Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature
British Cultural Studies

CREATING A WORLD OF AESTHETICS: DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI'S REACTION TO THE DOMINANT VICTORIAN CULTURE

Çiğdem Kayıhan

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2010

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KABUL VE ONAY

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To my dear family. . .

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ÖZET

KAYIHAN, Çiğdem. *Alternatif Estetik Bir Dünya Yaratmak: Dante Gabriel Rossetti'nin Viktorya Çağının Egemen Kültürüne Tepkisi.* Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2010.

Viktorya Çağında, endüstri, makineleşme ve seri üretim yaşamın her alanını etkilemişti ve bunlar egemen kültürü oluşturuyordu. Mathew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin ve William Morris gibi çağın önemli entellektüellerinden oluşan bir azınlık bu egemen kültüre karşı çıkıyordu. Dünya çapında devrimler yılı olan 1848'te yedi genç sanatçı Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood'u (Ön-Rafaellocu akım) kurmak için bir araya geldi. Bu sanat hareketinin üyeleri sanatın seri üretilmesine, dar kalıplarla tanımlanmasına ve Kraliyet Akademisi'nin gelenekleri ve kuralları tarafından şekillenmesine karşı çıktılar. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood'un lideri, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, öyküleri, şiirleri, soneleri ve resimleriyle estetik bir dünya yarattı. Bu estetik dünya tüketime dayalı endüstriyel Viktorya Dönemine sunulan bir alternatifti. Rossetti hikayelerinde sanatla ilgili fikirlerini, Kraliyet Akademisi'nin kuralcı sanatına ve dönemin egemen kültürüne tepkisini ortaya koymaktadır. Rossetti'nin şiirleri katı ahlak anlayışına, dine, saraylı usulü aşk geleneğine, kuralcılığa, öğreticiliğe, emperyalizme, makineleşmeye ve tüketim toplumuna karşı olan görüşlerini yansıtır. Rossetti'nin bu görüşlerini tablolarında da görmek mümkündür. Yaratmış olduğu alternatif dünya aşk ve sanatla biçimlenmiştir; hayali bir dünya olsa da mekanik dünyadan daha gerçek olarak sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Pre-Raphaelite'ler, Sanat, Estetik, Ruh, Endüstri, Viktorya Çağı, Egemen Kültür, Azınlık Kültür

ABSTRACT

KAYIHAN, Çiğdem. *Creating a World of Aesthetics: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Reaction to the Dominant Victorian Culture*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2010.

In the Victorian Age, industry, machinery and mass production affected every aspect of life and they constituted the dominant culture of the period. Such a mechanized feature of the age was reacted by a minority of the Victorians including intellectuals like Mathew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and William Morris. In 1848, the year of revolutions throughout the world, seven young artists united in order to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Members of this Movement of Art opposed art to be mass-produced, stereotypical and defined according to the conventions and rules of the Royal Academy. The leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dante Gabriel Rossetti created an aesthetic world with his prose-tales, poetry, sonnets and paintings. This aesthetic world was an alternative to the commodified industrial Victorian world. In his prose-tales Rossetti puts forward his ideas on art and expresses his reaction to the canonized art of the Royal Academy and to the dominant Victorian culture. Rossetti's poems present his opposition to strict morality, religion, courtly love tradition, conventionalism, didacticism, imperialism, machinery and commodified culture. When regarded from this perspective, his reactionary ideas can also be observed in his paintings. His alternative world is an aesthetic one, which is shaped by art and love; an imaginary world but one that is more real than the mechanized one.

Key Words

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Art, Aesthetic, Soul, Industry, Victorian Age, Dominant Culture, Minority Culture

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I. THE CONDITION OF ART IN THE VICTORIAN AGE

In the Victorian Age, England experienced enormous changes in society, culture and art with the industrial revolution and its consequences. By the late nineteenth century, the the feudal and agrarian order of the past was replaced by a democratic society, which meant the transference of politial power from the aristocracy to the people and the succession of Reform Bills. The developments in democracy were a result of the Industrial Revolution (Houghton 4-5). In the Victorian Age, the new machines for manufacturing and communication, more canals, macadam roads, railways and steamboats were introduced, which "hastened the growth of large-scale production by making possible a vast expansion of commerce" (Houghton 5). The new principle of laissez-faire started to be used, the speed of life increased and the spread of education doubled. Victorians lived in an age when the population increased in great amounts, large industrial cities grew, steam navigation, railways and electric telegraph were introduced, and more importantly science and scientific methodology spread into many areas of life (Gilmour 2-3). Victorians were proud of these improvements, which they thought distinguished their time from the past centuries (Houghton 4-5). Reeve argues that "industrialization" involves not only the technical and economic changes of a country but it includes "changes in social outlook and structure in cultural patterns, and in political life" (15). Consequently, industrialization in England is related to imperialism, technological improvements, economic growth, machinery, rise of the middle class and a mechanization as Mathew Arnold argues in *Culture and Anarchy* that in the Victorian Age "mechanical character, which civilization tends to take everywhere, is shown in the eminent degree" (49). Industrialization was a pride and of use for the British glory, imperialism and capitalism. Victorians saw the emergence of great improvements which made life easier. However, these changes were not reacted in the same way by all the Victorians, for instance, the steam engine was seen both as "beautiful" and as a "terrible monster" as well as the "symbol of the triumph of reason over the obscurantism of the past" (Eco 393).

The changes in industry that paved the way to mechanization of the Victorian Age were appreciated by the majority of the society, who saw industrialization as a glory. However, there was a minority of people who believed that culture and art had to be free from the industrial changes. Industrialization and mechanization of the world was opposed by Victorian intellectuals such as Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and William Morris who believed that industry and machinery should not be taken as the dominant features of the age. In his work *Past and Present*, Carlyle criticized the majority of the Victorian people for whom "to see beauty, order, gratitude, loyal human hearts around them, shall be of no moment; to see fuliginous deformity, mutiny, hatred and despair, with the addition of half a million guineas, shall be better" (Book IV. viii). Thus, he described the Victorians who searched for beauty, order, gratitude and loyalty as "a respectable, ever-increasing minority, who do strive for something higher than money" (Book IV. viii).

Matthew Arnold was among the minority of the Victorians, who thought that the modern world was mechanical and that it tended to become more so. Furthermore, he believed that the mechanical character was "in the most eminent degree" in the Victorian Age (49). Arnold reacted against the industrial and materialistic approach to life and suggested culture as an answer to the mechanic, material civilization and machinery in his work *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold believed that culture searched for perfection. For him culture itself was perfection; accordingly, he criticized machinery to be taken as perfection:

> What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? what is wealth but machinery? what are religious organizations but machinery? Now almost every voice in England is accustomed to speak of these things as if they were precious ends in themselves, and therefore had some of the characters of perfection indisputably joined to them. (50)

Matthew Arnold thought that the greatness of England was not in her industry or wealth, but that it was to be found in her culture, which he explained as having a love of perfection and a "desire simply to make reason and the will of God prevail, its freedom from fanaticism, by its attitude towards all this machinery" (60). Instead of machinery,

he gave importance to "a perfection in which the characters of beauty and intelligence are both present" and borrowing from Jonathan Swift, he referred to these qualities as "the two noblest of things, sweetness and light" (54). Arnold thought that perfection could be found in sweetness and light and that such a perfection was the great aim of culture: "Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has yet one greater!—the passion for making them prevail" (69).

In the Victorian age, even art was affected by industrialization. A link between art and manufactures was formed in order to promote "good industrial desing" (Gilmour 16). Most of the Victorians thought that there was creativity in mechanical craftsmanship and "not content with the illustrating range of applied science, they strove to make of their looms and reapers, their gates and boilers, obvious works of art" (Buckley 127). Engravings started to be multiplied in great amounts, Victorians could buy books with illustrations and the *Illustrated London News,* in which there were the pictures of fashion, painting, architecture and interior design. Furthermore, the developments in technology also made possible the spread of photography in 1850's (Gilmour 16-17). The things which Victorians took as art works were factory made products, made by machines, in a way, "they sacrificed the beautiful to the ingenious" (Buckley 127). Morse argues that the world had never seen so much art, but the struggle for art became even more difficult as "mass-produced, mechanical produced work" such as "book illustration, the production of decorated china, of ornamental tiles, of fabrics and materials, the design of furniture and other everyday objects begin to make a considerable impact on everyday world" (395). In addition to paintings and sculptures, these mechanical products which were made in great amounts started to be taken as art works.

Industry even affected the colours and it became "the fashion of the day to overlay colourful pigments with brown washes, rendering them drab, as if their owners wished to know nothing of a world that existed before coal-smoke" (Hardin 7). Not only the machine made products were taken as art works and the art works of the past ages were even industrialized with grey colours, but the beautiful objects were tended to be seen

with their commercial value (Michele 362-363). In the Victorian age, commecial value of art works were more in the foreground compared to their beauty and aesthetic value as a result of industry and capitalism. Therefore, Victorian aesthetics turned into

> [. . .] the expression of a basic duality, arising from the introduction of practical function to the realm of Beauty. In a world in which, over and above its usual function, every object became goods, in a world in which exchange value was superimposed over all values of utility, even the aesthetic enjoyment of the beautiful object was transformed into a display of its commercial value. Beauty ended up by coinciding no longer with the superfluous, but with value: the space once occupied by the vague, by the indeterminate, was now filled by the practical function of the object. (Michele 363)

The didacticism and conventionalism of art was in contrast with the transient nature of the age. Industry was improving but art was standing still, both of which made the condition of art even more problematic. Works that were considered as art or people who could appreciate those works were a minority of the Victorian people, and they were the people who did not appreciate mass produced products as art works. They thought that "a mechanical civilization had been created by a mechanical science, and that science was trying to substitute for art" (Williams, *Culture* 150). They believed that art belonged to a separate sphere away from the industrial world, and they longed for an art far removed from what Adorno and Horkheimer termed as "culture industry" (31). Intellectuals such as John Ruskin and William Morris were among the prominent Victorians who saw that the idea of art was changed from the aesthetic to the industrial and reacted against it.

John Ruskin reacted against industrialism, machinery and imitative art and argued that art should be relieved from all these which he saw as unnatural and artificial. He thought that expecting men to create perfectly crafted works like machine made products turned them machines and believed that people had to be free and with imagination:

> You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of his kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to

> consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool. (*The Lamp* 259)

Ruskin gave great importance to architecture and criticized the Victorian architecture in his book *The Stones of Venice*. As Harris argues, Ruskin criticized the Victorian architecture because he suggested architecture as a means to bring art to the majority of the Victorians and he further states that:

> Ruskin seems to have seen that, after all, only the comparatively wealthy could have fine art around them, and it was impossible for the poorest classes—still a very large and terribly deprived portion of the population in Ruskin's time—to have any attractive, not to say beautiful, objects in their homes. The one art that the average individual might encounter with any frequency was architecture. (102)

Ruskin glorified Gothic Art which is "the symbol of pre-capitalist structure and of creative freedom" (Barringer 52). Ruskin's concept of art priviledges beauty and uses nature as the source of inspiration On this issue Michele suggests that according to Ruskin the purpose of architecture was "the realization of a natural Beauty obtained by harmonizing the building within the landscape" and he further explains that "this Rustic Beauty, which rejected the new materials in the name of the naturalness of stone and wood, was the only one capable of expressing the vital spirit of people (367). Ruskin saw most of the buildings in England as soulless and similar to each other in contrast to the gothic buildings which were the work of men who had their choice, imagination, originality and a soul which he expressed in one of his significant essays called "The Nature of Gothic," published in the book *The Stones of Venice.* In the essay, he criticized the search for perfection and the desire to create the same works over and over again in order to achieve perfection which he believed was a kind of slavery. In his book, he argued that most of the buildings in England that looked perfect meant the slavery of their workers as they were not allowed to use their imagination or creativity, but they were just made to copy a prescribed perfection. Ruskin explained this slavery as:

> [. . .] to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and the skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with, -this it is to be slave-master indeed. (*The Lamp* 260)

Moreover, he believed that the examples of Gothic architecture represented the originality and freedom of their workers, even though they were often seen as ugly or imperfect compared to the dominant architecture in England. He stated that these Gothic buildings were "signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure" (*The Lamp* 261).

Ruskin not only criticized architecture but he also criticized didacticism in Victorian art, which also ruined creativity and originality as industry did. He believed that expecting the artists to create similar works in the same perfect techniques limited imagination and creativity. He criticized the Royal Academy which expected all the artists to reach a typical technical perfection as that of masters such as Raphael. Thus he saw the works created in imitation of the works that were shown as perfection just like mere copies:

> We begin in all probability, by telling the youth of fifteen or sixteen, that Nature is full of faults, and that he is to improve her; but that Raphael is perfection, and that more he copies Raphael the better, that after much copying Raphael, he is to try what he can do himself in a Raphaelesque, but yet original, manner: that is to say, he is to try to do something very clever, all out of his own head, but yet this clever something is properly subjected to Raphaelesque rules, is to have a principal light occupying one- seventh of its space, and a principal shadow occupying one-third of the same; that no two people's heads in the picture are to be turned the same way; and that all the personages represented are to possess ideal beauty of the highest order. [. . .] This I say is the kind of teaching which through various channels, Royal Academy lecturings, press criticisms, public enthusiasm, and not the least by solid weight of gold, we give to our young men. (*Pre-Raphaelitism* 19)

As it can be clearly understood from Ruskin's description of the condition of art in the Victorian Age, art was not only a minority culture, but it was also defined by the dominant conventionalism of the Royal Academy, which resulted in the formation of a stereotypical idea of art. Though "the Academy was the focal point of the Victorian Art

world, [. . .] it discouraged innovation" (Treuherz 12). The Royal Academy had the idea of "grand style" that imposed art to be like that of Raphael. The "perfection" of the High Renaissance art and "muted colors" were "the prevailing aesthetic" (Hardin 26). The academic convention praised neo-classical figure-paintings and historical paintings (Harris 85-87). Historical painting and the grand style were praised by the first president of the Royal Academy Sir Joshua Reynolds, a century before the Victorian Age. In fact, the lectures given by the Royal Academy professors of painting for a hundred years following his death were nearly the same as the lectures of Reynolds (Harris 85-87). Victorian artists took up these principles and wanted their works to be approved by the didactic and conventional Academy. This understanding caused the dominant culture of the age to be defined by conventionalism, didacticism and a resistance to change and dominant idea of art to be defined by High Renaissance art. The Royal Academy was a dominant decision maker and a dominant institution for the Victorian art world, and even was a "hegemony" as its power was seen as legitimate and natural by the rest of society. It is a "hegemony" that can be explained in Stuart Hall's definition; its power is based on "winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural" (qtd. in Hebdige 366). Victorians saw the rules that the Academy imposed as natural and they accepted them.

Another Victorian intellectual who thought that art was a minority culture in the Victorian age was William Morris (Williams, *Culture* 153). Morris thought that only a small minority was interested in art works and that non-works of art were in the majority. In his essay "The Beauty of Life" Morris criticizes the condition of art and argues that unique and beautiful craft-works can no longer be found easily and divides craft-work into two categories:

> [. . .] works of art and non-works of art: now nothing made by man's hand can be indifferent: it must be either beautiful and elevating, or ugly and degrading; and those things that are without art are so aggressively; they wound it by their existence, and they are now so much in the majority that the works of art that we are obliged to set ourselves to seek for, whereas the other things are the ordinary companions of our everyday life; so that if those who cultivate art intellectually were inclined never so much to wrap themselves in their special gifts and their high cultivation, and so live happily, apart from other men, and despising them, they could not do so:

> they are as it were living in wait to offend and vex their nicer sense and educated eyes: they must share in the general discomfort- and I am glad of it. (56)

Similarly, in another essay "The Art of the People," Morris complains about the vanishing of beauty and aesthetic, and severely criticizes machinery, the industrial and the capitalist system. He argues that machines violently destroyed life (43). Furthermore, he states "commercial profit" as "the monster who destroyed all that beauty" in his essay "The Aims of Art" (93). Morris saw arts as the solution to the modern world where he believed "the beauty and romance have been uselessly, causelessly, most foolishly thrown away" the world which he saw as "growing uglier and more commonplace, in spite of the conscious and very strenuous efforts of a small group of people towards the revival of art" ("The Aims" 86). Thus a small group of people reacted to the dominant ideas which helped to form the character of the age as an age of battle and quest which "are important in arriving at an understanding of the style or charter of the time (Timko 609).

II. THE PRE-RAPHAELITES' ALTERNATIVE WORLD OF AESTHETICS

Significant changes occurred in Europe, in the year 1848, when revolutions involving political and economic revolts started in many countries as well as in France. However, there was not a revolution in Great Britain, except for in her art. A group of seven young Victorians who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood united in 1848 as a "cultural formation" that reacted against the dominant culture of the Victorian Age (Sinfield 41). The Brotherhood was a "class friction" with "alternative cultural [. . .] affiliations" which were "not characteristic of their whole class" (Williams, *The Sociology* 74). Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, William Michael Rossetti, Frederic George Stephens, Thomas Woolner and James Collinson[1] were the members of the Brotherhood that was formed "with a view to a

[1] Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the leading member of the Brotherhood. John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt were the productive and well known painters of the Brotherhood. The brother of D.G. Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti was an art critic rather than a painter or a poet. Frederic George

reform or re-development of art" (W. M. Rossetti 5). Their aim was "to transform Victorian culture by establishing a new idea of 'advanced' culture as, in a sense, countercultural—always in advance of, or opposed to, conventional thought" (Riede, *Revisited* 55). The Brotherhood was a reactionary formation against industrialism, machinery and mass production, having been influenced by intellectuals such as Carlyle and Ruskin. They not only reacted to the industrial world with their art, but they also reacted to the condition of art in the Victorian age. Their paintings, poetry and prose were among the works of art that could "powerfully challenge [. . .] dominant ideological forms and present themselves as alternatives to them" (Harrison, *Victorian* 2). Thus they were among the constituters of culture as "culture is largely constituted by discursive practices and the discursive formations these practices generate" (Harrison, *Victorian* 3).

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a radical group, who "were dissidents from their class, and in one sense rebels against it, but in a specializing way, in that they found in the arts of paintings and poetry an alternative to the dominant social and cultural order" (Williams, *The Sociology* 78). The movement was a "youthful rebellion against the Royal Academy [. . .] to what they saw as stereotyped, meaningless and insincere art" (Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite* 1). They challenged the didactic principles of the Royal Academy, which were indeed the principles of the dominant culture.

While the Royal Academy can be defined as a "hegemony," the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which is an oppositional group that did not accept the legitimate dominance of the Academy and challenged its power can be thought as operating like a subculture, to borrow Hebdige's definition of the subcultures from his article "Culture to Hegemony" (367). Even though Hebdige's idea of subcultures is used for the formations in the twentieth century, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood can be thought as working like a subculture as well, because it appropriated certain themes of the dominant ideology such as religion by using it for their own purposes. Dante Gabriel

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Stephens was both a poet and a painter. However, he had very few paintings when compared to his poetry and essays which were published in *The Germ*. Thomas Woolner was a sculptor and a poet. James Collinson was a poet and the least known painter of the Brotherhood.

Rossetti, in particular used religion not with the aim of conveying didactic messages but for purely aesthetic purposes and this is going to be explained in detail in the following chapters.

The Academy did not like the aims of the group and was hostile towards the young artists, whereas Ruskin supported them and even described the Brotherhood as "the foundations of a school of art nobler than the world had seen for three hundred years" (qtd. in Gaunt 32). This school of art was in "thorough opposition to commercial modes" with their "attitudes to manual labour and to the practice of arts and crafts" (Williams, *The Sociology* 78). In their paintings they presented a pre-industrial era, in which arts and crafts were given much more importance. In their paintings, they mixed naturalism with medievalism which meant "an attachment to a certain romantic and decorative kind of beauty, which was also—and in the end very explicitly—a critique of the ugliness of nineteenth century commercial and industrial civilization" which made them "dissidents from their class" (Williams, *The Sociology* 78). Pre-Raphaelites used nature and the pre-industrial ages as their source of inspiration as they thought that these constituted an alternative to the industrial Victorian Age.

The style of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings changed in time. The early work of the Pre-Raphaelites was "deliberately archaic, giving it an expressiveness that marked it out from the contemporary narrative painting"(Treuherz 17). Later, under the influence of Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelites developed "a minutely painted, brilliantly coloured style, copying directly from nature" (Treuherz 17). They often used symbolic realism in their works. The use of bright colours, medievalism and reactionary attitude to the conventional art imposed by the Royal Academy can be thought as the striking features of the Pre-Raphaelite painting.

Though the majority of the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were painters, the term Pre-Raphaelite was attributed to poetry and prose as much as it was used for paintings. The literary works and ideas of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their circle were published in a magazine called *The Germ* which they formed in 1850. In the magazine the Pre-Raphaelites put forward their ideas on art, literature and poetry. The

magazine served as a manifesto of the art school. Both the title of the magazine and its context made it apparent that the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were "in opposition to their culture" (Peckham 154). The Pre-Raphaelites "created societal change by implementing new practices in art and poetry. Seeking to find truth in an age of transition and doubt, they affected reform by implementing practices in art and poetry" (O'Hop 1). It was in their magazine that the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their circle[2] could publish their reformist ideas as well as their poems, essays, dialogues and short stories. As Hilton states:

> *The Germ* occupies a historical niche of some importance in that it was the first house journal of a self consciously avant garde artistic group, and set the usual pattern of the many such productions that have succeeded it—large amount of initial enthusiasm, a dearth of good copy, endless trouble with printers, no sales and a shorter life. (49)

In the magazine essays that theorized the principles of the Brotherhood and put forward their aims were "The Subject in Art," "The Subject in Art No. II" written by John L. Tupper and "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art" written by F. G. Stephens. The point that was primarily emphasized in the article "The Subject in Art" was that "Fine Art should regard the general happiness of man, by addressing those of his attributes which are peculiarly human, by exciting the activity of his rational and benevolent powers" (Tupper 64). This principle, which is stated in the manifesto of the Brotherhood; *The Germ* makes it evident that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was within the minority of the Victorian people whom Carlyle searched for and called "a respectable, ever-increasing minority, who do strive for something higher than money" (Book IV. viii). This minority aimed art "to see beauty, order, gratitude, loyal human hearts around them" and these are the qualities that Carlyle could not find in the modern world (Book IV. viii).

Another point emphasized by Tupper, which was in "The Subject in Art No. II," was that "the subject in art should be drawn from objects which so address and excite" the

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[2] The Pre-Raphaelite Circle is "an inner group of close, sometimes quarrelsome friends, sharing social and artistic values, into and out of which others moved, a loose circle with a larger fringe" (Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite 14).* John Ruskin, Christina Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Elizabeth Siddall, Jane Morris, Frederic George Watts, John L. Tupper, Coventy Patmore, Alfred Tennyson, Agernon Charles Swinburne, Robert Browning were among the famous members of the Circle.

artist (208). This principle can be seen as a reaction to didactic art of the Royal Academy, and it aimed to change the didacticism in the content of art. The painter who took up this principle would paint what he liked, instead of painting the prescribed preferences of the first president of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who "had firmly established in Britain the Renaissance hierarchy of genres in which history painting was the most prestigious art, while portraiture and landscape were relegated to inferior status" (Barringer 60).

The Brotherhood aimed to "break the bonds of current fashionable taste, to use painting to achieve cultural transcendence" (Peckham 136). The Brotherhood also aimed to subvert the dominant idea of art in the Victorian age by challenging the rules prescribed by the Royal Academy and by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The Pre-Raphaelites referred to the conventional techniques of the Academy as "slosh" and to Sir Joshua Reynolds as "Sir Sloshua" (Wood 10). Pre-Raphaelites saw the teachings of Reynolds as a "control of imaginative liberty" (Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism* 379). They gave great importance to imagination and originality both of which were restricted by the Academy. They wanted to bring freedom of choice to the artists and to the viewers. They wanted the artists to be free from the dogmatic rules of Sir Joshua Reynolds who in his *Discourses* clearly recommended

> [. . .] that an implicit obedience to the rules of art, as established by the great masters, should be exacted from the young students. That those models, which have passed through the approbation of ages, should be considered by them as perfect and infallible guides as subjects for their imitation, not their criticism. (January 2nd, 1769)

Another principle of the Brotherhood is a continuation of the first and second principles that is, "as objects so exciting the mental activity may excite it to any amount, and so possibly in the highest degree that all objects so exciting mental activity and emotion in the highest degree, may afford for subjects for High Art" (Tupper, "No II" 208). According to this principle, everything that inspired the artist and lead the artist to an imaginary world could be a subject for art. This principle aimed to change the conventionalism of the Royal Academy, as a consequence equally challenged the idea that works painted in a Raphaelesque manner were High Art. They challenged

Reynolds' idea of creating a work of High Art by considering "how a Michael Angelo or a Raffaelle would have treated this subject: and work yourself into a belief that your picture is to be seen and criticized by them when completed" (*Discourses*, December 11, 1769).

Thus, the name The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood originated from the aim of the Brotherhood to look for other sources to take as examples other than Raphael. They took their examples from the times before the High Renaissance after which the idea of Raphaelesque stereotypical perfection was accepted. By looking to a time before this stereotype, they could paint without imitating Raphael and Michelangelo. Furthermore, Ruskin stated that the Pre-Raphaelites were opposed to "the entire feeling of the Renaissance schools; a feeling compounded of indolence, infidelity, sensuality, and shallow pride" (*Pre-Raphaelitism* 23). When the Brothers signed their paintings as P.R.B, it was evident that they aimed their art to represent the kind of original, sincere and natural art before Raphael and High Renaissance. According to this idea, all works of fine art could be High Art, not just the works painted in a Raphaelesque manner.

In accordance with what is so far stated, it can be said that what made the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood a revolutionary cultural formation was their reaction to the dominant features of the age and to the dominant idea of taste in art. As can be seen by the principles mentioned by Tupper in *The Germ*, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood can be defined by their reaction to didacticism, and conventionalism. However, the Pre-Raphaelites also reacted to industrialism and machinery, to ugliness, and to the capitalism and imperialism of the Age.

The Victorian world which was getting colourless with machinery and industrialism was challenged by the highly colourful Pre-Raphaelite works. In fact, in his book *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin mentioned the Pre-Raphaelite's love of colour and that "a painter's business is to paint, primarily; and that all expression, and grouping and conceiving, and what else goes to constitute design, are of less importance than colour, in a coloured work" (*The Lamp* 53). Furthermore, he declared that "the purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most" (*The Lamp* 49). With lovely

colours and dramatic details in their paintings the Pre-Raphaelites provided an alternative to the Victorian Age. Some critics argue that Pre-Raphaelites were escapists (Chu 341). However, Pre-Raphaelites had an aim of improving the condition of Victorian art, introducing new themes and colours. Therefore, they cannot be thought as escaping from their own time but they can be considered as a group of artists working to turn their age into an ideal and artistic one.

The Pre-Raphaelites aimed to change the world that was created by the industry and machines as well as the didacticism with their use of medievalism in their paintings and poetry. In their medievalism they were influenced by Carlyle's, Pugin's and Ruskin's ideas of returning to the past. For the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Middle Ages "anchored in a vision of the beauty of everyday life of the time, in contrast to the ugliness of the present" (Barringer 53). The members of the Brotherhood took the Quattrocento Art, the art of the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance as their alternative to the Victorian Age which they saw as industrial, artificial and ugly. They were influenced by artists earlier than Raphael such as Botticelli, Bennozzo Gozzoli, Ghiberti, Fra Angilico, Masaccio, Ghirlandajo, Baccio della Porta, "for they represented an honesty that the young painters felt the High Renaissance style of Raphael lacked" (Hardin 26). Their honesty meant a less artificial and more natural representation in painting. In fact, Ruskin defended the sincerity of the Brotherhood which resulted in the Brotherhood to be "hailed as an artistic avant-garde" (Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite* 11). Furthermore, these painters were more gentle, graceful and free, they had more energy and dignity compared to the High Renaissance painters, according to the members of the Brotherhood (Stephens 130). The members believed that they had a bond between themselves and the Italian Quattrocento painters because they presented nature with a fresh and direct technique just like them. Therefore, they created their works with a similar approach which was unconventional. Being inspired by the Quattrocento painters, the Pre-Raphaelites mostly disliked the classical and baroque traditions (Hilton 33). Medievalism was not only used by the Pre-Raphaelites as a means to create an alternative medieval world as opposed to the industrial one, but medievalism itself was also challenged which can be seen in "Dante Rossetti's appropriations of medievalist discourse for ostensibly apolitical, aesthetic purposes" (Harrison, *Victorian* 5).

F. G. Stephens, in his essay "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art" that was published in *The Germ*, explained the meaning of the early Renaissance art for the Pre-Raphaelites as being less artificial, having passion and feeling in it and as "the crying out of the man, with none of the strut of the actor" (129). The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood aimed at an art that was purer than Renaissance Art, pure in the sense that "they partook less of coarseness and of conventional sentiment than any school which succeeded them, and that they looked more to nature; in fact, were more true, and less artificial" (129). They thought that by leaving the prescribed rules of the Royal Academy and looking into the early Italian art, they could find "a greater amount of bold imagination and originality of conception" (Stephens 131). The Pre-Raphaelites believed that the prescribed technicalities and the idea of perfection of the High Renaissance made the meaning, feelings and soul less in the foreground of art. Thus the Pre-Raphaelites believed that technicalities were "but additions; and not the real intent of the painting" (Stephens 129).

The Pre-Raphaelites believed in Mathew Arnold's idea that "the character of perfection as culture conceives it, is in growing and becoming, not in having and resting" as Hunt quoted in his work titled *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (59). The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, by departing from the prescribed principles, aimed to advance, rather than stand still and resist change. Even in the medievalism of the art school, there was the aim to go further. The early Renaissance, which the Brotherhood took as an example had the connotation of an "idealized conception of the political conditions which prevailed under the Italian republics, and thus with the modern struggle for emancipation" (Fraser 95). Therefore, the medievalism of the Brotherhood was a revolutionary aspect of the formation.

Another revolutionary aspect of the Brotherhood was "their challenges to the Victorian canons of beauty" (Casteras, "Pre-Raphaelite" 13). Pre-Raphaelite artists did not hesitate to paint women from the lower classes and prostitutes, and to present these paintings as beautiful which challenged the conventional idea that the good was beautiful. The most influential members of the Brotherhood had their own ways of subverting the canon as Susan Casteras explained in her article:

> In Hunt's and Millais's case, such dissent also meant challenging existing assumptions about class differences and etiquette as they stormed the hallowed realms of fine art. For Rossetti the allegations were different, as were the visual translations of both inner and outer beauty in the form of febrile, mysterious giantesses and femmes fatales. Provoking audiences to reconsider what was decorous or "correct" in art as well as private life, all three made "a stand for the truth, however naked or unacceptable," deploying new pictorial solutions to the eternal question of beauty and to the constant battle with "good taste" and the status quo. (32)

Raymond Williams identified the Pre-Raphaelites as "open and relaxed (bohemian) than the norms of their class" (*The Sociology* 78). The Pre-Raphaelites' representation of women from the lower classes in their paintings and poetry could best illustrate Raymond Williams' idea concerning the Pre-Raphaelites.

The Pre-Raphaelites made the literary works their subject matter in their paintings. They painted scenes from literary sources, from Arthurian tales, works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, which all together "made up the lifeblood of the Pre-Raphaelites and their new style" (Hardin 7). Furthermore, they painted scenes from poets who inspired them such as Homer, Dante, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson and Browning. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, John Everett Millais' *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel,* William Holman Hunt's *The Eve of St Agnes* (Fig. 1), Frederic George Stephens' *Morte d'Arthur* are examples to the use of the literary works as their sources in the paintings of the Brotherhood. The use of these sources in the paintings of the Brotherhood helped the members to create their alternative world to the industrial one which they disliked. The world that they created through their paintings was a beautiful dreamy world that was in contrast with the Victorian world which they saw as ugly and mechanic. They were often criticized because they used poetry rather than life as their model, and it was interpreted as having caused them to miss the reality which they aimed to search for (Bass 38). However, it can also be argued that the literary helped them to portray the reality of life, the real as opposed to the artificial. They created a reality with the use of rich colours and colours of nature which were seen as the "instinctive concept of beauty" in the Middle Ages, and they represented them with their use of the literary sources. Thus, in the Middle Ages "the richness of colors and the splendour of the gems were marks of power, and thus objects of desire and marvel"

(Eco 107). For the Pre-Raphaelites, the Middle Ages that they read from the literary sources were more real with the bright colours or colours of nature than the life, in which wealth was given great importance.

Both in their paintings and poetry, the Pre-Raphaelites used religion, at times pagan religions and Christian symbols (Merritt 11). They formed a link between religion and society with paintings such as Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents* (Fig. 2) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin.* They sometimes made paintings that were associated with the Oxford Movement which was a reaction to the dominant Protestanism of the age or they painted works that represented Protestanism as William Holman Hunt's painting *The Light of the World,* in which there is a "sign of mankind's potential for redemption through labour" and a "restatement of the Protestant work ethic" (Barringer 118). A larger version of the painting was presented to St Paul's Cathedral, which made the painting an official icon of English Protestanism (Barringer 118). However, more than religious purposes, they had aesthetic purposes in their use of religious themes and symbols in their works. In some of their works they, especially Dante Gabriel Rossetti, appropriated or subverted religion, especially Christianity for aesthetic purposes.

The Pre-Raphaelites took art seriously as they believed that art had a moral aspect of appealing to the majority of society. Therefore, members of the Brotherhood worried about their functions as artists, and even more about the expression of these functions:

> Collinson said, 'I have always tried to paint conscientiously.' Hunt continually insisted on his own probity, and even Millais could be caught making the uncharacteristic remark that it was their duty as artists to turn 'the minds of men to good reflections... heightening the profession as one of unwordly usefulness to mankind. This is our great object in painting.' (qtd. in Hilton 54)

In the light of what is suggested, it is possible to argue that the Pre-Raphaelites tried to prevent art from being a minority culture, as it was in the Victorian Age. They wanted art to reach to much more people, which could result in a change in society. If art

Fig. 1. Hunt, William Holman. *The Eve of St. Agnes.* 1848. Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

Fig. 2. Millais, John Everett. *Christ in the House of His Parents*. 1849-1850. Tate Gallery, London.

entered more houses and if decoration could be like an art work rather than produced by mass production, society could be turned into an artistic one, rather than an industrial society.

In 1854 the Brotherhood came to an end which was best summarized by a poem by Christina Rossetti, the sister of D. G. Rossetti, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle, and a well known poet of the Victorian Age:

> 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:
> While William M. Rossetti merely Lops
> His B's in English disesteemed as Coptic.
> Calm Stephens in the twilight smokes his pipe,
> But long the dawning of his public day:
> 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 consumnated P.R.B. (qtd. in Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism* 61)

In spite of the fact that the Brotherhood of seven young artists was at an end, "Pre-Raphaelitism was only just beginning" (Wood 22). Although the members went on their separate ways, they continued to create works of art that were often considered as Pre-Raphaelite. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown formed the Hogarth Club in 1858. The club took its name from William Hogarth (1697-1764) whom Brown referred as "originator of moral invention and drama in modern art" and William Holman Hunt referred as "the stalwart founder of Modern English art" (Cherry 237). With the formation of this "exhibiting society and social club," the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle could exhibit their art works without worrying about whether their paintings would be "rejected or badly hung" by the Royal Academy (Cherry 237). The club dissolved in 1861, by then Rossetti had exhibited some of his most striking paintings such as *Bocca Baciata*. After the dissolution of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Hogarth Club, the Pre-Raphaelites followed some of the original Pre-Raphaelite ideas such as using the early Italian art as an example for the ideal art and the literary works

as their source of inspiration. The members of the Brotherhood who would continue to be remembered as the Pre-Raphaelites added a more obvious criticism of society into their art works. In their paintings, they frequently dealt with issues concerning the condition of women in the Victorian era such as in William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (Fig. 3) and in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Found* (Fig. 4). *The Awakening Conscience* deals with the issue of fallen women and that the fallen women can be awakened from the state of being fallen "openly, dangerously, within a less controllable sphere than that of family reading" which was "at a time when even Gaskell's own daughters were forbidden *Ruth*, and *David Copperfield* was widely considered unsuitable reading for girls" (Flint 64). The unfinished painting of Rossetti, *Found* deals with the same issue, but it does not present the promise of being awakened from sin for the fallen women. The woman does not seem to be willing to be saved, although a man tries to take her away from the dark wall she leans against. The painting openly presents the issue of prostitution in an age of strict morality.

In the 1860s William Morris and Edward Burne Jones united with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and continued in the movement of art as the Second Wave Pre-Raphaelites. Second Wave Pre-Raphaelitism brought a more severe criticism of society and a clearer attempt to change its culture. Morris reacted to the fact that "the machine took over so much of the function of manufacture that the crafts-man was reduced to only a part of a totally mechanized culture" (Gordon 272). He wanted to change this mechanized culture by using art. Morris argued that the aim of art was "to destroy the curse of labour by making work the pleasurable satisfaction of our impulse towards energy, and giving to that energy hope of producing something worth its existence" ("The Aims" 91). For Morris art was a means of achieving cultural change. He believed that what industrialism has taken away from people could be given back by art such as happiness and pleasure, which he saw as the aim of art. He thought that "the true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life, in elevating them by art instead of handling the performance of them over the unregarded drudges, and ignoring them" ("The Aims" 94). Therefore, for Morris art was a means

Fig. 3. Hunt, William Holman. *The Awakening Conscience*. 1853-1854. Tate Gallery, London.

Reproduced from *The Complete Writings and Pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti,* ed. Jerome McGann, http://www.rossettiarchive.org, freely distributed by IATH and the NINES consortium under a Creative Commons License.

Fig. 4. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Found.* 1854. Delaware Art Museum, Wilmigton.

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to live and a way to win back the beauty of life, which he thought industrialism and commercialism has destroyed.

The Pre-Raphaelites challenged the machinery, industrialism and the condition of art in the Victorian Age as it was stated before. However "there was also a national element to their challenge, to counter the high regard paid to French Art" (Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite* 8). The artistic world that they tried to create was a British world of art which could be an alternative empire as opposed to the empire of industrialism and colonialism. In the world of Pre-Raphaelites, Britain was to be a world power with her art instead of by colonialism; by destroying the art of other countries as William Morris disapprovingly mentioned:

> Englishmen in India are, in their shortsightedness, actively destroying the very sources of [. . .] all the famous and historical arts of the great peninsula [. . .] to be thrust aside for the advantage of any poultry scrap of so called commerce, and matters are now speedily coming to an end there. [. . .] The Conquered races in their hopelessness are everywhere giving up the genuine practice of their own arts. ("The Art" 37)

All Morris' views on art which he expressed in his lectures can be thought as the Pre-Raphaelite views not only because Morris was a second wave Pre-Raphaelite but also because his ideas are similar to those of the earlier Pre-Raphaelite artists. This similarity can be clearly seen in their art works, especially in the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was the leading and the most influential member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Rossetti continued to be recognized as a Pre-Raphaelite artist after the dissolution of the Brotherhood as well. However, he was not only appreciated as a Pre-Raphaelite artist but he was also seen as an artist who changed the condition of art in the Victorian Age. In one of his lectures Ruskin said "I believe Rossetti's name should be placed first on the list of men, within my own range of knowledge, who have raised and changed the spirit of modern art, raised in absolute attainment, changed in direction of temper" (qtd. in Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism* 345).

In the following chapters, Rossetti's alternative world as opposed to the Victorian one is going to be discussed in detail in the light of the issues that are presented in the

Introduction. Throughout the thesis, it is going to be argued that D. G. Rossetti created an aesthetic world with his works. This world is built with art and natural beauty, coloured with some forgotten stories of the past ages, love, passion and a yearning for the parted mate. Rossetti's aestheticism refers to his insistence in beauty in contrast with industrialism, the importance he gave to art and his use of the dominant features of the Age in order to highlight the importance of art.

Rossetti's works, which present a reaction to the dominant Victorian culture and the ones that present his alternative world are going to be discussed in this thesis. In the first chapter, Rossetti's two prose tales: "Hand and Soul" and "Saint Agnes of Intercession" are going to be discussed in relation to Rossetti's art, his ideas on art and his opposition to the dominant Victorian culture. In the second chapter, Rossetti's early poems are going to be discussed in relation to the aesthetic world that he created with his poems and his reaction to strict morality, religion, courtly love tradition, conventionalism, didacticism, imperialism, machinery and commodified culture. In the last chapter, Rossetti's sonnet sequence "House of Life" is going to be discussed with its focus on love and art and as a small version of Rossetti's aesthetic world. Some of Rossetti's paintings are going to be used to illustrate his reactionary attitude to the stereotypical art of the Victorian Age.

CHAPTER I

D. G. ROSSETTI'S PROSE TALES ON ART: "HAND AND SOUL" AND "SAINT AGNES OF INTERCESSION"

I shut myself within my soul,
And the shapes come eddying forth. (Rossetti, *Works* 476)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti; a Pre-Raphaelite Victorian, a Victorian Romantic, an Italian Englishman, a painter and a poet was born in 1828. His father was Gabriele Rossetti, an Italian refugee poet and father of four children who "did not grow up in a political party or even in a recognized stratum of society; as aliens, they could not be neatly categorized as proletarian, or bourgeois, or gentlefolk" (Stevenson 21). The Rossetti family had many artists other than Dante Gabriel Rossetti, such as his brother Michael William Rossetti; a critic and a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and his sister Christina Rossetti a well known poet. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was determined to become an artist from his early childhood. He read Shakespeare when he was five years old, and when he was nine, he read Robert Browning whom he admired greatly throughout his life. Before he was nineteen he had read Scott, Burns, Shelley, Poe, Keats, Byron, Blake, Tennyson, Coleridge and Dante, his great inspiration and influence. He wrote a poem in blank verse called "The Slave" at five, and "Sir Hugh the Heron" at twelve while he was sketching illustrations for literary works as well, and he wrote his famous poem "The Blessed Damozel" when he was nineteen (Cooper 22).

Rossetti was not only an artist starting from his childhood, but he was also a rebel. Hall Caine, literary critic and Rossetti's friend, believed that he was a reactionary and a challenge to the Victorian Society even when he was a child, and he further stated that:

> In his young manhood Rossetti's manners had been, to say the least, robustious, suggesting a person in deliberate revolt against nearly all the conventions of society, and delighting, if only out of perversity or for devilish amusement, in every opportunity to startle well-ordered people out of their propriety by championing the worst view of Neronian Rome, and by silencing, by sheer vehemence of denunciation, the seemly protests of very good and gentle folk. (4)

Rossetti was influenced by literary, Italian, religious and urban elements of his "respectably poor, middle-class" and "artistic" family (Cooper 2). D. G. Rossetti felt himself as "wholly English" whereas many of his critics and even his brother saw him more as an Italian as we can see in William Michael Rossetti's words about him: "Italian temper of mind, in the quasirestriction of his interest to the beautiful and the passionate, in disregard of those prejudices and conventions which we call 'Philistine', in general tone of perception" (Cooper 4). Rossetti attended Cary's Academy of Art and later the Royal Academy Antique School; where he met William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Rossetti did not learn much for his artistic career from his formal education. He was taught in painting by Ford Madox Brown.

He was the founder and leading member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and he had such a great contribution to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement that in the middle of the century the term "Pre-Raphaelite" had almost came to mean "Rossettian" (Riede, *Revisited* 8). William E. Fredeman identified him as "in every sense a one-man show," an influence on generations of poets, painters like Burne Jones and Morris and on critics like Pater and Wilde (*The Pre-Raphaelite* 55). Dante Gabriel Rossetti was both a painter and a poet. Thus he was "the victim of a kind of aesthetic schizophrenia, [. . .] and throughout his life he struggled to find a common language adequate to serve his twin talents, which were if not exactly a curse, certainly a mixed blessing" (Fredeman 61). Rossetti's paintings were like poems, and his poems like paintings. In his poems Rossetti used visual images and in his paintings he told stories expecting the viewer to read the work. Both his paintings and poems followed the Wordsworthian idea of "emotion recollected in tranquility," although the emotion of his poems was "emotion that racked the heart" (Cooper 113). Even though Rossetti's poems are dominated by passion instead of tranquility, he is also considered as a Romantic poet. Infact, Welby argues that he was the leader of the Victorian Romanticism, which was characterized by the association of graphic arts and poetry (4-6). Some of the major aspects of Rossetti's works; devotion to nature and representing the imaginary are the examples of his romanticism. In addition to being thought as a Victorian Romantic, he was taken to be the greatest poet of the Victorian Age by some of his contemporaries. The well known

Victorian poet and a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle, Algernon Charles Swinburne took Rossetti as one of the best poets of the Victorian Age:

> In all great poets there must be an ardent harmony, a heat of spiritual life, guiding without constraining the bodily grace of motion, which shall give charm and power to their least work; sweetness that cannot be weak and force that will not be rough. There must be an instinct and a resolution of excellence which will allow no shortcoming or malformation of thought or word: there must also be so natural a sense of right as to make any such deformity or defect impossible, and leave upon the work done no trace of any effort to avoid or to achieve. It must be serious, simple, perfect; and it must be thus evident and native impulse. The mark of painstaking as surely lowers the level of style as sign of negligence, in the best work there must be no trace of a laborious or a languid hand. In all the points the style of Mr. Rossetti excels that of any English poet of our day. (15)

Rossetti's achievement was in his sincerity and in his search and dream of reaching the soul. Bass states that "the search for [. . .] parted twin, as in Plato and Shelley, was also Rossetti's quest, and he believed that it would take him out of the material world and death" (164). In his poetry and painting, he followed the Shelleyan ideal of the soul within the soul with beauty and death (Riede, *Revisited* 2). His subjects of beauty, love and death all emphasized his one dream of reaching the soul. Rossetti was trying to reach the soul that the Victorian mechanization lacked. He was trying to create a dream or an illusion in the industrial and mechanized Victorian world which intellectuals such as Arnold, Carlyle and Ruskin criticized.

A noteworthy aspect of Rossetti's life which was also reflected in his works was his relationships with various women. The women in his life not only influenced him but also his portrayal of them in his paintings influenced the Victorian Age. As Riede argues: "Though Rossetti's art was deliberately removed from the mundane and vulgar world, it also was shaped by and helped in turn to shape Victorian attitudes towards both art and women" (*Revisited* 50). The first woman to influence Rossetti was his sister Christina Rossetti who was the model of his earliest paintings, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and *The Annunciation*. Rossetti appreciated his sister as an artist and wanted her to be a part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This suggestion of Rossetti was refused by the other members of the Brotherhood, but she continued to be an important part of

the Pre-Raphaelite circle. The most important influence for Rossetti was his wife Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall whom Rossetti and his circle often called "Guggums" and "Ida." As Riede further argues, "she was to be the soul within his soul, the Beatrice to his Dante" and "for several years the dominant image in Rossetti's art" (*Revisited* 9). Rossetti painted a portrait of Elizabeth Siddall as Beatrix after she died (Fig. 5). After his wife died, Rossetti buried his unpublished poems with his wife. However, some years later he changed his mind and he had those copies back from the grave. "This macabre event, which still provokes an emotional response, successfully helped to establish Rossetti's position as a Romantic artist alongside Keats, Byron and Shelley" whom Rossetti admired greatly (Marsh, "Imagining" 66).

The paintings and portraits of two other women constituted a significant place among Rossetti's art works. After Siddall, Rossetti had two more significant women in his life, first of whom was one of Rossetti's models; Fanny Cornforth, his mistress who was also painted several times by Rossetti. Rossetti had another love affair with Jane Morris, William Morris' wife. "As Elizabeth Siddall had seemed the very embodiment of Rossetti's soùl in the early years, so Jane Morris seemed in the later years" (Riede, *Revisited* 10). Jane Morris appeared in many paintings by Rossetti and became one of the renowned Pre-Raphaelite women along with Elizabeth Siddall. Even though these paintings did not include some of the primary Pre-Raphaelite aims such as truthfulness to nature, they were definitely part of Rossetti's search for his own soul, his parted mate as well as his suggestion of beauty and aesthetics to the Victorian Age.

Rossetti not only painted women but he also wrote poems which were about women. By telling about women from various classes and painting women in a manner bringing forth their bodily beauty, Rossetti broke the dominant Victorian norm about women and showed his bohemian side, which was mentioned in the Introduction in relation to Raymond Williams' remarks (*The Sociology* 78). Rossetti took women out of their domestic spheres into a more widely seen artistic sphere and became one of the Pre-Raphaelites who challenged "the Victorian canons of beauty" ("Pre-Raphaelite" 13). In this artistic sphere, women were seen as beautiful and valued no matter who they were. Rossetti's paintings and poetry about women were a challenge to the male dominated

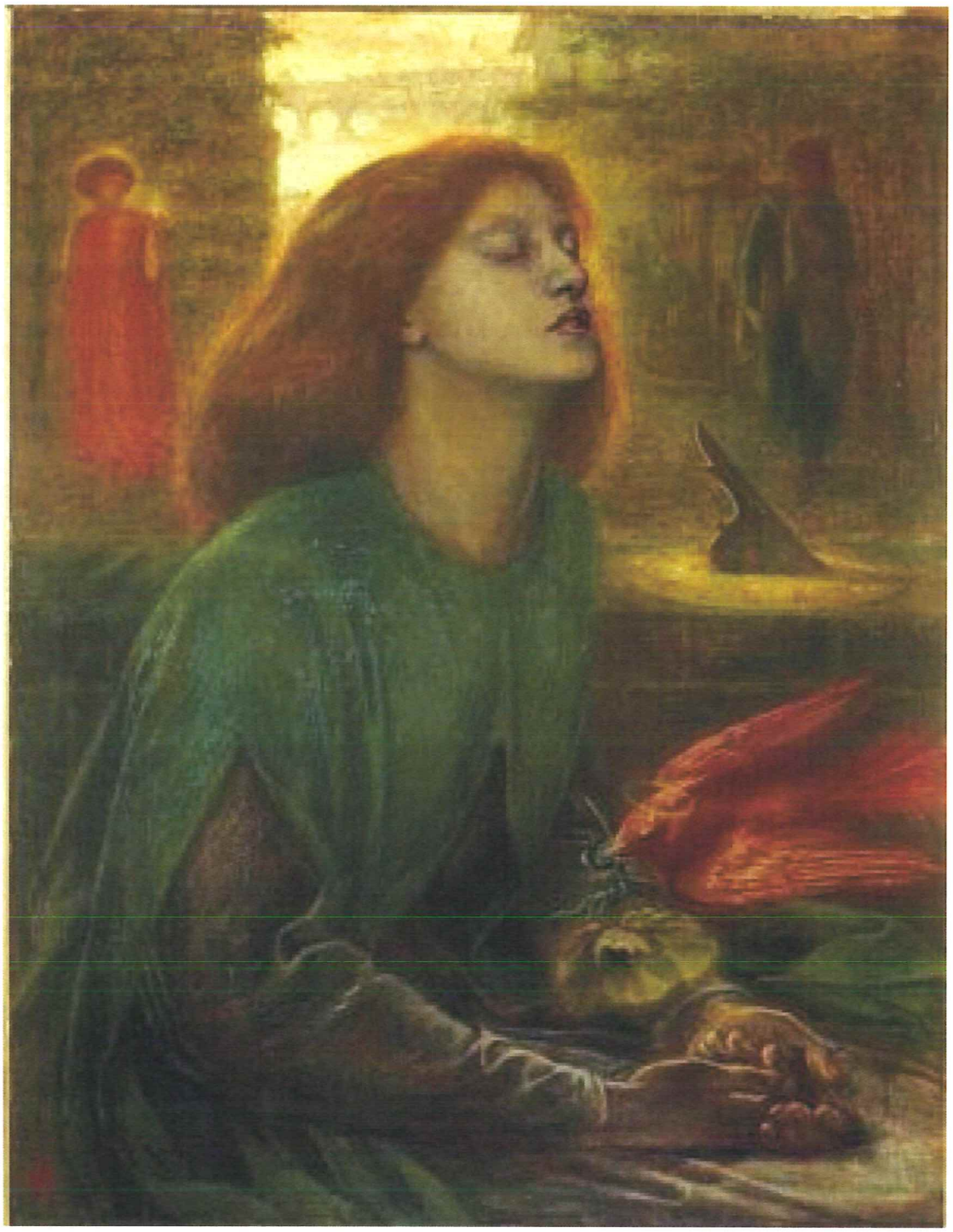

Fig. 5. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Beata Beatrix*. 1864. Tate Gallery, London.

Victorian world. It was an alternative world prevailed by women and this world projected a different idea of beauty far removed from the convention.

Rossetti's alternative world was a challenge to "a world of men" in Robert Browning's words. This "world of men" that Rossetti reacted included not only "battle" but also "all vigorous, ordered, public, daylight pursuits" (Sonstroem 11). In contrast, in the world that Rossetti created, women had the greatest place. In his poetry and paintings, he continuously wrote about women whom Sonstroem categorized into four as, "heavenly Madonnas instrumental in saving men," "femme fatales, ladies instrumental in destroying men," "sinful women in need of help—usually prostitutes," and a small category of "a fair lady victimized by a man" (Sonstroem 4). All these beautiful ladies constituted ninety-five percent of his poems and ninety-eight percent of his paintings (Sonstroem 3). These works were severely criticized by the Victorian Society, which made it apparent that his ideas were in conflict with those of the dominant Victorian culture.

One of the critics who criticized the bohemian artist was Robert Buchanan who accused Rossetti of "immoral sensuality" and "fleshliness" in his essay "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (Riede, *Revisited* 11). Rossetti's questioning of women's place in the Victorian Age and not obeying the norms of his society was criticized by Buchanan along with the "fleshliness" he saw in Rossetti's poetry. In his essay, Buchanan criticized Rossetti for his poems which he saw as "noteworthy for delicacy of touch as others are for shamelessness of exposition" (28). He stated in his essay that he saw Rossetti as "a fleshly person, with nothing peculiar to tell us or teach us, with extreme self control, a strong sense of color, and a careful choice of diction" (29). He saw the Pre-Raphaelites as "fleshly persons who wish to create form for its own sake" rather than poets who gave importance to the soul in the first place (37). He put forward his criticism about Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters in a critical tone:

> The fleshly gentlemen have bound themselves by solemn league and covenant to extol fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art; to aver that poetic expression is greater than poetic thought, and by inference that the body is greater than the soul, and sound superior to sense; and that the poet, properly to develop his poetic faculty, must be an

> intellectual hermaphrodite, to whom the very facts of day and night are lost in a whirl of aesthetic terminology. (25)

Buchanan's most severe accusation was that Rossetti's poetry did not tell about the soul or the heart, but only told about bodily emotions. Mentioning about the parts in Rossetti's poems, which he saw as telling bodily emotions, he accused Rossetti's poetry for its emphasis on physical details:

> Poetry is perfect human speech, and these archaisms are the mere fiddlededeeing of empty heads and hollow hearts. Bad as they are, they are the true indication of falser tricks and affectations which lie far deeper. They are triffles, light as air, showing how the wind blows. The soul's speech and the heart's speech are clear, simple, natural, and beautiful, and reject the meretricious tricks to which we have drawn attention. (35-36)

Buchanan's accusation was one of the most severe criticisms Rossetti ever received. As a result of the criticisms he got, Rossetti "broke down utterly, mentally and physically [. . .] and attempted suicide" (Cooper 70). However, he recovered and wrote an essay called "The Stealthy School of Criticism," answering the accusations made by Buchanan. Rossetti mentioned in his essay that he searched for the soul in his poetry that Buchanan saw as non-existent. In his essay, referring to his sonnet sequence *The House of Life*, some of the sonnets of which Buchanan criticized, he defended his poetry:

> One charge it would be impossible to maintain against the writer of the series in which it occurs, and that is, the wish on his part to assert that the body is greater than the soul. For here all the passionate and just delights of the body are declared—somewhat figuratively, it is true, but unmistakably—to be as naught if not ennobled by the concurrence of the soul at all times. Moreover nearly one half of the series of sonnets has nothing to do with love, but treats of quite other life influences. (40)

Although Rossetti was thought to be presenting bodily beauty rather than spiritual beauty by some of the critics of his time, he searched for the soul in his depictions of bodily beauty. Therefore, his works that were criticized for simply presenting earthly beauty had a spiritual aim of searching the soul. Rossetti gave importance to spirituality in art, and wanted his works to be thought as spiritual all his life long. His spirituality

involved "an emotional superstition rather than any formal religion" (Cooper 139). His search for the soul was interpreted as a kind of spirituality and was defended by many critics such as Frederic W. H. Myers who thought that Rossetti was "among those who meet the mysteries of love and womanhood with a very different interpretation" and that he never had a "materialistic view" (50). McGowan believed that in Rossetti's representation of women and in his search for the soul, there was a spiritual element, which could be thought as a "Christian Aesthetic" in which "a thing is never its appearance merely" (113). In this spiritual aesthetic, "there is always something beyond or beneath what is present to the senses, and the artist searches out this deeper significance" (McGowan 114).

Myers is one of the critics who thought Rossetti represented the bond between the body and the soul, and he links this representation of Rossetti with Platonic thought. Finding a connection with the Renaissance, when with the influence of Neo-Platonic thinking, beauty was attributed to the greatness of the soul and celebrated, Myers suggests that Rossetti's representation of the soul in women reminds one of Plato's idea that love is "the interpreter and mediator between things human and things divine; and it may be to love that we must look to teach the worshipper of beauty that the highest things are also the loveliest, and that the strongest of moral agencies is also the most pervading and keenest joy" (57). In the light of what Myers underlines it is possible to argue that Rossetti, by depicting women in his paintings, tried to reach the divine through the human.

Rossetti's most significant poetic qualities were his originality, imagination, and invention. Rossetti "boasted that his religious works were 'indeed altogether original in inventions'" (Cooper 112). Rossetti's works that had religious symbols or religious themes are named as "Art-Catholic." Rossetti coined the term himself in his title of the manuscripts called "Songs of the Art-Catholic" in 1847 (Riede, *Revisited* 26). These songs included poems such as "Ave," "My Sister's Sleep," and "the Blessed Damozel." Nevertheless, the term also refers to some of his paintings including "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin" and "The Annunciation" (Riede, *Revisited* 27). Riede explains that "Art-Catholicism represents, in effect, an aestheticizing of religion, an attempt to gain for art

some of the emotional tone of a religion that was becoming outmoded" (*Revisited* 28). In Rossetti's works religion is used for aesthetic purposes and to depict art itself, rather than religion. In fact, not only using religion for aesthetic purposes but also using Catholicism instead of Protestanism was an opposition to the Victorian culture.

Rossetti not only presented religious subjects aesthetically and in a reactionary way but he also had a strong imagination which enabled him to dramatize imaginary moments. Poetry was almost synonymous with imagination according to Rossetti. However, Rossetti believed that his best quality as a poet was "invention," which was the ability of making the imaginary look like real according to him (Cooper 111). These qualities can also be thought as his alternative to the mechanic, scientific and didactic aspects of the age he lived in. Rossetti's works impressed his contemporaries "precisely because it spoke powerfully within the idiom of its time to the concerns of its time" (Riede, *Revisited* 5). Rossetti struggled to find a solution for the Victorian world getting highly mechanized and industrial by adding an important challenge to his own age, to the dominant Victorian Culture. His reaction to the Victorian Age was through his pure, truthful and imaginary artistic world and with his Pre-Raphaelite ideas. In the mechanized Victorian Age which was thought to be getting uglier and uglier by the Pre-Raphaelite Circle, as stated before, Rossetti gave great importance to emotion, so much that for him "poetry without emotion was not poetry at all" (Cooper 147).

Rossetti's another opposition to the age was his insistence on beauty in arts. With a devotion to beauty, Rossetti created aesthetic works. Rossetti's insistance on beauty in his works made him considered to be a part of Art for Art's Sake Movement. However, Cooper believes that he gave more importance to imagination and invention when compared to beauty and perfection. As he further states in Rossetti's "lexicon, it was imagination—not 'beauty'—that was the synonym for poetry. And it was invention that he considered his best quality, not execution or perfection of form" (153). Rossetti's aestheticism is similar to the Aesthetic Movement which is associated with "the decorative arts, interior design and fashion," however unlike the followers of the Aesthetic Movement, Rossetti does not neglect "the areas of painting and sculpture" (Prettejohn 5). In Rossetti's aesthetic world, art was often used as a theme and given

great importance. For this reason, his works can be mistakenly thought as only depicting art itself. However, Rossetti's works priviledged the theme of love as well. Furthermore, even in his works on art, Rossetti had a reactionary attitude towards society and the age. Rossetti's aestheticism refers to his insistence in beauty in contrast with industrialism and the importance he gave to art as opposed to the artificial.

Rossetti believed that art was universal and that it could continue to live for ages even though cultures could not. He thought that the cultural significance of an art work did not add value to the work, as he believed that cultural meanings encoded in art works would disappear in time. He believed that art works had to be seen with their artistic values. Therefore, Rossetti's suggestion for the age was art unlike Arnold's suggestion of culture; "sweetness" and "light." With this view on art, Rossetti created an alternative aesthetic world that could continue to exist when the commercial Victorian world became a consumer society, which was on the way to turn into a "commodity culture" using Adorno and Horkheimer's term.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's prose tale "Hand and Soul" which was published in the first issue of *The Germ* is generally taken to be "the nearest thing to a Pre-Raphaelite manifesto, or more accurately to Rossetti's manifesto" (Helsinger 144). Thus, Rossetti described his work, which he wrote at the age of twenty as "an artistic confessio fidei" (Riede, *Revisited* 12). Welby states that it "suggests the spiritual ideals of the movement, giving to Pre-Raphaelitism a more intimate meaning than it had" in addition to Holman Hunt's and Millais' ideas (27). In the tale, it is possible to see what Pre-Raphaelitism means and how much it is related to Rossetti's works. In the story, the qualities that Rossetti gave importance in art and how these qualities challenged the dominant Victorian art and culture can be extensively observed.

"Hand and Soul" is the story of an artist who learns how to be a good artist after a phase of artistic production in which he realizes that one cannot be an ideal artist if he paints for fame or for faith. The protagonist is an early Renaissance artist named Chiaro dell' Erma who realizes that a good artist should paint his own soul, and he becomes the embodiment of an artist that the Pre-Raphaelites would take as an example. Chiaro is

Rossetti's ideal artist who "conceived art almost as, it were, for himself," and loved it "deeply" (Rossetti "Hand and Soul" 47). Even more significantly, Chiaro is an ideal Pre-Raphaelite and Rossettian artist who goes through a period of artistic awareness, in which he learns that an ideal artist should not paint with the influence of other artists or imitate them, and also should not paint in order to be famous.

In the beginning of the tale, Chiaro; a nineteen year old artist, is motivated to be the pupil of a famous artist named Giunta Pisano. After he sees the paintings of the famous artist who is admired by a majority of society, he realizes that he does not admire his works as much as the majority does: "He was received with courtesy and consideration, and shown into the study of the famous artist. But the forms he saw there were lifeless and incomplete; and a sudden exultation possessed him as he said to himself, 'I am the master of this man'" (48). The first realization of Chiaro is that the work that the majority admires may not be the ideal art work. Thus, it is the first Pre-Raphaelite message of the tale; the artist should have individual ideas on art and should not imitate the famous ones. Giunta Pisano whom Chiaro admired in the beginning of the tale, is an Italian artist who probably became a well known artist in collaboration with the Greek artists who were described in the story as "the keen, grave workmen from Greece, whose trade it was to sell their own works in Italy and teach Italians to imitate them" (47). The fame of the Italian artist can be associated with Classicism and Chiaro's dislike of the artist's works is probably related to his dislike of Classicism as well. Indeed, Pre-Raphaelites' medievalism was closely related with the gothic which they defined as "medieval as opposed to classical and grotesque" (George 90). Kennedy states that Rossetti also used Classical sources in his works, [3] but presented them as he did his other works, such as his paintings *Pandora* and *Proserpina* which are "Greek in title only; in treatment [. . .] on all fours with his *Beatrice* and his *The Blessed Damozel* (qtd. in Macleod, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti 208).* Rossetti used Classical subjects but presented them with the Pre-Raphaelite technique, rather than with a classical technique. The Pre-Raphaelite artists did not take the Classical Greek artists as their

[3] The poem *Troy Town*, the painting *Helen of Troy* and the drawing *Cassandra* are among Rossetti's other works for which he used Classical themes and sources. These works are Rossetti's late works which are at times categorized as Post Pre-Raphaelite as they do not carry all the Pre-Raphaelite ideals.

influence for a new art, but they generally opposed them as they took Pre-Renaissance Italian artists such as the protagonist of Rossetti's work, Chiaro as their influence.

After Chiaro learns not to imitate the Classical, believing that he can paint much better than Pisano, he starts to work in order to be famous. In fact, "his first resolve was, that he would work out thoroughly some of his thoughts, and let the world know him" (48). Striving to be a rival of the famous artist whom he used to admire greatly, "he would remain at work through the whole of a day, not resting once so long as the light lasted" (49). While working hard to be famous, he creates "the Dresden pictures" which are "inferior in merit, but certainly his" (49). However, after he gains fame he realizes that "the weight was still at his heart" (50). The artist understands that fame does not make him an ideal artist.

After fame fails Chiaro, he decides to work for another purpose, that is, for his faith and for God, and decides to reflect his devotion in his paintings. Being true to his faith in his art works, he paints works that present moral greatness and works related to Christianity, thus he depicts Madonnas, Saints and Holy Children. These pictures which he painted "to impress the beholder" were "cold and unemphatic" though they were "more laboured than his former pictures" as they had "the measure of that boundary to which they were made to conform" (51). Eventually Chiaro again realizes that he still could not become an ideal artist as he wanted to be, because he sees his frescoes presenting a moral allegory of peace covered with the blood of the members of the two families, who fought in the church. When his frescoes representing peace as a moral allegory are covered with blood, he understands that his religious works of art do not bring peace or faith. He realizes that his art could not reach people and consequently, is not an ideal art.

After seeing that fame and faith failed him, Chiaro sees his own soul in the image of a woman "clad to the hands and feet with a green and gray raiment, fashioned to that time" with hair looking like "the golden veil through which" Chiaro "beheld his dreams" (53). The protagonist reaches an artistic awareness with the appearance of the woman who tells him to paint his own soul just as it is:

> Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am, to know me: weak, as I am, and in the weeds of this time; only with eyes which seek out labour, and with a faith, not learned, yet jealous of prayer. Do this; so shall thy soul stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more. (55)

One of the important aspects of Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelitism and his outstanding contribution to the Pre-Raphaelite ideals can be seen in the tale "Hand and Soul" which is "not fidelity to external nature, but fidelity to one's own inner experience" (Hough 53). By truthfully representing inner experience Rossetti achieved both the Pre-Raphaelite principle of representing nature truthfully, and being original and sincere at the same time. This aspect of Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelitism makes his works resemble the Aesthetic Movement or to the Art for Art's Sake Movement which "placed greater emphasis on formal values and on color, tone, line and pattern; and instead of faithfully copying surface appearance they aimed to express inner truth by representing an imaginary world of poetry and beauty, often highly personal in its allusions" (Treuherz 20). Nevertheless, Rossetti and the other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood did not think that physical form of the painting mattered more than its subject, therefore they can hardly be considered among the Aesthetic Movement. In "Hand and Soul" Rossetti's views on art and his insistence in representing the soul are seen. Similarly, in "Hand and Soul" the observer of Chiaro's painting can see the artist's soul as well as the technique of the art work.

In the story, the protagonist Chiaro listens to his own soul and by painting his own soul he creates an original art work which no other artist can create. The art work also presents one of the most sincere subjects that an artist can paint; his own soul: "And Chiaro did as she bade him. While he worked, his face grew solemn with knowledge: and before the shadows had turned, his work was done" (55). Significantly, in an age when even art works were turned into identical products, creating art works which were original and sincere such as Chiaro's was one of the leading aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement that "challenged and refreshed mainstream Victorian painting" (Treuherz 16). The originality and sincerity that the Pre-Raphaelites searched for in art was a way to challenge the dominant culture of the Victorian Age. It was a way to react against the

age of mass production and machinery with originality and sincerity. Just like Chiaro's work is original, so is the work of Rossetti with its original theme.

It can be observed from the story that the artists should paint for a much more elevated ideal than for fame; they should paint to create a work of art, a sincere and original art work. Thus the soul of Chiaro thinks that "fame in noble soils is a fruit of the spring," one year this fruit maybe found, another year it may not be (54). The story advises the Victorian artists to be original and sincere in painting their own souls, and not to paint with an aim of imitating the Renaissance artists or being famous. According to Rossetti, artists needed to paint without worrying about the strict rules of imitating the masters such as Raphael and Michelangelo. Rossetti saw this process as an act for fame, which is not an ideal way to create an art work. He believed that if an artist painted from his heart just like Chiaro whose soul advised him to do so, he could be famous in the end. William Michael Rossetti believed that "Hand and Soul" suggested:

> [. . .] the only satisfactory works of art are those which exhibit the very soul of the artist. To work for fame or self-display is a failure, and to work for direct moral proselytizing is a failure; but to paint that which your own perceptions and emotions urge you to paint promises to be a success for yourself, and hence a benefit to the mass of beholders. This was the core of the Praeraphaelite [sic] creed [. . .] . (qtd. in Marsh, *Collected* 483)

Rossetti operated with "the belief—the ideology—that life is one thing, art another. Art for Rossetti appeared to him—as in Chiaro's vision in 'Hand and Soul'—as life in its finer tone, the one certain means by human beings can soar beyond the confusions of a mortal and veiled existence" (McGann, "The Betrayal" 172). For Rossetti, there were two different worlds, one real and the other, artistic. The real Victorian world was always to be challenged by Rossetti who had an artistic world view in his mind, which he tried to make it into a reality with his art works. His artistic world was at times his reality as opposed to the Victorian world, which he saw as artificial and mechanized. In the world that he created, there was a place for the problems of the real world, in an illusionary way. However, it can be observed in "Hand and Soul" that the artistic world is preferred over the real one as the tale "tells a story of the triumph of art and the artistic life over base circumstances" (McGann, "The Betrayal" 173). With Chiaro's

preference of the artistic life, the story is a representation of Rossetti's ideas on art, that art opens up a new and better world for him, for the other Pre-Raphaelites such as William Morris and for all the Victorians.

In the imaginary world created by Rossetti, there is a place for spirituality as there is for Chiaro. The woman whom Chiaro is to paint represents his own soul, so the artist has a spiritual aim, rather than a materialistic one when painting his art work. The spirituality of Chiaro is in direct contrast with the materialism of the Victorian Age. Being a character from the thirteenth century, he is the ideal artist for Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites to be influenced by. The spiritual aim of Chiaro is similar to the spirituality of Rossetti in his work "Hand and Soul." Rossetti suggests the reader a change in art for the future, by actually setting an example from the past. Additionally, by suggesting a change for the canonized art, Rossetti aims "art to unveil, or achieve transcendence" (McGann, "the Betrayal" 173).

McGann points out that Chiaro becomes an ideal artist with his decision to "serve man with God" (*the Game* 92). Chiaro decides to serve man rather than to serve God, which could change the ills of society or at least create an alternative to them, after he sees that serving God does not make him an ideal artist. Rossetti's spirituality refers to "the secondary moment of the Middle Ages," and not to the "primary moment at the outset of Christian Era" (McGann, *the Game* 91). Rossetti was influenced by a significant aspect of the period that is "the work of art—is the primal, defining event" and it becomes powerful when it has a "devotional" function (McGann, *the Game* 91). A work of art is "devotional" in terms of spirituality in Rossetti's story because, while spirituality is evident in the artists' search of his soul, religion is not, as Chiaro realizes that he cannot be an ideal artist if he paints for faith. The devotional aspect of Rossetti's spirituality instead of the obvious signs of Christianity can be seen in the words of the soul of the artist in the story:

> Give thou to God no more than he asketh of thee; but to men also, that which is man's. In all that thou doest, work from thine own heart, simply; for his heart is as thine, when thine is wise and humble; and he shall have understanding of thee. [...] Only by making thyself his equal can he learn to hold communion with thee, and at last own thee above him. Not till thou

> lean over the water shalt thou see thine image therein: stand erect, and it shall slope from thy feet and be lost. Know that there is but this means whereby thou may'st serve God with man: — Set thy hand and thy soul to serve man with God. (55)

Rossetti thought that "the whole Christian History" was a "poetic construction" which resulted in his creation of an art that did not "appeal to external sources or authorities—for instance to nature or to God," but an art that appealed only to art itself (*the Game* 91). Rossetti used the Christian elements and symbols in his works for aesthetic and artistic purposes, to construct his alternative world of art. He not only used religious elements but he also used the beauty of women for aesthetic purposes.

Along with reflecting the views of the Pre-Raphaelites, the story also "seems to forecast Rossetti's own future career, painting female heads to express his own inmost feelings, and transcribing the phases of his soul in the just phrases of his verse" (Riede, *Revisited* 13). The flow of the story suggests that neither Chiaro dell' Erma, nor Rossetti see women just as sensual models. Rossetti represents his soul as women, both in his paintings and his poetry, very often. The woman who appears as the artist's soul and the artist to paint that woman as his soul can be thought as Rossetti's way of putting forward his real aim in his paintings and poetry, his search for his own soul.

In the end of the tale, Chiaro dell' Erma's painting of his own soul is displayed in a museum of the Victorian Age, where some art students are copying a work of Raphael called "Berrettino." The people who copy Raphael's work do not realize the beauty and worth of Chiaro's painting because Chiaro is neither famous, nor a part of the canon. This becomes evident in the comment of a French person, who mentions that he does not understand Chiaro's painting and thinks that the painting is not worthy (58). The people in the museum, like the French character, do not understand Chiaro's painting because they were only taught the paintings of the masters such as Raphael. In "Hand and Soul," Rossetti shows that in the Victorian Age art education limited the vision of the students and even prevented them from creating works of art such as Chiaro's; a work that continues to be admired by a small minority of people rather than a majority who are trained to imitate.

The painting of Chiaro embodies all the Pre-Raphaelite principles explained by Tupper in *The Germ*. The subject of the painting is a woman who "addresses" the artist and "excites" him. The woman is the soul of the artist and therefore, is very personal "addressing those of his attributes which are peculiarly human" and is able to excite the "rational and benevolent powers" (208). Even more significantly, referring to Tupper's words, the painting which excites the "mental activity and emotion" of the artist turns out to be a work of High Art. This becomes evident in the end of the story when a small minority admires the painting, even though it is not painted by a well known artist who was appreciated by the Academy (208). Furthermore, the story suggests that the famous works of art are not necessarily High Art and unknown works of art may be High Art as Chiaro's work.

Chiaro is not only an ideal artist for the Pre-Raphaelites for these reasons, but he is also an Early Renaissance artist that the Pre-Raphaelites take as example. Rather than using the techniques of the High Renaissance painters, he asserts his originality in painting his soul truthfully. By deciding to be such an artist, Chiaro refuses the "glories of the Renaissance" and becomes "an imaginative resource because of his retrogate commitments—all those features that would come to be judged crudities and incompetencies by later art historians, with their enlightened and progressivist myths of art" (McGann, *the Game* 93). Chiaro's choice symbolically places him among the Early Renaissance painters such as Botticelli, Gozzoli, or Fra Angilico. In fact, Chiaro is a justification of Hilton's idea that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood saw themselves as sharing a bond with the Quattrocento painters (33).

Chiaro's painting is judged according to these myths of art that expect paintings to fit into stereotypes. Chiaro is being judged because his painting is original and does not conform to the already established norms of High Renaissance art in the Victorian Age. As the painting is unconventional and original, McGann defines Chiaro's painting as "not the art *object* but the *work*" (*the Game* 93). The painting is not an art object because it is presented in a museum even though it lacks fame and its artist, Chiaro is unfamiliar to the art students. His painting is not an imitation nor is it mass produced. As it was not painted with worries of fame, it is not a part of a commodity culture

either. Chiaro's painting is an art work in which the artist has put his soul, a painting for which the artist has worked hard to represent his true soul and a work of feelings rather than a painting designed to appeal to the tastes of the majority. Chiaro's painting is pure and sincere, which is an example to the Pre-Raphaelite works. His work is not only sincere and original, but imaginary and truthful at the same time and it represents beauty.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's other prose tale which is about a similar subject is "Saint Agnes of Intercession,[4]" an unfinished story which was written for the fifth issue of *The Germ* that was never published. Rossetti probably wrote the story with the influence of Keats' poem "The Eve of Saint Agnes," but the story of Rossetti is unfinished, so a direct resemblance between the two poems cannot be found. Rossetti's story is about an artist who has a passion for art from his early childhood. In the beginning of the story, the artist meets a woman named Mary Arden whom he falls in love with and eventually gets engaged. As art and his fiancée become the two passions in the artist's life, he decides to paint his new painting with a "modern subject" which would be "out of the age itself, as well as out of the soul of its producer" and which would therefore "be a soul of the age" ("Saint Agnes" 558). The model of the painting is Mary Arden. After the artist completes the painting, he sends the painting to an exhibition where it is criticized for being "quaint," "crude," "grotesque" as well as for being an imitation by a critic (561). All the negative criticism made for the painting makes it evident that it is a kind of painting that the Pre-Raphaelites would criticize, because the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood opposed the grotesque as well as imitation in art.

The protagonist artist of "Saint Agnes of Intercession" paints an imitation of a previous work called "Saint Agnes" by Bucciolo d'Orli Angiolieri, "a native of Cignana in the Florentine territory, [. . .] born in 1405 and died in 1460. He was the friend [. . .] of Benozzo Gozzoli" (565). The protagonist artist of the tale imitates the works of the Early Renaissance artist without being aware of it, out of his childhood memories when he had admired the work greatly. When the artist sees this resemblance, he gets frustrated as he realizes that his painting does not represent the soul of the age, but

[4] This prose-tale is cited from *The Rossetti Archive.*

represents the soul of the Medieval Age. Although the woman in his painting is the representation of his soul and his fiancée, she resembles the woman painted by Angiolieri. The protagonist mentions in despair: "A woman had then lived four hundred years since, of whom that picture was the portrait; and my own eyes bore me witness that it was also the surpassingly perfect resemblance of a woman now living and breathing,—of my own affianced bride!" (565). Furthermore, the self portrait painted by Bucciolo d'Orli Angiolieri resembles him as well:

> It was myself, of nearly the same age as mine was then, but perhaps a little older. The hair and beard were of my colour, trimmed in an antique fashion; and the dress belonged to the early part of the fifteenth century. In the background was a portion of the city of Florence. (566)

The story is about an artist who tries to be an ideal artist just like Chiaro dell' Erma. However, in this story the artist cannot achieve individuality and uniqueness as Chiaro does. The two stories reflect Rossetti's concerns on medievalism and imitation. Helsinger argues that the two stories of Rossetti are both similar and different in that:

> "Hand and Soul" is a dream parable of the modern artist's discovery of his true vocation through the medium of an early Renaissance painting described as a self-portrait—the artist's portrait of his own soul, in the figure of a woman. The unfinished "Saint Agnes of Intercession" seems to be the modern artist's nightmare: his discovery that his prize picture, a picture of his fiancée, is an unconscious copy of a print of a much older, early Renaissance portrait, a print he had seen as a child. Rossetti adapts the motifs of repetition and resemblance, in which these fictions abound, to address the more troubling implications of an increasingly realist art since the Renaissance and to explore, from different perspectives, Pre-Raphaelite desires to break with conventional norms of painting and poetry. (120)

Unlike Chiaro, the artist of this story "must not only labor at his craft, but must send off his work to be judged, worry about whether it will be accepted at the Royal Academy, and if so, whether it will be hung prominently enough to be noticed, whether it will garner praise or blame" (Riede, *Revisited* 16). The artist obviously thinks of his fame as an artist and knows that being famous is related to being noticed and praised by the Royal Academy which Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood criticized. Significantly the artist's painting is given a good place by the Academy and therefore is

quickly sold. The criticism made to the painting for being an imitation does not decrease its value. Even more importantly, Rossetti shows the Academy as an ultimate decision maker and a dominant institution for the Victorian art world, and even as a hegemonic formation, which wins and shapes consent and becomes one of the powers under the control of the dominant classes. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is an oppositional group that did not accept the rules of the Academy and challenged its power. Therefore, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood can be thought as working like a subculture opposing the rules of the Royal Academy. In "Saint Agnes of Intercession," Rossetti criticizes the paintings accepted by the Royal Academy to be recognized and the other paintings to be considered as worthless by society.

The resemblance of the painting to the earlier one worries the artist as well. Throughout the story there is the indication that the artist fears that his fiancée would die just like the fiancée of the Early Renaissance artist. In spite of the fact that Rossetti never finished the story, Millais did in his etching of the story which was included in the Millais Exhibition held at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886. W. Michael Rossetti referred to the etching as representing "what would no doubt have been the final incident in the tale—the hero painting the portrait of his affianced bride, who dies while sitting to him: this being a recurrence of the events which had happened to the same painter and the same lady in the fifteenth century" (132). In the story the artist's fear of his fiancée's possible death shows that he and his fiancée share the same soul with the people who lived centuries ago. Therefore, the painting of the artist is evidently not a copy or imitation of another artist, but it is a repetition of the same artist who painted the same painting unconsciously. This situation is best described by the protagonist:

> That it was my portrait,—that the St. Agnes was the portrait of Mary,—and that both had been painted by myself four hundred years ago,—this now rose up distinctly before me as the one and only solution of so startling a mystery, and as being, in fact, that result round which, or some portion of which, my soul had been blindly hovering, uncertain of itself. (567)

The artist needs to paint his soul as we learn from "Hand and Soul" and from "Saint Agnes of Intercession," but the artist's soul must be "a soul of the age" as wewll. In the story, the soul of the artist is the soul of a fifteenth century Italian artist, which suggests

Rossetti's medievalism; his search for the past ages in the Victorian Age. Rossetti seems to be answering the criticisms concerning the medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites, that they are copying the Early Renaissance artists. In the tale it is evident that imitation is not done on purpose but it is done as a result of sharing a strong admiration and desire for the Early-Renaissance Period, a passion so strong that the artist finds his own soul in the past and in the artists of the past. It is also possible to argue that the artist of the Early Renaissance continues to live in the Victorian Age as art and the real artist never dies, it survives while its copies vanish in time. Therefore, the artist's painting becomes a repetition rather than an imitation. In Rossetti's case, the love for the Pre-Renaissance period means a fondness for the medieval artists who painted pure and sincere works as well as an admiration for a pre-industrial period when mass production did not exist. In the prose tale, the fear of creating what is not desired is explained. This instance of reducing the worth of one's art work and labeling it as a mere copy, in a way recalls the Pre-Raphaelite Artist's fear that their works will be criticized for being imitations, whereas they can only be repetitions created by the artists who share the same soul with the Early Renaissance artists. At the same time, the story reflects the fear of the Pre-Raphaelites about reproductions in the art of the Victorian Age when,

> [. . .] the growth of illustrated magazines and specialized art journals stimulated public interest, while the development of new methods of reproduction such as steel engraving and, later in the century, photogravure ensured that a single image could be reproduced thousand of times with no diminution in quality of painting. (Treuherz 13)

Thus "Saint Agnes of Intercession" "centers on the psychic trauma of the modern artist who discovers the force of repetition, and it locates the source of his terror in the conditions of his success—his engagements with art as commodity and copy" (Helsinger 130). The painting of the artist is not an "art *work,*" but it rather turns out to be an "art *object*" using McGann's terms, as the painting is quickly sold though it is identified as an imitation by an art critic:

> "I am trying to think what the style of your picture is like. It is like the works of a very early man that I saw in Italy. Angioloni, Angellini, Angiolieri, — that was the name,—Bucciuolo Angiolieri. He always turned

> the toes in. The head of your woman there" (and he pointed to the figure painted from Mary) "is exactly like a St. Agnes of his at Bologna." (562)

An imitation to be sold quickly shows that art was highly commodified in the Victorian Age, and that it was accepted by the majority of society. Both of Rossetti's tales underline "the idealistic, perhaps anachronistic language of romantic originality and continuous progress, in which the history of art and the ambitions of artists continued to be articulated, and the cultural and economic hierarchies of value encouraging repetition and reproduction" (Helsinger 120). The painting of the artist of "St. Agnes" gains financial success but also loses its artistic value because it is not original. Thus Helsinger states that in the story "repetition, reproduction, and parody are made visible as at once the collapse of a modern artist's aspirations and the conditions of its success" (120). The artist is the part of a minority who does not accept the mass produced works as art and even gives more importance to individuality and originality:

> And as to which statue at the Museum I drew most or learned least from,—or which Professor at the Academy "set" the model in the worst taste,—these are things which no one need care to know. I may say, briefly, that I was wayward enough in the pursuit, if not in the purpose; that I cared even to little for what could be taught me by others; and that my original designs greatly outnumbered my school-drawings. (558-559)

Despite the fact that the artist is frustrated to learn that his work is identified as an imitation, it is ironic that he at the same time gains respect and recognition with this painting. Helsinger argues that the painter-narrator uses his fiancée as the representation of his soul, but more significantly, the fiancée is also used "to create the object that brings him his first professional and financial success." It is even possible that this success may

> [. . .] encourage him to capitalize on his first success through repetition, by producing more objects that look like Mary. If his paintings are successful, an enterprising dealer will purchase the reproduction rights for an amount as great or greater than the price of the painting, and Mary's face will be everywhere. (Helsinger 134)

In such a scenario the condition of the artist in the tale would be the opposite of that of Chiaro in "Hand and Soul." While Chiaro achieves to paint a unique, truthful

representation of a woman and his soul without fame or imitation, the artist of "Saint Agnes" gains recognition and financial profit and he does not represent his fiancée or his soul with originality. Chiaro stands for an artist who the Pre-Raphaelites would appreciate, but the artist of "Saint Agnes of Intercession" stands for an artist who the Pre-Raphaelites would criticize for painting a product similar to the stereotypical art works of the Victorian Age.

When both of the tales are considered, it can be observed that a real art work, such as Chiaro's, is only appreciated by a minority, but an "art object," as in the other tale is appreciated by a majority. In both tales, Rossetti presents the reaction of the Pre-Raphaelites to the condition of art in the Victorian Age, which is accepted by a majority of the Victorians. In these tales, it is also presented that original and uncanonized art works are a part of the minority culture. Thus by idealizing the art appreciated by the minority Rossetti's tales aim to increase the popularity of the art of the minority against the majority of the Victorian society.

One of the significant differences between the two tales is the time in which they take place. "Hand And Soul" mainly takes place in the thirteenth century and ends in a contemporary Victorian museum. "Saint Agnes of Intercession" takes place in a contemporary, probably in a Victorian setting, but the artist finds a bond between himself and the Middle Ages. The two tales show the difference between the Pre-Renaissance era with the Victorian Age; between what is ideal and what is real. It can be argued that the medieval period is idealized and presented as an example in the contemporary time; however the Victorian artist cannot be like the Medieval artists as the Victorian Age is industrialized and commercialized. The Victorian artist, like the artist in "Saint Agnes of Intercession," cannot be as free as Chiaro who lived in the thirteenth century, because he does not live in an age that helps artistic creativity to exist. On the other hand, the artist in "Saint Agnes of Intercession" lives in a world in which it is inevitable to imitate or the create repetitions. The artist has to paint repetitions as he needs to share a strong bond with the Middle Ages, the age of order, joy, artistic freedom and creativity to be able to survive in an industrialized world. In

the Victorian Age, it is difficult for an artist to be free in his art without the effects of industry and machinery.

Rossetti reflects both his dream and nightmare by giving two examples of art works and showing the paradox of an artist who is faced with either to be controlled or to find his own artistic characteristic. In fact, both of the tales show Rossetti's major ideas on art (Helsinger 120). While he represents both his dream and fear, it is evident that he fears for the condition of art for all the artists of the Victorian Age including himself. What he is afraid of is that he might copy his own works and become a part of the system that he criticizes, as a result of mass production and machinery, both of which were the outcomes of the industrial revolution. In fact, it was a system, which rapidly became a "culture industry" where "every element of the subject matter has its origin in the same apparatus as that jargon whose stamp it bears" (Adorno, Horkheimer 36). Even though Rossetti tried to avoid becoming a part of the commodity culture, some critics claim that he could not avoid it, just like the protagonist artist of "Saint Agnes of Intercession," in the commodified Victorian Age. Feldman argues that Rossetti eventually became a part of that system by painting many art works similar to each other which lead him to "agony upon realizing that pure art cannot be created in the fallen world of commerce" (71). Rossetti's inevitable inclusion to the system with his paintings can be best described with one of Christina Rossetti's poems called "In an Artist's Studio:"

> One face looks out from all his canvases,
> One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
> We found her hidden just behind those screens,
> That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
> A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
> A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
> A saint, an angel — every canvas means
> The same one meaning, neither more or less.
> He feeds upon her face by day and night,
> And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
> Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
> Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
> Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
> Not as she is, but as she fills his dream (1-14).

As it can be interpreted from Christina Rossetti's poem, not imitation but repetition is inevitable for D. G. Rossetti as he paints his dreams, his imaginary world and his soul in all his paintings. Therefore, Rossetti is inspired by artists like Chiaro who lived in the Pre-Renaissance times, and just like Chiaro, he depicts his own soul without thinking of fame or faith. He is also like the artist who paints a previously painted work in order to immortalize his fiancée because he is yearning for reflecting his parted mate and his soul on his canvas. In both tales, it is possible to find both the ideals and criticisms of Rossetti along with his aspiration to create a world of art free from industrialism and mass production.

In both of his tales, the artists painted women and both of their paintings became central to their lives. In fact, the beautiful woman to be central to an artistic world foreshadows Rossetti's future works in which he presented an aesthetic world with his beautiful models. Even though these works are often considered as Post-Pre-Raphaelite with their inclusion into the commercial system, they are clearly a continuation of the Rossettian Art which created an alternative world of aesthetics in a world of machinery, that is a kind of art which O'Hop described as "deconstructs what is and reconstructs what we know" (10). In this respect, it is possible to see Rossetti's tales and his other works as his way to deconstruct the dominant culture of the age and reconstruct a world of art which is much more beautiful, free, sincere, spiritual, colorful and aesthetic than the Victorian world.

It is possible to find the Pre-Raphaelite focus on art in Rossetti's stories as "art—pictorial and poetic—was of central concern to" all the lives of the Pre-Raphaelites along with "friendship" and "love" (Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite* 7). Just like in Rossetti's poetry and paintings, the world that he created with these is an aesthetic one. Rossetti painted and wrote with the Pre-Raphaelite ideals which he at times turned into his own ideals. In the story "Hand and Soul" it was possible to see that the artist depicted his soul—but only his soul with his own hand. In the following chapters, Rossetti's depiction of his soul in his works through beauty and aesthetics with an opposing view to the dominant culture of the Victorian Age is going to be discussed.

CHAPTER II

D. G. ROSSETTI'S AESTHETIC WORLD AS REFLECTED IN HIS POETRY AND PAINTINGS: "THE GIRLHOOD OF MARY VIRGIN," "THE BLESSED DAMOZEL," "THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH," "THE PORTRAIT," "JENNY" AND "BOCCA BACIATA"

> To Art
> I loved thee ere I loved a woman, Love. (Rossetti, *Works* 473)

Although D. G. Rossetti was both a painter and a poet, he saw himself more as a poet and believed that he could reflect his ideas and feelings more openly through poetry as he mentioned:

> My own belief is that I am a poet primarily, and that it is my poetic tendencies that chiefly give value to my paintings [. . .] the bread-and-cheese question has led to a good deal of my painting being pot boiling and no more – whereas my verse, being unprofitable, has remained unprostituted. (qtd. in Marsh, *Collected* xxiii)

Rossetti's poetry was written with the same ideals he put forward in his two prose tales that were explained in the first chapter. His aim of representing his own soul and creating his world of aesthetics is also apparent in his poems. Especially his early poems are significant in showing the Pre-Raphaelite and Rossettian ideals, which were discussed in the previous sections. Among his poems, there were those that he started writing at an early age and revised almost throughout his life. These poems reflected his ideas on art, his criticism to the Victorian Age and his alternative to the industrial world. Four of these poems, "The Blessed Damozel," "The Burden of Nineveh," "The Portrait" and "Jenny," all of which were published in 1870 within *Poems*, will be analyzed in this chapter. "The Blessed Damozel" emphasizes the importance Rossetti gave to aesthetic and soul rather than the principles underlined by the Victorian Age. "The Burden of Nineveh" reflects Rossetti's ideas on culture and religion and especially his ideas on art along with the poem "The Portrait." In "Jenny," there is a criticism of society as well as a criticism on the dominant culture of the age. Even though these poems have different

themes, they constitute an important part in understanding the outstanding aspects of Rossetti's alternative world of art.

Although Rossetti saw himself more as a poet, his paintings are also important in understanding his alternative world of aesthetics, not only because they are aesthetic works but also because they represent Rossetti's and the Pre-Raphaelite's views. Furthermore, Rossetti's paintings and his poetry are very similar and interrelated. He wrote poems and sonnets for some of his paintings and he drew paintings for some of his poems and sonnets. Although Rossetti wrote poetry and prose, and translated famous works such as Dante Alighieri's *La Vita Nuova*, the initials of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were first seen by the public on the first oil painting that Rossetti finished in 1849. This painting, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (Fig. 6) had "the qualities of a manifesto, a declaration of intent" (Barringer 7). Rossetti intended to change the Victorian art starting from this painting because he aimed to pursue the Pre-Raphaelite ideals. It was with Rossetti's painting *Bocca Baciata* (1859), that Rossetti started to paint sensuous female portraits, which dominated his artistic life (Riede, *the Limits* 233-234).

The Girlhood of Mary Virgin depicted the Virgin Mary and her parents St. Joachim and St. Anna. Rossetti's sister Christina Rossetti and his mother were the models of the painting. In the painting, Rossetti created his world of aesthetics as an alternative to the real Victorian world. In his alternative world, the focus was on the imaginary and the symbolic. Rossetti achieved this by depicting imaginary symbols more realistically than the actual objects or real people as Sonstroem argues:

> In general it is the supernatural or symbolic objects that receive realistic treatment, while the natural objects are only broadly indicated. For example, the fruitful vine, especially, and also the cross, the lily, the angel, and the seven thorned briar are all vivid and closely articulated, but the floor, the tapestry, St. Anna, and the landscape in the background are rather vaguely indicated. (35)

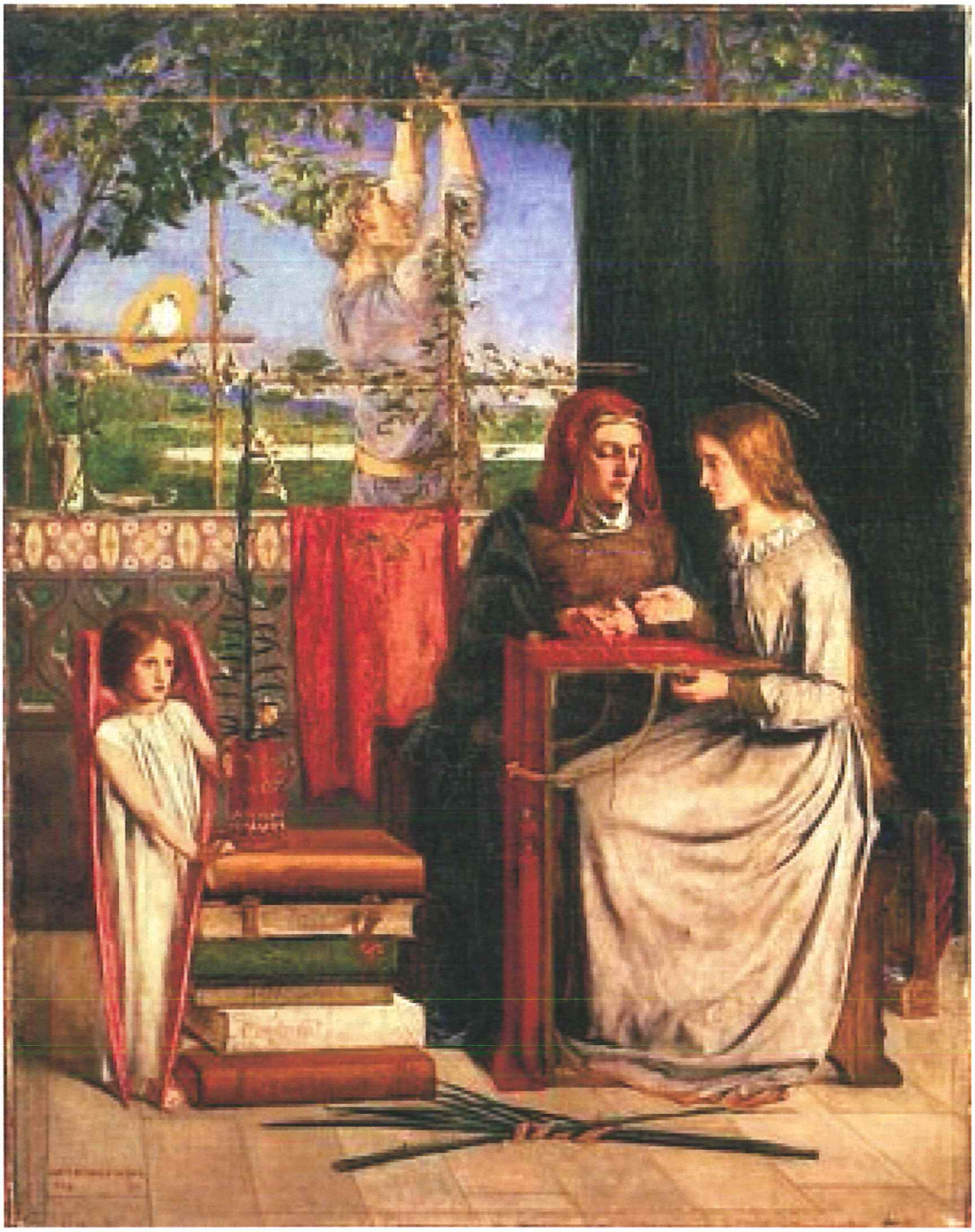

Fig. 6. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. 1849. Tate Gallery, London.

Rossetti's representation of the imaginary more as the reality shows his reaction to the realities of the Victorian Age such as the industry, machinery and mass production, which he saw as artificial.

The admiration for the Early Renaissance, which was evident in the two prose-tales of Rossetti, can be seen in this painting as well. The painting is similar to the paintings of the Early Renaissance Period in terms of its theme, colors and technique. In the painting, there are also references to the medieval period. Rodgers explains that St. Anna, St. Joachim and the Virgin Mary's names are written within the halos above them, which Rossetti probably learned from Bennozzo Gozzoli; an Early Renaissance artist who inspired Rossetti (34). In the background of the painting, there is the Lake of Galilee "in a landscape which owes a debt to fifteenth century Italian paintings" (Rodgers 34). Furthermore, in the painting there is an "early Christian" style in the influence of Early Italian Art (Riede, *Revisited* 39). In the painting there are numerous religious symbols. There is a haloed dove representing the Holy Ghost, St. Joachim tending the wine representing a traditional symbol of Christ, the crimson cloth representing Christ's robe, and the rose in the jar, which is a common a symbol of the Virgin Mary. There is a lily, the symbol of purity, standing on top of books with the names of three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity, and three cardinal virtues, Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance. Rossetti wrote two sonnets, together called "Mary's Girlhood," to accompany his painting and in the second sonnet he clearly explained the symbols in the painting:

> These are the symbols. On that cloth of red
> I' the centre is the Tripoint: perfect each,
> Except the second of its points, to teach
> That Christ is not yet born. The books – whose head
> Is golden charity, as Paul hath said –
> Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:
> Therefore on them the lily standeth, which
> Is innocence, bring interpreted.
>
> The seven-thorn'd briar and he palm seven-leaved
> Are her great sorrow and her great reward. (15-24)

McGann suggests that in the sonnets, Rossetti's interpretation of "meticulous detail" of his painting, "medieval awareness or interpretation of the pictorial features" being "painterly and historicized" was done on purpose (*The Rossetti Archive*). McGann argues that it was done "to confront the contemporary Victorian world with a way of thinking and feeling that offers a shocking contrast to the dominant culture and its values. The difference is to be registered as both a cultural/moral one and a poetic/aesthetic one" (*The Rossetti Archive*). The symbols such as purity and charity in Rossetti's painting and the sonnets which accompany the painting are in contrast with the values of the dominant culture such as industrialism and machinery.

Riede states that the Christian symbols show that the painting is an "Art-Catholic" painting. In the painting, by using religious symbols, Rossetti not only introduces detailed representation and symbolism in painting as a way to give a spiritual meaning to material things, but also he introduces the early Christian Art, with its "naive style of coloring" (*Revisited* 41). With his first painting to be displayed with the initials of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Rossetti introduces the principles and ideals of the new revolution in art that he and the other members of the Brotherhood planned. Rossetti uses Christianity as a way to introduce the new technique and thinking in art, Pre-Raphaelite ideals, particularly, detailed representation, intense use of colours, use of the technique of the Early-Renaissance artists and rejection of the Victorian conventions of art. Therefore, he uses religion for aesthetic purposes. Furthermore, Riede states that,

> In fact, by using religion as a source for art, Rossetti reflected not the faith of his times, but its doubt, and he situated himself within a tradition that was gradually replacing religion with art as a source of spiritual value. Certainly, at least, this is the way Rossetti's "Art-Catholicism" was viewed on his own age by others who saw art virtually as the new religion. (*Revisited* 29)

The Girlhood of Mary Virgin showed that Rossetti's suggestion for the Victorian Age was art, rather than religion or science. By being a part of the search for the Age of doubt, Rossetti represented his own age. By using the techniques of the early-Renaissance Art, he offered purity and colours to the Victorian Age. He challenged the popular tradition of the day to cover the colours and to hide the reminiscences of the colorful world before the industry, to refer to Hardin once again (7). He opened up a

new world for the Victorians, which existed at a time before the industry, within the Victorian Age.

In the painting, the Virgin Mary is depicted as embroidering a lily. George and Campbell argue that the depiction of the Virgin Mary as embroidering and her family as surrounding her "provided a powerful stereotype of domestic femininity" (55). Rossetti and the other Pre-Raphaelites challenged the idea that embroidering belonged to the sphere of women and the idea that it was only women's occupation. In fact, before the Renaissance,

> in the medieval ecclesiastical and secular workshops both men and women produced embroideries. But during the Renaissance needlework was increasingly assigned the status of a domestic craft. Skilled with the needle was assimilated to the emerging Renaissance ideal of the model wife. (George and Campbell 56)

The Pre-Raphaelites saw embroidery as a form of art. Hence, they tried to make more people interested in embroidery, which was the reason why they frequently painted women as embroidering. They took embroidery to a larger sphere by painting, writing about it and producing it. The Holy Grail series of tapestries executed by Morris and Company can be given as an example. The Pre-Raphaelites tried to change the status of embroidery from a lesser art to a fine art as they believed that all works that excited the artist could be works of fine art as it was explained in *the Germ* (208). In his speech on "the Lesser Arts," William Morris stated that he could not differentiate the "lesser so-called Decorative Arts" from "the great art of Architecture" and other "great arts commonly called Sculpture and Painting" (3). Morris defined "the so-called Decorative Arts" as a

> great body of art, by means of which men have at all times more or less striven to beautify the familiar matters of everyday life: a wide subject, a great industry [...] comprising the crafts of house-building, painting, joinery and carpentry, smiths' work, pottery and glass-making, weaving, and many others ("The Lesser" 4).

Morris further argues that with the elevation of the kinds of Art that he explains as the "great body of art" to the level of other great Arts, the life would be much more "reasonable," "beautiful," "simple" and "inspiriting" and there would be no "signs of waste, pomp, or insolence, and every man" would "have his share of the best" (27). By combining the Virgin Mary and the art of embroidery in the painting, Rossetti uses a Christian symbol for aesthetic purposes, especially for the Pre-Raphaelite ideals, which can be another reason for the painting to be defined as "Art-Catholic."

Another Pre-Raphaelite principle that is represented in the painting is truthfulness to nature. In the painting, the Virgin Mary's model for her work is a real lily. Her eyes are set on the real flower rather than on her embroidery, which symbolically refers to devotion to represent reality. On the other hand, lily stands for purity, which is also a representation of the Virgin Mary's soul. Therefore, in the painting not only truthful representation of nature but also the representation of the artist's soul is depicted. This exemplifies Rossetti's adopting the original Pre-Raphaelite ideal of painting from nature to paint the inner nature.

Furthermore, Rossetti represents the real nature, objects and real Saints with an addition of imaginary detail and an aim of representing the ideals of the new school of art. In *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, real and imaginary exist side by side. Real nature, ordinary objects and real saints mingle with some imaginary details with an aim of representing the ideals of this new movement of art. The use of nature is central in the painting, the lake and the green scenery is used in the background and St. Joachim is depicted outdoors as in close contact with nature. While the bright colours of external nature prevail the outdoors, art dominates the indoors as the Virgin Mary and St. Anna are depicted as busy with producing a hand-craft which takes its inspiration from real nature. Thus, the painting illustrates the close connection between art and nature, and the importance given to both of them by the Pre-Raphaelites. The figure of the angel on the left side of the painting is significant in terms of figuring forth the two important aspects of the painting. The angel's one hand is on the books representing the religious virtues and her other hand is on the lily, which the Virgin Mary embroiders. Taking into consideration the symbolic meanings of the books and the lily as well, it is possible to

see the angel as uniting spirituality, nature, purity and art, all of which reveal the Pre-Raphaelite and Rossettian ideals.

One of the best known and earliest poems of Rossetti is "The Blessed Damozel" which was written and revised almost throughout his entire life. The poem was first printed in *the Germ* in 1850 and it was reprinted in 1856 in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (Bass 176). The poem has two different versions; the one that was published in 1850 and the one published in 1870. Although the two versions are similar, the latter, which is going to be analyzed in this chapter, represents Rossetti's major ideas more clearly. Walter Pater identified Rossetti's poem as "a prefigurement of the chief characteristics of" the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and as a poem that includes "many of the characteristics which are most markedly personal and his own" (58). Rossetti wrote "The Blessed Damozel" while he was translating "La Vita Nuova" by Dante; from which he was greatly influenced in his own poem. However, Rossetti appropriated and subverted the tradition used by Dante which is going to be explained in detail further in this chapter. The poem represents an intellectual improvement in the nineteenth century: "the attempt to substitute human love for the lost comfort of divine love" (Riede, *Revisited* 34). The yearnings of the damozel and the lover are the main themes of the poem which Rossetti uses to appropriate, subvert or suggest an alternative to some of the dominant beliefs and aspects of the Victorian Age and the Middle Ages, which are religion, courtly love tradition and industrialism.

The poem is a prototype of a kind of painting that Rossetti standardized later in his life, which is "the decorative portrayal of a single female figure in a graceful pose, suffused with earthly melancholy and environed by emblematic objects that suggest eternal meanings" (Stevenson 25). The poem is like a painting with the frequent use of the Pre-Raphaelite colours such as the gold balustrade, the white robe and the yellow hair (Stevenson 26). The poem was also made into a painting by Rossetti within the same decade, when the second version of the poem appeared (Fig. 7). The writing and painting process of "The Blessed Damozel" dominated Rossetti's life, and it was an important part of Rossetti's life and art as well as it was for Rossetti's alternative world

Fig. 7. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Blessed Damozel*. 1875-1878. Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University, Cambridge.

of aesthetics. In the painting, there are two separated plates which illustrate the theme of separation. In the plate representing heaven, the lovers are depicted as embracing affectionately, and only the angels seem to illustrate the heavenly aspect of it. Moreover, the damozel with her daily clothes and flowers in her hand looks more like a real woman than a soul. The background of the painting is decorated with red flowers that suggest love, but the damozel holds white lilies and she has stars on her hair, representing purity. Dream and reality, physical beauty and spirituality exist side by side. With these contrasting, yet complementary details, the painting shows the interrelation and unity of physical beauty and spirituality. This unity can also be observed in the poem.

The blessed damozel is one of the heavenly ladies of D.G. Rossetti, a lady who is depicted as separated from her lover by death and she is in heaven, away from her lover. The poem is a dialogue of the lovers, the lovers voice merges with that of the narrator. In the poem, Rossetti unites earthly beauty with spirituality by depicting the damozel both as physically beautiful and as the soul of the lover in heaven. The damozel's soul and the lover's soul are united and when the damozel dies and goes to heaven, the lover has his soul in heaven as well, because he shares his soul with the beloved. In the poem, Rossetti portrays a beautiful woman who appears as a means to reach one's own soul; the important dream of Rossetti. The blessed damozel takes the lover away from the real world to a heavenly one, which is neither industrial nor materialistic. In this world, there is only a place for the beloved; the soul of the lover. These worlds, the heavenly and the real one are two different worlds, which are only connected to each other through a soul. This soul is in the appearance of a woman just like the soul of Chiaro dell' Erma and soul of the artist in "Saint Agnes of Intercession," the protagonists of Rossetti's tales that were analyzed in the first chapter. The heavenly world depicted in the poem is similar to the aesthetic world that Rossetti created with his works as the lover's soul and Rossetti's soul are in them. The union of the souls of the beloved and the lover in a single identity is a symbolic representation of Rossetti's aesthetic world as well.

The poem shows that the beautiful woman is the saviour, who could take the lover to heaven (Sonstroem 20). The damozel, the soul of the lover saves the lover from the real

world and takes him to a heavenly one. The blessed damozel is presented as an ideal woman who can save the lover from the earthly sorrows and from the material world he lives in, which is in fact industrial and mechanic when interpreted in a Victorian context. She is the soul of the lover, who is far away from the industry and the mechanized Victorian Age. So, the lovers are far away, in different worlds, and they cannot unite. In the poem, there is no indication of a real communication between them. This can be explained with the fact that in such an industrial age people could not reach their souls and could not be spiritual even if they wanted to. In this respect, the poem appears as a criticism of the material Victorian world. On the contrary, heaven in which the soul resides resembles to the world Rossetti tried to create with his works.

Some of the critics, especially Bass thinks that a medieval atmosphere is dominant in the poem. Bass argues that there are three characters of the poem; the lover, the damozel and the narrator, which gives the poem a "bi-level structure" that "gives the reader the effect of a medieval painting in which the heavenly is set off from, and dominates, the earthly one" (Bass 176). However, apart from the medieval setting that the three characters present, the three characters are indeed the same persona, the blessed damozel is the soul of the lover and the poem's narrator is the lover as well, who observes himself and imagines seeing the damozel in heaven. The narrator "speaks in an impersonal voice or as the blessed damozel, but when his emotions overwhelm him, he uses the personal voice, expressing his emotions directly in the first person" (Nassar 2). In the poem the lover tries to unite with his soul just like the protagonists of Rossetti's prose tales did. In this respect, this poem is another example of Rossetti's aim of reaching the soul in his art works.

As the lover desires to unite with his soul rather than with the realities of the time he lives in, his attempt constitutes an alternative to the real world that he lives in. The lover's soul is depicted both as a physical and a spiritual lady. The damozel is also depicted as physically beautiful. This unusual characteristic attributed to the Blessed Damozel can be seen from the three lilies in her hand as the Virgin Mary in the painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* was depicted as embroidering a lily. Thus, the lily gains a rich symbolic value in its association with two different female characters in the

paintings and poems of Rossetti. A woman who is physically as well as spiritually beautiful carries the same symbol with the Virgin Mary. Therefore, the damozel is an ideal woman just like the Virgin Mary and the Virgin Mary is not much different than an ordinary woman. Thus, the Damozel's physical and spiritual depictions make her an ideal being just like Beatrice in the *La Vita Nuova*:

> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even;
> She had three lilies in her hand
> And the stars in her hair were seven
> [. . . . . .]
> Her hair that lay along her back
> Was yellow like ripe corn (3-6, 11-12)

The three lilies in the hand of the damozel indicate purity in body, mind and soul (Sonstroem 21). The lovers do not unite physically in the poem but they only come together in their minds. It is not their bodies but their souls that communicate with each other. When the lovers would meet in the future after the lover dies, the damozel is going to guide her lover like Dante's Beatrice (Howard 46):

> 'When round his head the aureole clings,
> And he is clothed in white,
> I'll take his hand and go with him
> To the deep wells of light;
> As unto a stream we will step down,
> And bathe there in God's sight
> [. . . . .]
> 'And I myself will teach to him,
> I myself, lying so,
> The songs I sing here; which his voice
> Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
> And find some knowledge at each pause,
> Or some new thing to know'. (73-78, 91-96)

The Blessed Damozel for her lover has a similar ideal meaning to what Elizabeth Siddall meant for Rossetti who often painted his beloved as Beatrice. However, the damozel is not only the soul and the saviour as Beatrice but she is also physically beautiful. Furthermore, unlike in *La Vita Nuova*, in Rossetti's poem not only the lover but also the damozel has a yearning. The damozel yearns for her lover who is left in the

earth: "The blessed damozel leaned out / From the gold bar of Heaven" (1-2). The damozel's yearning for her lover is a physical yearning. Therefore, in the poem not only the body searches for the soul but also the soul searches for its body.

The damozel's yearning for reunion with the lover in earth is an unusual detail of the poem as it is not common to yearn for earth in heaven according to Christianity. The hope of reunion accompanies sorrow as well as doubt and fear; which can be seen in the damozel's words: "Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd? / Are not two prayers a perfect strength? / And shall I feel afraid?" (70-72). In these lines that indicate loneliness, it can be observed that heaven may turn up to be hell for one who is separated from her lover or heaven may be eternity of love, which the lovers yearn (Howard 49). In this respect, the sorrow of the blessed damozel, in a hell like heaven shows that "her heaven is the ironic equivalent of the second circle of Dante's hell, where the lustful are eternally condemned" (Nassar 1). Yet, the passionate love of the lovers makes their relationship differ from that of Dante and Beatrice. This relationship of the lovers makes the lover live in a hell-like earth and his soul to stay in a hell like heaven (Nassar 3). The damozel's yearning for the lover is so immense that her heaven becomes hell. Consequently, religious belief is parodied by "presenting a heaven that exists only in the language of physical desire" and by the exaggerated use of erotic depictions (Harrison 36). The poem ends in sadness with the dissolution of the eternal meeting in the lovers' minds and the hopes of reunion to be replaced with loneliness and despair. This dissolution makes damozel's hell like heaven even more evident:

> And then she cast her arms along
> The golden barriers
> And laid her face between her hands
> And wept (141-144)

The idea that heaven may become a hell for a woman who desperately wants to meet her lover subverts the traditional morality of the age and religious belief as it glorifies the union of the lovers and physical desire rather than a spiritual life in heaven. Rossetti also opposed another important belief of religion; with this poem he gave a new meaning to the idea of soul. For him, a woman whose heaven becomes hell because she yearns to meet with her lover represents the soul. Hence, Rossetti changes Dante's idea

that a spiritual lady can represent the soul, as for him physical beauty and spiritual beauty are united in a single lady.

In his poem, Rossetti uses Christianity for aesthetic purposes just like he did in his prose works. The poem is often identified as Art-Catholic just like Rossetti's painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. In fact, art was Rossetti's alternative to the transient, doubtful and chaotic Victorian Age. In the poem religion does not only appear aesthetically. In the early version of the poem religion appears as a thematic decoration. In the latter versions of the poem, stanzas imagining the reunited lovers in heaven were taken out, therefore, in the last version of the poem, "Christian symbolism is assuredly not merely decorative—the inadequacy of the Christian consolation is juxtaposed with the grief of the lovers to subvert traditional faith" (Riede, *Revisited* 33). The subversion of traditional faith is evident especially in the end of the poem when the damozel mentions about her plans to talk with "Lady Mary" and "Christ the Lord" about her relationship and asks to be reunited with her lover. This unsubmissive and courageous attitude of the beloved represents a reactionary attitude towards religion:

> [. . .] Then will I lay my cheek
> To his, and tell about our love,
> Not once abashed or weak:
> And the dear Mother will approve
> My pride, and let me speak.
>
> 'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
> To him round whom all souls
> Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
> Bowed with their aureoles:
> And angels meeting us shall sing
> To their citherns and citoles.
>
> 'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
> Thus much for him and me: —
> Only to live as once on earth
> With Love, — only to be,
> As then awhile, for ever now
> Together, I and he.' (116-132)

The damozel's prayer includes physical yearning rather than a spiritual one, which is unusual in Christianity. Moreover, Harrison notices another instance of subversion in

the poem and states that Rossetti subverts medievalism by using numerological symbolism and the linguistic archaisms in his poem that tells about a damozel who is not a typical Victorian or a courtly lady (Harrison 35). In Rossetti's poem, even though the damozel is represented as a typical medieval lady—a spiritual being with "three lilies in her hand" and with the seven "stars in her hair" (5-6), she is not always spiritual, but she is depicted as a physical being as well:

> And still she bowed herself and stooped
> Out of the circling charm;
> Until her bosom must have made
> The bar she leaned on warm (43-46)

The ideal depiction of such a physical lady who yearns for a union with her lover is unconventional for the courtly love tradition, which glorifies chaste, distant and unattainable ladies. Referring to some of the medieval romances in which women are willingly or unwillingly involved in physical relation, Morgan states that this brings only shame and insult for them (74-75). On the other hand, in Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," the lady yearns for physical reunion and is depicted as an ideal lady, who is the embodiment of spiritual and physical qualities.

Harrison argues that the poem is "a hyperartificial construct, a seductive and ornate bricolage and conflation of pre-existing ideologies [. . .] an aesthetic object that refuses any ideological commitment—to courtly love values or to medievalizing religious belief" (36). In the poem a lady is created and depicted so ideal and pure that she can be a courtly lady who lived centuries ago. However, she is also depicted physically. In the poem, Rossetti not only uses the courtly love tradition but also subverts it. This new type of character that Rossetti creates is an unconventional woman because she is both ideal and she yearns for physical union with the lover. This modern damozel is an example to Rossetti's use of medievalism as well as to the Pre-Raphaelite medievalism that uses the past in order to look into the future. Therefore, Rossetti subverts some of the dominant ideologies about womanhood.

The physical details of the poem are in accordance with the Pre-Raphaelite, and Rossettian sincerity, which Walter Pater described as "taking effect in the deliberate use

of the most direct and unconventional expression" (58). The directness and unconventionality seen in the stanzas where the lovers' relationship is expressed make it as if it is a real relationship, which is explained as the "gift of transparency in language" by Pater (58). Rossetti aimed to represent an unconventional but sincere relationship so that it could be part of a realistic world. It has been stated that the artistic or rather the aesthetic world created by Rossetti was considered by him as more real compared to the Victorian world of mass-production. Rossetti's poem tells a supernatural event in a supernatural setting, which is "real for the duration of the poem, having nothing to do with the really real" (Howard 42). In fact, representing the imaginary like reality was one of the qualities of Rossetti's poetry as it was stated before, a quality that he called "invention." Walter Pater explained this quality of Rossetti's poetry in his essay on Rossetti:

> For Rossetti, then, the great affections of persons to each other, swayed and determined, in the case of his highly pictorial genius, mainly by that so-called material loveliness, formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance, in a world where all beside might be but shadow. (62)

As it can be seen from Pater's comment, by presenting a human relationship with erotic details in this poem, Rossetti adds a reality to his imaginary work. The detailed description of the relationship of the lovers makes the reader see this poem as a concrete world. In the poem there are realistic details such as, the lover can see the beloved "smile" and "her eyes prayed" or hear "her tears" (139-144). Rossetti's handling of the theme of earthly love with pictorial details shape a real world. In Rossetti's alternative world, the mechanical realities are replaced with a love relationship that excels even the boundaries of the earth.

"The Burden of Nineveh" is another poem that projects Rossetti's ideas on culture and art. Rossetti started writing the poem in 1851, but it was first published in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856 and later revised for *Poems* published in 1870 (Howard 81). The poem was written with the inspiration of the arrival of "the huge human-headed winged bull from ancient Assyria excavated by Sir Henry Layard" to the British Museum in 1847 (Marsh, *Collected* 481). This sculpture was an art work made

by the Assyrian civilization, a military monarchy which ruled "from Cappadocia to Iran, from Ararat and the Caspian to Egypt and the Perin Gulf, even Iran and Asia minor, felt the influence of its civilization" and "its capital, Nineveh, was the real capital of the world" (Grousset 88).

"The Burden of Nineveh" is about this ancient Assyrian sculpture of a "bull-god" taken from the east to Britain (171). The poem mainly deals with the continuity of art and the vanishing of civilizations, religion and even imperialism. The poem takes place in the Victorian London but has references to the past with the art of the past centuries to be found in the British Museum with which the poem starts:

> In our Museum galleries
> To-day I lingered o'er the prize
> Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,-
> Her Art for ever in fresh wise [. . .]. (1-4)

Later, from the aesthetic atmosphere of the museum, the reader is taken to the real Victorian London, to "the London dirt and din" (7). As the speaker passes from the past to the present, he faces a sculpture; "A winged beast from Nineveh" (10). The sculpture is explained as "A dead disbowelled mystery; / The mummy of a buried faith" (15-16). Howard thinks that this monstrous statue is a "religious symbol" and "represents spirit" (84). Furthermore, in the Assyrian civilization, which was an inspiration for the poem, bull heads had a sacred meaning as "the sacred disk of Assur, the divine archer," which had two bull's heads (Grousset 91). In this poem religious symbolism is used just like it was used in Rossetti's other works. However, in this poem, a pagan religious symbol is used rather than a Christian symbol.

The art work with a monstrous shape resembles to gothic statues placed inside or outside of gothic buildings. Ruskin argued that gothic buildings with such sculptures were ideal architecture:

> [. . .] Go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and strern values,

> anotomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are sings of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children [. . .] . (*The Lamp* 261)

The sculpture of Nineveh may not exactly be one of the statues Ruskin mentioned in his essay *The Nature of Gothic*, but it is definitely an art work that could be appreciated by Ruskin because of the spirit it embodies in contrast to the "dirt" and "din" of London (7). In the museum there are Greek art works, which are "fresh" although they were made centuries ago, but they are not the focus of the poem (3-4). These art works represent the classical art works displayed in the Victorian museums. The Classical Art was not the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites and is not the subject matter of the poem either. On the contrary, the gothic-like sculpture is at the center of the poem. As a symbol, this sculpture represents the spirit which Pre-Raphaelites and Rossetti searched for in art. The sculpture, which the Pre-Raphaelites would admire, is anonymous and original – one that would probably not be appreciated by the Royal Academy.

It can be seen in the poem that civilizations have vanished and cultures have changed since the sculpture was made centuries ago. The sculpture was made "O'er which Time passed, of like import/ With the wild Arab boys at sport" (33-34). Rossetti mentions that "the consecrated metals," "ivory tablets," "winged teraphim" have all "fell into dust immediately" (111-115). However, only art works continued to live throughout the history:

> On London stones our sun anew
> The beast's recovered shadow threw.
> (No shade that plague of darkness knew,
> No light, no shade, while older grew
> By ages the old earth and sea.)
> Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
> Such proof to make thy godhead known?
> From their dead Past thou liv'st alone;
> And still thy shadow is thine own,
> Even as of yore in Nineveh (41-50)

The sculpture still has an impact with its shadow on Victorian London, in which many things are to vanish because they do not carry the qualities of art works, and they are mainly mass-produced. The sculpture is depicted as being brought to the British Museum to be presented along with art works from many other cultures and belonging to different periods. Harrison argues that in this poem "art defiantly rejects its originary historical contexts and transgresses—by transcending and eliding—the ideological values of the culture from which it emerges" (754). The art works from different cultures are displayed in the same museum for their artistic values rather than for their cultural values or meanings. The sculpture is not appreciated for its sacred meaning as it used to be, but it is valued merely as an art work. Mummies from Egypt and the sculpture of Nineveh are art works and that is the reason why they survived throughout the ages. These art works do not carry their original cultural meanings anymore as there is no visitor who can decode the same cultural meanings they had centuries ago, as their civilizations vanished. Therefore, Rossetti's poem implies that even cultures disappear with the vanishing of civilizations but art survives:

> And now, — they and their gods and thou
> All relics here together, — now
> Whose profit? whether bull or cow,
> Isis or Ibis, who or how,
> Whether of Thebes or Nineveh? (106-110)

Another significant aspect of the poem is that, it reflects "both England's cultural imperialism and its eventual demise" (Riede, *Revisited* 70). The sculpture from an eastern culture is brought to the British Museum in the poem, which shows an aspect of cultural imperialism implemented by Britain to the eastern cultures. The sculpture is represented as deprived of its original cultural meaning and context. The Assyrian sculpture was a representation of the Assyrian civilization and culture when it was crafted. Assyria united "all the peoples of the East beneath the same yoke" and the Assyrians were "the imperial race of the East and absorbed all the former civilized states of antiquity into one and the same empire." This "military," "despotic" and "materialistic" civilization's "highly cultured" people were unknown to the Victorian visitors of the British Museum (Grousset 88-89; 92). Therefore, this imperial civilization is one which had vanished but whose art work had not.

"In the Burden of Nineveh," there is no indication in the poem that the sculpture is appreciated as much as the works of the masters whom the Royal academy canonized. In the Victorian Age, art works from the east were popular, but their uniqueness and cultural value were not appreciated. William Morris argued that the art works of the East were not valued:

> Englishmen in India are, in their short-sightedness, actively destroying the very sources of that education—jewellery, metal-work, pottery, calico-printing, brocade-weaving, carpet-making—all the famous and historical arts of the great peninsula have been for long treated as matters of no importance, to be thrust aside for the advantage of any paltry scrap of so-called commerce [. . .] . In short, their art is dead, and the commerce of modern civilization has slain it [. . .]. What is going on in India is also going on, more or less, all over the East; but I have spoken of India chiefly because I cannot help thinking that we are responsible for what is happening there. ("The Art" 36-37)

In "the Burden of Nineveh," the sculpture is depicted as exhibited in the same room with other art works from other cultures: "And now, —they and their gods and thou / All relics here together, — now." The sculpture is seen as a part of eastern art works, which became popular in the Victorian Age and it is not given a high artistic value. In the poem the sculpture is depicted as valuable because it symbolizes the colonial strength of Britain and because it is popular at that time. Rossetti criticizes an imperial and colonial approach to art in the poem and he reacts to the idea that works from the east are seen as "the other," a term which Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain "as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and the colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view" (169). Rossetti reacts to the idea that art works are seen as the symbol of the colonial power of Britain. He believes that all art works should be seen with their artistic value as it was mentioned in the previous chapter.

It is implied in the poem that even the British civilization would vanish as well as Christianity, which shows the "eventual demise" of imperialism (Riede, *Revisited* 70). Rossetti tells about the inevitable end of the British Empire and British culture in the future by saying that even the periods of the British and Assyrian civilizations may be

unknown in the future. Furthermore, he adds that one day the sculpture of Nineveh may be found by another society and taken to be a relic of London, rather than of Nineveh:

> It seemed in one same pageantry
> They followed forms which had been erst;
> To pass, till on my sight should burst
> That future of the best or worst
> When some may question which was first,
> Of London or of Nineveh.
>
> For as that Bull-god once did stand
> And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
> Till these at last without a hand
> Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
> And blinded him with destiny: —
> So may he stand again; till now,
> In ships of unknown sail and prow,
> Some tribe of the Australian plough
> Bear him afar, — a relic now
> Of London, not of Nineveh! (165-180)

The poem reminds the reader of two poems by two famous Romantic poets: Shelley's "Ozymandias" and Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Harrison 199). In "Ozymandias" an Egyptian sculpture is depicted as surviving even though a civilization is vanished just like the sculpture of Nineveh in Rossetti's poem:

> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
> The lone and level sands stretch far away. (9-14)

Similarly, in Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" an artistic work, the Grecian Urn is explained as existing and would exist in the future when civilizations would vanish: "When old age shall this generation waste, / Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe" (234). These lines are similar to the lines in Rossetti's poem: "From their dead Past thou liv'st alone; / And still thy shadow is thine own, / Even as of yore in Nineveh" (48-50). Rossetti parodies the two poems by using them as intertexts and giving them new meanings in his poem as Harrison explains that:

> the author in his relation to these pre-texts behaves as the English have behaved in appropriating and assimilating into their own gigantic cultural monument (the British Museum) the works of art from many great civilizations which preceded the British Empire. (200)

In his use of Shelley's poem as an intertext, Rossetti gives more meaning to Shelley's monument as Harrison argues that "this artifact, too, or portions of it, might well be plundered and given new life as a historical "fact / Connected with [a] zealous tract" in the British collection" (200). In this way, Rossetti "gives new life to Shelley's poem and enriches its central irony." Harrison further states that in his use of Keats' poem as an intertext, Rossetti answers the questions of Keats with more questions (201):

> In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
> What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
> What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
> What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (Keats 7-10)

> What song did the brown maidens sing,
> From pûrple mouths alternating,
> When that [rush-wrapping] was woven languidly?
> What vows, what rites, what prayers preferr'd,
> What songs has the strange image heard? (Rossetti 23-27)

Rossetti not only appropriates and parodies the two poems belonging to the Romantic tradition but he uses religion aesthetically. The sculpture of Nineveh is the bull-god and therefore was a religious sculpture for the Assyrian civilization, but in the Victorian Britain, it is deprived of any religious meaning and only exists as an artifact in a museum where artifacts representing many other religions are presented all together:

> Deemed they of this, those worshippers,
> When, in some mythic chain of verse
> Which man shall not again rehearse,
> The faces of thy ministers
> Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?
> Greece, Egypt, Rome, — did any god
> Before whose feet men knelt unshod
> Deem that in this unblest abode
> Another scarce more unknown god
> Should house with him, from Nineveh? (81-90)

Rossetti also subverts Ruskin's views in the poem. He challenges Ruskin's "absolutist and evangelical view that art is a clear embodiment of the historically specific spiritual and moral values of the culture which produced it" (Harrison 200). Rossetti subverts Ruskin's idea that art and culture cannot be separated from each other by suggesting that only art works such as the sculpture of Nineveh continue to exist, while civilizations, cultures and even religions die. In the poem the religious symbol is a sculpture, an art work, which lost its original religious meaning, so Rossetti uses a religious symbol for an aesthetic purpose rather than for religious purposes. The bull-god is explained as once an unknown god for other religions but as a well known god in the British Museum as the contemporary civilization "shall learn to view" the bull-god "as a fact" (78). However, the contemporary civilization is going to see the sculpture as an art work, not as a symbol of religion. It is implied in the poem that religion does not survive, but art works do, which is a challenging idea to religion. It is stated that in the future, centuries later when a different civilization finds the sculpture of Nineveh, their people might think that the sculpture was a god of Britain:

> Or it may chance indeed that when
> Man's age is hoary among men, —
> His centuries threescore and ten, —
> His furthest childhood shall seem then
> More clear than later times may be:
> Who, finding in this desert place
> This form, shall hold us for some race
> That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,
> But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
> Unto the God of Nineveh (181-190)

The poem is an example of Rossetti's suggestion of art instead of religion to the Victorian Age. Hence, Rossetti's suggestion of art embodies challenges to culture, religion, Romantic texts and to Ruskin's idea, which particularly emphasizes that Rossetti could even react to the ideas of his supporters for the assertation of his own truths.

Harrison argues that in the poem, Rossetti appropriates these and reconstitutes ideology "in exclusively aesthetic terms" as he did in his poem "The Blessed Damozel" as well (204). In both of the poems, the accepted traditions and ideas of the Victorian Age, such

as imperialism, religion and the courtly love tradition are appropriated as intertexts and parodied at times for aesthetic purposes, therefore they represent art "as the unique source of fulfillment, permanence, and transcendence in life" (Harrison 204). In the "The Blessed Damozel," the love relationship of the lovers and Christianity are used to explain the transcendence of poetry, and in the "The Burden of Nineveh" with the apparent representation of the endlessness of an art work, again the worth of art is explained.

Another poem that was written in 1847 but was revised for the *Poems* published in 1870 was "The Portrait" (W. M. Rossetti 126). The poem is a love poem that expresses the speaker's desire to reunite with the dead beloved (Howard 12). The theme of the poem is similar to the "The Blessed Damozel," but in this poem the beloved does not have a voice, and she only appears in a portrait that was painted by the lover. In the poem, the speaker looks into a portrait of his beloved which he had painted before she died. This reminds the reader of "Saint Agnes of Intercession" and the late paintings of Rossetti. Consequently, the theme of the poem is a recurrent one in Rossetti's paintings and poems. "The Portrait," which is usually taken to be a representation of Rossetti's drawing *How They Met Themselves* (Fig. 8) depicts the painting of the dead beloved, and the feelings of the lover about the painting and the beloved.

In the poem, the art work exists, but its model does not, which reminds the reader of the "The Burden of Nineveh" as well. Although the portrait is a realistic copy of the beloved, the lover knows that the portrait is still "Less than her shadow on the grass / Or than her image in the stream" (35-36). Consequently, the art work is even less real than a shadow because the woman is no more alive and the art work is only a copy of her. The imaginative feature of the painting when compared to the real existence of the beloved reminds the reader of Christina Rossetti's poem "In an Artist's Studio" as the artist in the poem paints his beloved not as she is, but as she appears in his imagination. It is evident in D. G. Rossetti's poem that the lover painted the portrait in the way he wanted, not exactly how he saw her. After the day that the lovers met, the lover expresses:

Next day the memories of these things,
Like leaves through which a bird has flown,
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;
Till I must make them all my own
And paint this picture (55-59)

It is clear that the lover, or rather the artist paints the beloved as he wants her to be because he sees his own soul in the beloved. Just like in Rossetti's many other works, the artist finds his own soul in a woman and his soul in the shape of a woman: "And where the echo is, she sang, — / My soul another echo there" (44-45).

Harrison argues that this poem's pre-text is Browning's poem "My Last Duchess," which is evidently true as Rossetti greatly admired Browning's works. Rossetti wrote "The Portrait" in the same year when he started to admire Browning's poetry (Cramer 305). In fact, the first watercolour painting that Rossetti finished was *The Laboratory*, painted for the poem of Browning (Fig. 9). Furthermore, he admired Browning's work so much that he even "imposed Browning as a sort of dogmatic standard, upon the P. R. B," and affected the other Pre-Raphaelites and even their acquaintances at a time when Browning's work was not appreciated by the critics (W. Rossetti qtd. in Cramer 307). In later years, Rossetti got to know Browning in person and continued to admire him. It was originally his admiration that affected the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Pre-Raphaelite circle to help Browning become famous (Cramer 309).

Both in Rossetti's poem "The Portrait" and Browning's poem "My Last Duchess," portraits of the beloveds are gazed by the lovers. However, Harrison argues that Rossetti's poem depicts "a speaker whose character is the obverse of the Duke of Ferrera's: rather than merely an admirer of art, he is an artist for whom the portrait serves as a potential mode of communion with his dead beloved, not her replacement and a controllable improvement upon the original" (203). In Rossetti's poem the beloved represents the lover's soul. Therefore, Rossetti's speaker does not see the beloved as an object as the Duke of Ferrera does, but he is much more spiritual, an attitude that shows the spirituality of Rossetti's reactionary attitude towards Victorian industrialism. Thus, "Rossetti's poem responds directly to Browning's, presenting the positive amatory and aesthetic values absent from 'My Last Duchess'" (Harrison 203).

Fig. 8. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *How They Met Themselves.* 1851-1864. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

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Fig. 9. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Laboratory*. 1849. Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

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These values that can be found in Rossetti's poem show that the life that he represented in his works was full of love and aesthetic.

In "the Portrait," sensuality, which was taken to be fleshliness by Buchanan, can be observed. In this poem sensuality is told together with the Petrarchan and Dantean conventions. Harrison states that "The Portrait" uses and subverts Petrarchan and Dantean conventions (203). Although the love relationship of the lovers and the hope of their reunion are told in the Petrarchan and Dantean conventions, this reunion is not depicted as a conventional reunion, but it is expressed "in a parodic sexual image of penetration" (Harrison 203). Rossetti even subverts the Christian meanings in the end of the poem by finding a resemblance between the desire to meet the beloved and a pilgrimage. In Christianity, pilgrimage means a journey to a holy place as well as a moral, spiritual and religious search. However, in Rossetti's poem, the lover's yearning for reuniting with the beloved is depicted as a pilgrimage:

> Here with her face doth memory sit
> Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
> Till other eyes shall look from it,
> Eyes of spirit's Palestine,
> Even than the old gaze tenderer:
> While hopes and aims long lost with her
> Stand round her image side by side,
> Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
> About the Holy Sepulchre (100-108)

In three poems, "The Blessed Damozel," "The Burden of Nineveh" and "The Portrait," Rossetti makes use of some of the commonly accepted conventions and concepts of the Victorian Age like religion, faith, the immortality of the soul, the courtly love tradition, to create his own alternative world. He uses them for aesthetic purposes or for reflecting his reactionary attitude rather than for religious, spiritual purposes or for appreciating courtly values. In fact he "magically appropriated," "stole" these dominant symbols of the Age and made them "carry secret meanings" referring to Dick Hebdige's explanation of how subcultures subverted the dominant ideology (367). In three of the poems, Rossetti used Pre-Raphaelite, but mainly Rossettian ideas to appropriate and subvert these conventions and concepts in order to create a world of aesthetics.

In one of Rossetti's poems there was a more direct criticism of the Victorian Age and of the problems in the Victorian society. Rossetti wrote this poem, "Jenny" at the same time that he wrote the other three poems that were referred to in this chapter. Rossetti probably started to write the dramatic monologue in 1847, finished in 1858 and later revised in 1869 for the *Poems* published in 1870 (Howard 100). The poem resembles to Browning's dramatic monologues and Poe's stories (McGann, *the Game* 102). Swinburne identified the poem as "one of the most perfect and memorable poems of an age or generation" dealing with "deep and common things; with the present hour, and with all time; with that which is of the instant among us, and that which has a message for all souls of men; with the outward and immediate matter of the day, and with the inner and immutable ground of human nature" (21). Even more significantly, "Jenny" was among the few poems which Rossetti wanted to be remembered for (Marsh, *Collected* xxiii). Unlike in most of the poems of Rossetti, in this poem there is a more obvious criticism of society and a reaction to a different aspect of the commodified society: prostitution. The poem is about a young student spending a night with a young prostitute called Jenny who falls asleep on his lap. Throughout the poem, the thoughts of the student about Jenny are expressed.

In the poem, the feelings and thoughts of the young student or the "bohemian artist" are told, but Jenny is a passive character without a voice (McGann, *the Game* 102). Even though only the passing of the night seems to be the reality, the thoughts of the student create another reality, which is depicted as even more real than what the student and Jenny lived. McGann mentions that:

> It is crucial to realize that we are led to see the whole from a Rossettian inner standing point that is, from within the fantasy-space projected by the young man. It all appears to be a "real" scene, and is taken as real by the young man [. . .]. For the young man, or the poem, to see them more critically would be to break the spell of images, to break the illusion that constitutes their reality. [. . .] unawakened from its dream of life, the poem draws the lineaments of that supreme world of illusions we like to call "the objective world," the world as will and representation, "reality." (*The Game* 102)

In the poem, Rossetti creates an alternative world of illusions just like he did in the poem "The Blessed Damozel." In both of the poems Rossetti's "ability of making the imaginary look like real" can be observed. As stated before, Rossetti defined this ability as "invention" and as one of the best qualities of his works (Cooper 111). In both of the poems, the women are passive and the men are depicted as creating their own reality. The damozel is an ideal lady and Jenny is a fallen woman but they are both depicted with emphasis on their physical appearances, and they are both depicted as physically attractive, yet innocent. Therefore, it is not the damozel or Jenny that the poems focus on, but it is the alternative world that is created with the presence of these women.

In this alternative world, prostitution is not equated with an evil personality since the speaker thinks that Jenny is both "shameful" and "full of grace." Her appearance is similar to the appearance of the damozel, in the "Blessed Damozel," who is both pure and erotic (18). Jenny's physical features are explained in the poem: "Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair / Is countless gold incomparable" (10). Although Jenny is a fallen woman, she shares similar physical qualities with the damozel. In fact, the damozel in Rossetti's poem "The Blessed Damozel" had blue eyes and golden hair as well, and she was pure with the three lilies in her hair as Jenny is. Despite the fact that Jenny is a prostitute, she is not much different than other women according to Rossetti's persona as he thinks that she sleeps "Just as another woman sleeps!" (177). The idea that a prostitute can be pure is unconventional for the strict morality of the Victorian Age. In Rossetti's poem the prostitute is pure but fallen, which makes the reader think that she is fallen because of the system and society rather than because of her faults or personality. Rossetti subverts the Dantean and courtly love traditions by depicting the speaker as admiring a prostitute rather than an ideal courtly lady. In the courtly love tradition and in Dante's *La Vita Nuova* the beloved is "the glorious lady" and "the destroyer of all vices and queen of virtues" (Scott 2; 8). The speaker in the poem is evidently not like the rest of the men who mock or hate her even though they use her; unlike them he serves her and lets her rest. Moreover, in the poem, her being a prostitute does not decrease her value as a human being and as a beautiful woman:

> And from the wise unchildish elf
> To schoolmate lesser than himself

Pointing you out, what thing you are:-
Yes, from the daily jeer and jar,
From shame and shame's outbraving too,
Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?-
But most from the hatefulness of man
Who spares not to end what he began.
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside as when I dine
I serve the dishes and the wine (77- 88)

Furthermore, it is explained in the poem that Jenny could be a model for a painting drawn "With Raffael's or Da Vinci's hand" (237). Rossetti implies that if Jenny was not a prostitute, she could be painted in a painting made in the imitation of the two masters. However, Rossetti puts women like Jenny in a more elevated place than in an imitation, to his original art works. In many of his paintings Rossetti painted women who share similar physical characteristics with Jenny: "the stilled features, long throat, thin cheeks and pure wide curve from ear to chin" (Riede, "Aestheticism" 142). Rossetti's source of inspiration for the poem was probably his mistress Fanny Cornforth who was a prostitute and was painted as a prostitute by Rossetti as well (Sonstroem 64). She was the model of Rossetti's painting *Found* (Fig. 4) as well, which depicts a man trying to save a prostitute. Representing Jenny in his poem and women like Fanny in his paintings, Rossetti defied the Victorian morality by seeing a prostitute just like any other women.

Although Jenny is a prostitute, Rossetti still talks about innocence in relation to her. In an age when prostitution and innocence were seen as two extremes, he unites these two irreconcilable opposites in the character of Jenny. The speaker "sees her as a country girl, perhaps because she still seems touched with a kind of innocence which he does not equate with the city" (Howard 105). Although Jenny is a prostitute, she is more innocent than the city where even love is a commodity (Howard 105). Thus the city is a place where "Some things which are not yet enroll'd / In market-lists are bought and sold" (137-138). Later in the poem the speaker tells about his cousin Nell who "[. . .] is fond of fun, / And fond of dress, and change, and praise" (185- 186). Nell and Jenny have the same personalities, but it is money and their social classes that make the difference, because Nell does not have to choose whether to starve or to be a prostitute

as does Jenny (Howard 107). Therefore, in the poem society is blamed for Jenny's fall; the society that gives importance to material values and commodity.

In the end of the poem Rossetti resembles Jenny to a mythological character; Danaë and the speaker to Zeus visiting Danaë in the shape of a shower of gold. Eventually the speaker realizes that he is a part of the system that he criticizes. Even though he treats Jenny well, he is with a prostitute and he pays her with gold. Ruskin criticized the character of the speaker in a letter he wrote to Rossetti:

> He seems, even to me, anomalous. He reasons and feels entirely like a wise and just man—yet is occasionally drunk and brutal: no affection for the girl shows itself—his throwing the money into her hair is disorderly—he is altogether a disorderly person. The right feeling is unnatural in him, and does not therefore truly touch us. I don't mean that an entirely right-minded person never keeps a mistress: but if he does, he either loves her—or, not loving her, would blame himself, and be horror-struck for himself no less than for her, in such a moralizing fit. ("John" 234)

Realizing that he was a part of the society that made Jenny a prostitute, the speaker leaves Jenny. A similar theme can be seen in the painting *Found* as well. The man who is depicted as helping the woman can also be a man who might exploit her as a prostitute. Neither in the painting *Found*, nor in the poem *Jenny*, Rossetti seems to have found a clear solution to prostitution. In *Jenny*, it is implied that the man will not be able to do anything to change the society, but he will only be able to change his own decisions. The speaker decides to leave the prostitute in order to avoid being a part of the system that he criticizes:

> And must I mock you to the last,
> Ashamed of my own shame, - aghast
> Because some thoughts not born amiss
> Rose at a poor fair face like this?
> Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
> In my life, as in hers, they show,
> By a far gleam which I may near,
> A dark path I can strive to clear.
>
> Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear. (380-388)

In "Jenny," Rossetti reacts to the commodity culture of society and challenges it with his reactionary view on the way prostitutes were seen in the Victorian Age. Bullen argues that "What distinguishes 'Jenny' from contemporary moralizing texts, however, is its interrogative nature. In contrast to didactic accounts of the social or medical aspects of prostitution, "Jenny" is highly self-conscious and questioning" (64). The speaker knows that prostitution is a problem of society and he questions his position in that problem and eventually decides not to be a part of that problem. In this poem, it can be seen that Rossetti does not escape from the social problems of the Victorian society but he questions and illustrates them.

As it was argued before, depicting women unconventionally was one of the most important aspects of Rossetti's works. Another painting that represents this aspect and reacts against the Victorian idea of womanhood is *Bocca Baciata* (Fig. 10), with its "challenge to the dominant views of female sexuality and the appropriateness of the sexuality in art" (Bullen 108). Unlike Rossetti's early paintings, *Bocca Baciata* is a portrait. William Michael Rossetti stated that Rossetti "hardly painted anything in a more delicate and even style of art than" *Bocca Baciata* (36). The painting, which Rossetti finished in 1859, is the first of many paintings that depict female beauty, different from his more thematic oil paintings and water colours. Rossetti's paintings starting from *Bocca Baciata* became more famous than his earlier paintings. Many artists imitated Rossetti's paintings such as Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon, Frederick Sandys, Frederick Shields, which showed that "the paintings of Rossetti's final period, then, had a profound effect upon how nineteenth-century painters, critics, and consequently the cultured public saw both the arts of their own day and the arts of the past" (Riede, *the Limits* 234). *Bocca Baciata* was among those paintings, which changed the attitude to art. Barringer states that "with this painting, a new genre emerged which preoccupied Rossetti for the rest of his career" (146). This new genre was a combination of narrative painting, literary illusion and portrait (Barringer 146).

In *Bocca Baciata*, the use of nature is a striking feature. Flowers are used in the background of the painting; a single rose decorates the loose hair of the woman and another flower is depicted as in her hand. She is also painted as wearing jewellery with

Fig. 10. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Bocca Baciata*. 1859. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

floral patterns which can be taken as an implication of how art and hand-crafts are inspired by nature according to Rossetti. The woman's jewellery and the ornament placed on her hair can be thought as representing her interest in decoration and crafts which was one of the major aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism. This woman is not only a Pre-Raphaelite woman with her passion for nature and decoration, but she is a typical Rossettian lady with her loose hair, bare neck, rosy pink cheeks and lips.

The painting has a literary aspect as its title was inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Rossetti wrote the words: "A kissed mouth doesn't lose its freshness, for like the moon it always renews itself" at the back of his painting, which tells about the "eight story in the second day" in *Decameron* (Bullen 89). This story is about Alatiel, the daughter of the Sultan of Babylon, who on her way to marry the King of Algarve survives a shipwreck and is rescued by a nobleman who seduces her. As the story proceeds, Alatiel has relationships with other men such as the nobleman's brother who kills him in order to be with Alatiel. In the end, he goes back to her father and explains that she was in a Christian convent while he thought that she was lost. Later, her marriage to King Algarve is rearranged. The story ends with the words written on the back of Rossetti's painting (Bullen 91). Rossetti's painting does not exactly portray Alatiel, but it is inspired by Boccaccio's character and it portrays a woman like Alatiel—a sensual woman who does not hide her sexuality as Bullen argues:

> Unlike Rossetti's Magdelene, who tears the roses from her hair in a symbolic attempt to abjure her sexuality, the figure in Bocca Baciata allows the roses in her hair to remain as a sign of her continuing life of passion. And this symbol is played off against the untouched apple by her side. The apple, like the kissed mouth, has lost none of its 'freshness', and, like the ever virginal moon, acts as an emblem of female completeness. (93)

Therefore, sexuality in Rossetti's painting was challenging and new for the morality of the Victorian Age. The painting does not represent a prostitute as in "Jenny" or a fallen woman either, "yet the image is sexually highly charged" (Bullen 91). The painting depicts a sensual woman like Alatiel who is beautiful and desired. The model for the painting was Rossetti's mistress Fanny Cornforth. Sexuality is represented as an "enhancing virtue in the painting" (Bullen 93).

Riede states that it was the fleshliness of the painting that his contemporaries saw as the great change in Rossetti's style (*the Limits* 237). Rossetti's paintings seemed to be representing the beauty of the body solely, without the soul. However, even in Rossetti's earliest poems, the beautiful women were depicted along with their physical beauties as in "The Blessed Damozel." Rossetti always believed that the artist needs to represent his soul in his work as it can be derived from "Hand and Soul." In both of Rossetti's prose tales, the artist's soul was a beautiful woman. When Rossetti was painting beautiful women, he was painting his soul at the same time. Riede argues that "for Rossetti the symbols of the soul were the female anima, the beloved, and the traditional symbol of the mirror or reflecting surface" (*the Limits* 247).

Rossetti's and also the Pre-Raphaelite's another insistence in art was purity and originality as opposed to the conventionalism of the Victorian art and the artificiality of the Victorian Age. In an age when large historical paintings were appreciated, Rossetti's sensual female portraits can be taken as a challenge to the conventions and expectations of the Victorian society. In this portrait, beauty, sensuality and use of nature represent an alternative to the machinery of the age as well as a reaction to the ideas of morality and chastity. Rossetti not only reacted to his age with this painting, but he also changed his style in painting. Riede argues that the reason of Rossetti's change of style starting with *Bocca Baciata* was a reaction to his idealized heavenly characters: "In his poetry, Rossetti's own skepticism had led him away from the celestial machinery of 'The Blessed Damozel' toward a more sensual and more personal mode, toward an emphasis on flesh and blood" (Riede, *the Limits* 237). Representing women more sincerely rather than idealized seemed more real to Rossetti. Riede further argues that "the loving care with which Rossetti painted the women he loved is itself the soul of the work, and so it is both true and important that he painted best from the women he loved" (*the Limits* 262). Consequently, love itself without any artificial additions was much more real and pure according to Rossetti.

Rossetti created an aesthetic world with his paintings of beautiful women. As it was stated before, even his early paintings with religious symbols such as in *The Girlhood of*

Mary Virgin and his late paintings starting from *Bocca Baciata*, had privileged aesthetic concerns. Throughout his career, he painted and wrote his own soul; the soul of the artist in the shape of a woman. In his poems "The Blessed Damozel," "Jenny," "The Portrait" and in his paintings *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and *Bocca Baciata* Rossetti's representation of different women can be clearly seen. In "The Portrait" and in "The Burden of Nineveh" the immortality of art works can be observed. In all of these works dominant culture of the Victorian Age is challenged with subversions of strict morality, religion, medievalism and courtly love tradition, as a reaction to conventionalism, didacticism, imperialism and the commodified culture. Rossetti's alternative to the dominant Victorian culture was his aesthetic world, which was dominated by art and women. The highest places given to women and art in the alternative life that Rossetti created are going to be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

D. G. ROSSETTI'S *THE HOUSE OF LIFE*

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The Soul, -- its converse, to what Power 'tis due. (Rossetti, *Works* 275)

Rossetti's sonnet sequence *The House of Life* including a hundred and two sonnets were written throughout his life time and finished in 1881. The sonnets are about the issues similar to that of his poems. The sonnet sequence is dominated by the themes of love, death, separation, the longing for reunion, the joy of union and the power of art (Howard 164). The sonnet sequence is significant because it is composed of sonnets that create a whole and this whole represents life itself for Rossetti. In Rossetti's previous works, it could be seen that one of the major themes of Rossetti's works was art—the ideal artist, the ideal art work and the value and immortality of art. Another prevailing theme of Rossetti's works consisted of searching for the soul, love and the unity of physicality and spirituality. In his sonnet sequence, Rossetti shows that love and art are given the most prestigious places in his alternative world of aesthetics. Although some critics believed that Rossetti's sonnet sequence was a "House of Love" rather than a House of Life, Riede argues that "*The House of Life* is definitively not merely a House of Love, for it lacks the harmonious union that successful love would ideally bring about [. . .]" (*Revisited* 21). Rossetti's sonnet sequence can be thought as a House of Art and Love. The sonnet sequence is going to be discussed with a thematic order following the themes of art, love and grief.

The sonnet sequence, which is often taken to be "Rossetti's greatest achievement" consists of two parts, the first called "Youth and Change" and second called "Change and Fate" (Howard 164). There is no significant difference in the themes of the two parts as there is not a "distinct or emphatic principle of grouping" (Baum 37). In the second part, sonnets telling about loss, separation and death are more in number. However, in both of the parts, there are sonnets dealing with the same themes. Baum argues that Rossetti did not intend "to put into the limited compass of his hundred sonnets his whole philosophy of life" but he reflected what he saw in life, the larger

variety of the human comedy, with its proper place for robust gaiety and vigorous enjoyment of the world" (35). Throughout the sequence, the joy of life is related to the relationship with the beloved. With the separation from the beloved, sonnets are overcast by a tone of grief and melancholy. Happiness and love are accompanied by the presence of art as well.

In the sonnet written as a preface to the sonnet sequence, it is explained that "sonnet" is the representation of "a moment's monument,-- / Memorial from the Soul's eternity / To one dead deathless hour" (1-2-3). In the sonnet, "sonnet" is further depicted as "a coin" with a face that "reveals the soul" (9-10). In the previous chapters it was said that Rossetti's aim in art was representing the soul, and in this sonnet this aim of Rossetti is once again seen. As this sonnet is a preface to the sonnet sequence, the following sonnets represent Rossetti's soul as well. It was also told in the previous chapters that the soul of Rossetti was in art. Therefore, in the sonnet sequence art is depicted as "the transcendent power that might redeem otherwise meaningless lives [. . .]" (Riede *Revisited* 137).

In the sonnet "Heart's Hope," words and poetry are explained as mentors for teaching love and for giving meaning to love: "By what word's power, the key of paths untrod, / Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore" (1-2). It can be further argued that the soul of the beloved and the beloved herself are known from the heart. They are taught by words as well, as words are explained as the teachers of hearts who teach love. It is through the words of poetry that the depths of love are explored. Hence, poetry and art are given prestigious places in Rossetti's sonnet. This privilege given to art in this sonnet is even more significant as this sonnet is taken to be "representing miniature the aspiration of The *House of Life* generally" (Riede *Revisited* 139).

Another sonnet that represents the importance given to art and represents art as higher than the real is "The Portrait," carrying the same name with Rossetti's poem, which was mentioned in the previous chapter. In the sonnet, unlike in the poem, the painting of the beloved is depicted as a means to "show" the beloved "even of her inner self the perfect whole" and the soul of her to the viewers of the painting (4). The sonnet is not about

grief or a hope of reunion as it is in Rossetti's poem "The Blessed Damozel." The sonnet is rather dominated with the pride of owning an art work. The art work is like a continuation of the beloved and an immortal version of her. The owner of the art work is proud as though he owns the beloved: "Let all men note / That in all years (O love, thy gift is this!) / They that would look on her must come to me" (12-14). In the sonnet, the art work is depicted as surviving even when life ends. This shows the immortality of art and the futility of every other thing as it was depicted in "The Burden of Nineveh" as well. Paintings of the beloved continue to exist but the belongings of the beloved do not. In another sonnet called "Without Her," the belongings of the beloved are depicted as meaningless when the lady no more exists:

> What of her glass without her? The blank grey
> There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
> Her dress without her?
> [. . . . . .]
> What of the heart without her? (1-3; 9)

The things that remind the lover of the beloved are not meaningful, but only a portrait of her is. The portrait of the beloved is not seen as copy of the real person, but it is an independent entity that continues to exist despite the destructive power of time.

The importance Rossetti gave to art can be seen in the first sonnet of the second part of the sonnet sequence as well. In this sonnet, "Transfigured Life," it is said that life changes "by Art's transfiguring essence" (12). William Michael Rossetti argues that "this sonnet sets forth (what Rossetti profoundly believed to be the truth concerning good poetry) that 'the song'—i.e., a poem—is the 'transfigured life' of its author; his essential self developed into words under the control of art" (225). In the sonnet, art is explained as a world for the artist, a world in which the artist has another life. In this new world everything is not the same as in the real world: "So in the Song, the singer's Joy and Pain, / Its very parents, evermore expand [. . .]" (9-10). In this artistic world, feelings have a greater place. This world is a representation of the alternative world that Rossetti created as opposed to the mechanized and industrial Victorian world.

In this sonnet, art is represented as the life giver or the life changer, which can be derived from William Michael Rossetti's comment about the sonnet. It is by art that one passes into another world, and it is again by art that one's life is transfigured into a different one. This world is an aesthetic one that is dominated by art as can be understood from Rossetti's poems and paintings. Therefore, art resembles to God; the life giver, transfigurer of life and the meaning of life after death. So, it is not surprising that Rossetti ends this sonnet with a reference to a biblical allusion: "And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand / There comes the sound as of abundant rain" (13-14). These lines refer to the biblical allusion explained by W. M. Rossetti in his comment of the sonnet:

> After the three years' terrific drought, Elijah announced to Ahab that there was a sound of abundance of rain. He then sent up his servant to the top of Mount Carmel, to watch: the servant saw a little cloud of the sea, like a man's hand, and it was followed by a great rain. (225)

In Rossetti's sonnet, art is depicted like God, or like a new religion as the "song-cloud" is shaped as a man's hand rather than a "cloud of the sea." The "song-cloud" can be thought as a poem-cloud. So, rain is created by a poem or art, which once again shows that in Rossetti's alternative world, art is powerful, not God, industry, machines, conventions or institutions.

Rossetti defied all these aspects of the Victorian Age with the creation of a new world of art. Nevertheless, his alternative world is a world of love as well. The first sonnet in the *House of Life*, "Love Enthroned" represents the place of love among "all kindred Powers the heart finds fair," which are "Truth," "Hope," "Fame," "Oblivion," "Youth," "Life" (1-8). It is expressed that "Love's throne was not with these; but far above" (9). The sonnet sequence starts by giving a more privileged place to love above life and it continues with sonnets in which love is equated with life. In an age of machinery, Rossetti believed that the beloved was the meaning of life: "Sometimes thou seem'st not as thyself alone, / But as the meaning of all things that are" ("Heart's Compass" 1-2). Consequently, in this sonnet, as in many of Rossetti's works, one of the reasons of existence is the beloved rather than the improvements in industry as in the real Victorian world. Riede argues that this sonnet "lifts love out of life into the higher realm

of art" and projects "the aim of the sequence, to enthrone love and art and assert their dominion over life" (*Revisited* 128). The high place given to love in Rossetti's alternative world can be seen in the sonnet "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. (1-4)

In his love sonnets Rossetti searches for his own soul in the beloved as he did in his prose tales and poems. In the sonnet "Heart's Compass" the beloved, who is depicted as the meaning of life is also represented as a beautiful lady, whose beauty can lead one into a discovery of his soul:

> Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone;
> Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul unbar,
> Being of its furthest fires oracular; —
> The evident life of all life sown and mown. (5-8)

Rossetti's search for his soul can be thought as a Victorian intellectual's search for a soul in an age, which is deprived of souls and spirituality due to machinery, conventionalism and didacticism. Mathew Arnold believed that "greatness" could not be found in machinery or religion but that it was "a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest and admiration" (51). Rossetti saw "greatness" as a spiritual condition that could excite love, interest and admiration as well, so he searched for his soul in his works. However, while Arnold's suggestion for the chaotic Victorian Age was culture, Rossetti's was art that mainly expressed love. Arnold believed that culture searched for a perfection of "beauty and intelligence," which he depicted as "sweetness and light." Rossetti's suggestion for the age was art, which searched for similar things as well; beauty, soul and love. In the sonnet "Soul's Beauty" the soul of the lady or the lady in whom the poet finds his soul is told. Thus, it is a sonnet that unites physical beauty with spirituality. The sonnet also presents the beauty of the eyes of the lady, which symbolizes the beauty of the soul:

> Under the arch of Life, where love and death,

Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee, - which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath. (1-8)

The lady has a pure and simple beauty as plain as her soul. While "love and death, terror and mystery" are present in life, she appears to be above all of them and untouchable by them as well. She has a greatness that can make one's "voice and hand shake still" (10). She also has eyes "which, over and beneath, the sky and sea bend on" (6). She is not only physically beautiful but also spiritually beautiful as, she is depicted as more than a woman, more than a beloved; she is the soul that one would follow without questioning:

By flying hair and fluttering hem, - the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days! (11-14)

Riede states that "without love there is, for Rossetti, no soul and without soul, there is only fragmentation and emptiness" (Revisited 130). Rossetti has a painting named *Sibylla Palmifera,* accompanying this sonnet (Fig. 11). In the painting, the woman is "modestly dressed" and "sits in a temple" representing spirituality and the soul (Rodgers 94). In *Sibylla Palmifera*, behind the beautiful sibyl, in the background, elaborate architectural details of the temple and beautiful flowers are depicted together. It is in this respect that the painting can be taken as representing spirituality, art and nature. Even though the woman is a sibyl, as can be understood from the title of the painting, she is depicted as physically beautiful with her red clothing and loose hair.

Rossetti wrote a sonnet called "Body's Beauty" which accompanied his sonnet "Soul's Beauty." This sonnet is in contrast with "Soul's Beauty." In this sonnet "Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told" (315). Lilith is referred as "the witch" Adam "loved before the gift of Eve" (2). Lilith is not heavenly or with a virtuous soul as the lady depicted in the previous sonnet. The sonnet tells about a physical and earthly, yet a strong woman and as Allen states:

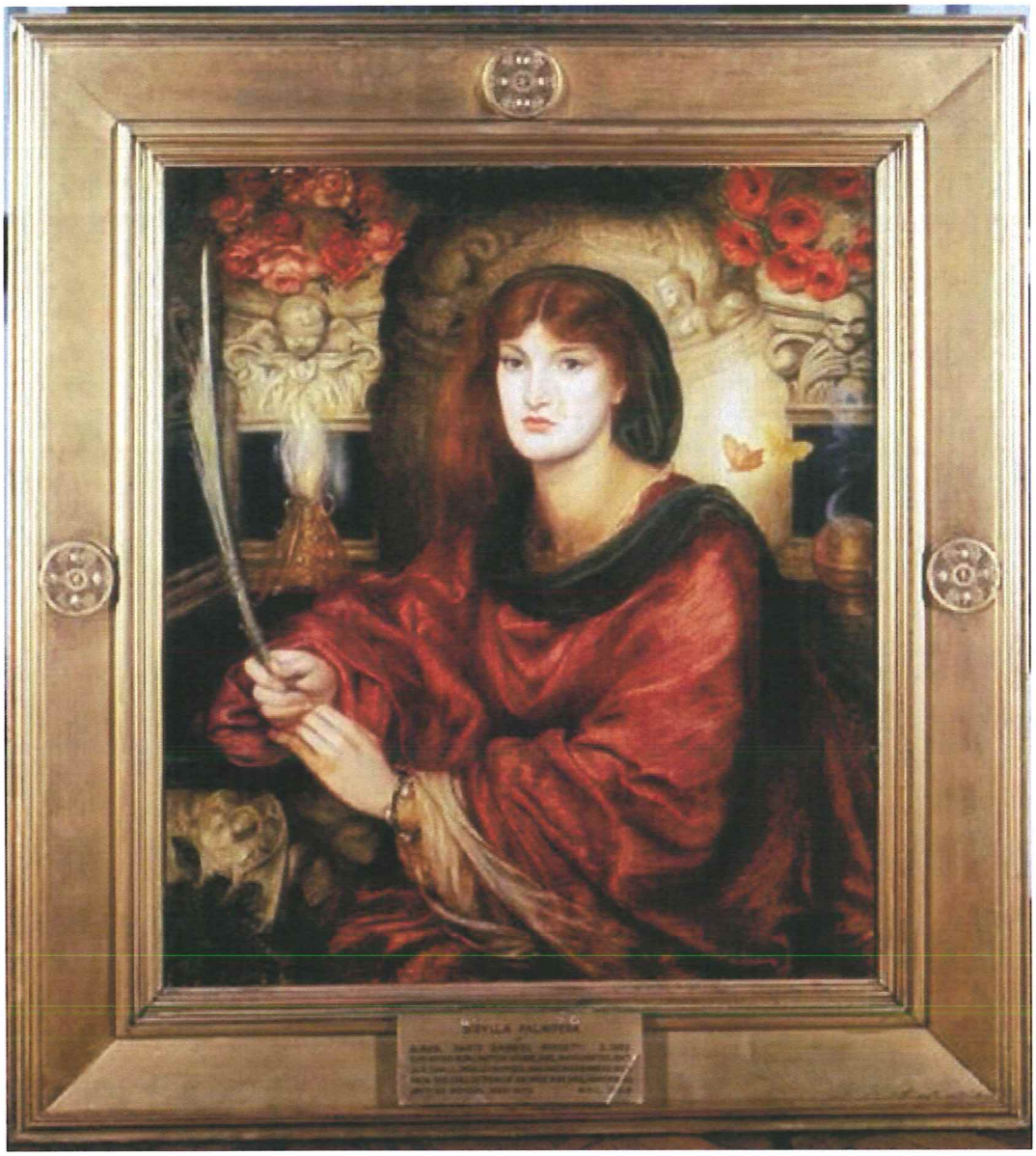

Fig. 11. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Sibylla Palmifera*. 1866-1870. Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

> She represents the New Woman, free of male control, scourge of the patriarchal Victorian family. In examining a select few of those earlier works together with Lilith herself it can be demonstrated that she incorporates the fears and fascination of Rossetti and his generation. Those fears were born of confrontation with the Women's Emancipation Movement and the controversy over family planning in the 1860's. (286)

Critics refer to D. G. Rossetti's Lilith as the first strong-minded woman and the original defender of woman's rights. However, Allen argues that one should not think that Rossetti worked for the Women's Movements, but the opposite can be argued for he equates the destroyer of men Lilith, with the new woman (292).

Rossetti has a picture, which accompanies the sonnet and it is named *Lilith* (Fig. 12). In the painting, nature and physical beauty are depicted as complementing each other. Nature is one of the most apparent features of the painting with many flowers and the natural scenery which the mirror reflects. Lilith's physical and sensual beauty is evident with her long neck, loose hair and bare shoulders. This painting and the sonnet portray a seductress woman who has bodily charm. In the painting, "Lilith is placed among the rose and poppy, symbolizing sterile love and sleep/death, images which add to her representation as an attractive and desirable, yet deadly woman" (Scerba). Both the poem and the painting draw a femme fatale character and indicate that "any woman so beautiful as Lilith, so self-contented and powerful, will cause nothing other than a man's death" (Scerba). Lilith's beauty gives her such a great power that she "draws men to watch the bright web she can weave, / Till heart and body and life are in its hold" (7-8). She is so beautiful that a man who looks at her is spelled by her beauty and becomes powerless:

> [. . .] O Lilith, whom shed scent
> And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
> Lo! As that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
> Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
> And round his heart one strangling golden hair. (10-14)

Lilith's beauty is also fatal and with its dangerous charm, the lover is killed as indicated in the last line of the poem: "And round his heart one strangling golden hair" (14). The line also means that Lilith had deceived Adam before the fall even before the snake did.

Fig. 12. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *Lady Lilith*. 1868-1873. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.

Rossetti's Lilith also seems to draw upon Keats' image of Lamia, the snake-woman because Lilith is as beautiful as Lamia and her physical appearance is in contrast with her personality. Just like Lamia, Lilith has an evil nature that can destroy men. While the cause of the male character's death is Lilith's "one strangling golden hair," this hair can also be seen as a metaphor for the coiling body of a snake" (Scerba). Moreover, Allen argues that

> Lilith, it would seem, is deadly as well as seductive. If not the first, she is certainly an early form of the erotic icon we now call the femme fatale, whose flowing hair became an essential part of the design style of Art Nouveau, and whose lethal charms were the primary subjects of symbolist art. (286)

In the first version of the painting, the model of Rossetti was Fanny Cornforth who was the mistress of Rossetti, a woman whom he never married and never saw as his soul as he saw Elizabeth Siddall and Jane Morris. However, in the second version of the painting (Fig. 12) Rossetti changed the model from Cornforth to Alexa Wilding, which might mean that Lilith was to be saved rather than to destroy (Sonstroem 117). Some critics interpret Lady Lilith as a representation of Elizabeth Siddall (Allen 293). These different interpretations about the painting show that there can be a Lilith in any woman. If Lilith is the representation of Elizabeth Siddall who is depicted spiritually in many sonnets and paintings of Rossetti, then any woman might have a part of Lilith in her and she might be even glorified with her physical beauty as Lilith is, as it can be derived from the title of the sonnet. A physically attractive woman with a deadly charm to be seen as any Victorian woman defies the traditional way to see women as chaste, spiritual and innocent. It is also ironic to see that Lilith is also similar to spiritual ladies that Rossetti depicted in his poems and paintings. Alexa Wilding was the model for both *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Lilith.* Rossetti depicted two different types of women—one spiritual, the other sensual—from the same model. This instance is again very suggestive in the sense that Rossetti's female characters are free of the strict rules imposed on woman by the society and tradition. They are the embodiment of spirituality, beauty and sensuality.

Allen argues that "the sonnet represents the mythic Lilith, who may be any woman but especially a woman in poet's own 'sexual imagination' " (291). Accordingly, it is once

again possible to remember Christina Rossetti's poem "In an Artist's Studio." Both "Body's Beauty" and "Soul's Beauty" depict the woman in the poet's imagination. For Rossetti, spiritual, soulful beauty and bodily beauty could both be found in a woman and so they were represented as united in Rossetti's works. Rossetti and the personas in his sonnets and other works admired both of these qualities in women. This admiration most of the time meant being in love with these women.

For Rossetti, love is not only spiritual but also physical, as it is expressed in his sonnet "Michelangelo's Kiss." In the sonnet, Rossetti says that the "worst regret" of "Great Michelangelo" would be:

> That when, with sorrowing love and reverence meek,
> He stooped o'er sweet Colonna's dying bed,
> His Muse and dominant Lady, spirit-wed, --
> Her hand he kissed, but not her brow or cheek. (5-8)

Rossetti as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood opposed the High-Renaissance Art made in the imitation of masters such as Raphael and Michelangelo. Despite this opposition, he deny the greatness of Michelangelo's art. In this sonnet, Rossetti criticizes Michelangelo's understanding of love. In the sonnet Michelangelo is depicted as "good at Art's fire-wheels to urge her chariot" but as a lover who "earns" only "a little" (9-12). It can be concluded from the sonnet that being a good artist should be accompanied by being a good lover if one wants to gain a lot from life. The sonnet ends with the question "What holds for her? And for thee?" (14). With this question, Rossetti expresses the futility of being a great artist without the existence of physical love in life. Similarly, in another sonnet called "The Kiss," it is asked whether love, which is both emotional and physical can be forgotten:

> What in smouldering senses in death's sick delay
> Our seizure of malign vicissitude
> Can rob this body of honour, or denude
> This soul of wedding-raiment worn to-day? (1-4)

It is said that such a passion, "fire within fire, desire in deity" could not be forgotten as the persona feels like "a spirit" and even like "a god" when he is with the beloved (11-

12; 14). The passion of a physical relationship makes the persona feel like a god and makes him feel spiritual. The passionate moments continue to exist even after death and the persona has those moments left after he dies unlike Michelangelo.

Another sonnet that depicts physical love is "Nuptial Love," a sonnet that Robert Buchanan particularly criticized in his essay "The Fleshly School of Poetry." In the first stanza of the sonnet, the sexual relationship of a couple is told:

> At length their long kiss severed, with sweet smart:
> And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
> From sparkling eaves when all the storm has fled,
> So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
> Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
> Of married flowers to either side outspread
> From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
> Fawned on each other where they lay apart. (1-8)

The intimacy expressed in the stanza is not depicted erotically. Moreover, the second stanza of the sonnet depicts the couple as have fallen asleep when "Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams / Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day" (11-12). The sonnet does not only tell about the sexuality of the lovers, but also tells about the union of their souls. Still, Rossetti was criticized by Buchanan for writing and printing this sonnet:

> Here is a full-grown man, presumably intelligent and cultivated, putting on record for other full-grown men to read, the most secret mysteries of sexual connection, and that with so sickening a desire to reproduce the sensual mood, so careful a choice of epithet to convey mere animal sensations, that we merely shudder at the shameless nakedness (28).

Even though Buchanan's criticism does not reflect the real meaning of the sonnet, it represents the attitude towards sexual women in the Victorian Age. Moran explains that: "A middle class woman who engaged in sexual activity outside marriage faced exclusion – from fiancé or husband and children, from the parental home, from friends and polite society" (37). Buchanan's criticism not only represents the attitude towards the sexuality of women, but also the idea of love, as according to the Victorians "love [. . .] was essentially a spiritual phenomenon relating to mental affinity and spiritual

communion" (Seidman 49). Even sexuality was repressed in marriages as it was believed that sexuality had to be related to reproduction and that:

> Sex should never be valued simply for its expressive or sensually pleasurable qualities alone. [. . .] Elevating erotic pleasure to an autonomous value opens the way to the dominance of animal passions over reason in human affairs. Controlled by sensual urges the individual loses self-control and social purpose. This inevitably leads to self-destruction and to social chaos and decline. (Seidman 52)

Considering how sexuality was repressed in the Victorian Age, Buchanan's criticism of the sonnet "Nuptial Sleep" can be thought as a conventional criticism for the sonnet, even though the second stanza of the sonnet does not express sexuality. However, Rossetti's attitude towards sexuality is unconventional for the Victorian Age and its discourses of sexuality. In Rossetti's sonnet sexuality is an expression of love and is not to be ashamed of, or to be repressed. Baum argues that "to Rossetti, with his pagan simplicity, love was as properly physical as spiritual; and he gave abundant recognition to both sides" (31). Rossetti does not contrast love with sexuality, but he unites them. In this way, he challenges the idea of morality and how sexuality was seen in the Victorian Age. In fact, this sonnet is a representation of Rossetti's alternative world and his reaction to the Victorian conventions.

The unity of spiritual and physical love for Rossetti was seen by Walter Pater as well. Pater explains in his essay on Rossetti that the unity of the physical beauty and sexuality with the spiritual beauty is related to medievalism. Pater argues that Rossetti follows "the church of the Middle Age by its æsthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter" (61). The comment of Pater explains that the spiritual and the physical are united for aesthetic purposes in Rossetti's works. Pater's comment on Rossetti's works recalls Raymond Williams' idea, which was referred to in the introduction, that in the Pre-Raphaelites works medievalism is related to the beautiful, which is a reaction to the ugly industrialism and commercialism (Williams, *The Sociology* 78). In fact, Williams defined the Pre-Raphaelites as "dissents" from their class because Pre-Raphaelites saw

the industrial and commercial as ugly and suggested the art works as beautiful in return (Williams, *The Sociology* 78).

In Rossetti's alternative world sexuality was a part of love and it was a depiction of beauty as well, as can be seen in Rossetti's defense of his sonnet in his essay "Stealthy School of Criticism." Rossetti argued that his sonnet depicted "a beauty of natural universal function, only to be reprobated in art if dwelt on to the exclusion of those other highest things of which it is the harmonious concomitant" (41). Rossetti saw love and sexuality as beautiful, whereas he saw machinery and industry as ugly. Therefore, the beauty he found in love that involves sexuality, constituted an alternative view for the dominant aspects of the Age. Rossetti's works represented love, which could fill the "confused, chaotic, meaningless" life which became so "with the removal of God from the world" (Riede, *Revisited* 129). Riede argues that in Rossetti's world "without love—as without God—the self is fragmented into separate, lonely senses, all laboring toward an end which, itself, is only disarray" (*Revisited* 130).

This emptiness, which was caused by not having love in life is the reason of the melancholic tone of the following sonnets. Tisdel argues that these sonnets "tell of regret, disappointment, doubt, despair, the anguish of a broken, remorseful life, the cry of a spirit that has suffered deeply and not found solace" (81). Despair occupies the empty space, which is left in the poet's heart with the beloved's departure. When the poet cannot write sonnets about love and the beloved, this absence causes despair, and it becomes his recurrent theme. One of those sonnets is "Barren Spring," a sonnet that marks a turning point in the sonnet sequence as Landow argues: "At this point in *The House of Life*, imagery of natural fertility can no longer represent the poet's mood, and instead he perceives, like that last great Victorian poet Eliot, that April is the cruelest month for one who has no capacity for joy and new life within him" (Victorian Web). When there is no love, the sonnets of Rossetti's sequence do not have joy. The lack of love and joy of life lead the persona to such a despair that, in this sonnet, even a "girl who sails balanced in the wind" does not make the hopeless and desperate persona smile:

So spring comes merry towards me here, but earns
No answering smile from me, whose life is twin'd
With the dead boughs that winter still must bind,
And whom to-day the Spring no more concerns. (5-8)

In the second stanza of the sonnet, the reason of melancholy is explained as the loss of the beloved. Spring is depicted as meaningless as even though the time passes, the beloved does not return and her loss tortures the poet's heart: "Nay, for these Spring-flowers, turn thy face from them / Nor stay till on the year's last lily stem / The white cup shrivels round the golden heart" (12-14). The sonnet once again shows the importance of love and the beloved in Rossetti's world and how his world might be full of grief with her absence.

Another sonnet on despair is "A Superscription," which tells about "the sense of loss in the death of one supremely beloved" according to William Michael Rossetti (257). The sonnet depicts a moment when the persona goes through an immense feeling of loss: "Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been / I am so called No-more, Too-late, Farewell / Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell" (1-3). In this sonnet, there is no hope for reunion, but there is only a place for the regrets and farewell. These feelings take place within a moment in time, and this sonnet represents "a moment's monument" as it tells about that moment in time, which imprisons the persona in it (Rossetti, Preface of *The House of Life)*. This sonnet is similar to the sonnet "Michelangelo's Kiss" as without the beloved and love the persona is on the verge of losing his identity and his life. As the persona is imprisoned in a moment in time without his soul and himself, there is a feeling of alienation, from the self who is prisoned in that moment. The sonnet represents the importance of soul in Rossetti's world.

The next sonnet in the *House of Life* is "He and I," a sonnet, which depicts the alienation of the self from itself. In this sonnet it is possible to see that the persona changed so much that he cannot even recognize himself and sees his new self as a stranger:

Whence came his feet into my field, and why?
How is it that he sees it all so drear?
How do I see his seeing, and how hear

The name his bitter silence knows it by? (1-4)

The new desperate self is stronger than the other one. It is the new self who "wanders round" the persona's "field, / With plaints for every flower" (9-10). This self even complains about the good things in the persona's life. He is full of grief about the persona's life and it is even he who cries; not the real persona:

A moan, the sighing wind's auxiliary:
And o'er sweet waters of my life, that yield
Unto his lips no draught but tears unseal'd,
Even in my place he weeps. Even I, not he. (11-14)

The persona is alienated from the new self, as if the persona continues to live with the good past while the new self cries. However, in the end, the persona realizes that he no more goes through a happy period as he did before and cries. As a result of this, the new self no more needs to compensate for the lost feelings of the persona. This sonnet has an important place in the sequence because it shows Rossetti's personal conflict with himself and how he dealt with the loss of his beloved. The sonnet suggests love for the mechanized Victorian world, as a solution, and it also signifies love as one of the most prestigious aspects of Rossetti's alternative world. Therefore, the sonnet represents the feeling of loss in a world without love and highlights the importance given to love in Rossetti's *House of Life*.

It is possible to read the sonnet "He and I" autobiographically as well as the other sonnets in the sequence since *The House of Life* is Rossetti's "one production that figures forth his own life without confusing it with an analogue" as Sonstroem expresses (153). The persona in the sonnet resembles to Rossetti, who started to feel desperate in the late part of his life as a result of facing the loss of his beloved and waiting for a similar end. The grief and sadness that Rossetti had were unfamiliar to his previous life and even to his art. It was possible for him to see his desperate self as a new person. Additionally, he could easily alienate himself from that person just like the persona in the sonnet. Rossetti's art was full of colours, it always depicted love, passion,

art and all these blended at times. He depicted life itself with these and believed that life could not exist without love and art.

The following sonnets represent Rossetti's turning back to life in the figurative sense. The two sonnets, which are named as "Newborn Death" are about death, which is depicted as an unfamiliar thought for the persona. The persona waits for death and wonders when it will come in the first sonnet. In the second sonnet, the persona, just like Rossetti would, asks whether love and art have died. From the sonnet it can be understood that as long as love and art continues, the persona does not want to die:

> Lo! Love, the child once ours; and Song, whose hair
> Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;
> And Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair;
> These o'er the book of Nature mixed their breath
> With neck-twined arms, as oft we watched them there:
> And did these die that thou mightst bear me Death? (9-14)

There is the implication that the persona can only die after love and art dies. Once again in this sonnet it is possible see that life meant love and art for Rossetti. For him, if love and art ended, life would end as well. In the last sonnet of the sequence "The One Hope," this blend of love and art gives Rossetti hope. Rossetti searched for his soul in the beloved and in love in the works which are studied and he insisted in the search of the soul in art as well. Rossetti found his own soul in love and art and he hoped that these could and so he could continue even after death. His hope can be seen in the "The One Hope:"

> When all desire at last and all regret
> Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
> What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
> And teach the unforgetful to forget?
> Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,--
> Or may the soul at once in a green plain
> Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
> And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet? (1-8)

Sonstroem argues that "soul runs the gamut of meaning from inner feeling, to inner holiness, to an active metaphysical entity, to an immortal spirit" (148). In the last stanza of the sonnet the soul is depicted as wandering around and continuing the one hope of finding life once again in love and in art:

> Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
> Between the scriptured petals softly blown
> Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,
> Ah! let none other written spell soe'er
> But only the one Hope's one name be there,--
> Not less nor more, but even that word alone. (9-14)

William Michael Rossetti argues that "the one hope" in this sonnet refers to "the name of the woman supremely beloved on earth" (261). Love transcends life, so it is given a higher place than life as it is in the first sonnet of the sequence. Consequently, the first sonnet and the last sonnet of the sequence complement each other, which represents life as a circle. Depicting life as a cycle explains the nonlinear order of two parts of the sonnet sequence. The sonnets, which deal with different themes are randomly placed in the sonnets just like events or periods in life are.

Baum states that the sonnet sequence "has little unity of a formal kind; on the contrary, its unity is the unity of Rossetti's life" (46). Rossetti searched for his soul in his depictions of women, just like the persona he created searched for his soul in life after life. Rossetti's soul was not only in the idea of love but it was also in art. Helsinger argues that in the last sonnet of Rossetti's sequence, "The One Hope" is "that of a wan soul" but "it is also a word, a genesis for poetry" (256). Also when this last sonnet is read autobiographically, the soul cannot be only in love but it can be found also in art. After Elizabeth Siddall's death Rossetti did not write any poems for some years and he even buried the poems that he wrote before. However, after a couple of years of mourning, he turned back to writing and even had the poems taken out of the grave. Wallerstein states that "Rossetti with a renewed creative force, the full strength of which he can hardly himself have been conscious of, after a silence of six years resumed composition in a series of sonnets [. . .]" which included the sonnet "The One Hope" (498). The one hope not only relates to Rossetti's desire to see the beloved after

life but it relates to Rossetti's passion for art and his belief that art continues to exist when every other thing comes to an end.

In Rossetti's works love and art always accompanied each other, neither of these existed without the other. Particularly, in his *The House of Life*, art and love complete each other and their unity is celebrated. However, as it could be seen from the sonnets, they are given importance separately as well. Art is so powerful that it opens up a new world and it transfigures life. It is like a religion which dominates the new world that it opens as well. The new world is also shaped by love, which is both spiritual and physical, and without love the alternative world of Rossetti is full of despair. In the sonnet sequence it can be seen that Rossetti gave the most prestigious places to love and art in his world. Therefore, the sonnet sequence can be thought as a microcosm of Rossetti's alternative world of aesthetics.

CONCLUSION

Victorian Age was an age of transition marked by rapidly improving industry, machinery and mass production. O'Hop explains that "in times of radical change" as in the Victorian Age "industrialization creates doubt about existential issues and leaves little room for the arts, institutions disintegrate and confusion envelops spiritual life" (8). In the Victorian Age, material works were appreciated more than the art works. Even reproducing works of art was seen as bringing "culture" to the Victorians (Buckley 128). However, the majority of the Victorians did not even think that such a culture was even necessary. According to this majority, industrial improvements and mechanical products were to be appreciated. The minority of the Victorians resisted the industrial culture and they strived for High Culture. Mathew Arnold saw high culture as an alternative for the industrial Victorian Age going towards a chaos.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a part of the minority who did not accept the dominant culture. They did not suggest culture as the alternative for the Age, but they rather suggested art. They not only painted but wrote poetry as well. O'Hop explains that in a time of radical change, when art is appreciated by a minority, art must be "deconstructed and reconstructed into new forms" and such a time of transition "takes the good from past art forms and uses it to make art meaningful again" (8). Just like the other Pre-Raphaelites, D. G. Rossetti was inspired by the medieval period "a period where artistic freedom and artistic achievement went hand in hand" as a reaction to "science and the false pride of science" (Morse 454). He used the medieval period as a way to challenge the dominant culture and the stereotypical, conventional art of the Victorian Age.

D. G. Rossetti created a world of aesthetics as an alternative to the dominant culture of the Victorian Age. Rossetti not only reacted to the lack of art, but he reacted to the mass-produced art works and imitative art. According to him and to the other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood art not only meant painting, sculpture, architecture and literature but it meant hand-crafts as well. In his prose tales Rossetti set how an ideal artist and art should be. According to him, art had to represent the soul of the

artist, it should not be done for fame or faith. Furthermore, it had to be free from the conventions and be original. Rossetti's prose tales presented a reaction to the Royal Academy and other conventions of the age. In "Hand and Soul" and "Saint Agnes of Intercession," art and artistic life were represented as above the real industrial Victorian life.

In his poems "The Blessed Damozel" and "The Portrait," Rossetti shaped an artistic world that was more real than the reality. In "The Blessed Damozel," the damozel was a savior who could save the lover from the industrial life, which Rossetti saw as an artificial life. The imaginary communication of the lovers was told realistically, and none of the lovers wanted the imaginary moments to end. The damozel did not want to turn back to heaven and the lover did not want to turn back to real life. Therefore, even imaginary union of the lovers is preferred over the real world. In his works, Rossetti explained love as superior to all, along with art. In his sonnets, life without love was expressed as full of despair and grief.

In the relationships told by Rossetti, the women were both spiritually and physically attractive and the relationship of the lovers was at times depicted with too much emphasis on physicality. In "The Blessed Damozel," the spiritually and physically attractive woman yearning for physical union was represented as an ideal woman. Rossetti subverted the courtly love tradition and the Victorian norm of seeing spiritual women as ideal. In his poem "Jenny," Rossetti's criticism of the Victorian society is evident. He blamed the Victorian society for the fall of Jenny. Rossetti argued that Jenny could be a model for a painting considered as Fine Art, rather than being a prostitute, a victim of the commodity culture. In his poem, Rossetti contrasted the two worlds, of fine art and of commodity culture and presented the apparent value of the artistic one.

In many of his works D. G. Rossetti expressed his desire for the prevalence of the artistic world over the real world that he disliked in many of his works. Starting from his painting "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin," Rossetti opened up a new world which existed at a time before the industry. He used Christianity to introduce the new

technique and thinking in art. Rossetti appropriated and subverted religion in many of his works including *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, "The Blessed Damozel" and "the Burden of Nineveh." In his sonnets sequence *The House of Life*, art was expressed as transfiguring life into another one and art was resembled to a new religion. Art represented "the one hope" of Rossetti, the hope that life could continue through art after death. In his poem "The Burden of Nineveh," civilizations, their cultures and religions are explained as having vanished. However, art is represented as the only survivor, which shows that for Rossetti, it is the best solution for the problems, changes and deterioration of the period.

D. G. Rossetti opposed to the dominant culture of the Victorian Age. His and the other Pre-Raphaelites' opposition at times made them operate like a subculture, which uses the aspects of the dominant culture to challenge the hegemony. Rossetti used the courtly love tradition, religion, spirituality, the idea of soul, morality and subverted them. His subversion of the values of the dominant culture was a part of his deconstructing this culture as well. Even though Rossetti's opposition was a part of a minority, he wanted to reach more people through his ideas on art and art works. He believed that art should not be restricted with any definitions. Consequently, he believed that all works could be works of High Art. For this reason, he elevated every kind of art in his works. He showed the importance he gave to crafts in his works such as in "the Girlhood of May Virgin." Rossetti wanted his ideals to reach to a majority.

Industrialism, machinery and commodity culture certainly could not be avoided by the efforts of the Pre-Raphaelites or by the following generations either. However, as Buckley argues "all Victorian painters, including the Pre-Raphaelites, were fighting a losing battle against mechanical means of reproducing the actual with consummate realism" (137). Reproducing, imitation and mass production could not be avoided either, as the British culture was getting commodified with the rapidly improving industry. Even though Rossetti could not change the dominant culture of the Victorian Age, he could shape an alternative world of aesthetics.

Furthermore, The Pre-Raphaelites and especially D. G. Rossetti influenced the artists and the people living all over the world. The movement and the artists associated with the movement reached to a majority of people and influenced the art and culture of the Victorian Age. As Macleod explains "never before had there been so many middle-class buyers eager to spend such vast amounts of money on the work of living artists" and in the mid-Victorian years hundreds of new collectors became interested in buying art works, which Geoffrey Best called "crystallising of a cultural apparatus" (*Art* 195). Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites influenced the American artists as well, as an American patron wrote to Rossetti in 1863: "There is hope for Art in this country. The true ideas—the P. R. B. has done so much to make clear—are extending among our younger men, both painters and architects, and we shall before long have good work to show you" (qtd. in Casteras, *English* 147).

The art movement that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood started continued to influence many other artists after the dissolution of the Brotherhood. Burne-Jones and William Morris were considered as the artists belonging to the second phase of the movement. Morris' Arts and Crafts Movement was influenced by the ideas first stated in *The Germ.* J. R Stanhope and Simeon Solomon were two of the major followers of Burne Jones. Furthermore, The Birmingham School of Art was an outpost of Burne-Jones' and the Pre-Raphaelite's influence. This movement of art was committed to the arts and crafts and they aimed to shape the cultural institutions in Birmingham with Burne-Jones' help (Christian 11). After the Birmingham School of Art, The Early Academic Tradition flourished with the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites with an addition of an academic standpoint, which the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood intended to oppose in the beginning. The Early Academic Tradition was started by John William Waterhouse and Sir Frank Bernard Dicksee and it was continued by Arthur Hacker, Maurice Greiffenhagen and Herbert Draper. Later, artists born in 1870's, Byam Shaw, Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, Frank Cadogan Cowper were the group of artists who were influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In fact, they wanted the Movement to revive, and so they reinterpreted the early works of Rossetti and Millais with an academic spirit. However, they cannot be said to carry the original aims of the Pre-Raphaelites as their works were not original and they had an academic spirit. Pre-Raphaelitism also influenced the Slade

School Symbolists, who were thought as the true heirs of the Pre-Raphaelites (Christian 12-15). Pre-Raphaelitism influenced many other artists including sculptors and authors. Oscar Wilde referred to the Pre-Raphaelites as "great men" in one of his lectures and also implied that they were not known as much as they had to be (Christian 20).

The Pre-Raphaelites' influence even extended to the twentieth century; to the Surrealists according to some of the art critics (Tanita 19). The Pre-Raphaelites were cited as the "Victorian Surrealists" in the Time Magazine of 1946 and this name was associated with them because they painted their dreams just like the Modern Surrealists. Tanita argues that Salvador Dali saw the Pre-Raphaelites as significant and was especially influenced by Rossetti (19). Thirty years after Dali wrote about the beauty of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings in his article "le Surrealisme Spectral de L'eternel Feminin Preraphaelite," the Pre-Raphaelites reclaimed "a place in the emergence of modern art" (Tanita 20). O'Hop states that the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites can be seen in the works of Modernists like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Robert Frost (4).

As Matson explains, Rossetti influenced many twentieth century works including Nerina Shute's *Victorian Love Story: A Novel of Rossetti*, John Fowles' *French Lieutenant's Women*, John Hale's *The Love School*, Elizabeth Savage's *Willowwood*, Patty Kitchen's *The Golden Veil*, Vincente Munoz Puelles' *Los Amantes de la Niebla*, Kim Morrissey's *Clever as Paint: The Rossetti's in Love* and Ken Russell's *Dante's Inferno* (IV). In an interview, John Fowles explained his use of Rossetti in his novel *French Lieutenant's Women* as a symbol of a breakthrough for "standing up against the age" and saying "there's something sick about this age, we've got to become more human, more sensuous" (Campbell 465).

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and especially Dante Gabriel Rossetti influenced many other movements, artists and culture. Rossetti reacted to the industry, machinery, mass production, imitation and art to be a part of a minority culture. He used the dominant aspects of the age and subverted them. At the same time, he created another world—an aesthetic world in his prose tales, poetry, sonnets and paintings. As Riede argues by referring to Harrison, Rossetti's poetry fought to establish "the ideology of

'aestheticism,' the idea of art's autonomy and independence, primarily through its own complex dependence on prior texts" (*Revisited* 166). Despite the fact that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood received both support and criticism by the prominent literary figures of the Victorian Age, they established a tradition that not only challenged the concept of art but also inspired some of their contemporaries and the future artists. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with his paintings and literary works created an alternative aesthetic world, which is independent from the dictates of the dominant culture and shaped by a reactionary approach to the conventional art. It is an imaginary world away from the real one that is ruined by industrialization; and it is a world where art, beauty, spirituality and physicality are given the most prestigious places.

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