



## THE SHIGA HERO

William F.  
Sibley

Line drawing courtesy of  
Iwanami Shoten, Publishers.

"In any academic or intellectual discipline, there appear from time to time certain books which present a standard of accomplishment so much higher than had ever appeared before and which open up areas of inquiry so wholly unanticipated by previous works in the field that they mark a turning point in the evolution of the entire discipline. I believe *The Shiga Hero* to be such a book."—Jay Rubin, University of Washington

Sibley unifies Shiga's sparse, fragmented narratives by reconstructing the cyclical biography of a single central character who appears in almost all his works.

*Cloth 256 pages \$16.00 November*

**The University of Chicago Press**

Chicago 60637

# MODERN PHILOLOGY

a journal devoted to research  
in medieval and modern literature

*Volume 77 Number 2*

November 1979

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

## Old Controversies, New Texts: Two Recent Books on Pre-Raphaelitism<sup>1</sup>

Florence S. Boos

Until recently the complexity and uncertain extension of Pre-Raphaelitism rendered it almost inaccessible to critical analysis. Such confusion multiplied biographical anecdotes, and Pre-Raphaelite biography was long dominated by naive moralism and derivative psychology. The Pre-Raphaelites have come now to seem less inaccessible, rebellious, and alien from their fellow Victorians, but this has been the result of many efforts at location, organization, and interpretation of letters and documents which relate to Pre-Raphaelitism and to the Rossetti family. The most significant publications have been: (1) William Fredeman's *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (1965, extended by later bibliographical surveys);<sup>2</sup> (2) his biographical reconstruction of the most difficult and least recorded years of Dante G. Rossetti's life, *Prelude to the Last Decade: Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the Summer of 1872* (1971); and (3) Virginia Surtees's *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A Catalogue Raisonné* (2 vols., 1971). More accurate biography, criticism, and editing of texts are still needed to understand almost every aspect of Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelite life and literary achievement. The two editions under review have made recent contributions, one modest and one substantial.

Publication of *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris: Their Correspondence* before the appearance of a complete edition of Rossetti's letters is an obvious response to sentimental interest in their liaison in the years 1867 and 1868 and following.<sup>3</sup> The volume derives unity from its record of what Rossetti considered the central relationship of his life, and is illustrated by the portraits of Jane Morris discussed in the letters. The extant portion of their correspondence is fragmentary: his letters extend with gaps from 1868 to 1881, the year before his death;<sup>4</sup> but hers are sparser, briefer, and begin in 1878. The correspondence both

1/*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris: Their Correspondence*, ed. with an intro. by John Bryson, in association with Janet Camp Troxell (Oxford, 1976); *The P.R.B. Journal: William Michael Rossetti's Diary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1849-1853, Together with Other Pre-Raphaelite Documents*, ed. from the original manuscripts with an intro. and notes by William E. Fredeman (Oxford, 1975).

2/"William Morris and His Circle: A Selective Bibliography of Publications, 1960-62," *William Morris Society Journal* 1, no. 4 (1964): 23-33; "William Morris and His Circle: A Selective Bibliography of Publications, 1962-63," *William Morris Society Journal* 1, no. 4 (1964): 23-33; "William Morris and His Circle: A Selective Bibliography of Publications, 1963-65," *William Morris Society Journal* 2, no. 1 (1966): 13-36; "The Pre-Raphaelites," *The Victorian Poets: A Guide to Research*, ed. Frederic Faverty, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 251-316.

3/In January 1870, Rossetti wrote Jane Morris, "For the last two years I have felt distinctly the clearing away of the chilling numbness that surrounds me in the utter want of you . . . ;" this would place the renewal of their relationship around 1868.

4/The British Library's collection of Rossetti's letters to Jane Morris was opened to the public in January 1964, and is described by R. C. H. Briggs in "Letters to Janey," *William Morris Society Journal* 1, no. 4 (1964): 2-22.

indicates the nature of their relationship and reflects the many poems and paintings associated with her that he created in this period. Jane Morris's only published letters contain no striking introspection, but do offer evidence against charges of aloofness or vapidness sometimes made by biographers such as David Sonstroem, who refers to her as the "unstable and self-centered Janey."<sup>5</sup> She seems to have been a mildly complaining but kindly and intelligent invalid.

In his introduction, John Bryson calls Rossetti's attitude toward William Morris in the letters "good-humoured mockery," which "changes gradually to something less friendly" (p. xv). This is euphemism; of several dozen references to Morris, none is "friendly," and most mix false joviality with real accusations. Morris is repulsively obese, boorish, splenetic, insensitive, unable or unwilling to provide companionship for his wife, negligent of her health, stingily reluctant to finance her travel, ungenerous with money, inaccessible, comically prolix in composition, and guilty of plagiarizing Rossetti's own conception for the *Earthly Paradise* tale "The Death of Paris" (p. 30).<sup>6</sup> Morris's political activities are crudely derided: "Watts was enraptured by the enormous democratic obesity of Top. O for that final Cabinet Ministry which is to succeed the Cabinet d'aisance of his early years!" (p. 180). These jokes refuse to notice the clear antiparliamentary nature of Morris's agitation; after an initial interest in the Liberal party, Morris eschewed all association with parliamentary politics and later broke with Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in part over this very issue. Morris's Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, which one might have thought would merit Rossetti's approval, is similarly dismissed as the "Ancient Monument Society" (p. 158). Morris readily sacrificed in fact both the good opinion of most of his social class and the honors conferred on more conservative artists and poets.

Rossetti alludes to Morris's study of Icelandic sagas with similar condescension. When a drawer cannot be opened, "[T]he hammer of Thor, the head of Topsy, or some other Icelandic weapon must have been employed to jam the drawings into that grooved case" (p. 76). It amuses him that one might take medieval Icelandic culture seriously, a surprising response for someone whose first published work had been a volume of translations of previously unknown medieval works.

Essential to Rossetti's view is a fixed idea that Jane is utterly isolated and deserted by all. At several points he implies that Morris will not finance another cure for his wife, and gives £1,000 to Jane, a gesture which must have seemed gratuitous to a man who subsidized his wife's lifelong travels with apparent equanimity. Rossetti never seems to have acknowledged either Morris's essential generosity or the extent to which Morris's tireless efforts held the Firm together and established his family's solvency in a period of severe strain.

Most frequently criticized is Morris's choice of residence. Rossetti himself had searched for and failed to find a suitable alternative, but insists that Morris's decision to live in Kelmscott House (whose dampness he had greatly exaggerated)

5/David Sonstroem, *Rossetti and the Fair Lady* (Middletown, Conn., 1970), p. 149.

6/During his life Rossetti was angered by several instances of what he believed were appropriations of his own ideas. The charge here is unfair, since Tennyson's "Oenone" had returned this legend to the public domain, and many contemporary poets reworked Tennysonian themes.

is "mistaken" and selfish (pp. 77-78). Though Morris may have been less attentive to Jane in the late 1860s,<sup>7</sup> the titles of Rossetti's paintings of her are melodramatic: "Proserpine," forced by her husband to remain in the underworld for half the year; "Desdemona," killed by a passionately jealous husband; (Dante's) "La Pia" (de Tolomei), imprisoned unto death by her husband in miasmatic swamps; "Mariana," mournfully abandoned by a faithless lover; "Beatrice," married to someone else. Morris never commented on these allusions, but Rossetti's public derogation of his private life could not have been pleasant.

Rossetti's jibes at Morris's rotundity and emotions also deflect attention from the possibility that these expressions of emotional stress were aggravated by his wife's indifference to him and preference for Rossetti. Rossetti's sketch of Morris, "Resolution, or the Infant Hercules," is a mean as well as amusing caricature of a sexual rival.<sup>8</sup> As his most preferred and famous model, Jane Morris furthered greatly Rossetti's work and livelihood (when a 700-guinea contract for "The Day-Dream" arrived, he gratefully told her "luck generally comes through the drawings of your dear face. . . ." [p. 122]). By contrast, this was one of the most difficult periods of Morris's career;<sup>9</sup> Morris's decorative work could not rival the flattery of Rossetti's paintings, and his earlier reported boyish exclamation to Jane Burden that "I cannot paint you but I love you"<sup>10</sup> reverberates with sad irony. During the period of the letters Rossetti often praised Morris's poetry to others, but never to Jane.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever Morris's outward demeanor, there is clear evidence that he suffered acutely from his wife's rejection. Many grieving lyrics of the late 1860s and 1870s were published years later in *Poems by the Way*, appeared after his death, or remain unpublished;<sup>12</sup> they are more directly autobiographical than most of his other poems, and express deep anguish at his failure to stir his beloved's

7/John Le Bourgeois, "Morris, Rossetti, and Warrington Taylor," *Notes and Queries* 220 (1975): 113-15.

8/*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris*, p. 22 (British Library); also cited in Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford, 1971), 2:211.

9/John Le Bourgeois, "The Financial Crisis of William Morris," *Durham University Journal* 66 (March 1964): 203-5.

10/Philip Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends* (New York, 1967), p. 49; Henderson does not cite his source.

11/For example, Rossetti described Morris in a letter to John Skelton on February 7, 1869 as "all things considered—the greatest literary identity of our time"; to Miss Losh on July 16, 1869, "Topsy goes on working at a prodigious rate at the second volume of his *Earthly Paradise*. . . . One day lately, working from 10 one morning to 4 the morning after . . . he produced 750 lines!—and this of the finest poem he has yet done"; and to Algernon Charles Swinburne on December 12, 1869, "I must say that, hearty as is the praise with which the critics are greeting the book from their own point of view . . . , I do not think justice is yet being done by them to this most remarkable poem ["The Lovers of Gudrun"], 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. The subject is a glorious one" (*Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl [Oxford, 1965], 2:688, 708, 773). Rossetti became more critical as time passed, but the contrast between his public admiration of Morris and the views he expressed to Morris's wife remained marked.

12/*Poems unpublished at Morris's death* are found in William Morris, *Collected Works*, ed. May Morris (London, 1915), vol. 24; May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (London, 1936), vol. 1; and in B.L. Add. MSS. 42,298A and B, 45,347, and 45,319b and c; William Morris Gallery MS. J15; and V.A. MS. R.C. AA17.

heart. In an uncharacteristically confessional letter to Aglaia Coronio in 1872, Morris argues that life may yet be valuable despite "this failure of mine" and complains of Rossetti's presence at Kelmescott, "because it is really a farce our meeting when we can help it. . . ."<sup>13</sup> Rossetti's assertions of Morris's indifference had to disregard clear signs of his former friend's distress.

Rossetti's one mildly praiseful reference to Morris in the letters is an assertion that Morris will not object to Rossetti's concern for Jane. He writes her at Ems: "All that concerns you is the all absorbing question with me, as dear Top will not mind my telling you at this anxious time. . . . 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" (p. 11).

Many of Rossetti's judgments of Morris are typical of his mingled distaste and fear of the outer world, variously expressed as personal, artistic, or political antipathy. Other old friends are not spared: He wishes that the news of a sale be concealed from Burne-Jones, now a rival as well as friend. His view of patrons oscillates between good humor and disgust, and descriptions of his financial prospects are overwrought in the light of his income and past success. From time to time, self-pity sharpens to the conviction that he has been betrayed. In 1879 he writes, "Those who made apes of themselves and kissed my hands with insane obeisance in early days now ignore me or make me a figure of fun . . ." (p. 97); such melancholia may have seemed excessive to Jane, for he apologizes in the next letter, not for the substance of the remark, but for having committed it to "ridiculous black-on-white" (p. 99). Throughout the latter part of the correspondence he apologizes defensively for having nothing to write, being intolerable company, and causing her distress by his refusal to exhibit. He fears the loss of artistic skill: "As luck deserts one, one feels power may desert one too and that one may not be doing one's best as of old" (p. 155).

As Bryson observes, Rossetti's letters show little interest in contemporary European painting. In literature he likewise retains the preferences of his youth (Coleridge, Keats); he seems uninterested in contemporary poetry, and actively dislikes the young Wilde, whose early poems ironically show Rossetian influence. When he defends Poe as an unjustly maligned artist—"His only real fault seems to have been gloom . . . rousing him to intolerance of folly and pretension . . ." (p. 159)—there may also be a suggestion of the way in which he viewed his own depression.

There are breaks in the "gloom." Rossetti read Donne's poems for the first time with great zest, and describes them as "quaint beyond everything—full of various merits and extremely funny" (p. 142). He makes earnest efforts to sell works by the mentally ill painter James Smetham to relieve debts of the latter's family. His wryly ornate comments on the comic sketches sent to Ems demonstrate robust and skillful good humor,<sup>14</sup> and stories of Howell's dramatic confrontations

13/*The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, ed. Philip Henderson (London, 1950), pp. 50-51.

14/For example, see *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris*, p. 16, for his comments on "The German Lesson."

with others exercise comic narrative gifts largely barred from his more formal style.

Most emphatic is a dislike of everything remotely "political"—social change, new laws, even the mildest criticisms of the contemporary social order. Hall Caine's company is acceptable because he "never talks Politics" (p. 185). When friends attend a meeting to support the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Act, Rossetti finds that "however reasonable the thing may be (and I think it quite so) calamities may follow it" (p. 147). (The "calamity" he cites is the disinheritation of Hunt's son by his maternal grandfather.) In general, he perceives the outer world as monotonous, faithless, and menacing. There are few subjects he cares to examine, events for which he hopes, or people he desires to meet. At times the letters almost seem to rework in prosaic form the dialectic of decay and perfect beauty which informs "The House of Life."

By contrast, Jane Morris is the "noblest and dearest thing that the world has had to show me" (p. 34). A central feature of his professions of love is an obsessive concern for her health. Almost every letter expresses distress that he has not heard more particulars of her recent lapses and recoveries. Since there is no real improvement, he eventually reaches an equilibrium of solicitous distress. He begs her once not to address her own envelopes (then complains when Jenny mis-addresses one), and often sends medicines (on one occasion morphia, fortunately not taken). Upon hearing that Jenny has recovered from an illness, he replies that "all is nothing if you do not mend" (p. 52)—a bitter irony, for the illness was the first sign of Jenny's forty-year progressive mental deterioration. He assures Jane that his chief desire in life is to be with her, read to her, and wait on her—"and when this cannot be, I can hardly now exert myself to move hand or foot for anything" (p. 35). There is a certain dreary sincerity to this—Jane Morris's health may really have been Rossetti's chief concern in life. Since his devout interest seemed evenly divided between her and her affliction, perhaps he was attracted to her by her suffering. He himself was in bad health during much of this period and may have transferred a preoccupation with his own frailties to someone for whom he could show anxiety and pity. Emphatically, he asserted the abiding nature of his attachment: "Would that circumstances had given me the power to prove this: for proved it would have been" (p. 68). Perhaps, but it should also be kept in mind that at each stage of life Rossetti's image of an ideal beloved was of someone elusive and unattainable.

The eroticism of his paintings of her gradually contrasts with a waning sexual intensity in his letters; their friendship becomes a companionable harmony of shared complaints—his blunt, hers muted. He assumes affectionate agreement, and often expresses anxiety that she might disapprove of the unhappy tone of a sonnet or letter; her quiet resistance to spasms of self-pity may have had a stabilizing effect or at least forced him to restrain emotions with which he could not deal. She may have demurred at some of his effusions; after a passage in which he writes of "the fulness of wonder and worship which nothing else could have made known to me" (p. 34), he apologizes for "vague and dismal follies" (p. 34). There were also aspects of his life which he thought necessary to conceal from the object of his "worship" and best model for "ideal subjects" (p. 40)—the

disinterment of his wife's grave, his drug addiction, and his lengthy liaison with Fanny Cornforth.

The letters show several clear parallels with Rossetti's poetry. When at one point he suggests that he paint Jane Morris as "Fortune," the image is that of his ballad "The Card-Dealer," written twenty-one years earlier (p. 25). His "True Woman" sequence, which William Rossetti dated in 1881, reworks the silence-snowdrop-and-spring-budding imagery of "The Day-Dream," painted in 1881, and, as William notes, the snowdrop was Jane Morris's favorite flower. In 1878 both correspondents read Herman Grimm's *Life of Michael Angelo*, which contains a fervent if thinly documented chapter on the ideal relationship between Vittoria Colonna and the painter in old age. Rossetti remarks that Jane resembles Vittoria (the reproduction in Grimm does not confirm this) and contemplates painting her in this role. Three years later the octet of one of the most intense and abstract "House of Life" sonnets, number 94, "Michaelangelo's Kiss," is based on a sentence in Grimm.<sup>15</sup> The dark rippling hair and gray eyes of the beloved are invoked often in both the letters and the "Willowwood" sequence, and Rossetti's declaration in a letter that Jane must "never sign anything but [her] own dear name" may echo sonnet 101:

Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er  
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—  
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

Less definable but more significant are thematic parallels, especially his insistence that a dark world is lightened only by the beloved's presence, and a hovering fear that he will lose even this. Rossetti's rhetorical absorption into the beloved's identity passes beyond metaphor to psychological appropriation of another's sufferings and perceptions; "How I wish I could look with you at everything you are seeing," he writes (p. 40) as she arrives in Italy. This attitude seems reflected in the opening quatrain of sonnet 36, "Life-in-Love":

Not in thy body is thy life at all,  
But in this Lady's lips and hands and eyes;  
Through these she yields thee life that vivifies  
What else were sorrow's servant and death's thrall.

After all the resemblances between poetry and letters have been noticed, one is grateful for what the poetry omits—fugitive anxieties, banal complaints, jealousies, irritations, and repetitions of detail.

The only collection of Jane Morris's letters in print also raises questions about her character and attitudes toward all involved, including herself. A consistent feature is her sincere appreciation for each object of art or portrait which Rossetti sends. She writes with rare excitement in 1879, upon receipt of two studies for the predellas of "Dante's Dream": "I unpacked them myself and carried them carefully to my own room, where I have finally decided to arrange them over my bed, so that I may always have the pleasure of feeling them near me in bed, and

<sup>15</sup>He once said to Condivi, years afterwards, that he repented nothing so much as having only kissed her hand, but not her forehead and cheek also, when he went to her at her last hour" (Herman Grimm, *Life of Michael Angelo* [Boston, 1899], 2:321).

seeing them when dressing and undressing, I think them more lovely than ever . . . it is a great pleasure once more in this life" (p. 108). Her interest was apparently unanalytic but steady. She appreciates her role as attractive model, worries about seeing Rossetti when sickness may have changed her appearance, and takes pains to embroider clothes requested for paintings. She reads and enjoys books sent her, and sends murmurous complaints with the confidence of one who assumes interest in each detail. Throughout she seems inoffensive and calm in cross-currents of emotion. Rossetti sent the second sonnet of "True Woman" to her during the period of "The Day-Dream," and its Victorian womanly stereotypes may also suggest his view of her.

She loves him; for her infinite soul is Love,  
And he her lodestar. Passion in her is  
A glass facing his fire, where the bright bliss  
Is mirrored, and the heat returned. . . .

Many have assumed that Jane's afflictions were largely psychosomatic, but there is no evidence to confirm or refute this. Trapped in a nineteenth-century subculture of wealthy peripatetic invalidism, Jane Morris shared with her doctors and Rossetti a naive view of the therapeutic value of weather and surroundings. Her view of Kelmscott is that "the sea-air is the only thing that braces up the nerves. I wish that I had such a place, and that Kelmscott was off my hands—but they are all obstinate and love it more than ever" (p. 175). However the doctors diagnosed her complex of psychophysical difficulties, inability to prescribe effective remedies did not prevent them from urging trips to still more climates and spas. The many prescribed trips disrupted Morris family life and consumed her energies; even she speaks by 1880 of "those gigantic efforts I have made so often to so little purpose" (p. 134). Yet she comes as close to rhapsody as is consistent with her character in descriptions of some of the places she visits, and it seems likely that genuine ill health provided her with a respectable rationale for travel and escape.

Ultimately, her debility darkened her view of herself and the world: "I should be but too happy to feel myself of use again to any human being . . ." (p. 100), and a morose view of existence is expressed in an allusion to her daughter May: "I think [she] will not drag through a long life. So much the better for her!" (p. 128). (May Morris lived to seventy-six, and her mother to seventy-four.) One wonders whether other hostilities underlay this remark; this is the only specific allusion to May in all the letters to Rossetti, and May Morris's twenty-four introductions to Morris's *Collected Works* seldom mention her mother. In general Jane Morris's references to her husband and children in the letters to Rossetti are perfunctory: Though free of Rossetti's malice and desire to deride,<sup>16</sup> she seldom mentions Morris and never praises him.

The only political opinion in her letters is that artists should organize to demand better terms from dealers, a response to Rossetti's financial complaints. Topics of interest to her husband—the condition of the decorative arts, political

<sup>16</sup>She and Rossetti seem to believe that Morris is impervious to Rossetti's art; she cites as evidence for the unusual quality of his drawings for the "Dante's Dream" predellas that "even Top got enraptured with them" (p. 108).

issues, or the activities of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings—are never mentioned.

In later life, Jane Morris wrote a series of letters to Sydney Cockerell, her husband's former assistant and future director of the Fitzwilliam Museum. The fullest collection of her unpublished letters,<sup>17</sup> they begin just before William Morris's death in 1896, continue until shortly before her own in 1914, and reveal shifts in attitude from the sentiments expressed years earlier to Rossetti. Cockerell was very close to the Morris family, and she freely discusses personal affairs in a tone of great affection. Ill health and constant travel are dominant still, but she seems more energetic, cheerful, and actively solicitous of her friends. She also seems to grieve sincerely for Morris. After a trip to Cairo with May soon after Morris's death, she writes, "I feel so grateful to [Cairo] for having sheltered me so long through those months of bitter sorrow," and three times during 1897 she mentions to Cockerell that she wishes to spend March 15, Morris's birthday,<sup>18</sup> at Kelmscott. On March 1 she observes: "This is always the worst bit of the year for me to get through," and on October 3, the anniversary of his death: "I perceive that I am really rich, but feel inexpressibly poor today." In 1913 Cockerell asks whether she would like to buy Kelmscott, and a major shift of attitude is revealed by her reply that "Today it is simply a heaven, and no price seems too great to pay for it" (May 29). So it had once seemed to Morris.

Rapprochement with Morris is further suggested by her ardent enthusiasm for everything associated with the Kelmscott Press. She fervently thanks Cockerell for his services to the Press, enjoys an exhibition of Morris and Company designs held in 1899, expresses pleasure that the manuscript of *Sigurd the Volsung* has been bought by the British Museum (December 23, 1906), and exhibits her only flash of ill-will in these letters when Cuthbert Ellis offers to sell her manuscripts which William Morris had given to his father (June 15, 1901). In general, Morris's literary, decorative, and printing work seems to arouse affectionate memories, his socialist activities few or none,<sup>19</sup> though there are some traces of a slight shift in directions her husband would have favored. In 1897 she mentions that she and her landlord have considered starting a reading room, and her one political comment expresses concern for the miners for whom Morris had worked, tainted by then-fashionable anti-Semitism, the "socialism of the dunce": "It is a ghastly state of things, I think the miners ought to be paid at least twice as much as they seem to get, and all the owners and Jews and financiers and idle rich people generally ought to work in the mines at least one day a week. . . ." (March 4). She and May did enroll as members of the Fabian Society, though it is doubtful whether she attended any meetings. Landscapes and travel still arouse the most

<sup>17</sup>Other surviving letters of Jane Morris can be found in B.L. MSS. 45,341, 45,346, and 45,353; V.A. MS., R.C. JJ 4; and Bodleian Library MS. J.J. 7. Jack Lindsay, *William Morris: His Life and Work* (London, 1975), mentions letters to Emma Oldham but does not cite the source. <sup>18</sup>Morris's biographers Mackail, Henderson, and Lindsay all give March 24 as the actual birthday.

<sup>19</sup>She maintains a modest interest in literary and artistic affairs and shows an appreciation for well-designed houses and cottages, reads desultorily among contemporary authors, enjoys Doughty and Masefield (as an author of long Morris-like narratives), laughs over *Erewhon II* (which contains some parallels to *News from Nowhere*), and at one point expresses pleasure at discovering a translation of the *Pearl* which Morris would have appreciated.

animated response, and she continues to peregrinate systematically in search of better health.

Increasingly, concern for her own health is subordinated to Jenny's deterioration. At first there are occasional upturns—in July 1899 she reports, "Jenny is cheerful and helpful in a way that she has not been for years . . .," but in August 1904 is afraid she may be too unwell to care for her, and in June 1908 is reduced to rejoicing that she has had no attack for four days. Later letters record the attacks' increase in violence and frequency, and insistent advice from doctors that she relinquish care of her daughter. In the last years of Jane Morris's life, care of Jenny did devolve on attendants, and after 1910 she reports matter-of-factly on her absent daughter's health.

The Cockerell letters tend generally to exonerate Jane Morris from a simplistic charge that she moved from valetudinarian marriage to suspiciously healthy widowhood. She writes in an unaffected and natural speaking voice, and does seem less passive than earlier in the letters to Rossetti, but in all probability the rheumatism, back pain, and heart condition were real, as was her concern for Jenny. Public interest in extramarital passion is perhaps inevitable, but of equal significance is the record preserved in these later letters of real if limited marital affection. Morris may have been a neglectful spouse when young and Jane Morris a cold and unfaithful one, but something ultimately worthwhile seems to have emerged. Whatever were the memories of the elderly Jane Morris, William Morris as well as Dante G. Rossetti was central to them.<sup>20</sup>

Since many of Rossetti's best paintings were of Jane Morris, reproduction in one volume of his paintings and their letters serves a useful artistic and literary purpose. Bryson has edited the correspondence carefully, with a frontispiece photograph of Jane Morris chosen for its resemblance to the paintings, and appropriate juxtapositions of illustrations and text throughout. There is a careful index, and the annotations are thorough and at times more extensive than the notes of the Doughty and Wahl edition of Rossetti's letters. For a book of 219 pages, the number of errors and misprints is moderate,<sup>21</sup> though the sudden alternation of sentences and sentence fragments is confusing.<sup>22</sup>

The letters reveal a shared world of ill health, artistic mementos, assured prosperity, and mild dissatisfaction. Rossetti may have been fortunate in loving a

20/In Richard Howard's 1969 dramatic monologue, "A Pre-Raphaelite Ending: 1915," the seventy-four-year-old Jane Morris recalls her past life as she sorts through old letters and mementos, and remembers Rossetti above all else. Appearing five years after Rossetti's manuscript letters to Jane Morris were opened to the public in 1964, Howard's poem may well exaggerate the significance of their contents to Jane Morris's life (*Untitled Subjects* [New York, 1969], pp. 82-88).

21/On p. xviii, last line is sentence fragment; p. 17, Bryson might have commented on Rossetti's use of "proluded upon," either a back-formation from "prolusion" or a coinage from Latin "procludere"; p. 55, n. 2, "The Palace of Art" lacks quotation marks; p. 71, "favorite" misspelled; p. 89, line 8, Rossetti's misspelling of "Penseroso" not noted; p. 148, n. 6, "Morrises" misspelled; p. 181, line 2, "anecdotal" misspelled; pp. 191 and 213, John Le Bourgeois's name cited incorrectly; Mrs. Maria Zambaco's name is inconsistently spelled in the notes as both "Maria" and "Mary," perhaps from the influence of Rossetti's usage "Mary." Bryson patronizes Jane Morris as "Janey" throughout; for consistency, he should either have written Jane Morris or "Gabriel."

22/Examples occur on p. 9, n. 15; p. 15, n. 8.

woman he could not marry, and the letters suggest that all behaved reasonably well, given the impossibility of divorce. Rossetti seems to have been genuinely considerate of Morris's near-invalid wife, William Morris stoically endured her preference for another, and Jane Morris felt malice toward neither and some affection for both.

Except for an ungenerous dismissal of Fanny Cornforth,<sup>23</sup> Bryson generally preserves a friendly neutrality, but there is a basic artificiality to his project. Its narrow focus necessarily slights Rossetti's more complex and semiidealized world of friends and prostitutes, Morris's painful poetic expressions of private grief, and the straightforward calm of Jane Morris's later letters. More comprehensive editions of the letters are being prepared by William Fredeman and Norman Kelvin, and a collective biography of Morris's family and friends—Jane Morris, May Morris, Georgiana Burne-Jones—is needed to understand the shadowy but complex and interesting periphery of Pre-Raphaelitism. Only such major efforts are likely to free full-scale biographies of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris from overlays of facile psychology and sensationalism.

A significant and comprehensive task has been performed by William E. Fredeman's edition of the *P.R.B. Journal: William Michael Rossetti's Diary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1849-1853*, the most important historical document of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. About half the surviving text of the *Journal* was published by William Michael Rossetti in *Praeraphaelite Diaries and Letters* (1900); Fredeman restores the entire text and adds supplemental appendices, illustrations, collation, an exhaustive index, full explanatory notes, and painstaking descriptions of the state of the manuscript (the latter rendered important by the destruction of more than half of the *Journal* through mutilation and excision).<sup>24</sup> Fredeman aims beyond meticulous restoration to a consideration of the *Journal's* Pre-Raphaelitism; his index of entries for each member of the Brotherhood and the chronology of the *Germ* are useful, and the collection of (often undistinguished) verse on the P.R.B. obliquely illustrates its self-image and shared enjoyments.

Fredeman generally uses early-twentieth-century conventions in punctuation and spelling, and avoids superscript numbers for endnotes, in an attempt to prevent the editorial structure from overwhelming a comparatively brief (ninety-six printed pages) *Journal*. On first reading, repeated checking to see whether a note exists is annoying, but afterward one has the advantage of an uncluttered text. Likewise, the many abbreviations are at first cumbersome, but do make the notes more concise. William Michael Rossetti was the P.R.B.'s historian, editor, and commentator, and it is appropriate that the journal of a man who devoted so much of his life to accurate transmission of others' work should benefit from this painstaking edition. Unfortunately the Oxford Press has printed the many tables and annotations in an uncomfortably small typeface, and only those whose vision and motivations are acute may be able to give the annotations the study they deserve.

From this meticulous reconstruction several patterns emerge. One of these is

23/*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris*, p. xx.

24/*P.R.B. Journal*, pp. xix-xxi.

the extent to which the twenty-year-old William Rossetti's self-effacing enthusiasm influenced the character, survival, and ultimate success of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There is truth in Fredeman's sweeping assertion that "[William Michael Rossetti] is not remarkable as a man of ideas, but among the P.R.B.'s he was almost the only man of action, and without him there would have been no Brotherhood, no *Germ*, no *P.R.B. Journal*, and no movement to leave its mark on the history of English art" (p. xxv). The most fervent Brother of all, William Rossetti was intensely loyal to the ideal of an artistic fraternity. He was the sole faithful attender at all meetings; assiduously publicized the Brotherhood; tended to unpleasant tasks such as correspondence and social calls; wrote friendly letters to all members outside of London; lovingly recorded each change of opinion; wrote poems, tales, and reviews on demand; and equably suffered their suppression in favor of others. As the *Germ's* editor, he collected, encouraged, and prodded the work of others; made cumbersome visits by foot to gather material from dilatory contributors; assumed the difficult task of soliciting money from the *Germ's* proprietors; and made good much of its deficit when it died insolvent. Both the *Journal* and a surviving verse epistle to Woolner reflect his pride and identification with the movement.<sup>25</sup> In the opening pages of the *Journal* William Rossetti describes his work as a reviewer for the group, and free art reviews he provided the *Critic* (in response to an early invitation to the Brotherhood) led to work as salaried art reviewer for the *Spectator*. It was characteristic that he declined the job until assured that none of the others wanted it, but had begun work on the first review just in case. He considered reviewing an opportunity to support the work of fellow P.R.B.'s and refused to moderate his ardent partisanship to placate editorial hostility. Appointed editor of the *Germ* without his prior consent, he conscientiously remonstrated against this decision on the ground that he was not an artist, but worked with genuine fervor when the argument was lost. His steady determination to codify, define, and institutionalize the little group to which he belonged reflected both a vision of the potential significance of such a brotherhood and something of the communal spirit which later inspired his editing of poetry of Blake, Shelley, and Whitman; support of reforming and anti-imperialist political causes; and publication in 1907 of the mildly left-liberal *Democratic Sonnets*.<sup>26</sup>

In view of the great influence of Ruskin's definition of Pre-Raphaelite art upon scholarly interpretations of the movement, it is also significant that only William Rossetti is known to have taken seriously the content of Ruskin's letters to the *Times*. As the movement's recording secretary he also wrote much of the commentary on Pre-Raphaelitism used by later art historians. He was the only Brother who prepared the statement on the meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism that all had agreed to write, and in the *Journal* summarized at considerable length Ruskin's statements on Pre-Raphaelite adherence to drawing "what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene they desire to

25/"Two Verse-Letters," *P.R.B. Journal*, pp. 128-29.

26/For background on William Rossetti's political views, see Leonid M. Arinshstein with the assistance of William E. Fredeman, "William Michael Rossetti's 'Democratic Sonnets,'" *Victorian Studies* 14 (1971): 241-74.

represent . . ." (pp. 93-94). He immediately applied Ruskin's definition, and later in the same entry noted of a bas-relief by Tupper, "It is at the extremist edge of P.R.Bism, most conscientiously copied from Nature, and with good character" (p. 96). Years later, he described the intentions of his verse-narrative, "A Plain Story of Life" (later "Mrs. Holmes Grey"), as follows: "The informing idea of the poem was to apply to verse-writings the same principle of strict actuality and probability of detail which the Praeraphaelites upheld in their pictures. It was in short a Praeraphaelite poem."<sup>27</sup> Ruskin of course scarcely advocated naturalism. William Rossetti may have been drawn to this rationale of Pre-Raphaelitism by his own inclination to naturalistic observation, and in a different environment might have developed further what seems protoscientific curiosity; the *Journal* records interest in current scientific fads (phrenology, mesmerism); attempts to note detailed features of wind, light, and animals; and alertness to painful sights which his brother would never have recorded—a toad run over in the road, the broken body of a grasshopper.

The selflessness referred to above may have reflected a sense of inferiority reinforced throughout the period of the *Journal* by the failure of his efforts to find favor. William Rossetti's comments on himself in the *Journal* tend to be indirect; when his character is read by a phrenologist, he first records that others think it accurate, then adds his own conclusions almost as an afterthought (p. 24). It must also have been painful for William to record of an early effort at illustration (of Coventry Patmore's "The Woodman's Daughter"): "I again made futile efforts on my Patmore subject; and as everything I do has to be rubbed out the same day, shall not consider it necessary to mention this henceforward, until I have done something better worth doing" (p. 5). He worked hard on a variety of projects—life drawings, designs, a prose tale, sonnets, descriptive poetry, and the "Mrs. Holmes Grey" mentioned above (reprinted by Fredeman in an appendix). He accepted his brother's emendations and apparently did not dispute Patmore's harsh judgment that "Mrs. Holmes Grey" exhibits "a most objectionable absence of moral dignity, all the characters being puny and destitute of elevation" (p. 25). No one in fact liked the rather lonely "Mrs. Holmes Grey"; William Rossetti patiently recorded W. B. Scott's opinion that it was "exceptional and wrong in delineation of character" (p. 47), and the final blow came when a Mr. Wrightson called it unintentionally comic, and urged that he send it to *Bentley's Magazine* as a piece of humor (p. 58).

The hostility of P.R.B. associates toward "Mrs. Holmes Grey" strongly suggests that most identified "nature" with moral rectitude and idealization. No worse critics could be imagined for the poem than the romantic conservatives W. B. Scott and Patmore, whose poetic aims were directly contrary to its real merits.<sup>28</sup> It is in fact a poem of some emotional force, whose descriptions slowly

27/William Rossetti, ed., *Family-Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti with a Memoir* (London, 1895), 2:63.

28/William Rossetti finally published "Mrs. Holmes Grey" in the *Broadway* in 1868. Its one reviewer, H. Buxton Forman, repeated the objection to its antiromantic qualities (*Tinsley's Magazine* [October 5, 1869], p. 276): "We cannot . . . withhold the expression of our surprise that the accomplished critic of 1868 should have been so far misled . . . as to touch-up the crude project, and publish it thus under the sanction of his present reputation." Only Swinburne

intensify the theme of frustrated passion. In manner and subject it suggests contemporary studies of distorted sexuality and revenge by Browning and the Spasmodics, and anticipates the Froissartian poems of William Morris's *The Defense of Guenevere*. In a quiet way William Rossetti also entered the marriage-adultery controversy under way in contemporary poetry; like Browning, his response was clearly on the side of the liberals, and this may have prompted Scott's and Patmore's judgment that the tale is "unelevated." The poem tells of a married woman whose unreciprocated passion for another man leads to a fatal heart attack; the would-be adulteress, though errant, has acted under mesmeric influence [1], and her distraction and pain seem genuine. There is psychological acuity in Rossetti's presentation of the husband's emotions: shocked estrangement from his friend is mixed with reluctance to divulge the story, compulsion to divulge it, pity for himself, grief for her, and fantasies of revenge. Rossetti's *mise en scène* is not inept, and as was suggested above, he seems to have had a genuine bent for realistic literary case study.

The *Journal* also clarifies the relationship between William Rossetti and his brother. Its first and last entries are given over to Gabriel's plans and activities—early stages of a pattern which defined William Rossetti's place in literary history as a chronicler and editor of the works of others (Dante and Christina Rossetti, Blake, Oliver Madox Brown, Hemans, Buerger, Burns, Byron, Campbell, Coleridge, Cowper, Hood, Keats, Longfellow, Lowell, Milton, Moore, John Polidori, Scott, Shelley, Thomson, Tupper, Whitman, and Whittier). Though not a brilliant role, it is one with which honest editors and critics must identify, and William Rossetti was one of the best of his time. He not only lengthened the life of P.R.B. and contributed to the completion of the *Germ*, but narrated and interpreted the Brotherhood's rise and fall, and helped create its final self-image for posterity.

The *P.R.B. Journal* also records the role of Coventry Patmore as the Brotherhood's mentor and friend. Patmore was their only connection with the literary establishment, gave biweekly gatherings for the P.R.B., persuaded Tennyson to sit for a medallion portrait by Woolner, published two poems and an adolescent essay in the *Germ*, praised the poems of Woolner and Rossetti, and—most important—suggested that Ruskin write the *Times* on the Brotherhood's behalf. Patmore's poems were studied with a deference they have seldom enjoyed before or since: "[Millais] having informed us . . . that he had been reading Patmore's 'Woodman's Daughter' and 'Sir Hubert,' and had found several faults of diction, etc. therein, we proceeded to a most careful dissection, and really the amount of improvable is surprisingly small, as he also agreed in thinking" (p. 5). The first entry notes that "we minutely analyzed such defects as there are in Patmore's 'River' from Gabriel's recitation" (p. 3), and both William Rossetti and Millais attempted to illustrate "The Woodman's Daughter." Patmore's remarks on more

sensed its possibilities and wrote hyperbolically that "both in conception and execution it is worthy of Balzac—only he would not have given it that flavor of tragic poetry which I feel throughout" (*Letters*, 2:28). See William Fredeman, "A Key Poem of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement: W. M. Rossetti's 'Mrs. Holmes Grey,'" *Nineteenth Century Literary Perspectives* (Durham, N.C., 1975), pp. 149–59.

prominent literary figures (Tennyson, Browning) were eagerly received, and some of his arbitrary views recorded (Burns was a greater poet than Tennyson, the age of narrative poetry has passed for ever, etc.). The Brotherhood's veneration of the few published poets who befriended them is suggested by William Rossetti's remark about an admirer of the *Germ*, that "He . . . seems to have a fair acquaintance with modern poetry, but depreciates Patmore, and does not know W. B. Scott" (p. 50).

Millais appears frequently in the *Journal* as one of the group's most versatile members; he writes poetry and a prose tale, and completes a high proportion of the designs he projects. Alone of the group, he seems to have shown irritation at Patmore's sententiousness, even when the latter praised Millais's "Lorenzo and Isabella" as "far better than anything Keats ever did" (p. 28). In view of Millais's later career, it is sad to read of the intelligence of his early passion for natural detail: ". . . [Millais] said that he had thought of painting a hedge (as a subject) to the closest point of imitation, with a bird's nest,—a thing which has never been attempted. Another subject he has in his eye is a river-sparrow's nest, built, as he says they are, between three reeds; the bird he describes with his head always on one side, 'a body like a ball, and thin legs like needles'" (p. 6). All agree that Millais is to persuade his brother, also a painter, to spend the next summer painting in open fields.

Also prominent in the *Journal* is Thomas Woolner, lively, inventive, and sociable, who worked steadily at sculpture and poetry and seems to have been William's closest friend. Woolner and he were the group's only political liberals, and in an 1849 entry William Rossetti reports of a visit to Woolner, "Being alone together, with Hunt, Millais, and Gabriel, out of hearing, we had some conversation concerning republicanism, universal suffrage, etc." (p. 21). James Collinson also seems to have been a more important member than his later defection would suggest, and throughout the period of the *Journal* was an impressively steady worker.

Striking also is the range of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poetic and artistic achievement during his association with the P.R.B. William Rossetti records Gabriel's recitation of his early Italian translations, refers to the translation of the *Vita Nuova*, and mentions the beginning of "On Mary's Portrait" (renamed "The Portrait" in a later version), "The Bride's Prelude," "The Blessed Damozel," "The Burden of Nineveh," and "Dante at Verona." Gabriel's preoccupation with Dante is prominent: In the first entry he is working on a design, "Dante Drawing the Figure of an Angel," and later he writes intermittent stanzas for "Dante at Verona." The last entry records his intention to etch illustrations for a translation of the *Vita Nuova* (which appeared in 1861 after a delay of eight years). Gabriel's literary tastes—Tennyson, Browning, Charles Wells, W. B. Scott, Keats, Patmore, Hawthorne, and Poe—were strongly influential in the group and were expressed in characteristic superlatives. After William has bestowed obligatory praise on Wells's *Joseph and His Brethren*, a major object of his brother's enthusiasm, he adds that it is "decidedly too full of images, laboured descriptions, etc." (p. 20), and even he regards with skepticism Gabriel's and Woolner's view that *The Princess* is the finest poem since Shakespeare (p. 30).



From the extant *Journal* the nature of the P.R.B. as a mutual education society becomes apparent. Nonuniversity men who hoped for artistic careers, the members of the Brotherhood provided each other with news, contacts, instruction, conviviality, and a sense of belonging to an exclusive group which partially compensated for their remoteness from the prestigious Royal Academy; mutual defense against critical abuse later joined the list of benefits. Despite Ruskin's pronouncements, the Brotherhood's bond was not essentially ideological, beyond the artistic tastes, enthusiasms, and habits which its members derived from a common late-romantic artistic and literary tradition. They did share a joint interest in literature and art: During the period of the *Journal* every member of the P.R.B. attempted poetry as well as art work; Deverell, Millais, and William and Dante Rossetti began prose tales; and an impressive number of illustrations for literary works were planned. Meetings often featured poetry recitations, careful dissection of specific poems, and debates over literary eminence. The *Germ* received outside submissions of poetry from Brown, Patmore, Orchard, Wrightson, Faber, and John Tupper, and at one time the P.R.B. planned the preparation of a joint volume of its poetry. The Brotherhood also served as a kind of extended family. Brothers often ate and drank together, took night walks, and spent long mutual evenings of work, debate, and relaxation; occasionally they roomed together, and there was even talk of a P.R.B. house; but few could afford it. Enthusiasm for the *Germ* was surprisingly high; the kind of subsidy Morris later provided for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* might have kept it going for several more issues, and perhaps encouraged Rossetti to write more for its pages. The *Journal* also offers interesting vignettes of artistic self-consciousness: The embarrassed Brown doesn't want his name affixed to a tale he has written for the *Germ*, Deverell tears up in disgust a tale he has composed, and Gabriel angrily destroys proofs for one of his prints. Occasionally literary events of the outer world intrude, as when William Rossetti reports the coming publication of Tennyson's "book of elegies on young Hallam" after a visit to Patmore (p. 22).

The *Journal* records clearly the arc of the Brotherhood's history—obscurity, obloquy, then respectability. From the first they were conscious of bad reviews and anxious to minimize hostility; even William Rossetti published his art criticism anonymously, and opposed the use of the word "Pre-Raffaella" in a *Germ* submission. With Ruskin's eccentric but powerful patronage, and the establishment of two of their members (William Rossetti and F. G. Stephens) as art critics, they were able to defend themselves more systematically than any could have done alone. The last part of the *Journal* is a kind of historical post-script written on the occasion of Woolner's return from Australia, when characteristic patterns of members' lives were set—Hunt had decided to leave for Palestine, Gabriel continued to project fine designs but delayed completion and feared exhibition, William worked energetically as critic and loyal promoter of more talented friends, and Millais, the most diligent and proficient, had joined the Royal Academy. Christina Rossetti summarized this cycle in her wry 1853 lyric, "The P.R.B.," which Fredeman reprints in an appendix:

The P.R.B. is in its decadence;  
 For Woolner in Australia cooks his chops,  
 And Hunt is yearning for the land of Cheops;  
 D. G. Rossetti shuns the vulgar optic;  
 And he at last the champion great Millais,  
 Attaining academic opulence,  
 Winds up his signature with A.R.A.  
 So rivers merge in the perpetual sea;  
 So luscious fruit must fall when over ripe;  
 And so the consummated P.R.B.<sup>29</sup>

This gradual defection to respectability finished the Brotherhood, but the lack of further need for its group education and collective defense was itself an oblique sign of success.

Thanks to Fredeman's work, William Michael Rossetti's *P.R.B. Journal* should be recognized as an important book of the period. No startling discoveries emerge, but careful editorial reconstruction makes this edition an orderly and comprehensive guide for the understanding of early Pre-Raphaelitism, and the text, notes, and helpful index make many minute contributions to interpretation of the intricate puzzle of Victorian literary and artistic life. Perhaps publication of the *P.R.B. Journal* and other documents such as *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris: Their Correspondence* will encourage emergence of the reliable editions of letters and early manuscript drafts of other major Pre-Raphaelite figures that are needed for more accurate and perceptive understanding of the Pre-Raphaelites and their contemporaries.

University of Iowa

<sup>29</sup>*P.R.B. Journal*, pp. 123-24.