

The Pre-Raphaelites

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Among the year's more significant publications are two new volumes of Dante Rossetti's and Christina Rossetti's collected letters. *The Chelsea Years, 1863-1872, Prelude to Crisis, Volume IV, 1868-1870* is the fourth of nine projected volumes in William E. Fredeman's *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, edited after his death by Roger C. Lewis, Jane Cowan, Roger W. Peattie, Allan Life, and Page Life. This physically attractive volume offers clear summaries and chronologies and a color frontispiece of Rossetti's flame-toned "Sybilla Palmifera," as well as many letters unavailable in the 1965 Doughty-Wahl edition. Scholars acquainted with Jan Marsh's recent biography and John Bryson's edition of Rossetti's correspondence with Jane Morris will find few surprises, but the volume's notes elucidate many obscure references, and its temporal collocation throws Rossetti's activities and growing obsessions into sharper relief. Deferral of the current volume's index to volume five is a somewhat unfortunate inevitability, for its many allusions cry out for a more extensive network of references.

Admirers of Rossetti's poetry may find this the series' most important volume, for it includes many observations about the verse he gathered, rewrote, and recomposed for his *Poems* (1870), as well as a critical obligato of commentary—often generous and perceptive—on the work of Tennyson, Morris, Browning, Swinburne, Philip Marston, Thomas Hake, and others. He also penned a number of intense letters to Jane Morris, as well as more reflective accounts of his views and activities to William Bell Scott, Alice Boyd, Ford Madox Brown, Swinburne, and others. Rossetti's circle clearly contracted during this period, but it remained broad enough to reflect a wide range of artistic and literary contacts as well as his mature intellectual life.

Biographers have given us considered accounts of Rossetti at his unfortunate worst, and the readers of the current volume will encounter the latter in force: Rossetti the rationalizer, for example, who arranged for others to extract his manuscript poems from Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti's grave, and wrote his friend Swinburne that "the truth is, that no one so much as herself would have approved of my doing this. . . . Had it been possible to her, I should have found the book on my pillow the night she was buried; and could she have opened the grave, no other hand would have been needed" (p. 190). And the unctuous figure of Rossetti in *Love*, who hastened to assure Jane Morris that "all that concerns you is the all absorbing question with me, as dear Top will not mind my telling you at this anxious time. The more he loves you, the more he knows that you are too lovely and noble not to be

loved: and, dear Janey, there are too few things that seem worth expressing as life goes on, for one friend to deny another the poor expression of what is most at his heart. But he is before me in granting this, and there is no need for me to say it" (pp. 216-217).

More mundanely, readers will encounter Rossetti's willingness to abuse his friends' patience and hospitality; his readiness to resent someone else who may or may not have used a design or phrase he considered his own; his requests for large cash advances for work he failed to complete; efforts to renegotiate contracts with buyers disappointed when he failed to keep his word; and willingness to spend large sums extracted in some cases from people poorer than he was. In 1868, for example, Rossetti borrowed at least five hundred pounds from Alicia Margaret Losh, an elderly aunt of Alice Boyd, who instructed her aunt's executor to destroy the IOUs after Losh died in 1872. Even Rossetti's loyal brother William Michael remarked at one point that "it would be a waste of faith to suppose Gabriel will ever deny himself any expenditure he feels disposed for" (p. 346).

Artists' and composers' conflicts with their patrons will presumably endure as long as there are artists, composers, and patrons. Patronage, after all, is a somewhat unstable mixture of friendship and hard bargaining, but George Rae, Eleanor Heaton, Frederick Craven, William Graham, and Frederick Leyland were for the most part models of patience and adaptability.

In a more neutral register, the volume preserves dozens of near-frantic demands to his publisher F. S. Ellis for changes and corrections in the proofs of Rossetti's 1870 *Poems*, as well as directives about the volume's binding, endpapers, blank pages, advertisements, and distribution of review copies as well as amended review copies. Ellis seems to have accommodated all his demands, and the much-petitioned reviewers seem to have taken the cues he wished them to take. One of them, for example, William Morris—the friend of his youth whom Rossetti pursued with envy, derision, edgy competitiveness, and professions of fraternal affection—wrote in the *Academy* (in a style unusually stilted for him) that "I [do not] know what poems of any time are be called great if we are to deny that title to these" (p. 533).

At his best, Rossetti in his forties remained as eager to help fellow artists and writers as he had been when he was young. He exhibited George Boyce's pictures in his studio; tried to help Thomas Hake market his poems more favorably, spoke to potential buyers or patrons on behalf of Frederick Shields, James Smetham, and John T. Nettleship; and praised the work of the blind poet Philip Marston and the young John Payne and Arthur O'Shaughnessy. He also exerted himself on behalf of several dead artists' and writers' widows and families, among them Warrington Taylor's widow, Walter Deverell's sister, and Coventry Patmore's brother, who had suffered a stroke.

His letters to his mother were affectionate, though his forms of address

were sometimes arch ("Good Antique," "Dear good Teak"). Toward Christina he was friendly and helpful with an occasional edge of condescension (as she was about to publish *Commonplace and Other Short Stories* he told her that her "proper business [was] to write poems and not Commonplaces"). His affection for small mammals remained, directed toward the acquirement of moles, dormice, and a somewhat heftier wombat named "Top," presumably one of his many gibes at Morris' appearance.

The letters of this period are rich in literary criticism. When he first learned the subject of Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, he derided its "prosaic reality . . . less like pure Cognac than 7 Dials Gin" in a letter to William Allingham (p. 136), but he changed his mind when he read the poem, and sent Browning three excited "reader-response" letters between January and March of 1869. Of "Caponsacchi," for example, he wrote that "the way in which the ideal element is at last infused into the book without sacrificing one tittle of its supreme reality, is a triumph of Art such as no Englishman but yourself could venture to hope for" (p. 146), and his response to "Pompilia" expressed "astonish[ment] at the gradual revelation of inmost truth, so new everywhere in spite of your having boldly given a complete glimpse of the story and the relation of its personages at the outset! . . . The surprises of the book are infinite, where, by its plan, surprise seemed almost excluded" (p. 156). Of the work's conclusion, he wrote that it was "to the inmost centre of the emotion that the mind reverts on closing the book; and finds itself still gazing with Caponsacchi on the "lady, tall, pale, beautiful, strange and sad," and still thrilling to those all-expressive words of his—"You see we are / So very pitiable, she and I / Who had conceivably been otherwise" (p. 161).

Despite Rossetti's often-expressed disdain for Morris' manner, appearance, and occupation, and his furtive pursuit of his wife, he wrote thoughtful praise of Morris' poetry. To John Skelton, for example, he wrote of *The Earthly Paradise's* second volume that "Morris is now only 35, and has done things in decorative art which take as high and exclusive a place in that field as his poetry does in its own. What may he not yet do? . . . In some parts of [the volume] the poet goes deeper in the treatment of intense personal passion than he has yet done" (p. 153). To Swinburne, he wrote that "the [second] volume will contain the Icelandic story which is his masterpiece. He read me also several very beautiful lyrics he has done" (p. 288), and added later that "Gudrun is a wonderful poem—so great that perhaps it is no serious draw-back to say that the critical situations (in general) being so fine as they are, are still as usual perhaps less convincingly perfect than the more level passages of the narrative. . . . I do not think justice is yet being done by [the critics] to this most remarkable poem, which can only be justly dealt with by detailed analysis. . . . The Death of Paris is a very fine poem now I think, having been much improved since its first state. . . . I wish it had come to my share" (p.332). In

1870, he prodded Alexander Macmillan to publish Morris' poetry with two pointed rhetorical questions, "Why does your magazine resolutely ignore the best things going? . . . [and] why in the world has Morris been left in the lurch till now?" (p. 571).

In part at least, Morris' revision of the *Laxdælasaga* as "The Lovers of Gudrun" was animated by stoic grief over his estrangement from his wife, and I find it difficult to fathom the complex blend of denial, indirection, compensatory dutifulness, and genuine adherence to a frayed ethic of artistic brotherhood which may have underlain Rossetti's just recognition of its literary stature. Whatever the composition of Rossetti's motives in this period, the contemporary reputation of his poetry benefited from Morris' willingness to suffer in silence. A somewhat different evocation of the Brotherhood's original sense of solidarity appears early in the volume, when the ceiling of Burne-Jones's dining room collapsed after a dinner for members, associates, and friends of the Firm, or in William Bell Scott's words, "everybody of the true creed." Later, Brown remarked that "the new school" might be extinct if the collapse had occurred a few hours earlier (p. 38).

Rossetti often importuned friends with his anxieties about the wording of his verse, but most of his ultimate decisions were good ones. At one point, for example, William Michael feared that "when vain desire at last and vain regret" (a line in "The House of Life"'s last sonnet) might suggest a Petrarchan echo, and Gabriel dutifully changed it to "when all desire at last and all regret," but he restored it later at the behest of his inner poetic ear.

Some of the letters articulated Rossetti's literary ideals. Writing to Thomas Hake, for example, he expressed a "particular . . . hope it might be thought . . . that my poems are in no way the result of painters' tendencies—and indeed I believe no poetry could be freer than mine from the trick of what is called 'word-painting.' As with re-created forms in painting, so I should wish to deal in poetry chiefly with personified emotions; and in carrying out my scheme of 'The House of Life' . . . shall try to put in action a complete *dramatis personae* of the soul" (p. 450). Offering advice to the young John Payne, he also warned that "the pouring forth of poetical material is the greatest danger against which an affluent imagination has to contend, and in my own view it needs not only a concrete form of some kind but immense concentration brought to bear on that also, before material can be said to have become absolutely anything else. . . . Self-repetition is certainly the quality which must be absolutely eradicated from work before it can be looked upon as finally dealt with, and nothing but the most complete attention will ever eradicate this" (p. 559).

In this register, Rossetti was a critic of great discernment of whom it might be appropriate to apply Yeats's anguished dictum, that "The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life or of the work."

And the “intellect of woman” as well. The fourth and final volume of Antony Harrison’s *Letters of Christina Rossetti* covers the last eight years of her life, from 1887 to 1894. The letters, many published for the first time, reveal a woman of consistency and integrity, private benefactions and deep familial ties, who took steady pleasure in her literary endeavors, and faced death with courage and determination not to burden others. In his introduction, Harrison helpfully summarizes her several interests during a period in which she enlarged her volumes of *Poems* and *Sing-Song*, composed *The Face of the Deep* (a 550-page commentary on the Book of Revelation), and compiled a volume of devotional verse for the SPCK. Her life during most of this period was also constrained by the need to maintain a household and provide care and companionship for two elderly aunts, Charlotte, who died in 1890, and Eliza, who followed her in 1893.

Christina’s letters reflect the gender-inflected roles of “social reproduction,” to borrow a phrase from Marxist feminism. She composed many charming and affectionate missives to friends such as Caroline Gemmer, Amelia Heimann, and Miss Newsham, her goddaughter Ursula Hake, her brother William, his semi-invalid wife Lucy and their four children. The Rossettis were an admirably cohesive family, but she was especially devoted to her kind and conscientious brother William. “So long as I have you I have one very dear person left” (p. 241) she wrote William at one point when he was in ill-health, and when anxieties for his family overwhelmed him: “You may be sure of my sympathy. . . . You know how glad I shall be to see you. . . . it is a treat to talk over things with you. . . . Dearest William, I wish you rest and peace always and everywhere and can quite sympathize with your weariness and depression” (pp. 308, 311). She also sent him friendly letters in Italian, offered to help with money to permit him to rejoin his wife in Italy before her death, and later invited him to stay with her when it appeared he might become temporarily homeless. When her own death loomed, she minimized her fear and the pain of her two cancers so as to cause him as little distress as possible.

Her memories of Gabriel were elegiac but admiring and affectionate, and they sometimes seemed to focus on his seraphic youth. To Herbert Horne, a critic who had not known him personally, she writes, “Poor Gabriel had a great deal of amiability, and that indefinable grace which one calls charm,—the bloom on the peach” (p. 40). To Miss Newsham, reading his poems for the first time, she comments: “Amongst my brother’s poems I hope you will admire *Staff and Scrip*, *Woodspurge*, and the awful Sonnet on *Lost Days*. He was indeed a highly gifted man, and was very attractive withal” (p. 204). In 1892, she published a reminiscence of 16 Cheyne Walk in *Literary Opinion*, in which she maintained that “Gloom and eccentricity such as have been alleged were at any rate not the sole characteristics of [DGR]: when he chose he became

the sunshine of his circle, and he frequently chose so to be. His ready wit and fun amused us; his good nature and kindness of heart endeared him to us" (pp. 276-277).

She also recalled his suggestions for her poetry with gratitude, and responded to an inquirer who wished to know how she had learned to write that "in poetics my elder brother was my acute and most helpful critic" (p. 65). She assured Miss Newsham that "my brother Gabriel did, in old days, so much of the same kind [suggesting revisions] for my poems, that they came out materially the better for his care. I like to imitate him in my turn" (p. 209). With William, she tended to his grave in Birchington.

Christina also answered inquiries about her father, sister, and other relatives in great detail and precision, sent money to her Italian relatives, and took active pride in her Italian heritage, helping to teach her nephew and nieces Italian, writing occasional letters in Italian, and arguing points of Dante scholarship with William. In her memories of childhood, she paid special tribute to her parents' personal and literary example: "It happens that my 'style' resulted not from purposed training so much as from what I may call hereditary literary bias and from constant association with my clever and well read Parents. Neither nursery nor schoolroom secluded their children from them. . . . I do not recollect that I was ever exercised in English composition as a task, tho' to all of us it early became more or less of a delight" (p. 65).

Rossetti's judgments of her sister-poets were sympathetic and respectful. To William, for example, she wrote, presumably with reference to a list of possible candidates for a pension or award, "Did not Mr. Gladstone omit from his list of poetesses the one name which I incline to feel is by far most formidable of those known to me?—Augusta Webster" (p. 180). When another critic ventured to suggest that she was a greater poet than Elizabeth Barrett Browning, she responded that "all said, I doubt whether the woman is born, or for many a long day, if ever, will be born, who will balance not to say outweigh Mrs. Browning" (p. 247). She was more ambivalent about Emily Dickinson, who had "a wonderfully Blakean gift, but therewith a startling recklessness of poetic ways and means" (p. 222).

The letters give few hints about her political views. She rejected Home Rule for Ireland, but seems to have viewed other imperial adventures with a measure of skepticism, expressing a disinclination to read Henry Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*, and gratification when a friend's husband had moved to South Africa "that your dear Husband no longer treads the war path both for his own safety's sake and because war is a horror laden with awful responsibility" (p. 363).

Concrete class divisions offended her ("The contrast between London luxury and London destitution is really appalling,—all sorts of gaieties advertised, and deaths by exposure or starvation recorded, in the same newspaper")

(p. 366), but she was particularly unequivocal in her rejection of cruelty to animals: of ladies with feathered hats, she exclaimed to her nephew that “I have more sympathy with the Cat who ate the swallow than with the lady who likes to wear such an ornament. Poor little harmless happy swallow, sacrificed to a fashion” (p. 121). She helped gather signatures for a petition to the Home Secretary against the licensing of research on live animals, resigned from the Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge when they published a book which supported vivisection, and offered twenty pounds (a very substantial sum on her scale of expenditures) to buy and pulp the remaining copies.

“As to [my own] literary success,” she wrote with a measure of detachment, “I am fully satisfied with what has befallen me but literary success cannot be Mother, Sister, dear friend to me” (p. 260). She took innocent pleasure in its acquaintance, however, remarking in a letter to William that Mr. McClure, the SPCK editor, had told her that “my last book [*Verses*] sold beyond what was anticipated, so that the second ed. was not out quite in time to meet the demand. Very grand” (p. 313). To McClure himself, she wrote that “I am glad to see how ‘*Verses*’ gets on” (p. 347), and to Miss Newsham, who presumably had seen some reviews, “Oh yes! I am only too pleased at the occasional favorable mentions of me” (p. 315). She also sent Miss Newsham detailed and politely worded suggestions for the latter’s poetry, and showed a steady interest in the revision and development of her own work.

Particularly remarkable forbearance appeared in her response to William Bryant, who wrote her constant begging letters. Despite her pleas for him to desist and attempt independence, she usually complied, and often sent as much as a pound, accompanied by good wishes and a bit of exasperated advice. In certain years such gifts must have added up to a major expense.

In general the letters of Christina Rossetti’s last years are much less despondent than many readers might expect. She faced growing pain and terminal illness with courage and resolve, and managed to conduct each small interchange with affectionate concern for others’ wishes and vulnerabilities. When William’s wife died and left the family house to their children, she wrote him that “if any combination with me would help towards an arrangement it seems probable that I should be available—, that is, if life last so long. But if not, I have the comfort of knowing that your income would be increased” (p. 382). In the last letter she was able to write him in her own hand, she assured him that “this lovely summer day revives the world,—I hope it revives you. I am not very bright but quite tolerable all considered” (p. 386). These moving letters are an appropriate tribute to their author, and a fitting conclusion to a well-crafted edition.

The last twelve months have also brought two collections of essays on the Pre-Raphaelites. *Outsiders Looking In: The Rossettis Then and Now* (Anthem Press), edited by David Clifford and Laurence Rousillon, reexamines “the

Rossettis' position as outsiders engaged with the bustling, cosmopolitan intellectual life of their adopted homeland" (p. 4). The volume arranges its overview of the Rossettis' situation at the intersection of two cultures under five rubrics, "Italy and Italianness," "Aesthetics in a Commercial World," "Faith in an Age of Science," "Radical Poetics," and "Literary Tradition and the Rossetti Legacy."

In "Sibling Cultures," Jan Marsh considers the complexities and identifications of four lifelong Londoners who were three-quarters Italian by ancestry but English by birth, and examines the choices made by Maria, who taught Italian but never visited Italy, Christina and Gabriel, fluent Italian-speakers who visited Italy once, and William, who went to Rome as often as his work-life, duties to his extended family and writing and critical projects permitted. Noting motives of exile, displacement, and dual identities in D. G. Rossetti's "Dante at Verona," and the many allusions to Italy in Christina Rossetti's *Time Flies* and "Italia, Io Ti Saluto!," Marsh concludes that their two countries "st[ood] in parental relation to the Rossetti siblings and simultaneously in sibling relationship to them" (p. 26).

In "William Michael and Lucy Rossetti: Outsider Insiders—The True Cosmopolitans," Angela Thirlwell argues that William and Lucy best embodied the pan-European values of the Rossettis' blended northern and southern heritage. She reviews the breadth and sophistication expressed in William's *Democratic Sonnets*, opposition to slavery, Dante and Leopardi scholarship, deep admiration for Whitman, and interests in French and Japanese culture. His *Democratic Sonnets* were bland enough when they finally appeared in 1907, but might have been less so when his family—dependent on the income from his governmental post—pressured him to withhold them in 1881. Lucy Madox Brown Rossetti shared her husband's political views and her father's artistic talent, but lived in Italy for many of the last years of her life in an effort to palliate her consumption, a self-imposed exile which prompted her to write a biography of Mary Shelley for a series on the Lives of Eminent Women.

Interesting glimpses into William's later life appear in Peter Mandler's "The Taxman and the Aesthete: The Canon According to W. M. Rossetti," which examines his service as an art assessor for the British government in the years following his retirement as Assistant Secretary for Inland Revenue. Opportunities for travel and a legal tax-exemption for artworks which possessed ostensible "national, scientific, or historic interest" made such work congenial for an author of entries on Italian art for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and moderate opponent of class-privilege in a period when only the rich paid tax. Mandler conjectures that more stringent application of Rossetti's assessment criteria might have led to an (unfortunately counterfactual) "continental-style system of shared ownership" which would constrain private owners to cede partial control of artworks to the public interest.

In "Copyright and Control: Christina Rossetti and her Publishers," Lorraine Janzen Kooista reconsiders the vexed relations between Christina and publishers with whom she negotiated the format and production of *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, *Sing-Song*, *Commonplace*, and *Speaking Likenesses*. Several of these works brought little or no immediate profit, and Alexander Macmillan, who had sold out *The Prince's Progress* at a deficit, demanded that she resign copyright of *Sing-Song* to him before he would publish it. This led her to seek better terms from F. S. Ellis and Roberts Brothers of Boston in a vain effort to retain artistic control over her books. Her situation improved in the period after she reluctantly relinquished copyright for *Speaking Likenesses*, however, and she was able to refuse another offer from Macmillan for *A Pageant and Other Poems*, responding that "copyright is my hobby; with it I cannot part" (p. 72). Macmillan bent this time, and subsequent years brought her considerable satisfaction in the disposition of her books as well as welcome increases in her royalties.

In "D. G. Rossetti and the Art of the Inner Standing-Point," Jerome McGann assimilates shifts in Rossetti's art and imaginative writings to a "Venetian" turn in *Monna Vanna*, *Bocca Baciata*, and other later paintings in the late 1860s and thereafter. Rossetti defended the 1870 poem "Jenny"'s "inner standing-point," and McGann discerns a similar *Standpunkt* in his art and poetry from the Art-Catholic period onward. The titles of "Bocca Baciata" and "Monna Vanna" alluded to portrayals of prostitutes in the works of Boccaccio and Calvacanti, and McGann finds in Rossetti's later works a "culpable and duplicitious aestheticism that [his] own work is forced to illustrate . . . complicity, in fact . . . between the discourse of high art and commodity fetishism." Rossetti had always attempted to paint the "real presence" of commodified forms, but his late paintings (and presumably their poetic counterparts) presented a "dead surface whose arresting power lies exactly there. *Consumeratum* [sic] est." (pp. 184-186).

In "Maundering Medievalism: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris's Poetry," Clive Wilmer explicates some common sources and eventual divergences in Morris' poetry and Rossetti's art. Wilmer observes that "we may think of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ruskin as Morris's twin masters, but for many years the former as the intimate companion exerted the greater influence and urged Morris towards Aestheticism" (p. 191). He also finds parallels between the visual manner and emotional intensity of Rossetti's early art works and the style and charged eroticism of Morris' *Defence of Guenevere*, in which "awkwardness of speech and metre in Morris' poems together with their forceful characterization may remind us of Rossetti's 'angular, unidealized figures'" (p. 194). Both artists strove to transpose medieval prototypes into something richer, stranger, and more challenging to nineteenth-century conventions, but Morris—frustrated with "what he rightly or wrongly saw as

Rossetti's province[.] the realm of dreamers with no hope or desire to make their dreams reality" (p. 200)—infused these prototypes with a sense of realism and practicality, found an impeccably medieval corrective to “the maundering side of medievalism” in Icelandic literature, and turned to more radical counterparts of the questions of social justice Ruskin had raised in *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *Stones of Venice*.

In “Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Poetic Daughters: *Fin de Siècle* Women Poets and the Sonnet,” I examine the pervasive influence of Rossetti's style, especially that of “The House of Life,” on many women poets of the generation which succeeded him, among them Mathilde Blind, Augusta Webster, Catherine Dawson, Amy Levy, Olive Custance, Michael Field, and Rosa Newmarch. As one of its period's most influential sonnet-sequences, “The House of Life” provided a template for subsequent efforts to hint at elusively interdicted emotions, and it inspired women of the next poetic generation to seek comparably eloquent poetic expression for more heterodox and less poetically conventional forms of “love”—for a daughter; for a deeply beloved dog; for another (married) woman; for humanity; for a moldering mummy; or (in the direct Rossettian tradition) for one's own lost, elusive or indefinable identity. In their explorations of this wider range, several of these women poets deployed sonnet-conventions in distinctively revisionist, feminist, ingeniously parodic and strikingly deconstructive ways. In an appendix I offer a sample of such sonnets by Constance Naden, Edith Nesbit, Bessie Craigmyle, Annie Matheson, Katherine Tynan, and Margaret Woods.

Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism, edited by Thomas J. Tobin (SUNY Press), focuses on Pre-Raphaelite influences and associations outside of Great Britain. In his introduction, Tobin traces some of the movement's artistic, political, historical, and cosmopolitan antecedents, and follows its subsequent freshets, currents, and eddies into France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Russia, and anglophone Canada as well as the United States. Tobin compares definitions of “Pre-Raphaelitism” which held sway at various points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and suggests that W. E. Fredeman's influential *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (1965) both reinvigorated and narrowed the field of Pre-Raphaelite studies to focus on the movement's more parochially “English” qualities.

In “Rossetti's ‘A Last Confession’ and Italian Nationalism,” Christopher Keirstead suggests that “it must have seemed positively odd [for Rossetti] not to take up the ‘Italian Question’ in [his] work” (p. 75), and interprets Rossetti's poem about an Italian revolutionary's murder of an adopted daughter who has become a sexually independent adult as an allegory of Rossetti's personal reactions to the degeneration of Italian nationalism into the *Realpolitik* of a conventional “nation-state” of the sort Mazzini and Gabriele Rossetti had scorned. This reading comports with Rossetti's ambiguous description of the

poem as the story of a “savage penalty exacted for a lost ideal” (p. 77), and suggests a reason why its pathological protagonist seemed to enjoy a measure of the author’s sympathy.

In “‘Count us but clay for them to fashion’: Pre-Raphaelite Refashionings in Canada,” David Latham examines three Canadian authors—J. E. H. MacDonald, Francis Sherman, and Phillips Thompson—whose respect for more reformist aspects of Pre-Raphaelite ideals led them to infuse socialist and anti-colonial principles into Victorian verse and prose-forms. J. E. H. MacDonald, one of the founders of the Group of Seven movement painters, published his volume of anti-Boer-War poetry, *A Word to Us All* (1900), with Kelmscott-Press-like typeface, borders and design. In *The Politics of Labour* (1887), Phillips Thompson argued for a revolutionary rejection of ideologies dear to the North American ruling classes, among them the “American dream.” In *Matins* (1896), finally, Francis Sherman transposed motifs from Morris’s *Defence of Guenevere* into a Canadian setting, satirized those blind to the beauties of that setting, and mocked the barrenness of art-forms arbitrarily imposed on the ‘new’ Canadian environment: “Sherman . . . may have understood better than Kipling the delusions and the duties that challenge ‘new singers’ in their attempt to mould the country in their hands” (p. 264).

In “William Morris’s Later Writings and the Socialist Modernism of Lewis Grassic Gibbon,” I observe a number of parallels in linguistic and political aims between Morris’ prose romances and the Scottish modernist classic, Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s *A Scots Quair*, whose author, Leslie Mitchell, admired the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelites as well as Morris’ egalitarian socialism. Both writers, for example, cherished a regulative ideal of hope and solidarity, created characters whose lives were rooted in kinship and seasonal cycles, and employed slightly archaic poetic cadences to suggest a timeless “fellowship” of historical continuity. The sermon at the memorial to the war dead which concludes *Sunset Song* resonates with the cadences and ideals of the priest’s sermon at the crossroads in *A Dream of John Ball*, and Chris Guthrie in *A Scots Quair* and Ellen of *News from Nowhere* both anticipate the desires and inner consciousness of a future society. Commonplace assertions that Morris’ work had little effect on the experimental language and ideals of his modernist successors seem therefore to have had at least one prominent exception.

The *Journal of William Morris Studies* (formerly the *Journal of the William Morris Society*) published a special issue this year on “Morris and the Book Arts,” with an introduction by Rosie Miles and articles and color plates which celebrate Pre-Raphaelite ideals of design and composition.

In “Lyric Colour: Pre-Raphaelite Art and Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere*,” Elizabeth Helsinger argues that Pre-Raphaelite uses of “colour often [spoke] less of serene faith than of social and sexual tension and disturbed emotions in the scenes [they] depict” (p. 24), and cites instances—“The Gillflower of Gold,”

for example—in which color suggested intensities of lyric expression and shifts in time or consciousness which mid- and late-nineteenth-century viewers may have associated with reverie as well as trauma. Adducing analogies between discordant Pre-Raphaelite uses of heraldic emblems and the discontinuous mental states which appear in such Morris poems as “The Wind” and “The Blue Closet,” she also argues that such poems’ “vivid, felt reality of colour” evoked “disturbed perceptions of place and space that constitute[d] the experience of modernity for late-nineteenth-century readers and viewers” (p. 35).

In “The Influence of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts on the Pre-Raphaelites and the Early Poetry of William Morris,” Michaela Braesel distinguishes early illuminated manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth century from later miniatures and illuminations of the late-fifteenth century, such as the *Roman de la Rose* (MS Harley 4425), which may have influenced scenes in Morris’ “Golden Wings.” Acknowledging that Morris as well as Ruskin preferred the simpler, more decorative early designs, Braesel argues that he found nonetheless that the later Flemish manuscripts’ “detailed rendering of scenes . . . offered richer ideas of a medieval world,” which Morris sought to translate “from a visual to a verbal medium” (pp. 49-50).

In “A Book Arts Pilgrimage: Arts and Crafts Socialism and the Kelmscott Chaucer,” Jessica De Spain observes that Morris’ design of an edition which became “a treatise and embodiment of arts and crafts socialism for the approaching twentieth century” (p. 77) reflected Chaucer’s role as author and craftsman in his own text, and re-enacted Chaucer’s ability “to encapsulate the reader and encourage his or her commentary” (p. 79). Noting that the careful iconography of the edition’s Chaucer-portraits framed the latter’s offer of the book to future readers, De Spain argues that Morris sought to “reinsert the heteroglot voices of the artisans into the covers of the Book” (p. 85), and that his edition “begs us to question our commodity-based system and the nature of the Book itself” (p. 87).

In “Illustrating Morris: The Work of Jessie King and Maxwell Armfield,” Rosie Miles suggests that illustrated editions of Morris’ work offer a partial history of the ways in which “Morris’ poetry has been interpreted, and indeed marketed, throughout the twentieth century” (p. 111), and offers two representative examples. Bodley Head’s 1904 edition of *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* with illustrations by Jessie King employed line drawings influenced by Beardsley to represent the charged eroticism of the *Defence* poems. Headley Brothers’ 1915 *Life and Death of Jason*, by contrast, employed Maxwell Armfield’s androgynous evocations of the tale’s classical milieu to convey a sense of movement cut off at the edge of frames, “like film stills, suggesting an image that comes both directly before and after the one we see” (p. 126).

The life and character of Emma Morris, the older sister who was young

William's closest companion, has remained something of an enigma. In "My Dearest Emma: William and Emma Morris" (*JWMS* 16, no. 1), Dorothy Coles examines Morris' early relationship with Emma, the parish work of her husband Joseph Oldham and Morris' contacts with her in later life. She interprets, for example, an early letter to Emma in which William asked if it was wrong to accept the gift of a rabbit as a reflection of a small boy's desire to do right by one of the workmen on his parents' property. Emma later devoted much of her adult life to efforts to help the coal miners and other workers in her husband's parish, and Morris—who visited her when he stumped in the north for the Socialist League—left her a fairly substantial annuity of a hundred pounds—a tribute perhaps not only to her kindness, but to egalitarian values they shared.

In "William Morris's Translation of Homer's *Iliad* I.1-142" (*JPRS* 13), an edition of Morris' incomplete translation of the opening pages of the *Iliad*, William Whitla examines the three extant manuscripts of this translation or parts thereof, and concludes that someone—probably Thomas Wise, to whom Morris apparently gave a complete autograph in 1894—excised a page from the original, then sold the resulting "fragments," which eventually came to rest in the Huntington Library and the Humanities Research Center in Texas. In all likelihood, this will not be the last time a careful editor has reason to suspect editorial mutilation at the hand of the once-respected Wise.

In his introduction, Whitla also places Morris' choice of Anglo-Saxon diction and rimed hexameters in a framework of contemporary debates about the sources and meaning of epic poetry, and argues that Morris's tentative return to classical translation in 1887 complemented rather than conflicted with his active political life as a writer, editor, and traveling agitator for the Socialist League. Morris believed, for example, that translations into modern European languages should reject elegant paraphrase in favor of direct speech, inflected by traces of the accident of their ancient originals, and that classical epics belonged not to a lone genius or even a lineage of transcribers, but to "the people of that time, who were the real authors of the Homeric poems." Whitla's introduction and textual analyses pay just tribute to both these egalitarian views.