communion".¹⁰³⁶ W. M. Rossetti stressed the importance of the "real presence of Christ in the eucharist" for her.¹⁰³⁷

Pusey, who had affected the tone of Dodsworth's sermons, had preached that the Eucharist was the mystic gateway through which God could enter the soul.¹⁰³⁸ He talked of "our incorporation into Christ" and of "being inebriated by the Blood of our Lord".¹⁰³⁹ Pusey purposely sought to use the language of the Church Fathers, as in "The Holy Eucharist: a Comfort to the Penitent", a sermon preached on the fourth Sunday after Easter, 14 May 1843; the Eucharist's "one object," Pusey declared, echoing Augustine, "was to inculcate the love of our Redeemer for us sinners in the Holy Eucharist".¹⁰⁴⁰ The sacrament of Holy Communion, which has always been a controversial issue between Protestants and Catholics, was particularly so in the mid-nineteenth century as a result of rising Anglo-Catholicism. Burne-Jones wrote to Cornell Price in 1853, "have you seen Archdeacon Wilberforce's last work on the Holy Eucharist?... It has been spoken of, and I readily assent, as the most controversial and truly theological work that has come out for ages."¹⁰⁴¹ In *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, Wilberforce, who seceded to Rome in 1854, contended for Christ's real presence in the host, which he saw as a literal life-giving force. As food sustains the body, so he argued, quoting St Ambrose, Christ's body strengthens the soul.¹⁰⁴² These ideas concerning ecstatic union and spiritual nourishment and energisement expressed by Pusey and Wilberforce, appertain in an intriguing way to *Beata Beatrix*.

Rossetti owned a copy of Whitley Stokes' edition of *The Play of the Sacrament* (1861), a fifteenth century miracle play, based on a thirteenth century French source, which

¹⁰³⁶M. F. Rossetti, p. 64.

¹⁰³⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 2, pp. 427-28. Maria copied out of Neale's *History of the Holy Eastern Church* the three methods of Holy Communion used in the East (Neale, 1850, vol. 1, pp. 523-24; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:8).

¹⁰³⁸E. B. Pusey, "Catena Patrum: Testimony of the Later English Church to the Doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, with an Historical Account of the Changes Made in the Liturgy as to the Expression of that Doctrine", *Tracts for the Times*, vol. 4, no. 81 (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1839). Chadwick, 1992, p. 39. Liddon, vol. 2, p. 31. Dodsworth, p. 17.

¹⁰³⁹E. B. Pusey, *Sermons for the Church Seasons from Advent to Trinity* (London: Kegan Paul & Trench, 1883), p. 356.

¹⁰⁴⁰Liddon, vol. 2, pp. 306-10, 323.

¹⁰⁴¹G. Burne-Jones, vol. 1, p. 89.

¹⁰⁴²R. I. Wilberforce, *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (London: John & Charles Mozley, 1854, 3rd ed.), pp. 130 ff, 349.

centred on the doctrine of the Real Presence.¹⁰⁴³ It concerned the miraculous conversion and subsequent baptism of Jonathas, a wealthy Jewish merchant, who, along with his companions, had been desecrating the Host, which they had obtained from a Christian merchant. They had assaulted it with nails, daggers and boiling water, saying:

Yff pat thys by he that on Caluery was mad red,
Onto my mynd, I shall kenne yow a conceyt good:
Surely with ower daggars we shall ses on thys bredde,
& so with clowtis we shall know yf he haue eny blood.¹⁰⁴⁴

The wafer not only bled, but Christ himself appeared to them from the Holy wafer with his wounds bleeding.¹⁰⁴⁵ As early as 1849 Rossetti had expressed something of "the mystery / Girding God's blessed Eucharist" in "Pax Vobis", and in his 1850 "Sacrament Hymn" he had described Holy Communion as "the soul-filling, life-giving board":

No feast where the belly alone hath its fill, -
He gives me His body and blood;
The blood and the body (I'll think of it still)
Of my Lord, which is Christ, which is God.¹⁰⁴⁶

In his 1849 "Vox Ecclesiae, Vox Christi", Rossetti had also described "the wine-cup at the altar" as "Christ's own blood indeed".¹⁰⁴⁷

In "Aurora Leigh" (1857) which Rossetti greatly admired, Elizabeth Barrett Browning had assimilated a description of novices entering church for Mass with a secular love experience:

A face flashed like a cymbal on his face
And shook with silent clangour brain and heart,

¹⁰⁴³Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2. O. Waterhouse (ed.) *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays* (London: Early English Text Society, 1909), pp. lv-lxl, 54 ff.

¹⁰⁴⁴Waterhouse, 1909, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴⁵Waterhouse, 1909, pp. 70, 77-78.

¹⁰⁴⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 192. *Germ*, no. 4 (May 1850), pp. 176-77. Swinburne admired "the religious emotion" expressed with in this poem and requested that it be not left out of Rossetti's 1870 *Poems* (Swinburne to Rossetti, 22 February 1870, transcript in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:40; Lang, vol. 2, p. 100).

¹⁰⁴⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 265. W. M. Rossetti owned an 1871 edition of T. Tuke's 1625 *Concerning the Holy Eucharist and the Popish Breaden God*, in which the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation was unceremoniously derided, "They make their God, and then eat Him vp. / They swallow downe His flesh, and blood vp sup" (T. Tuke, *Concerning the Holy Eucharist and the Popish Breaden God* (Lancashire: Gosart, private circulation, 1871 - 156 copies only), p. 16). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even thus,
 He too received his sacramental gift
 With eucharistic meanings; for he loved... ¹⁰⁴⁸

Begun in the year of "Aurora Leigh", Rossetti's watercolour *Chapel before the Lists* (S.99; fig. 109), showing a knight and his lady saying their farewells before a tournament, is set in a shrine in which an altar is laid ready for Communion. In the dim religious light the lovers' embrace is thus given a sacramental quality. Rossetti depicted the lady with her back to the altar, and the knight with his back to his helmet, which was surmounted with a gryphon, a symbol of Christ, and in this way he suggested the actual ascendancy of physical passion over love for God.

In "God's Graal", in which Rossetti intended secular love to triumph over Christian, he again turned to the imagery surrounding the Eucharist:

There was set Christ's very sign,
 The bread unknown and the unknown wine
 That the soul's life for a livelihood
 Craves from his wheat & vine.¹⁰⁴⁹

Likewise in "Love's Redemption" he elicited the language of the Eucharist to describe physical passion, talking of "The body and blood of Love in sacrament" and "The inmost incense of his sanctuary". He evocatively ended with the line, "And murmured o'er the cup, Remember me!" Rossetti made direct allusion to the teachings of Pusey, writing, "thy life with mine hast blent".¹⁰⁵⁰ In "Lovesight" of 1869 Rossetti described his lover's face as the altar on which rite of Holy Communion is performed:

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
 When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
 Before thy face, their altar, solemnize

¹⁰⁴⁸Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, bk. 1, p. 375.

¹⁰⁴⁹Ashley Coll., British Library. These lines were written in 1858 (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 239, 672).

¹⁰⁵⁰Penkill proofs (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1). In this poem, Rossetti, verging on blasphemy, also applied "the descent of Christ into hell, and his releasing thence the spirits predestined to salvation" to "the passion of love" (W. M. Rossetti, *Designer and Writer*, 1889, p. 186; W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 178). In *The Towneley Mysteries*, which Rossetti owned, Christ's deliverance of souls from hell was dramatised. W. M. Rossetti owned J. A. Herard's *The Descent into Hell* (1830) (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14; 12:2; England, 1897, pp. 293 ff). In a letter of c. 1858 to Rossetti, A. M. Howitt who claimed to be in contact with the spirit world, described a painting "Blake gave me" of "the Spirit of Love descending into Hell" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 11).

The worship of that Love through thee made known?¹⁰⁵¹

Rossetti wrote in one of his notebooks of the 1870s, "Her mouth is a perpetual feast of love".¹⁰⁵²

Recognising the power which Christ's act of sacrifice on the Cross, continually remembered in the Eucharist, still held for Victorians, Rossetti was able to create secular works resonant with great spiritual intensity. This can be seen most notably in *The Damsel of the Sanct Grael* (S.91 R.1; 1874; fig. 110), in which he adopted a subject which would allow him to depict a sensual female as a celebrant priest, holding the Eucharistic chalice. To enhance the sacred theme, he framed this figure with the protecting wings of a white dove. Having given her this religious pedigree, he subversively had the damsel raise her left hand and not her right in the sign of the benediction, whereas, in an earlier, chaster version of the subject, he had used the right hand (S.91; 1857; fig. 111). In doing so he radically asserted his new approach to saintly imagery.¹⁰⁵³

However, Rossetti remained more cautious than Swinburne. On 12 May 1870 he wrote Swinburne, begging him to withdraw his two sonnets on Napoleon, "The Saviour of Society", as a birthday present to him; "You know how free I am myself from any dogmatic belief; but... I do myself feel that the supreme nobility of Christ's character should be exempt from being used... certainly in contact of this kind with

¹⁰⁵¹Penkill proofs (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1). W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 178.

¹⁰⁵²Rossetti notebooks (British Library, no. 1, p. 15). Amongst the items listed in an inventory made by Treffry Dunn of the ornamental draperies in Rossetti's collection were a number of eucharistic items, including a "Small altar cloth silver & gold flowers", "7 Vestment pieces worked with Saints and Angels" and "13 pieces emb[roidere]d belonging to the same vestment" (D. G. Rossetti Coll., Princeton, 1:AM20703). There were a number of Catholic accessories among Rossetti's belongings at his death, including a small German prayer book with silver clasps and corners, and a brass ecclesiastical casket with inlaid stones and recessed figures (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, pp. 19, 21, lots 346, 397). Also put up for sale at Rossetti's death was "*Roccheggiani Costumi religiosi civili e militari degli antichi*, 3 vols." (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 23, lot 462).

¹⁰⁵³Rossetti's father had also used the language of Catholicism in a new and subversive way, although unintentionally. Meynell wrote of Gabriele Rossetti's *Mistero Platonico*, "He trusted that his poem would cause him to be held in such high esteem as to induce the Papal Party to recall him to his native city; and yet that Poem is a great treachery to that Party, a very fine play of Catholic jargon" (W. Meynell, "Miss Rossetti and Her Circle", *Illustrated News* (2 February 1895); Troxell Coll., Princeton, 3:8).

anything so utterly ignoble as this".¹⁰⁵⁴ Like the younger man, Rossetti was allured by the idea of ecstatic experience, but he refused to repudiate Christian tradition. He largely used religious imagery in a positive way to suggest the transcendental power of sexual experience, and his more subversive efforts notably did not come to much. Rossetti preferred to stay loosely within the context of religious tradition, although not faith. Therefore, it was with enthusiasm that he read R. W. Dixon's volume of religious poetry, *Christ's Company* (1861), in 1875, and wrote to the poet that he possessed "first rate powers". He particularly admired the mystical and ecstatic "St John":

The bliss renews itself in visions still,
And urges me for ever to aspire
To that great knowledge which drew out my will
To ecstasy, as fire to flame draws fire;
And thus last night the triple period
Saw I of love; beheld I love in man,
In angels, and in God...¹⁰⁵⁵

It was precisely sentiments such as these, full of spiritual resonance and power, that Rossetti sought to absorb and relay to the secular experience.

¹⁰⁵⁴Troxell Coll., Princeton, 31:42.

¹⁰⁵⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1334. Dixon, 1861, p. 17.

Ch. 4: Spiritual Guidance I: Swedenborgianism

Rossetti's mother, taken with the orations of Rev. Charles Bradley, Curate of High Wycombe, had transcribed in her *Literary Diary* an extract from one of his sermons in which he had vehemently argued that heaven was a physical place, rather than a mere state of being.¹⁰⁵⁶ Rossetti inherited this view of a physical heaven. For him the spiritual in no way negated the physical. However his ideas as they developed went further than his mother or the curate would ever have approved, Rossetti regarding heaven to be a place of reunited lovers.¹⁰⁵⁷ In his 1870 version of "The Blessed Damozel", Rossetti specifically placed an emphasis on physical love within the celestial regions. He had made allusion to the continuation of marital union in heaven in his earlier versions, "to be / As then we were, - being as then / At peace", but he subsequently developed this idea further:

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:-
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, - only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.'¹⁰⁵⁸

In his oil *The Blessed Damozel* (S.244; fig. 113), commissioned by William Graham in February 1871 but not completed until 1877, Rossetti highlighted the prominence of physical love. He surrounded the blessed damozel with rose bushes, emblematic of amorous passion, and placed lovers within fiery aureoles, locked in embraces. One is reminded of Swinburne's definition of heaven as "a rose-garden full of stunners".¹⁰⁵⁹ Appropriately, in *Love's Greeting* (S.126; c. 1861; fig. 112) in which Rossetti showed a man and woman kissing within the protective wings of an angel, he had used Swinburne as his male model.¹⁰⁶⁰

Faxon has likened the embracing figures in Rossetti's *Blessed Damozel* to the humans and angels who embrace in Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity* (fig. 114), which Rossetti had

¹⁰⁵⁶F. M. L. Rossetti, *Literary Diary*, p. 138 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:18).

¹⁰⁵⁷Bradley wrote of heaven as a place of worship; "There are no sensual delights to be found within its courts" (F. M. L. Rossetti, *Literary Diary*, pp. 140-41; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:18).

¹⁰⁵⁸D. G. Rossetti, 1904, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵⁹Swinburne to Edwin Hatch, 17 February [1858] (Gosse & Wise, vol. 1, pp. 4-5).

¹⁰⁶⁰Swinburne to R. Monckton Milnes, 15 October 1860 (Gosse & Wise, vol. 1, p. 9).

seen and admired at the Leeds Exhibition in 1868.¹⁰⁶¹ Rossetti would have appreciated the symbolism of this union between earthly and heavenly figures. However, in contrast to the angels embracing humans in Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity*, human lovers clasp each other in *The Blessed Damozel*, and the maiden in heaven yearns not for contact with the divine but to be reunited with her lover on earth. A predella which shows the lover pining on earth was added to *The Blessed Damozel* in 1878.¹⁰⁶² In his 1881 version of "The Blessed Damozel", heaven's inhabitants are no longer identifiable by their "virginal chaste names" and no longer play "at holy games", but ardently celebrate their reunion with their spouses:

Around her, lovers, newly met
 'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
 Spoke evermore among themselves
 Their heart-remembered names...¹⁰⁶³

The increasing vogue for the philosophical writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in the nineteenth century has to be considered in this context. In *Conjugal Love* (1768) Swedenborg had declared that although one lost one's physical body on entering the spiritual world, one did not lose one's libidinal desires nor the ability to sexually perform:

Married partners enjoy similar intercourse with each other
 as in the world, but more delightful and blessed, yet without
 procreation; for which, or in place of it, they have spiritual
 procreation, which is that of love and wisdom.¹⁰⁶⁴

William Morris noted that in "The Blessed Damozel", "the heaven that exists as if for the sake of the beloved is as real as the earthly things about the lover".¹⁰⁶⁵

Swedenborg had been criticised for what seemed to be his obsession with the realm of the sexual. The Baptist minister, Rev. J. G. Pike, printed a pamphlet entitled *Swedenborgianism Depicted in its True Colours*, in which he accused Swedenborg of condoning fornication and adultery. In the *Arminian Magazine* in August 1783, Wesley had labelled Swedenborg a madman and imposter, as had the editors of the

¹⁰⁶¹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, pp. 664-65. Faxon, *Rossetti*, 1994, p. 209.

¹⁰⁶²This was at Graham's request (Surtees, 1971, p. 142).

¹⁰⁶³*Germ*, February 1850, p. 81. Penkill proofs, before 21 August 1869 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1). W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 233.

¹⁰⁶⁴E. Swedenborg, *The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1953), no. 51, p. 53.

¹⁰⁶⁵William Morris, "Poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *The Academy* (14 May 1870), p. 199.

Evangelical Magazine in June 1821.¹⁰⁶⁶ This controversy may have attracted Rossetti to Swedenborg's mystical writings. Rossetti was not impressed by the writings of Wesley as he demonstrated in 1850, writing a "Sacrament Hymn" "merely to see if I could do Wesley", as he wrote to Allingham a decade later, and having it copied and passed around in order "to enrage my friends".¹⁰⁶⁷

Rossetti's indebtedness to Swedenborg was recognised by Horne, who wrote in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* in 1886 that "the creed of Rossetti which holds that hereafter he shall dwell with the very woman he loved on earth, she whose body Love knew not from her soul" is "but the natural sequence of a faith of Blake's, developed out of Swedenborg, which held that man has no soul apart from his body."¹⁰⁶⁸ Horne here made reference to Rossetti's 1869 poem, "Love-Lily":

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice,
Kisses and words of Love-Lily,-
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice
Till riotous longing rest in me!
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,
But find in her its gracious goal,
Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought
Nor love her body from her soul.¹⁰⁶⁹

Swedenborg declared that true conjugal love that was "celestial, spiritual, and holy", consisted of the conjunction of two souls, minds and bodies into one, a theory similar to that expressed in "Love-Lily".¹⁰⁷⁰ Swedenborg believed that true union which

¹⁰⁶⁶John Gregory Pike, *Swedenborgianism Depicted in its True Colours; or a Contrast Between the Holy Scriptures and the Writings of Baron Swedenborg* (Accrington: W. Hutchinson, 1844). R. Hindmarsh, *A Vindication of the Character and Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg* (Manchester: H. & R. Smith, 1822), pp. 10, 31.

¹⁰⁶⁷Birbeck Hill, pp. 244-45. "Sacramental Hymn" published in "Some Scraps of Verse and Prose by Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Pall Mall Magazine* (December 1893). P. F. Baum (ed.), *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: An Analytical List of Manuscripts in the Duke University Library* (Duke University Press, 1931), p. 8. W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 192, 666. Robert Southey's *Life of Wesley* had been published in 1820 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown).

¹⁰⁶⁸H. P. Horne, "Thoughts Towards a Criticism of the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, vol. 2 (July 1886), p. 95.

¹⁰⁶⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 315.

¹⁰⁷⁰Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, no. 61, p. 63; no. 158, p. 150. E. Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Explained*, no. 983, quoted in *Love and Marriage on Earth and in Heaven: Extracts from the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1964), p. 7. W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. xxix. In an earlier draft of "Love-Lily"

would last into the spiritual world could only happen at the rare meeting of true soul mates.

Rossetti gave expression to the idea of finding one's soul partner in his poem "The Birth-Bond" which he sent to Allingham in July 1854:

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than I wotted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my life's own sister well enough!¹⁰⁷¹

In his 1870 *Poems* Rossetti changed the last line of this poem in order to enhance the conjugal love theme, "Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!"¹⁰⁷²

Swedenborg quite conventionally believed that true conjugal love corresponded to "the marriage of the Lord with the Church".¹⁰⁷³ More radically, he declared in *Divine Love and Wisdom*, "There is in all the heavens no other idea of God than the idea of Man."¹⁰⁷⁴ Rossetti combined these ideas in his poem "Heart's Hope" of 1871:

Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God.¹⁰⁷⁵

In *Conjugal Love* and *Heaven and Hell* Swedenborg claimed that the union of two partners in heaven created one angel.¹⁰⁷⁶ In *Love's Greeting*, in which two lovers are encapsulated within the encircling wings of an angel, Rossetti may have had in mind Swedenborg's hypothesis of an angel being constituted of two souls. *Love's Greeting* was a development of the design Rossetti made for the frontispiece of his *Early Italian Poets*, and significantly he wrote to Allingham in January 1855 that he intended this to be published "with an *adornment* almost Patmorian"; Patmore, as will be discussed,

the final line read, "Nor God her body from her soul", and where in the final version he wrote "mind" in the earlier this was "soul" (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4.9).

¹⁰⁷¹Birkbeck Hill, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷²D. G. Rossetti, 1904, p. 108. The alteration was only made at the last minute, the final line remaining unchanged in the 1869 Penkill proofs (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 6:1).

¹⁰⁷³Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, no. 62, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷⁴E. Swedenborg, *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1969), no. 11, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 179.

¹⁰⁷⁶Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, no. 368, quoted in *Love and Marriage*, 1964, p. 9. A. Wilton & R. Upstone, *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts* (London: Tate Gallery, 1997), p. 192.

had been heavily influenced by Swedenborgian thought.¹⁰⁷⁷ Rossetti conveyed an analogous concept in his 1851 watercolour, *Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast, Denies him her Salutation* (S.50; fig. 115), in which he balanced the figures of the bride and groom with angels kissing.¹⁰⁷⁸ In this way Rossetti suggested a link between earthly union and that of angels; as Swedenborg declared in *Heaven and Hell*, "Man has been created that he may come into heaven and become an angel".¹⁰⁷⁹ In *The Blessed Damozel* the embracing figures in the background are replaced by angels in the replica (S.244 R.1; fig. 116).

Swedenborgianism as a British movement began in Manchester, where the New Jerusalem Temple was set up on Bolton Street, Salford, and led by Rev. Robert Hindmarsh.¹⁰⁸⁰ Its members believed that Swedenborg had been appointed by God and that with him the New Dispensation described in the book of Revelation had begun, being clearly perceptible they felt in the rapid progress that had been made in the arts and sciences of the time.¹⁰⁸¹ Enthusiasm followed in London, and a quarto edition of *Heaven and Hell* appeared in 1778, printed by the Quaker, James Phillips. Swedenborg's writings became increasingly available. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century translations of *Arcana Coelestia*, *True Christian Religion*, *Conjugal Love* and *Earths in the Universe* were made by John Clowes, a Manchester clergyman.¹⁰⁸² *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom* was translated by Dr N. Tucker and published in Manchester in 1788.¹⁰⁸³

Rossetti had a ready source of information on the theology of Swedenborg. Numerous articles were published in contemporary journals on all aspects of his life and philosophy, from mesmerism and visions, to ontology and christology.¹⁰⁸⁴ W. M.

¹⁰⁷⁷Birkbeck Hill, p. 101.

¹⁰⁷⁸Marillier believed the angels to be part of a fresco design on the wall (H. C. Marillier, "The Salutations of Beatrice: As Treated Pictorially by D. G. Rossetti", *Art Journal* (December 1899), p. 356).

¹⁰⁷⁹Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, no. 57, quoted in *Love and Marriage*, 1964, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸⁰Hindmarsh, 1822, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸¹R. Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church*, ed. Rev. E. Madeley (London: Hodson, 1861), p. v.

¹⁰⁸²Hindmarsh, 1861, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁸³Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, p. v.

¹⁰⁸⁴*Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 39 (1849), pp. 465 ff.; *Sharpe's London Magazine*, vol. 9 (1849), pp. 152 ff.; *Prospective Review*, vol. 6 (1850), pp. 145 ff.; *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, N.S., vol. 22 (1855), pp. 536 ff.; *Household Words*, vol. 13 (1856), pp. 136 ff.; *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 55 (1857), pp. 174 ff.; *National Review*, vol. 6 (1858), pp. 336 ff.; *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, vol. 37 (1862), pp. 357 ff.; *Macmillan's*

Rossetti owned Swedenborg's *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell* (1817), *The Coronis - The Last Judgement - On the White Horse Mentioned in Revelation - The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning Charity - Internal Sense of Prophetic Books and Psalms - On the Athanasian Creed* (1840-56), *Abrégé des Ouvrages de Swedenborg* (1788), and E. Paxton Hood's *Swedenborg: a Biography and an Exposition* (1854).¹⁰⁸⁵ Hood's monograph, which very simply laid out the principle doctrines of Swedenborg's philosophy, contained a complete chapter on the mystic's views on marriage. In this chapter Hood described the teachings of the Church Fathers which favoured celibacy as "blasphemous rubbish", contrasting Swedenborg's elevation of conjugal love both on earth and in the spiritual world.¹⁰⁸⁶

Rossetti himself owned T. Brevior's *The Two Worlds* (1864) which contained a chapter on the philosopher, setting him forward as "the greatest christian seer and revealer of spiritual things since the days of the Apostles".¹⁰⁸⁷ Further, Anna Mary Howitt wrote a number of letters to Rossetti in the 1850s making reference to Swedenborg. She described herself in a letter to Rossetti of around 1858 as "a sort of new Swedenborg", writing "a letter to the *new Church*". She claimed that, like Swedenborg, her soul had entered into the heavenly realms, and as Swedenborg had sanctified physical love, so she declared, "to *love* is to obey God's will upon earth and in Heaven".¹⁰⁸⁸ Howitt was heavily influenced by Dr J. J. Garth Wilkinson, the author of *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Biography* (1849), and on her and her family's recommendation Wilkinson became Elizabeth Siddal's physician in 1854.¹⁰⁸⁹ W. M. Rossetti described

Magazine, vol. 10 (1864), pp. 74 ff.; *Month*, vol. 6 (1866), pp. 561 ff.; *Eclectic Review*, vol. 125 (1867), pp. 333 ff.; *London Quarterly Review*, vol. 28 (1867), pp. 474 ff.; *Nation*, vol. 4 (1867), pp. 329 ff.; *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 77 (1868), pp. 679 ff.; *Radical*, vol. 3 (1868), pp. 475 ff.; *Lippincott's Magazine*, vol. 7 (1871), pp. 399 ff.; *Universalist Quarterly Review*, vol. 30 (1873), pp. 146 ff.; *Universalist Quarterly Review*, vol. 31 (1874), pp. 22 ff.; *Temple Bar*, vol. 49 (1876), pp. 28 ff.

¹⁰⁸⁵Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹⁰⁸⁶E. P. Hood, *Swedenborg: a Biography and an Exposition* (London: Arthur Hall, 1854), pp. 315, 322.

¹⁰⁸⁷T. Brevior, *The Two Worlds: the Natural and the Spiritual* (London: F. Pitman, 1864), p. 181. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

¹⁰⁸⁸Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 6, 14, 20, 22.

¹⁰⁸⁹Wilkinson had also published *A Sketch of Swedenborg and Swedenborgians* in 1842 and in 1847 *A Popular Sketch of Swedenborg's Philosophical Works*. Further, he had translated a number of the more obscure writings of Swedenborg: *A Hieroglyphic Key to Natural and Spiritual Mysteries* (1847), *Posthumous Tracts*, 2 vols. (1847), and *A Series of Posthumous Philosophical Tracts* (1848). W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 126, 129. Birkbeck Hill, p. 262.

him approvingly as a "distinguished Homoeopathist and writer".¹⁰⁹⁰ Howitt fully believed that "Lizzy's present and future well being" depended on "Dr W's sanction".¹⁰⁹¹ Rossetti, encouraged by Howitt, showed an admiration for Wilkinson's apparent knowledge of the spiritual world and for his rather obscure literary efforts.¹⁰⁹² In Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (1863), Rossetti described Wilkinson as "the highly gifted editor of Swedenborg's writings, and author of a *Life* of him".¹⁰⁹³ A biography on Swedenborg was listed in Rossetti's collection at his death, and this may well have been that of Wilkinson.¹⁰⁹⁴

Rossetti had also almost certainly come into contact with Swedenborgian theory through his father, who, as a poet, scholar of Dante and medieval literature, political exile and member of the secret sect of the Carbonari, was much influenced by mystical thought.¹⁰⁹⁵ His letters to Charles Lyell were full of his musings on Dante, Swedenborg and Freemasonry.¹⁰⁹⁶ William Michael wrote that their father could often be found in his study surrounded by "ponderous" volumes concerning "alchemy, freemasonry, Brahminism, Swedenborg, the Cabbala etc..."¹⁰⁹⁷ Such mystical writings, wrote William Michael, were inspected "from time to time" by Rossetti in his father's library "with some gusto not unmingled with awe".¹⁰⁹⁸ In a letter to John Hookham Frere, dated 1 October 1832, Gabriele Rossetti wrote, "I see with regret that the assertion of many Sectarian writers, and among others of Swedenborg, is not without foundation", suggesting either his own or Frere's inclusion in that sect.¹⁰⁹⁹ In

¹⁰⁹⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 177. Wilkinson was an intriguing figure for the Rossetti family, W. M. Rossetti eventually owning Frederick H. Evans' *James John Garth Wilkinson* (Edinburgh: Turnbull & Spears, 1912). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹⁰⁹¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 10.

¹⁰⁹²"I remember hearing Dante Gabriel Rossetti speak (it must be fifteen or twenty years ago) of Garth Wilkinson as one of the few who wrote a noble and beautiful prose style" (Anon. notice, quoted in Evans, p. 93).

¹⁰⁹³Gilchrist, vol. 1, p. 382. Birkbeck Hill, p. 263. Wilkinson had edited Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* in 1839, and wrote to Swinburne on 28 March 1868 to enquire about his Blake studies (Lang, vol. 1, pp. 294-95).

¹⁰⁹⁴Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 29, lot 614 - author not specified.

¹⁰⁹⁵William Michael was anxious to point out that his father only enrolled as a Carbonaro in the latter part of 1820 when it was no longer illegal (W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 41).

¹⁰⁹⁶Purves, p. 114.

¹⁰⁹⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 64.

¹⁰⁹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹⁹W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 135.

his *Versified Autobiography* Gabriele certainly wrote of Frere's death in Swedenborgian terms:

Those lines while I was writing, thou, blest soul,
Wast winging forth thy way to Paradise,
There to embrace the sister and the spouse
From whom thou languishing wast parted here.¹¹⁰⁰

And, facing death himself, he wrote of his wife:

I shall again embrace thee, O my wife,
Within that everlasting nuptial-bond...¹¹⁰¹

In 1826-27 Gabriele Rossetti had published a rather mystical work, a "Comento Analitico" on Dante's *Inferno*, in which he claimed that Dante and many other early Italian poets, including Petrarch, were bound up in a secret, occultish society similar to that of the Freemasons. Coleridge, himself influenced by the ideas of Swedenborg, was an admirer of this treatise, although he did not give himself over to the arguments wholesale. Gabriele Rossetti followed up his thesis in *The Anti-papal Spirit which produced the Reformation* (1832), and in the five volumed *Mystery of the Platonic Love of the Middle Ages derived from the Ancient Mysteries* (1840), which his pious Anglican wife burned after his death.¹¹⁰² In this latter treatise Gabriele wrote to Lyell that he had made reference to "Petrarca, Boccaccio, and especially Swedenborg".¹¹⁰³

William Blake, whom Rossetti revered, was also influenced by the Swedish mystic. Rossetti's enthusiasm for the writings of Blake had been fired by a Blake manuscript, a "truly precious volume", which he had bought for ten shillings on 30 April 1847 from Palmer, an attendant in the Antique Gallery of the British Museum.¹¹⁰⁴ When Alexander Gilchrist, who had been working on a *Life of Blake*, died unexpectedly on

¹¹⁰⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 64.

¹¹⁰¹W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 106.

¹¹⁰²*Lo Spirito Antipapale che produsse la Riforma* (1832). *Il Mystero dell' Amor Platonico del Medio Evo derivato dai Misteri Antichi* (1840). W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, pp. 65-68, 41. Waller, p. 40.

¹¹⁰³W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 141. A copy of Arthur Hallam's *Remarks on Rossetti's Spirito Antipapale* of 1832 could be found in the library of W. M. Rossetti in 1897 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

¹¹⁰⁴Written by Rossetti on fly-leaf of volume, "I purchased this original M.S. of Palmer, an attendant in the Antique Gallery at the British Museum, on the 30th April, 1847. Palmer knew Blake personally, and it was from the artist's wife that he had the present M.S. which he sold me for 10s. Among the sketches there are one or two profiles of Blake himself" (G. Keynes (ed.), *The Note-Book of William Blake* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1935), p. ix).

30 November 1861 of scarlet fever, aged only 33, it was Rossetti and his brother who were entrusted with bringing the work to completion.¹¹⁰⁵ Rossetti wrote the final chapter of the *Life* section of volume one, and completed chapter 32 on "Inventions to the Book of Job", which had been left with some blank sections. He also chose and arranged certain of Blake's unpublished writings, which were to form the basis of the second volume, and added introductory remarks. Gilchrist's widow called Rossetti's contribution "a labour of love".¹¹⁰⁶ In chapter 3 of *Life* Swedenborg was described as "the greatest of modern Vision Seers" and "a genius singularly germane to Blake's own order of mind".¹¹⁰⁷

In 1789 Blake had attended the first general conference of the Swedenborgian New Church, and, although he did not become a member, he signed their articles of belief. He did not remain attached to the New Church for very long, but the influence of Swedenborg on his art was more lasting, most notably in his concern for spiritual allegories; Swedenborg's theory of correspondences had given every element of the natural world a spiritual meaning.¹¹⁰⁸ Annotations by Blake can be found in a number of works by Swedenborg including a 1816 reprint of *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom* (1788), *Divine Providence* (1790) and *Heaven and Hell* (1784).¹¹⁰⁹ However, as Swinburne declared to Seymour Kirkup in March 1868, Blake, who could not be tied to any one religious sect, was a "very heretical" Swedenborgian.¹¹¹⁰

Rossetti's friendship with Smetham may have brought further acquaintance with the theories of Swedenborg. Rossetti had written to Smetham in May 1861 to persuade him to become involved with Gilchrist's project, recognising that his friend was "very closely akin to Blake; more so, probably, than any other living artist".¹¹¹¹ As a result Smetham wrote a review of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* which was published in January

¹¹⁰⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 109-10, 211. Allingham recalled looking over a large collection of Blake drawings with Rossetti in 1855 at the premises of Evans, the London printseller, on Great Queen Street (H. Allingham & D. Radford, *William Allingham: A Diary* (London: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 349-50).

¹¹⁰⁶William Michael composed an annotated catalogue of Blake's pictorial works. Gilchrist, vol. 1, pp. v-vi.

¹¹⁰⁷Gilchrist, vol. 1, pp. 15, 16.

¹¹⁰⁸D. Bindman, *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), pp. 49-52.

¹¹⁰⁹Swedenborg, 1969, p. v. Bindman, p. 234, n. 8.

¹¹¹⁰Lang, vol. 1, pp. 294-95. Gilchrist wrote that Blake was also influenced by the mystic Jacob Boehme (Gilchrist, vol. 1, p. 16).

¹¹¹¹Rossetti to Smetham, 31 May 1861 (V&A, no. 1). A. Gilchrist, *Life of Blake* (2nd ed., 1880), vol. 1, quoted in W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 594.

1869 in the *London Quarterly Review*.¹¹¹² In October 1868 Rossetti expressed appreciation for a batch of poems Smetham had sent to him to read, and declared that his favourite was "Immortal Love", which had "a strong tinge of Blake's spirit."¹¹¹³ In this poem Smetham isolated love as the central feature of Christianity, focusing on the continued impact and relevance of the story of Mary Magdalene, and, perhaps significantly in terms of Swedenborgianism, making the point that this love was felt on earth and in heaven alike: "We smell on earth its fragrance still, / It curls and wreathes on Zion's hill".¹¹¹⁴

Smetham was catholic in spirit and well informed of wider religious issues beyond Methodism, to which he adhered. In his essay on "William Blake" he criticised "the narrow... querulous condition of mind".¹¹¹⁵ His time as an apprentice for the Gothic revival architect E. J. Willson of Lincoln from 1840 to 1843 was formative, as Smetham's close friend Dr Gregory recalled:

His residence with Mr. Willson was of immense advantage to him. He met at his table the most select society: artists, architects, and the *élite* of the Roman Catholic clergy, all men of culture for Mr. Willson was a distinguished member of the Medieval Church, and his house was a favourite trysting-place for men of genius and rare accomplishments.¹¹¹⁶

Smetham would on occasion cite Swedenborg. For example, in a letter to William Davies of 28 August 1853 he wrote, "Swedenborg says that the angels are always advancing towards their spring-time. The oldest angel is the youngest. There is something in the idea... I feel more like a child than I did".¹¹¹⁷ Likewise in "True Woman: III. Her Heaven" of 1881, Rossetti wrote:

If to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
(As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman...¹¹¹⁸

As with conventional Christianity, Rossetti saw Swedenborgian theology to have its application in the secular sphere.

¹¹¹²W. Davies (ed.), *The Literary Works of James Smetham* (London: Macmillan, 1893), pp. 99-100 n.

¹¹¹³Rossetti to Smetham (V&A, no. 11).

¹¹¹⁴W. Davies, p. 270.

¹¹¹⁵W. Davies, p. 104.

¹¹¹⁶S. Smetham & W. Davies, pp. 10-11.

¹¹¹⁷S. Smetham & W. Davies, pp. 48, 292-93. Casteras, 1995, pp. 81, 48.

¹¹¹⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 205.

Patmore had studied Swedenborg before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and in fact it was the writings of Swedenborg that appeared to have opened the way for this. Patmore described Swedenborg's writings as "unfathomably profound and yet simple" like a rosary. Indeed, "Ninety-nine hundredths of what Swedenborg writes," he declared, "is in perfect harmony with the Catholic Faith, or rather, it is the Catholic Faith."¹¹¹⁹ He went on to write articles on Swedenborgianism in the *Fraser's Magazine* and in the *National Review* and quoted from him in an essay on "American Poetry" in the *North British Review*.¹¹²⁰ Reid claims that Patmore absorbed more typically Swedenborgian concepts into his verse than any other English poet.¹¹²¹ In this context it is significant that W. M. Rossetti should write, "We admired the poems enormously, and I daresay that in the course of a couple of years we had read every one of them through 20 or 30 times."¹¹²² Rossetti owned copies of Patmore's *Espousals* (1856), *The Angel in the House* (1858), and *Faithful for Ever* (1860).¹¹²³

Patmore, like Swedenborg, saw sexual relations as having their place in heaven as well as in the physical realm and such ideas he expressed in his writings, most notably in *The Angel in the House*.¹¹²⁴ For example, in a stanza within "The Betrothal" entitled "Love's Immortality" the speaker declares:

... My faith is fast
That all the loveliness I sing
Is made to bear the mortal blast,
And blossom in a better Spring.
My creed affirms the ceaseless pact
Of body and spirit, soul and sense;¹¹²⁵

¹¹¹⁹Champneys, vol. 2, pp. 19, 52, 84-85.

¹¹²⁰C. Patmore, "Swedenborgianism", *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 55 (February 1857), pp. 174-82; "Swedenborgiana", *National Review*, vol. 10 (April 1858), pp. 336-59; "American Poetry", *North British Review*, vol. 17 (July 1852), pp. 394-421.

¹¹²¹J. C. Reid, *The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 66.

¹¹²²Champneys, vol. 1, p. 82. Patmore's contribution towards *The Germ* caused great excitement. W. M. Rossetti wrote to his mother on 28 September 1849, "Did you hear that so great a man as Coventry Patmore has given us a poem for insertion?" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:3).

¹¹²³Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

¹¹²⁴G. Trobridge, "Coventry Patmore and Swedenborg", *The Westminster Review*, vol. 165 (January 1906).

¹¹²⁵C. Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (London: Macmillan, 1866, 4th ed.), p. 7.

Further, in his simile, "Spirits... match'd like hand and glove", Patmore expressed the Swedenborgian notion of the perfect spiritual partner.¹¹²⁶ Swedenborg regarded the marriage of male and female as representing the union of love and wisdom; "two married partners are the very forms and effigies of the marriage of love and wisdom".¹¹²⁷ Patmore held similar views:

Love, kiss'd by Wisdom, wakes twice love,
And Wisdom is, thro' loving, wise.¹¹²⁸

As Swedenborg saw conjugal love to be the link between humanity and its God, so Patmore wrote:

This little germ of nuptial love,
Which springs so simply from the sod,
The root is, as my song shall prove,
Of all our love to man and God.¹¹²⁹

In "Heaven and Earth" Patmore declared, "nuptial contrasts are the poles / On which the heavenly spheres revolve".¹¹³⁰ The idea of spheres was a typically Swedenborgian one, and one to which Rossetti made frequent reference. In "The Portrait", written around 1847, he talked of "the secret of the spheres".¹¹³¹ Patmore made an overt allusion to Swedenborg's *Deliciae sapientiae de amore conjugiale* (1768) in his ode "Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore" in which he talked of his lady's smile as inflaming the "sphere".¹¹³²

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a friend of Patmore, also had sympathies with Swedenborgian thought. Her biographer Kenyon wrote, "The temperament of Mrs Browning had in it a decidedly mystical vein, which predisposed her to believe in any communication between our world and that of the spirits."¹¹³³ She herself declared to Miss Mitford in February 1853, "You know I am rather a visionary, and inclined to knock round at all the doors of the present world to try to get out".¹¹³⁴ She had been interested in the Swedish philosopher's ideas since the late 1840s, and spent

¹¹²⁶Patmore, 1866, p. 6.

¹¹²⁷Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, no. 66, p. 65.

¹¹²⁸Patmore, 1866, p. 56.

¹¹²⁹Patmore, 1866, p. 35. Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, nos. 29-33, pp. 12-13.

¹¹³⁰Patmore, 1866, p. 9.

¹¹³¹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 242, 233.

¹¹³²Patmore, 1890, II. ix, p. 77. Maynard, pp. 245, 367 n.

¹¹³³Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 92.

¹¹³⁴Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 102.

considerable time in the early 1850s studying his writings.¹¹³⁵ E. F. Haworth lent her some of his works, and writing to thank him in September 1851, she confessed, "the books have so drawn and held me".¹¹³⁶ She herself came to own a copy of *Conjugal Love*.¹¹³⁷ However, she did express some reservations. In a letter to I. Blagden of around October 1853 she outlined her stance on the matter: "There are deep truths in him, I cannot doubt, though I can't receive *everything*".¹¹³⁸ Yet by 1857 she was writing, "I'm a Swedenborgian, you know, and believe in 'spheres,' 'atmospheres' and 'influences'"; in a letter of 27 March 1857 to Blagden she wrote confidently, "as we Swedenborgians say..."¹¹³⁹ Rossetti, writing to Allingham in December 1856, called E. B. Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, in which certain Swedenborgian ideas were given expression, "an astounding work".¹¹⁴⁰

Even Robert Browning, who was more sceptical on such matters than his wife, appears to have been influenced to an extent by Swedenborg. This is particularly evident in his *Men and Women* (1855).¹¹⁴¹ In "Evelyn Hope" the speaker, looking on the dead body of the girl he loved, who however had not yet loved him, anticipates his union with her in life beyond death:

I claim you still, for my love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you...¹¹⁴²

In "A Lover's Quarrel", which ends with the declaration, "I shall have her for evermore!", the speaker describes the oneness which he feels with his love, "Me, your own, your You", and in "By the Fire-Side" he talks of "our one soul":

But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.¹¹⁴³

¹¹³⁵Huxley, p. 75. Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, pp. 105, 137, 145, 177. C. F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 30. Reid, p. 67.

¹¹³⁶Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 21.

¹¹³⁷Wilton & Upstone, p. 193.

¹¹³⁸Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 145.

¹¹³⁹E. B. Browning to sister, 12 October 1857 (Huxley, p. 283). Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 309. H. N. Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, 5 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), vol. 4, p. 57.

¹¹⁴⁰Birkbeck Hill, p. 189. Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 156.

¹¹⁴¹Wilton & Upstone, p. 193.

¹¹⁴²Jack & Inglesfield, vol. 5, pp. 19-20.

Rossetti was delighted when, having paid Browning a visit on 27 September 1855, he had quoted off by heart a couple of lines from his "Blessed Damozel".¹¹⁴⁴ In fact Rossetti worried about the poem's closeness to the writings of the Brownings. He wrote to E. B. Browning on 1 October 1855 to express his concern that "there should be any property of his or yours in it".¹¹⁴⁵ In 1847 when "The Blessed Damozel" was conceived, Rossetti considered Browning unsurpassable; "Confronted with Browning, all else seemed pale and neutral in tint."¹¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Mrs Browning had been awarded one star and her husband two in the List of Immortals formulated by Rossetti and Hunt in 1848.¹¹⁴⁷ In a letter to Allingham dated January 1856 Rossetti talked of his "receptiveness in regard to Browning", and revealingly writes concerning his own poetic creativity, "I really find my thoughts on the subject generally require a starting-point from somebody else to bring them into activity".¹¹⁴⁸ Even as late as March 1869 Rossetti admitted in a letter to Browning himself:

I feel as if we were in communication even now before I put pen to paper: for is not your completed thought now filling me? - in how many ways, at what strange junctures, to recur to me forever? Such function I have long acknowledged as yours; but now most strongly, by this confirmed and controlling impression of your greatness at a time when judgement should be mature in me.¹¹⁴⁹

It is likely that the Brownings would have given their support to attempts by Rossetti to express Swedenborgian ideas in his painting. They endorsed the work of William Page, a commercially unsuccessful artist, who, known as the American Titian, was notable for his experimentation with colour and technique.¹¹⁵⁰ On 3 June 1859 E. B. Browning described him to Ruskin as "an earnest, simple, noble artist", who "has learnt much from Swedenborg, and used it in his views upon art."¹¹⁵¹ Page had been first

¹¹⁴³Jack & Inglesfield, vol. 5, pp. 14, 17, 71-72, 77.

¹¹⁴⁴Rossetti to F. M. Brown, 19 September 1855 (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 271).

¹¹⁴⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 273.

¹¹⁴⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 102.

¹¹⁴⁷Fredeman, 1975, p. 107.

¹¹⁴⁸Birkbeck Hill, p. 159.

¹¹⁴⁹Rossetti to Robert Browning, 13 March 1869 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 8:4).

¹¹⁵⁰William Page, "The Art of the Use of Colour in Imitation in Painting", *Broadway Journal*, vol. 1 (8 February - 29 March 1845), pp. 86-88, 114-15, 131-33, 150-51, 166-67, 201-2; reprinted in *Crayon*, vol. 1 (1855). J. C. Taylor, *William Page: The American Titian* (University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 284. Turner, vol. 23, p. 765.

¹¹⁵¹Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 315. J. C. Taylor, pp. 229-31.

interested in the connection between art and religion through the painter Samuel F. B. Morse, whose studio he had entered at the age of fifteen. For a short period he had entertained hopes of becoming a Presbyterian minister, in 1828 entering Philips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, for this purpose.¹¹⁵² His interest in literature and spiritualism was strengthened as a result of his friendship with the poet James Russell Lowell, whom he met in 1840. In Italy a decade later, he was introduced to the ideas of Swedenborg through the sculptor Hiram Powers, a friend of the Brownings, who had just been baptised into the New Church by the prominent Swedenborgian minister, Rev. Thomas Worcester.¹¹⁵³ Page was to declare in "The Measure of a Man", an 1879 paper in which he expressed many of his Swedenborgian ideas, that beauty's "highest use is soul manifestation."¹¹⁵⁴

Page painted a portrait of *Robert Browning* in 1854, and interestingly the Brownings approached Rossetti concerning its exhibition. They had lauded the work, and when Rossetti actually received the painting he declared himself "much disappointed in it". In fact, he declared to Allingham in a letter of 8 January 1856 that he would "advise its non-exhibition, as a portrait of Browning oughtn't to be put out of sight or kicked out."¹¹⁵⁵ Rossetti may not have thought very much of Page's art, but this incident suggests that the Brownings certainly considered their work to be in some way allied. Indeed, there were clear indications in Rossetti's paintings and poems that he had come under the influence of the writings of Swedenborg, and that, like Page, he too had become innately concerned with "soul manifestation".

¹¹⁵²J. C. Taylor, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁵³J. C. Taylor, pp. 28-29, 111-13, 124. J. Turner, vol. 23, p. 765.

¹¹⁵⁴This article was a revised and extended version of Page's "A New Geometrical Mode of Measuring the Proportions of the Human Body", published in New York in 1860 (W. Page, "The Measure of a Man", *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 17 (1879), pp. 894, 898).

¹¹⁵⁵Birkbeck Hill, pp. 162-63. C. Wood, 1998, vol. 1, p. 391. The painting remained in the Browning family until 1913, when it was sold to Sir Wilfred Meynell, and is now in the collection of Baylor University, Texas (J. C. Taylor, pp. 135 n, 138).

Ch. 5: Spiritual Guidance II: Spiritualism

Intimately related to Swedenborgianism is the subject of spiritualism. As E. P. Hood declared, "Swedenborg compels us to revoke our prejudices in connection with the world of spirits... on the relative condition of body and soul in this world, and the neighbourhood of souls to each other."¹¹⁵⁶ From April 1745 until his death in 1772 Swedenborg had purportedly been in daily communion with spirits and angels, God having "opened the interiors of my mind and spirit". These encounters he carefully documented.¹¹⁵⁷ As Rossetti was attracted to aspects of Swedenborgianism, so his innate interest in the heavenly spheres resulted in a fascination with spiritualism.

Treffry Dunn recorded that in the 1860s table-turning, spirit-rapping, planchette and mesmerism took up Rossetti's time when he was not painting.¹¹⁵⁸ Indeed, Dunn described his friend's curiosity as "feverish", Rossetti going to as many séances as he could possibly be invited to, as well as hosting them in his own home. He became familiar with popular mediums such as Mrs Guppy, née Miss Nichol, and the American Daniel Dunglas Home who had come to Britain in the spring of 1855. Both were famous for their miraculous spiritual feats, including levitation, elongation and spiritual travel.¹¹⁵⁹ Home in particular was known for his surprisingly personal communications whilst his hand was controlled by the power of a spirit.¹¹⁶⁰ As an artist and poet, the phenomena of spirit drawing and writing would have held particular interest for Rossetti. Certainly in *Hand and Soul* he had demonstrated a concern for the divinely controlled hand, as he also had in his 1849 pen and ink drawing (S.42) and 1853 watercolour (S.58) of *Dante Drawing an Angel in Memory of Beatrice*, in which Dante, starting from his drawing at the presence of visitors, declared, "Another was with me".¹¹⁶¹

¹¹⁵⁶E. P. Hood, p. 343.

¹¹⁵⁷E. Swedenborg, *The Spiritual Diary* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1962), p. iii. Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, p. 3.

¹¹⁵⁸Dunn, pp. 46-48.

¹¹⁵⁹D. D. Home, *Incidents in my Life* (New York: Carleton, 1863), pp. 95, 192. Allingham & Radford, pp. 160-61. [Robert Bell] "Stranger than Fiction", *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 2 (August 1860), pp. 222-23. Rev. C. M. Davies, *Mystic London* (London: Tinsley, 1875), p. 290. E. H. Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (London: William Britten, 1884), pp. 142-49, 160-62.

¹¹⁶⁰W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 2, p. 201.

¹¹⁶¹Surtees, 1971, p. 12. Arthur Hughes, who saw the watercolour version in 1909 at the opening of the Pre-Raphaelite room in the Ashmolean Museum, described this work as "heavenly" and Dante as having "the gaze of one who still had the Angel in those eyes" (A. Hughes to Sydney Cockerell, V&A, MSL/1958/692/22).

Spiritualism and automatism had begun to attract adherents in the main cities of Europe in the 1850s, following an outbreak of occult activity in the United States in 1848, initially in the home of John D. Fox in New York State.¹¹⁶² E. B. Browning, writing in 1853, declared, "At Rome there has been a good deal of this mystical handwriting".¹¹⁶³ In London too the phenomenon was rife. Mary Ruxton claimed that her husband, who had never before shown any tendencies towards poeticism, "filled a quire of paper with poetry the other day, in the course of three quarters of an hour, under '*spiritual guidance*.'" E. B. Browning, who recounted this in a letter to her sister Henrietta, wrote, "She tells me that the thing is spreading widely".¹¹⁶⁴

Although Browning wrote on 9 July 1856 concerning "Aurora Leigh" that "There is one reference to the spirits" and "nobody will be offended by it", certain spiritualists believed that Browning had written *Aurora Leigh* as dictated by spiritual forces.¹¹⁶⁵ "Mr Jarves came to enquire very seriously the other day," Browning related in 1857, "whether there was any truth in the story going about Florence that 'Aurora' was written by the 'spirits,' and that I disavowed any share in it except the mere mechanical holding of the pen!!!"¹¹⁶⁶ William Howitt in *The Spiritualist Magazine* in 1860 actually described her as "biologised by infernal spirits".¹¹⁶⁷

Browning certainly was "in deep meditation on the nature of the rapping spirits", as she admitted to Miss Mitford in March 1853. In this letter she mentioned a friend's acquaintance with Henry Spicer, who "has just written a book entitled, 'The Mystery of the Age.'"¹¹⁶⁸ In *Sights and Sounds: the Mystery of the Day*, Spicer gave many examples of automatic writing, most notably by Lydia Tenney of Georgetown, Massachusetts, who transcribed poetry from the spirits of Robert Southey, Edgar Allan Poe and Macdonald Clarke. "The lady herself repudiated all claim to poetic fire," wrote Spicer, and she declared that "the act of writing, was entirely beyond her control".¹¹⁶⁹ Browning affirmed that although Spicer's book appeared "flippant and a

¹¹⁶²H. Spicer, *Sights and Sounds* (London: Thomas Bodsworth, 1853), pp. 56 ff.

¹¹⁶³Huxley, p. 190.

¹¹⁶⁴Huxley, p. 258.

¹¹⁶⁵Huxley, p. 250.

¹¹⁶⁶Huxley, p. 264.

¹¹⁶⁷Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 403

¹¹⁶⁸Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 105. See note 1162.

¹¹⁶⁹Spicer, pp. 133-42. London journals at this time were hotly debating the issue of spiritualism. Spicer contributed a number of articles on the subject to the *Critic* (Britten, p. 136).

little vulgar", "the honesty and accuracy of it have been attested to me by Americans oftener than once."¹¹⁷⁰ Further specimens of apparently spirit-controlled writing and drawing were published in the *Spiritual Magazine*, and in volumes such as Coleman's *Spiritualism in America* (fig. 117).¹¹⁷¹

Rossetti may well have come in contact with spiritualism and spiritual penmanship through the Brownings and also Spicer's book which had been recommended in Brevior's *Two Worlds* which Rossetti owned, but it was also brought into his coterie through his friendship with the Howitts.¹¹⁷² He wrote to Allingham on 18 December 1856, "Have you heard of the Howitts?... *Spiritualism* has begun to be in the ascendant at the Hermitage, and this to a degree which you could not conceive without witnessing it."¹¹⁷³ William and Mary Howitt were two of the earliest adherents to spiritualism in nineteenth century Britain, their interest beginning in the early 1850s. In 1853 William Howitt translated Ennemoser's *History of Magic* which included "An Appendix of the most Remarkable and Best Authenticated Stories of Apparitions... Divination, Witchcraft... Table-Turning and Spirit-Rapping" by Mary Howitt. In 1854 the Howitts claimed to have accompanied "in the spirit" Joseph Sturge, Robert Charleton and Henry Pease of the Society of Friends to St Petersburg, where, as the *Times* recorded, they had gone to gain an audience with Czar Nicholas in order to attempt to avert oncoming war.¹¹⁷⁴ Mary Howitt declared, "It was really a fine thing, quite worthy of George Fox".¹¹⁷⁵ In the spring of 1856 the Howitts' experimentation with spiritualism increased as, Mary Howitt recorded, "we had become acquainted with several most ardent and honest spirit-mediums".¹¹⁷⁶

Rossetti became caught up in the Howitt circle. Mary Howitt wrote in her diary on 1 March 1853, "M. Reclus, a French acquaintance of Miss Acton's, was here the other evening. He knows much about magic and occult things, and is acquainted with many French and German books on the subject. Is it not singular the widespread belief in such agencies? Rossetti told us the other evening some most remarkable ghost-

¹¹⁷⁰Kenyon, 1897, vol. 2, p. 105.

¹¹⁷¹B. Coleman, *Spiritualism in America* (London: F. Pitman, 1861), p. 28. *Spiritual Magazine*, vol. 2, pp. 432 ff (W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 2, p. 189).

¹¹⁷²Brevior, p. 312.

¹¹⁷³Birkbeck Hill, p. 195.

¹¹⁷⁴"Deputation of the Religious Society of Friends to the Emperor of Russia", *Times* (28 February 1854), p. 12.

¹¹⁷⁵M. Howitt, 1889, vol. 2, pp. 99-100, 105. Lee, pp. 212-13

¹¹⁷⁶M. Howitt, 1889, vol. 2, p. 117.

stories".¹¹⁷⁷ Significantly, Rossetti's "Sister Helen", which dealt with the subject of witchcraft, and which was first published in the German magazine *The Dusseldorf Artists' Annual* in 1854, was brought out in an English edition by Mary Howitt.¹¹⁷⁸ As previously mentioned, Rossetti had found an admirer in the Howitts' daughter, Anna Mary. She wrote to her uncle, Richard Howitt, on 18 June 1854, "Please read in the Album a poem called 'Sister Helen.' It is by Gabriel Rossetti, an artist friend of ours".¹¹⁷⁹

In 1863 William Howitt wrote a two volumed *History of the Supernatural*, in which he chronicled the history of spiritualism and the occult from ancient times to the present day, drawing from the practices of people groups world-wide, and dealing with both religious phenomena and witchcraft. In the second volume he dealt largely with spiritualism under the broad umbrella of Christianity, taking into consideration orthodox and dissenting factions within the Eastern, Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions, and focusing on key figures such as Madame Guyon, Wesley, Böhme, Swedenborg and Irving. It was a well researched document, and W. Howitt came to be regarded as one of the central figures of Victorian spiritualism, not least for the scholarly credibility he lent to the subject, his work being very different to the personalised accounts of supernatural experience which dominated spiritualist literature, and also for his resituation of the preternatural within the Christian faith. His daughter, through whom Rossetti's acquaintance with spiritualism burgeoned, dedicated a large portion of her 1883 *Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation* to him.¹¹⁸⁰

Anna Mary Howitt wrote Rossetti a thirty-two page letter from Rouen around the spring of 1858, describing her spiritual mediumship, and giving a 'spontaneous' specimen of automatic writing, which she maintained to be the work of Shelley "who lives in me" (fig. 118).¹¹⁸¹ She also claimed that she conversed with Fra Angelico who came into her soul and taught her how to paint.¹¹⁸² A. M. Howitt wrote of her parents

¹¹⁷⁷M. Howitt, 1889, vol. 2, p. 94.

¹¹⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 166-67.

¹¹⁷⁹M. Howitt, 1889, vol. 2, p. 108.

¹¹⁸⁰Anna Mary Howitt, *The Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation: Life and Works of Dr J. Kerner: William Howitt and his Work for Spiritualism: Biographical Sketches* (London: Psychological Press Association, 1883). Britten, p. 200.

¹¹⁸¹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 22.

¹¹⁸²Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 9, 24. W. B. Scott recalled seeing A. M. Howitt's early 'spirit paintings' still hanging on her walls when she was fifty-five (Minto, vol. 2, p. 242).

that "in Clairvoyance & in my queer Painting and Writing Mediumship they fully believe".¹¹⁸³ Indeed, in his *History of the Supernatural* her father related a number of cases of spirit writing and drawing in America, and backed up the phenomena by relating instances from Scripture.¹¹⁸⁴ Further, describing the drawings made by Madam Hauffé under the direction of spirits in the *Spiritual Magazine* in April 1863, W. Howitt mentioned that although he himself had "never had a single lesson in drawing, and never could draw in a normal condition", he had on one occasion drawn such perfect circles under the influence of the spirits that they could not have been surpassed by "Giotto, or any pair of compasses".¹¹⁸⁵

The influence of the art and philosophy of William Blake on A. M. Howitt was significant. Blake claimed to have conversed with the spirits of illustrious men, such as Milton, who had dictated an original poem to him, and many of Blake's writings, such as *Jerusalem*, he declared to have been written spontaneously, as inspired by the spirits.¹¹⁸⁶ A. M. Howitt in turn professed to be in contact with Blake's spirit.¹¹⁸⁷ However, a more immediate influence on A. M. Howitt was J. J. G. Wilkinson, also a follower of Blake, who had published in 1857 a book of verse written automatically, entitled *Improvisations from the Spirit*.¹¹⁸⁸ His name occurs several times in her 1858 letter to Rossetti as a mentor figure. Wilkinson's *Improvisations* also drew the attention of Rossetti, who contacted Allingham towards the end of 1862 to request a loan of the volume:

You will remember my troubling you once or twice about that *Bogie* poem book of Wilkinson's. I am wanting it now to mention in a passage on Blake's poetry which I am writing for the *Life* never quite completed.¹¹⁸⁹

He again requested Wilkinson's book in December 1879, this time because his own copy had gone missing. He wrote to Watts-Dunton emphatically, "the *Bogie Book*, I do ardently desire."¹¹⁹⁰ He appreciated its "Blake-like... 'mystical madness'".¹¹⁹¹

¹¹⁸³Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 12.

¹¹⁸⁴W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 1, pp. 148-49; vol. 2, p. 189.

¹¹⁸⁵Britten, p. 200.

¹¹⁸⁶Ennemoser, vol. 1, p. 86. F. Tatham & A. Russell (eds.), *Letters of William Blake and Life* (London, 1906), 25 April 1803. Underhill, p. 79.

¹¹⁸⁷Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 11.

¹¹⁸⁸James John Garth Wilkinson, *Improvisations from the Spirit* (London: W. White, 1857). See also William Martin Wilkinson, *Spirit-Drawings: A Personal Narrative* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858).

¹¹⁸⁹Birkbeck Hill, p. 261.

¹¹⁹⁰Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1691. Eight months later Rossetti was once again requesting this book (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1803).

W. M. Rossetti kept a diary of the séances which he attended from 1865 to 1868, these mainly at 7 Bristol Gardens, the home of Mrs Marshall, whom he described as a "washerwoman medium", and also at his brother's Cheyne Walk studio and at 33 Elgin Road. He recalled seeing on 11 November 1865 drawings on the walls at Mrs Marshall's, "evidently so-called spirit-drawings - one of a devil: but I paid very little attention to them."¹¹⁹² W. M. Rossetti remained largely sceptical, yet he came to own numerous books on the subject of spiritualism, including J. H. Anderson's *The Fashionable Science of Parlour Magic*; Dr J. Ashburner's *Philosophy of Animal Magnetism & Spiritualism* (1867); Giovanni Damiani's *Spiritualism and Positivism: Experiences of Spiritualism* (1868-69); William Edwards' *Mesmerism: Its Practice and Phenomena with Cases of Clairvoyance* (1850); W. Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers* (1834); and John Snaith Rymer's *Spirit-Manifestations: A Lecture* (1857) which received a special recommendation from W. Howitt, as recording early spiritualist activity in Britain.¹¹⁹³

Rossetti appears to have consulted his brother's books, designing, for example, in 1853 a pen and ink drawing, *Michael Scott's Wooing* (S.56), the subject of which was described in Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers*:

Michael Scot [sic.] of Balwirie in the county of Fife...
addicted himself to astrology, chemistry, and the still more
frivolous sciences of chiromancy and physiognomy... the
vulgar, we are told, generally regarded him as a sorcerer,
and are said to have carried their superstition so far as to
have conceived a terror of so much as touching his works.¹¹⁹⁴

Rossetti returned to the theme around 1861, and this work, exhibited at the R.A. in 1883, was described in the catalogue as follows: "the wizard, Michael Scott, to please and fascinate a lady whom he was wooing, gets up a magical pageant of Love, Death, and various other figures."¹¹⁹⁵ Watts-Dunton claimed the design had its origins in James Hogg's supernatural tale "Mary Burnet", in which the protagonist John Allanson

¹¹⁹¹Evans, pp. 93-94.

¹¹⁹²Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 17:3. W. M. Rossetti, 1903, pp. 154, 156-57. Hunt attended a séance at which spirit drawings were made of an angel, a griffon and a crane (Marsh, 1999, p. 337).

¹¹⁹³W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 2, p. 231. Rymer had given hospitality to Home at his house in Ealing (Britten, p. 139). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹¹⁹⁴W. Godwin, pp. 254-55.

¹¹⁹⁵W. M. Rossetti, May 1884, p. 152. Marillier, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1899, pp. 143-44.

becomes involved up in witchcraft in order to win over his love. However, Watts-Dunton also believed Rossetti to have first heard this tale at Kelmscott, that is, in 1871-74.¹¹⁹⁶ Rossetti did return to the subject in 1870-71 (S.222; fig. 119), but an alternative source is required to explain his earlier designs.¹¹⁹⁷ The R.A. catalogue declared of the 1861 composition, "The subject is probably an invention of the painter's", and whilst this is probably true, the impetus was likely to have been his brother's copy of *Lives of the Necromancers*.

Rossetti himself owned a number of spiritualist works, including *The Two Worlds: the Natural and the Spiritual* (1864) by Thomas Brevior, the editor of the London *Spiritual Magazine* and contributor to the *British Spiritual Telegraph*. This book, which described Brevior's personal experiences of spirit writing and spirit drawing, was spoken of admiringly in W. M. Rossetti's copy of *Philosophy of Animal Magnetism & Spiritualism*.¹¹⁹⁸ Rossetti may or may not have bought Brevior's book on the recommendation of Ashburner, but he certainly had a marked interest in the subject of Ashburner's book. In 1878 Rossetti repeatedly recommended that his friend Smetham, whose physical health was gradually worsening, should try the therapeutic effects of mesmerism. Rossetti declared, "I believe great benefit would shortly result". Rossetti had also had a personal encounter with the phenomenon, writing, "My own conviction *from experience* is that mesmerism ought certainly to be tried in his case".¹¹⁹⁹

Wilkinson's "Improvisations from the Spirit", which Rossetti so admired, included poems entitled "Memory", "Mesmer" and "Healing", thereby suggesting a connection with mesmerism. This volume also contained poems such as "The proud hath said in his heart, There is no God", "The Holy Spirit descended like a dove" and "Have Faith", which set spiritualism in a specific Christian context.¹²⁰⁰ In his book on parlour magic, Anderson described spirit-rapping and writing mediums as making astonishing headway "not among the less informed of the population only, but among men of learning, the

¹¹⁹⁶[J. Hogg] *Tales and Sketches, by the Ettrick Shepherd*, ed. D. O. Hill (Glasgow: Blackie, 1836), pp. 28-53. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 911.

¹¹⁹⁷Rossetti also wrote a poem (1869) and a prose outline (1870) for the subject (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 214, 616).

¹¹⁹⁸Brevior, pp. vi, 336-67. Animal magnetism was Friedrich Anton Mesmer's name for hypnotism.

¹¹⁹⁹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, pp. 1557, 1596 - Rossetti's italics. J. Ashburner, *Notes and Studies in the Philosophy of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism* (London: H. Baillière, 1867), p. 278.

¹²⁰⁰J. J. G. Wilkinson, 1857, pp. 39-41, 118-23, 355.

clergy, and the higher classes."¹²⁰¹ It is significant that Anderson noted the acceptance of spiritualism among the religious. A number of distinguished mediums were among the clergy. Rev. C. Hammond wrote with wonder that his hand should have been "moved by an invisible influence".¹²⁰² In *Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism*, Ashburner declared that "Atheism and Animal Magnetism are quite incompatible". Considering mesmerism to be innately connected with spiritualism, he maintained that "Animal Magnetism received a sanction from [St] John, who was himself a healing medium". In fact, he declared, "the Apostles urged them [Christians] to communicate with the world of unseen spirits".¹²⁰³

Alarm was expressed in certain quarters. One American minister declared that spiritualism was "undermining the ancient faith in many quarters more effectually, because more secretly, than any other influence now at work in our community."¹²⁰⁴ Many feared spiritualism to be the product of evil forces, and Scriptural passages were cited to warn against contact with spirits.¹²⁰⁵ However, spiritualism was not regarded by some as running counter to Christianity, but as actually substantiating it.¹²⁰⁶ William Howitt felt that in spiritualism many were desirous of finding "deep religious truth".¹²⁰⁷ Mary Howitt, recounting the experience of her husband and herself, related:

With constant prayer for enlightenment and guidance, we experimented at home... I felt thankful for the assurance thus gained of an invisible world...¹²⁰⁸

In *The Two Worlds*, Rossetti could have read Brevior's justification of spiritualism through the "Testimony of Scripture" and the example of the early church. In the

¹²⁰¹J. H. Anderson, *The Fashionable Science of Parlour Magic* (London: R. S. Francis, n.d.), pp. 67-68.

¹²⁰²Anon., *Spirit Rapping in England and America* (London: Henry Vizetelly, n.d.), p. 69.

¹²⁰³Ashburner, pp. xi, 272-73, 276.

¹²⁰⁴J. H. Anderson, p. 68.

¹²⁰⁵Anon., *Spiritualism or Spirit-Rapping Tested by the Word of God* (London: W. H. Broom, n.d.), pp. 3-8. *Leviticus* 19.31; 20.27; *Deuteronomy* 18.10-12; *Isaiah* 8.19.

¹²⁰⁶This was the stance taken by the journal, *The Spiritual Times and Weekly News*, which ran from March 1864 to October 1866 (Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 99). W. R. Bertolacci, *Christian Spiritualism* (London: Faithfull, 1864).

¹²⁰⁷William Howitt, *Spiritual Magazine* (April 1863), quoted in Britten, p. 201.

¹²⁰⁸M. Howitt, 1889, vol. 2, p. 118. Birkbeck Hill, p. 205. Hymns were even sung by spiritualists at séances, "The Beautiful Land on High" being one favourite (C. M. Davies, p. 79).

present day, Brevior declared, the Church of England "teaches Spiritualism in its most sacred and highest sense" in "the action of the Spirit of God upon the individual human spirit" and in "*the communion of Saints*" as stated in the Apostles' Creed.¹²⁰⁹ Rossetti may have gained first hand experience of such theories through Home's séances which were known to have taken on a Christian aspect. Home at times prayed whilst in a trance, and the spirits frequently made reference to Christian doctrine. On one occasion a Mr Jencken noted that tongues of fire encircled Home's head in Pentecostal fashion.¹²¹⁰ Indeed, Home declared that his decision to become a medium had come out of his desire "to place myself entirely at God's disposal".¹²¹¹

The various isolated religious revivals with their attendant spiritual phenomena which had occurred in the early part of the century in Britain had in part opened the way for the acceptance of spiritualism among Christians.¹²¹² Indeed, Brevior discussed the manifestations of spiritual gifts which had occurred in London in the 1830s in the church of Edward Irving precisely in the context of spiritualism. He linked the Christian charismatic phenomenon of tongues with instances of written mediumship in which the communicant received a message in a foreign language, in both cases the 'medium' requiring a translator.¹²¹³ Interestingly, many of the spirit communications related in Spicer's book concerned religious matters in some way, many constituting exhortations to faith. D. G. Green, writing as directed by "the spirit of Calvin", described "the great harmonial circle of God's more immediate presence", and S. French, purportedly possessed of Fenelon, declared, "Love first our God, with constant outpourings of thankfulness for his boundless mercy..."¹²¹⁴

Similarly A. M. Howitt urged Rossetti after he had read her thirty-two page "epistle" to "*pause, consider, pray*":

Oh Gabriel, if God enters your soul with its words - pray,
pray with up raised eyes with anguished heart - with hands
crushed together in agony as I have this moment done - to
understand, to believe - *to obey!*¹²¹⁵

¹²⁰⁹Brevior, pp. 1-12, 42-50, 260-65 - Brevior's italics.

¹²¹⁰Britten, pp. 143-44, 146. *Acts* 2.3.

¹²¹¹Home, 1863, p. 24.

¹²¹²Britten, pp. 104 ff., 124.

¹²¹³Brevior, pp. 202-15. 1 *Corinthians* 14.27.

¹²¹⁴Spicer, pp. 147-49.

¹²¹⁵A. M. Howitt to Rossetti [spring 1858?] (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 1, 17).

The writer of an anonymous article, *Spiritualism or Spirit-Rapping Tested by the Word of God*, published in the early 1860s in response to such claims of divine revelation through the spirits, made the point that the communications received were "confined to the most commonplace and well-known truisms".¹²¹⁶ Indeed, Howitt's letter is full of Christian platitudes: God was "the *Reader of all hearts*", and "all *must, must* obey and believe in God alone, *as Love*". "Lift up thy voice thou child chosen of Christ and sing", the spirits declared to Howitt.¹²¹⁷

Following contemporary trends in spiritualist and religious thinking, Howitt rejected the notion of the Bible as a closed canon. She considered revelation to be progressive; "Oh, there is such lovely truth in the New Testament teaching, Gabriel... but... So much, much alas *left out*", and talked of "God's own plan of mediumship".¹²¹⁸ Howitt specifically justified the manifestations she received by likening them to when "God's Angels spoke in the heart of Prophets of old Jewish times, in the hearts of saints and martyrs in early Christian times".¹²¹⁹ She appeared to see not only herself but Rossetti as artistically akin to such saintly figures, writing that like the early monastic painters, "*First we have to paint, then to live for God*". Indeed, she frequently returned to the language of monasticism, talking of Rossetti's "narrow cell", and describing him as "the giver of the keys of Brotherhood".¹²²⁰

Christian mystics often made claims to a species of automatic writing. St Teresa maintained that her great mystical writings were written as dictated by God, and that she had been powerless against divine will.¹²²¹ Jacob Böhme's *Aurora* (1610) and his subsequent work were also written automatically. He declared:

I do not know myself what I shall write; but as I write the spirit dictates it to me in such wonderful discernment, that I frequently do not know whether I am in this world according to the spirit.¹²²²

¹²¹⁶Anon., *Spiritualism... Tested by the Word of God*, p. 3.

¹²¹⁷Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 1, 15.

¹²¹⁸New concerns for "personal authority from within" in contrast to old scriptural authority were discussed in R. Vaughan's *Letter and Spirit* (London: Jackson & Walford, 1849), p. 19. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 7, 12, 19, 22.

¹²¹⁹Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - p. 3.

¹²²⁰Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:5 - pp. 8, 24, 25.

¹²²¹G. C. Graham, vol. 1, pp. 202-4. Underhill, pp. 79, 352.

¹²²²Julius Hamberger, *The Doctrines of the German Philosopher Jacob Böhme Represented According to Systematic Extracts from his Collected Works* (1853), quoted in Ennemoser, vol. 2, p. 301. W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 2, p. 388.

The seventeenth century Madam Guyon, whom Osgood asserted in 1849 to be "rising into notice and favor among Protestants now", felt compelled by spiritual forces to write.¹²²³ Madam Guyon's autobiography had been translated into English in 1772, and in 1851 there appeared a new biography of her life by the Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Bowdoin College, which was reviewed in the *British Quarterly Review* in 1853.¹²²⁴ Her life and religious stance were described by W. Howitt in his *History of the Supernatural*. He called her "one of the purest spiritualists" and "one of most distinguished writing mediums that ever lived."¹²²⁵

The current interest in spiritualism was likened by *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1851 to the miracles of saintly legend.¹²²⁶ Likewise, the association was made by Ennemoser in *The History of Magic*: "To the various forms of clairvoyance during ecstasia must be reckoned that of the saints and prophets".¹²²⁷ There were certainly links with the related experiences of Christian mystics and saints. Rossetti may have read in Brevior's account of modern spiritualism of St Teresa's experiences of elevation: "Sometimes my whole body was carried with my soul, so as to be raised from the ground", and similar experiences of St Catherine, St Philip Neri, Abbot Richard of St Vanne de Verdun, Ignatius Loyola and Savonarola.¹²²⁸

Some mediums purposely exploited such saintly associations. For example, as sweet fragrances were related to have emanated from the bodies of saints after death, so there were reports of séances at which ambrosial aromas accompanied spirit manifestations. Mediums were on occasion known to have attempted to artificially create such effects with cheap perfume. F. M. Brown gave an account of such a séance on 9 April 1868, at which Rossetti was present, when "eau de Cologne was squirted over the guests in the dark".¹²²⁹ Rossetti would have recognised the underlying tradition. He had

¹²²³Osgood, p. 225. Underhill, p. 78.

¹²²⁴*The Life of Lady Guion, by Herself*, trans. anon. (London, 1772). Thomas C. Upham, *Life and Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1851). "Mysticism: Madame Guyon", *British Quarterly Review*, vol. 17 (1 May 1853), pp. 317-372. A new and revised edition of Upham's volume came out in London in 1854, published by Sampson Low, and this received further coverage ("Upham's Life of Madame Guyon", *Eclectic Review*, vol. 102 (1855), pp. 437-53).

¹²²⁵W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 1, p. 468; vol. 2, p. 318.

¹²²⁶"Legends of the Monastic Orders...", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1851, p. 310.

¹²²⁷Ennemoser, vol. 1, p. 88.

¹²²⁸Brevior, p. 57.

¹²²⁹Birkbeck Hill, p. 205.

referred to "tombs of pilgrims" and heavenly perfume in "The Portrait", a poem of strange occult meetings in which the speaker mourns his dead love:

And all around was fragrant air
In the sick burthen of my love...¹²³⁰

Rossetti made a personal connection between spiritualism and the legends of the saints in his 1863 oil *Joan of Arc* (S.162; fig. 120), painted for the solicitor and art collector J. Anderson Rose.¹²³¹ Rossetti may have been familiar with the story of St Joan of Arc through reading W. M. Rossetti's copy of Godwin's *Lives of the Necromancers* or his own edition of Brevior's *Two Worlds*. He would certainly have been attracted to the visionary experiences related therein, Joan regularly communicating with the spirits of deceased saints.¹²³² William Howitt declared in the very year of Rossetti's painting that "of all the spirit-mediums which have appeared in the Roman Catholic history, there is none which surpasses, or perhaps can equal, the peasant maiden of Domremy, the heroic and maligned Joan of Arc."¹²³³ In Cassell's *History of England* (1856) Howitt had emphasised the supernatural aspect of her mission.¹²³⁴ In contrast, Sharon Turner, in his discussion of the heroine in his *History of England* (1823), asserted that Joan was either deceived by the evil of others into believing in supernatural visitations or subject to hallucinations: "we admit no super-human agency for that, which natural means were competent to produce".¹²³⁵ However, in *Two Worlds*, the source readily available to Rossetti, Brevior put forward the case of Joan of Arc as perfectly illustrating the way in which spiritualism "blends with both ecclesiastical and secular history."¹²³⁶ W. M. Rossetti admitted that whereas in the 1850s his brother had spoken scornfully of the idea of spirit mediums, by 1864, "he believed in it not a little".¹²³⁷

¹²³⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 242-43.

¹²³¹Surtees, 1971, p. 91.

¹²³²W. M. Rossetti also came to own a copy of Jules Michelet's *Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1888). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹²³³W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 1, p. 465.

¹²³⁴J. F. Smith & W. Howitt, *Illustrated History of England*, 4 vols. (London: John Cassell, 1856), vol. 1, pp. 574-82. W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 1, p. 465. It seems likely that Rossetti had access to Howitt's *Illustrated History of England*. Included in the sale of Rossetti's books in 1882 was a "History of England, illustrated" (Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, p. 29, lot 617). In 1861 he had written to Brown requesting a loan of his "Pictorial History of England" (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, p. 426).

¹²³⁵S. Turner, *History of England*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1814-23), vol. 3, pp. 42-110. Brevior, p. 72 n.

¹²³⁶Brevior, p. 70.

¹²³⁷Birkbeck Hill, p. 204.

Writing in the *American Church Review* in 1883, Ward recognised within Rossetti "the sense of mystery and mysterious depth of meaning with which the idea of the supernatural rightly invests all human life".¹²³⁸ Rossetti was not one of those referred to in Brevior's *Two Worlds* who "affirm that Nature, or material forces and phenomena, constitute the totality of being."¹²³⁹ He had been drawn to mystical phenomena from the outset of his career, and therefore, when organising his trip with Hunt to France and Belgium in the autumn of 1849, he had been very keen to visit the dramatic poet Charles Wells in Brittany.¹²⁴⁰ Wells' *Joseph and his Brethren*, which had been first published 1824 under the pseudonym H. L. Howard Whitaker, had recently come out in a new edition.¹²⁴¹ Rossetti considered Wells to be "the greatest English poet since Shakespeare". However, more than this, Wells that very year "had created a great sensation in Brittany by *raising from the dead through prayer* a young lady of a distinguished family".¹²⁴² Disappointingly for Rossetti, the proposed visit never took place.

Treffry Dunn saw a direct link between his friend's belief in the supernatural and his art; "both his poetry and his painting was influenced by the bent of mind in that direction and his yearnings for the unseen."¹²⁴³ This was borne out by the ballad "Rose Mary", written in 1871, which Rossetti called his "magic poem", and the pastel *Madonna Pietra* (S.237) of 1874, both of which centre on the phenomenon of crystal-gazing, which had also come into vogue with spiritualism.¹²⁴⁴ Brevior mentioned the antiquity of this method of spiritual communication, citing *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years Between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits* (1659) and a five volumed, unpublished manuscript in the British Museum entitled *Journals of Magical Processes, Appearances of Angels, Spirits, &c., and Conferences with Them, from July 24, 1671, to December 18, 1688*.¹²⁴⁵

¹²³⁸J. H. Ward, "Rossetti in Poetry and Art", *American Church Review*, vol. 41 (April 1883), p. 375.

¹²³⁹Brevior, p. v.

¹²⁴⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 55.

¹²⁴¹Wells had settled in Brittany c. 1840 (D. G. Rossetti, "Notes on C. J. Wells", British Library, pp. 1-2).

¹²⁴²D. G. Rossetti, "Notes on C. J. Wells" (British Library, pp. 5, 11).

¹²⁴³Dunn, p. 53. In contrast, and quite unjustifiably, Wood claimed that Rossetti avoided "the mystical and the occult" (E. Wood, p. 93).

¹²⁴⁴Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1012. Mrs De Morgan, *From Matter to Spirit* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863), pp. 109-10. W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 103-36.

¹²⁴⁵Brevior, pp. 339-40.

Joan of Arc was recorded to have conversed with St Margaret and St Catherine of Fierbois, and it was they who informed her of the mission which had been set her by God, that of lifting the seige of Orleans and escorting King Charles VII of France to his coronation at Rheims.¹²⁴⁶ St Catherine commanded her to arm herself with the sword which she would find in the church at Fierbois. In his 1863 oil Rossetti showed the saint kneeling in church before the altar on which lies a lily, and fervently kissing her sword, whilst gazing on the crucifix above. As with St Elizabeth of Hungary, there were numerous tales recounting Joan of Arc's adolescent piety and her frequenting of churches.¹²⁴⁷ In his concentrated image Rossetti alluded to this, whilst also suggesting the standard with which Joan of Arc chose to be represented, a fleur de lys pattern on a white ground with a central image of Christ enthroned, the saint having taken a vow of chastity for Christ's sake.¹²⁴⁸

The subject was a significant one for the artist.¹²⁴⁹ He made three other versions of the painting, two in watercolour in 1864 (S.162 R.1 & R.2) and one in oil in 1882 whilst at Birchington-on-Sea (S.162 R.3), and in 1879 he began a poem on the theme.¹²⁵⁰ W. M. Rossetti wrote that his brother had intended to write a lengthy ballad on the subject along the lines of "The White Ship" or "The King's Tragedy", but was prevented by his early death. Only three stanzas were written.¹²⁵¹ In 1871 there were three plays based on the life of Joan of Arc to be seen on the London stage, which may have renewed Rossetti's interest in the subject: Tom Taylor's *Joan of Arc* was performed in Queen's Theatre in April, E. Villers' in East London in August, and Charles Clarke's *The Maid, the Amazon, and the Martyr* in Victoria in August.¹²⁵² However, Rossetti was not a great theatre goer. The catalyst for his interest in the saint was spiritualism. Indeed, in the three stanzas he wrote inspired by Joan of Arc, Rossetti, referring to the Holy Spirit's manifestation at Pentecost, described the saint as "the world's chief Christ-fire", and importantly alluded to her mediumship, albeit in a

¹²⁴⁶W. Godwin, pp. 286-94. Brevior, pp. 73-74. Smith & Howitt, vol. 1, p. 574.

¹²⁴⁷Brevior, pp. 72-73. S. Turner, vol. 3, p. 44-45.

¹²⁴⁸Smith & Howitt, vol. 1, pp. 574, 576. S. Turner, vol. 3, p. 68.

¹²⁴⁹Millais also painted a version of the subject which he exhibited at the R.A. in 1865 - No. 208 (Graves, 1905, vol. 5, p. 245).

¹²⁵⁰Birchington may have appealed to Rossetti because of its proximity to the road taken by medieval pilgrims to Canterbury (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17).

¹²⁵¹W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. xx, 245, 672.

¹²⁵²D. Mullin, *Victorian Plays* (London: Greenwood Press, 1987). p. 178.

line in which he expressed certain religious doubts: "Where spirits go, what man may know?"¹²⁵³

In the 1860s when he first became interested in the subject of Joan of Arc, Rossetti was seeking reassurance from spiritualism. Following his wife's death on 11 February 1862, he came to believe that he could call up her actual spirit at séances, and "that some secret might yet be wrested from the grave."¹²⁵⁴ An acquaintance wrote to W. B. Scott, "Our old friend Gabriel has gone into spiritualism, and fancies he can call up bogies".¹²⁵⁵ Coleman, in his 1861 book on spirit writing, dwelt particularly on a certain "Mr L" who claimed to be in frequent communication with the spirit of his dead wife, Estelle (fig. 121). Through the intermediacy of Miss Fox, a writing medium, Estelle had apparently declared, "There is no separation - no death! and what is so beautiful to me is, the fact of angels being the watchers of their loved on earth."¹²⁵⁶ In the context of such spiritualist literature it is not surprising that Rossetti returned to theme of "The Blessed Damozel", in which the man on earth and the woman in heaven mutually long for each other, beginning in 1871 an oil version of the subject, sympathetically commissioned by William Graham.

In the poem "The Blessed Damozel" the man believes he hears his love, "Even now in that bird's song".¹²⁵⁷ At Penkill Castle, Ayrshire, in 1869 Rossetti became convinced that the spirit of his dead wife had visited him in the form of a chaffinch, a fact confirmed in his eyes when he discovered that at about the same time the house bell had been rung, apparently by nobody.¹²⁵⁸ Rossetti may well have been thinking of accounts of other attempted communications through natural elements, discussed within spiritualist literature. Coleman related that on one occasion when "Mr L" had visited his wife's grave, he had considered it of great spiritual import that some little birds had flown across his path. Indeed, his 'wife', in her next 'spirit letter', had written, "Dear Charley, did you not notice as you were standing over the grave... the little birds.. Oh! how I tried to waken you from your musings..."¹²⁵⁹ Rossetti became increasingly convinced that such communication was possible. Therefore, in the painted version of *The Blessed Damozel*, in contrast to the poem in which neither partner can see the other, Rossetti added a predella, visually suggesting through the

¹²⁵³W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 245.

¹²⁵⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 255.

¹²⁵⁵Minto, vol. 2, p. 66.

¹²⁵⁶Coleman, p. 28.

¹²⁵⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 234.

¹²⁵⁸Minto, vol. 2, pp. 113-14.

¹²⁵⁹Coleman, p. 35.

subsequent reciprocation of gaze, direct contact between the physical and spiritual realms.

The rationalist W. B. Scott was disdainful of Rossetti's spiritualist interest, and felt there to be "a confusion between external realities and mental impressions" in Rossetti's mind. This was only confirmed by Rossetti's contemplated suicide at Penkill in 1869.¹²⁶⁰ In this year Rossetti wrote to Scott recommending Hake's *Vates, or The Philosophy of Madness*, a book full of extraordinary visionary appearances and illustrated by the "strange wild etchings" of Thomas Landseer (fig. 122).¹²⁶¹

Poignantly, Vates observed that "the strong exercise of passion or reason is inimical to the integrity of the senses, and productive of their decline", and that the hallucinations from which he had suffered were subsequent to much inward mental activity.¹²⁶²

Rossetti may have doubted his own reason at times. He obtained for himself a copy of Rev. John Barlow's *On Man's Power Over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity* (1843), which recounted instances of the apparent appearances of deceased persons, and concluded these to be hallucinations, and their origin internal.¹²⁶³ Certainly in 1872, following Buchanan's attack in the *Contemporary Review* and a decade of emotional strain, insomnia and chloral abuse, Rossetti was to suffer a mental collapse from which he was to never completely recover. "From his wild way of talking - about conspiracies and what not - I was astounded to perceive that he was, past question, not entirely sane", wrote his brother of 2 June 1872.¹²⁶⁴ Five days later Rossetti was to make a serious attempt at suicide through an overdose of laudanum.¹²⁶⁵

¹²⁶⁰Minto, vol. 2, pp. 66, 113-14.

¹²⁶¹Rossetti to W. B. Scott, 9 October 1869 (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7). T. G. Hake, 1840, p. 74. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 281.

¹²⁶²T. G. Hake, 1840, pp. 73-74.

¹²⁶³Rev. J. Barlow, *On Man's Power Over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity* (London: William Pickering, 1843), pp. 51-3. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2. Rossetti's father had believed "that those whom we take for beings existing outside of ourselves, and who are represented to us as such by the Christian doctrine, are none other than our internal ideas or affections" (Gabrielle Rossetti to Charles Lyell, 14 January 1836, in W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 139).

¹²⁶⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 307-9. W. E. Fredeman, "Prelude to the Last Decade: Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the Summer of 1872: I", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 53 (autumn 1970), pp. 91 ff.

¹²⁶⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 313. Fredeman, 1971, pp. 275-76.

However, Rossetti's intrigue with spiritualism was not merely due to mental unbalance. W. M. Rossetti, in his 1911 edition of *Works*, recorded a verse fragment dating from 1871 in which his brother had written:

I shut myself in with my soul,
And the shapes come eddying forth...¹²⁶⁶

Rossetti may well have suffered hallucinations as a result of the chloral and whisky which he took in dangerous quantities at this time, but such a phrase also demonstrates his continued personal interest in the spiritually inspired image. In February 1880 he quoted a section of Neale's *The Unseen World* (1853) concerning apparitions to Henry Buxton Forman.¹²⁶⁷ It is precisely because of Rossetti's continued concern for supernatural manifestations that the legend of St Joan of Arc retained its attraction. For Rossetti there was an intimate connection between spiritualism and the legends of the saints. Indeed, discussing Rossetti's interest in communications with the dead, Scott made this association. He declared, "Invocation of saints is exactly the same; saints are the bogies of good people long deceased".¹²⁶⁸

¹²⁶⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 241.

¹²⁶⁷J. M. Neale, *The Unseen World* (London: Joseph Masters, 2nd ed. 1853; 1st ed. 1847), p. 72. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1711.

¹²⁶⁸Minto, vol. 2, p. 80.

Ch. 6: Celestial Music

The two "Davenport Boys", whose séances W. M. Rossetti described as having "electrified London" in 1864, were purportedly the channels of a group of musical spirits.¹²⁶⁹ Under the command of these young mediums, who allowed themselves to be tied up in order to counter objections of foul play, the spirits appeared to play musical instruments such as the guitar, tambourine, trumpet and bell.¹²⁷⁰ D. G. Rossetti attended one of their séances in December 1864, as a letter to Christina testifies, and, according to the diary of William Michael, again in January 1866.¹²⁷¹ Music also played a part in the séances of Home, which were attended by Rossetti, evoking for the participants the spiritual and mysterious.¹²⁷² In one account, an accordeon being played "without hands" was described as creating effects of "divine tenderness" which "touched the hearts, and drew the tears of the listeners".¹²⁷³

Edgar Allan Poe recognised that it was in music "that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the poetic sentiment - it struggles - the creation of supernatural beauty."¹²⁷⁴ Included amongst the spirit-poems which so intrigued Rossetti in Wilkinson's 1857 *Improvisations from the Spirit*, was a poem entitled "Song: its divine birth".¹²⁷⁵ In Hake's *Philosophy of Madness*, Vates exploited, in his 'artistic experiments', music's potential to suggest the divine and create feelings of worship and awe: "to perpetuate the enchantment, I poured a fresh flood of music on her soul... there in holy fear she lay as if in the presence of Heaven."¹²⁷⁶ Rossetti himself perceived music's power to suggest the divine, describing the effects of "the viol-string" and "the slim pipes" in "For a Venetian Pastoral by Giorgione", as "Life touching lips with Immortality."¹²⁷⁷

¹²⁶⁹A. H. Harrison (ed.), *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, 2 vols. (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), vol. 1, p. 210 n.

¹²⁷⁰W. Howitt, 1863, vol. 2, pp. 190-91.

¹²⁷¹W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 168. A. H. Harrison, vol. 1, p. 209. Marsh, 1999, p. 301.

¹²⁷²Home, 1863, p. 102.

¹²⁷³R. Bell, pp. 221-22. Britten, pp. 143-49.

¹²⁷⁴E. A. Poe, "The Poetic Principle", *The Literati* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1850), pp. 7-8. D. Sutton, *Nocturne: The Art of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Country Life, 1963), p. 56.

¹²⁷⁵J. J. G. Wilkinson, pp. 135-39.

¹²⁷⁶T. G. Hake, 1840, p. 31.

¹²⁷⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 345.

The Rossetti family knew many accomplished musicians: Sperati; Ferrari, an old blind musician; the conductor Sir Michael Costa; and Aspa, a Sicilian pianoforte tuner in Broadwood's house.¹²⁷⁸ William Michael wrote that the family of Cipriani Potter, the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, a distinguished pianist and composer and godfather to William Michael, was the only British household which the Rossettis saw regularly in their early years in London.¹²⁷⁹ Potter was well respected by the Rossettis, and was in fact asked to compose music for a drama written by Gabriele, entitled *Medora e Corrado*; a number of Gabriele's improvised poems had already been set to music.¹²⁸⁰ Although W. M. Rossetti declared, "Beyond an opera or a concert at rare intervals, we heard little music as children", he recalled that "our father, with his rich voice and fine declamation, would at times, unaccompanied, strike up a stave of some glorious chant of the French revolutionary epoch".¹²⁸¹ J. H. Frere's biographer, who remarked on Gabriele's "beautiful tenor voice", recalled a popular rhyme which amusingly suggested his musical pretensions:

Rossini, Rossetti,
Divini, imperfetti.¹²⁸²

Their mother, who also "had an agreeable voice for singing", would "frequently play on the pianoforte". W. M. Rossetti remembered that she would give a rendition of *The Battle of Prague* with its "groans of the wounded" to amuse her children.¹²⁸³

The Rossetti family were keen appreciators of musical church services. In her *Literary Diary*, Frances Rossetti copied out a line of music entitled "A Chant, written by Mr Jones, Organist of St Paul's" which she had found in L. A. C. Bourbet's *Life of Hayden* along with the note, "This simple and natural air, gave him the greatest pleasure he ever received from the performance of music."¹²⁸⁴ The family's musical enjoyment appears to have affected their choice of Christ Church, S. Andrews' and S. Barnabas' as places of worship. Dodsworth, who had in 1831 produced a collection of metrical psalms and hymns for his congregation at Margaret Chapel, was a figure of some significance for the Choral Revival. As Perpetual Incumbant at Christ Church, he had

¹²⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 48, 49.

¹²⁷⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 44.

¹²⁸⁰W. M. Rossetti, *Gabriele Rossetti*, 1901, p. 117. "The other day amongst old music Mamma found a set of airs, accompaniments to our father's improvisations, - & she has transferred them to Euston Sq. thinking you may value them" (C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 14 October 1876, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1).

¹²⁸¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 40.

¹²⁸²Festing, p. 295.

¹²⁸³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 40.

¹²⁸⁴F. M. L. Rossetti, *Literary Diary*, p. 37 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:18).

by July 1849 innovatively introduced surplices and Gregorian chants into his choir, rebuilt the organ and erected new choir stalls.¹²⁸⁵ In a diary entry of 13 February 1884 Frances Rossetti commented on the "fine musical service" on the occasion of the inauguration of the new organ at Christ Church.¹²⁸⁶ At Christina's funeral in Christ Church, a number of her own hymns were sung, including "Lord, grant us grace", set to music by the church's own organist Frank T. Lowden.¹²⁸⁷

S. Andrews' Church, Wells Street, which became renowned for its musical services, was notable for having in use the 1849 *Psalter Noted*, although this was abandoned for Janes' primitive *Psalter* in 1850 during the anti-papal riots.¹²⁸⁸ The *Psalter Noted* was also used at S. Barnabas' of Pimlico where Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, "well aware that music may be the handmaid of religion", was one of those behind the *Parish Choir*, a periodical published by 'The Society for Promoting Church Music', which was set up in 1846.¹²⁸⁹ Bennett wanted choral services to be held daily at S. Barnabas' and a school of choristers was therefore established.¹²⁹⁰ Rev. Frederick Gore Ouseley, one of the curates of S. Barnabas', composed a number of items for the *Musical Times* in the 1850s and later became Professor of Music at Oxford.¹²⁹¹ Bennett declared that although the church at Frome was in some respects in a ruinous state, it "seemed for long to have maintained a fair character for music".¹²⁹²

Rossetti himself owned an 1850 copy of *Hymnal secundum usum Ecclesiae*.¹²⁹³ He was also friendly in 1850s with the musical critic, Sutherland Edwards, and from 1869 with Franz Hueffer, a significant figure in the Wagnerian movement, who became musical critic for the *Times*.¹²⁹⁴ Rossetti also owned a large collection of musical instruments, a fact remarked on by Treffry Dunn, "all old and mostly stringed. Mandolins, lutes, dulcimers, barbarous-looking things of Chinese fashion..."¹²⁹⁵ However, despite his great musical heritage, Rossetti showed no propensity in that direction, and the instruments he owned were never played. They existed merely as

¹²⁸⁵Rainbow, pp. 125-27. Grieve, 1973, p. 10.

¹²⁸⁶Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:17.

¹²⁸⁷Burial Service, Christ Church, 2 January 1895 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 10:4).

¹²⁸⁸F. Bennett, p. 150. Rainbow, pp. 169, 171.

¹²⁸⁹F. Bennett, pp. 144, 280.

¹²⁹⁰Rainbow, p. 154.

¹²⁹¹F. Bennett, p. 151. Rainbow, p. 276.

¹²⁹²F. Bennett, p. 199.

¹²⁹³Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

¹²⁹⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. xiv. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 282; vol. 2, p. 98.

¹²⁹⁵Dunn, p. 18.

props for his paintings and as objects of beauty to be admired by visitors.¹²⁹⁶ Hunt declared, "Music he regarded as positively offensive."¹²⁹⁷ This is corroborated by Allingham who wrote in his diary on 9 July 1864, "D. G. Rossetti and I dine at Hotel de Provence, Leicester Square, then to Opera, where Taylor has promised us places for 'Mirella.' Gabriel, who detests music, soon went away".¹²⁹⁸ Rossetti's prevailing memory of a performance of Handel's *Messiah* was that "it seemed that everybody got up and shouted at him as loudly as possible." Dunn likened him to Dr Johnson who found noise intolerable and music only just bearable.¹²⁹⁹

Yet Rossetti depicted both St Cecilia and King David (fig. 123), established patron saints of music. Hunt wrote an article on Rossetti in the *Musical World*.¹³⁰⁰ A number of articles on Rossetti by Hipkins appeared in the *Musical Review*.¹³⁰¹ E. Wood talked of "the harmony and sonority" of "Rossetti's music".¹³⁰² Davies used a comparison of the musical styles of Debussy and Beethoven, and then later Mozart, as a basis for his discussion of the poetry of Rossetti.¹³⁰³ Kenyon wrote in his article in the *Methodist Review* that "the breath of his genius still lingers to awaken music in rare and sensitive souls, as the wind murmurs through an Æolian harp."¹³⁰⁴ Furthermore, Debussy, who described Rossetti's 1870 sonnet "The Monochord" as "that wonderful apostrophe to the mystical power of music", composed in 1888 a piece of music based on "The Blessed Damozel", having read the poem in a French translation by Sarrazin.¹³⁰⁵ Swinburne declared, "Even Shelley never expressed the inmost sense and mighty heart of music as this poet has done in 'The Monochord.'"¹³⁰⁶ Rossetti's "Three Shadows" (1876), "For Ever Nearer" and "Love-Lily" (1869) were all later set

¹²⁹⁶Dunn, p. 40. The year after Rossetti's death, when there was a spate of articles about the artist appearing in literary and art reviews, the *Magazine of Art* published an article by John Leyland, entitled "Musical Instruments as Works of Art" (*Magazine of Art*, vol. 6 (1883), pp. 298-302).

¹²⁹⁷Hunt, May 1886, p. 741.

¹²⁹⁸Allingham & Radford, p. 104.

¹²⁹⁹Dunn, p. 19.

¹³⁰⁰W. H. Hunt, "Memories of Rossetti", *The Musical World*, vol. 70 (5 July 1890), pp. 526-28.

¹³⁰¹W. M. Rossetti, "Notes on Rossetti and his Works", *Art Journal* (July 1884), p. 206.

¹³⁰²W. M. Rossetti takes exception to Wood here as elsewhere, for being over-laudatory and under-critical (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 435).

¹³⁰³C. Davies, pp. 66-67, 89.

¹³⁰⁴Kenyon, 1896, p. 750.

¹³⁰⁵L. Gilman, "Debussy, Rossetti and the Blessed Damozel", *New York Tribune* (19 April 1936), p. 8. Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:23.

¹³⁰⁶Swinburne, 1870, p. 555.

to music.¹³⁰⁷ Rossetti himself hoped to transform his 1869 prose summary of "The Doom of the Sirens: A Lyrical Tragedy" into the *libretto* of a musical opera, as W. M. Rossetti recalled, "he had not, I fancy, any clearly defined idea as to a musician to co-operate with him, but thought vaguely of our friend Dr Franz Hueffer."¹³⁰⁸ Rossetti may not have had a musical ear but music was a very important part of his painting and poetry, carrying symbolic, and particularly religious, associations.

Music was tied up with Rossetti's infatuation with the medieval world. Dunn, describing Rossetti's 1867 oil version of *A Christmas Carol* (S.195; fig. 124), which showed "a maiden in a resplendent eastern dress of crimson with a golden thread pattern worked throughout, playing on a stringed instrument whilst she sings *Hodie Jesus Christus natus est, Hallelujah*", declared that "Rossetti was a great digger-out of subjects from *Early English Mysteries* and I conjecture he must have unearthed this fancy from such a source."¹³⁰⁹ Indeed, in his second Oxford lecture, "The Relation of Art to Religion", Ruskin referred to Rossetti as the reviver of interest in early English legend.¹³¹⁰ As already mentioned Rossetti possessed an edition of *The Towneley Mysteries*, published by the Surtees Society in 1836, a significant proportion of which was devoted to the celebration of Christ's birth.¹³¹¹ He also owned the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, which was the only known preserved text of a medieval miracle play, and a copy of *Political, Religious, and Love Poems from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth MS.*, edited by F. J. Furnivall and published by the Early English Text Society in 1866.¹³¹² However, John Christian maintains that the particular text

¹³⁰⁷W. M. Rossetti owned musical scores to "Three Shadows" and "For Ever Nearer" by Hatton & Constance E. Maults (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14). He wrote of "Three Shadows", "This lyric has been rather frequently set to music - more frequently, I think than any other poem by its author. The next in order might be "Love-Lily" (W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 670 n.).

¹³⁰⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 610-13, 682.

¹³⁰⁹Dunn, p. 32. *The Christian's Sacred Lyre: a Selection of Carols for Christmas and A Collection of Christmas Carols* could be found in the possession of W. M. Rossetti (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14).

¹³¹⁰Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 20, "The Relation of Art to Religion" (16 February 1870), p. 63.

¹³¹¹England, 1897, pp. 78 ff. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2.

¹³¹²Waterhouse 1909, p. ix. Further Rossetti owned a copy of J. O. Halliwell's edition of *The Thornton Romances* (London: Camden Society, 1844). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2. According to Val Prinsep, Rossetti had enjoyed reading these fifteenth century chivalric tales in the company of Morris and Burne-Jones (Prinsep, "Oxford Circle", 1904, p. 167).

accompanying *A Christmas Carol*, "Jesus Christus hodie Natus est de Virgine", which was inscribed on the frame, was derived from the Winchester Mysteries.¹³¹³

Underhill wrote that "The medieval mind, more mystical than ours, and therefore more sharply aware of the part which rhythmic harmony plays in the worlds of nature and of grace, gave to music a Cosmic importance".¹³¹⁴ In the Middle Ages it was believed that the universe, founded on mathematical proportions, resonated with music.¹³¹⁵ Rossetti alluded to this medieval world-view in "The Portrait", written around 1847, in which he talked of "the music of the suns", and in the near-contemporary "Blessed Damozel" in which he wrote that the "stars sang in their spheres".¹³¹⁶ Music played an important part in his "chivalric Froissartian" works, which in 1858 Rossetti wrote were "quite a passion of mine".¹³¹⁷ In *The Blue Closet* (S.90; fig. 125), in which he depicted four maidens making music, Rossetti meaningfully decorated the double organ on which two of the young women play with sun, moon and stars in order to connote a medieval cosmology.

Grieve likens the compositional arrangement of *The Blue Closet* to the symmetrical groupings of music-making angels in medieval paintings, for example in Orcagna's *Musical Angels* in Christ Church, Oxford, which Rossetti would certainly have had the chance to have seen.¹³¹⁸ Rossetti was particularly interested in minstrel angels. In "The Blessed Damozel" the speaker describes how "Angels, meeting us, shall sing / To their citherns and citoles."¹³¹⁹ In accordance with this, in an early study for his painting *The Blessed Damozel* Rossetti inserted angelic figures playing on a variety of musical instruments (S.244M; fig. 126). Minstrel angels frequently frame the central action of Rossetti's compositions in order to connote some mystic event, as, for example, in *The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Paradise* (S.116 D; fig. 127), and *The Seed of David* (S.105).

¹³¹³Terence Rodrigues (ed.), *Treasures of the North* (Manchester: Brown Shipley & Henry Cooke, n.d.), p. 92. Surtees, 1971, p. 112.

¹³¹⁴Underhill, p. 91.

¹³¹⁵C. Davidson (ed.), *The Iconography of Heaven* (Michigan: Western Michigan University, 1994), p. 169. P. L. Little, *The Place of Music in the Medieval World System* (PhD diss., University of Otago, 1975).

¹³¹⁶W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 242, 233.

¹³¹⁷Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 336.

¹³¹⁸Parris, p. 280.

¹³¹⁹*Germ*, February 1850, p. 83.

According to Isaiah 6.3 and Revelation 4.8-11, the function of the angels in heaven was to give praise to their Creator. Thus incorporated into the *Te deum laudamus* was the statement, "To thee all angels cry aloud...", and in the *Preface to the Mass*, "And therefore with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations and with all the host of the heavenly army we sing the hymn of thy glory..."¹³²⁰ In J. M. Neale's translation of *The Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix*, an 1859 edition of which W. M. Rossetti owned, heaven, which was the "City of Angels", was presented as a place of "Unceasing minstrelsy" and "United praise" and a "palace that re-echoes / With festal song and mirth".¹³²¹ In his 1853 ink drawing of *Found* (S.64 B; fig. 128), Rossetti himself quoted from a passage of Scripture in which angels were represented as rejoicing in heaven. Depicting a graveyard at the left of his composition, he included a tombstone on which was inscribed a paraphrase of the text, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."¹³²²

In sacred art angels were often depicted singing hymns of praise and playing fantastical musical instruments, and this, R. Lynd believes, was Rossetti's chief source of inspiration: "In his use of the very mysteries of Christianity, he is intoxicated chiefly by the beauty of the designs by which the painters have expressed their vision of religion."¹³²³ Rossetti could have read and viewed the illustrations in Jameson's chapter on angels and archangels in *Sacred and Legendary Art*, and of course he may have visited the old master exhibitions held in the British Institution.¹³²⁴ He was personally familiar with early Christian art, as is clearly demonstrated in his letters, particularly those of the 1870s. He mentioned in a letter to William Davies of February 1878 that he had in his collection "a good lot of photos: from the early men".¹³²⁵ Most interestingly, on 21 March 1876 Rossetti wrote to Treffry Dunn from Bognor, "Many thanks for your beautiful sketch of Donatello's cherub."¹³²⁶ At this time Rossetti was working on a replica version of *Blessed Damozel* (S.244 R.1) in which he

¹³²⁰Davidson, 1994, p. 165. W. M. Rossetti recalled that, "I used to enjoy the vigorous singing of the *Te Deum*" (W. M. Rossetti, 1906, vol. 1, p. 127).

¹³²¹Neale, 1866, pp. 16, 33.

¹³²²Luke 15.10. Elzea, p. 96.

¹³²³R. Lynd, "Rossetti and Ritual", *Old and New Masters* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1919), p. 139. E. Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and their Symbolism in Western Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 131.

¹³²⁴Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, pp. 19-21.

¹³²⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, pp. 1557-58.

¹³²⁶C. Watts-Dunton (ed.), *Letters from Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Algernon Charles Swinburne, Henry Treffry Dunn and Theodore Watts-Dunton* (unpublished transcript, Victoria & Albert Museum), p. 192.

had the heads of three child angels replace the embracing lovers in the original picture's background, and may well have desired fresh inspiration from past masters.

Examining the paintings in which Rossetti placed musical instruments, it becomes apparent that he was not interested in having the instruments convincingly played. Winternitz points out that such mannered and unrealistic renditions were fairly common in earlier examples of sacred art. He illustrates this with the example of Raphael's altarpiece in San Petronio in Bologna in which Saint Cecilia was represented playing her beautiful organetto in a most peculiar way, the instrument having been reversed in order to better suit Raphael's composition.¹³²⁷ The organ in Rossetti's *St Cecilia* would not even be able to produce a tune, as it is depicted with all the pipes of the same height and gauge, when there should be a descent from the largest bass pipe on the right to the smallest treble pipe on the left. Following the example of past masters, Rossetti was not interested in the accuracy of the instrumentation or of the playing techniques because what concerned him was the symbolism of the instruments.

Music had contributed to the wonder Rossetti had experienced as a young man in the church at Bologna. He had also read an account by David Scott of an incident during mass at the Grand Duke's Chapel, Florence in 1850, when the music, in conjunction with the incense, candles and costumes, had "lifted the mind into a sensitive sphere".¹³²⁸ A. M. Howitt, attending High Mass in the Hof-Kapelle, Munich, wrote that "the crowd of worshipping people, the strains of music, the incense... [the] glow of gold, of rich draperies, of angelic forms and faces, of rainbow-tinted wings, of mystical flowers and symbols" produced an effect which was sublime.¹³²⁹ Ruskin too wrote of the sublimity of the effect produced when confronted by fine music in conjunction with noble architecture.¹³³⁰ Rossetti sought to initiate in the beholder similar feelings of aesthetic saturation in works such as *The Wedding of St George and Princess Sabra* (S.97, fig. 129), in which the presence of music-making angels conjoined with the intensity of the colour and the elaboration of the patterning overwhelm the viewer's senses. Smetham gave a suggestion of this in his account of the work, in which he described the concentrated mixture of angels, costumes, furnishings, flowers, colours and bells as giving a suffocating, although pleasurable, "sense of secret enclosure", in which all appeared as "a golden dim dream".¹³³¹

¹³²⁷Winternitz, p. 47.

¹³²⁸W. B. Scott, 1850, p. 88.

¹³²⁹A. M. Howitt, 1853, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

¹³³⁰Cook & Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita* (1886), quoted in Wakefield, p. 20.

¹³³¹S. Smetham & W. Davies, p. 102.

In the late 1850s Rossetti moved increasingly towards Aestheticism, producing decorative works in which music played a significant part. Walter Hamilton, writing in the year of Rossetti's death, felt that the artist-poet exemplified the movement's interest in the sisterhood of the arts.¹³³² Indeed, Hunt concluded his article on Rossetti in the *Musical World* in 1890 with a quote from Schumann, "The aesthetics of one art are those of all the others; they only differ in the subject-matter of which they treat".¹³³³ Of central importance in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, and appearing in the writings of Balzac, Alphonse Karr, Léon Gozlan, Gustave de la Moussaye and Théophile Gautier before him, had been the theory of *correspondances*.¹³³⁴ This had found subsequent expression in the writings of Walter Pater, who, believing art to be "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material", declared that "*All art constantly aspires to the condition of music*".¹³³⁵ The paintings and critical writings of James McNeill Whistler also expounded such theories, Whistler naming his paintings after musical terms - arrangements, harmonies, symphonies and notes - and declaring, "as music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of colour".¹³³⁶

Dickens declared that the sofa which Rossetti exhibited at the International Exhibition in 1862 was ornamented "with decorations looking like bars of music".¹³³⁷ *The Building News* similarly described the sofa as "partially covered with lines and crotchets in imitation of bars of music".¹³³⁸ This sofa displayed a debt to the art of Japan, predating even the work of E. W. Godwin. Its proportions, the variations on the rectangle and straight line, seem to be derived from a study of Japanese woodwork, probably seen within Japanese colour prints, with the motifs adorning the tops of the

¹³³²W. Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1882), p. 5. Prettejohn, p. 36.

¹³³³Hunt, 1890, p. 528.

¹³³⁴J. Richardson, *Baudelaire* (London: John Murray, 1994), pp. 225-27.

¹³³⁵W. Pater, "The School of Giorgione", *Fortnightly Review*, N.S. vol. 22 (October 1877), pp. 528, 530; included in 3rd ed. of *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1888, 1st publ. 1873) - Pater's italics.

¹³³⁶J. M. Whistler, "The Red Rag", *World* (22 May 1878), quoted in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London: William Heinemann, 1890), p. 127.

¹³³⁷Dickens, 1862, pp. 584-85.

¹³³⁸"The Medieval Court, International Exhibition", *Building News* (8 August 1862), p. 99. Banham & Harris, p. 138.

posts looking somewhat like Japanese fans.¹³³⁹ This further signified Rossetti's allegiance to Aestheticism, for which the oriental and exotic held great appeal.

As with the other aesthetes, colour was predominant in the titles of Rossetti's paintings, enhancing the synaesthetic suggestion that, like music, these works of art were intended to be enjoyed on a purely emotional and sensory level. F. G. Stephens wrote in 1894 of *The Blue Closet* (1857) that it was "an exercise intended to symbolize the association of colour with music".¹³⁴⁰ Its descendant, *The Blue Bower* (1865; fig. 130), one of Rossetti's truly subjectless works in which Fanny Cornforth was shown playing an exotic musical instrument, also described itself in terms of colour rather than narrative. The *Athenaeum* wrote of it as a "lyrical poem" and a "chromatic harmony".¹³⁴¹ Significantly, the date of this painting coincided with the exhibition of Albert Moore's *The Marble Seat* at the R.A., a painting which, seeking to tell no story and working within a relatively limited range of colours in a way which would be likened by F. G. Stephens to antique music, initiated Moore's mature artistic practice.¹³⁴² It was also the year of the conception of Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 3* (YMSM.61), the first painting by Whistler exhibited with a musical title.

There is no doubt that Rossetti was keen to suggest an analogy between the sister arts of painting and music. *Veronica Veronese* (S.228; fig. 131) of 1872 constituted his most forceful demonstration of a belief in an alliance between the painter's craft and that of the musician. Rossetti created a 'harmony' in yellow by depicting together a daffodil, two buttercups and a coltsfoot, and these he placed on a sheet of violin music so that the correlation could in no way be over looked. These plucked flowers he also visually linked up with the yellow canary in the top left of the canvas, singing at the door of its golden cage. In this way bird song and violin music were associated with

¹³³⁹Rossetti was one of the first collectors of Japanese paraphernalia. He owned a number of Japanese print books and illustrated books, coloured and plain (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2). At the 1862 International Exhibition, Japanese goods were for the first time on display, a fact which interested the Rossetti brothers who bought a copy Sir Rutherford Alcock's *Catalogue of Works of Industry and Art sent from Japan to the International Exhibition* (1862). Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 26:14.

¹³⁴⁰F. G. Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London, 1894), pp. 41-42. Banham & Harris, p. 101.

¹³⁴¹Stephens, 1865, p. 545.

¹³⁴²F. G. Stephens, "Mr Humphrey Roberts's Collection: Modern English Oil Pictures", *Magazine of Art* (1896), p. 47. A. L. Baldry, *Albert Moore* (London: George Bell, 1894), p. 31. R. Dormant et al., *Victorian High Renaissance* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts & Lund Humphries, 1978), p. 142.

visual beauty. By extension Rossetti had the viewer understand that art should be enjoyed on an aesthetic level like music. As the woman in the painting was depicted carefully placing the notes on the page in order to create the desired musical effect, so the painter placed colour on the canvas in order to obtain the required pictorial effect.

The Liverpool collector and shipowner Frederick R. Leyland bought *Veronica Veronese* in the spring of 1872 before it was even completed. He also commissioned as a companion *A Sea-Spell* (S.248; fig. 132), showing a bird listening to a woman playing an exotic stringed instrument. It was Leyland, himself an accomplished musician, who suggested in 1872 the musical term 'Nocturne' for Whistler's moonlit scenes of the Thames, and his role in Rossetti's decision to paint decorative pictures of beautiful women playing musical instruments or singing is noteworthy.¹³⁴³ *A Christmas Carol*, *Veronica Veronese*, *The Bower Meadow*, *La Ghirlandata*, *The Roman Widow*, *A Sea-Spell* and *Desdemona's Death-Song* were all commissioned by Leyland, who wanted to make his home into not only a palace of art, but a palace of the arts.

However, Rossetti was not merely pandering to his patron's tastes.¹³⁴⁴ There is a French inscription on the frame of *Veronica Veronese* which it was thought Rossetti had taken from the *Lettres de Girolamo Ridolfi*:

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.¹³⁴⁵

According to Hueffer, whom Rossetti had consulted concerning the possibility of reproducing a canary note on the violin, the quote was an invention. W. M. Rossetti, taking Hueffer's statement as authoritative, noted that "the passage does not seem to

¹³⁴³J. M. Whistler to F. R. Leyland [November 1872] (G.U.L., PWC 6B/21/3; *James McNeill Whistler: Selected Letters and Writings*, ed. N. Thorp (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994), p. 46).

¹³⁴⁴F. L. Fennel (ed.), *The Rossetti-Leyland Letters* (Ohio University Press, 1978), pp. xviii, 28-30.

¹³⁴⁵Surtees, 1971, p. 128. D. G. Riede, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p. 156.

me to be the writing of my brother, but more probably of Mr. Swinburne".¹³⁴⁶ In this way an interesting parallel is formed with the poem "Before the Mirror" which Swinburne wrote in April 1865 to complement Whistler's *The Little White Girl* (YMSM.52, 1864), which along with its predecessor *The White Girl* (YMSM.38, 1862) and also *Symphony in White, No. 3*, formed a landmark in subjectless, aesthetic painting.¹³⁴⁷

For Swinburne, Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, to which Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* had been dedicated, and in which the fundamental ideas behind aesthetic theory had been so eloquently expounded, was a modern Bible, "the golden book of spirit and sense / The holy writ of beauty".¹³⁴⁸ Rossetti and Whistler were aligned in Swinburne's mind, and this he categorically stated in 1868: "Rossetti has in common with Whistler - the love of beauty for the very beauty's sake, the faith and trust in it as in a god indeed".¹³⁴⁹

Swinburne recognised that within Aestheticism, and in Rossetti's work in particular, there was a spiritual undercurrent. In his 1870 essay on Rossetti, he described *The House of Life* as containing "bowers of music, chapels for worship" where "Spirit and sense together, eyesight and hearing and thought, are absorbed in splendour of sounds and glory of colours distinguishable only by delight."¹³⁵⁰ This synaesthetic description is significant, as mystic writers often talked of the merging of the senses whilst in ecstatic states. Saint-Martin declared, "I heard flowers that sounded, and saw notes that shone". He further talked of bird song striking "our retina as a pageant of colour", and of hearing "as a great fugue the repeated and harmonized greens of the forest".¹³⁵¹ These ideas were given pictorial expression in *Veronica Veronese* in which "the inspiring bird" evokes both the embodiment of the Holy Spirit and the human soul of traditional religious iconography. Indeed, depicting Wilding lost in reverie, Rossetti intimates an internal, spiritual preoccupation. He sought to enhance the mysticism by depicting archaic rather than modern violin music.¹³⁵² Certainly for Swinburne Rossetti's painting embodied "the dawn of a mystic creation". He recognised that

¹³⁴⁶W. M. Rossetti, July 1884, p. 206. Elzea, pp. 116-17.

¹³⁴⁷R. Dormant & M. F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler* (London: Tate Gallery, 1995), p. 78.

¹³⁴⁸Prettejohn, p. 18. Richardson, p. 223.

¹³⁴⁹W. M. Rossetti & A. C. Swinburne, *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition* (London: privately printed, 1868), quoted in Ghose, pp. 100-1.

¹³⁵⁰Swinburne, 1870, p. 553.

¹³⁵¹Underhill, p. 8.

¹³⁵²Rossetti to G. P. Boyce, March 1872 (Surtees, 1971, p. 128).

Rossetti had been seduced by specifically "Christian forms and images"; by the "charm of sound or vision, by spell of colour or of dream" of what he called "the mythological side of the creed", that is, the mystical and legendary aspects of Catholic Christianity.¹³⁵³

In Hunt's article on Rossetti in the *Musical World*, he called Rossetti "a true seer", comparing his sensitivity to "human and spiritual interests" to the listening of an "ever-advancing music".¹³⁵⁴ As his parents appreciated the power that music lent to the church service, so Rossetti recognised music's ability to intimate the divine and throughout his *oeuvre* returned to music to indicate spiritual and mystical experience. Thus in his 1871 "Rose Mary", at the point when the Beryl-stone was taken from its niche, Rose Mary and her mother,

... were 'ware
Of music-notes that fell through the air;
A chiming shower of strange device,
Drop echoing drop, once twice and thrice,
As rain may fall in Paradise.¹³⁵⁵

Similarly in "Hand and Soul" we are told that at the time of the mystical vision "suddenly he found awe within him... there seemed a pulse in the light, and a living freshness, like rain. The silence was a painful music, that made the blood ache in his temples".¹³⁵⁶ It may be significant that Rossetti presented Chiaro as a citizen of Arezzo. Guido d'Arezzo, a Benedictine monk, had famously established a school of music there.¹³⁵⁷

Ecstatics often used music to describe their mystical encounters with God, talking of a kind of 'heavenly music'.¹³⁵⁸ The fourteenth century English mystic Richard Rolle most notably used musical terminology in order to convey rapturous spiritual experience. In *The Fire of Love* he described how with meditation came "heavenly, spiritual sounds, sounds which pertain to the song of eternal praise, and to the sweetness of unheard melody". The peak of rapture was "the sweet song of everlasting praise", and his whole being became "a hymn, beautiful and fragrant".¹³⁵⁹ This book,

¹³⁵³Swinburne, 1870, p. 562.

¹³⁵⁴Hunt, 1890, p. 527.

¹³⁵⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 105.

¹³⁵⁶*Germ*, January 1850, p. 29.

¹³⁵⁷Jameson, 1850, p. 4. *Sharpe's London Magazine*, 1851, p. 19.

¹³⁵⁸Underhill, p. 9.

¹³⁵⁹R. Rolle, *The Fire of Love*, trans. C. Wolters (London: Penguin, 1988), pp. 93, 121, 150. P. Hodgson, *Three 14th-Century English Mystics* (London: Longmans &

of which there were five manuscript versions in the British Museum, enjoyed widespread popularity.¹³⁶⁰ Certainly Rossetti, who had in 1856-57 drawn St Cecilia's rapturous organ playing, continued in the 1870s to define God through music, making reference in one of his notebooks to what he called, "The Song-God".¹³⁶¹

In essence Rossetti's 1867 *A Christmas Carol* is close to the ideas expressed by Rolle, who declared in *The Fire of Love*:

Good Jesus, you have bound my heart
to think of your Name, and now I cannot but sing it.¹³⁶²

At the top of Rossetti's canvas, just off centre, hangs a heart-shaped emblem containing a haloed Virgin holding the Christ Child. The picture dwells on the dual nature of Christ's mission, his incarnation and crucifixion, and this is celebrated in song. To the left of centre, visually balancing the emblem, is the head of the exotic instrument which Ellen Smith plays, and around this is twisted a rope into which a sprig of holly has been placed. This visually suggests Christ's crown of thorns, even more so as the background to this design is a tapestry on which is woven a design of a curling vine, recalling the Eucharist and Christ's declaration in *John* 15.1, "I am the true vine". The figures within the heart-shaped motif bear a resemblance to those Rossetti dedicated to secular love in compositions such as *Regina Cordium* (S.190). The allusion Rossetti thus makes to Venus and Cupid in *A Christmas Carol* is significant, Rolle describing his hymns to God as his "love-songs". The Incarnation, a subject to which Rossetti frequently returned, was at the heart of mystical theology.¹³⁶³

Vasari described Veronese's *Allegory of Music* in the library of San Marco, Florence, as evincing that "Amor is born from Music, or that Amor is always in the company of Music".¹³⁶⁴ In the 1860s Rossetti particularly sought to emulate the Venetian painters

Green, 1967), pp. 13-21.

¹³⁶⁰Rolle, Introduction, p. 10.

¹³⁶¹Rossetti notebook (British Library, no. 4, p. 39).

¹³⁶²Rolle, p. 192.

¹³⁶³Underhill, p. 128. W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 244, 348. Similarly, the Trinity was a favourite subject with mystical writers, most notably Julian of Norwich who returned again and again to the idea of phenomena appearing in triads (Julian, anchoress at Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Grace Warrack (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 145, 133; Underhill, pp. 132-34, 137). Rossetti, who himself owned a short early English poem entitled "A Triad", made this mystical concept a frequent subject of his own paintings and poems (Leaf 150, MS. Harl. 7322, in F. J. Furnivall, p. 258; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2): eg. "The Woodspurge" (1856) and *Rosa Triplex* (1867; S. 238 A).

¹³⁶⁴Vasari, *Lives of the Painters*, vol. 6, quoted in Winternitz, p. 55.

for whom music was an important signifier of love and courtship. Venus was often painted in her boudoir accompanied by a musical courtier playing a lute or an organ, and with other musical instruments placed symbolically around her. Rossetti was probably familiar with examples in British collections, for example, Titian's *Venus and the Lute Player* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. In a work like *Love's Greeting* Rossetti himself set courtship in the context of music, and in his *A Sea Spell* he painted Alexa Wilding in the role of a siren, playing on an exotic stringed instrument in order to lure unsuspecting men.¹³⁶⁵ In his 1859 watercolour *My Lady Greensleeves* (S.113; fig. 133) Rossetti included an actual bar of music in his design of a young lady longing for her knight. The tune, an old worldish simple air, carried definite romantic connotations for Rossetti, being one "he particularly liked at one time, when a lady-friend was in the habit of singing it".¹³⁶⁶ In "St Agnes of Intercession" the speaker declared exhilaratingly, "it seemed as if her love burst around me like music", and in "Heart's Compass" of 1871 Rossetti wrote:

Sometimes thou seem'st not as thyself alone,
But as the meaning of all things that are...
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone...¹³⁶⁷

Pater, approaching the Venetian school through the poetic interpretations of Rossetti, and also Keats, concentrated on the hints of musicality in their work, and the appeal made to the senses.¹³⁶⁸ He described them as "unperplexed" by "religious mysticism".¹³⁶⁹ Yet Rossetti, recognising that music spoke to the very soul ("While through the sense your song shall fit / The soul to understand"), insisted on closing his sonnet "For a Venetian Pastoral by Giorgione" with the line, "Life touching lips with Immortality", rather than the line his brother preferred, "Silence of heat, and solemn poetry", which would have left the poem with no spiritual pretensions.¹³⁷⁰ The saintly and secular were not so far removed in Rossetti's eyes, and in his *oeuvre* music was made to carry both amorous and spiritual connotations. Thus in "An Altar-Flame"

¹³⁶⁵It is surprising that Rossetti showed a preference for stringed instruments over wind, as the phallic shapes and suggestive sounds produced by wind instruments had long been associated with sexual fertility and defloration (Winternitz, p. 48). In an 1852 pencil drawing of Siddal, Rossetti depicted her on her knees playing a double pipe, but this is a rare example (*Catalogue of the Remaining Works...*, 1883, no. 111, p. 12; Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:20).

¹³⁶⁶W. M. Rossetti, July 1884, p. 206.

¹³⁶⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 190, 425.

¹³⁶⁸Pater, 1877, p. 533. P. Barolsky, *Walter Pater's Renaissance* (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), pp. 130-32.

¹³⁶⁹Pater, 1877, p. 531.

¹³⁷⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 253, 345. Doughty & Wahl, vol. 2, pp. 726-27.

(1848) the impact of the lover's presence was described in terms of a musical service. Although it was written to *bouts-rimés*, that is, W. M. Rossetti provided the rhyme words for his brother to speedily compose a sonnet, the lines are powerful and accord with the themes which Rossetti developed in his mature work:

Thy presence weighs like a most awful strain
Of music, heard in some cathedral fanned
With the deep breath of prayer, while the priest's hand
Uplifts the solemn sign...¹³⁷¹

Likewise the secular "Song and Music" (1849) anticipated images such as *St Cecilia* in which music was presented as a feature of religious ecstasy:

The music lives upon my brain
Between your hands within mine eyes;
It stirs your lifted throat like pain,
An aching pulse of melodies.

For Rossetti the maturation of love was a sudden awareness of sacredness. Thus in "Known in Vain" (1853) Rossetti, drawing from Old Testament tabernacle imagery, described the lovers as entering "The Holy of holies" and their enlightenment as being accompanied by "music high and soft".¹³⁷² Walter Hilton wrote in the fourteenth century that the person who could hear angels singing was very close to God and perfect love.¹³⁷³ In his 1849 "Marriage of St. Katherine" Rossetti had presented the reader with such an idea:

Awe, and the music that is near her, wrought
Of Angels, hath possessed her eyes in thought...¹³⁷⁴

Including music-making angels in his amorous paintings and drawings, as for example in *The Marriage of St George and Princess Sabra*, Rossetti emphasised the notion of the sanctity of physical love. Even in his very early work one has the hint of a competition between the Christian God and secular Love. In "The Portrait", a poem which was begun in 1847 and mourns the death of a beloved, the occupants of heaven were described as holding their breath in order to listen not to God but to "The beating heart of Love's own breast". Rossetti was certainly influenced by the musical conceits developed by aesthetes, but music was much more to him than mere colour theory. The transcendental nature of music, eloquently expressed in the writings of Christian

¹³⁷¹W. M. Rossetti, 1911, pp. 265, 673-74.

¹³⁷²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 209.

¹³⁷³Walter Hilton, *Of Angels' Song*, II, 11-13, quoted in Davidson, p. 162.

¹³⁷⁴*Germ*, May 1850, p. 180.

mystics, was the perfect medium through which Rossetti could celebrate his growing belief that redemption could be found within the beloved:

How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
When, by the new birth born abroad
Throughout the music of the suns,
It enters in her soul at once
And knows the silence there for God!¹³⁷⁵

¹³⁷⁵W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 242.

Conclusion

On a personal level Rossetti had reason to lose sympathy with monasticism and saintly example. His *Proserpine* (S.233; fig. 134), dating from 1873, is often interpreted as an allusion to Jane Morris' relationship with her husband, Rossetti drawing an analogy with Proserpine who was forced to become the bride of Pluto and dwell in the underworld.¹³⁷⁶ However, it may also be seen as a cynical reference to his sister Maria's admission into All Saints' Sisterhood, Margaret Street, in that year. Although Maria did not announce her decision to join the Anglican convent until the summer of 1873, her family had long been aware of her desire to submit to such a life. Rossetti described Maria's step as something "to which her lifelong tendencies have pointed from the first".¹³⁷⁷ This William Michael indirectly suggested in his *Lives of Famous Poets*, which he dedicated to Maria and Oliver Madox Brown. Although Maria had only spent three years in All Saints' Sisterhood, and two of these as a novice, her brother summed up her life of forty nine years in the phrase, "Writer and Sister of the Poor".¹³⁷⁸ Since 1860 she had been an "Associate" of the Sisterhood, contributing her finances and time.¹³⁷⁹ W. M. Rossetti recorded that in 1873 "she announced that she would no longer defer her project."¹³⁸⁰ Interestingly, that very summer Rossetti requested he be sent a copy of Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*.¹³⁸¹

W. M. Rossetti believed the timing of Maria's decision to have had a direct bearing on his marriage to Lucy Madox Brown which was announced in the summer of 1873 and which, as W. M. Rossetti put it, left Maria "freer than before of family-ties".¹³⁸² But Packer hints towards a darker picture, quoting a reference by Maria to "Lucy's

¹³⁷⁶Marsh, 1999, p. 459. Faxon, 1994, p. 191.

¹³⁷⁷W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 320. However, Maria had not always intended to become a nun. In a letter to William Michael of 13 August 1853, Christina made mention of Maria's dowry (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 2:25). Also, it was Maria who inherited her mother's old calf bound 1811 copy of Edgeworth's *Belinda*, which principally concerned marriage, and which Francis M. L. Polidori had received from her mother on 27 April 1823, on the occasion of her wedding (Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 3 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1811, 3rd ed., 1st ed. 1801); Troxell Coll., Princeton, 12:5).

¹³⁷⁸W. M. Rossetti, *Lives of Famous Poets* (London: E. Moxon, 1878).

¹³⁷⁹Not only did Maria receive newsletters at this date, but she was in direct correspondence with individual Sisters (Troxell Coll., Princeton, 4:1, 4:3). Marsh, 1994, p. 243.

¹³⁸⁰W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 346.

¹³⁸¹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1180. See note 125.

¹³⁸²W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 346.

enthronement as bride".¹³⁸³ Emotionally Maria may have felt something of a forced bride, although she had held the possibility of such a life in mind for a long time. She may also have seen herself as becoming the bride of death, furthering the link with Proserpine, as Packer connects Maria's step with her illness, Maria having felt the first symptoms of cancer in May 1873.¹³⁸⁴

Although All Saints was not a closed order, Rossetti may have seen Maria, like Proserpine, as fearfully trapped. An undated pen and ink drawing in the British Museum (S.610; fig. 135), depicting a rather stocky figure dressed in a nun's habit with a white coif and crucifix, is very close to a photograph of Maria in the attire of a Sister, which was taken around 1874 (fig. 136), and suggests that Maria was very much on her brother's mind.¹³⁸⁵ Although Maria wrote that visitors were allowed on "Sundays & Festivals throughout the year: Thursdays & Saturdays except in Lent: from 3.30 - 4.45", in reality her situation allowed little time for family and friends. She noted down beside these visiting times that it would be likely that she would be "out or engaged".¹³⁸⁶ When 'Nolly' Madox Brown requested she should read the work of Dante to him, she replied, "The educational pursuits which engage me are wholly for the benefit of the poor; & every spare moment is filled up with some kind of Community work."¹³⁸⁷

T. G. Hake marvelled at the spirit which had induced her to "voluntarily undertake such a life of hardship".¹³⁸⁸ Rossetti certainly did not regard the situation favourably, as Frances Horner recalled:

Once he was talking of his sister... she had joined a sisterhood at Clewer, and he said: "Good God! What do you think she has done? She has made herself exactly like a pen-wiper!"¹³⁸⁹

¹³⁸³Packer, pp. 304-5.

¹³⁸⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 296. Packer, pp. 304-5.

¹³⁸⁵In 1874 Maria also sent Lucy Rossetti details of her habit for a drawing: "Besides the white hood, they are these; no cap-strings, a much larger collar, crossing over the breast, with bibs coming down lower than my present capstrings, but not so broad; a black rope girdle knotted at the side, *over* which hangs the scapular, instead of my present leather girdle with scapular under; no cross on the breast, but a large black one at the end of the girdle, too low I believe to come into your drawing at all" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:9).

¹³⁸⁶Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:8.

¹³⁸⁷Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:9.

¹³⁸⁸T. G. Hake to Rossetti, 12 December 1873 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:1).

¹³⁸⁹Horner, p. 10.

His letters all too plainly convey the anxiety he felt. He worried about her not coming home for Christmas ("I grieve to think how lonely she will be on Christmas-day without her family"), and talked of "Poor Maggie... annexing the Kingdom of Heaven for good".¹³⁹⁰ Writing to his brother on 13 November 1873 he admitted, "I have really felt very sincerely anxious about Maria since what you tell me of no fires in this blessed place. I simply could not exist on such terms - it would be a noviciate for another world; and I view the matter as most serious for her."¹³⁹¹ The poem which Rossetti wrote in 1872 and inscribed on his painting of *Proserpine* suggests imprisonment within an almost monastic cell: "Afar away the light that brings cold cheer / Unto this wall".¹³⁹² Indeed, Burne-Jones' 1869 personification of *Winter* as a nun-like figure reading a missal (fig. 137), may have been inspirational to Rossetti, and naturally led his thoughts to Proserpine who had to spend the six winter months imprisoned in Hades. W. M. Rossetti noted that at the same time as his brother had written his poem "Proserpine" he had also composed a poem entitled "Winter" to complement his painting.¹³⁹³ The subject of Proserpine beginning her new life in a cold netherworld continued to haunt him until his own death in 1882. By this time he had painted eight different versions, the final being finished in Birchington-on-Sea only days before he died.¹³⁹⁴

The notion of entrapment was one which Rossetti would not relinquish. *La Pia de' Tolomei* (S.207; fig. 138), the last original canvas on which Rossetti worked, was a variation on the theme of *Proserpine*.¹³⁹⁵ In the *Divine Comedy* Dante related how Pia de' Tolomei was confined by her husband in a fortress in the swamps of the Maremma, where she died. Prominently displayed in the foreground of Rossetti's work

¹³⁹⁰Rossetti to Alice Boyd, 3 November 1875 (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1368). Rossetti to F. M. L. Rossetti, 15 December 1875 (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 325). Christmas still held some religious significance for Rossetti, as evidenced by letter to T. Watts-Dunton, dated 24 December 1878, in which he talks of "a lonely Christian's Christmas" (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1616).

¹³⁹¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 300.

¹³⁹²W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 371.

¹³⁹³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 326. Smetham described *Proserpine*, along with *Astarte Syriaca* (S. 249) and *The Sphinx* (S. 241), as "full of 'spiritual fire'", and declared it to be "a thing to haunt one's inner eye for the rest of life" (Smetham to Rossetti, 16 March 1875, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 3:24 - Smetham's italics).

¹³⁹⁴Surtees, 1971, p. 133. W. M. Rossetti thought there to have been seven canvases, besides crayon drawings (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 325).

¹³⁹⁵As with *Proserpine*, this painting has been connected with Rossetti's relationship with Jane Morris (W. D. Paden, "La Pia de' Tolomei by Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Register of the Museum of Art (University of Kansas)*, vol. 2 (November 1958), p. 20).

were a rosary and a prayer book. Although the painting was begun in 1868, only the figure of Jane Morris was filled in at this point. It is significant that the religious details were not painted until 1880.¹³⁹⁶ In his painting Rossetti emphasised the sense of confinement through the cramming of detail into the picture space, and through the closeness of the picture frame to Jane Morris's bent, awkward posture. Ravens forebodingly circle while she melancholically fingers her wedding ring.

Maria's failing health within the convent away from her family put great strain on Rossetti. He appeared to mentally equate her illness with the restraints of convent life; "It is terrible to think of that bright mind and those ardently acquired stores of knowledge now imprisoned in so frail and perishing a frame".¹³⁹⁷ In 1876, the year of Maria's decline and death, Rossetti's references to monasticism took on a markedly negative aspect. He recommended that Brown should "paint Chaucer beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street", having found, he declared, "the subject recommended to Haydon by C. Lamb".¹³⁹⁸ Maria's death, although anticipated, shook Rossetti. Frances Rossetti advised her son "to attend the preliminary service in the Chapel only, & not to go to the cemetery". Christina declared to William Michael, "I dread the cemetery for him with all his peculiar feelings".¹³⁹⁹

Despite this painful family situation, Rossetti returned to saintly and even ascetic iconography. Sexual purity was the subject of *Sancta Lilius* (S.257; fig. 139) of 1879, a chalk composition of a haloed saint, chastely dressed in a loose-fitting robe and holding a lily stem.¹⁴⁰⁰ It shared its name with Rossetti's 1874 oil study for *The Blessed Damozel*, a painting described by Gurney as "an exposition of the spiritual signification of Mary" being full of Marian iconography, lilies, roses, stars and palms.¹⁴⁰¹ Although the lily was primarily an emblem of the Virgin, it also appeared in

¹³⁹⁶Surtees, 1971, pp. 118-19.

¹³⁹⁷Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1465.

¹³⁹⁸The incident was taken from T. Speght's *Life of Chaucer* of 1598 (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1405). Rossetti had already mentioned seeing "a monkish-looking character" on a sheet of drawings by Haydon, in the newly published *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk, with a Memoir by his son, Frederic Wordsworth Haydon* (Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1399).

¹³⁹⁹C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 26 November 1876 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1). Rossetti requested a lock of Maria's hair for a keepsake, to put alongside his father's (C. G. Rossetti to W. M. Rossetti, 11 December 1876, Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:1).

¹⁴⁰⁰Whereabouts unknown, photograph in Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:26.

¹⁴⁰¹Gurney, "A Dream of Fair Women" (1883), quoted in Bentley, 1982, p. 38.

Rossetti may have made use of John Gough Clay's *The Virgin Mary and the Traditions*

paintings of the saints, particularly those of St Francis, St Anthony of Padua, St Dominick and St Catherine of Siena, as a signifier of holiness.¹⁴⁰² It is evident that in his chalk *Sancta Lilius* Rossetti sought to make a return to more traditional notions of sainthood, in contrast to his earlier sensualised approach in *La Ghirlandata* and *The Damsel of the Sanct Grael*. As a result *Sancta Lilius* attracted the attention of a Rev. Dr Gots who hoped to purchase it for his vicarage.¹⁴⁰³

Rossetti's style went through undeniable changes. At times he mocked his previous achievements, describing his early work as "discouragingly angelic".¹⁴⁰⁴ However, he did not make a clean break with the past, remaining preoccupied with his earlier saintly poems and images. Dunn noted that in the 1860s Rossetti retained a photograph of *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* in his studio, and on one occasion Dunn found him looking back over *The Germ* in which "The Blessed Damozel", his sonnets from Bruges, "Pax Vobis", and *Hand and Soul* could be found.¹⁴⁰⁵ In 1874 Rossetti wrote to Dunn to say that he had *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* back in his studio to be retouched for Graham, and declared, "there is a sort of inspired quality about it which sets it at the top of my work."¹⁴⁰⁶ It was not inappropriate that Rev. H. C. B. Foyster, the Rector of St Clement's, Hastings, where Rossetti and Siddal were married on 23 May 1860, should have proposed on the couple's fiftieth anniversary the installation of a memorial window based on *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* and framed by scrolls containing lines of Rossetti's poetry. Indeed, W. M. Rossetti and Mackenzie Bell both gave their approval to the scheme.¹⁴⁰⁷

In the latter part of his career, Rossetti returned on a number of occasions to subjects he had initially envisaged in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Versions of *Dante's Dream* were made in 1856, 1871 and 1880, although the original idea had been conceived in 1848.¹⁴⁰⁸ In his poetry too he continued to develop earlier themes. In a studio notebook used between 1871 and 1881, Rossetti composed a list of possible

of *Painters* (London, 1873).

¹⁴⁰²Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xlii.

¹⁴⁰³E. Bates to Rossetti, 23 December 1879 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 2:2).

¹⁴⁰⁴Troxell Coll., Princeton, 9:7.

¹⁴⁰⁵Dunn, pp. 22, 25. Shields, who had an extensive knowledge of photography, kindly oversaw the photography of many of Rossetti's paintings (Mills, p. 139).

¹⁴⁰⁶C. Watts-Dunton, p. 103. Earlier that year, fearing *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* to have perished in a fire, Rossetti had written to Brown anxious for information (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:1).

¹⁴⁰⁷Troxell Coll., Princeton, 11:16.

¹⁴⁰⁸Doughty & Wahl, vol. 1, p. 49. Surtees, 1971, p. 42.

names to be included in his poems. These names were predominantly medieval ones, for example, Berold, Adelais, Monhault, Gervaise, and a few explicitly monastic-sounding appellations, for example, Hélic de Saint Sain and Ninian.¹⁴⁰⁹ In 1880 Rossetti sent Caine a selection of sonnets for inclusion within his *Sonnets of Three Centuries*, which was to be published by Elliot Stock in 1882, and he chose sonnets in which the themes of mystical marriage were prominent, both in religious and sexual contexts: "Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee"; "Known in Vain"; "Stillborn Love"; and "True Woman".¹⁴¹⁰

Further, Rossetti returned to earlier source material. At Kelmscott in the summer of 1873 he requested that he be sent "a set of photos from an old Flemish missal which are illuminated & which I had... in a little portfolio."¹⁴¹¹ The medieval ship in *The Boat of Love* (S.239; fig. 140), begun in 1874, was derived from a book of engravings by Carlo Lasinio after Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes in the Campo Santo in Pisa. This book, owned by Millais, had been one of the initial sources of inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.¹⁴¹² The artists of the early Renaissance, Italian and Northern, continued to hold a deep fascination for Rossetti and an importance in his work. Nearly twenty years after the founding of the PRB Allingham declared, "In Painting the Early Italians with their quaintness and strong rich colouring have magnetised him."¹⁴¹³ Rossetti spent considerable time in the 1870s reading Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, and applying what he read to his work.¹⁴¹⁴ In 1872, engaged on designing a predella for Graham's version of *Beata Beatrix*, Rossetti explained in a letter to his mother of 12 September that he was following the practice of "old Italian art".¹⁴¹⁵

His enthusiasm can only have been strengthened by the mutual interest of his friends. In 1869 W. B. Scott, who had "a formidable collection" of old German prints, brought out a book on Dürer, and W. M. Rossetti returned from Italy inspired by the examples of medieval art he had seen.¹⁴¹⁶ March 1874 found D. G. Rossetti intrigued by a "little

¹⁴⁰⁹Rossetti notebook, 1871-81 (British Library, no. 1, p. 28).

¹⁴¹⁰Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1821 n.

¹⁴¹¹Letters from Rossetti to Dunn (V&A, no. 5).

¹⁴¹²Dunn, pp. 56, 69. *Art Journal* (1892), p. 250. Surtees, 1971, pp. 136-37.

¹⁴¹³Diary entry, 19 September 1867 (Allingham & Radford, p. 163).

¹⁴¹⁴Dunn, p. 55.

¹⁴¹⁵Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1059.

¹⁴¹⁶D. G. Rossetti to Smetham, 7 September 1869 (V&A, no. 14). Minto, vol. 2, p. 193. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 13:4. D. G. Rossetti himself owned a copy of C. E. Norton's *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860) (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C.,

early Italian picture" which a friend had anonymously sent him, "a Resurrection - fine & interesting."¹⁴¹⁷ He in turn sought to enthuse others, in 1876 sending "a series of photos from the miniatures of a celebrated Livres d'Heures" to Maria at All Saints Sisterhood.¹⁴¹⁸ He valued these early works precisely for their intense spirituality and he knew his sister would share his appreciation. Writing to Dunn in January 1875, he criticised those works of the later Renaissance in which he had found "the soul to be too visibly in a minor ratio, as compared to the body".¹⁴¹⁹ No matter how sensual his works became, the spiritual side of art remained of supreme importance to Rossetti.

Reviewing Rossetti's *Poems* in 1870, Swinburne declared that he had decided to treat Rossetti "as a Christian poet".¹⁴²⁰ Indeed, in the *Fortnightly Review* he described Rossetti's "most exquisite and especial work" as "essentially Christian" and "formally and spiritually Catholic".¹⁴²¹ Richard W. Dixon recalled, "I once saw him [Rossetti] very indignant on hearing that he had been accused of irreligion, or rather of not being a Christian. He asked with great earnestness, 'Do not my works testify to my Christianity?'"¹⁴²² More than this Rossetti felt his works expressed "his belief in immortality".¹⁴²³ Describing a Leeds picture dealer, Edmund Bates, to Frederic Shields in July 1879, Rossetti called him a "strange creature", being "a dealer who admires the spiritual only and sells nothing but what he admires!" Rossetti declared, "I must try and know him". By November 1879 he was able to write that Bates was going to take some of his work to sell in Leeds.¹⁴²⁴

Certainly Rossetti's *oeuvre* attracted and retained the attention of a great number of religious men and women. Lady Bath continued to show interest in his output beyond the 1850s. In 1869 she informed Charlotte Polidori, "I like your account of the pictures very much - so pray purchase them", a message which Polidori conveyed to her nephew on 9 October 1869.¹⁴²⁵ In 1872 Rossetti sold a pencil sketch to Rev.

12:2).

¹⁴¹⁷Letters from Rossetti to Dunn (V&A, no. 4). In a letter to his brother of 13 March 1874, Rossetti specified the panel to be by Pietro Laurato (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 1:6). Rossetti eventually donated the painting to his sister Maria, becoming then the property of All Saints' Sisterhood (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, p. 305).

¹⁴¹⁸Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1459.

¹⁴¹⁹Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1328.

¹⁴²⁰Lang, vol. 2, p. 105.

¹⁴²¹Swinburne, 1870, p. 562.

¹⁴²²W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 407-8.

¹⁴²³Hunt, 1905, vol. 1, p. 160.

¹⁴²⁴Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1684. Mills, p. 244.

¹⁴²⁵Troxell Coll., Princeton, 28:33.

Edward F. Russell, and in December 1879 Bates borrowed some of Rossetti's poems to show to a "Rev. gentleman".¹⁴²⁶ Rossetti perceived that "there may be things here and there in the book which might rather ruffle the nap of 'The Cloth'".¹⁴²⁷ Yet the clergyman was greatly impressed.¹⁴²⁸ Rev. P. T. Forsyth described Rossetti's paintings as "art of the soul", and Rev. R. W. Dixon declared Rossetti's 1870 *Poems* to be "nectar".¹⁴²⁹

William Graham, described by his daughter, Francis Horner, as a fervently religious man, "Presbyterian in religion" and "a strong Sabbatarian", a man who every morning would read to his family from the Bible and pray with them, was yet drawn to the works of Rossetti.¹⁴³⁰ Indeed, the number of compositions he obtained from the artist demonstrated the extent of his fascination. From large oils to small chalk studies, his acquisitions numbered around thirty. These included the prominent early religious works *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* and *Fra Pace*, but considerably more of Rossetti's later 'secular' pieces: an oil replica of *Beata Beatrix*; an oil version of *Dante's Dream at the Time of the Death of Beatrice*; an oil and a chalk version of *The Blessed Damozel*; a chalk and a watercolour study of *Venus Verticordia*; and the oil *La Ghirlandata*.¹⁴³¹

Rossetti's secular work appealed to the religious because he continued to develop themes that were specifically Christian. The connection he had earlier perceived in monasticism and in the legends of the saints between sexual and religious experience continued to interest him even though he had begun to see earthly love as sacred. Both Pater and Swinburne recognised the sensuality of medieval mystical writing and saintly legend, and its sustained potency for Rossetti.¹⁴³² W. M. Rossetti agreed that his brother, whilst eschewing traditional belief, continued to show great concern for "the

¹⁴²⁶Rossetti to C. A. Howell, 7 January 1873; Aldam Heaton to C. A. Howell, 11 January 1873 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:11).

¹⁴²⁷Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1693. Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 2:2.

¹⁴²⁸Bates to Rossetti, 28 December 1879 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 2:2).

¹⁴²⁹P. T. Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901, 1st publ. 1889), p. 22. R. W. Dixon to Rossetti, 26 August 1874 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 2:20).

¹⁴³⁰Horner, pp. 3-5.

¹⁴³¹S.40; 44; 64; 73; 75 R.2; 80; 81 R.1; 116 R.2; 118 R.2; 126; 126. R.1; 168 R.3; 169; 170; 173B; 173 R.2; 181; 196; 201 R.2; 213; 224B; 232; 235; 238A; 239; 244; 244E; 255E; 535.

¹⁴³²W. Pater, "Poems by William Morris", *Westminster Review*, vol. 34 (1868), pp. 300-12. Fredeman, 1965, p. 19.

abstract ideas and the venerable forms of Christianity".¹⁴³³ This is encapsulated in poems such as "Pride of Youth", which, although totally unconcerned with the actual mechanism of faith, adopts religion's accessories, ending with a comparison between lost loves and "the beads of a told rosary!"¹⁴³⁴

Yet Rossetti had no love for Christianity as a Victorian institution. Staying with the Cowper-Temples at Broadlands, Romsey, in August 1876 during "a religious Conference(!)", he had had to share hospitality with fifty or sixty enthusiastic vicars. Treffry Dunn noted humorously that Rossetti's suite of rooms must have been cut off from the noise "to judge from the fact that he was quite oblivious to family prayers having taken place and a hymn sung" by twenty or thirty "stentorious" voices.¹⁴³⁵ Rossetti, writing to Watts-Dunton, described himself as of "an entirely foreign substance".¹⁴³⁶ Horner related, probably from Burne-Jones, how on another occasion a prelate came to visit Rossetti and "was startled to hear his host call down the stairs: 'Send the bloody bishop up!'"¹⁴³⁷ In 1870 Rossetti contemplated writing a tale or humorous poem entitled "The Palimpsest", in which a manuscript displaying both Christian and pagan writings was fought over by a Victorian theologian and classics scholar. Significantly Rossetti gave the classicist the victory and had the theologian eschew his Christian morals:

The Theologian is in bad health, and expects to die before
the Classic is finished. This drives him to desperation, and
impels him at last to murder his rival; who in dying shows him
in triumph the scroll, from which the Early Father has been
completely erased by acids, leaving a fair MS. of the Pagan
poet.¹⁴³⁸

Burne-Jones' declared, "There are only two sides of Christianity for which I am fitted by the Spirit that designs in me - the carol part and the mystical part - I could not do without mediaeval Christianity".¹⁴³⁹ It was within mystical Christianity that Rossetti also had a place, rather than within the realms of any enlightened nineteenth century church. Rossetti saw himself, like his father and Dante, "to be of those that haunt / The

¹⁴³³W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 114.

¹⁴³⁴W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 188.

¹⁴³⁵Dunn to F. M. L. Rossetti, 2 August 1876 (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 6:15).

¹⁴³⁶Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, pp. 1452-55.

¹⁴³⁷Horner, p. 22.

¹⁴³⁸W. M. Rossetti, 1911, p. 616.

¹⁴³⁹G. Burne-Jones, vol. 2, p. 160.

vale of magical dark mysteries".¹⁴⁴⁰ Sir Frederic Leighton, speaking at a Royal Academy banquet in 1882 described Rossetti as "A mystic by temperament and right of birth".¹⁴⁴¹

Hueffer criticised Rossetti for always obscuring the meaning of his poems: "being convinced that poetry is literary mysticism, he was always more or less concerned to show that he was a literary mystic."¹⁴⁴² However, Rossetti's mysticism did not rely merely on complexity. He did not approve of impenetrable poetry. He had been a great admirer of P. J. Bailey's *Festus*, first published in 1839 and enlarged in 1845, but, reading Bailey's *The Mystic* in 1855, he had objected to its enigmatic, mysterious language:

... he lived a threefold life
Through all the ages; yea, seven times his soul
Commingling, leavened with its light the world.
First in the feast of life, and the sun's son...¹⁴⁴³

Rossetti light-heartedly corrupted its title to *The Mystake*, and wrote to Allingham on 8 January 1856, "What do you think of Browning being able to read *The Mystake*? Could you?"¹⁴⁴⁴

It was mystical ideas, particularly that of spiritual marriage, rather than esoteric language that concerned Rossetti. The writer of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1870 compared his brand of sensual spirituality to that of Walt Whitman.¹⁴⁴⁵ Like Whitman, Rossetti explored the interconnecting themes of ecstatic religious experience and sexual arousal, making frequent returns to the image of the bride and bridegroom of the Canticles. Through the simplicity of the language of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), as well as the imagery, Whitman had sought to evoke the spirit of the *Song of Songs*:

I am she who adorned herself and folded her hair expectantly,
My truant lover has come and it is dark.¹⁴⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴⁰D. G. Rossetti, 1904, p. 145.

¹⁴⁴¹W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 424.

¹⁴⁴²F. M. Hueffer, *Rossetti: A Critical Essay on his Art* (London: Duckworth, 1902), pp. 185-86.

¹⁴⁴³P. J. Bailey, *The Mystic and other Poems* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1855), pp. 5-6, 18. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 89.

¹⁴⁴⁴Birkbeck Hill, p. 164.

¹⁴⁴⁵*Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 2 (1870), pp. 115-18, quoted in Ghose, p. 123.

¹⁴⁴⁶W. Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. M. Cowley (London: Secker & Warburg, 1959), p. 107.

However, the notebooks and manuscripts of Whitman in the early 1850s made reference to personal ecstatic encounters with the divine, and in "Song of Myself" he declared, "God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night".¹⁴⁴⁷ Whitman's description of actual transcendental experience was very different to Rossetti's poetic allusion to the mystical. Rossetti declared to Allingham in a letter dating from April 1856, "I have not been so happy in loathing anything for a long while - except, I think, *Leaves of Grass*".¹⁴⁴⁸

Following his breakdown, Rossetti lived in almost monastic seclusion, taking walks only after dark, and this reclusiveness in conjunction with his unwillingness to exhibit his paintings enhanced the sense of mystery which surrounded his work and life. Tirebuck declared that "there grew about Rossetti's *name* the halo of mystery".¹⁴⁴⁹ However, Rossetti was not a mystic in a true sense, although living a hermitic life, and intrigued by mystical experience which he sought to intimate in his work.¹⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, F. W. H. Myers noted, "He is not a prophet but an artist". Yet, as Myers continued, he was "an artist who, both by the very intensity of his artistic vision, and by some inborn bent towards symbol and mysticism, stands on the side of those who see in material things a spiritual significance, and utters words of universal meaning from the fulness of his own heart."¹⁴⁵¹ This was at the core of Rossetti's intrigue with the Catholic world of hagiography.

Half-lengths and full-lengths, enthroned and martyred, paintings and effigies, W. M. Rossetti witnessed and recorded a vast array of saintly images on his various trips to Italy in the 1860s.¹⁴⁵² Visiting Antwerp with W. M. Rossetti in 1863, D. G. Rossetti

¹⁴⁴⁷Whitman, pp. xii, 27.

¹⁴⁴⁸Birkbeck Hill, p. 181. In 1876 Rossetti said he was willing to contribute £5 to a fund to promote Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and *Two Rivulets*, although in the end he contributed "less than he had at first intended" (W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 2, pp. 332, 348). In 1868 W. M. Rossetti edited *Poems by Walt Whitman* (London: John Camden Hotton). Rowley, who visited Whitman in the States, wrote, "He was particularly anxious that I should thank Mr William Rossetti for all he had done for him, not only as a literary friend and helper, but as a benefactor in needful and substantial ways" (Rowley, 1905, p. 218).

¹⁴⁴⁹In his own lifetime "DGR" became to the public a mystic monogram almost like "PRB" had been (Tirebuck, pp. 32-33).

¹⁴⁵⁰A distinction has to be made between the true mystic who attains union with the Divine, and the person who merely talks about it (Underhill, p. 86).

¹⁴⁵¹F. W. H. Myers, "Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty", *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. 47 (February 1883), p. 217. W. M. Rossetti, 1895, vol. 1, p. 436.

¹⁴⁵²W. M. Rossetti, 1903, pp. 8-12, 55-58, 110-23, 186-92, 308-17, 387-91.

too had the opportunity to view a substantial number of such works, most notably, two large female martyrdoms by Stuerbout, "high class specimens", and a number of patron saints by Rubens, "most gorgeous pieces of work, and one of them (Katharine?) singularly beautiful and queenly".¹⁴⁵³ At his home in Cheyne Walk, D. G. Rossetti literally surrounded himself with saintly works, accepting Legros' images of Christian martyrs and devotees into his house, and inviting Shields, who was working on such sacred works as his oil *Mary Magdalene* and his *Army of Martyrs* stained glass design, to share his studio.¹⁴⁵⁴ Rossetti also began to collect early Renaissance oils of saints and virgins. Treffrey Dunn's painting of *Rossetti in Tudor House* (1882; fig. 141) shows that Rossetti had on the wall of his drawing room in the year of his death such an early *Madonna and Child* with a gilt, pointed arch frame. The 1882 auction sale catalogue of Rossetti's belongings included amongst its lots two such paintings:

288 Old Florentine, Virgin and Child, on panel with appropriate frame, presented by Mr Robert Browning to D. G. Rossetti.

302 An oil painting in handsome carved frame of the Italian School, Virgin and Child.

Also listed were "An oil painting of the Venetian School, framed, Virgin and Child, Infant St. John and three other Saints, attributed to Bonifazio" (lot 287), and "An old oil painting, framed and glazed, after a woodcut by Albert Dürer, 'The Martyrs'" (lot 324).¹⁴⁵⁵

Jameson expressed concern that works of spiritual import were now frivolously adorning the Victorian living space:

We have taken these works from their consecrated localities, in which they once held each their dedicated place, and we have hung them in our drawing-rooms and our dressing-rooms, over our pianos and our side-boards - and now what do they say to us?¹⁴⁵⁶

She instanced, "That Magdalene, weeping amid her hair, who once spoke comfort to the soul of the fallen sinner". However, Rossetti appreciated the emphasis placed on visual cognisance within the Roman Catholic faith. He had experienced something of

¹⁴⁵³W. M. Rossetti, 1903, p. 32.

¹⁴⁵⁴Mills, pp. 241, 269.

¹⁴⁵⁵Wharton & Martin auction cat., 1882, pp. 16-18. Rossetti also owned a copy of Archdeacon Allen's 1856 edition of Dürer's *The Humiliation and Exaltation of our Redeemer*, which included 32 prints from original blocks (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 12:2).

¹⁴⁵⁶Jameson, 1848, vol. 1, p. xxiv.

the power of religious art as early as 1843, and understood, in a way that went against his Protestant education, that art was an important conveyer of religious truths. Thus he had become intrigued with the notion of the sacred image and of the depiction of the meritorious saint.

In turn Rossetti had felt an affinity with monasticism which provided not only spiritual but artistic fellowship for its painter brothers, and he frequently returned in his work to the example of the artist monk and the notion of the religious community. However, Sulman recognised that in the late 1850s art itself was becoming for Rossetti a sacramental activity, and in the many subsequent artistic collaborations that he made with his fellows, Rossetti can be seen to have been seeking to create something of his own secular order.¹⁴⁵⁷ Yet powerful iconic figures such as St Mary Magdalene retained their potency for him. Rossetti desired the mysticism and acknowledgment of the supernatural within saintly and monastic legend to be a feature of his own secular paintings and poems, and more than this, he wanted his modern saintly images to speak to the very soul of onlooker.

Christina Rossetti had written in 1856 in her poem "In an Artist's Studio" that "One face looks out from all his canvases, / ... A saint, an angel". This image was so potent, so necessary for life, that the artist was described as 'feeding upon her face'.¹⁴⁵⁸ This desire for intensity of visual and poetic expression was at the heart of Rossetti's plundering of hagiographical iconography. Rossetti may have turned his back on Christianity in the conventional sense, but as he declared in "Soothsay":

Let lore of all Theology
Be to thy soul what it *can* be...¹⁴⁵⁹

For Rossetti Christian legend and theological tradition gave transcendental power to his startlingly sexual images in both written and visual media.

Venus Verticordia purposely exploited the format of the religious icon with its decorative surface, ambiguous space and gold nimbus, creating what was essentially a new and powerfully sensual votive image, with its suffocating colours, crowding of symbols and the pungency of suggested odours.¹⁴⁶⁰ Hamilton called "the lovely but

¹⁴⁵⁷Sulman, p. 549.

¹⁴⁵⁸Crump, vol. 3, pp. 264, 463.

¹⁴⁵⁹W. M. Rossetti, 1886, vol. 1, p. 336.

¹⁴⁶⁰In 1874 *The Catholic World* declared that "Mr. Rosetti [sic] has peculiar claims upon the interest of Catholic[s]", noting approvingly the "intense sensuous appreciation of the medium" he used (Earle, p. 264). Rossetti, although calling *The Catholic World* "a Yankee Romanist Magazine", described Earle's article to Brown in 1874 as "the best

melancholy faces of Proserpine and Pandora", which hung around Rossetti's studio, his "household gods", and Myers described Rossetti's mature work as "the sacred pictures of a new religion".¹⁴⁶¹ In a time marked by religious scepticism Rossetti felt that beauty alone could be counted on to inspire higher thoughts. He considered his works to be the century's new sacred images, and they were meant to be kissed and adored. Arthur Hughes wrote to Allingham in 1860, "Rossetti has lately painted a most beautiful head, marigold background, such a superb thing, so awfully lovely. Boyce has bought it and will I expect kiss the dear thing's lips away before you come to see it."¹⁴⁶²

However, Rossetti never lost his fundamental respect for Christian art and tradition. His preoccupation with Swedenborgian ideas and spiritualism demonstrated that he was still affected by contemporary religious trends and had retained a degree of belief in a spiritual world. Rossetti did not intend to be a radical subversive, but merely to invigorate his own sensuous pictures of brooding females with the iconography of sacred art. Therefore, at Cheyne Walk Rossetti hung the saintly works he possessed amongst his own secular canvases, to suggest their artistic kinship. William Graham too, who was "one of the first and largest collectors of the Italian Primitive", recognised the affinity, and in his house at Grosvenor Place hung Rossetti's paintings side by side with saintly, "old and modern, sacred and profane".¹⁴⁶³ Rossetti's appropriation of saintly iconography in both his secular paintings and poems was the product of a profound admiration for Christian, and more particularly, Catholic legend and theology. Gabriele may have called his son "my little Protestant", but Rossetti's work demonstrated a consistent debt to the traditions of the medieval church.

review of my poems I have seen" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 11:1; Doughty & Wahl, vol. 3, p. 1283). Writing to William Davies on 16 March 1881, he remembered it as "the only thoroughly good review ever written of my things" (Angeli-Dennis Coll., U.B.C., 1:23; Doughty & Wahl, vol. 4, p. 1857).

¹⁴⁶¹Myers, 1883, p. 219. W. Hamilton, p. 60.

¹⁴⁶²G. H. Fleming, *That Ne'er Shall Meet Again* (London: Joseph, 1971), p. 161.

¹⁴⁶³Horner, pp. 3-5.

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