

Christina Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators — from Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Arthur Hughes —

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The early poetical works of Christina Rossetti are illustrated by her brother Dante Gabriel and his friends. Her early lyrics share some pictorial elements with the Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The comparison between Rossetti's poems and the Pre-Raphaelite paintings throws light on the Pre-Raphaelite emblems which the poetess and the painters have in common. Through the interpretation of the original poems and the illustrations, this paper explains the Pre-Raphaelite emblems and considers the presentation of her poetry in the Victorian period.

I

The Pre-Raphaelites were keen on setting an illustration to literary works. Their interest in pictorial quality of literary works shows that 'pictorial' means the rigorously realistic depiction required by their early aim 'to bring art back to the fidelity of nature' (Johnson 23): in other words, 'delicate, ornamental, and romantic details are inserted into a carefully arrested architectural, domestic, or historical frame, causing motions to seem simultaneously intense and slow, passionate and heavy.' (Boos 105).

If such Pre-Raphaelitism is applied to poetry, as indicated in the poetical works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), 'pictorial' means colourism (full of varied colours as emotive symbols) and detailed description. The 'pictorial' quality in this sense is characteristic of Keats and Tennyson, the Pre-Raphaelites' favourite poets. It is the pictorial quality in their poetry as well as the medieval themes that inspired specially the early Dante Gabriel and William Holman Hunt (1827-1910). Holman Hunt's *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1848), after Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes' (1820), was the start of his acquaintance with Dante Gabriel, and later of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Keats's 'Isabella' (1820) was one of the major sources of inspiration to the Pre-Raphaelites. They also contributed thirty of the fifty-four illustrations to the Moxon edition of Tennyson's poems (1857). Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485),

republished in 1817, was their inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Thus, the Pre-Raphaelites aimed for the pictorialisation of 'pictorial' literary works (with colourism and detailed description) by using painterly 'pictorial' (rigorously realistic) depiction. In this point, Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894) could be called a Pre-Raphaelite poet, for her early poems were subject to the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites. Her *Goblin Market* (1862) is said to be the most Pre-Raphaelite of her works in its various 'pictorial' details. The first edition of *Goblin Market* and of other lyrics were illustrated by her brother Dante Gabriel, which is also an assertion of the pictorialisability — the possibility of pictorialisation (execution of a painting based on the pictorial quality) — of Christina Rossetti's lyrical world.

This paper will indicate the Pre-Raphaelite elements of Rossetti's poetry and survey the pictorialisation of her poetical works from the viewpoint of illustration, specially drawn by the Pre-Raphaelite painters. The first section will explain the pictorial elements of her lyrics which several critics have compared with Dante Gabriel's paintings. The second section will introduce some illustrations by her brother and his friends, and consider the presentation of her poetry in the Victorian period when she lived. Through the interpretation of the original poems and the paintings, and the comparison between them, the section will search for clues to the pictorialisability of pictorialisation, of Rossetti's poetry.

II

Some critics compare Rossetti's particular 'pictorial' poems, of which colourism (full of varied colours as emotive symbols) and detailed description are characteristic, with some paintings of Dante Gabriel.

For instance, C. M. Bowra relates her poem 'Within the Veil' (1861) to *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1850, figure 1) (255). Kathleen Jones regards 'A Birthday' (1857) as the most pictorial example, and said 'Her Pre-Raphaelitism reached its highest point in the second verse of 'A Birthday', which reads like a description of one of Dante Gabriel's paintings' (27):

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
 Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
 Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
 And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
 Work it in gold and silver grapes,
 In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
 Because the birthday of my life
 Is come, my love is come to me. (9-16)

Jones says that Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites have something in common both in the theme, 'renunciation, loss of longing' (27) and the emotional expression, which shows 'simplicity and lack of sentiment' (27). However, the Pre-Raphaelites' favourite themes are not always the 'renunciation, loss of longing' which Rossetti specially inclines towards. In addition, Rossetti's poetry is full of sentiment and melancholy, as Stuart Curran summarises, 'pervasive sentimentality and tiresome self-pity.' (287)

Previous studies of Rossetti's poetry in paralleling it with her brother's paintings, have chosen thematically similar ones intentionally, emphasised the biological sibling status of the poet and the painter, and persisted in discussing the similarities without clarifying what elements make her lyrics look like a picture.

Another critic, Ralph A. Bellas, also quotes 'A Birthday' as a pictorial poem of Rossetti's:

The pictorial quality and the rich texture are Pre-Raphaelite features. . . . All the poetic elements fuse to capture what was one of the rare moments of sheer



(figure 1) Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Ecce Ancilla Domini (1850)

delight in Rossetti's poetic life. (65)

Neither Jones nor Bellas declares which paintings of Dante Gabriel's are recalled, but perhaps this poem reminds them of the atmosphere of 'The Woodspurge' or 'The Honeysuckle.' The definition of 'pictorial' seems ambiguous in Bellas or in Jones, but what Bellas calls 'pictorial quality' seems to have something to do with the colourism and detailed description. Another reason why 'A Birthday' gives the 'pictorial' impression is in the use of emblems with gorgeous garments in varied colours, such as 'doves' 'pomegranates' 'peacocks' 'grapes' and 'fleurs-de-lys.'

It is true that Rossetti's lyrics in the 1850s and Dante Gabriel's paintings have something in common, that is a 'pictorial quality,' however, it is not the theme nor the emotional expression but the use of emblems in a

highly realistic way. Florence Saunders Boos mentions Dante Gabriel's preference for 'the imagery of precious metals and jewels' (concentrated, intense, non-human images of perfection) and 'of colours associated with the regal or artificially elegant' (rose and purple, for instance) (66-7). She then defines the 'emblematic function' of these things:

The metal, jewels, and heavy draperies serve an emblematic function; they are not pictorially descriptive but invoke an already programmed reaction. For example, we know that things golden are good or desirable, . . . (67)

The Pre-Raphaelite principle is rather 'to bring art back to the fidelity of nature' (Johnson 23) than to 'invoke an already programmed reaction,' however, they are in fact fond of using emblems in their pictures. Emblems make their pictures look like a medieval tapestry in 'simplicity and lack of sentiment' (Jones 27). In Rossetti's case, it seems that such a 'programmed reaction' leads to her control of stylising emotion, even sentiment or melancholy, in her later works.

Jones quotes Rossetti's 'A Shadow of Dorothea' (1858) which is to be compared with Dante Gabriel's work *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848; figure 2). In this poem Rossetti uses the same emblems as the Pre-Raphaelites prefer, such as lilies, golden hair, and roses, as Jones points out:

In 'A Shadow of Dorothea', Rossetti opens a door into the legendary emblematic world of the Pre-Raphaelite painting with its golden-haired, dreaming figures, and richly ornamented backgrounds. (27)

Looking at the beginning of 'A Shadow of Dorothea,' it is clear that Rossetti describes in the poem the Pre-Raphaelite ideal figure such as Dante Gabriel's Beatrice type which is opposite to the Pre-Raphaelite *femmes fatales*:

'Golden-haired, lily white,
Will you pluck me lilies?'

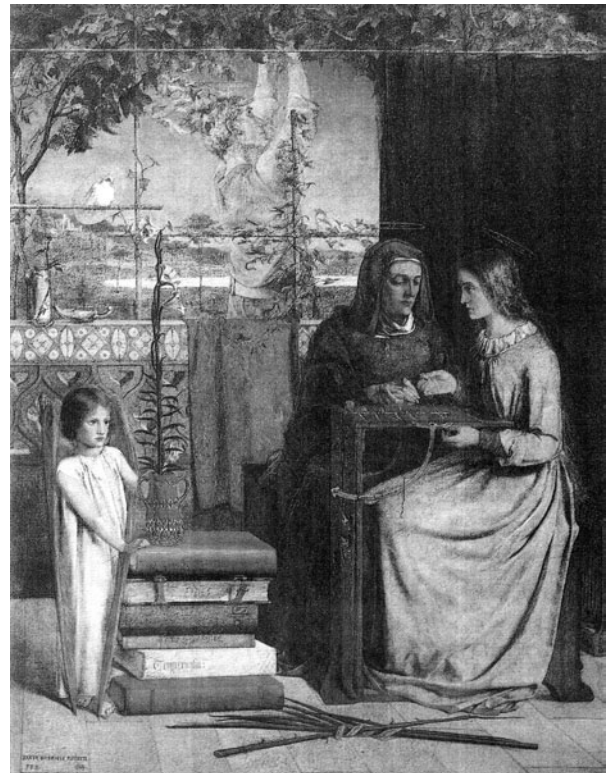
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'I pluck young flowers of Paradise,
Lilies and roses red:

A sceptre for my hand,
A crown to crown my golden head.
Love makes me wise:
I sing, I stand,
I pluck palm-branches in the sheltered land.'
(1-2, 9-15)

Here what is to be expected as 'an already programmed reaction' is admiration for the purity and innocence of such a young maiden as his Beatrice, of which the lilies and roses are emblematic.

The Girlhood of Mary Virgin is a reminiscence of medieval Italian mural painting. A maiden is embroidering three lilies on a radiant crimson cloth under her mother's instruction. A small angel with crimson wings is standing still and showing her three lilies on one stalk in a crimson vase on the piled six books. The embroidery thread is golden, and so is the hair of the maiden. The maiden's angularity is echoed by the whole shape of her dress, her knees, the desk, the tiled floor, the trellis of the background. The texture of her dress is plain, echoed by the angel's clothes, and so is everything else in the painting. The texture of her mother's deep green cape is repeated by the curtain behind them. This deep



(figure 2) Dante Gabriel Rossetti
The Girlhood of Mary Virgin (1848)

green curtain spreads behind her mother halfway, but surrounds the maiden completely. The curtain and the cape in the same texture and colour surround and protect the maiden. The several stalks and one thorny stalk on the floor also block out the maiden and her mother from anyone or anything in the foreground. They have characteristics of Dante Gabriel's standard woman with an aquiline nose, a long protruding jaw, tightly closed lips, a stiff neck, and long hair, but far from sensuality. On the contrary, both of them look stern in proximity: tight-mouthed, stiff-necked, and cold-eyed, which emanates a sense of control and concentration to the whole painting.

'Within a Veil' (1861) can be considered as another example. As Bowra points out, Rossetti must have composed the poem after Dante Gabriel's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (figure 1):

She holds a lily in her hand,
Where long ranks of Angels stand:
A silver lily for her wand.

All her hair falls sweeping down,
Her hair that is golden brown,
A crown beneath her golden crown.

Blooms a rose-bush at her knee,
Good to smell and good to see:
It bears a rose for her, for me:

Her rose a blossom richly grown,
My rose a bud not fully blown
But sure one day to be mine own. (1-12)

Here are again some Pre-Raphaelite emblems such as the lily, golden hair, and rose, incorporated into the highly pictorial world of the poem. According to Boos's definition of 'emblematic function,' here the 'emblematic function' is not pictorial description but to invoke an already programmed reaction to admiration for maidenish purity and innocence.

Looking at *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, all is white: the maiden's dress, her bedclothes, angel's clothes, the lilies on the angel's hand, the wall, and the floor. Here white is an emblematic colour for maiden innocence and purity. The white lily is a common emblem to not only the poem

but also *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. Like the maiden's dress in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, the texture of her dress is plain, and so is everything in the painting. The colouration is simple, using only primary colours: the blue cloth and the scenery from the window, the yellow flame at the foot of the angel, and the crimson cloth on the foreground of the right side. This is the same crimson cloth on the same folding table seen in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, which the maiden has already finished embroidering with the three lilies on one stalk. It blocks her out from the foreground, and the embroidered three lilies are repeated by the fresh lilies in the angel's hand. These two lily stalks surround her, in cooperation with the wall and the blue cloth, to intensify her hesitant withdrawal from the angel.

In this way there is seen the frequent use of the Pre-Raphaelite emblems in her works of 1850s. Certainly Rossetti's lyrics and Dante Gabriel's paintings have some common elements, such as white lilies or roses, which belong to the artistic trend of the Pre-Raphaelites. The two artists were strongly influenced by each other as artistic 'brothers' as well as biological siblings. However, the comparison between her 'pictorial' lyrics (with colourism and detailed description) and her brother's Pre-Raphaelite 'pictorial' (rigorously realistic) paintings would be a mere work of picking out the common Pre-Raphaelite emblems in a deliberate way. But, such emblems surely work to bring about 'an already programmed reaction,' for instance, admiration for the purity and innocence of a Pre-Raphaelite young maiden, of which the 'lily' and the 'rose' are emblematic. In short, emblems can also be considered to be particularly 'pictorial' in Rossetti's poetry. Thus, in addition to the colourism and detailed description, the Pre-Raphaelite emblems are the key determinants of the pictorial quality of Rossetti's poetry.

What those critics have done so far is to consider such poems as 'A Shadow of Dorothea,' or 'Within a Veil,' as, as it were, 'verbal explanation' of the paintings. The critics have found some of Rossetti's poems which are highly realistic, colourful, emblematic, that is 'Pre-Raphaelite' (as they call it) or 'pictorial' (without an exact definition), and set the poems to the paintings which have similar features to the poem. If they claim such relevance between the poem and the painting, illustrations should be literally 'pictorial explanation' of

poetry whereas poetry would be ‘verbal explanation’ of the paintings. But in fact, the illustrations are rather an assertion of the pictorialisability of poetry than ‘pictorial explanation’ of poetry.

Therefore, in order to consider the illustrations for her poetry, specially in the Victorian period when she lived, we will now move to the actual illustrations for some of her poems.

III

Dante Gabriel, a painter and poet, produced paintings for his poems, and composed poems for his paintings. In his case, poetry and paintings are harmonically united with each other to heighten his artistic expression. In Rossetti’s case, she seldom painted a picture. Her early works in the first edition were illustrated by her brother Dante Gabriel and his friends.

Her favourite painter was Arthur Hughes (1830-1915), an associate of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in his early days. He illustrated her most pictorial poem ‘A Birthday’ (1857) whose second stanza is quoted in the previous section. Later he illustrated Rossetti’s book of children’s verses *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872), another of her books of children’s stories, *Speaking Likenesses* (1874). These books will be discussed in the fifth section.

Dante Gabriel illustrated her first collection, *Goblin Market and other poems* (1862), and her second collection, *The Prince’s Progress and other poems* (1866). The title page for *Goblin Market* (figure 3) tells the readers to fantasise the story as a fairy tale, and in a sense limit their imagination by offering innocent images of girls through his illustration. He located the centre of the poem in the maidenish sisterhood. His illustration is based on this harmonious scene:

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other’s wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,



(figure 3) Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Title page for *Goblin Market and other poems* (1862)

Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forebore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest. (184-198)

With these lines he provides the fanciful projection of a dream by the maiden sisters sleeping ‘locked together’ in one bed.

The original poem offers a wider interpretation for the readers beyond the innocent literary images. For instance, this part is still controversial among the critics:

She cried, ‘Laura,’ up the garden,
‘Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;

Laura, make much of me;
 For your sake I have braved the glen
 And had to do with goblin merchant men.'
 (464-474)

This is a quite erotic, sensuously direct expression, which might recall a possible lesbian scene of Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816) with its gothic atmosphere. As Mary Wilson Carpenter explains the scene, 'Ecstatically, she [Lizzie] offers Laura the "juices" of her sexual knowledge, spread over the surface of her bruised body' (429).

Dante Gabriel's illustrations originally tried to show an innocent fairy tale. In *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (figure 2), he tried to invoke 'an already programmed reaction,' that is, general admiration for the purity and innocence of a young maiden. Here, he tried to invoke general praise for the sisterhood, or rather to utilise his illustrations for making the readers ignore the possible sensuality of the story, in order to protect his sister's reputation as a woman writer in the Victorian literary world. His deletions and revisions of the original poem also make the speaker's experience 'foreign to Christina Rossetti's own experience,' as Alison Chapman points out (152). Nevertheless, contrary to his purpose, the way the two girls look in his illustration is far from the girlish purity and innocence which he has shown in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. The sisters have the look of sturdy 'women,' that is characteristic of Dante Gabriel's models, with an aquiline nose, a long protruding jaw, tightly closed lips, a stiff neck, and long waving hair. They sleep together, twined around each other like lovers. The girl on the left side wears a long-sleeved nightgown, while the other on the right side wears a sleeveless negligee trimmed with lace which is about to slip from her shoulder. The pattern of the duvet cover is repeated at the middle top of the background, like a floating curtain in a night breeze from the window. The soft curvaceousness of fabric fills the scene with the wrinkles of the duvet cover, the puffed sleeves, and the floating curtain. So does that of femininity in the girls: the waving hair; the fluffy nightgown and the lacy negligee; and their twined bodies. All are surrounded by darkness, opposite to the starry brightness of the dream-like circle at the left top of the background. And so does the close-up of the girls contrast with the goblins in miniature within the small circle. The composure

of the girls also presents a contrast to the comical figures of goblins. This illustration is ironically successful in presenting not the maiden innocence of the sisters but the comical childishness of the goblins.

In the frontispiece for *Goblin Market and other poems* (figure 4), goblins are visualized into various animal figures. It is the very caricature. In front of the plate full of exquisite fruits, Laura is cutting her golden hair. The goblins are surrounding and watching her:

One had a cat's face,
 One whisked a tail,
 One tramped at a rat's pace,
 One crawled like a snail,
 One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
 One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry. (71-76)

As William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), Rossetti's another brother, points out, 'the authoress does not appear to represent her goblins as having the actual configuration of brute animal; it was Dante Gabriel Rossetti who did that in his illustration to the poem (he allows human hands, however)' (460). It is true that this illustration must have kept readers from imagining how the goblins are like, and might have lessened some freedom and fun of reading the original poem. Yet, it could be



(figure 4) Dante Gabriel Rossetti
 Frontispiece for *Goblin Market and other poems* (1862)

said that the illustration is caricatured skillfully enough to attract all, from little children to elderly people.

Goblin Market is the most famous work of Rossetti's, and various editions have been published, illustrated by different painters. If these illustrations are compared with each other in chronological order, the comparison will indicate the transition of the interpretation of the original poem according to the transition of the times. Since to inquire further into the matter would carry us too far away from the purpose of this paper, however, this may be left to Lorraine Janzen Kooistra (249-277) to discuss.

In the same way as the first one, Rossetti's second collection, *The Prince's Progress and other poems* is illustrated by Dante Gabriel. The illustrations are based on the scenes in the poem. The title page (figure 5) is subtitled 'The long hours go and come and go' quoted from the first stanza of the poem:

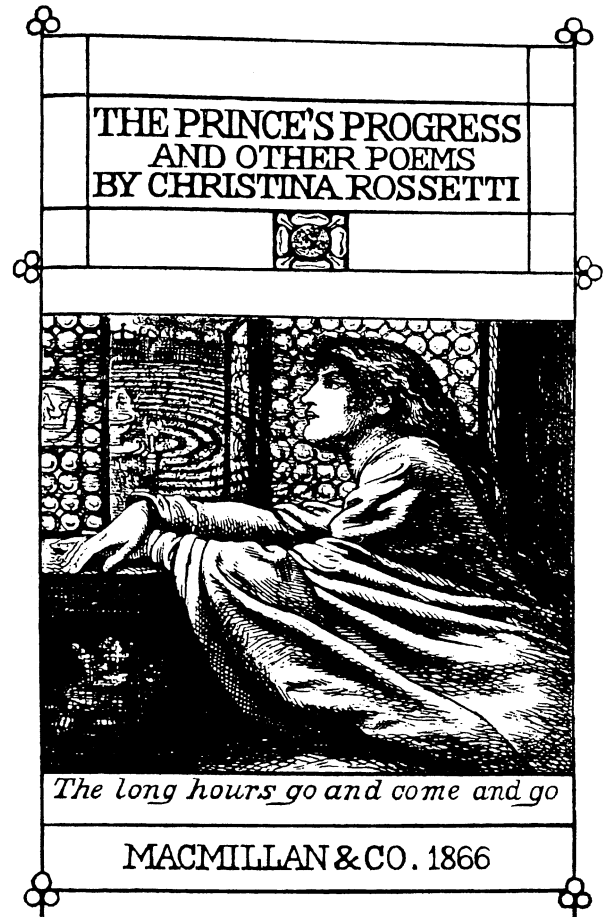
Till all sweet gums and juices flow,
Till the blossom of blossoms blow,
The long hours go and come and go;
The bride she sleepeth, waketh, sleepeth,
Waiting for one whose coming is slow:—
Hark! the bride weepeth.

'How long shall I wait, come heat come rime?'—
'Till the strong Prince comes,
who must come in time'

(Her women say): 'there's a mountain to climb,
A river to ford. Sleep, dream and sleep;
Sleep' (they say): 'we've muffled the chime;
Better dream than weep.'
(1-12)

The heroine is a typical 'waiting' woman, an exact copy of Rossetti herself. The woman has grown old, waiting for her fiancé to come back to her from his long journey. She holds lilies and roses on her head, with red and white poppies around her feet on the ground. She is wearing the emblems of red and white. It reminds us of a princess in a Pre-Raphaelite painting of a chivalry story in Middle Age.

The illustration (figure 5) shows a profile of a woman looking outside through the medieval stained glass window. Her features are characteristic of Dante Gabriel's models, with an aquiline nose, a long protruding jaw,



(figure 5) Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Title page for *The Prince's Progress and other poems* (1866)

tightly closed lips, a stiff neck, strong-willed eyes, and long waving hair. She is not a terrestrial woman type but such a celestial love type as his wife Lizzie.

Either reflecting outside light or bent with age, her hair is shining in white and melting into the background. The outside light shades the drapes of her white dress. Under her graceful hands a white indistinct object is floating. The contrast between light and shadow, between black and white, forms the keynote of the whole sight: the woman in white and the shadow surrounding her; the inside and outside of the room; and the light and shadow on the furniture.

The stained glass window is ornamented with many circles; so is the scenery out of the window. The central fountain describes a geometric pattern of circle, which looks like a garden or even an amphitheatre. A gate and a fence are seen over there.

Through the whole works of Rossetti's, 'waiting' woman is a typical female character, who is innocent, pure, and intently waiting for her lover. However,

according to a love convention, she finally gives him up only to dream of a marriage in heaven after death. As her women say, 'Better dream than weep,' escaping from her harsh reality. Sleep is connected to death in Rossetti's poetry. In this poem, the heroine dies dreaming of her fiancé who never returns.

The death scene of the princess is drawn in the frontispiece (figure 6) subtitled 'You should have wept her yesterday':

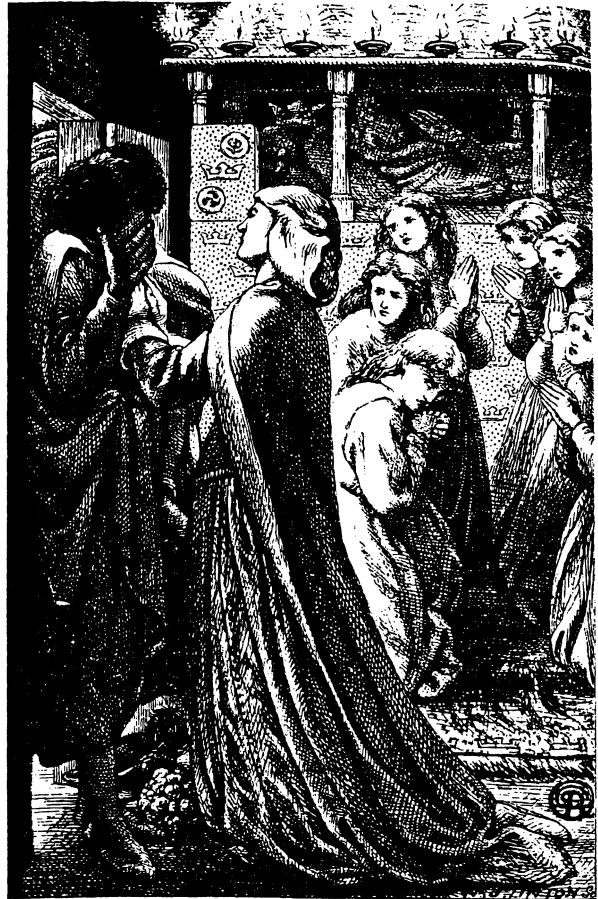
'You should have wept her yesterday,
 Wasting upon her bed:
 But wherefore should you weep today
 That she is dead?
 Lo we who love weep not today,
 But crown her royal head.
 Let be these poppies that we strew,
 Your roses are too red:
 Let be these poppies, not for you
 Cut down and spread.' (531-540)

She has passed away when the prince comes back with red roses. Her women tells him to put poppies on her head instead of the roses ('White poppies she must wear'). Young and beautiful bride has turned into an old maiden, who will not wear lilies nor roses. She has lost her youth and beauty while waiting for a long time. Obviously poppies are ingredient of opium, suggesting dream, sleep and death. This example of flower image is very effective for Rossetti to use Pre-Raphaelite emblems in an impressive way.

Just after the prince returning from the journey, the princess's women announce her death to him:

Veiled figures carrying her
 Sweep by yet make no stir;
 There is a smell of spice and myrrh,
 A bride-chant burdened with one name;
 The bride-song rises steadier
 Than the torches' flame:

'Too late for love, too late for joy,
 Too late, too late!
 You loitered on the road too long,
 You trifled at the gate:
 The enchanted dove upon her branch



You should have wept her yesterday

(figure 6) Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Frontispiece for *The Prince's Progress and other poems*
 (1866)

Died without a mate;
 The enchanted princess in her tower
 Slept, died behind the grate;
 Her heart was starving all this while
 You made it wait. (475-490)

In the illustration (figure 6), from the left side of the picture, the prince is entering the room, weeping; the head of her woman is greeting him at the centre of the picture; praying six women are looking at him, with their eyes full of blame; at the upper dark part of the picture, an ornamented stone coffin with a lying figure on the lid, where the princess is to sleep. The long distance between the coffin and the prince indicates the relation between the princess and the prince, far away from each other.

The prince is covered with dark shades as if it showed his deep regret and sadness. Yet, the women sings a funeral song beginning with 'Too late for her,

too late for joy,/ Too late, too late!', and address the prince 'you' instead of 'thou' to blame him for the princess's lonely death.

Thus, the illustrations for *The Prince's Progress and other poems* basically visualise a part of the original poems in the same way as those for *Goblin Market and other poems*. The difference between them is that Dante Gabriel focuses on the waiting princess's story in *The Prince's Progress*, not the 'prince's progress' itself, while he draws the sisters, the main characters of the original poem, in the illustration for *Goblin Market*.

A waiting woman character must have reminded Dante Gabriel of his wife Lizzie, whose life was the act of waiting. She married him after a long engagement, had a miscarriage of their first daughter, and took a fatal dose of chloral, waiting for her husband to come back from his mistress Funny. Guilt-ridden, Dante Gabriel depicted in the illustrations for *The Prince's Progress*, not only his sympathy for the princess, a waiting woman, but also his regret and sadness shared with the prince.

Rossetti herself also spent her life writing and waiting. In her youth, she waited for her future husband, yearning for the love story of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. After breaking off her second engagement, she stayed unmarried for the rest of her life, waiting for Christ, waiting for a long sleep before the Last Judgment.

Now these two waiting women of the Rossettis are buried in the same grave. Dante Gabriel left a will that he would be buried alone in a different grave in order not to 'desecrate' his holy wife, which was fulfilled.

IV

After finishing the illustrations to *The Prince's Progress and other poems* (1866), Dante Gabriel became too busy with his own work to continue illustrating Rossetti's poems, although he enjoyed doing it. Anthony Frederick Sandys (1829-1904) was recommended by Dante Gabriel in place of him to illustrate 'Amor Mundi' (1865):

'Oh where are you going
with your love-locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing
along this valley track?'

'The downhill path is easy,
come with me an it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back.'

So they two went together
in glowing August weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay
to their left and right;
And dear she was to doat on,
her swift feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons
too sportive to alight.

'Oh what is that in heaven
where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven
just at the rainy skirt?'

'Oh that's a meteor sent us,
a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt.'

'Oh what is that glides quickly
where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?'
— 'A scaled and hooded worm.'

'Oh what's that in the hollow,
so pale I quake to follow?'

'Oh that's a thin dead body
which waits the eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest,
— turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest,
I fear, is hell's own track.'

'Nay, too steep for hill mounting;
nay, too late for cost counting:

This downhill path is easy,
but there's no turning back.' (1-20)

The illustration for 'Amor Mundi' (figure 7) shows all the details of the original poem: a woman and a man in dialogue; their situation explained by the narrator; the developing scenery depicted by their dialogue. It is a faithfully pictorial reproduction, conveying the somehow gothic atmosphere of the original poem. Andrew Wilton appraises Sandys's illustration of her 'Amor Mundi' as



(figure 7) Anthony Frederick Sandys *Amor mundi* (1865)

‘a well-known composition that foreshadows some of the darker imagery of later Symbolist painting’ (21). This illustration is an earlier assertion of the pictorialisability of Rossetti’s poetry before the Symbolist painters pictorialised it in their paintings. Sandys has located the centre of the poem in its gothic atmosphere and its *femme fatale* story like that of Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci.’

The troubadour sings happily and blindly with a long haired lady holding a mirror in the left hand. Many weird beings on the field, including the long winding road, are as coiled and twined as her waving hair to trap the troubadour. The blackness of the obsessively detailed foreground presents a contrast to the brightness of the simple figures. This contrast makes more disastrous and tragic the troubadour’s fall into entanglement along the ‘never turning back’ way to hell.

Dante Gabriel appreciated Sandys’s work and recommended him to illustrate Rossetti’s next poem ‘If’ (1866). Having accepted his proposal, Sandys illustrated

If (figure 8), but in fact, ‘Sandys’s imagination proved unequal to the task’ (Marsh 1994: 346):

If he would come to-day, to-day, to-day,
 Oh what a day to-day would be!
 But now he’s away, miles and miles away
 From me across the sea.

 Dig my grave for two, with a stone to show it,
 And on the stone write my name:
 If he never comes, I shall never know it,
 But sleep on all the same. (1-4, 21-24)

In the illustration, Sandys depicts a Pre-Raphaelite *femme fatale* type, with a tuft of hair in her mouth, watching the sea in a bad mood, waiting for her lover in vain. She looks still voluptuous yet old with a plump figure, losing her beauty gradually as she waits for her lover. All this was contrary to Dante Gabriel’s expectations. He expected Sandys to depict the image of a laudable woman waiting for her lover that is formed in the original poem. Jan Marsh severely criticises the illustration (1987):

Unfortunately, by 1866, the date of Sandys’s *If*, Fanny [Fanny Cornforth: Dante Gabriel’s mistress]’s ample figure and somewhat sulky expression did not in the least accord with the mood of the verses. The strand of hair in the mouth seems to relate rather obviously to Rossetti’s earlier image of yearning desire modelled by Lizzie [Elizabeth Siddall: Dante Gabriel’s wife] *Delira*, while Sandys’s fat, blowzy figure expresses no such delicate romance. (90)

Nevertheless, whether Dante Gabriel admitted it or not, the same observation is seen in this illustration as in Dante Gabriel’s *Goblin Market* (figure 3). Dante Gabriel also tried to fit his illustration to the atmosphere of the original poem, but failed.

Apart from the fact that the model was Fanny, his secular woman, the woman in the illustration is a Dante Gabriel standard, a sturdy figure with an aquiline nose, a protruding jaw, a stiff neck, and long waving hair. The puffed shape of her dress is repeated at the middle top of the background, this time as the black cliff’s bulk. The landscape behind her echoes her stout figure formed by



(figure 8) Anthony Frederick Sandys *If* (1866)

her skirt. Several streamers here fill the scene: her long hair hovering in the wind; the wrinkles of the skirt and the scarf; and the long stretching road. In the same way as Dante Gabriel's *Goblin Market* and his own *Amor Mundi*, Sandys illuminates the characters and darkens the background. Similar to the bright dream-like circle in *Goblin Market*, there is seen the white ocean at the left top of the background. The close-up of the woman's figure is also similar, but the distance from the painter to the model seems to be greater than in the case of *Goblin Market*, and shorter than in the case of *Amor Mundi*. The scene of the illustration certainly reproduces the first stanza of the original poem: the waiting woman, the ocean, and the perspective view of the background, which suggests her longing feelings and her time consumed in waiting.

However, the whole of the illustration does not treat the theme of sleep, which is always equivalent to death in Rossetti's poetry. In the last stanza the speaker imagines her 'grave,' which reminds us of the speaker of 'When I am dead, my dearest' (1848) who looks at her lover after her death from the graveyard where her body is buried. The graveyard is a threshold of Heaven and this world, and the place for rest and sleep. The aspiration for death as the escape from real life is seen in a

fragmentary poem dated in 1849, written by the young Rossetti:

Sleep, let me sleep, for I am sick of care;
Sleep, let me sleep, for my pain wearies me.

This theme of sleep = death obsessed Rossetti until her last poem in 1894, echoing as the refrain of 'Sleeping at last.' In the same way, Rossetti displays the theme of sleep = death in 'If,' and makes the time and space of the poem continue from the present 'today' to the eternal 'sleep'. What is lacking in Sandys's illustration is such an exposition of the temporal and spatial expanse of sleep = death in the original poem, because Sandys has located the centre of the poem in the speaker's weariness of waiting:

In this weary world it is so cold, so cold,
While I sit here all alone;
I would not like to wait and to grow old,
But just to be dead and gone. (13-16)

Then, no illustration after that appeared by Sandys. In consequence, Arthur Hughes (1832-1915) succeeded the position, since Rossetti herself much preferred him as her illustrator.

V

Hughes produced illustrations for two of her masterpieces, *Sing-Song* (1872) (figure 9) and *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) (figure 10).

He tackled the task with such a delicate sensibility as the original works have. The illustration shows the sensibility characteristic of the two artists, and satisfied both Rossetti's expectation and his own feeling of fulfillment. It conveys the original work's atmosphere and pictorial quality in a faithful way which never disappoints children's imagination. In the illustration, there are various animals, birds, and angels, all surrounding the mother and the child. Young animals want to join the child to listen to Mamma's tales. The mother is holding her child on the knee, knitting and talking. There is contrast and perspective without darkness: while adult sheep are taking a rest over the tree, two lambs come near the mother and the child, looking at

them and listening to the tales; while an adult donkey is drinking water, a young donkey is interestedly looking at the mother and the child, and is tempted to cross the bridge to listen to the tales. A Rabbit, squirrels, tiny birds, and angels also stay to listen to the tales. All the beings here produce a peacefully pastoral scene, where Hughes has located the centre of the poem.

Rossetti was quite satisfied with Hughes's illustrations, and asked him to work on her next piece *Speaking Likenesses*. This case is also successful in making a harmonious atmosphere suitable for the original. For example, the illustration for 'The Mouth Boy' (figure 10) displays a humorous scene, making the original characters lively and vividly:

A boy: and close at his heels marched a fat tabby cat, carrying in her mouth a tabby kitten. Or was it a real boy? He had indeed arms, legs, a head, like ordinary people: but his face exhibited only one feature, and that was a wide mouth. He had no eyes; so how he came to know that Maggie and a basket were standing in his way I cannot say: but he did seem somehow



(figure 9) Arthur Hughes

Frontispiece for *Sing-song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872)



(figure 10) Arthur Hughes

The Mouth Boy for Speaking Likenesses (1874)

aware of the fact; for the mouth, which could doubtless eat as well as speak, grinned, whined, and accosted her: 'Give a morsel to a poor starving beggar.' (84)

In the illustration (figure 10), a monstrous boy (the mouth boy) with disheveled hair importunes Maggie for her chocolate with half-threats. His figure is comical as well as grotesque: his fat belly is bursting the jacket losing some buttons; the decayed foreteeth are seen out of his bulky lips: all caricatures his greediness.

On the right side of the picture, the boy is stretching his right hand over the branch, across the boundary between Maggie and him. He is trying to reach for the basket, which Maggie covers with her cloak. On the left side of the picture, where Maggie is standing, two small birds are perching on a withered tree in winter. They make a contrast to the tabby and the tabby kitten. This contrast is equivalent to that between Maggie and the boy: between vulnerability and vulgarity.

Yet, Hughes's illustration somehow provides this dreadful situation with humorous or even funny ambience. Without his illustrations, Rossetti would not have been successful in the field of juvenile literature.

VI

Thus, the illustrations for some of Rossetti's early lyrics are generally faithful to the 'pictorial' quality of the original poem — the colourism, detailed description, and emblems. They literally illustrate a scene in the original without falling into mere 'pictorial explanation' of poetry. Embodying the pictorial quality of Rossetti's

poetry in realistic and detailed depiction, the illustrators did not reflect their own personal imagined scenery on the illustrations but tried to give vividness and animateness to the original poem by means of their works.

Among these non-personal illustrations, only Dante Gabriel's intended to invoke 'an already programmed reaction' or rather to provoke general admiration for the purity and innocence of a young maiden, by means of the repetitive emblem of the white lily. He succeeded in his fresco-like oil paintings, such as *Ecce Ancilla Domini* or *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, but failed in his illustration.

On the other hand, Arthur Hughes succeeded in keeping Rossetti's pictorial quality in his illustrations better than her brother Dante Gabriel. Hughes's illustrations vividly visualise and harmonise her poetic world. In this way, a marriage of Rossetti's poetry and Hughes's illustrations is so completed as to produce the two immortal literary works, which have been being read all over the world.

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