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**Pre-Raphaelite and Working-Class poetry, 1850-1900:
an examination of a contiguous tradition**

by
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*Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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Abstract

This thesis closes an existing gap within the field of Victorian poetry scholarship, as the relationship between Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets has yet to be explored in depth by critics, in part because they superficially appear to be disparate. I argue that a contiguous tradition exists between the two groups which reveals connections through; shared political agendas, the use of the past to change tastes and ideas in the present, connections between imagery and form, and the use of contemporary events to modify public perceptions of their poetry. This focus is of significance to critics of the Victorian period because it is not necessary to prove that an individual poet or group has an influence over another. As a result, this thesis does not principally concern itself with the power relationships which are of interest to a New Historicist critic; rather it employs elements of Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism and Cultural Materialism. What emerges is an expanded notion of what constitutes Victorian high culture, as well as a more nuanced picture of social stratification. The first three chapters uncover exchanges between the poets, which are evidenced in material culture, through Pre-Raphaelite patronage of working-class poets and, via an engagement with contemporary print culture. Later chapters focus upon issues relating to poetic form, imagery, setting and particular modes of expression. The contiguous relationship which links the groups emerges through a focus upon a shared employment of the themes and voices of the French Medievalist past, the anti-pastoral, the chivalric-grotesque and war poetry. The arguments constructed within these chapters challenge the cultural position of the groups, and thus call into question critical expectations of their work. It paves the way for future work, which clarifies the distinctions and similarities between the poets and gives a clearer and nuanced picture of their interactions.

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Introduction

This thesis will argue that a contiguous artistic tradition exists between the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class poets, which runs counter to pre-conceived notions of Victorian high culture; a tradition that has yet to be fully mapped out by critics. In order to be able to recover this previously obscured relationship between two seemingly different groups of writers, the work in the main body of this thesis is informed by, and engages with, elements of Cultural Neo-Formalist discourse. Indeed the methodology underpinning the following chapters could be described as a way of negotiating between the two. The first part of this thesis will explore the material connections between the two groups that can be discerned through the patronage system and Victorian print culture. The second section then goes on to investigate commonalities in such key areas as the uses of voice (communal and solitary), the tensions and adjustments made between aesthetics and politics and the struggle to establish either a regional or national identity. Within these broad issues it is noticeable that certain key thematic touchstones – nearly always involving a particular choice of imagery or form – reoccur and these themes constitute and explain the chapter divisions and titles. Some of these areas will be immediately familiar to any reader of the Pre-Raphaelites. Others are slightly newer and involve some reconceptualisation.

The chapters of the second half of the thesis look at the following areas in turn: Chapter four explores the way in which winter themed poetry is used as a vehicle to explore female poetic identity: Chapter five examines the ways in which shared use of garden imagery seems to indicate what might be viewed as an embryonic anti-pastoral tradition, allowing both Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets to engage with, or take a

step back from, the contemporary world: Chapter six focuses on Medievalism, singling out as most significant the appropriation of poetry from French Medievalism that enables poets to intervene in contemporary political and aesthetic discussions. The final chapter brings together two categories often seen in opposition – the chivalric and the grotesque – to explore their interplay and what this might tell us about some of the conservative drives to restore or emphasise order at work in these poets. In each case, my thesis will deal primarily with poetry written between 1850 and 1900, the period during which the Pre-Raphaelites were at their most active.

The work of Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian working-class poets existed in some ways outside of Victorian high culture but in other ways within it. According to Jonathan Rose the notion of Victorian high culture itself is problematic, particularly from the point of view of working-class writers who were thought by the higher classes to exist outside of this tradition. Rose poses the question: ‘If the dominant class defines high culture, then how do we explain the passionate pursuit of knowledge by proletarian autodidacts, not to mention the pervasive philistinism of the British aristocracy?’¹ This suggests a more fluid relationship between class and high or low culture. Working-class poets at times thought that they were participating in a high-cultural tradition because their work was inspired by writers such as Shakespeare (1564-1616), Milton (1608-1674) and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), who are now considered to be canonical writers. This tradition has been explored by Brian Maidment in the section from his edited collection *The Poorhouse Fugitives* which explores what he terms to be ‘Parnassian Poetry’. Maidment comments that ‘[I]t is indeed one of the central paradoxes of poetry by self-taught writers that in their poetic model they should follow Pope and eighteenth century neo-classic modes in their reflective and social

¹ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working-Classes* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 4.

poetic, but the Romantic, whose politics were much admired, largely for their pastoral and devotional poetry'.² My research will reveal that the tradition is even more complex than Maidment suggests, as certain poets mediate a critique of the current inequality between the working and upper classes through the French Medieval past, whilst others use the anti-pastoral to comment on the impact of industrialisation upon the way in which the working classes respond to the world around them.

Working-class writers were often seen to be on the periphery of Victorian high culture. Yet, this behaviour was not all pervasive because it was actively challenged by writers from higher classes through the patronage system. This enabled working-class writers to enter into print. These movements are possible in part because culture itself is elusive and malleable. For Raymond Williams, culture is a word that is notoriously difficult to define. 'This is so partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought'.³ This partially explains some of the overlaps between high and low culture that this thesis will uncover because different understandings of culture exist simultaneously; there is no pervasive definition. Francis O'Gorman in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* argues that such cultural polysemy extends to critical circles, "[c]ulture" now in academic discourse means an irreducible and complex web of social forces and energies'. This complex social web, which is examined by George Eliot (1819-1880) in *Middlemarch* (1874), comprises of the 'intellectual, material, economic [and], social' forces that create and negotiate 'with the individual thing or person or

² Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987), p. 136.

³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1975), p. 87.

discourse or activity’.⁴ The Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism that will be employed throughout this thesis will respond to the complexities and ambiguities involved in any attempt to respond to notions of high and low culture.

Throughout the Victorian period the definition of high culture was debated by key ‘sage’ thinkers such as John Ruskin (1819-1900), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). Significantly, these writers are able to enter into this prestigious discourse in spite of their varied social backgrounds, because Victorian sage writing could transcend class boundaries.⁵ This then is a further example of the fluidity between class and culture. However, the most famous definition of culture within the period comes from Arnold. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) he argues that culture ‘has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light’.⁶ Arnold’s work responds to the competing world-views that were becoming more apparent during the Victorian period; the tenets of Christianity were being questioned and social class was unstable. Arnold attempts to combat this by linking the highest culture with a drive towards human perfection. He comments that culture ‘seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light’.⁷ Interestingly, Arnold argues that the highest form of culture

⁴ Francis O’Gorman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 76. For further discussion of the role of culture in the Victorian period see Herbert Tucker, ed., *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Tucker’s representation of Victorian culture discussed within the anthology is narrower than that of O’Gorman. He argues that, ‘[w]hen seeking to demonstrate the reciprocal influence of text and context, it makes sense to turn on the one hand to writings that enjoyed wide circulation, and on the other hand to writings that expressly reflected a broad spectrum of contemporary concerns.’, p. xii. This definition used for the anthology aims to help to make themes within Victorian literature and culture more accessible to students, scholars and other interested readers but it misses some of the complexities that are observed by O’Gorman.

⁵ For instance, Thomas Carlyle’s father was a master stonemason, but the contemporary democratic Scottish educational system enabled him to gain a university education. John Ruskin was of middle-class mercantile origin as his father was a wine and sherry importer. For further biographical details on Carlyle and Ruskin see the articles on the two men in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-2012).

⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by Jane Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1869 repr. 2006), p. 52.

⁷ Ibid.

should ideally be open to all classes, even if this was not possible during the Victorian period in practice. Carlyle links culture to self-improvement when he argues that ‘the great law of culture is: Let each become all that he was created capable of being’.⁸ This implicitly suggests that a limit is put upon an individual’s ability to improve themselves, based upon the capabilities that they were instilled with at birth. However, this is not necessarily a class-based prejudice because a person’s ‘capabilities’ do not necessarily relate to class. Carlyle’s view of culture is also less egalitarian than that of Arnold since he argues that not every man is able to achieve perfection through exposure to the highest culture.

Throughout this thesis the tension between an engagement with high or low culture will be explored through the patronage system, print culture and questions relating to place and voice. Significantly, the ‘cultural’ tradition of thought that is identified above, excluded material considerations such as editorship, paratexts and how a text is aided to enter into print, which my thesis (through this focus) will address. Poems set within a poet’s local world or the domestic-sphere are common for working-class writers. Yet they do at times write poems that deal with national concerns such as the Crimean War, the ‘factory question’ and socialism, as well as their own cause Chartism.⁹ Their poetry can also partake in, and aim towards, the type of transcendental qualities and effects that we often associate with the aspirations of Romantic-period poets. Pre-Raphaelite poetry tends to be more aesthetic, transcendent or even visceral, but the group will also be seen to be political and radical. All of the poets write in a voice that is their own, but I will argue that this can also be mediated through the work of writers associated with Victorian and earlier

⁸ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Jean Paul F. Richter’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 46.91 (June, 1827), 190, 176-195.

⁹ For further discussion of the factory question, see Robert Gray, *The Factory Question and Industrial England, 1830-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

high or low culture.¹⁰ It is possible that the contiguities that I have found between the Pre-Raphaelite and working-class artists are coincidental. It could be argued that the poets simultaneously write in response to the work of writers linked to Victorian high culture such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) and Robert Browning (1812-1889) and Arnold because their work at times exhibits an overlap in theme and imagery. I believe that this argument is too reductive because of the disparity between the texts that were available to writers (some of which were not contemporary). Even if a number of the connections between the two groups are coincidental, they are still significant because they reveal aesthetic contiguities, such as in the shared use of winter imagery and the anti-pastoral and the fact that cultural links emerge through their engagement with contemporary print culture. The work of both groups operates outside of, or is on the margins of Victorian high culture. This is partially because the groups could be individually or collectively supported and/or championed by writers associated with Victorian high culture. Further, some of the themes, images, and elements of style and language in their poetry overlap, as is revealed in Janet Hamilton's (1795-1873) poem 'Winter' (1863), which will be explored in a later chapter which considers the link between women's poetry and the winter environment. Gerald Massey (1828-1907) on the other hand re-writes sections from the poet laureate Tennyson's *The Foresters* (1892) in 'War Winter's Night in England' (1855). These cross-over works have their own spirit and agenda and can be both conservative and radical.

Further evidence of the complexity of the contiguous artistic tradition that exists between Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets can be seen in the concrete examples of connections between the two groups. These are explored in the first two chapters of the

¹⁰ The concept of a need to create a voice of their own is usually associated with work written by women, as an attempt to define their aesthetic against patriarchal works. See especially the work of the modern critic Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 1982) and the Modernist novelist Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), *A Room of One's Own [and] Three Guineas*, ed. by Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

thesis, which will focus particularly on Pre-Raphaelite patronage of working-class poets, teaching at the London Working Men's College and connections that arise through a desire to enter into print. Yet, one of the key problems in commenting upon the relationship between the Pre-Raphaelites and any other individual author or group is that the Pre-Raphaelites can at times be apathetic, whilst in certain instances they show sustained or fleeting enthusiasm for individual writers, works of art, themes or events. In other words, it is not always easy to establish a pattern. For instance, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) is largely indifferent towards the Crimean War, whilst Christina Rossetti's (1830-1894) work 'In the Round Tower at Jhansi' (1862) from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* is ambiguous because she questions the legitimacy of the action of the Indian mutineers towards the British expatriates. William Morris's (1834-1896) response is different again, as *The Defense of Guenevere* (1857) presents an indirect critique of the involvement of the British in the war. These ambiguities however are part of what makes this study so interesting – despite the fact that links can be found between artists from both groups, their poetic response to a given event shows variability within similitude.

The Contiguous Relationship

According to the *OED* the word contiguity suggests several slightly different things. Contiguity can mean: 'touching, in actual contact, next in space; meeting at a common boundary, bordering, adjoining', 'non physical contact' or 'proximity of impressions or ideas in place or time, as a principal of association'. This thesis will reveal that elements of Pre-Raphaelite and working-class publishing techniques 'border' each other, and interactions through the patronage system show evidence of ways in which writers from both groups could be said to 'touch' one another. It is the notion of the artists touching or occupying a similar position, rather than trying to gain influence over one another, which

helps to open up the kind of links that I will present between the two groups through the patronage system. Chapters four through to seven will explore contiguities that are closer to the *OED*'s second and third meaning of contiguous: 'non physical contact' and the 'proximity of impressions or ideas'. The connections which will be found within these chapters can relate to (but are not limited to) imagery, sociological ideas, aesthetics and political affiliations. Importantly, notions of power (which are typically of interest to a New Historicist critic) will remain a concern throughout this thesis. This is because Cultural Neo-Formalist, and to a lesser extent Cultural Materialist criticism, will enable me to re-think the location of power in cultural texts and the relations of contiguity which shape and contextualise them.

The links that can be discerned between the two groups are, more often than not, more subtle and complex than some of our customary language of influence allows. The points of connection will range between: shared political agendas, the use of the past to change tastes and ideas in the present, connections between imagery and form, and the use of contemporary events to modify public perceptions of poetry. What will emerge is perhaps an expanded notion of what constitutes high culture as well as a more nuanced picture of social stratification. My argument, following the writings of Brian Maidment and Jonathan Rose, develops out of an understanding that the relationship between high and low art is fluid, as the boundary between the two is blurred because of the overlap in the forms and other techniques that are employed by working-class and Pre-Raphaelite poets.¹¹ Further connections will be found in a shared interest in national events such as the

¹¹ Jonathan Rose in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* argues for the significance of Victorian autodidact involvement in Mutual Improvement Societies and Mechanics Institutes, as well as their use of public libraries. Rose's work also reveals that certain autodidacts became involved with literary canon-making. These activities have the effect of enabling the working classes to enter into higher class discourse. Maidment's work, particularly *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, also reflects upon the ways in which self-taught poets write within certain literary traditions, such as Parnassian poetry, which are traditionally associated with high culture.

Crimean War, more local events (the Lancashire famine), social stratification, the use of discursive historical settings and imagery and the tension between locality and voice. The issue of social stratification is already understood to be one of complexity by critics, but the points of connection will further the work of Richard Altick, Isobel Armstrong, Florence Boos, Patrick Joyce, Michael Sanders, E. P. Thompson and Martha Vicinus, who have previously written about the social, aesthetic and political aspirations of the working classes.

The thesis will challenge the established cultural position of the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class artists within Victorian society. The two groups appear to exist within ‘separate spheres’, yet their interactions will be shown to be not limited to these spheres. Occurrences will be discovered where the artists simultaneously traverse the boundaries of class and high/low culture or art, particularly in those chapters which will focus upon Print Culture and French Medievalism. The types of contiguity that will be discerned within the chapters relate to a number of themes and subjects that are not necessarily restricted to one chapter. These include: power relationships and questions of ownership, shared use of certain modes of production, links between poetic identity and place and the use of the past or present to make an impact upon contemporary debates.

Chapter two will provide an interesting test case for contiguities which relate to power. It will ask whether the relationship between working-class and Pre-Raphaelite poets was reciprocal or of greater advantage to one of the groups or individual writers. This chapter will argue that the Pre-Raphaelites attempt to gain status by setting themselves up as arbiters of a taste, even though this attempted revolution in taste never really took hold. This is because their prose does not have the authority of Ruskin or Carlyle’s sage writing, and they were marred by their previous radicalism. Significantly, this thesis will reveal that

the Pre-Raphaelites were genuinely interested in working-class poetry partially because their writings show them to be surprised by the richness and variety of the work that they encountered. Further, the significant amount of time that members of the group spent teaching at the London Working Men's College, and the positive feedback given to their students, will reveal that the Pre-Raphaelites were interested in the education of the working classes. The question then becomes, do the Pre-Raphaelites try to exert direct power over the artists or claim ownership? The notion of personal influence is problematic because the physical connections between the artists are not very strong. The correspondence between the two groups is limited and they very rarely met face to face. Their principal form of interaction was through their poetry. This is why the uncovering of shared themes, imagery and modes of the writing in the later chapters of the thesis will be so important.

This issue reverberates into the third chapter of this thesis which will explore a contiguous tradition that can be found within Victorian print culture. The example of Edwin Waugh will reveal to us that working-class poets, like the Pre-Raphaelites, could be extremely careful about the way in which their poetry was presented to the Victorian reading public. A shared desire to present their work in a way that reflects their poetic identity is not in itself contiguous. What is however, is that there are overlaps in the types of publications that members of the groups worked on. The most interesting example of this will be seen in the shared involvement in the production of the Moxon Tennyson, which involved the Pre-Raphaelites via illustration and working-class artists through engraving. An engagement with print culture enables both groups to enter into larger Victorian debates concerning the cultural role of women, the factory question, as well as who should be responsible for what appears in print, via editorship, reviewing and letter writing. A final point of connection that will be discussed in this chapter is the

understanding that the physicality of a book could be radical. This is used to the advantage of William Morris in his Kelmscott publications which put the design of a book at the forefront of their agenda and in a working-class awareness of the link between poetic identity and physical representation in print.

In the fourth and fifth chapter of this thesis links between place and identity will appear which suggest a shared connection to the natural world, either through the seasons or the garden. The fourth chapter will reveal that winter imagery enables Janet Hamilton and Christina Rossetti to position themselves as intellectual women who also remain connected to the domestic sphere. For both, their strong faith causes them to see the presence of God during the winter months – it is thus a time of anticipation of better times on earth and in heaven. The difference in the work of the two lies in what the poets choose to reveal or conceal about themselves. I will argue that Rossetti's poetry of concealment shows how little humanity is aware of God's plan for them, whilst Hamilton wishes to draw attention to certain political causes – such as the Italian *Risorgimento*, the impact of the factory system upon the poor and the education of women – because she believes that her poetry can affect change. The contiguity that will be discussed within the fifth chapter relates to a particular mode of expression, the anti-pastoral, which will prove to be an apt vehicle to discuss the themes of: untenable relationships, women, loss and death. Significantly, the anti-pastoral is a discursive mode of expression – it engages with realities, hardships and psychological distress, as opposed to gesturing towards the ideal. The working-class poetry that will be seen within this chapter exposes hardships facing the poor within an industrial society whilst Swinburne's poetry will reveal a discontentment with this life and a desire to die into art.

The contiguous relationship which will be revealed in the French Medieval and chivalric-grotesque chapters is slightly different than the links between poetic identity and

place which will be found in earlier chapters. Here, I will discuss how the poets use imagery and the voices of the past to impact upon contemporary arguments about art, politics and the current economy and social structure. This partially results from the incongruent political (in the case of Thomas Cooper) and aesthetic (in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's work) agendas which will be uncovered within the poetical works discussed. A contiguous relationship will instead be found in the way in which Cooper and Rossetti simultaneously make use of the literature of the French Medieval past, as opposed to referring back to the English literary tradition. By using poetic techniques, settings and voices from the past, the poets are able to take a step back from contemporary society in order to re-enter current debates regarding the class system and the nature of art with greater force. A shared use of the chivalric-grotesque mode by William Morris and Gerald Massey, as a vehicle for social critique, will be explored in the final chapter of the thesis. I will argue that *The Defence of Guenevere* by Morris and *War Waits* by Massey both display a socialist agenda which transfers well to the chivalric-grotesque mode by showing a flawed chivalric world with questionable morality and social inequality. This is reflected in the poetry of both through imagery which shows disfigurement, blood, oozing, rotting and *rigor mortis*, to name a few. Both poets see the chivalric-grotesque mode as being a way to indirectly talk about corruption within society. Again, the poets will be seen to step back from the artistic norms of contemporary society in order to give their poetic critique further impetus.



According to Robert Spence Watson (1837-1911), Dante Gabriel Rossetti was bemused by the working-class poet Joseph Skipsey (1832-1903) when he first came across his work. He remarks that it contained 'real-life pieces' written by a poet of sociability who

‘describes what he knows and mixes in’.¹² Rossetti is slightly surprised to be confronted with what could be argued to be the stereotype of a working-class poet, whose subject matter is limited by locality. This suggests that the Pre-Raphaelites could be just as guilty as others within contemporary society of subscribing to stereotypes of working-class poets and poetry. Interestingly though, the work of the Pre-Raphaelites had also been stereotyped by the public through the ‘Fleshly School of Poetry’ campaign instigated by Robert Buchanan (1841-1901) in the *Contemporary Review* in October 1871. Rossetti was livid and responded with an article (originally envisioned as a pamphlet) entitled ‘The Stealthy School of Criticism’ in *The Athenaeum* in December 1871. Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) on the other hand embraced the accusations in his pamphlet ‘Under the Microscope’ by turning them into something positive, as he argues that an amount of ‘fleshly’ writing is a positive feature within their art work and in-keeping with its spirit.¹³ This being said, these stereotypes and misconceptions need not be a problem since they do not detract from the writing itself and the poets refuse to pander to such criticism by changing their poetic style.

Further, the ‘fleshly school’ controversy has had less of an impact upon more modern critics who comment upon their work (excepting of course those who are specifically concerned with the early reception of their art). Similarly, John Keats’s (1795-1821) poetry (which was a significant influence upon the Pre-Raphaelites) was notably unpopular when it was first published: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* considered him, amongst others, to be part of the ‘Cockney School of Poetry’. Keats was particularly berated by John Gibson Lockhart for his low diction and for imitating the rhymes of

¹² Robert Spence Watson, *Skipsey: His Life and Work* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), p. 53.

¹³ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Under the Microscope* (London: D. White, 1872).

working-class poets.¹⁴ For a number of more recent critics however Keats is considered to be one of the most significant figures in British Romantic literature. As Jerold E. Hogle argues, he was long ago canonised as one of the ‘big six’ male Romantic writers from whose dominance Romantic studies is still emerging.¹⁵ This is one example of the way in which critical opinion can change over time. Working-class poets (particularly during the Victorian period) have been stereotyped as rustic, dirty, uneducated, simple and lacking in cultivation, while the Pre-Raphaelites have been accused of being subversive, non-traditional, radical and overly or outrageously effete and aesthetic. Such observations can lead to a ‘grouping’ that minimises individual difference. Working-class artists were, and still are, easily grouped together, despite the technical variety and range of content that their work actually presents. Partially because of this social grouping, very little was expected from their poetry by certain contemporary critics.¹⁶ Others however found themselves to be pleasantly surprised by working-class poetry; for some this led them to promote or publish their work in newspapers and magazines. Members of the Pre-Raphaelite group came from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds, and so their work was better positioned to receive critical acclaim. Yet, because of the subject matter and

¹⁴ John Gibson Lockhart, ‘On the Cockney School of Poetry’ in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 2.7 (October, 1817), 38-41. For further critical discussion see Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt, and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘Romanticism and the “Schools” of Criticism and Theory’, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-33, (p. 2). See also, Stephen Copley and John Whale, eds., *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts, 1780-1832* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-3.

¹⁶ This prejudice is particularly evident in the social problem novels which started to appear from the late 1830s onwards, such as *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) by Charles Dickens, *Sybil: Or the Two Nations* (1845) by Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Kingsley’s *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (1850) and *North and South* (1854-55) by Elizabeth Gaskell. Working-class characters that have any socio-political or literary aims tend to be foiled by society. For instance, even though the boys in the workhouse ‘suffered from the tortures of slow starvation’, when *Oliver Twist* asks, “Please Sir, I want some more” his request is met with disbelief and the thought that Oliver has such a delinquent character that he will one day be hung. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. by Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 14, 15. *Alton Locke* on the other hand follows the fortunes of the titular character through his involvement in the Chartist cause. Alton wishes to bring about change in the lives of the working classes, but becomes dejected upon the failure of the movement.

technique of their early work in particular, the group was labelled as *avant-garde* and radical.¹⁷

Pre-Raphaelitism, though it can be linked to earlier or later literary movements, is very much of its Victorian moment because of its group identity and the nature of its radicalism. In its first phase the group took inspiration from artworks that were published prior to the Renaissance painter Raphael Sanzio Urbino (1483-1520), and the group were influenced by shared reading practices.¹⁸ In addition to this, individual members of the group took on the ideas of certain key writers. For instance, Dante Gabriel Rossetti was particularly inspired by the Medieval Italian writer Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Swinburne by French Decadent writers such as Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier (1811-1872). Throughout this thesis it will become apparent that it is not always a straightforward matter to discern the extent to which Pre-Raphaelite writers were aware of working-class literature and its traditions, and vice versa. The Pre-Raphaelites tend to be more vocal about working-class poetry than working-class poets were about their poetry. This is most likely because the number and type of texts that were available to working-class poets was limited – new volumes of poetry were expensive and out of their price range. Working-class poets were only likely to read Pre-Raphaelite work if it was published or reviewed in periodicals. Generally though, the Pre-Raphaelites published their work in volumes (which had a limited print run) and it was only subject to the occasional review. As it is not possible to revert to much prose commentary, the poetry discussed in this thesis must do a good deal of work and provide links through shared vocabularies and registers.

¹⁷ For a succinct overview of the early reception of Pre-Raphaelite art see Dinah Roe's Introduction to *The Pre-Raphaelites: From Rossetti to Ruskin* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. xvii-xxxvi.

¹⁸ For instance, the first wave of Pre-Raphaelites were avid readers of the works of John Ruskin whilst they were at university.

Generally, higher-class writers were exposed to snapshots of working-class poetry through local newspapers, word of mouth or very occasionally in coming across a volume of their poetry. ‘Come Whoam to the Childer an’ Me’ (1856) by the Lancashire poet Edwin Waugh (1817-1890) was an unusually popular poem, which was promoted by Baroness Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906) amongst her family and friends. Most often, however, working-class poetry was dismissed as being trivial or neglected all together. This lack of interest in their literature was also extended to the poets’ everyday lives. This is demonstrated by the fact that few biographies of working-class poets were written during the Victorian period. It tended to be up to the poets themselves to write their own autobiographies; one of the most extensive of these was written by Thomas Cooper (1805-1892), *The Life of Thomas Cooper*.¹⁹ Ebenezer Elliot (1781-1849), the Corn-Law rhymers, also had a section of his *Autobiography* published in *The Athenaeum* on 12 January 1850. Yet these are not unproblematical accounts of the lives of the poets. Jonathan Rose in *The Intellectual Lives of the British Working Classes* has argued that the works contain ‘inherent distortions and biases’. This is in large part because they are ‘not entirely representative of their class [...], if only because they are unusually articulate’ and because they decided what to include of their own lives.²⁰ A number of biographies and monographs now exist that explore the lives of individual working-class writers and poets, but these are quite a recent critical development.²¹ Knowledge of working-class life outside of first-hand accounts and experiences was usually mediated through the writings of a higher-class writer such as Henry Mayhew’s (1812-1887) *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), Friedrich Engels’ (1820-1895) *Conditions of the Working-Class in England*

¹⁹ Thomas Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872).

²⁰ Rose, p. 2.

²¹ For instance, Gustav Klaus, *Factory Girl: Ellen Johnston and Working-Class Poetry in Victorian Scotland* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), David Shaw, *Gerald Massey: Chartist, Poet, Radical and Freethinker* (London: Buckland Publications, 1995) and David Shaw and Ian Petticrew, *Gerald Massey: Poet, Author and Evolutionist: Centenary 2007* ([S. I.]: Gerald-Massey.org.uk, 2007).

(1845) and through the work of novelists such as Charles Dickens (1812-1870), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928).²²

Novelists like Dickens could be guilty of stereotyping the working classes – almost to the point of caricature.²³ This can be seen in characters such as Pip and Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations* (1861), Jo the street urchin and crossing sweeper from *Bleak House* (1853), Dodger, Fagin and Nancy in *Oliver Twist* (1838), Clara Peggotty (whose working-class status is dubious) in *David Copperfield* (1850) and Rachael and Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* (1854). Few of Dickens's lower-class characters are sympathetic – the exceptions are perhaps Sam Weller from *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) and 'Kit' Nubbles from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). George Orwell famously took issue with the way in which Dickens depicts the working classes in his novels. In the essay on 'Charles Dickens' published in *Inside the Whale, and Other Essays* (1940) he claims that 'the ordinary town proletariat, the people who make the wheels go round, have always been ignored by novelists'. He goes on to argue that the working-class characters that can be found in Dickens's novels are there as 'objects of pity or as comic relief', such as 'Bill Sykes, Sam Weller, and Mrs. Gamp. A burglar, a valet, and a drunken midwife — not exactly a representative cross-section of the English working class'.²⁴ According to Michael Sanders, 'Dickens never identifies the working class as the agent of social change. Dickens is at best dismissive and at worst openly hostile towards both Chartism and trade unionism [... He] can only conceive of the working class as an essentially destructive force, capable

²² The most significant works of this genre are: Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. by Victor Kiernan (London: Penguin, 2005) and Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. by John D. Rosenberg, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1968). For further discussion of Mayhew see, Bertrand Taithe, *The Essential Mayhew: Representing and Communicating the Poor* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

²³ Pam Morris, *Dickens's Class Consciousness: A Marginal View* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) and Chris Louttit, *Dickens's Secular Gospel: Work, Gender, and Personality* (London: Routledge, 2009).

²⁴ George Orwell, *Inside the Whale, and Other Essays* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), p. 12.

of destroying a thoroughly corrupt social order, as in *Barnaby Rudge* or *A Tale of Two Cities*, but equally incapable of constructing a new social order in its place'.²⁵ John Schad cites *Oliver Twist* as being one of Dickens' positive working-class characters – but argues that Dickens does not go so far as to make him a hero. This is because the generic conventions of the 1830s novel did not make allowances 'for successful working-class spokesmen. A protagonist from the lower orders can be represented only if he is denied agency as a representative of popular reform or revolt'.²⁶ In order to appear within a work of literature then a working-class character has to be radical or reactionary – everyday men and women implicitly would not make for very interesting subjects due to their perceived functionality, though the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy thought otherwise.²⁷ This goes some way to explaining why it was more difficult for the Victorian reading public to have a real sense of what working-class life was like and points towards a need for self-representation in order to redress the balance in various forms of literature like autobiography and poetry.

John Clare (1794-1864) and Robert Burns (1759-1796) – perhaps the most well-known pre-twentieth century working-class poets to the modern reader – had a considerable impact upon the way in which the Victorians responded to working-class poetry as a form of novelty. According to Robert Crawford, 'as far as the Victorians were concerned, Burns quickly became the hero of Scottish song'.²⁸ Burns was in part refashioned as an idealised rustic bard in order to suit contemporary tastes. It would be difficult to argue that today's society is oblivious to the social class that a poet comes from,

²⁵ Michael Sanders, 'Politics', in *Charles Dickens in Context*, Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 235-242, (p. 240).

²⁶ John Schad, *Dickens Refigured: Bodies, Desires, and other Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 61.

²⁷ Hardy's work is famous for his employment of working-class characters such as Michael Henchard (*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, 1886), Jude (*Jude the Obscure*, 1895) and Tess (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 1895); though they are often thwarted by a prejudiced society.

²⁸ Robert Crawford, ed., *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

but it is perhaps regarded as less politically correct to categorise writers in this way. A number of well-known modern poets come from working-class backgrounds, but only a handful are willing to fully engage with a possible identity as a working-class poet. Interestingly, the current poet laureate Carol Anne Duffy (1955-) comes from a working-class background and spent her early life living on a very poor estate in Glasgow, the Gorbals. Duffy has commented that she came from a background where ‘language was often perceived as embarrassing, or dangerous’.²⁹ Duffy’s example suggests that class background does still cause difficulties for modern poets. Tony Harrison (1937-) and Simon Armitage (1963-) are recent poets who are perhaps the most interested in exploring their working class identities. The former came from a working-class family in Leeds, but was able, through the availability of free education, to complete a classics degree at Leeds University. This would not have been possible in the Victorian period, as Hardy laments through the inability of the working-class titular character in *Jude the Obscure* (1896) to start a degree at Christminster.

Critical context: Cultural Neo-Formalism

I earlier mentioned the critical background to the thesis as I see it developing. I would like now to take a step back from setting out my subject area to consider the issue of approach in more detail, concentrating particularly on the bearing of Cultural Neo-Formalism and to a lesser extent Cultural Materialism upon my research. This will then lead into a discussion of the social, economic and political context into which the work of the two groups was published. I will be aiming to locate the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class poets within its cultural setting by taking an approach that could be described as ‘Cultural

²⁹ Carol Ann Duffy interviewed by Jane Stabler, *Verse*, 8:2 (Summer, 1991), pp. 125-27, cf. Angelica Michelis and Antony Rowland, *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: ‘Choosing tough words’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 146.

Neo-Formalist'.³⁰ Cultural Neo-Formalism is a more recent critical development than Cultural Materialism, and has been linked directly to Victorian poetry by Herbert Tucker and Caroline Levine. According to Tucker the new critical element of the criticism is interested in 'verbal iconicity', whilst the New-Historicist is interested in 'hegemonically interlocked ideologemes', but these can be linked by their 'structural point of view'.³¹ According to Jason Rudy, Cultural Neo-Formalist analysis 'has the dual benefit of enlivening formal approaches to poetry and grounding work in Cultural Studies more firmly in textual evidence'.³² For Levine, what then 'emerges is a cultural-political field in which literary forms and social formations can be grasped as comparable and overlapping patternings operating on a common plane'.³³ Within my work these 'overlapping patternings' can be aptly described via the concept of contiguity.

Within Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism the importance of a text is not predicated upon its contemporary popularity (in fact many of the texts which I discuss were not widely read in their time), or whether or not they have been included in more recent canons. Rather, the key point of significance is how the form of a text illuminates its cultural moment. Cultural Neo-Formalism has been used, for example, by Rudy and Kirstie Blair to evaluate the cultural significance of the forms used by the Victorian Spasmodic poets, whose status within the current canon is dubious.³⁴ In 'On Cultural

³⁰ In using this method my work is indebted to that of Yopie Prins, Herbert F. Tucker, E. Warwick Slinn, and recent critics Lee O'Brien, Monique R. Morgan, Cornelia D. J. Pearsall and Dino Franco Felluga. For a definition of Cultural Neo-Formalism see Tucker, 'Fix on Form: An Open Letter', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27:2 (1999), 531-35. The application of the term has also been debated by Tucker and Caroline Levine in 'Tactical Formalism: A Response to Caroline Levine', *Victorian Studies*, 49.1 (Autumn, 2006), 85-93 and 'Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies', *Victorian Studies*, 48.4 (Summer, 2006), 625-657. More recently the cause has been taken up by Jason Rudy in 'On Cultural Neoformalism, Spasmodic Poetry, and the Victorian Ballad', *Victorian Poetry*, 41.4 (Winter, 2003), 590-596.

³¹ Tucker, 'Fix on Form: An Open Letter', 531.

³² Rudy, 590.

³³ Levine, 'Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies', 629.

³⁴ See Rudy's article 'On Cultural Neoformalism, Spasmodic Poetry, and the Victorian Ballad' and Kirstie Blair's article 'Spasmodic Affections: Poetry, Pathology, and the Spasmodic Hero', *Victorian Poetry*, 42.4 (Winter, 2004), 473-490.

Neoformalism, Spasmodic Poetry, and the Victorian Ballad' Rudy calls for the approach to be used to 're-evaluate, among other things, the significance of women's poetry and working class poetry', thus hinting at the potential of the approach to look beyond the conventional Victorian canon.³⁵ My work advances that of Rudy by applying the approach to working-class poetry in order to reveal, through culturally aware formal analysis, the complexity of working-class culture and poetry.

Cultural Materialism

The focus of the Cultural-Materialist critic is upon the way in which specific historical documents illuminate a particular moment in history.³⁶ In the eyes of New Historicist and Cultural Materialist critics, texts of all kinds are inherently the vehicles of politics insofar as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations.³⁷ One of the first critics to define Cultural-Materialism was Raymond Williams, who saw this type of research as a crossover between Marxism and Culturalism. According to Andrew Milner, Cultural Materialism encompasses a 'break from an older tradition of British Communist Marxism on the one hand and that distinctly British version of literary humanism'.³⁸ In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams describes Cultural Materialism as 'a theory of the specificities of material culture and literary production within historical materialism'.³⁹ This Marxist heritage is significant because the political views of, for instance, Gerald

³⁵ Rudy, 590

³⁶ For further discussion of Cultural Materialism see: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1998), Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, repr. 1994), Andrew Milner, *Cultural Materialism*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993) and Kiernan Ryan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

³⁷ Brannigan, p. 1.

³⁸ Milner, p. 9.

³⁹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 5, 5-6.

Massey and William Morris were influenced either directly or indirectly by the writings of the classical Marxist thinkers Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Engels; their works informed the way in which the two poets constructed their socialist beliefs at certain points in their lives.⁴⁰ The first two chapters of this thesis have a Cultural-Materialist leaning because they take an interest in how texts come into being. The focus is not necessarily upon the quality of works of literature but rather on what the publication of these works can tell us about the relationship between the two groups.

Social, economic and political context

The Victorian period is well-known to be one of extensive social, economic and political change. Like many other artists, the work of Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets responds to these changes. The work of Clare sets a precedent for working-class poetry which comments upon transformations that take place in the natural landscape as a result of the Industrial Revolution.⁴¹ This can particularly be seen in the anti-pastoral poetry of the working-class poets George Hull (1863-1933), Samuel Laycock (1826–1893) and William Billington (1825-1884), which highlight industrial changes in Black Country towns. Pre-Raphaelite responses on the other hand are often more oblique. Morris's critique of industrialisation in *The Defence of Guenevere* is mediated through a combination of chivalric and grotesque images. However, this practice is also taken up by the working-class poet Cooper who uses an imagined Medieval past to criticise the injustices inflicted by class-based prejudice in *The Baron's Yule Feast* (1846).

⁴⁰ This can be seen in works such as William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1891) and *Socialism* (1893). Massey also published a number of works in *The Christian Socialist* and *The Red Republican* in the early 1850s. These connections will be explored in greater depth in the seventh chapter of this thesis in which the differing political beliefs of the two can be seen to link through the chivalric-grotesque.

⁴¹ John Goodridge, ed., *The Independent Spirit: John Clare and the Self-Taught Tradition* (Helpston: John Clare Society and the Margaret Grainger Memorial Trust, 1994). John Goodridge, 'Identity, Authenticity, Class: John Clare and the Mask of Chatterton', *Angelaki*, 1.2 (1996), 131-148.

The work of the majority of working-class poets to be discussed within this thesis is influenced in some way by the various social and political uprisings that took place within the nineteenth century. This thesis acknowledges the importance of national events such as the land enclosures, the Reform Bills of 1832, 1867 and 1884 and the Chartist uprisings in the first half of the nineteenth century to working-class poetry, even if the events are not often reflected on at length. These events have the effect of antagonising the working classes and uniting them in a fight for a given cause. For instance, Ebenezer Elliott had a particularly significant impact upon later working-class political poetry. Elliott did not come from a working-class background, but he felt able to sympathise with their cause because there had been periods in his life, after his businesses had failed, that he was left in financial difficulty (though he did have rich relatives who were able to give him money to start a new business). His work was particularly influential upon Chartist poetry. The Chartists then went on to leave behind a legacy of sung lyric poetry which had the intention of uniting people under a common cause.⁴² In the 1850s to 1880s, the period that my work concentrates upon, one of the most significant cultural events was the move towards self-help as proposed by Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) in *Self-Help* (1859) and copied by Thomas Cooper in *Triumphs and Perseverance and Enterprise: In Learning, Science, Art, Commerce, and Adventure* (1879). The period also saw the growth of the Christian Socialist and Socialist Movement. The group were partly responsible for the foundation of the Mechanic's Institute and the London Working Men's College, which aimed to help to educate the working classes and attracted members of the Pre-Raphaelite group as teachers, as will be further discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Other

⁴² For further discussion of Chartist poetry see Peter Scheckner, ed., *An Anthology of Chartist Poetry: Poetry of the British Working Class, 1830s-1850s* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), Michael Sanders, 'Poetic Agency: Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry, 1838-1852', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (2001), 111-136, and Ulrike Schwab, *The Poetry of the Chartist Movement: A Literary and Historical Study* (Dordrecht and London: Kluwer Academic and International Institute of Social History, 1993).

artists within the groups move in an opposite direction towards aestheticism and ‘art for art’s sake’. This is evident in the Decadent poetry of Swinburne (‘The Garden of Proserpine’ 1866 and ‘The Forsaken Garden’ 1878) and the aesthetic and symbolist works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (‘The Blessed Damozel’ 1870).

Other national events which impacted upon the poetry of both groups were wars and threats to national security; the most obvious examples of this are the Napoleonic, Crimean and Boer Wars. The threat of revolution was also in the air early on in the nineteenth century, following uprisings in the United States and France, but for many Britons this was not a welcome prospect. This can be seen in the way in which Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) criticises the current ruling class of England. In the sonnet ‘England in 1819’ King George III is described as ‘old, mad, blind, despised and dying’.⁴³ The work was not published directly after it was written in 1819, but in 1839, for fear that it might incite revolution. I have already suggested that changes to a way of life can also be seen as a threat, and the significance of this will be further explored in the final chapter of this thesis which concerns itself with war poetry.

Criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class writers

The voices of sage critics such as Arnold, Carlyle and Ruskin tended to have the most contemporary authority. This was largely the result of self-importance, connections to key figures within industry and the higher classes and respect for their sage discourse. Their position was also consolidated by the fact that their ideas were often first published in a range of periodicals, which had a wider audience than texts published in volume form. Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, for instance, was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* between 1867 and 1868. Interestingly though, working-class and Pre-Raphaelite poets did

⁴³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O’Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

not necessarily define themselves as poets in relation to these contemporary critics. Working-class poets most often revealed their ideas about the role of poetry in the prefaces to volumes of their poetry (if they were lucky enough to be in a position to have their work published in this way). Their ideas can also be found in the poetry itself or in articles or letters published in local (and infrequently national) periodicals. Massey first published his work in *The Bucks Advertiser and Aylesbury News*. There were also a number of Chartist periodicals such as the *Northern Star*, *The Red Republican* and *The Illuminator* that were likely to publish working-class work if it had the correct political allegiance.⁴⁴ The Pre-Raphaelites on the other hand, had a more defined aesthetic and identifiable and coherent opportunities for publication. It is therefore easier to trace the group's influences and their ideas about the role of the poet and poetry from their journals and correspondence. Very few private letters by working-class writers are, on the other hand, available to critics; there are certainly not the critically edited editions that we have of Christina Rossetti (edited by Anthony H. Harrison), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (edited by Oswald Doughty) and John Robert Wahl and Norman Kelvin's edition of Morris's correspondence, to name a few.⁴⁵ It can also be difficult to source individual volumes by working-class poets because they often had very limited print runs and they have not been considered to be important enough works to store and conserve by libraries. These issues will be expanded upon in a later chapter in this thesis which explores Victorian print culture.

⁴⁴ For further discussion of the publication policy of *The Northern Star* in particular see Michael Sanders, "'A Jackass Load of Poetry': *The Northern Star's* Editorial Policy 1838-1854", *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 39.1 (2006), 46-66. This research is expanded upon in Sanders' monograph *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). This work examines *The Northern Star's* poetry column from 1838-1852 and concerns itself with the role which poetry played in the Chartist cause.

⁴⁵ Christina Rossetti, *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, ed. by Anthony Harrison, 4 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997-2004), Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters*, ed. by Oswald Doughty and John Rob Wahl, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-67), William Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984-1987).

There is also an inequality with regard to the amount of recent critical work that is available on the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class writers. Because working-class writing has a long heritage, a number of general or thematic critical works on Victorian working-class writers have emerged. The most well-known of these are *The Victorian Working-Class Writer* by Owen Ashton and Stephen Roberts, Patrick Joyce's *Vision of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* and *Democratic Subjects and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England*, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working-Classes* by Rose, Michael Sanders' *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History* and a special edition of the *Victorian Poetry* journal (39.2) on Victorian working-class poetry.⁴⁶ All of these works are indebted to the work of E. P. Thompson, Martha Vicinus, Brian Maidment and Richard Altick— four pioneering scholars of the writings of the working-classes.⁴⁷ Studies on single authors are rarer, and are most often concerned with the writings of Burns or Clare, but lesser known working-class poets such as Massey, Ellen Johnston (1835-1874?) and Waugh have also received some recent critical attention.⁴⁸

The Pre-Raphaelite artists are conceptualised as a coherent group within modern criticism and popular culture, despite the fact that the artists could at times have very different agendas. Initially Pre-Raphaelite group identity was solidified by the publication

⁴⁶ Owen Ashton and Stephen Roberts, *The Victorian Working-Class Writer* (London: Mansell, 1999), Patricia E. Johnson, *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction* (Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2001), Patrick Joyce, *Vision of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Joyce, *Democratic Subjects and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Labouring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working-Classes*, Michael Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History*, Florence Boos, *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology* (Plymouth: Broadview, 2008), Boos, 'Class and Victorian Poetics', *Literature Compass*, (Winter, 2005), 1-20. <10.1111/j.1741-4113.2005.00115.x> [Accessed on 18 March 2011] and Boos, ed. and intro., 'The Poetics of the Working-Classes', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (2001), 103-10.

⁴⁷ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working-Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963), Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974) and Robert Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957).

⁴⁸ Marth Vicinus, *The Ambiguities of Self-Help: Concerning the Life and Work of the Lancashire Dialect Writer Edwin Waugh* (Littleborough: George Kelsall, 1984), Shaw, *Gerald Massey: Chartist, Poet, Radical and Freethinker* and Klaus, *Factory Girl: Ellen Johnston and Working-Class Poetry in Victorian Scotland*.

of their magazine *The Germ* in 1850. This can be read as a manifesto concerning their view of art. A Pre-Raphaelite artist will often be considered to be any artist who has been linked by contemporary critics to either the first or second wave of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Of the artists who will be considered at length within this thesis: Christina Rossetti and William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) belong to the first movement and Swinburne and Morris belongs to the second, the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti traverses both groups. Other writers (and artists who dabbled in writing poetry) such as William Bell Scott (1811-1890), William Allingham (1824-1889), Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), Coventry Patmore (1823-1896), Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862) and Thomas Woolner (1825-1892) are referenced but their work does not hold the specific focus of a chapter.

Working-class poets have often been defined in relation to the occupation of their parents by critics, as within contemporary society this would have been the basis of their class classification. It is for this reason that the term ‘labouring-class poet’ has not been used. A recent anthology which considers the poetry of working-class writers uses the term labouring-class writers: *Nineteenth-Century Labouring-Class Poets, 1800-1900*, edited by John Goodridge.⁴⁹ Goodridge’s definition is based upon the jobs that the poets had during their lifetime, which may have excluded some of the poets that have been included as part of my thesis. For instance, the miner Skipsey through self-improvement came to be given the position of custodian of Shakespeare’s house in Stratford-upon-Avon and both Massey and Cooper worked for newspapers: not occupations traditionally associated with the term ‘labouring’. As I indicated above, the extent to which all working-class poets can be argued to be a group is perhaps even more problematic. They are a group only in the sense that they are linked by social position. My study recognises that working-class literature

⁴⁹ *Nineteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets, 1800-1900*, ed. by John Goodridge, 3 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006).

and traditions are extremely complex and that various more localised sub-groups exist and need to be acknowledged. My work encompasses, for example, the Spasmodic tradition, which found its home in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Lancashire poets headed by Laycock and Waugh and the Industrial poets of Blackburn anthologised by Hull.

The range of critical work which focuses upon the Pre-Raphaelites is necessarily diverse since the poets worked in a range of artistic mediums. The work of the most well-known critic of the Pre-Raphaelites, Elizabeth Prettejohn, is predominantly interested in their visual art works.⁵⁰ As well as critical texts a number of books which explicate modern exhibitions featuring the Pre-Raphaelites have been published.⁵¹ There tends to be a greater number of more general critical works on Pre-Raphaelite art than on their writings. This is in part because the Pre-Raphaelites originally established themselves as visual artists. Members of the group first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1849 but, *The Defence of Guenevere*, the first volume of poetry from a member of the group was not published until 1857. A number of critics have also been interested in the lives of the poets and have created detailed bibliographies of their lives and works.⁵² These studies do provide a wealth of information on the artists, but they are potentially problematic. This is because they prevent the work from speaking for itself – biographies make it easy for critics to

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Prettejohn, ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c1999), *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate, 2000), *J. W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, ed. by Prettejohn and others (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008), Julian Treuherz, Prettejohn and Edwin Becker, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003) and *Dante and his Circle: Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997).

⁵¹ For instance *The Pre-Raphaelites: Tate Gallery* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), *Edwardian Pre-Raphaelites: The Art of John and Mary Young Hunter* (London: Pym's Gallery, 2000), Rachel Barnes, *The Pre-Raphaelites and their World* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1998), Julian Treuherz, *Pre-Raphaelite Paintings from Manchester City Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1993) and Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *Pre-Raphaelite Art in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A, 2003).

⁵² The two most significant biographies of William Morris's life to modern critics, for instance, are by J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899) and Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995). Jan Marsh is the most well-known general biographer of the Pre-Raphaelite group. Her works include: Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998, c1997), Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005) and Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* (London: Quartet Books, 1985).

impose a historical context onto a work. Those works which have been the most significant to my research aim to situate the Pre-Raphaelites within their cultural moment. They thus address the poetry and choices of expression in relation to the historical moment, which could be seen to link to the Cultural Neo-Formalist critical leaning of this thesis. This approach features in: Michaela Giebelhausen and Tim Barringer's *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites: Text, Context and Subtext*, Ellen Harding's edition of *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays* and William E. Fredeman and David Latham's, *Haunted Texts: Studies in Pre-Raphaelitism*.⁵³ *Haunted Texts* sees Pre-Raphaelitism as a focal point for interdisciplinary studies, but also recognises that the relationship between the Pre-Raphaelite, Aesthetic, and Decadent movements in art and culture and literature is difficult to define. *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites* on the other hand interrogates how Pre-Raphaelitism was textually constructed by critics and writers of biographies. These texts reveal an approach that is closer to my own because they link the work of the Pre-Raphaelites to contemporary and older texts, whilst maintaining an awareness of contemporary culture and historical changes.

The field of the criticism of Victorian poetry has generally seen a surge over the last two decades in work which theoretically can be considered to be Cultural Materialist, Neo-Formalist or Cultural Neo-Formalist. This shows a movement away from the New Historicist work which has come to dominate Victorian studies. One of the critics at the forefront of the study of Victorian poetry is Isobel Armstrong; significantly her work ranges between these critical impulses. Her argument in *Victorian Poetry, Poetics and Politics* is based upon the assertion that the 'double poem' is a predominant form during the Victorian period. By this she means that it is able to question the relationship between

⁵³ Tim Barringer, *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites: Text, Context and Subtext* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 1999), Ellen Harding, ed., *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996) and William E. Fredeman and David Latham eds., *Haunted Texts: Studies in Pre-Raphaelitism* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

the way in which the self is constructed and how this relates to contemporary ‘cultural conditions in which these relationships are made’. The epistemological reading which is required to achieve this is ‘political’ and is able to expose ‘relationships of power’.⁵⁴ In this sense, Armstrong’s criticism can be argued to have a New Historicist agenda, which differs from my own because it is concerned with power relationships within a given historical context. Yet, Armstrong’s work also has a strong interest in the analysis of form, which may suggest that her work operates in a Neo-Formalist way, before the term was coined.

Some of the most innovative ‘neo’ criticism in recent years has come from Matthew Campbell, Kirstie Blair, Jason Rudy and E. Warwick Slinn. There is a tension in these works between cultural context and form.⁵⁵ Campbell’s work aims to ‘discuss varying Victorian accounts of agency through comparable accounts of voiced rhythm. Bringing these concerns together, it describes the workings of human will through poetic effect both in the narrative and lyrical forms which move towards dramatic monologue and in Victorian versions of elegy’.⁵⁶ Here Campbell links psychology to Victorian meters by describing the different ways in which the human will is presented in varying forms of poetry. Blair and Rudy on the other hand are interested in exploring how the ‘embodied heart’ (which is linked to contemporary scientific discourse) or how electrical developments affect Victorian poetic metres.⁵⁷ Rudy goes further by suggesting that electricity ‘serves in the nineteenth century as a tool for exploring poetry’s political consequences’.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that my work is not necessarily interested in the link

⁵⁴ Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Matthew Campbell, *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), Jason Rudy, *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009) and E. Warwick Slinn, *Victorian Poetry as Cultural Critique: The Politics of Performative Language* (London: University of Virginia, 2003) and *The Discourse of the Self in Victorian Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

⁵⁶ Campbell, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Blair, p. 3. For instance, Blair’s first chapter looks at heart disease within Victorian literature and culture, whilst other chapters discuss heart sickness (chapter four) and the pathological heart (chapter five).

⁵⁸ Rudy, p. 2.

between science and prosody, it does indicate that form can be used to present political protests against developments within contemporary society. The process of finding links between poetic form and contemporary culture is a significant objective in the Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism in this thesis.

The journal of *Victorian Poetry* published by the University of West Virginia and currently edited by John B. Lamb acts as a useful indicator of trends within the field of Victorian Poetry. Recent special editions of the journal have focused upon prosody (edited by Meredith Martin and Yisrael Levin, 49.2, Summer 2011), literature within periodicals (forthcoming in Spring 2014) and an investigation of the links between literature and design edited by Jerome McGann (48.1, Spring 2010). The Brownings, Tennyson, Arnold, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) and the Pre-Raphaelites still seem to attract the most critical attention within the journal. Swinburne's work was considered by a special edition of the journal in winter 2009 (47.4), which was edited by Terry Meyers and Rikky Rooksby; this focus is usually reserved for the poet Laureate Tennyson. The journal has also reflected a general resurgence of interest in the poetry of marginal groups such as certain women poets (particularly poets such as Mary Hutton and Augusta Webster (1837-1894)) and the study of working-class writers, as was reflected in the special edition of their work edited by Florence Boos in 2001 (39.2). My research is informed by both of these trends. The study of working-class and Pre-Raphaelite art and literature has also been influenced by poetry and prose based anthologies and companions which give an overview of the period. It is often the case that working-class poets are under-represented or are considered within the same section in these works. Only very rarely are individual working-class poets included in a category which is dominated by middle or upper-class

poets.⁵⁹ This has contributed to the fact that the majority of critical studies are concerned with placing the poets foremost within their class setting, and less often as individuals who can be discussed alongside higher-class poets. This thesis aims to redress this by discussing individual poets alongside those from a middle or upper class background: For instance, the third chapter of this thesis compares seasonal poetry by the middle-class Christina Rossetti with the working-class Janet Hamilton. Yet, these readings do not ignore the significance of class identity to their poetry, rather class is not seen as the deciding factor.

Throughout this project I have been able to access a range of newspaper and magazine articles through the digitisation work of the British Library in London. Further, a significant portion of my research time has been spent in looking through archival websites dedicated to individual poets as well as the ‘Gerald Massey and Minor Victorian Writers Archive’ <www.Gerald-Massey.org.uk>, which promotes the writings of a range of marginalised Victorian writers.⁶⁰ This has greatly increased the number of texts that are available to me and their accessibility. The availability of primary texts has in part enabled this comparative study to take place.

⁵⁹ Joseph Bristow, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Valentine Cunningham, ed., *Victorian Poetry Now: Poets Poems Poetics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, c2011), Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Antony H. Harrison, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) and O’Gorman, ed., *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁶⁰ Jerome McGann, ed., *The Rossetti Archive* [<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/>], John Walsh, ed., *The Swinburne Archive* [<http://swinburnearchive.indiana.edu/swinburne/www/swinburne/>], Florence Boos, ed., *The Morris Library of Digitized Texts* [<http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu>] and Ian Petticrew, ed., *Victorian Minority Writers Archive* [<http://www.gerald-massey.org.uk/>].

Pre-Raphaelite Patronage of Working-Class Poets

Introduction

The patronage of working-class poets by members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle raises questions with regard to the degree to which a group or an individual could control the artistic output of another individual. Patronage, it can be argued, does also show a degree of solidarity between the artists of the two groups as they form an implicit alliance to promote their aesthetic, which had not been widely appreciated within Victorian high culture. The patronage of Pre-Raphaelite artists inspired, nurtured, enabled and at times constrained certain working-class poets. In the spirit of brotherhood they supported the work of fellow artists whom they admired, just as they gave financial and practical support to the work of their fellow brethren. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines patronage simply as ‘the support given by a patron’.⁶¹ But patronage can be seen as an umbrella term for a diverse range of help and activity undertaken by the patron on behalf of an individual or group.⁶² The term will be used in this more expansive sense throughout the chapter.

For the most part, the Pre-Raphaelite poets were well off enough to either self-publish their work or to share the risk of its publication with their publisher. They began to publish in volume form from the late 1850s onwards. William Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere* for instance was published by Bell and Daldy at Morris’s own expense in 1857. Christina Rossetti’s first collection of poems followed in 1862 from Macmillan & Co. The artists of the Pre-Raphaelite circle did however understand the importance of the patronage system to the successful production and circulation of works of art. The group were not

⁶¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3 edn., online version, December 2011.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138932> [Accessed on 18 December 2011].

⁶² For discussion of the patronage system in the Renaissance, including its influence upon Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) see David Moore Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570-1640* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2006).

always in a financially secure position. With regard to the group's first venture into publishing, *The Germ* (January-April 1850), William Michael Rossetti writes that 'all the PRBs were to be proprietors' but they were 'quite ready to have some other proprietors' because of a need of 'spare cash' and a lack of 'steadiness of interest in the scheme'.⁶³ Further, the interest and support of figures such as John Ruskin, Francis McCracken and Thomas E. Plint had given the early Pre-Raphaelites financial security and helped them to gain a degree of respectability in the Victorian art world after initial attacks.⁶⁴ The most significant patron of Pre-Raphaelite art at this time had been Ruskin. As a respected critic, he could sway public taste. In 1851 he used his position to defend the group and consolidate their reputation in his letters to *The Times* on the 13 and 30 May. Ruskin continued to be involved with the group over a number of years.⁶⁵ Briefly put, Ruskin first came into direct contact with the artists via William Holman Hunt. He praised the painting *Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus* (1851) in his letter to *The Times*, and would go on to champion *The Light of the World* (1851-3) in his May 1854 letter. When Hunt left for Palestine in 1854, Ruskin turned his attention to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddal and later, to Edward Burne-Jones. William Michael Rossetti observed that Ruskin's financial support did more than give enumerative support to his brother Dante; it also 'allowed Rossetti to avoid selling his work through public exhibitions or speculative dealers'.⁶⁶ This freedom from producing artwork for the market gave him a greater degree of control over the paintings that he was to produce.

The first section of the present chapter will trace the patronage of working-class poets throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will show that they could both be

⁶³ William Michael Rossetti, 'Introduction', *The Germ*, 1 (April 1850), 9.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the role of various patrons of Pre-Raphaelite art see Judith Bronkhurst, 'Pre-Raphaelites and their Patrons', *The Burlington Magazine*, 132.1042 (1990), 55-56.

⁶⁵ See Robert Hewison, Ian Warrell, and Stephen Wildman, eds., *Ruskin, Turner, and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery, 2000) and John Batchelor, *John Ruskin: A Life* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000).

⁶⁶ Hewison, Warrell and Wildman, p. 127.

sought by and approach patrons. The Glaswegian poet Ellen Johnson published her work via subscription, and could therefore be said to have had numerous patrons. I will then discuss Pre-Raphaelite involvement with the London Working Men's College. A number of the Pre-Raphaelites taught and guest lectured at the college from the 1850's onwards. These included John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Alexander Munro, Thomas Woolner, Ford Madox Brown, Valentine Prinsep, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. My discussion however will principally concentrate upon the involvement of Ruskin and Rossetti with the college. The main body of the chapter will then be divided into three sections, each of which will concern itself with a working or middle-class poet who received patronage from one or more of the Pre-Raphaelite poets: 1. Charles Wells, who was supported by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne. 2. Ebenezer Jones, who was favored by Rossetti. 3. Joseph Skipsey, who received various forms of patronage from Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Theodore Watts, William Michael Rossetti and William Morris. Each section will discuss the influence that the Pre-Raphaelites had upon the work of the poets and the extent to which a shared aesthetic begins to emerge. As stated in the previous chapter any assessment of class is potentially problematic, but for the purpose of this thesis I have considered class to be dependent upon the jobs held by, or the social position of the poet's parents and the opportunities that they were therefore able to give to their children. By focusing upon Pre-Raphaelite teaching at the London Working Men's College and the interest shown in the work of individual working class poets, I will explore aesthetic and more material forms of patronage. This dual focus will reveal that the aesthetic principles of the group, which were expounded at the London Working Men's College, could influence working-class artists. Further, the group's patronage of individual poets shows that they were able to use their popularity and

connections to influence print runs of working-class poetry and to bolster the reputation of the poets.

Patronage of working-class poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth century

The declining patronage system of the eighteenth century, which provided support for a range of writers such as Samuel Johnston (1709-1784), Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) and Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), was instrumental in promoting the work and well-being of working-class poets in the nineteenth century. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries patronage was ‘by definition oppressive and demeaning’ and ‘never provided adequate support to authors’.⁶⁷ The relationship between writers and patrons was problematic in the eighteenth century as both parties were often looking after their own interests and as a result acted badly towards each other. The system had its imperfections, but it did enable many working-class poets to enter into print – even if they did not have the control over the publication of their work that they would wish for. These poets would have been unlikely, without assistance, to have reached an audience beyond local magazines and newspapers. Ann Yearsley (1753-1806) and John Jones (1774-?) both attracted respected patrons in Hannah More (1745-1833) and the poet laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843). These eighteenth-century examples highlight ways in which the patronage of working-class writers could be strained. Each party entering into the relationship had their own agenda and expectations, such as to gain money, fame or prestige.

⁶⁷ Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1, 3. Critics who have taken this view include: A. S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson: Being a Study of the Relation between Author, Patron, Publisher and Public, 1726-1780* (London: Holden, 1927) Alexandre Beljame, *Men of Letters of the English Public in the Eighteenth Century: 1660-1744* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1948).

The local poetic reputation of the milkmaid Yearsley drew the interest and patronage of the blue-stocking writer Hannah More.⁶⁸ More had a prejudiced and superior attitude to her charge's poetry, but Yearsley was also indignant towards her patron. Throughout their strained relationship the poet became increasingly frustrated that More was keeping back her share of her work's profits; More's reason being that she did not think that the money would be spent wisely. She remarks in her introductory letter to Yearsley's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1785) that, 'the verses excited my attention; for, though incorrect, they breathed the genuine spirit of Poetry, and were rendered still more interesting, by a certain natural and strong expression of the misery, which seemed to fill the heart and mind of the author'.⁶⁹ This is an example of the way in which More's dealings with Yearsley lack tact, as she shows a disregard for the reasons behind her misery. This could also be due to ignorance or a desire to maintain class boundaries. It is merely an accepted quality of her poetry. She goes on to distinctly categorise Yearsley (perhaps unfairly) as an 'unlettered' poet who is only able to produce 'wild-wood-notes' which abound in 'imagery, metaphor and personification' (x). When More describes Yearsley as the producer of 'wild wood-notes', rather than a more elevated poetry, she perhaps exhibits a desire to keep Yearsley within her social place. This is a reference to Shakespeare in Milton's early pastoral poem '*L'Allegro*'.⁷⁰ 'Wild-wood notes' as well as connoting a lack of cultivation, evoke Bacchus or Dionysus, a classical God associated with frivolity and merriment. This implies that her work could potentially be a threat to society, thus within this context More would be seen as justified in her attempt to take control over the distribution of *Poems on Several Occasions*: the emphasis falls firmly on

⁶⁸ Yearsley was the daughter of a milkwoman from Clinton, a village near to Bristol. She did not receive any institutional education but was taught to read and write by her mother and older brother.

⁶⁹ Ann Yearsley, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 4th edn. (London: J. J. Robinson, 1836), p. vi.

⁷⁰ The speaker remarks, 'Or Sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe, | Warble his native Wood-notes wilde [sic]', John Milton, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Jonathan Goldberg and Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 133-34.

the ‘wildness’. More tellingly remarks that ‘I should be sorry to see the wild vigour of her rustic muse polished into elegance, or laboured into correctness’ (x). Eighteenth-century poetry is characterised by precision, formula and correctness, as can be seen in the Augustan couplets of Alexander Pope. More wishes Yearsley’s poetry to remain distinct from this.

In an act of bravery in the summer of 1826 Jones, a domestic servant from Bath, wrote a letter to the then poet laureate Southey that would enable his poems to be brought into print. Jones begins his letter to Southey by saying that, ‘[t]he person who takes the liberty of addressing you is a poor, humble, uneducated domestic, who, having attempted the stringing together of a few pieces in verse, would be happy in the possession of your humble opinion of them’.⁷¹ Jones is very aware of his addressee’s social and cultural position, and as a result, the references to his own verse may appear to be self-deprecating. This is not necessarily Jones’ own opinion of himself, but the tone of his solicitation does have the desired effect. Something about the ‘manner’ of Jones’s address intrigues Southey and he condescends to reply. Southey is very aware of his status as ‘Lord Chancellor in Literature, a Lord Keeper of the King’s taste’ with ‘the literary patronage of the public and the state at his disposal’. It would therefore be unwise for him to be seen to be frivolous with his patronage. Interestingly, however, class boundaries, even for Southey, are not set in stone. He sees Jones as being the ‘last versifier of his kind’ (a working-class poet, not tarnished by the ‘march of intellect’).⁷² Yet at the same time Southey comments that he sees something of ‘Cunningham’s vein, or of Cotton’s, a man of higher powers, whom Cunningham followed’; both of these poets came from a higher-class background (6-7). Both Southey and More are keen to maintain class boundaries through their patronage and

⁷¹ Robert Southey, *The Lives of Uneducated Poets* (London: W. H. Bohn, 1836), p. 1.

⁷² Southey, p. 1.

do not perceive the work of the artist that they patronise to share their own aesthetic merits: More wishes for Yearsley to continue to produce 'wild wood-notes' whilst Southey sees Jones as a rare case, an exception to the usual writings of working-class poets.

Despite the fact that the patronage system had declined in the eighteenth century, patronage continued to be an important instrument for the publication of working-class poetry in the nineteenth century. This is because working-class poets were not in a strong economic position (though this had slightly improved since the eighteenth century), and often did not have the money or connections to have their work published in volume form. Most often their work appeared in local newspapers and was distributed via broadsheets. The half-profits publication arrangement, offered by publishers such as Moxon, Macmillan, Longmans and Chatto & Windus, was not often extended to working-class poets, as they were not financially able to take on the risk.⁷³ Certain poets, such as Thomas Cooper and Gerald Massey were in a stronger position; they managed to gain a national reputation, which would grant them access to national newspapers and journals, but this was not typical. Assistance with publication in volume form was not the only way in which a patron could intervene on behalf of a writer. This could come in diverse forms, most obviously the commissioning of artwork, paying a subscription to buy a work, paying for the living expenses of an artist and/or the cost of the publication of their poetry. Some patrons were able to give more practical assistance such as giving instruction, advice or securing a pension for them. Other patrons were able to use their influence amongst literary circles to increase the reputation of a particular poet or to pay for a work to be advertised in the periodical press or in an existing volume of poetry.

⁷³ Lee Erikson, 'The Market' in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Richard Cronin and others., (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 345-360 (p. 348).

For a number of poets, publication via subscription was the easiest way for their work to enter into print in volume form.⁷⁴ The subscription lists that appear in the poetry volumes of Ellen Johnston and William Billington, amongst others, can give us valuable information about the kinds of people that were interested in supporting working-class poetry. The Lancashire poet Billington, for instance, seems to have received a good deal of localised support. Many of those who subscribe to his work appear to be from his extended family as there are eleven people with the surname Billington on the subscription list for *Lancashire Songs* (1883). In Ellen Johnston's *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* (1867) the subscription list takes up two pages of the volume and gives sixty names with the disclaimer that 'in addition to the preceding list there are a number of other Subscribers whose names have not reached the printers in time for this Edition'.⁷⁵ The most prominent subscribers are listed first and include: the Duke of Buccleuch, Earl of Enniskillen, Major-General Sir Vincent Eyre, Sir John Bowring and Colonel Sykes, MP. Subscription lists show the expansion of private patronage to encompass a cross-section of society. Ellen Johnston uses the autobiographical introduction to her volume to evade responsibility for her own story by attesting that it had been included because of the 'expressed wishes of some subscribers'.⁷⁶ The Pre-Raphaelites did take note of the subscription lists inserted into volumes of poetry, but their names rarely feature in these lists. For instance, Dante Gabriel Rossetti notes that in the subscription list of *The Grave* (1805) by Robert Blair (1699-1746) a 'Mr. Robert Scott, Edinburgh' can be found. Rossetti discerns that, 'this was

⁷⁴ In this form of publication an author would put together a list of subscribers who were willing to pay for a particular volume upon publication. In return for their early support, subscribers would be listed in the front of the published volume. Some subscribers would agree to buy a number of copies; this is what the numbers next to individual names signify.

⁷⁵ Ellen Johnston, *Autobiography, Poems and Songs* (Glasgow: William Love, 1867).

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

the engraver, father of David Scott, to whom, therefore, this book (published in 1808, one year after his birth) must have come as an early association and influence'.⁷⁷

Working-class poets also benefited from the patronage of one specific individual, or a chain of individual patrons. Perhaps the most prominent example of this kind of patronage can be seen in the publication of Edwin Waugh's 'Come Whoam to thi Childer an' me' (1856).⁷⁸ The poem is one of the most famous responses to the famine in Lancashire in the 1860s. The first patron of Waugh's poem was the bookseller David Kelly. According to Ian Petticrew, after seeing the poem in the *Manchester Examiner and Times* in 1865 Kelly had the work printed on cards which were distributed to the customers of his bookshop. It was here that Baroness Burdett-Coutts came upon a copy of the poem; she subsequently ordered twenty thousand of Kelly's cards, which were to be distributed amongst local businesses and friends.⁷⁹ Further, it was upon its resultant popularity that the publishing company Heywood of Manchester took the risk of publishing Waugh's *Lancashire Songs* in 1869. Waugh did not have any control over the publication and distribution of his poem at this stage but it did bring his work to the attention of a greater number of readers than would otherwise have been possible. Perhaps in retaliation to his earlier lack of control, in a later edition of the *Sketches* published in 1892, the editor of the work, George Milner, points out that Waugh insisted upon a high degree of control over

⁷⁷ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, '11- Literary Papers', in *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 1 (London: Ellis and Scrutton, 1886), p. 451.

⁷⁸ The poem was published in Edwin Waugh, *Lancashire Songs* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1865). The first four stanzas are written from the point of view of a mother who is preparing for the return of her absent husband who is most likely out of work. The poem was popular with higher class audiences because it is a temperance poem that presents a sentimental ideal of the working classes. It is nonthreatening and centres on the home and the separate spheres of the husband and wife. The work has a strong sense of pathos as the daughter Sally cries when the mother puts her to bed 'cose her fryther weren't theer' and her brother asks if 'the' boggarts taen houd o' my dad?' (goblins/evil creatures have taken his dad away), p. 7, 10, 22. The poem rallies around the small comforts of home and family as a means of keeping heart during the famine. In the poem's final stanza we hear from the father who rather sentimentally describes the comfort which he gains from returning home and having the kiss of his children as a reward: 'An' aw'll kiss thee an' th' childer o reawnd', p. 42.

⁷⁹ Ian Petticrew, ed., 'Edwin Waugh: Introduction', <<http://www.gerald-massey.org.uk/waugh/index.htm>> [Accessed on 8th January 2010].

the publication of his volume. Milner writes in the preface to the 1892 edition of *Sketches* that when compiling the collected works of the writer, '[t]he author was alone responsible for the selection and arrangement adopted; and no other hand could have accomplished the task so well'.⁸⁰ Both Johnston and Waugh are to an extent controlled at this stage in their careers by their patrons. Johnston suggests that her poetry and Autobiography was influenced by her readers (who are implicitly her patrons) and Waugh has little say over the way in which his poem is distributed. For Waugh, this disregard occurs because his patrons see his work as being a commodity. His sentimental temperance poem is just the type of poetry that higher-class readers want to read from working-class poets. What goes for Waugh and Johnston was also the case for the artists who were taught by the Pre-Raphaelites at the London Working Men's College, as we will now see. They were, to an extent, influenced (and implicitly controlled) by their teachers; they were encouraged to paint what they saw around them during art lessons, in line with the contemporary Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic.

Pre-Raphaelite Involvement with London Working Men's College

Pre-Raphaelite involvement with educating the working classes via art teaching and lecturing at the London Working Men's College gives practical evidence of the two groups operating within the same arena. The Pre-Raphaelites had direct contact with working-class men at the college: they learned something about their lives and how they expressed themselves (both through speech and art) and were able to pass on their arguably *avant-garde* aesthetic ideas. It is clear that the working-class pupils of members of the group were influenced by their encounter with the Pre-Raphaelites, yet the extent to which Ruskin and Rossetti were influenced by their pupils is more difficult to determine. Within

⁸⁰ Edwin Waugh, *Lancashire Sketches*, ed. by George Milner (John Heywood: Manchester, 1892).

this section I will present a brief overview of Pre-Raphaelite involvement in the college, give examples of feedback to, and engagement with, their working-class pupils and finally will present some ideas with regard to the possible impact of the college upon the Pre-Raphaelites.

A patron of the Pre-Raphaelite group, John Ruskin became involved with the newly established London Working Men's College upon its inception in 1854 as a teacher of art. The college was founded by R. D. Litchfield and F. D. Maurice (who became its first principal) on 31 March in Red Lion Square, London.⁸¹ The college can be seen as a successor to the Mechanics Institutes which were founded in London in 1823. Their aim was to provide scientific education for members of the lower classes. J. F. C. Harrison points out that the college provided a legitimate method of aiding social advancement 'at a time when other methods were unacceptable or discredited. Revolution, as a method of social change, was discredited by the recent failure of the Chartists'.⁸² The college attracted Ruskin to work as a teacher and later other members of the Pre-Raphaelite group: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Alexander Munro, Thomas Woolner, Ford Madox Brown, Valentine Prinsep, and Edward Burne-Jones.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact motivations which led the members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle to teach at the Working Men's College. Ruskin was drawn into the college through a connection to F. D. Maurice. The two had corresponded over the nature of the priesthood. This dialogue arose from questions upon religion which Ruskin had detailed in *The Stones of Venice: Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* (1851). F. J. Furnivall acted as a mediator to secure Ruskin's services and he began teaching fortnightly

⁸¹ J. F. C. Harrison, *A History of the Working Men's College 1854-1954* (London: Routledge, 1952, repr. 2007).

⁸² Harrison, 13.

at the college in 1853.⁸³ Jan Marsh and Harrison speculate that Rossetti's motivation for teaching at the college appears partly to have been to impress Ruskin who was then his patron.⁸⁴ This assessment holds some weight as Rossetti did not share the Christian Socialist beliefs of the founders of the college and refused to engage in their political programme. Yet according to Kirstin Mahoney, Rossetti's 'vision of aesthetic labour actually harmonizes in many ways with the Christian Socialist 'vision of intellectual labour'.⁸⁵ The synergy between aesthetic and intellectual labour potentially provides a useful point of contiguity between members of the working classes involved in, and affected by, Christian Socialism and Pre-Raphaelitism. Intellectual labour, important to the Christian Socialists, proposed an egalitarian (anti-Capitalist) view of education and advanced the idea that those willing to work hard should be given access to knowledge, regardless of class. Similarly, Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic labour prided itself upon attention to detail and taking the time to produce realistic effects. This practice could be taught to anyone with an artistic inclination, provided that they had the patience to follow it through.

Importantly, Rossetti taught art at the college for three years without payment. He returned to serve on the council from 1861-2, and also recruited Ford Madox Brown and Thomas Woolner to teach at the college.⁸⁶ Rossetti may have initially been attracted to the college because of its focus upon the liberal arts rather than science and industry. Its main curriculum consisted of Theology, the Humanities and Natural Division, but the Humanities did not include the teaching of poetry. For Rossetti, painting was the only subject of importance [within the context of the college's curriculum] and he thus shared this enthusiasm with his students. He coerced one individual to give up algebra and 'asked

⁸³ For further details see: John Batchelor, *John Ruskin: A Life* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000).

⁸⁴ Jan Marsh, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Painter and Poet* (London: Phoenix, 1999), 137.

⁸⁵ Kirstin Mahoney, 'Work, Lack, and Longing: Rossetti's "The Blesses Damsel" and the Working Men's College', *Victorian Studies*, 52.2 (Winter, 2010), 219-248, 224.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

him what use algebra could be to painting'.⁸⁷ For Rossetti the link between painting and poetry is indissoluble, and thus he could just as easily be talking about poetry here. This connection can be seen in 'Sentences and Notes' from *Works* (1911), edited by William Michael Rossetti, when Dante writes that, 'picture and poem bear the same relation to each other as beauty does in man and women: the point of meeting where the two are most identical is the supreme perfection'.⁸⁸ Rossetti comments here that art and poetry can become 'identical' when 'perfection' is achieved in each type of art.

It appears that Rossetti was attentive in the feedback that he gave to his pupils, as his student J. P. Emslie comments that he was 'patient and indefatigable' and 'greatly interested himself in the development of whatever gift each particular pupil might possess'.⁸⁹ Another student, Thomas Sulman, writes that Rossetti 'could inspire and thrill us, we loved him so, and were happy to render him the smallest service'.⁹⁰ Importantly for Rossetti and Ruskin, the college gave them the freedom to promote aesthetic realism and a close fidelity to nature through their teaching, rather than the laborious copying of still-life which was the approved teaching method of the Royal Academy. According to Sulman, Rossetti urged him to draw only 'what you see' and not what was academically expected.⁹¹ Sulman's anecdote provides evidence of a member of the Pre-Raphaelite group transferring their aesthetic ideas. This can also be seen in the private art lessons that Rossetti gave to his working-class wife Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862). As Steven Kolsteren sees it, the 'artist most singularly influenced by Rossetti was unquestionably Elizabeth Siddal'.⁹² Rossetti's influence was noticed by his brother William Michael Rossetti, who

⁸⁷ J. Llewelyn Davies, ed., *The Working Men's College, 1854-1904* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 48.

⁸⁸ Rossetti, 'Sentences and Notes' in *Works*, ed. by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911), 606.

⁸⁹ Llewelyn Davies, ed., 41.

⁹⁰ Harrison, 67.

⁹¹ Thomas Sulman, 'A Memorable Art Class', *Good Words*, 38 (1897), 547-51, 550.

⁹² Steven Kolsteren, 'Rossetti's Writings as a Source of Inspiration for Victorian Artists', *Victorian Poetry*, 20.3/4 (Autumn-Winter, 1982), 114.

suggests that Siddal's paintings were largely derivative of those of his brother. He remarks that, '[h]er designs resembled those of Dante Rossetti at the same date: he had his defects, and she had the deficiencies of those defects', which he considered to be 'little mastery of form, whether in the human figure or in the drapery and other materials; a right intention in colouring, though neither rich nor deep'.⁹³ This suggests a very close proximity between the aesthetics of the two, which must partially have been a result of tutoring.

Ford Madox Brown was also an enthusiastic teacher at the college. The highlight of being taught by Madox Brown must have been the trips to his studio. On one occasion his pupils were able to see the incomplete painting 'Work' (1852-65). It is a painting which contains resonances of the college, as its founder F. D. Maurice is positioned next to Thomas Carlyle and the poster for the college can be seen in its background. These trips demonstrate that Madox Brown did not draw a line between his own private artistic practices and his role as a teacher, which suggests a desire to demystify the workings of the Pre-Raphaelite group. There is also evidence that Rossetti showed his own works of art to his pupils. Thomas Sulman saw the painting 'Mary in the House of St John' in 1856, and later reviewed it: 'The whole, as I remember now, was very impressive. I think there must have been frequent amazing failure in the drawing, but the colour was so deep and "Belliniesque" in its glow that all its faults were condoned after one impatient glance'.⁹⁴ This is particularly significant because it provides evidence of one of Rossetti's pupils providing feedback on his teacher's work. Curiously, we also only know of the existence of one of Rossetti's works of art from the period, 'Jan Van Eyck's Studio' (c1856), because of Sulman's recollection that he was not impressed by the piece.⁹⁵ These examples fit within the Pre-Raphaelite ethos to share their *avant-garde* work, as had been the case

⁹³ William Michael Rossetti, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal', *Burlington Magazine*, 1 ([n.p. and n.pub]. 1903), 278.

⁹⁴ Sulman, 550.

⁹⁵ Ibid. The current location of the drawing is unknown.

since their first public exhibition in 1849 at the Royal Academy. Their journal, *The Germ* (January-April 1850), which will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis, also provided the group with the opportunity to demystify their aesthetic ideas and to spread their views on art.

Working-class influence upon the Pre-Raphaelites can be aptly represented by what I am calling contiguity, partially because it has been difficult for critics to make a direct connection between teaching at the London Working Men's College and any distinct change in the aesthetic of the group. Rossetti expert Jan Marsh considers that despite his 'egalitarianism', '[h]e found a certain breed of self-improving autodidact consummately boring; and bores he could not abide', which implicitly suggests that he was unlikely to be influenced by his pupils.⁹⁶ Mahoney goes the furthest towards making the leap as she argues in 'Work, Lack, and Longing: Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" and the Working Men's College' that Rossetti's 'sense of the relationship between lack and artistic labour was strengthened during the time he spent teaching alongside John Ruskin at the Working Men's College'. Mahoney comments that the 1855 revised manuscript of 'The Blessed Damozel' exhibits 'an effort to strengthen the preexisting connections between the theoretical apparatus developed in this work and the mode of production encouraged by Ruskin and Rossetti in their art classes'.⁹⁷ Rather than suggesting that the art of the Pre-Raphaelites was affected by their encounter with working-class pupils, it is the pedagogy developed during Rossetti's time at the college which is of significance to his revisions.

Importantly, Rossetti did see the college as a place where he could draw freely. In *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* William Holman Hunt records Rossetti's comment that 'I draw there myself and find that by far the most valuable part of

⁹⁶ Marsh, 137.

⁹⁷ Mahoney, 236.

my teaching, not only to me, but to them'.⁹⁸ According to Sulman, at least one of Rossetti's works, 'Two Lovers Embracing' (c.1850-54), was conceptualised whilst at the college. He comments that '[o]ne day [during his art class] Rossetti scribbled in ink on the back of a letter a motive for a picture, two lovers embracing in a turret of a castle wall. The subject pleased him and he blotted in a scheme of colour'.⁹⁹ Yet, this evidence does not tell us to what extent the college and its pupils influenced the drawing. It may be that the college simply proved a useful place for Rossetti to work.

Ruskin was perhaps clearer in his agenda for teaching at the college. According to James Dearden, Ruskin did not aim 'to make artists of the workmen attending his classes, but to make them better men – or in other words, to educate them'.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly though, Dearden goes on to extrapolate some of the ongoing connections with working-class men that Ruskin maintained long after he finished working at the college. For instance, 'William Ward became Ruskin's assistant teacher, an accomplished Turner copyist, and the agent for the sale of Ruskin's educational photographs'.¹⁰¹ Ruskin also first met the publisher and engraver George Allen via his art classes at the college. In *Praeterita* (1885–89) Ruskin comments that:

I took two pupils out of the ranks to carry them forward all I could. One I chose, the other chose me – or rather, chose my mother's maid, Hannah, for love of whom he came to the college, learned to draw there under Rossetti and me, and became eventually Mr. George Allen of *Sunnyside*, who, I hope, still looks back to his

⁹⁸ William Holman Hunt and Marion Edith Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2nd ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913), II, 1. cf. Marsh, 136.

⁹⁹ Sulman, 550.

¹⁰⁰ James S. Dearden, *John Ruskin: An Illustrated life of John Ruskin, 1819-1900* (Shire: Aylesbury, 2004), 29.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Dearden also remarks that 'J. W. Bunnet became a professional artist and executed many commissions for Ruskin in Venice: W. H. Hooper and Arthur Burgess became successful wood-engravers', 29.

having been an entirely honest and perfect working joiner as to the foundation of his prosperity in life.¹⁰²

Allen became Ruskin's assistant in 1857 and upon his instruction learnt the skill of wood engraving.¹⁰³ Allen's publishing company would also go on to publish a significant number of Ruskin's works. It is interesting to note here that Allen was also in Rossetti's class, yet it was Ruskin who he principally retained a connection to. It may not be possible to argue that Rossetti and Ruskin were influenced by their pupils, but the contiguous overlap between the two groups reveals that enduring links were formed between teachers and pupils at the London Working Men's College. Both Pre-Raphaelite and working-class artists found the college to be a place conducive to the production of art and for the Pre-Raphaelites, teaching was to be a key way of passing on their aesthetic. The opportunity to influence working-class writers and artists directly like this was, however, a rare one. In the case of Charles Wells, a little-known elderly poet who had given up writing long before the group discovered his work, the Pre-Raphaelites were unable to directly guide his aesthetic, but they were able to work towards bringing it before a new audience. Wells forms the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Charles Wells

The Pre-Raphaelites were interested in the work of the middle-class poet Charles Wells because they perceived congruities with their own poetry. We do not know what his parents did for a living, his mother was rumoured to be an actress, but they did have enough money for Wells to be trained as a lawyer. Wells therefore would not need to be given financial aid for his work to be published. The main obstacle to the publication of his

¹⁰² John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2012), 313.

¹⁰³ For further discussion of the relationship between Ruskin and Allen see: Paul Dawson, 'George Allen, John Ruskin and Publishing in the Nineteenth Century' <<http://www.georgeallen.co.uk/introduction.html>> [Accessed on 1 July 2013].

work was that there was not a ready market for his writing during the Victorian period. The Pre-Raphaelites influence the way in which his poetry was looked upon by reviewing his early work and helping to bring out a new edition of Wells' *Joseph and his Brethren* in 1877. The poetry of Wells was seized upon by the Pre-Raphaelites in large part because it resembled the work of the Romantic poet John Keats – a poet who had been a formative influence upon the group – and because of aesthetic connections to their own work. Significant in raising his cultural currency with the Pre-Raphaelites, Wells had known Keats: the two moved within the same social circles after Wells left school and was apprenticed to a solicitor in London. Wells was dropped from his set after he played a practical joke upon Keats' brother Tom, in which he sent him fake love letters that were signed, Amena Bellafilla. There is a sense of excitement and discovery in the first Pre-Raphaelite reviews of Wells' work, particularly in Dante Gabriel and William Michael Rossetti's discussion of Wells, as well as Algernon Charles Swinburne's 1877 Preface to a new edition of his work. Criticism of *Joseph and his Brethren* (1846) by Swinburne sheds light upon some of the qualities in verse which could excite the group's interest.¹⁰⁴ They would go on to admire similar traits in the work of the working-class poets Joseph Skipsey and Ebenezer Jones. Wells is an important touchstone for later judgements about Pre-Raphaelite patronage of these working-class writers because the interactions between Wells and the group highlight a tension between self-interest and genuine appreciation of the work that they are promoting.

Wells produced two notable works during his lifetime: *Stories After Nature* in 1822 and *Joseph and his Brethren* in 1824 under the pseudonym H. L. Howard. Both volumes were largely unread following their first publication – by the mid-Victorian period Wells'

¹⁰⁴ The aesthetic preferences of the Pre-Raphaelites will be discussed at greater length in the Introduction and 'Print Culture' chapter of this thesis.

work had almost been forgotten. Dante Gabriel Rossetti discovered his *Stories after Nature* and *Joseph and his Brethren* in 1846; a crucial point during which the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was beginning to form. He began to share his interest in the poetry with other members of the group. It was read and admired by Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914), Edmund Gosse (1849-1848), George Meredith (1828-1909) and J. A. Symonds (1840-1893). Shared reading and an appreciation for certain texts had a considerable influence upon the shared aesthetic of the group.¹⁰⁵ The fact that Wells was being read at this time may indicate that his work also contributed to the formation of the group's aesthetic; we know, for instance, that William Michael Rossetti noted that Charles Wells' work had directly influenced Rossetti's 'Hand and Soul'.¹⁰⁶

William Michael Rossetti lists Wells amongst canonical and respected writers such as Shakespeare, Walter Scott (1771-1832), George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), Robert Browning and Dante Alighieri who had influenced Dante Gabriel Rossetti.¹⁰⁷ This is high praise for a writer who had received little support from Victorian high culture. The Pre-Raphaelites were perhaps drawn to Wells' poetry at this stage in part because it had resonances of the work of Keats, who had been a major influence on the group, and particularly upon Dante Gabriel Rossetti.¹⁰⁸ Like the Pre-Raphaelites, two of Keats' key themes are death and the pursuit of beauty, as can be seen in poems such as 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles' (1817), 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (1816) and 'Sleep and Poetry' (1817).

¹⁰⁵ For further discussion of the importance of shared reading practice amongst the Pre-Raphaelites see: Michaela Giebelhausen and Tim Barringer, *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites: Text, Context, Subtext* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 1, p. xxvi. William Michael Rossetti writes that, 'Blake likewise had his peculiar need of homage, and Charles Wells, the influence of whose prose style, in the *Stories after Nature*, I trace to some extent in Rossetti's "Hand and Soul"'. For further discussion of the connection between the two works see D. M. R. Bentley, 'Rossetti's "Hand and Soul"', *English Studies in Canada*, 3 (1977), 445-57.

¹⁰⁷ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 1, p. xxv.

¹⁰⁸ For further discussion of the connection between Wells and Keats see, Priscilla Johnston, 'Charles Jeremiah Wells: An Early Keatsian Poet', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 26 (1977), 72-87.

According to William Michael Rossetti, Dante ‘transfused’ his admiration for Wells’ work to Swinburne, who would go on to be a ‘potent faculty’ in the publication of a new edition of Wells’ *Joseph and His Brethren* in 1877, just two years before the poet’s death (Wells would have been 77 at the time).¹⁰⁹ In their letters and journals Swinburne and Rossetti only comment upon Wells’ work and not their reasons for publishing a new edition of his poetry. It is unlikely to have been for the poet’s direct benefit: he would have had little control over the production of this new edition because of his age. For the same reason, he would not have considerably benefited from any of the edition’s sales, though any money could have been passed on to his family and children. The Pre-Raphaelites and Wells did perhaps hope that the volume would increase Wells’ posthumous reputation and that the Pre-Raphaelites would be credited with the find of a forgotten talent.

In his introduction to *Joseph and his Brethren* Swinburne expresses an anxiety over the fact that such a talented poet had not received his ‘due place in general repute’.¹¹⁰ For Swinburne, Wells is ‘one only lesser than the greatest of his time in some of the greatest qualities of his art’.¹¹¹ He ranks Wells’ work with that of Keats, yet it only attracted ‘thin and reedy’ critical ‘eulogies’ from contemporary critics.¹¹² Swinburne’s introductory essay is an attempt to redress this. His work follows the lead of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s proclamation of the writer’s ‘genius’ in a review contributed to Alexander Gilchrist’s edition of the *Life of Blake* (1863). According to Rossetti, the example of Wells ‘affords, perhaps, the solitary instance, within our period, of poetry of the very first class falling

¹⁰⁹ William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His Family-Letters with a Memoir*, vol. 1 (London: Ellis, 1895), pp. 101-102.

¹¹⁰ Charles Wells, *Joseph and his Brethren* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), p. v. All references below refer to this edition.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. vii.

quite unrecognized and remaining so for a long space of years'.¹¹³ The reviews of Rossetti and Swinburne did not create a new audience for Wells' work as was hoped – the reading public at the time remained unconvinced of his talent.

The criticism of Wells by Swinburne, which appears in the introduction to the 1877 version of *Joseph and his Brethren*, is not only for the benefit of the author. He was an elderly man, who had long since given up writing poetry. Swinburne writes the review because he is genuinely impressed by the poetry. Wells describes his work as a 'scriptural drama' because this enables him to present the 'thoughts and feelings of a man in a wild and wilful state of nature' and to convey the 'impassioned ethos of the story itself'.¹¹⁴ These are qualities which would have attracted the attention of the Pre-Raphaelites but may have discouraged readers familiar with the formality and restraint of Alexander Pope, William Cowper (1731-1800) and Thomas Gray (1716-1771) when the work was first published. The story is taken from Genesis 37-50. Wells takes liberties with the text; in his Preface he states that he wishes to 'suit the Drama to the story', rather than aiming for accuracy (xi). We learn that Swinburne was particularly interested in the section of the text which details the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelites. According to Swinburne these lines exhibit an 'ease and stateliness of manner which recall the more equable cadences of Shakespeare'. He considers the passage which describes the setting of the sun to be particularly Shakespearean: 'A god gigantic, habited in gold, stepping from off the mount into the sea' (xi). The lexis and syntax is self-aware and playful and has resonances of classical epithets such as 'the rosy fingered dawn' or Apollo, the 'shining sun God'. A re-interpretation of the imagery of the Bible is however important in early Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics because many of the first wave of artists were religious, whilst for all, the Bible

¹¹³ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, '11- Literary Papers', *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. 1 (Ellis and Scrutton, 1886), p. 455.

¹¹⁴ Wells, p. iii.

provided a source of well-known and accessible stories. As is the case for *Joseph and his Brethren*, provocative religious works of art were not always popular within Victorian society; John Everett Millais's 'Christ in the House of his Parents' (1849-1850) was regarded as too realistic, and controversially painted the holy family in an ordinary manner. Charles Dickens described Christ as being 'a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-haired boy in a night-gown'.¹¹⁵ Swinburne's poetry in particular delights in toying with religion – as can be seen in poems such as 'Hymn to Proserpine', 'The Triumph of Time', 'Hertha' and 'Before a Crucifix' – and it is likely to be for this reason that he responds to Wells' grandiose vision of the biblical story.

In a conversation between Joseph and his father early on in the volume, the two discuss teleological proofs for the existence of God that respond in part to William Paley's (1743-1805) 'Watchmaker Analogy' (1802). Notably, Wells' book was published before the publication of Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of 'Natural Selection' in 1859. Joseph comments that he has travelled throughout the land of Canaan in order to find 'fresh proofs' for the existence of God.¹¹⁶ Joseph observes that many of the tribes and nations 'overlook | God's greatness in his works', yet for him a 'simple flower is cloth'd with the thoughts | That lead the mind to heaven' (Ibid.). This notion reflects a Pre-Raphaelite interest in close observation of the natural world. Jacob then goes on to confirm his son's observations and to add his own wisdom:

For there's no work, the meanest on the earth,
Matter, or thing, but 'tis so nicely cast
By the great Master-hand, and so set off
In beauty's mask, or else consistent truth [...] (ibid)

¹¹⁵ Charles Dickens, 'Old Lamps for New Ones', *Household Words*, 12 (1850), 12-14.

¹¹⁶ Wells, *Joseph and his Brethren*, p. 22.

God is described by Jacob as being a ‘Master-hand’ (which is reminiscent of the technical skill of Paley’s watchmaker), who casts things in such a way that they are either beautiful or display a ‘truth’. As we shall see in the next chapter of this thesis, which discusses the Pre-Raphaelites’ magazine *The Germ*, ‘truth’ and a resultant pursuit of beauty were key features of their art. Yet, for the group these qualities could be created or mimicked, rather than only being a reflection of the works of God.

Ebenezer Jones

Ebenezer Jones was the working-class poet who was most enthusiastically supported by the Pre-Raphaelites. This is perhaps because he is the closest to being ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ of the working-class poets discussed in this chapter, as his work displays the most proximity to their aesthetic. Like the work of Pre-Raphaelites (particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti), Jones’ poetry can be unusual, but is always highly ornate. He shares key themes and images, such as the association between death and a beautiful woman and the psychological instability and spontaneity that came to be associated with sensation fiction. In promoting the work of Jones, the Pre-Raphaelites intend to endorse their own aesthetic, but also recognise that this could extend beyond their own circle, and further, beyond class boundaries.

Jones was initially born into a middle-class family and unlike many other working-class poets, had the benefit of an early education up to middle-school level. Jones’ stable, if austere Calvinist existence was taken away from him when at seventeen his father died and the family were left destitute. Jones was then obliged to work twelve-hour days as a clerk and later at a warehouse. The majority of Jones’ free time was spent reading the work of radical writers such as Shelley and Thomas Carlyle, who perhaps offered an escape from his day to day existence and had a profound effect upon his work. Jones’ first

significant volume of poetry was *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1843). The volume exhibits a move away from his Calvinist upbringing; it delights in presenting a dreamy world of disorder which breaks down societal taboos. The work can be seen to be radical as according to Kirstie Blair it presents a ‘celebration of bodily impulses’ and defies ‘societal norms’.¹¹⁷ Because of the unusual nature of the work, it was not positively received by critics. Jones was disheartened by the negative critical reception of his volume by writers such as Thomas Hood (1799-1845) and Baron de Tabley (1835-1895) in the periodical press. Hood described Jones as ‘shamefully prostituting his gift of poetic power’.¹¹⁸ The advert for the volume placed in the *Examiner* on 20 January 1844 reveals that there were some positive reactions to the volume. It notes that the *Court Journal* considered that the work contained ‘much poetry of the highest order’. Similarly, a writer for the *Spectator* remarks that ‘there seems to be in him a vein of true poetry’. These responses did not rescue Jones’ reputation and like Wells, his work was largely unread in the early Victorian period. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had not yet formed in 1843, and therefore they could not promote his work at this time.

The revival of the reading public’s interest in Jones’ work was aided by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Theodore Watts Dunton, R. H. Shepherd (1842-95) and the Chartist poet and engraver, W. J. Linton (1812-97). Jones had previously met Linton through becoming a radical journalist involved in the Chartist movement, but it is unclear whether he had any direct contact with Watts-Dunton and Shepherd. This is an interesting group of people to come together in support of Jones’s work: two Pre-Raphaelite artists (Rossetti and Watts-Dunton), a journalist (Shepherd) and a radical and working-class poet (Linton). The Rossettis came into direct contact with Jones for the first and only time in 1847 at their

¹¹⁷ Kirstie Blair, ‘Poetry and Sensation’, in Pamela K. Gilbert, ed., *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 107-120 (p. 133).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Ebenezer Jones, *Studies of Sensation and Event: Poems by Ebenezer Jones*, ed. by R. H. Shepherd (London: Pickering, 1879), p. xvii. All further references refer to this edition.

lodgings in University Street, Tottenham Court Road. William Michael Rossetti recalls that, '[o]n one occasion — to please Dante Rossetti, who took a great deal of interest in a rather eccentric but able volume of poems entitled *Studies of Sensation and Event* — Major Campbell secured the attendance of its author'.¹¹⁹ Nothing seems to have come of the meeting, no collaborations were suggested and the two were never to meet again. The record of the meeting by William Michael Rossetti is unfortunately sparse. It is therefore not clear what Rossetti made of the poet and whether the meeting was merely arranged to satiate his curiosity. Dante did however continue to show an interest in the reception of Jones' poetry long after his death. As late as 1870, Rossetti wrote an article in *The Athenaeum* calling for Jones' work to be brought to greater public and critical attention. Dante saw Jones as a 'remarkable poet, who affords nearly the most striking instance of neglected genius in our modern school of poetry'.¹²⁰ When he first came across *Studies of Sensation and Event*, Rossetti admits to finding deficiencies in his work, but he did detect its freshness and innovation. He was impressed that Jones dealt 'recklessly with those almost inaccessible combinations in nature and feeling which only intense and oft-renewed effort may perhaps at last approach'.¹²¹ Rather than aiming for the precision and attention to detail which is apparent in paintings such as *Ophelia* (1851-1852) by John Everett Millais and *Our English Coats* (1852) by William Holman Hunt, Jones presents 'truth to nature' in a more impressionistic way. The similarity to Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics lies in the way in which he strives to make innovative connections between nature and feeling. In Jones's poem 'Ode to Thought' from *Studies of Sensation and Event*, for instance, the speaker compares the movement in the natural world with the flow of thought to him.¹²² It

¹¹⁹ William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters with a Memoir*, vol. 1, p. 111.

¹²⁰ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Ebenezer Jones', *Notes and Queries*, 5 February 1870, p. 154.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² The connection is also particularly apparent in 'Remembrance of Feelings', 'Early Spring' and 'High Summer', also from *Studies of Sensation and Event*.

is described as a ‘mighty rushing’ of ‘flight’ and ‘oceanic choirings that precede | And tide your state’ (33, 37-38).

According to Rossetti, some of Jones’ best poems did not become popular because he did not achieve canonical status. He says of ‘When the World is Burning’ that, ‘had it been the writing of Edgar [Allan] Poe, it would have enjoyed world-wide celebrity’.¹²³ William Michael Rossetti recalls that Poe was a ‘poet of my brother’s marked predilection’ whilst at school, and his work continued to be a source of enjoyment for Rossetti.¹²⁴ The extent to which Jones’ poetry is like that of Poe (who was a more popular poet in Britain than he was in the United States in the nineteenth century) is debatable, but it reveals that Rossetti ranked the work of Jones with an established and popular contemporary poet. A possible connection between the poetry of Jones and Poe can be seen in poems such as ‘Spirits of the Dead’ from *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* (1829), ‘The Visit of the Dead’ from *Tamerlane and other Poems* (1827) and ‘The Raven’ and ‘Song’ from *The Raven and other Poems* (1845). All of the poems have formal innovation in common as well as interesting and evocative depictions of death. ‘Song’ potentially has the closest resemblance to Jones’ work since it creates a link between women, movement, burning and light – themes which recur in his work. The first two stanzas are given below:

I saw thee on thy bridal day
 When a burning blush came o’er thee,
 Though happiness around thee lay,
 The world all love before thee:

And in thine eye a kindling light

¹²³ William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters with a Memoir*, vol. 1, p. 152.

¹²⁴ William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, p. 76.

(Whatever it might be)
 Was all on Earth my aching sight
 Of Loveliness could see.¹²⁵

One perceptible difference between this poem and the majority of Jones' work is that the meter of the poem is quite regular (abab), as opposed to the skeletal and unusual form that is used in 'A Death-Sound', 'Zingalee', 'The Gem of Coquettes' and 'Hardiness of Love' from *Studies of Sensation and Event*, which reflects the sensational content of the poems. However, skeletal and usual meters can be seen in works such as 'The Raven' and 'The Bells' (1849) by Poe.¹²⁶

William Allingham, a poet connected to the Pre-Raphaelite group, also showed an interest in Jones' poem 'When the World is Burning', and it was subsequently added to a collection of poems which he edited entitled *Nightingale Valley* (1860). In the preface Allingham claims that the edition was created to present the reader with a poetic 'jewel' comprised of 'many stones' that would 'delight' them.¹²⁷ Like William Blake in 'The Tyger' from *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1895), Jones attempts to create something beautiful from a furnace:

When the world is burning,
 Fired within, yet turning
 Round with face unscathed;
 Ere fierce flames, uprushing,
 O'er all lands leap, crushing,
 Till earth fall, fire-swathed;

¹²⁵ Edgar Allen Poe, *The Raven and other Poems* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 1-8.

¹²⁶ For further discussion by Poe on the composition of his poetry see 'The Philosophy of Composition', *Graham's Monthly American Magazine*, 28.4 (April 1846), 163-167.

¹²⁷ William Allingham, ed., *Nightingale Valley: A Collection, including a Great Number of the Choicest Lyrics and Short Poems in the English Language* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1860)., p. v. All references below refer to this edition.

Up amidst the meadows,
 Gently through the shadows,
 Gentle flames will glide,
 Small, and blue, and golden.
 Though by bard beholden,
 When in calm dreams folden,
 Calm his dreams will bide.

Where the dance is sweeping,
 Through the greensward peeping,
 Shall the soft lights start;
 Laughing maids, unstaying,
 Deeming it trick-playing,
 High their robes upswaying,
 O'er the lights shall dart;
 And the woodland haunter
 Shall not cease to saunter
 When, far down some glade,
 Of the great world's burning,
 One soft flame upturning
 Seems, to his discerning,

Crocus in the shade. (1-27)

In stanza one the flames are simultaneously described as being 'fierce' and 'crushing' and a 'Gentle flame [that] will glide | Small, and blue, and golden' (4, 5, 9-10). The second imagining of the flames suggests delicacy and the ability to change and create. This image

is furthered in the second stanza when the flames are likened to a ‘dance’ which is ‘sweeping, | Through the greensward’ (14-15). This stanza draws the reader back to an idealised medieval England – a continuing Pre-Raphaelite theme – in which the flames become both the ‘haunter’ of the forest and a group of maidens (21). The ‘Laughing Maids’ in the wood entice the ‘haunter’ with their trick playing and the ‘upswaying’ of their robes, in an evocation of the classical Sirens (17). This image could be seen to prefigure the supernatural ballad ‘The Maids of Elphin-Mere’ by William Allingham and its accompanying illustration ‘The Maids of Elfen-Mere’ by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The work depicts three women with long flowing hair and white robes who mysteriously appear nightly to spin. This also has the playfulness and movement of the daffodils in Wordsworth’s poem of the same name but not its innocence. The imagery used by Jones points towards the notion that the sexual conquest of the maiden can enable a potentially beautiful creation. In the final lines of the poem the haunter discerns a ‘soft flame upturning’ which seems to be a ‘crocus in the shade’ (25, 27). The upturning of the soft flame has created something new, a flower. The link between death and eroticism is a key Pre-Raphaelite theme; noteworthy examples include: Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s ‘The Blessed Damozel’ (1847) (written when he was just 18) and ‘Hymn to Proserpine’ by Swinburne, from *Poems and Ballads: First Series* (1866). This link will be further discussed in the later section of this chapter which concentrates on Joseph Skipsey.

By the late 1870s Jones’ reputation had improved, but this was not necessarily as a result of Pre-Raphaelite influence. His work was less shocking to a reading public familiar with sensation fiction with its provocative plots involving adultery, insanity and murder (to name a few).¹²⁸ On the other hand Jones was also not directly antagonistic after his death,

¹²⁸ Some of the key novels which interest critics of sensation fiction include: *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863) both by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1853) and *The Moonstone* (1868) and *East Lynne* (1861) by Ellen Wood. For discussion of sensation fiction see

as there was no chance of him producing any more confrontational poetry. Figures such as Linton and Shepherd came forward to praise Jones as a ‘true poet’.¹²⁹ The posthumous edition of his work met with far greater success than the first. The reviewer for *The Graphic*, for instance, commented that there is a ‘great though unrestrained power’ in his poetry.¹³⁰ A further volume of Jones’s poetry that would contain previously unseen work, was planned by Shepherd. In the *Daily News* on 12 August 1881 Shepherd advertised for potential subscribers to contact him to show their support for the volume (which would incidentally never come to fruition). It was to contain ‘several important unpublished and unedited pieces, printed for the first time from the author’s *MS*. Or resuscitated from the pages of the extinct and long-forgotten miscellanies’. Interestingly, the critic in *The Graphic*, writing in 1879, comments that Jones’ volume is ‘most valuable, as supplying an important link in the history of a particular school of poetry which has had a significant influence upon modern thought’.¹³¹ It is unclear which group is being referred to. If it is the Pre-Raphaelites, this would suggest a contemporary understanding that there was a significant relationship between the artist and his Pre-Raphaelite patrons. Even if it is not the Pre-Raphaelites who are being referred to, the fact still remains that there is a close proximity between their aesthetic and that of Jones. This may suggest that the group were willing to patronise his work in order to implicitly promote a wider Pre-Raphaelite tradition.

Andrew Radford, *Victorian Sensation Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), and Pamela K. Gilbert, ed., *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2011).

¹²⁹ William James Linton, *Memories* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1970), p. 79. Ebenezer Jones, *Studies of Sensation and Event: Poems by Ebenezer Jones*, ed. by R. H. Shepherd (London: Pickering, 1879).

¹³⁰ ‘Recent Poetry and Verse’, *The Graphic*, 28 June 1879, 646.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Joseph Skipsey

The working-class poet Joseph Skipsey is a second poet who received significant aid and attention from the Pre-Raphaelite group. As was the case with Jones, there are thematic and aesthetic links both to first and second phase Pre-Raphaelitism visible in his work, which seem to explain the motivation for Pre-Raphaelite interest and patronage. Skipsey's work is quite different in tone to that of Jones; it is less sensationalist and makes extended use of natural imagery. The links to the aesthetic of the Pre-Raphaelites is less strong in Skipsey's work, but the group were still impressed by his poetry. Skipsey started his working career as a trapper and then a putter at a coal mine in Percy Main in North Shields. He was largely self-taught, learning to read by making sense of the disparate pieces of literature which he was able to obtain and by asking for the assistance of other more literate miners. During the course of his career Skipsey moved with his young family to London and Coatbridge, Scotland, seeking better employment along the way as a hewer and then pit deputy. Skipsey wrote poetry regularly throughout his life, producing at least nine individual volumes of work.¹³² A *Selected Poems* appeared in 1976, edited by the higher-class poet Basil Bunting (1900-1985). Bunting may have been drawn to his work because he was also from the North East, born in Scotswood upon Tyne. Skipsey was a perceptive literary critic and was hired to write prefaces to the work of eminent poets such as Robert Burns, Allen Poe, Blake, Shelley and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) for the Canterbury Poets Series published by the publishing house Walter Scott. Skipsey was already a well-established poet within the working-class community and beyond before he was assisted by the Pre-Raphaelites and therefore did not need their help for his poetry to enter into print. Rather, the group helped to consolidate the position of the poet and aided

¹³² *Lyrics* (1859), *Poems, Songs, and Ballads* (1862) *The Collier Lad, and Other Lyrics* (1864), *The Hell-Brother and other Songs* (1865), *Poems* (1871) *A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics* (1878), *Carols from the Coalfields* (1886) *The Poet as Seer and Singer* (1890) and *Songs and Lyrics* (1892).

him in gaining the position of custodian of Shakespeare's house in Stratford-upon-Avon and a Civil List pension.

One of the poems particularly admired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti was 'The Hartley Calamity' (1862). The poem was written following the death of two-hundred and four miners from suffocation because of chokedamp, and was perhaps Skipsey's best-known work.¹³³ It explores cycles of despair and hope experienced by the miners throughout their ordeal. When they think that rescue is coming, this hope is taken away from them. Skipsey's poem presents the miners with a certain dignity as they face death, as they are described as being 'noble' and strong (1). The final quarter of the poem moves away from seeing the miners as a group but instead as individuals, thus adding to the pathos of the poem. The most touching of these lines is an exchange between a father and son. The son asks his father to hold him close because '[m]y eye-lids are together glued, | And I – and I – must sleep' (75-76). The glue, which Skipsey describes as holding the boy's eyes together, prefigures the eternal closing of his eyes by death. This image has something of the sensuousness of death in Pre-Raphaelite poetry but it is not quite as ethereal as the painting *Ophelia* by Millais, for instance. The most famous example of the closing of eyes to prefigure death can be found in the painting *Beata Beatrix* (1872) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In this work Rossetti shows Beatrice Portinari from Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (1295) just before her death. Beatrice is either sitting or kneeling with her eyes closed in what appears to be a state of meditation, prayer or even bliss. The figures of love and death stand in the background and Beatrice's hands are slightly open to receive the poppies of the red dove, which symbolise death. The painting is calm and sensuous as the figures are bathed in a red tinted light.

¹³³ Joseph Skipsey, *Carols from the Coal-Fields* (London: Walter Scott, 1886), 21-24. All references below refer to this edition.

The use of two caesuras in line 76 adds to the pathos of the stanza, as the breaks in the written line and the breaks in the sound figuratively attempt to hold off death. The father then replies:

“Sleep, darling, sleep, and I will keep

Close by—heigh-ho!”—To keep

Himself awake the father strives—

But he—he too—must sleep. (77-80).

The breaks in the father’s reply mirror those in the lines of his son. The syntax and lexis of the lines may be interrupted by caesurae, but the pushing onwards of the enjambment suggests that the stanza is moving towards an inevitable conclusion. These features, together with the internal rhymes ‘sleep’ and ‘keep’, present a tension between the desire of the father to stay awake to protect his son and his inability to do so. Tragically, when the miners do fall asleep they are unable to wake. We learn in the poem’s final lines that, ‘they slept – still sleep – in silence dread’, and will only wake upon arrival in heaven when the last trumpet sounds (97). States of dream and sleep are important in Pre-Raphaelite poetry because they are the means by which to transcend reality and to offer a vision of hope – precisely the effect that Skipsey is trying to achieve in this poem. In Morris’s work the trope of the dream vision is used in *News from Nowhere* (1890) and *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) as a gateway into a better world. A closer link can be found in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s ballad ‘My Sister’s Sleep’ composed in 1848, in which the death of a daughter is replaced by the notion that she is sleeping:

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve:

At length the long-ungranted shade

Of weary eyelids overweigh’d

The pain nought else might yet relieve.¹³⁴

The hope for a new life in the poem is shown through the coming of Christmas morning, which heralds the birth of Christ. A focus on the eyes before death can also be seen in Christina Rossetti's poem 'A Martyr: The Vigil of the Feast' from *A Pageant and other Poems* (1881). The poem deals with a period of feasting and rituals which prepare the speaker to be a sacrifice or martyr. Throughout the poem there is a tension between the covering and uncovering of her eyes, and the fact that the eyes of others are 'glued' upon her.¹³⁵ The speaker asks God to 'cover up' her eyes 'from frantic fear' (59) and thus turns her eyes to God to give her strength despite her heart being 'forlorn' (76). Towards the close of the poem the speaker hopes that she will not be seen to be worthless in the eyes of God: 'Let me not in Thine eyes be nothing worth' (141). In the face of death the eyes of the speaker turn away from this world and towards God, whereas the eyes of Skipsey's miners are involuntarily glued together at the point of death as they wish to hold on to life.

Rossetti picks 'The Hartley Calamity' out as being one of the best poems in *Carols from the Coal-Fields* because it is written 'to be really sung, like the old ballad'.¹³⁶ This indicates that Rossetti has an appreciation of the oral forms of verse which were pertinent in working-class culture. The Pre-Raphaelites were also interested in, and utilised traditional working-class forms, particularly the ballad. The form foregrounds works such as Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* series (1866, 1878), Rossetti's *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881) and William Morris' *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858); these works will be further discussed in the chapter focussing on the use of anti-pastoral and the penultimate chapter

¹³⁴ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems: A New Edition* (London: Strangeways and Sons, 1881), 1-4.

¹³⁵ Christina Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. by R. W. Crump (London: Penguin, 2005), 89. All references below refer to this edition. For further discussion see Dolores Rosenblum's chapter on 'Watching, Looking, Keeping Vigil' in *Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance* (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 136-144.

¹³⁶ Letter from Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Joseph Skipsey dated 29 October 1878. cf. Robert Spence Watson, *Skipsey: His Life and Work* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), p. 54.

examining a shared use of elements of the chivalric and grotesque literary traditions. The use of the ballad form within these works however is innovative, and responds to the new prosody. Skipsey's ballad on the other hand is more traditional and its use aims to preserve his own culture.

As well as being of interest to Rossetti, Skipsey's poem also attracted the attention of his soon to be life-long friend, patron and biographer Robert Spence Watson. Watson was a politician, educationalist and social philanthropist. He may have gained an interest in working-class poetry from his father who had been secretary of the Northern branch of the Anti-Corn Law League. Many of Skipsey's works, including *Carols from the Coalfields* and *Miscellaneous Lyrics*, are dedicated to Spence Watson. In *Miscellaneous Lyrics* (1878) Skipsey dedicates the work 'to Robert Spence Watson, ESQ., solicitor, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, as a token of affection and esteem for the man, his culture and his principles, this book is inscribed by his friend the author'.¹³⁷ Skipsey appears to be on friendly terms with his patron but still shows a degree of respect by praising the 'man', 'his principles' and his 'culture'. It was through his friendship with Spence Watson that Skipsey met Ruskin and subsequently the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1880 he took him to London to be introduced to his set. We learn from Spence Watson's account that in 'London Skipsey saw many of the men who formed so distinguished an artistic circle, and amongst them [were] Burne-Jones, the Rossettis, Holman Hunt, and Theodore Watts'.¹³⁸ These acquaintances were retained for at least nine years, for in 1889 Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Watts, William Michael Rossetti and Morris joined the distinguished list – including Tennyson and Browning – that sponsored Skipsey for the position of custodian of Shakespeare's house in Stratford-upon-Avon. Skipsey was chosen for the position over 'many applicants'.¹³⁹ This

¹³⁷ Joseph Skipsey, *A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics* (Bedlington: George Richardson, 1878).

¹³⁸ Robert Spence Watson, *Skipsey: His Life and Work*, p. 72.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

is significant because it shows public and practical support for the writer by members of the group and others, even if it only required a little effort.

Members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle went on to put their names to Skipsey's application to gain a civil list pension in 1880.¹⁴⁰ Skipsey was granted £10 per annum, which was increased by £50 by the Royal Bounty Fund in 1886.¹⁴¹ According to the critic John Langton this was 'largely because of Edward Burne-Jones' influence'.¹⁴² Burne-Jones writes in a letter to Skipsey in September 1880 that 'Mr. Gladstone [sic]' was 'much interested' in his work and would subsequently like to offer him 'a little annual sum for the purchase of books or photographs, or what not' in the hope that 'it would help to furnish a little library for you'.¹⁴³ These two instances of support are significant because they exhibit institutional approval which is mediated through members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle.

As well as offering practical support to Skipsey, Rossetti also took a particular critical interest in his poetry. Rossetti was familiar with Skipsey's work before he was presented in London in 1880; the two had corresponded in the 1870s. Spence Watson observes that Rossetti was 'kind and full of encouragement, and that his praise was made more valuable by being tempered with a certain amount of blame'.¹⁴⁴ In a letter to Skipsey on 29 October 1878 he writes that:

¹⁴⁰ The inception of the Royal Literary Fund and the 1837 Civil List Act could potentially be used for the maintenance of working-class poets as they entered into old age, though few managed to gain a pension. Prior to instigation of the old age pension scheme for those over seventy years of age on 1st January 1909, the working classes had depended upon their families for support during retirement. Most, however, died prematurely and did not survive long enough to enjoy even this familial support. According to Frederick Engels in *The Condition of the Working-classes in England* in the North East during the 1830s the majority of miners died from consumption and inflammations of the respiratory organs 'between forty and fifty years of age, according to medical testimony of 79 miners whose death was entered upon the public register of the district, and who attained an average of 45 years, 37 had died of consumption and 6 of asthma'. Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, ed. Victor Kiernan (London: Penguin, 1984, repr. 1987).

¹⁴¹ Watson, p. 76.

¹⁴² ODNB.

¹⁴³ Cf. Watson, p. 75.

¹⁴⁴ Watson, p. 72.

I am gratified to know that my poems appeal at all to you. Yours struck me at once.

The real-life pieces are more sustained and decided than almost anything of the same kind that I know — I mean in poetry coming really from a poet of the people who describes what he knows and mixes in.¹⁴⁵

In this passage, there is a sense of excitement and curiosity as Rossetti encounters a poet who is a closer fit to what he perceives to be the stereotypical working-class poet. For Rossetti, this is a poet who describes and comments upon the working-class world that surrounds him. As was the case with Wells, the thrill of discovering a new voice is also apparent. Rossetti's assessment may appear to be condescending and perhaps a little presumptuous, but he is attracted to the authentic 'real-life' pieces in Skipsey's work because they come from the everyday experience of the poet. This quality may have interested Rossetti because it relates to his desire to convey truth, and the careful observation which is a key feature in the art work of the early Pre-Raphaelites. Rossetti goes on to make reference to several of Skipsey's poems in this letter. 'Persecuted', 'Willy to Lily', 'Mother Wept' and 'Nancy to Bessy' are highlighted as his favourite poems. He praises 'Bereaved' for its union of 'poetic form' and 'deep pathos' and 'Thistle and Nettle' for its 'varied power'.¹⁴⁶ More generally, he is struck on occasion by the 'verbal perfection' and 'pathetic force' of the verse.¹⁴⁷ This echoes Ruskin's praise of the highest level of poets, who have 'acuteness of feeling, and command of it' in 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy'.¹⁴⁸ The presence of these qualities in Skipsey's work cause Rossetti to re-evaluate his own view of working-class poetry, as stated above. He realises that the living conditions, or social class of a particular poet do not necessarily affect his ability to create

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁴⁸ John Ruskin, 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy', *Critical English Essays*, ed. by Edmund D. Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), pp. 378-397, (p. 336).

poetry which responds to universal human experience (the ‘deep pathos’ which he describes) and to have a ‘power’ which resonates beyond class.

The similarities between Skipsey’s poetry and that of the Pre-Raphaelites is particularly evident in ‘The Thistle and Nettle’ – one of the poems selected by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for praise. ‘The Thistle and Nettle’ is reminiscent of certain nature poems written by Rossetti in the early 1850s such as ‘The Woodspurge’ (1856) and ‘The Young Fir-Wood’ (1853). ‘The Woodspurge’ in its first two stanzas captures a moment of psychological intensity. The speaker claims to be guided by the ‘will of the wind’ when walking.¹⁴⁹ He comes to sit upon the ground and places his head between his knees. The eye of the speaker is drawn to the ten or so weeds on the ground, but fixes upon the woodspurge, which the speaker notes ‘flowered, three cups in one’ (12). The final stanza moves to an unidentifiable moment in the future. The speaker remarks that:

From perfect grief there need not be

Wisdom or even memory:

One thing then learnt remains to me,

The woodspurge has a cup of three. (13-16)

The speaker can still neither make sense of the ‘grief’ which he felt, nor has he learnt anything from his past feelings, only the image of the woodspurge remains with him. Rossetti’s depiction of the natural world in ‘The Young Fir-Wood’ is more playful. The trees of Rossetti’s wood are small, and implicitly have little use. They could be put into the ‘cap’ of a giant or be used as a fan by a lady, but Rossetti foresees that the spring will ‘cherish them in strength and sap’ to help them to grow (5). For now, however, the wood is the realm of the ‘wind’s wanderings’ (7). For Rossetti, nature can nurture and strengthen,

¹⁴⁹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems: A New Edition* (London: Ellis and White, 1881), 3. Both ‘The Woodspurge’ and ‘The Young Fir-Wood’ are taken from this edition.

and by extension, provide inspiration for the poet. This enables his poetry to become self-reflexive and psychological.

Skipsey's poem has an even closer affinity to nature. In 'The Thistle and Nettle' the natural world is used to create an imaginative Medieval land. The thistle symbolises the male wooer and the nettle, the object of his affection. The poem centres around the quest motif associated with courtly romance and the man and the woman take on some of the characteristics of the thistle and nettle. Skipsey's Medievalism here has semblances to both the poetry of Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. Medievalism is both an important theme in Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poetry, as will be discussed in a later chapter. The woman is described as a 'timid maid' who aims to preserve her chastity against the 'subtle snare' which is laid by the thistle.¹⁵⁰ The speaker informs us that, '[a]t every word he uttered, garr'd | Her fleeting needles faster flee' (71-72). The speaker also uses these images to suggest that the qualities of the thistle and nettle are more general characteristics associated with men and women. For instance, the speaker goes on to use a reference from Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598-1599) to propose that men are naturally deceitful: 'The fraud of men was ever so | Since summer first was leafy' (27-28). This supposed truth is extended into the future. This deceit will last until 'cherries grow on brambles, | When grapes adorn the common thorn' (46-47). This relates to the gender stereotyping that is prevalent in the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris, particularly in *The Defense of Guenevere* and Rossetti's *House of Life* (1870). Even in Morris's forward thinking *News from Nowhere*, women are praised for their beauty and are associated with the domestic sphere. Swinburne and Christina Rossetti have a more fluid sense of gender and the role of women, but this will be further explored in later chapters on

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Skipsey, *Carols from the Coal-Fields: And other Songs and Ballads* (London: Walter Scott, 1886), 21, 25. All further references refer to this edition.

the response of female poets to the winter environment and the connection between the male poet and the anti-pastoral garden.

Rossetti also judges that there are problems with Skipsey's verse, first because he considers that his poetry lacks 'poetic finish'. Second, he finds the construction of his verse to be at times unsatisfactory: 'Stanzas similarly rhymed are apt to follow each other, and the metre is often filled out by catching up a word in repetition — I mean, as for instance, "May be, as they have been, may be", &c [sic]'. Spence Watson is grateful to Rossetti for giving a balanced critique of his friend's poetry as Skipsey 'listened perhaps too much and too frequently to those who, without judgment or knowledge, thought to please him by extravagant and undigested praise'.¹⁵¹ As with Swinburne's balanced critique of Wells and Rossetti's own response to the poetry of Jones, he is willing to comment on both the positive and negative characteristics of the verse. This reveals that Rossetti respected Skipsey as an artist and that his criticism of him is free from class prejudice. Importantly though, Skipsey, Jones and Wells do not have the chance to publicly respond to the criticism of the group because they are aged or already dead. This means that it is the Pre-Raphaelites who have a significant say in the way in which the poetry of these artists was received. The group seemingly want to influence public taste by suggesting what is *good* (in their opinion) about the poetry. This was most often the discovery of qualities that are present in their own work. Significantly though, in the case of Skipsey, the poets have little influence over the way in which his poetry is presented to the reader. Rossetti's response to Skipsey's work is similar to that of Robert Southey (in connection to John Jones' poetry); he sees something special in the poetry of a working-class poet, which he had not expected to find.

¹⁵¹ Watson, p. 82.

Conclusion

The patronage system reveals a complex relationship between Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poetry. The Pre-Raphaelites aided or gave support to poets whose work they felt an affinity with or admired. Members of the Pre-Raphaelite group taught at the London Working Men's College for a variety of reasons – for Ruskin and Rossetti the college provided them with the opportunity to: pass on their own ideas about art, influence the art work of their working-class pupils and produce work during their art classes. Potential working-class influence upon the aesthetic of Pre-Raphaelites during this period has been discussed via the contiguous tradition. This is because of the critical difficulty in making direct connections between the two groups. Further, the Pre-Raphaelites were surprised and delighted by their encounters with the work of Wells, Jones and Skipsey and discovered traits, themes and images that they used in their own poetry. Swinburne responded to Wells' dramatic manipulation of the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers in part because he used formal play, and subversive content to antagonise contemporary religion. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was drawn to the work of Jones because its radical, slightly morbid beauty appealed to him. Further to this, the poets could also be argued to influence the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, as Rossetti claims that Wells' work had been a touch stone for 'Hand and Soul'. Though the group show an awareness of the social status of the poets, this does not prevent them from assisting working-class poets in practical ways. There is however another side to this; because of the weaker social position that working-class poets found themselves in, they were liable to be manipulated by publishers, printers and patrons who came from higher-class backgrounds. When Swinburne helps to bring out a new edition of Wells' *Studies of Sensation and Event*, his Preface influences the way in which the volume is perceived by new readers. Further, the group do not help their charges at a time when they could really benefit from their assistance; Jones and Skipsey

make a good start to their careers without the assistance of the Pre-Raphaelites. The group begin to promote the work of Wells when he is 77 years old, Jones is deceased when Rossetti publically reviews his work and Skipsey only needed minimal assistance. However, in their reviews and Prefaces to the work of these artists the poets above all show a degree of respect for their fellow artists; their criticism and assistance lacks prejudice. In their dealings with the poets, they are ranked alongside those associated with Victorian high-culture and are thus shown due respect.

Print and its Influence: Working-Class and Pre-Raphaelite Poetry

Introduction

In the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class writers, entering into print both influenced the way in which their poetry was received at certain stages of their career and had an impact upon the dissemination of their views and politics. There is an inequality with regards to how easy it is for certain members of the groups to have their work published, but contiguities can be found in the practices which aid in the publication process. This chapter will thus have a book historical leaning as it explores material connections between the two groups. In this chapter I will firstly consider the influence of publication through periodicals, secondly the way in which a volume of poetry is put together and thirdly the use of illustration and engraving in the work of both groups. Entering into print raises questions with regard to who is in control of the artistic process: the editor, poet, illustrator or engraver. The history of print culture in the period reveals a tension between high and mass culture because the world of print almost inevitably includes artistic and artisan practices that are performed by a range of social classes. In the nineteenth century more people from working-class backgrounds were able to enter into print because of an increase in the number of literate people in the population. This was made possible partially because of circulating libraries and the availability of cheaper periodicals and books.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Much critical material has been written about reading practices in Victorian Britain, some of the best of this work is by: Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), Steven R. Fischer, *A History of Reading* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, eds., *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Andrew King and John Plunkett, eds., *Victorian Print Media: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Victorian Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

The first section of this chapter will look at the role of the editor and how journals and newspapers were put together. It will also compare examples of work that was included in two working-class publications (*Ben Brierley's Journal* and *Eliza Cook's Journal*) with two Pre-Raphaelite magazines (*The Germ* and *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*), via close readings which are informed by contextual information on the journals and their editors. Each journal or magazine is made up of a number of voices, all of which write under the same editor and publication name. This can at times create the illusion of a false unity, as there could in practice be a number of dissenting voices within the work. Laurel Brake and Julie Codell describe periodical publications as consisting of 'individual's contributions patched together and fitted, very practically, to the space, readership, and politics of the structure of a single periodical issue'.¹⁵³ The scope of a newspaper or journal could deal with areas within politics, the arts, scientific advances and industrialisation, to name a few.

Editors of print journals or newspapers had to juggle a number of factors when judging which content to include in their publication. This is because decisions made regarding which work to include had an impact upon the overall aesthetic or political leaning of the work. They would also need to think about how well the collection was likely to sell, and it would therefore be necessary to attract submissions that would appeal to their readership from either unknown artists or buy into the popularity of established artists. An editor could also choose to incorporate their own work. The working-class poet and editor Eliza Cook (1818-1889), for instance, used her journal as a vehicle through which to expose her poetry to a wider audience. The same is true of the early Pre-Raphaelite journal *The Germ* because its principal aim was to promote the group's

¹⁵³ Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell, 'Introduction', in Brake and Codell, eds., *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, Readers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.

aesthetic and thus included work by its editor William Michael Rossetti. The editor also had a say over the way in which a newspaper or journal was physically presented. These decisions included the size and type of paper used, the font, size of type face and whether or not to include etchings or illustrations. Editors had final say in these matters, and there was no need to negotiate with a printer. Another element of an editor's work was to read and potentially respond to any correspondence that was sent in. Letter writing was important because it made the readership feel involved in the journal and helped them to consider themselves to be part of a community by entering into a dialogue with other writers. Letter-writing also had an impact upon increased levels of education. In some newspapers, a number of letters would be selected to appear in print. For instance, the working-class Glaswegian poet Ellen Johnston often exchanged poems and ideas with her readers through the letters column of her local newspaper the *Glasgow Examiner*.¹⁵⁴

The second section of this chapter will consider how examples of working-class and Pre-Raphaelite volumes of poetry were put together. These decisions influence how we conceive the function of the poet. The section will go on to show that the printed form can both add to and detract from a work of art. The extent to which the poets are in control of the presentation of their work will be considered as well as the influence that the printed form has upon the aesthetic of the poet. I will discuss what a volume of working-class or Pre-Raphaelite poetry is, and in doing so will make use of introductory material (such as prefaces, illustrations, frontispieces) and the advertising and reviews included within the volume. The second element of this section will focus upon the production of selected works published by William Morris's Kelmscott Press. The key influences upon Morris's ideal book are Medieval manuscripts and craft processes. Morris had a considerable

¹⁵⁴ For further details see, H. Gustav Klaus, *Factory Girl: Ellen Johnston and Working-Class Poetry in Victorian Scotland* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

knowledge of the processes involved in the creation of Medieval manuscripts. Further, he was self-educated in hand-production processes which were central to the Arts and Crafts Movement. He had very clear ideas about the materials and techniques that he intended to use for the creation of his Kelmscott Books. Many of his works have an instantly recognisable appearance, yet he did not think that the physicality of a text should be ostentatious, to the extent that it draws attention away from the prose. This does not mean however that a text could not be beautiful. Attaining beauty will be shown to be an important aim in the production of a Kelmscott book.

The third section of this chapter will show that illustration and engraving is an instance of concrete overlap in the aesthetic practices of the two groups, but it does not reveal them to be in harmony.¹⁵⁵ This will further the aesthetic links which emerged between the poetry of the two groups discussed in the previous chapter. Both Pre-Raphaelite and working-class artists were involved in the creation of images that appear in volumes of poetry, journals and magazines. This section will indicate that through the (sometimes strained) relationship between engravers and illustrators, work was produced that was at times aesthetically beautiful and also political.

Periodicals and newspapers

The periodicals and newspapers that the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class writers produced give us clues as to the intended audience of their work: whether this is upper, middle or working class, national or limited to a particular region of the country. The majority of working-class poets first published their poetry in local magazines and newspapers. An opening was created because these publications were less likely to attract

¹⁵⁵ A definition of engraving and illustration processes can be found in Paul Goldman, *Looking at Prints: A Guide to Technical Terms* (London: British Museum Publications, 1981).

submissions from more famous poets who had their sights set upon national publications or volume publication, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Publication in regional newspapers for working-class poets meant that their work would be read by members of different classes and might attract a patron who would offer them either monetary support or another form of assistance. Work that was published in regional newspapers however, was also likely to have a strong local flavour or references to events that had impacted upon the local community.¹⁵⁶ This can particularly be seen in the work of the Blackburn poets: Joseph Hodgson (1796-1856), George Hull, William Billingham and George Salisbury (1832-1897).¹⁵⁷ In particular, these poets grapple with the preservation of their community's traditional identity in the face of the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The influence of their local communities can also be seen in some of the poetry of Gerald Massey, Thomas Cooper and the Lancashire poets Edwin Waugh and Samuel Laycock. Several working-class poets did go on to have their work published in national newspapers, but this was the exception rather than the rule. For instance, Massey published work in *The Christian Socialist*, *The Friend of the People*, *Hogg's Instructor*, *The Quarterly Review* and *Fraser's Magazine*. A number of working-class poets and writers went on to set up their own periodicals, such as *Ben Brierley's Journal* (1869-1891) and *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-1854).

Eliza Cook, the editor of the journal of the same name, wrote a range of journalism and poetry. This included four volumes of poetry: *Lays of a Wild Harp* (1835), *Melaia, and Other Poems* (1840), *New Echoes, and Other Poems* (1864) and *Diamond Dust* (1865). She was born in Southwark, London and her father Joseph was a tinman and brazier. Cook is likely to have been mostly self-educated, though she was aided by her mother. From the

¹⁵⁶ Brian Maidment discusses the impact of the periodical presses upon local communities in *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987).

¹⁵⁷ For further discussion upon these poets see George Hull, *The Poets and Poetry of Blackburn 1793-1902* (Blackburn: J. & G. Toulmin, 1902).

age of fifteen onwards Cook's skill at writing poetry and prose developed. She began publishing *Eliza Cook's Journal* in 1849 (it ended in 1854 due to her poor health). The journal had surprisingly high circulation figures. According to Richard Altick, during the newspaper's first year circulation was between 50,000 and 60,000.¹⁵⁸ In comparison the Pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*, sold fewer than 300 copies throughout its four volume print run.¹⁵⁹ Working-class poetry in particular could reach a far greater audience through the periodical press, since a typical print run of a volume of poetry was around 500 copies. The journal's success was almost wholly due to Cook's influence. She contributed an editorial, an article and a poem to the journal every week. Eliza Meteyard (1816-1878) wrote the 'Silverpen' articles and Samuel Smiles, who was famous for his self-help philosophy, was another contributor of note.

Cook has been considered by Solveig Robinson to be a political writer; this is evident from her earlier journalistic work and poetry.¹⁶⁰ For instance, she considers that Cook's songs relating to labour show a 'radical vision of a fundamentally more democratic England, a vision that fuses an idealistic belief in the dignity of manual work with a pragmatic belief in the efficacy of self-improvement through cooperation and education'.¹⁶¹ This radical political stance, interest in the dignity of the working-class writer and their propensity for betterment (through self-help and organisations such as the Mechanics Institute) runs on into her journal. This can be seen in 'A Word to my Readers', which is an introductory address that fronts the first issue of the journal, published on 5 May 1849. Cook comments that:

¹⁵⁸ Altick, p. 304.

¹⁵⁹ Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds., 'Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art (1850) in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: British Library, 2009), p. 246.

¹⁶⁰ According to Robinson, Cook's poetry also reveals a 'significant and largely unnoticed political content'. Solveig D. Robinson, 'Of "Haymakers" and "City Artisans": The Chartist Poetics of Eliza Cook's *Songs of Labour*', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (Summer, 2001), 229-253 (229).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

While venturing this step in the universal march of periodicals, let it be understood that I am not playing with Fortune at ‘pitch and toss’ in a desperate or calculating mood of literary gambling, nor am I anxious to declare myself a mental Joan of Arc, bearing special mission to save the people in their noble war against Ignorance and Wrong. I simply prepare a plain feast, where the viands will be all of my own choosing, and some of my own dressing, hoping that if what I provide be wholesome and relishing, I shall have a host of friends at my board, whose kind words and cheerful encouragement will keep me in a proud and honourable position at the head of the table.¹⁶²

By using the phrase ‘universal march of periodicals’ Cook is perhaps referring to Southey’s discussion of the ‘march of intellect’ in working-class writing.¹⁶³ According to Southey, higher-class writers in the late eighteenth century became increasingly apprehensive about working-class writers who attempted to write verse in forms and lexis that were beyond their station. By the late 1840s working-class writers had moved beyond using forms and expressions traditionally associated with higher-class writers and they could now organise these writings into a journal that would enter into the literary market place. Cook tries to appear self-deprecating by claiming that her journal is not a ‘calculating [...] literary’ gamble nor an attempt to declare herself to be a ‘mental Joan of Arc, bearing special mission to save the people in their noble war against Ignorance and Wrong’. Regardless of intent, this is a provocative statement which makes an implicit connection between the two figures. Joan of Arc (c1412-1431) was a French national heroine who led an army against the English during the Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453). Cook perhaps responds to the reputed strength of Joan’s visions from God, and the fact that

¹⁶² Eliza Cook, ‘A Word to my Readers’, *Eliza Cook’s Journal* 1 (May, 1849), 1.

¹⁶³ Robert Southey, *The Lives of Uneducated Poets* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1836), p. 1. The march of intellect is discussed in greater detail in the first chapter of the thesis, in relation to Southey’s patronage of the working-class poet John Jones.

this drove her to find the courage to command a male army. Cook models herself as a somewhat masculine figure, as her use of medieval imagery depicts her as a lord of the manor. For instance, she describes her journal as preparing a ‘plain feast, where the viands will be all of my own choosing’ and that she will have a ‘host of friends’ at her ‘board’. She goes on to claim however, that the principal purpose of the journal is not self-promotion, but rather is education. Cook indicates that she does not necessarily have a ‘right to lead or teach “the people”’, but is keen to give her ‘feeble aid to the gigantic struggle for intellectual elevation now going on’, thus affirming the self-help agenda of the work.

Articles that are included in the journal cover a range of topics: the first issue contains, for instance, self-help articles on ‘Being Happy’, ‘Progression’ and ‘Education’, a biography of William Cobbett and an arts review section entitled ‘Notices of New Works’. In spite of the masculine persona that is created in the opening address, Cook was aware that a large part of the journal’s readership would be women. A section of the work entitled ‘A Word to Mothers’ is therefore dedicated to giving advice. Generally two poems were included at the close of each edition; one of these poems was by Cook, while the author of the other poem varied. Notably, in the first edition there is an article which celebrates town and country life, ‘Love of Country in Town’. It begins with an epigraph from John Keats’s poem ‘To One who has been Long in City Pent’ (1817). This poem considers whether a person can escape their city life through reading and the employment of their imagination. The writer hopes, like many others, that he will one day be able to retire to the county. He sees it as imbued with history and as a place of inspiration. The anonymous writer in Cook’s journal comments that ‘[t]his old green country is worthy of all their admiration, love and pride. It is almost a part of themselves, and associations connected with it are bound up with their being. Our poets have sung of it, till it has

become mixed up with their tenderest [sic] and strongest influences' (14). This idealisation of the countryside from the point of view of a higher-class writer reveals that a number of different perspectives could be contained within a journal edited by a working-class writer.

In the fourteenth issue of the journal on 4 August 1849 Cook includes a poem entitled 'Song to my Readers'; it responds to the 'Address to my Readers', which introduces the first issue. Stanzas one to four are included below:

Here's a health to the many, the kind and the true,
 Who have gallantly helped me along;
 Ye have done what I warmly besought ye to do,
 And replied to my hope and my song.

Though ye know and know well, what this spirit must feel
 'Neath the laurels ye gave me to wear,
 Yet it surely becometh the breast to reveal
 Its thanksgiving as well as the prayer.

Ye have frankly stood forth, ye have praised, ye have cheered,
 Ye have made me triumphantly vain;
 For though sympathy's links had allied and endeared,
 Ye seem not to have fastened the chain.

I had built my hope's creed on your word and your deed,
 And the voyage my bark has achieved,
 Shows how earnest and true were the trustworthy crew,
 And the compass in which I believed. (1-16)

The way in which the poem is constructed is not particularly ambitious and even feels perfunctory. Yet, it has a strong political leaning because it rallies against inequality shown to the working classes in contemporary society. In order to achieve this, the poem takes on some of the language and imagery associated with Chartist writings. This can be seen in phrases such as ‘this spirit must feel’ and ‘ye have made me triumphantly vain’ and mercantile imagery, ‘how earnest and true were the trustworthy crew’. Michael Sanders acknowledges, via reference to Isobel Armstrong’s work, the ‘masculinist’ and ‘martial propensities’ of Chartist poetry.¹⁶⁴ According to Armstrong Chartist poetry shows its traditions through ‘the ballad and refrain, the marching song, the Bunyanesque hymn, biblical hymn, [and] biblical imagery’.¹⁶⁵ For instance, in a Chartist poem entitled ‘Some Men that I Like’ by John Henry Bramwich, which was published in the *The Northern Star and National Trades Journal*, the importance of the freedom of the spirit is suggested:

I like a man who scorns to be
A slave to fellows mortal;
Whose spirit pants for liberty,
While passing through death’s portal.¹⁶⁶

The poem indicates that a Chartist should not be a slave to any other man, but should instead aspire towards freedom. Cook’s poem was written a year after the 1848 Chartist uprisings, so their ideas and actions would still be fresh in the minds of Cook’s readers. The poem uses a ballad form which is often utilised in Chartist poetry; the poem rhymes abab throughout and the lines of each stanza oscillate between three and four feet (4343). Further, the poem makes use of archaic language, ‘ye’, ‘becometh’, ‘forth’ and ‘endeared’;

¹⁶⁴ Michael Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 57.

¹⁶⁵ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 189.

¹⁶⁶ John Henry Bromwich, *The Northern Star and National Trades Journal*, 18 April 1846, 5-8. Cf. Peter Scheckner, ed., *An Anthology of Chartist Poetry: Poetry of the British Working Class, 1830s-1850s* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), p. 125.

similar phrases can be found in certain Medievalist works by Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti that will be explored in a later chapter in this thesis. Recalling Cook's opening address from the first edition of her journal, the use of this language gives the poem the weight of tradition, credibility, and to an extent, a quiet radicalism.

Ben Brierley's Journal on the other hand is quite different, both in the range of work that is included within it, and its tone. Ben Brierley (1825-1896), from Failsworth near Manchester, was the son of James Brierley a hand-loom weaver. This partially explains why his prose and the journal that he edited exhibit such strong connections to the cotton industry.¹⁶⁷ Brierley was only educated until he was six, but this gave him a passion for learning. Aged fifteen he formed a mutual improvement society with some of his friends from Failsworth, which eventually developed into the 'Failsworth Mechanics' Institute'. Brierley began publishing *Ben Brierley's Journal* in 1869. The journal was originally published as a monthly magazine, but due to its popularity, went on to appear in weekly instalments. The journal was neither as political as Cook's journal nor did it aim specifically to educate working class people; though this was likely to have been a by-product of its other achievements. Rather, it was a mouthpiece for the local community of Manchester and the surrounding area. As Margaret Beetham sees it, *Ben Brierley's Journal* was 'part of a network of social and cultural institutions in which a set of local identities were articulated and explored'.¹⁶⁸ The journal consisted of 'poetry, articles, book and periodical reviews headlined in New Journalistic Style; "Looks into Books" and "Peeps into Periodicals", jokes, snippets and extracts from other publications together with woodcut illustrations'.¹⁶⁹ Further the journal valued 'entertainment above instruction' and

¹⁶⁷ These links can particularly be seen in the Ab-O'-th-Yate series published by the Manchester based John Haywood, which originally featured in *Ben Brierley's Journal*. Brierley also dedicated an entire work to his local area in *Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life: Cast upon the World* (Manchester: A. Haywood, 1886).

¹⁶⁸ Margaret Beetham, 'Ben Brierley's Journal', *Manchester Region History Review*, 17.2 (2006), 75.

¹⁶⁹ Beetham, p. 78.

‘excluded party politics and was not allied with any specific religious grouping or sect’.¹⁷⁰

Ben Brierley’s Journal has a different tone to that of *Eliza Cook’s Journal*. It is lighter and contains an eclectic mix of material. It has a closer proximity to Charles Dickens’s magazines, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, because of its combination of authors and ideas. This is perhaps because Cook wished to be taken seriously in an industry that was dominated by an ‘old boys club’ mentality, and may also explain her use of a masculine persona in her journal’s introductory article.

The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art (January-April 1850) has a very clear and coherent aesthetic leaning, and was conceived as a vehicle through which to promote the ideas of the early Pre-Raphaelites. It was edited by William Michael Rossetti who was the lesser known of the Pre-Raphaelite siblings.¹⁷¹ From his later Preface to the journal we are able to get an insider’s view of the aesthetic leanings and motivation of the early Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. William Michael Rossetti comments retrospectively that the group

hated the lack of ideas in art, and the lack of character; the silliness and vacuity which belong to the one, the flimsiness and make-believe which result from the other. They hated those forms of execution which are merely smooth and prettyish, and those which, pretending to master, are nothing better than slovenly and slapdash, or what the P. R. B.’s called ‘sloshy’. Still more did they hate the notion that each artist should not obey his own individual impulse, act upon his own perception and study of Nature, and scrutinise and work as his objective material with assiduity before he could attempt to display and interpret it; but that, instead of all this, should try to be ‘like somebody else’, imitating some extant style and

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ The alternative title of the journal was *Art and Poetry: Being Thoughts towards Nature conducted Principally by Artists*. It was discontinued after four instalments, because the magazine proved to be a financial failure.

manner, and applying the cut-and-dry rules enunciated by A from the practice of B or C. They determined to do the exact contrary.¹⁷²

The qualities of the group are oppositional. They claim that they hate ‘lack of ideas’, ‘character’, ‘silliness’ and ‘vacuity’ of contemporary art as these are associated with ‘flimsiness and make-believe’. Instead artists should follow their own impulses, perceptions and scrutinise the world around them closely and as objectively as possible. The content of this introduction is implicitly political because it acknowledges the radical leaning of the early group. Problematically, however, this Preface was not written at the time that the journal’s first edition was published, but was composed over fifty years later for the publication of the Stock Edition in 1901. This suggests that when the journal first appeared the artists thought that the works would speak for themselves and implicitly the artistic movement was to be defined in retrospect. A sonnet by William Michael Rossetti which is used to start every issue of the *Germ* sets the tone for the journal and hints at the themes that would later be elaborated upon:

When whoso merely hath a little thought
 Will plainly think the thought which is in him,
 Not imaging another’s bright or dim,
 Not mangling with new words what others taught;
 When whoso speaks, from having either sought
 Or only found,— will speak, not just to skim
 A shallow surface with words made and trim,
 But in that very speech the matter brought:
 Be not too keen to cry —“So this is all! —
 A thing I might myself have thought as well,

¹⁷² William Michael Rossetti, ‘Introduction’, *The Germ*, 1, (Jan 1850), 5.

But would not say it, for it was not worth!"

Ask: "Is this truth?" For is it still to tell

That, be the theme a point or the whole earth,

Truth is a circle, perfect, great or small? (1-14)

The use of the sonnet is interesting because the form is traditionally used to express a single thought by an individual. Yet here, the sonnet presents a collective voice of the journal and the artists contained within it. The key theme is the 'truth' of a work of art; this is what gives it its 'worth' and is more important than aesthetic posturing. William Michael Rossetti suggests that the 'truth' in art is the quality that holds everything else together and speaks just as much through 'smallness' as it does through the 'great'. This principle is what holds the journal together rather than its specific editor.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the original driving force behind the publication of the magazine. He was assisted in attaining his vision by his brother William Michael, James Collinson (1825?-1881), John Everett Millais, Frederic George Stephens (1828-1907), and Thomas Woolner (1825-1892). The magazine was not limited solely to those connected to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. Other contributions were sought from friends and acquaintances of members of the group, as well as from a general call for offerings that was inserted into the journal. Contributions came from writers such as Coventry Patmore (1823-1896), Frederic George Stephens (1828-1907) and Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861), but the four issues of the journal are dominated by the work of the Pre-Raphaelites. The group's stamp can also be seen in the way in which the journal is put together; for instance, an illustration by an artist associated with the group prefixes each edition.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ The first etching is by William Holman Hunt. The work consists of two panels, one of which presents a pair of lovers by a stream or pond. The woman either wishes to touch some flowers at the water's edge, or the water itself; the man holds her to prevent her from falling in. The second panel shows the man distraught after the death of his beloved. The etching accompanies the poem 'My Beautiful Lady' by Thomas Woolner. Subsequent illustrations are by James Collinson, Ford Madox Brown and Walter Deverell.

Further, Gothic Type is the main typeface used throughout the journal, suggestive of the Gothic Revival, which was an important influence upon Pre-Raphaelitism both in its early and later stages. The significance of the Gothic Revival will be explored in the penultimate chapter of this thesis which considers the influence that Ruskin's writings on the gothic and grotesque had upon Morris's conception of chivalry. In the case of *The Germ*, the gothic and/or Medieval can be seen in works such as 'Pax Vobis' (4, May) and 'The Blessed Damozel' (2, Feb.) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and 'Cordelia' (3, March) by William Michael Rossetti. Another key leaning of the journal according to Jerome McGann is that it is 'anti-secular'. He goes on to comment that 'pervading the journal is a loosely defined but unmistakeable set of religious goals, as well as a closely related conviction that art and literature are the vehicles that can be most relied upon to secure those goals'.¹⁷⁴ Interestingly, the religious conformity could cause the radical leaning of the journal to be challenged, as Victorian high culture tended to be conformist with regard to religion. However, the group's religious works could be provocative, particularly Millais' painting 'Christ in the House of His Parents' (1849-50). In contrast, neither *Eliza Cook's Journal* nor *Ben Brierley's Journal* has a strong religious inclination because this may have affected the sales of their publications.

Like both working-class publications, *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (January-December 1856) was both secular and eclectic. It aimed to promote open discussion and liberal values. It was founded by a set of friends at Oxford University who called themselves 'The Brotherhood'. Members included Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and William Fulford (1831-1882) – all of whom were associated with the second wave of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The magazine was initially edited by Morris, but he passed on

¹⁷⁴ Jerome McGann, 'Introduction to *The Germ*', <<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/ap4.g415.raw.html>> [Accessed on 14 June 2011].

the responsibility to Fulford after the publication of the first issue. *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* is more secular than *The Germ* and also has a socialist leaning. According to P. C. Fleming, the magazine planned to combine ‘social reform with aesthetic investigation’.¹⁷⁵ The journal was also influenced by the shared reading of its members; whilst at Oxford the group read the work of both older and contemporary writers. This closeness influenced the output of the journal, as the pieces shared themes and elements of style.¹⁷⁶ For instance, Flemming suggests that there are ‘remarkable consistencies among the stories in the Magazine. Nearly all use some kind of dream motif, and most have a Medieval setting. Important background texts for the stories in the Magazine include Thomas Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* (finished in 1470 but printed in 1485), Ruskin’s *Stones of Venice* (1851-3), and Benjamin Thorpe’s *Northern Mythology* (1851)’.¹⁷⁷ The capital to publish the magazine, as with *The Germ*, came from within the group; starting up the journal was decided to be a good use of Morris’ inheritance. Most of the essays were published anonymously. Further, according to Georgina Burne-Jones ‘[Cornell] Price wrote at the time, “It is unanimously agreed that there shall be no shewing [sic] off, no quips, no sneers, no lampooning in our Magazine [...] [the contents will be] mainly Tales, Poetry, friendly critiques and social articles”’.¹⁷⁸ This indicates that its authors and editors wanted the journal to be taken seriously, even if it was not published specifically to promote a particular aesthetic or to advance the careers of its individual writers.

Each journal was influenced by a range of writers and ideas, which in turn had some effect upon the way that its readership responded to the work and what they gained

¹⁷⁵ P. C. Fleming, ‘Introduction to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*’, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/ap4.o93.raw.html>, [Accessed on 14 June 2011].

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1906), p. 116.

from it. Journals like that of Cook had a decidedly educationalist policy, but the other three journals also indirectly educate their readers through the broad range of material that they include. The extent to which the editor of a journal retained overall control varies between the journals. Cook has the strongest presence as an editor, in part because of the considerable amount of content that she contributed to each issue. The Pre-Raphaelite *Germ* may have been prefixed by a sonnet written by its editor William Michael Rossetti, but William Michael did not have overall aesthetic control of the journal. This was because the publication was a mouthpiece for a group of artists to which William Michael belonged. William Michael's summary of the movement was not published until over fifty years after the original journal was published. Morris, the editor of the first edition of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, also did not have complete control over content because it was again the mouthpiece of a number of individuals. His opinions did potentially have more weight than others within his set because he had put up the capital for the venture. What all of the journals have in common is that they attempt to promote certain aesthetic, social or political ideals. This is however in tension with the need to appeal to a sizeable readership if the journal was to continue and remain profitable. *Ben Brierley's Journal* needed to appeal to a local audience whilst the other three aimed towards a national audience. The radical aesthetic leaning of *The Germ* is part of the reason why the journal did not sell very well, and was cancelled after four issues, whilst both working-class journals were more successful in gaining a large and consistent readership.

Book production

It is often useful to pay attention to the materiality of a range of early editions of the poetry from working-class writers because these can give us clues as to the readership of a particular text and the ways in which it was used. These editions often contain a range of

adjuncts to the main body of the text such as the title pages, notes and illustrations. Early volumes also give us an insight into the way in which the poet constructed their identity and how they wished to be viewed by others. There are however instances when very little is added to the author's text. In the Glaswegian working-class poet Alexander Smith's first edition of *Poems* (1853) the layout has been kept very simple. There is a frontispiece which does not contain any illustrations and a table of contents, but there are no other additions to the text. This kind of set up is equally of interest to critics because it may suggest that the poet has nothing to prove to his readers, and therefore does not need to justify his poetry or to thank a patron. The fact that there is very little advertising in Smith's work could also indicate that the poet had gained a sufficiently strong reputation which would render advertising unnecessary.

One of the key problems faced by critics working on early editions of working-class poetry is that a certain amount of guess work is involved, as there is often no concrete evidence as to why certain decisions have been made with regard to the way in which a text is presented. It is difficult to discern the extent to which individual poets such as Smith, Janet Hamilton and Gerald Massey were involved in the construction of their books. Unlike Morris, who wrote a considerable amount upon the way in which his books were to be presented, we have very little evidence of this in the letters, journals and prefaces of working-class poets.¹⁷⁹ Generally, most volumes of poetry have a frontispiece which details the author, the name of the text, the publisher, place of publication and the name of the publisher. Additional material can include a dedication (sometimes to a patron), an epigram, a preface and illustrations. Dedications to patrons as a thank you for assistance are also common features in volumes of working-class poetry. For instance, the

¹⁷⁹ Morris is well-known for the distinct design of the books produced by his Kelmscott Press. For further details on Morris's conception of the ideal book see Morris, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. by William S. Peterson (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982).

introductory material added to the beginning of Janet Hamilton's volumes of poetry influences the interpretation of her poetic identity by readers. The dedication to *Poems and Essays of a Miscellaneous Character on Subjects of General Interest* (1863) is conventional and reveals little about Hamilton as a poet:

TO COLONEL D. C. R. C. BUCHANAN, DRUMPELLER, This Volume is by permission respectfully dedicated as a testimony not more of respect and esteem for the qualities of the gentleman, the generous landlord, and kind master, than for the liberal supporter of every benevolent and educational institution in the large and populous district in which he resides.

Interestingly, the volume contains a frontispiece that is taken from the Prelude to *Voices of the Night* (1839) by the American writer Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882):

Look, then, into thine heart and write;
 Yes, into life's deep stream –
 All forms of sorrow and delight,
 All solemn voices of the night
 That can soothe thee or affright,
 Be these henceforth thy theme.

The use of an American writer is potentially a democratic move and there is a purposeful link to the first sonnet of Philip Sydney's *Astrophel and Stella*, which gestures towards love poetry.¹⁸⁰ In spite of the differences between the lives of the two poets, Hamilton sees in Longfellow's work an expression of her own project as a poet – to write from the heart. The heart is a particularly important image in Victorian women's poetry and according to Isobel Armstrong is a key feature of 'expressive theory', which conveys 'emotions' and the

¹⁸⁰ Philip Sydney, *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sydney*, ed. by Albert Feuillerat, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 1: 1-14.

‘affective moment’.¹⁸¹ In *Poems and Ballads: With Introductory Papers by George Gilfillan and Alexander Wallace* (1868) Hamilton also uses poetry to prefigure her work. A dedication to the working classes is positioned after the frontispiece: ‘This volume is lovingly and respectfully inscribed by the authoress to her brothers the men of the working classes’:

Ah, not low in my aspirations
 High and strong my soul’s desire,
 To assist my toiling brothers
 Upward, onward, to aspire.

Upward, to the heaven above us,
 Onward, in the march of mind;
 Upward, to the shrine of freedom,
 Onward, working for our kind.

This to you my working brothers
 I inscribe; may nothing low
 Dwell in mind, in heart, or habit,
 Upward look, and onward go. (1-12)

The poem that is used to introduce Hamilton’s earlier volume is more introverted, whereas the later volume has a more openly political agenda, as it champions the aspirations of the working classes. The repetition of ‘onward’ in the final line of each stanza is suggestive of Sabine Baring-Gould’s (1834-1824) processional hymn ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’,

¹⁸¹ Armstrong, p. 340, 333. For further discussion of the role of the heart in Victorian women’s poetry see Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992) and more generally Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

which was written three years before Hamilton's work in 1865. It implies that Hamilton believes that her cause, the fight for greater working-class freedom, is supported by God. The insertion of these poems into Hamilton's work raises questions with regard to the tradition within which she is writing, (whether that of the Romantics, a political tradition or within an American tradition) and the extent to which her work is influenced by that of others. In order to form a more concrete opinion, the evidence found in the supplementary material to a volume, the text itself and other writings by the author needs to be considered.

It is frequently the case in early editions of poetry that advertisements and reviews for the book itself and other volumes by the same author or publisher can be found. For instance, a second edition text of Massey's *Craigcrook Castle* (1856) contains an advertisement for the fifth edition of Massey's second volume of poetry *The Ballad of Babe Christabel, with Other Lyrical Poems* (1855), as well as excerpts from the reviews of a range of magazines and periodicals.¹⁸² As is the case with modern paperbacks, selected lines are taken from the review in order to present the book in the best possible light. The *Athenaeum* suggests that, '[i]n him we have a genuine songster. He has the true faculty of creative life. [...] Few poems in our recent outgrowth of poetic literature are finer than some of these love-verses'. The *Times* considers that *Craigcrook Castle* is the 'production of a young man who has fought his way to the Temple-gate sword in hand. May the summer morning be fair as the spring dawn is bright'. These reviews also indicate that a breadth of publications were willing to review Massey's work. *Craigcrook Castle* was reviewed in *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Edinburgh Review*, *London Quarterly Review*, *New York Tribune*, *Spectator*, *Chamber's Journal*, *Examiner* and *Church and State Gazette*, though any less useful elements of the reviews were likely to have been left out of these small excerpts. For instance, the review of *Craigcrook Castle* from the *Athenaeum* on

¹⁸² Gerald Massey, *The Ballad of Babe Christabel*, 5th edn. (London: David Bogue, 1855).

25 October 1856 cited on the next pages is over 2,000 words long, whereas the extract given in the volume is reduced to a paragraph. In its next pages the volume contains an advertisement for the forthcoming revised edition of *Craigcrook Castle*, which includes reviews by the *Athenaeum*, *Critic*, *Examiner*, *Press*, *Tait's Magazine*, *Economist*, *Illustrated Times*, *Scotsman*, Thomas Aird in the *Dumfries Herald*, *Dundee Advertiser* and *People's Paper*. None of the publications listed above approach Massey's work in the same way. The tone of the reviews that were published in the high-brow *Examiner* and the working-class *People's Paper* were quite different. The *People's Paper* considers that the volume 'contains some of the most beautiful passages in English Literature' and that the "Ballad of Inkerman" is decidedly the finest war-lyric ever produced'.¹⁸³ The critic of the *Examiner* is more cautious:

We give a hearty welcome to another book from Mr. Gerald Massey, a young writer who, through hard beginnings of life, has attained to much, and undoubtedly is capable of more than he has yet achieved. 'Craigcrook Castle' deserves to be bought and read. There is sufficient sign in the new book of increased maturity of thought.¹⁸⁴

This indicates that various publications have a differing agenda in their approach to working-class poetry. The *People's Paper* is more concerned with promoting the poetry of a working-class poet than rendering an unbiased assessment. The class of a writer is an important factor for the critic of the *Examiner*. Periodicals associated with high culture were particularly keen to preserve social stratification and reviewed working-class poetry with the social class of the author in mind. This type of advertising is also present in *Poems and Ballads: With Introductory Papers by George Gilfillan and Alexander Wallace* by

¹⁸³ Massey, *Craigcrook Castle*, 2nd edn. (London: David Bogue, 1856).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Janet Hamilton but is not present in volumes by all poets.¹⁸⁵ The poetry volumes of Alexander Smith for example are quite sparse. However, in *City Poems* an advertisement is placed before the frontispiece which reads, ‘By the same Author. / A LIFE DRAMA, AND OTHER POEMS. / Fcap. 8vo. Cloth, 5Is’.¹⁸⁶ This advertising is perhaps in a different place because it is intrusive and makes the reader aware of another volume of Smith’s work. Advertising is a key way in which the physical presentation of a work can be used to influence its audience. It creates links between the texts of different authors, which contributes to an implicit shared aesthetic tradition which has the capability to transcend class boundaries.

The books which are produced by Morris’s Kelmscott Press do not contain any advertising, and the print run for each edition was purposefully kept low. The press did not print any original texts but rather printed existing texts in a new way. Morris’ volumes aimed to influence how people conceived of books. The press reacted to the emerging commodity culture which had been brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The books were created to last and to be a prized possession within the home, as they had been during the Medieval period. In fact, the design of the books reflects those that were created by hand (largely in the scriptoriums of monasteries) during that time. Morris applied his substantial knowledge of Medieval manuscripts and Gothic architecture to the design of his

¹⁸⁵ The volume also includes reviews of Hamilton’s last volume ‘Poems and Sketches’. Hamilton’s work reached a wide audience as there are excerpts from both national and local publications with vastly different readerships. The publications are ordered by prestige and readership. The national periodicals are first whilst the smaller local newspapers are listed last. This is because the first reviews would carry the most weight with contemporary readers. Publications include: the *London Athenaeum*, *Edinburgh Daily Review*, Dr. J. Campbell of the *Evening Standard*, the *London Quarterly Review*, *London Spectator*, *Glasgow Citizen*, *London Non-Conformist*, *Liverpool Albion*, George Gilfillan in the *Dundee Courier*, *London Weekly Record*, *Caledonian Mercury*, *Glasgow Morning Journal*, *The Press*, London, *Ayr Observer*, *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper*, *London Freeman*, *Dumfries Standard*, *Christian News*, *Evangelical Repository*, *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, *Hawick Advertiser*, *Banffshire Reporter* and the *Scottish American Journal*.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Smith, *City Poems* (Cambridge, 1857).

books.¹⁸⁷ According to William Peterson the press was a manifestation of the ‘final phase of the Gothic revival. Burne-Jones compared the *Kelmscott Chaucer* (1896) to a cathedral’.¹⁸⁸ This is part of the reason why Morris sees the production of an ideal book as a craft process.¹⁸⁹ Walter Benjamin has argued in ‘The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ that through the industrialisation of print the author has come to be removed from the publication process of his work. In the ‘Mechanical Age’ artistic ‘authenticity’ is more difficult to achieve in the copies that are created of an individual work of art. This is because: ‘First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction’ and secondly, ‘technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself’.¹⁹⁰ Morris’ craftsmanship and use of limited print runs is opposed to this because it enables him to keep a close eye upon the printing of each book. Despite the fact that the printing trade set out to increase the availability of texts, Kelmscott books were deliberately labour intensive (because of the design work and the production time that went into each book). The print run of each volume was also limited – the average print run was just 300 volumes.¹⁹¹ For instance, only 486 copies of *The Kelmscott Chaucer* were produced and sold, even though many more copies could have been. The regular copies of the book were sold for £20 each; yet this was still much more than the price of a typical volume at the time.¹⁹² The print-run

¹⁸⁷ This influence of the Gothic and its derivative the grotesque upon the poetry of both Morris and the working-class poet Gerald Massey will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter on the chivalric-grotesque.

¹⁸⁸ William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris’s Typographical Adventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ See William Morris’s lecture entitled ‘The Ideal Book’ (1893) in Morris, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. by William S. Peterson (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 67-74.

¹⁹⁰ The essay is included in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* ed. by H. Ardent, trans. H. Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-235 (p. 214). Interestingly, Benjamin specifically notes earlier within the same essay that he is not referring to literature which, unlike visual art, has always been reproducible. Yet, his ideas are relevant to Morris because his Kelmscott books are more like art works than traditional print.

¹⁹¹ Peterson, p. 4.

¹⁹² See James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007).

of a typical working-class volume of poetry was also likely to be small and the works were much cheaper, but this was for practical purposes as a publisher would ideally want all of a print run to sell. The books were not as ornate as those printed by the Kelmscott Press, however they did contain a number of decorative elements, as discussed above.

Through the Kelmscott Press Morris aimed to produce books that had ‘a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters’.¹⁹³ Like Medieval books, these editions were designed to be significant objects in a person’s home, they were produced to last and to be savoured. In a similar way, William St Clair has argued that during the Romantic period there was a trend amongst the aristocracy to use books as a form of display within the home. What he terms to be ‘furniture books’ were highly ornate, though problematically many were ‘produced as gifts and may not have been much read’.¹⁹⁴ This could cause the books to be elitist, because they were not affordable for a cross-section of society. Problematically, this leads to questions with regard to how accessible these texts would be to the working classes. Yet, the Kelmscott texts can be placed within the context of Morris’s anti-industrialist stance because all of the books were printed by hand and a lot of time and thought went into their production. Morris designed his own typefaces, including the Golden and Troy types.¹⁹⁵ He did not often use wood engraving for his ornamentation and illustration, but instead printed from

¹⁹³ From a letter dated 11 November 1895. cf. Duncan Robinson, *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and The Kelmscott Chaucer* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1982), p. 32.

¹⁹⁴ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 193.

¹⁹⁵ For further details on how the designs for the press came about see the essay on the Kelmscott Press on the library of the University of Michigan’s website: ‘The Pursuit of the Ideal: The Life and Art of William Morris’, <http://www.lib.umich.edu/pursuit-ideal-life-art-william-morris/kelms.html> [Accessed on 9 June 2011]. The Golden Type was designed in 1890 and took its form from the Roman Type designed by Nicolaus Jenson and Jacobus Rubeus (c. 15th). The Troy Type was used for quite large letters as it was an 18 point type and it was named after the book in which it first appeared, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, which was published by the Kelmscott Press in 1892.

electrotypes.¹⁹⁶ According to Morris' principles of design, certain rules about typefaces, reducing spaces between words and margin size needed to be observed.¹⁹⁷ As William Peterson sees it, if these rules were observed, then 'even the most cheaply manufactured shilling reprint, could be improved'.¹⁹⁸

Working class traditional craft processes were used in the construction of both working-class and Pre-Raphaelite volumes of poetry, such as the use of wood engraving for transference of illustrations to the book. In spite of this however the works were not necessarily aimed towards a working-class readership. The Kelmscott volumes would certainly have been out of the price range of the working classes. Further, a volume of poetry can tell us something about the identity of the poet, or at least how they or their publisher wished them to be perceived. A given publisher could tweak the presentation of a working-class volume of poetry, in order for the work to appeal to its target audience. The previous chapter of this thesis suggested that through the patronage system individual or group patrons could influence the way in which working-class poetry was distributed. Similarly, publishers could choose what additional material to include in a volume of working-class poetry (advertisements, illustrations and prefaces); this in turn had an effect upon the way in which the poet was perceived. It remains unclear how much power the poets themselves had in this process. Morris on the other hand, had total control over the construction of his books. The format was designed by him, and he also collaborated with the illustrator of the work (most often Edward Burne-Jones). He was therefore able to use the Kelmscott Press to make a statement about what the ideal book should be.

¹⁹⁶ For a definition of both processes see Goldman, *Looking at Prints*, 1981. This process is curious since it goes against Morris's move away from industrial processes.

¹⁹⁷ Morris's exact specifications were set out in his lecture 'The Ideal Book', pp. 67-74.

¹⁹⁸ Peterson, p. 106.

Illustration and engraving

By the 1820s book illustration had become increasingly influential within pre-Victorian culture. According to Herbert Tucker ‘at the time *Waverly* reappeared in the fully illustrated Magnum Edition of Scott’s novels’ (1829-33), illustration had become an important feature in the production of the Victorian book.¹⁹⁹ From this period onwards illustrations began to appear in significant works within Victorian culture such as the *London Illustrated News*, Doré’s *London: A Pilgrimage* and the cartoons in *Punch* magazine. Illustration in many works, particularly in *Punch* and the illustrations of George Cruickshank in Charles Dickens’ novels, functioned as social satire, but illustration also had a connection to high art. This is because it had been linked to the narrative paintings of William Hogarth (1697-1764) who remained a favourite amongst upper and middle-class Victorians.²⁰⁰ With a rise in the popularity of illustration came an increase in the ‘popularity’ and ‘feasibility’ of wood engraving.²⁰¹ In spite of the connection between Victorian high-art and illustration, wood engraving retained its connections to working-class and artisan practices. Both Pre-Raphaelite and working-class artists were involved in the illustration and engraving process during the Victorian period. According to Rodney Engen prints and illustrations were a valuable ‘means of spreading’ the ‘message’ of the

¹⁹⁹ Herbert F. Tucker, ‘Literal Illustration in Victorian Print’, in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, ed. by Richard Maxwell (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 163-208 (p. 164). Maxwell comments that, ‘[b]ook illustrations were simultaneously reimagined as a crucial component of the institution of literature, just coming into its own around 1820; illustration and literature subsequently fed off each other’. ‘Introduction’, in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, iv- xxvii (p. xxv).

²⁰⁰ Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 3-4.

²⁰¹ Paul Goldman, *Victorian Illustrated Books: 1850-1870: The Heyday of Wood-Engraving: The Robin de Beaumont Collection* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), p. 12. According to Herbert Tucker in ‘Literal Illustration in Victorian Print’, advances in engraving techniques after the 1820s ‘boosted the visibility of the book’, p. 165.

Pre-Raphaelites and potentially working-class poets, thus enabling their ideas to be appreciated by a wider audience than would otherwise have been possible.²⁰²

The addition of illustrations to a magazine, newspaper or volume of poetry could be expensive. Often an editor would need to commission an illustrator to create an image and then pay an engraver to transfer it onto a woodblock that could be used for printing purposes. According to Holman Hunt each artist was paid £20 for each of the 52 illustrations for the *Moxon Tennyson* (1857). Each engraver was paid at least £12.²⁰³ The *Moxon Tennyson* is unusual amongst volumes of Victorian poetry. The majority of the works that did contain illustrations would have either one or two plates. For instance, the second edition of *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862) by Christina Rossetti contained two illustrations by her brother Dante, as well as a further illustration for the front cover.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti created illustrations to appear in two volumes of his sister's work (*Goblin Market and Other Poems* and *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* 1866) and *The Music Master* (1860) by William Allingham. According to Paul Goldman '[t]he Pre-Raphaelites and in particular Rossetti came to recognize illustration, at least for a time, as equal in importance to painting'.²⁰⁴ This was in part the case because it could represent the narrative element of their work, not necessarily because of its possible high-art connection. The illustration which accompanies 'The Maids of Elfin-Mere' in William Allington's *The Music Master, A Love Story, and Two Series of Day and Night Songs* (1855) is one of Rossetti's most evocative images (even though he is known to have been unhappy with the final design).²⁰⁵ Allingham's poem is a supernatural ballad in which three maids from the mythical land of Elfin-Mere visit a small town at night to spin cloth.

²⁰² Rodeney Engen, *Pre-Raphaelite Prints: The Graphic Art of Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti and their Followers* (London: Lund Humphries, 1995), p. 13.

²⁰³ June Stephen Hagen, *Tennyson and His Publishers* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 105.

²⁰⁴ Goldman, *Victorian Illustrated Books*, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ Rossetti used an alternative spelling in this title of the illustration: 'The Maids of Elfen-Mere'.

The son of the pastor falls in love with the maids and thus attempts to put back the town's clock in order to cause them to stay longer. In the end the reverse is true; this becomes their final visitation as the reader infers that they have been killed because three bloodstains are found the next morning and they are never seen again. Jerome McGann claims that the poem and illustration operate in the same way as one of Rossetti's double works, in which there is a strong dialectical relationship between image and text. This is important because it suggests that his illustrations are able to add to the text rather than just being a separate piece of art that accompanies it.²⁰⁶ Rossetti later wrote in a letter to Allingham that if 'one can allegorize on one's own hook on the subject of the poem, without killing, for oneself & everyone, a distinct idea of the poet's. This, I fancy, is *always* the upshot of illustrated editions [...] unless where the poetry is so absolutely narrative as in the old ballads, for instance'.²⁰⁷ Rossetti's image does not significantly diverge in its interpretation of Allingham's poem, 'The Maids of Elfin-Mere', because it has the feel of an old ballad. Interestingly though, some of the images that are used by Allingham resemble Rossetti's own aesthetic. For instance, Allingham describes the maidens as 'three white lilies'.²⁰⁸ A similar image is used in Rossetti's 'The Blessed Damozel' as his subject is described as having 'three lilies' in her hair.²⁰⁹ This may be why Rossetti was interested in the poem in the first place, as I suggested in the previous chapter on Pre-Raphaelite patronage, he was drawn to artwork which had resonances of his own aesthetic. Rossetti's illustration provides an example of the way in which his creative work

²⁰⁶ Rossetti's double works consist of a poem and a work of art which interact with each other. Notable examples of these works include 'Astarte Syriaca' (painting and poem 1875-77), 'Found' (Painting, 1854 and poem, February 1881) and 'Proserpine' (Painting, 1871-1881 and poem, 1872).

²⁰⁷ George Birkbeck and Norman Hill, eds, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 1854-1870* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1897), p. 97.

²⁰⁸ William Allingham, *The Music Master, A Love Story, and Two Series of Day and Night Songs* (London: Routledge, 1855), 11.

²⁰⁹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems: A New Edition* (London: Ellis & White, 1881), 4.

could be influenced by that of others and that he in turn could find previously undiscovered nuances in the original piece.

The most prominent example of Pre-Raphaelite illustration can be seen in the *Moxon Tennyson* – importantly it reveals how illustration could be used to influence the way in which a work of art was perceived. The work was published in 1857 by Edward Moxon. Tennyson's regular practice when publishing a volume of poetry had been to pay all of the publication costs himself so that he would remain in the control of the production process. In the case of the *Moxon Tennyson* however Moxon paid all of the publishing costs and agreed to pay Tennyson a fee of at least £2,000 out of the profits. June Stephen Hagen remarks that this volume was unusually decorative for Tennyson. It was bound in a 'bright blue, silk-like cloth with a gilt urn on the cover'.²¹⁰ Also in contrast to volumes of working-class poetry, the *Moxon Tennyson* did not rely upon paid advertisements but rather upon word of mouth, advertising and reviews. The work contains 52 illustrations by eight prominent artists within Victorian society. Significantly, a number of these illustrations were from the Pre-Raphaelite artists Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais.²¹¹ Stephen Hagen indicates that Rossetti and Holman Hunt were selected in part because they had been put forward by Tennyson's new friend Ruskin.²¹² The tension which arose between poet, illustrators and engravers came about because the illustrators were given free rein to interpret the poems in their own way. The engravers who were brought in to transfer the images were the Dalziel Brothers (the most well-known name in Victorian engraving), W. J. Linton, T. Williams and John

²¹⁰ Stephen Hagen, p. 26.

²¹¹ Pre-Raphaelite involvement with the *Moxon Tennyson* has been covered elsewhere in more depth than is possible here. For more detailed analysis see particularly Stephen Hagen, Goldman and Engen.

²¹² Stephen Hagen, p. 103.

Thompson.²¹³ According Stephen Hagen up until ‘about 1850, the engraver’s hand was pre-eminent in the production of book illustration, with the artist supplying only the basic idea. But then artists such as Rossetti and Millais insisted on drawing right on the wood-block itself, leaving the engraver simply the task of cutting the lines in. For the Tennyson book, both methods were used’.²¹⁴ Dante Gabriel Rossetti was famously unhappy with the way in which the engravers had transferred his work.²¹⁵

The most significant link between engraving and illustration was that it enabled artists from both groups to be involved in the construction of a volume of poetry. A working-class poet and Chartist, Linton, from Mile End in London, was the son of a provision broker and shopkeeper. Unusually for working-class poets Linton was sent to grammar school. After school he had drawing lessons and was later apprenticed to an engraver. He took up poetry later in his career, principally in support of the Chartist cause. Interestingly, Linton’s own poetry and that of Morris have aesthetic and political connections because they use poetry as a medium through which to promote their radical agenda, as has been argued by Anne Janowitz.²¹⁶ An important connection between the work of the two is that they were both aware of the importance of the link between image and text in the creation of political work.

This can be best seen in a long poem written, illustrated and engraved by Linton called *Bob Thin* (1845). It was originally published for private circulation but subsequently appeared in *The People’s Review* and was later printed separately. The work was written as

²¹³ According to Paul Goldman in *Victorian Illustrated Books: 1850-1870*, ‘[t]he great wood engraving workshops of the Dalziel brothers and Joseph Swain provided a seemingly inexhaustible supply of designs for publication on every subject. The use of wood-engraving as the chosen medium was brought to an inglorious end by the 1880s’, p. xvii.

²¹⁴ Stephen Hagen, p. 104.

²¹⁵ Stephen Hagen, p. 103.

²¹⁶ Anne Janowitz makes a link between the socialism and republicanism of the two through her comparison of Morris’s *Pilgrims of Hope* and *Chants for Socialists* and Linton’s Chartist writings, particularly in *The Red Republican*. ‘W. J. Linton and William Morris: Republican and Socialist Poets’ in *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 195-232.

a response to the new Poor Laws of 1834.²¹⁷ According to Ian Haywood, the poem ‘appropriated several popular visual and literary genres, including the children’s pictorial alphabet, the “floriculture” of urban gardening, the radical Utopia, and the “Condition of England” fable’.²¹⁸ The first section of the poem describes the social descent of Bob, an ‘industrious’ and ‘honest’ weaver whose life is blighted by the Poor Laws.²¹⁹ Despite his hard work and the long hours that he puts into his job, he finds it difficult to feed his family. Bob eventually ends up in the poorhouse and after many years he decides to flee. During his escape, in a state of exhaustion, he shelters beneath an oak and falls asleep; it is then that his vision commences. The second section of poem provides a description of this utopian dream-vision. When Bob awakes he sees a ‘spring-wreathed man’ whose presence reassures him (II.2). He finds himself in a paradisaical landscape ‘on a bed | Of mossy gold, gold-canopied | By the new oak-buds God-yspread’ (II. 31-33). The dream vision trope is also a prominent feature in Morris’ prose and poetry – the most famous example being *News from Nowhere* (1891). This device is particularly apt here because it is traditionally used for political allegory. It is for this reason that the poem also bears a resemblance to ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ and ‘Holy Thursday’ by William Blake (1757-1827).²²⁰

In the *Moxon Tennyson* and Linton’s *Bob Thin*, illustrations are used for two contrasting purposes. In creating the *Moxon Tennyson*, its publisher aimed to revamp a

²¹⁷ Two of the key changes in the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, were that: (a) no able-bodied person was to receive money or other help from the Poor Law authorities except in a workhouse, and (b) conditions in workhouses were to be made very harsh to discourage people from wanting to receive help.

²¹⁸ Ian Haywood, ‘Illuminating Propaganda: William James Linton’s *Bob Thin: Or, The Poorhouse Fugitive*’. Conference Paper, *The Verbal and the Visual in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, Institute of English Studies, University of London, 23-24 June 2006.

²¹⁹ William Linton, *Bob Thin, or, The Poorhouse Fugitive* (London: s. n., 1845), I, 133. All references refer to this edition.

²²⁰ In Blake’s ‘The Chimney Sweep’ in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, ed. by Richard Willmott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), an angel comes to deliver Tom Dacre from his life as a chimney sweep for the night; the children then play on the ‘clouds and sport in the wind’ (18). The angel assures Tom that he has ‘God as his Father’, who will protect him and offers a world of ‘joy’ when he dies (20). In ‘Holy Thursday’ a group of children with ‘clean’ faces are led into St. Paul’s Cathedral in order to provide evidence of the charity work that is taking place in the city, but rather the hypocrisy of the state is shown (1).

work by an already popular poet that would be able to tap into the gift-book market. The illustrations used within the text have been added to enhance its appeal; whilst those in *Bob Thin* were added to emphasize the political nature of the work. Illustrations have the effect of enabling a reader to either discover previously unseen resonances in its accompanying work, or see it in a completely new way. Tennyson was concerned with the way in which some of his texts had been interpreted by certain Pre-Raphaelites, and thought that they had taken too many liberties. In contrast, the illustrations that are used by Linton operate in a similar way to the illustrations used by Blake in works such as *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793). They are in dialogue with the text and draw out its politics.

Conclusion

For both the Pre-Raphaelites and working-class poets, entering into print could have an impact upon the way in which their poetry was received, as well as having an effect upon their work that could enhance and detract from their aesthetic. This chapter has explored points of intersection in this process. For instance, both groups use journals as a vehicle through which to present their own work. The way in which individual poems interact with writings within and without the work has an effect upon the way in which it is perceived. A contemporary reading of Eliza Cook's poem 'Song to my Readers' would have been influenced by the political leaning of her introductory address, her prior Chartist affiliations and the moderately radical leaning of the journal towards self-help. The Pre-Raphaelites for the most part use print to promote their aesthetic or political views. Through *The Germ*, the first wave of Pre-Raphaelite artists presented prose and poetry to accompany the paintings that the visitors to the 1849 exhibition of the Royal Academy of

Art found so shocking. The journal had been created principally to promote their aesthetic values, but they did not anticipate that it would be so little read. *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* did not fare much better. The two working-class journals were more financially stable, perhaps because they were mostly politically neutral and had a clear sense of their audience. Most often working-class publications such as *Ben Brierley's Journal* and *Bob Thin* only targeted a limited or regional audience. The former targeted people from the Manchester area whilst Linton's work was most likely to be read by those who sympathised with his reformist cause. Linton's work could therefore stir up those who opposed the new Poor Law whilst remaining unread by those who were in a position to change it. The early Pre-Raphaelites on the other hand would have liked their work to have been read by a wider audience, but were not willing to compromise their aesthetic integrity. Fame did eventually come however, and a second attempt at publishing a journal was not needed to bring their work to a new audience.

The most successful Pre-Raphaelite contributions to Victorian print culture were through the illustrations designed for the *Moxon Tennyson* and the books created by Morris' Kelmscott Press. For modern readers, the illustrations for the former have become iconographic and are now more widely available than the complete text to which they originally belonged. The books of the Kelmscott Press are rare and are often safely stored in the special collections or rare books sections of academic and copyright libraries. They are often not decorative assets to the home but they have perhaps achieved Morris' socialist ideal that the books should be in theory, if not always in practice, available to all. That is to say anyone with a particular research topic can join the British Library for free, though access to university libraries is more restricted. Digitisation has also opened up the archive to those who have access to 'Google Books'. Working class contributions to Victorian print culture have either not lasted well or are not well known. Further, because

the criticism of working-class poetry is still relatively new there has not yet been a drive to make sure that these texts are effectively preserved. In many libraries copies can be found on open shelves and can be browsed (and potentially mistreated) by all; the exception to this being copyright libraries.

Gender, Winter, and Seasonal Identity: Christina Rossetti and Janet Hamilton

Introduction

The working-class female poet Janet Hamilton writes from a local or regional point of view. Yet, the fact that her poetry is rooted in a particular locality does not limit the scope of the work that is produced. Hamilton uses winter imagery to venture beyond the terrain of the domestic into politics, the mythical and the religious. In this sense she uses winter, and at times other seasonal imagery, to expose issues that are important to her. The Pre-Raphaelite poet Christina Rossetti on the other hand uses similar imagery to present a poetic identity which is both ambiguous and ambivalent. Further, she writes in a style that, we might argue, is not associated with any fixed place. This is because, according to Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, her vision remains fixed on a 'heavenly, rather than earthly crown' and she therefore does not have any specific allegiance to the places associated with this life.²²¹ Rossetti's work often focuses on Christianity and presents speakers that are elusive. Like the working-class poets, her work can also have mythical or political elements. Hamilton was also a strong Christian; her grandparents and great-grandparents were Presbyterians and she and her mother Mary inherited their strict Sabbatarian views. In her religious works she explores the tension between the difficulties of this life for the working classes and the hope for a heavenly reward in the next life. Despite the context of difference, one particular theme recurs in the work of both poets: the experience of winter. What this reveals is a shared language and set of images, which enables the poets to fashion a complex poetic identity. Rossetti aims to create an identity which can move

²²¹ Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Christina Rossetti and Illustration: A Publishing History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), p. 235.

beyond the constraints of gender, in order for her to be a voice that speaks only for God. Cynthia Scheinberg argues that in certain religious poems by Rossetti, aspects of gendered identity become ‘obscured’.²²² Hamilton uses winter imagery as part of her quest for the furtherance of her political views, as a way of exploring her identity as a female poet and enriching her mind as well as that of others.

I will argue that different life experiences (which during the Victorian period were significantly influenced by a person’s class) have an impact upon the way in which Rossetti and Hamilton artistically respond to the theme of winter. The time of winter sparks the poetic imagination and it can be both a magical and supernatural realm. Yet, class does inevitably have an impact upon the way in which the poets experience the season. Winter was a particularly difficult time for the working classes because little paid work was available, especially for men, at a period when more money was needed to keep warm and well fed. The comfortable middle-class existence of Rossetti would not have been impacted by these hardships and further, she would not have had the physical experience of prolonged exposure and being chilled to the bone. Importantly, during the winter period a power shift between men and women occurs, particularly within rural working-class communities. The domestic sphere becomes central to working-class life, as the outside world comes to be inhospitable: ‘because the early textile mills employed large numbers of young women, industrial labour became associated with a radical reversal of “natural” gender roles, a brave new world characterized by female employment and male unemployment’.²²³ The domestic sphere is highlighted as a place of security and protection. It has the potential to be what Susan Zlotnick terms a ‘paradise’ for husbands

²²² Cynthia Scheinberg, *Women’s Poetry in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²²³ Susan Zlotnick, *Women, Writing and the Industrial Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 7.

and the rest of the family.²²⁴ Zlotnick goes on to comment that the domestic sphere became particularly pertinent to working-class culture following the ‘failure’ of Chartism.²²⁵ This is because it caused the working classes to ‘turn indoors’ in an attempt to embrace the domestic ideology of the middle class. Within Victorian society, working-class women tended to have more freedom than their middle-class counterparts. The ‘turn indoors’ challenged this because it re-enforced the middle and upper-class mantra that a woman’s place was within the home. This would have been difficult for some working-class women to adhere to since they often had both paid employment and socialised outside of the home.

Importantly, the domestic sphere is a realm of storytelling in the homes of all social classes, particularly during winter. Families would come together to sit by the fire and listen to a reading; this could be from the Bible, a newspaper or a novel. Hamilton describes long winter nights as being a time for sharing stories and revisiting memories, as well as giving an opportunity for the working classes to engage in self-improvement activities – if they did not need to continue to work. Hamilton comments in an essay on ‘Self Education’, that she had been disappointed by the number of young men that had been distracted by their friends on winter nights, and started playing ‘cards’, rather than improving their minds. She remarks that ‘the mind has become so occupied and absorbed by its fascinations, that the book, the pen, the pencil, and the institute were first partly, and then altogether thrown aside’.²²⁶ Both Rossetti and Hamilton (and their respective families) played language games on winter nights which enhanced their minds; the Rossetti siblings composed *bouts-rimés*, whilst Hamilton at times encouraged those within her household to

²²⁴ Zlotnick, “‘A thousand times I’d be a factory girl’: Dialect, Domesticity, and Working-Class Women’s Poetry in Victorian Britain”, *Victorian Studies*, 35.1 (Autumn, 1991), 10.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

²²⁶ Janet Hamilton, ‘On Self Education’, *Poems, Essays and Sketches*, ed. by James Hamilton (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1880), pp. 369-380 (p. 373)

improve their mental dexterity by writing *centos*.²²⁷ Telling stories and language play is an important Pre-Raphaelite motif, as can be seen in John Everett Millais's painting entitled 'A Winter's Tale' (watercolour, date unknown), which depicts a middle-class family sitting in a parlour listening to their father animatedly telling a story. These winter tales also have a strong tradition within English Literature. For instance, Shakespeare's play *A Winter's Tale* (1623) explores regeneration, redemption and the supernatural. These themes recur in the work by Rossetti and Hamilton in which the experience of winter, for good or bad, forms a central concern.

One site of common ground in the work of the poets can be found in the way that they move away from the sentimental poetic tradition. According to Isobel Armstrong, this tradition was 'constructed by reference to the Victorian notion of what was specifically female in poetry', yet, 'it is undoubtedly the case that women wrote with a sense of belonging to a particular group defined by their sexuality, and that this sense comprehends political difference and very different kinds of poetic language'.²²⁸ My discussion of the winter poetry of Rossetti and Hamilton complicates this tradition by suggesting that differences are also created through locality and class. Hamilton has a degree of freedom from a strict adherence to the expectations of poetry produced by women in the nineteenth century because of her working-class status. This can be seen in her poem 'The Rose', a flower which appears as one of the first signs of spring after a difficult winter. These are the third and fourth stanzas:

See the sweet rosebud her petals unfurl!

²²⁷ Composition of *bouts-rimés* involves one player making up all of the end rhymes of a sonnet and then passing these on to a second player who has to fill in the rest of the sonnet as quickly as possible. *Centos* are made up of a mix of lines of poems by different authors. William Michael Rossetti discusses the Rossetti siblings' game in his Preface to Dante's *Collected Works*, ed. by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis and Scrutton, 1886), p. 30. James Hamilton recollects his mother encouraging him to create *centos* with her in 'Janet Hamilton: At her Ain Fireside', in *Poems, Essays and Sketches*, ed. by James Hamilton (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1880), pp. 30-40 (p. 38).

²²⁸ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 323.

The gems on her breast of value untold;
 The dewdrop, the ruby, the lustrous pearl,
 Meet emblems of thee, pure, innocent girl.

The trail of the snake is over thy name,
 Dimm'd are thy gems, and sullied thy fame;
 Virtue will triumph, detraction will die,
 The rose and the gem smile up to the sky.²²⁹

The third stanza is quite typical of the expected relationship between women, flowers and gems; Hamilton describes these as being the 'emblems' of an innocent girl. However, in the final stanza she calls this into question, by alluding to the role of Eve in the fall of mankind, as related in the book of Genesis. This causes a woman's gems to be 'dimm'd' and her reputation to be tarnished. In the final lines of the poem Hamilton affirms that this reputation can be overcome and the female gender will 'triumph'. According to Anthony Harrison, the popular poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) considered that the poetry of women was constrained by 'socialised roles, values, behaviours, and expectations of Victorian women'.²³⁰ The range of Hamilton's poetry indicates that she is not bound to tackle only those topics that were associated with female experience, and that we might attribute this 'freedom' in some regards to her working-class roots. This does not problematise the 'turn indoors' as a response to middle class family traditions discussed above, as Hamilton saw the maintenance of the domestic sphere as being her primary role.²³¹

²²⁹ Hamilton, in *Poems, Essays and Sketches*, 1-8.

²³⁰ Anthony Harrison, *Victorian Poetry and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 96.

²³¹ Zlotnick, "'A thousand times I'd be a factory girl'", 9.

Rossetti moves away from producing similar poetry of sentiment to that of the early nineteenth-century poetesses Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) and Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-1838). According to Angela Leighton this type of poetry, which focused upon 'feeling', 'truth' and 'the imagination' was linked to the heart.²³² Leighton goes on to argue that when these tropes were not used in a poem it became increasingly difficult for a contemporary audience to recognise a poem as being feminine.²³³ The absence of the sentimental in the poetry of Rossetti works well, as it enables her to present a negative of traditional female roles due to her strong faith. This in turn creates a moral and linguistic landscape that reflects the flaws of humanity, which are common in both genders, thus gesturing towards the need for God. For Rossetti, because the Bible is the only true linguistic reference, it has a significant impact upon her own poetic voice. Diane D'Amico has stated that this enables her to 'adopt the voice of the texts; thus, her poetic voice takes on tones of authority not characteristic of the women poet's sphere'.²³⁴ Interestingly, this causes her poetry at times to transcend gender stereotypes because she realises that these roles have no value beyond this life. This is not necessarily a feminist position, but the truth as she sees it as a result of her faith. Cynthia Scheinberg makes a similar argument in her chapter on Rossetti in *Women's Poetry in Victorian England*, when she proposes that Rossetti radically constructs a female Christ in her poetry, drawing upon biblical precedent which shows Jesus to have both masculine and feminine attributes.²³⁵ Importantly, the final judgement of mankind is not contingent upon gender; these are only earthly constructs for Rossetti. This is an important aspect of Rossetti's myth-making. According to Alison

²³² Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets, Writing Against the Heart* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 3.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Diane D'Amico, *Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), p. 26.

²³⁵ Cynthia Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 115, 116.

Chapman, her subversion of the sentimental tradition and the construction of her poetic identity are linked. She considers that 'her poetry's resistance to the ideology of female poetic creativity, from within the sentimental tradition, signifies a secret that is precisely rhetorical'. Potentially for Chapman, this leads to the problem that Rossetti's poetry may be 'predicated on nothing'.²³⁶ However, the argument is problematic since Rossetti's poetry is predicated above all upon God. As far as she is concerned, humanity comes into full being only within the context of their relationship with Him.

The subject of Rossetti and poetic identity is an already well-trod critical territory.²³⁷ Most critics agree that Rossetti's poetry is ambiguous and multi-faceted. According to Kathryn Burlinson, 'Rossetti is one of the most strategic, secretive, and mysterious of poets'.²³⁸ She is also known for her verbal play. Margaret Reynolds describes her as being '[s]elf-effacing, hidden, secret, behind, underneath, [...] yet what goes on in that underneath, still needs excavation'.²³⁹ Mary Arseneau's recent critical work explores the immediate female tradition from which Rossetti's work appears. She aims to recuperate 'her primary familial, literary, intellectual, and religious community: [...] readers, writers, educators, volunteer social workers, Anglican-Catholic devotees – a female community that has been silenced and erased'.²⁴⁰ A synchronic form of influence such as this unsettles the emphasis upon a purely poetic history, as in Harold Bloom's model wherein 'poetic history, [...] is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence,

²³⁶ Alison Chapman, *The Afterlife of Christina Rossetti* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 6.

²³⁷ See particularly Angela Leighton's discussion of Rossetti in *Victorian Women Poets, Writing Against the Heart* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), Armstrong's "'A Music of Thine Own": Women's Poetry – An Expressive Tradition' in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (Routledge: London, 1993), pp. 311-370, Anthony Harrison, *Christina Rossetti in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1988) and Mary Arseneau, *Recovering Christina Rossetti: Female Community and Incarnational Poetics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²³⁸ Kathryn Burlinson, *Christina Rossetti: Writers and their Work* (Devon: Northcote, 1998), p. 1, 5.

²³⁹ Margaret Reynolds, 'Speaking Unlikeness', in *The Culture of Christina Rossetti: Female Poetics and Victorian Contexts*, ed. by Mary Arseneau and others (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), pp. 3-21 (p. 15).

²⁴⁰ Mary Arseneau, *Recovering Christina Rossetti: Female Community and Incarnational Poetics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), p. 1, 5.

since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves'.²⁴¹ Similar reading practices – for instance, familiarity with the King James Version of the Bible – could lead to the appearance of shared imagery and ideas in the poetry of the two women writing at the same period of history.

Hamilton was born in Carshill in Lanarkshire in 1795. She was taught to read by her mother and continued to do so avidly. By trade Hamilton was a tambourer, a type of embroiderer who used hoops to hold cloth in place, until she eventually lost her sight in her early 60s. Hamilton was never formally educated and despite having learned to read at an early age, she did not learn to write until she was 54; before this she had composed through dictation (as was also the case when she lost her sight). She believed strongly in the education of women and thus started teaching all of the children to read from the age of five. She went on to expand her writing beyond poetry, and published a range of essays in magazines such as *The Working Man's Friend*, *The Christian News* and the *United Presbyterian Magazine*, and as part of her poetry volumes.²⁴² The scope of her poetry encompasses politics, religion, war, her community and the domestic sphere. Florence Boos has recently described Hamilton as '[a]n upright woman of mildly reformist inclinations, angered by the devastating consequences of urban industrial blight, Hamilton eventually became an articulate spokeswoman for the working class and a remarkable example of an elderly oral poet whose verses found wide circulation in print'.²⁴³ In some respects, Hamilton resembles Eliza Cook, the newspaper editor and poet who was discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. Both women share a reformist agenda and a

²⁴¹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Study of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 5.

²⁴² Florence Boos, 'The "Homely Muse" in Her Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Poems of "Marie", Janet Hamilton and Fanny Forrester', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (Summer, 2001), 255-286, 256. See also the section on Hamilton in Solveig C. Robinson, ed., *A Serious Occupation: Literary Criticism by Victorian Women Writers* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003).

²⁴³ Florence Boos, 'Janet Hamilton', *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. by William Thesing (Columbia, S. C.: Brucoli, Clark, Layman, 1998), pp. 149-58 (p. 149).

desire to speak for the working classes, despite the fact that it was not often seen as a woman's place to do so. Perhaps the most significant distinction between the two however is that they write from different vantage points: Cook is a poet of youth and middle age, whilst Hamilton's work, which was mostly composed after her children had grown up, has a sage-like quality.

According to Boos in her introduction to an anthology of poetry by *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain*, some of the common themes found in working-class poets were:

pervasive autobiographical content; strong interest in 'ordinary' heroism and sacrifice in everyday life; pointed preoccupations with the problems of children, the poor, and suffering of animals; elegiac commemoration of deaths and consolations of the bereaved; recurrent expressions of gratitude for the deep importance of poetry to the author's identity and well-being; and recurrent desires to celebrate friendship, memories of the past, and (in common with other poets) the beauties of an often vanishing countryside.²⁴⁴

These themes can be perceived in a number of poems discussed below, for instance: Hamilton's 'Winter' is concerned with the hardships of the working classes during the season. 'Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853' discusses the effect of the Industrial Revolution upon the poor, which results in the inability of the speaker to see any greenery because of the pervasive industrial smoke. 'October, 1861' shows the link between the environment and the poet's identity and is interested in the suffering of a robin as the weather turns colder. 'Retrospect of Song' does not follow the traditional pattern of working-class poetry because it discusses an international event, the fight for Italian

²⁴⁴ Boos, ed., *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology* (Plymouth: Broadview, 2008), p. 18.

independence. It calls for the end to the war rather than offering an elegy or consolation. Boos goes on to comment that ‘working-class women wrote few poems about “the poor”, but many wrote less generic verse about the plight of individuals in marginal situations and occupations’.²⁴⁵ The use of the label of ‘the poor’ was an easy way for those from the middle and upper classes to remain detached from the plight of the working classes. The fact that working-class poets, including Hamilton, focus upon individuals, small groups and families, breaks down the tendency to generalise, thus giving concrete rather than broad examples of living conditions. This also adds a greater immediacy to their work.

In order to test the premises of Boos and others we need, however, to get closer to the poetry. Keeping the notion of a contiguous tradition in mind, I want to do this by presenting three comparative readings. The first is between ‘Winter’ by Hamilton and ‘Sir Winter’ by Rossetti and discusses the use of mythical and political elements by the two poets. The second two poems are Rossetti’s ‘In the Bleak Mid-Winter’ and Hamilton’s ‘Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853’, which consider links between the winter period, religious faith and social critique. The final section looks at the use of cyclical poems by Rossetti (‘A Year’s Windfalls’, ‘Spring Quiet’ and ‘Spring’) and Hamilton (‘Retrospect of Song’ and ‘October, 1861’) that investigate issues relating to politics, class and poetic identity.

I have selected the poems discussed within this chapter upon the basis of their content – they do not necessarily correspond to a particular phase in the poetic development of each of the poets. The poems included from Hamilton form part of her 1863 work *Poems and Essays: Of a Miscellaneous Character on Subjects of General Interest*, published when she was 68 years old. Rossetti composed her works sixteen years apart: ‘Sir Winter’ was composed early in her career in 1856 and was not published, whilst

²⁴⁵ Boos, ed., *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain*, p. 20.

‘In the Bleak Mid-Winter’ or ‘A Christmas Carol’ was added to *The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems* in 1875, but was first published in 1872 in *Scribner’s Monthly*.²⁴⁶ Rossetti’s three cyclical poems, ‘A Year’s Windfalls’, ‘Spring Quiet’ and ‘Spring’ come from *The Prince’s Progress* and the latter poem from *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862). I have included poems from different points in Rossetti’s career, since it is true to say that her aesthetic does not change considerably. If anything, her views only become more entrenched and dogmatic. Rossetti wrote her poems during the first two decades of Pre-Raphaelite publishing, which began with the appearance of Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere* in 1857. This period followed significant working-class events such as the Hungry Forties and the Chartist uprisings. According to Zlotnick with the ‘waning of the Hungry Forties and the receding threat of Chartism around 1850, Great Britain entered an era of relative calm in which cooperation replaced conflict as the byword of class and industrial relations’.²⁴⁷ Despite the fact that during the 1860s and 1870s there was still a degree of unease over industrial progress, it was more difficult for working-class poets to define their identity in relation to changes taking place within society. This partially explains why the poetic identity of Hamilton can at times be inconsistent, bound as it is to the moment of composition in palpable ways. The points at which Hamilton achieves a degree of stability tend to be in the positioning of her voice within her local community or the domestic sphere and in talking about political causes that are important to her.

‘Winter’, by Janet Hamilton and ‘Sir Winter’, by Christina Rossetti

Hamilton in ‘Winter’ and Rossetti in ‘Sir Winter’ use winter imagery to make sense of the relationship between their poetic identity, politics, community and myth. This can be

²⁴⁶ The poem is now more widely known as a slightly edited Christmas carol set to the music of Gustav Holst (1874-1934).

²⁴⁷ Zlotnick, *Women Writing and the Industrial Revolution*, p. 170.

achieved through use of soundscape, imagery and the tension between the warmth of the community and home and the coldness of the landscape. The first thing that the reader of Hamilton's poem 'Winter', either consciously or unconsciously, becomes aware of is its interesting soundscape.

Laud blaw the wild an' wintry win's,

Wi' eerie howl an' angry thud,

Wi' blatterin' rain, an' rattlin' hail,

Loud roarin' thro' the naked wud.²⁴⁸

The consonance and internal rhyme between 'blatterin'' and 'rattlin'' dramatically mimics the sound of the hail and the repetition of 'w' and 'a' sounds evokes the sound of the wind. The loud roaring through the naked wood is perhaps the least effective line in the stanza as the sound seems out of place in relation to the 'eerie howl' of the wind, which gives a change in the quality of the sound. These two animalistic images do however suggest that the winter world is one of impending danger to the speaker, rather than creating pathos. The sense of foreboding distracts the reader from the lighter stanzas that follow, but there are clues even within the first stanza that winter is not a completely negative season. The stanza echoes Shakespeare's 'Blow, Blow thou Winter Wind' from *Much Ado about Nothing*, ii. 7. Shakespeare suggests that the winter wind is 'not so unkind | As man's ingratitude' and thus implicitly proposes that men can be more harmful to each other than nature is.²⁴⁹ The use of a ballad stanza throughout the poem implies that the poem responds to song tradition and the movement and prosodic play within the stanza has resonances of the origins of the carol as a merry dance.

²⁴⁸ Janet Hamilton, *Poems of a Miscellaneous Character on Subjects of General Interest* (Glasgow: Thomas Murray, 1863), 1-4. All subsequent references refer to this edition.

²⁴⁹ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. by F. H. Mares, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2-3.

Hamilton goes on to demonstrate that in spite of the hardships of the season working-class communities do their best to make the most of their time, rather than only aiming to survive. Yet, she is also very aware that there are others within society who have the financial means to help the poor during this season but choose to do nothing. In contrast to the opening stanza, stanza three of the poem has a more subdued tone.

Red rows the burn frae bank to brae;
 The dowie banks are screenge't and bare;
 The flow'ris are deid, the birdies dumb-
 There's no a cheep in a' the air. (9-12)

The fact that no birds can be heard to sing in the air is in keeping with the absence of life in the landscape, the flowers are dead and the banks are starved and bare. The death and starvation which Hamilton's speaker perceives in the landscape is a very real problem facing working-class people during the winter months. In 'Scottish Peasant Life and Character' Hamilton writes about two particularly cold winters that were experienced by her grandparents in 1739 and 1740.²⁵⁰ During these winters

two thousand persons had perished by hunger and cold, a scarcity of fuel being almost as great and as severely felt as that of food, and the frost of the first winter had not entirely left the earth when the second had set in. The mosses remained so hard that a sufficient quantity of peat could not be dug out to supply the imperious necessity for winter fuel. (421)

This indicates that Hamilton has knowledge of the dangers associated with winter, a time when people can lose their lives. Flowers are seasonal, and many birds are able to migrate, but the working classes have no form of escape, tied as they are to the land, and must make

²⁵⁰ Hamilton, 'Scottish Peasant Life and Character', in *Essays, and Sketches: Comprising the Principal Pieces from her Complete Works*, pp. 420-434.

it through the winter. A link can be found to Rossetti's 'Dreamland' from *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862), which has an eerie quality because of a lack of movement and noise. She describe a place

Where sunless rivers weep
 Their waves into the deep,
 She sleeps a charmed sleep:
 Awake her not.
 Led by a single star,

[....]

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
 Shed over brow and breast;
 Her face is toward the west,
 The purple land.

She cannot see the grain
 Ripening on hill and plain;
 She cannot feel the rain
 Upon her hand.²⁵¹

The landscape created by Rossetti is similar to that of Hamilton because it prefigures sleep, calmness and a minimal amount of movement. The rivers here do not gush or flow, but rather 'weep' their water into the sea. The subject of the poem is described as being in a

²⁵¹ Christina Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. by R. W. Crump (London: Penguin, 2005). 1-5, 17-24. All previous references refer to this edition.

perfect state of sleep, which renders her senses dulled to the world around her; she cannot 'see the grain' nor 'feel the rain'. A difference between the worlds created by the two poets though is that this kind of landscape does not have negative repercussions for Rossetti's speaker; she is protected within a dream-scape.

Even though winter is a time of hardship, Hamilton's poem is not entirely negative – the associations of magic and the supernatural become key to imbuing winter with transformative capacities, as is the case in Rossetti's poetry. For instance, she uses folklore to describe the frost as being brought about by a warlock who can turn objects into stone through his touch: 'There comes the white-pow's warlock frost, | An' a' he touches turns to stane' (19-20). Interestingly, the Norse and Anglo-Saxon myths concerning Jack (or Jokul, meaning 'icicle' in Norse) Frost were likely to have been brought over to Britain during the Saxon, Norman or Viking invasions. It came to be a nationally recognised story which was not contained within any one social class. Frost's ability to turn things into ice or stone blends into the image of the curling stone, again a pastime which connects to local custom. This is one of the most engaging sections in the poem. Curling can only be played during the winter period because it depends on there being a sheet of ice upon the ground. The game is thought to have been invented in Medieval Scotland. It was established there because the country had particularly harsh winters that left the required sheet ice behind. The name of the game has Scottish origins, as it is taken from the Scots verb *curr* which means 'to make a low murmuring'.²⁵² Curling was popular amongst the working classes in Scotland because it was free to play and could involve a number of members of the

²⁵² 'Curling', in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., online version (2012) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/46061> [Accessed on 12 Mar. 2012].

community.²⁵³ The importance of the game to the community can be seen in the following stanza:

The curlers ply the ‘roarin’ play,’
 An’ rinks are made, an’ wagers ta’en’
 An loch an’ muir are ringin’ roun’
 Wi’ echoes o’ the curlin stane. (25-28)

Despite the cold, the game brings about a sense of warmth, the ‘roarin’ play’ has connotations of the heat given from a roaring fire. Curling is also known as ‘The Roarin Game’ because this reflects the sound of the stone as it moves across the ice. The game can implicitly warm up the community and the echoes of the game revive the landscape by filling it with a ‘ringin’ sound. Interestingly, Hamilton does not condemn the wagers made on the game, whereas it has previously been noted that in her essay ‘On Self Education’ she was quick to chastise young men for playing cards rather than using their time productively.²⁵⁴ The difference may be because curling is part of a communal experience, which brings people together, whereas playing cards potentially wastes time.

Another positive aspect of working-class life that is exhibited during this season is the pivotal role played by women within the home, particularly as its moral defender. The love of the mother ‘brocht contentment wi’ sic lot | For mither’s love an’ God’s war there!’ (47-48). Hamilton sees a presence within the home as a woman’s natural role, but her work does not have to be all encompassing. She herself took care of a large family and was able to find time to write – though Hamilton comments in the introduction to *Poems, Essays and Sketches* that this extra time was taken from her sleep.²⁵⁵ Hamilton’s example shows

²⁵³ John Kerr, *The History of Curling, and Fifty Years of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1890).

²⁵⁴ Hamilton, ‘On Self Education’, p. 373.

²⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Poems, Essays, and Sketches: Comprising the Principal Pieces from her Complete Works*, ed. James Hamilton (Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1880).

that domestic duties need not take away from a woman's creativity and intelligence. In 'Woman', she argues that in women:

There is an element of power
That suits the needs of every hour
All wants to which our state gives birth
The life, the mind, the home, the hearth. (1-4)

The speaker sees a woman's role as attending to all household tasks as well as to her own mind and that of those around her.

'Winter' aims to expose both the good and bad aspects of life within a working-class community, in order to argue that they are worthy of the support of the higher-class. The political nature of the poem is revealed in its final stages: It ends with a Dickensian appeal to her more affluent readers. In *A Christmas Carol* (1843) Dickens attests that during the winter period (and especially towards Christmas) the hearts of men should be warmed sufficiently for them to help the poor within their society.²⁵⁶ In the final stanza of the poem, Hamilton makes a similar plea.

O ye what ha'e o' warl's gear
Mair than ye need or wish to spen'
Let Winter's cauld juist warm yer hearts,
To help puir, needfu' workin men. (45-48)

Here, Hamilton calls for those who have more than they need, or wish to spend, to 'help puir, needfu' workin men'. Interestingly, the poor are referred to as a group at this final point in the poem, which according to Boos is less often the case in working-class

²⁵⁶ Ebenezer Scrooge's nephew Fred says to him on Christmas Eve that 'I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round [...] as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys'. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 36.

writing.²⁵⁷ This poem does however think about interactions within a working-class community and focuses on a family who have a meal together after participating in the curling outside; all of which humanise the poem.

Hamilton's style can be considered to be ideological – it plays on nostalgia and quaintness of custom in order to maximise the volte into a direct political address to the reader. The politics of her work is submerged in imagery before being revealed openly. However, this could also be because she is proud of her heritage and her community's way of life. Larry McCauley has commented that 'first, dialect poetry tends to re-inscribe rather than resist middle-class ideology, and second this poetry is ultimately stylistically conservative – written in a conventionalised poetic idiom with a tenuous relationship to the actual speech of its writers'.²⁵⁸ This notion is problematic since Hamilton can easily move between vernacular and Standard English. Therefore, writing in dialect becomes a self-conscious act, but this does not necessarily cause a tenuous link with the actual speech of the writer. Hamilton saw herself as being fluent in two separate languages, English and Scots, which represent different facets of her identity. In 'The Power and Beauty of Scottish Song' she argues that Scottish speakers should promote the language and 'win their hearts, an' train their min', | In a' that's virtuous, gude, an' kin'?' (2-3). Hamilton argues that if a Scottish speaker does not use dialect then they are effectively killing or at least denying a crucial part of their identity. When Hamilton writes about her own community she is more likely to use dialect, as can be seen in 'Oor Location'. Here Hamilton ironically 'sings' of the 'beauties' of the world immediately around her (4). These include:

A Hunner funnels bleezin', reekin',

²⁵⁷ Boos, ed., *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain*, p. 18.

²⁵⁸ Larry McCauley, "'Eawr Folk": Language, Class, and English Identity in Victorian Dialect Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (Summer, 2001), 287.

Coal an' ironstone, charrin', smeeikin';
 Navvies, miners, keepers, fillers,
 Puddlers, rollers, iron millers. (5-8)

These images are not obviously beautiful and link to industrialisation. This poem reveals that Hamilton sees herself as a moralist and educator, as she goes on to comment upon the negative effects of industrialisation – a key theme in her work.

Dialect writing partakes of the customs of a community, as well as its relationship to place, rather than either aligning itself to, or resisting middle-class ideology. This practice can also be seen in 'Come Whoam to thi Childer and Me' by Edwin Waugh. As has been previously discussed, Waugh's poem uses dialect to present a temperance work that portrays a doting family awaiting their father's return. As in Hamilton's poem, the language and imagery have been carefully selected in order to appeal to the class based presumptions of his upper-class audience. Yet, as Zlotnick argues, the use of dialect in poetry can also be seen as a subversive move. She argues that 'if we understand dialect literature to be a distinct working-class voice, we must at the same time acknowledge it to be a distinctly male one. Like the literary tradition of which it forms a part, dialect writing is an almost exclusively male province'.²⁵⁹ The use of dialect may have been viewed as appropriate here since Hamilton's speaker is neither distinctly male nor female. But, Hamilton does not consign her use of dialect to poems which are written in this voice. Poems on a variety of themes such as 'Rhymes for the Times', 'Oor Location' and 'Song, The Couthie Auld Man' are also written in dialect. This follows a male tradition in working-class poetry that enables poets, such as George Hull and Joseph Skipsey, to move between Standard English and dialect at will, depending upon the tone and content of their poem. Interestingly, however Hamilton uses dialect poetry to enter into traditional

²⁵⁹ Zlotnick, "'A thousand times I'd be a factory girl'", 8.

feminine discourses of gossip and old wives' tales.²⁶⁰ This tradition is associated with folklore, superstitions and untruths, as well as passing on knowledge to the next generation. In Hamilton's poem, after their game of curling, the speaker's family come indoors and eat salted potatoes and sometimes bread. This is a time when they all come together to talk, when knowledge and ideas would be exchanged. As discussed above, long winter evenings could also be an opportunity for partaking in activities which could improve an individual's mind.

Unlike Hamilton's poem, which engages directly with the effects of the winter season upon her particular community, Rossetti's 'Sir Winter' is more concerned with the animal world. This prevents Rossetti from locating her poem within a specific place. She uses personification in these descriptions: the 'waistcoated robin', the 'plump housekeeper dormouse' and the 'armed hedgehog'.²⁶¹ Throughout the poem, she employs animal imagery to present images of domesticity and protection. These descriptions are perhaps idealistic, and do not acknowledge the true hardships of the season. For instance, she writes that 'Plump housekeeper dormouse has tucked himself neat, | As a brown ball in moss with a morsel to eat' (13-14). This may be a comment upon the ignorance of the majority of the middle and upper classes with regard to how the poor live. If this is true, then it would suggest the poem to have a similar objective to Hamilton's.

In Rossetti's poem winter is described as being 'so wild and so free' (2). These may be positive characteristics in the poet's view, since in a number of Rossetti's other poems she delights in showing her speakers to be unconstrained by any particular time or place. The most famous example of this can be seen in 'Winter: My Secret' from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). The speaker delays the revelation of her secret because of an

²⁶⁰ 'Old wives' tales' are a particularly old form of discourse, a reference to the practice can be found in the Bible in 1 Timothy 4.7: 'But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness' (King James Version).

²⁶¹ Christina Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, 10, 13, 15.

arbitrary weather condition, which may or may not have anything to do with the secret. She ‘perhaps some day’ will reveal the secret, ‘[b]ut not today; it froze, and blows, and snows’ (2-3). Just as the speaker refuses to reveal her secret, she also does not invite the addressee into her home and is thus able to retain control over the domestic sphere. This is also an important theme in ‘Winter’ by Hamilton and ‘Sir Winter’ by Rossetti, but it is tempered by the need to come home to a place of safety and security. This suggests that both women use the winter season to assert the importance of their role within this realm, but also to hint at the capability of their imaginations to describe experiences which are physically out of their reach.

In the fifth stanza of ‘Sir Winter’ Rossetti’s speaker considers that winter has ‘conquered us quite’ (17). It is likely that we are not to take this assertion too seriously since the tone of the poem is quite playful, whereas Hamilton uses a combination of the play of curling and the difficulty of everyday life, to make a point about the unfair economic situation of the working classes. Rossetti’s playfulness can also be seen in her use of prosody, as she uses an aabb feminine rhyme scheme. The use of couplets emphasizes the feminine endings – which are normally used in humorous poems because of their comic effect.²⁶² The weather associated with winter acts arbitrarily, but here Rossetti considers how winter could be described if we did see it as having a will of its own:

Sir Winter is coming across the wide sea,
With his blustering companions, so wild and so free:
He speeds on his way, like some bold buccaneer,

²⁶² George T. Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). According to Wright, ‘Shakespeare and Spencer use feminine endings freely in their sonnets and other poems, often to secure a distinctly lyrical effect, even in poems written entirely or largely in iambic pentameter. [...] In English, where feminine rhyme often (and triple rhymes always run the risk of seeming comic), they may impart a playful spirit to the lines’, p. 161.

And Day flies before him with faltering and fear.

In the front of the battle new trophies to reap,

Mid the howl of the tempest, the roar of the deep,

Lo, he comes with his noiseless-shod legions of snow

And nips the last buds that were lingering to blow. (1-8)

Rossetti gives her personified winter the title Sir. This is significant because it is both an indication of social rank, bestowed by a queen or king and a formal address. In the next lines it would seem that winter does not act with the decorum which is expected of a gentleman. He is described as speeding forwards like a ‘bold buccaneer’ with his ‘blustering companions’. The coming of winter signals the beginning of a battle against the natural world, with a ‘howl’ and ‘roar’, which are reminiscent of Hamilton’s onomatopoeic description of winter. Winter is the kind of general who is in command of ‘legions of snow’. This military connection may be the reason that Rossetti decides to give winter the title ‘Sir’ as there is a strong link between the English gentleman and the military within Victorian society. It is an association which had persisted since the eighteenth century as can be seen in the first encounter between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Wickham in Jane Austen’s (1775-1817) novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Lizzie is quick to perceive gentlemanly qualities in Mr Wickham, in his ‘countenance, voice, and manner’, without knowing anything about his social background, because he is in the militia.²⁶³ Lizzie thinks that she perceives these qualities because the cultural imagining of the militia in the Romantic period was often linked to the Medieval knight and chivalric tradition. Rossetti’s depiction of winter in ‘Sir Winter’ does not adhere to this tradition. In bringing ‘legions of

²⁶³ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Vivien Jones and Tony Tanner (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 199-200.

snow' to subsume the landscape and kill off flowers, winter is fighting a defenceless foe (8). His combat strategy is without honour and any sense of fair play. In spite of all of the connections to war, we must bear in mind that this is a playful poem, and it is therefore difficult to say whether she is attacking or upholding this view of masculinity.

It is possible to perceive in these two opening poems 'Winter' by Hamilton and 'Sir Winter' by Rossetti a questioning of the normative gender roles prevalent within Victorian society. Through her poem 'Sir Winter' Rossetti suggests that the authority of the military gentleman can be questioned and even become a source of ridicule. In 'Sir Winter', he is still a powerful force within society but this authority is undermined by Rossetti's speaker. Hamilton's work also shows a bridging of gender divisions as her winter poem presents a female poetic voice that has become politicised due to circumstance. She uses dialect to evoke sympathy and to seek the help of the upper classes, as well as to present a voice which is strongly rooted within her female working-class community. The surface tonal and imagistic similarities between the two poets conceal fundamental differences in purpose: Rossetti uses winter imagery to hide her poetic identity whilst Hamilton uses it to expose the effects of winter upon the poor.

'In the Bleak Mid-Winter' by Rossetti and Hamilton's 'Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853'

Rossetti's 1872 poem 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter' plays upon myths which surround the birth of Christ. She transfers the story to a barren, and potentially industrial landscape, making use of words such as 'earth', 'iron', 'hard' and 'stone' (3, 4). However, the imagery cannot be linked to any specific place – 'stable-place' is the only concrete detail that we are given (14). The first four stanzas give a general description of the speaker's

interpretation of the events surrounding the birth of Christ, but there is a turn-in upon the speaker in the final stanza. The speaker reflects upon how she should respond to the coming of Jesus into the world. One of the most remarkable things about Rossetti's poem, which often goes unnoticed, is that she uses the winter season to depict the birth of Christ. It is true that Christians traditionally celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December, but there is no historical precedent for this. The winter season is apt for Rossetti's poem because it is a period of quiet (and even death) that prefigures the renewal which comes with the spring. Spring is the key season in the Christian year for Rossetti because it is associated with the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of renewed life for mankind. According to Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) in his humanistic work *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), God and Jesus are a projection of the best and worst qualities of humanity and he is created to satisfy our needs.²⁶⁴ Similarly David Strauss (1808-1874) suggested in *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835) that the miracles of Jesus that appear in the biblical account are myths that hold to Jewish expectations of their messiah.²⁶⁵ It could be argued that Rossetti is engaging in a similar kind of myth making that responds to her own beliefs about Jesus.

The Christian tradition could also be a source of working-class myth making. Boos has argued that the King James Bible offered 'a repository of heroic myths and allegories, avidly absorbed in childhood, and hallowed reference frames for metaphors in a reflective adult life'.²⁶⁶ Examples of this practice can be seen in 'Ichabod', 'The Death of Stephen', 'Lines on the Death of my Mother', "'God is departed from me, and answereth me no more,'" and 'A Faithful Mother's Love' by Hamilton. In 'Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853' Hamilton plays with the story of Noah and the flood which is related in the book of Genesis and the birth of Jesus which is told by Matthew, Luke and John in the

²⁶⁴ Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, ed. by Karl Barth, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

²⁶⁵ David Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot, 5th ed. (London: 1906).

²⁶⁶ Boos, *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology*, p. 37.

New Testament. Only elements of each of the stories are used. The birth of a new year is linked to the birth of new baby and the story of the flood is signalled by the appearance of a dove. Hamilton uses these well-known stories to suggest the magnitude of the problems that face contemporary society; the underlying cause being mankind's enslavement to vices such as the desire for too much power and money.

In stanza one of 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter', Rossetti reveals that the coming of winter demonstrates that the physical world cannot sustain itself indefinitely. Unlike Swinburne's decayed garden worlds, death and decay make way for the new life that will arrive with the spring.

In the bleak mid-winter
 Frosty wind made moan,
 Earth stood hard as iron,
 Water like a stone;
 Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
 Snow on snow,
 In the bleak mid-winter
 Long ago. (1-8)

The earth becomes like 'iron', something which is cold, hard and devoid of life (3). Water is no-longer life giving, but becomes a 'stone' (4). By contrast, in Hamilton's poem 'Winter', the image of the curling stone was associated with having fun and bringing life to the community rather than death. Further, Rossetti's imagery echoes contemporary descriptions of the way in which masculinity was shaped within Victorian society. In *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, James Eli Adams refers to two

widely known examples which capture this fashioning of ‘heroic masculinity’.²⁶⁷ The first comes from *In Memoriam* by Tennyson:

[...] life is not as idle ore,
 But iron dug from central gloom,
 And heated hot with burning fears,
 And dipt with baths of hissing years,
 And batter’s with the shocks of doom

To shape and use.²⁶⁸

The second is taken from *Sesame and Lilies* by John Ruskin: ‘You may chisel a boy into shape [...] But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does’.²⁶⁹ For Rossetti, the earth is shaped and transformed naturally during the winter period – earth stood ‘hard as iron’ and ‘water like a stone’. (3, 4) This implicitly suggests that it is not socio-economic factors which ultimately shape men and women, but their relationship with God. It is because of this that Rossetti goes on to show that Christ becomes the ultimate symbol of hope during the wintertime. In stanza three the subsistence which is given to Jesus, the ‘breastful of milk’ and the ‘mangerful of hay’ for the animals has a similar syntax to John 6.35 and prefigures Jesus’s eventual role as the ‘bread of life’, the giver of spiritual sustenance (20, 21).²⁷⁰

What is also important to bear in mind when we read this poem is that Jesus/God is not ultimately subject to the seasons because it is He who controls them. In spite of this

²⁶⁷ James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithica, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 25.

²⁶⁸ Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam* in *The Major Works*, ed. by Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), p. 118, 20-25.

²⁶⁹ John Ruskin, ‘Lilies of the Queen’s Gardens’ in *Sesame and Lilies* (London: Arc Manor, 1865 repr. 2008), pp. 57-82 (p. 72).

²⁷⁰ John 6:35, 51.

power, a stable is sufficient for one who Rossetti sees as having the company of ‘angels’ and ‘archangels’ (25). Rossetti chooses to emphasise Jesus’s humility with her repetition of ‘Enough for him’ (9, 13). She argues that God is so powerful that ‘Heaven cannot hold him’ (that is to say he has the ability to be born in human form) yet it is ‘Enough for him, whom Cherubim | Worship night and day’ and whom the ‘Angels | Fall down before’ to be born in a stable and to live a lowly human life. Implicitly this is so that he is able to save mankind (9, 17-18, 21-22). The fifth stanza moves away from these transcendental references in order to focus upon the speaker. It considers what the appropriate response is to the gift of redemption that is brought about through the birth of Jesus. The first line of the stanza asks, ‘What can I give Him | Poor as I am’ (40-41). In the last stanza the ‘I’ that is referred to could be an unrelated speaker or a general representative of humanity. In this case, the poem could act as a call for its readers to respond to the message of Jesus. In the next four lines there is a suspension of action, as the speaker claims that if she were a shepherd or wise man, she would know what gift to bring to the infant Jesus because she would be able to follow the biblical account of his birth. In bringing these gifts, the wise man and shepherd are effectively only returning something which is already owned by God. In the same way, Rossetti realises that the only appropriate response that humanity can make to the gift of a personal relationship with God and of eternal life is to return their hearts to Jesus. The important implication of this is that, regardless of their earthly situation, men and women have equality under God because humanity can only be his/her authentic self in relationship to Him. Any earthly self-fashioning is ultimately worthless.

‘Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853’ is more interested in the political and religious fashioning of a society than self-fashioning, as it responds to contemporary anxieties regarding the current state of Britain. Interestingly, the end of 1852 had seen a change from a Conservative to a Peelite government after the resignation of the then Prime

Minister, Edward Smith-Stanley (1799-1869), over the defeat of his Chancellor's budget. The poem reflects upon contemporary political instability via reference to the natural world (Smith-Stanley's government had only lasted for ten months). The poem opens by making a link between the coming of a new year and the birth of a new baby – both of which are encapsulated in the birth of Jesus, which is traditionally celebrated at the close of the year on 25 December. The poem begins:

Hail! infant year, fresh from the womb of Time,
Cradled in clouds, what shapes and shades sublime
Attend thy birth, and hover round thy head,
Bright glowing hopes, dark signs of doubt and dread [...] (1-4)

The first line evokes the ode tradition with its expected '[h]ail'. It also responds to the 'Hail Mary' Catholic prayer through the links that relate to motherhood. Unlike the baby Jesus, who is cradled in a manger in the biblical account of His birth, the personified New Year is '[c]radled in clouds'. Further, in the spirit of the heightened language of the ode, 'shapes and shades sublime' attend the birth, rather than the traditional wise men and shepherds. The imagery that Hamilton employs then changes to consider the New Year as being a fresh start which echoes the story of the flood detailed in Genesis 6:9 – 8:22. The New Year is seen as being 'Freedom's dove' who is the '[h]erald of Life, of Liberty, and Love' (5, 6). However, it soon becomes clear that this is more than a celebration of a new start, rather it is a political critique. The dove, who is a symbol of new life after the flood, is described as 'flagging' because the air is 'murky' (7). This could be a comment upon the smoggy air which resulted from factories and industrialisation. The dove is also surrounded by a 'chaos of despair' (8). He is not able to land on 'Europe's shores' because they are 'beaconless and dark' and the dove is forced to return to the ark without having

found proof of the availability of land (11). For the speaker, another cause of darkness in Europe is superstition. She comments:

And Superstition's pall, for ages hung
 Betwixt his God and man, and impious flung
 O'er mind and conscience, fettered, dark, defiled,
 Shall fall; the Word, the Truth of God, exiled
 From hearths and homes, shall circulate unconfined,
 Bright as the sun, and free as mountain wind. (17-22)

Here, Hamilton suggests to her readers that superstition has created a barrier between God and man; one that exists in the mind and conscience. This has caused humanity to be imprisoned, 'fettered' and 'defiled'. Hamilton argues that the truth of God 'shall circulate unconfined' because He is omnipresent and thus can be seen in the natural world. Rossetti and Hamilton's poems are quite different in tone; Rossetti's poem is more of a meditation, whilst Hamilton's poem gestures towards the epic tradition because of the wider scope of its contents. Partially for this reason winter imagery is omitted here, in spite of the fact that the poem is set at the beginning of January – the heart of the British winter. This poem is very different from 'Winter' (the first poem by Hamilton to be discussed within this chapter), as it does not focus upon the working-class community. Rather, it thinks about the state of an industrial society without God. For Hamilton, those who do not live a godly life are caught in the 'thralls of wrong and woe', which has led to a situation where a kind of slavery still exists (23). Hamilton then calls for the oppressed to be set free:

In words of power, to million eyes hath rushed
 The burning tear; alike from princely hall
 And humble homestead sounds the thrilling call
 Of Freedom for the slave. (28-31)

According to Hamilton, this notion should be supported by a cross-section of society, from those living within ‘princely’ halls to those in a ‘humble homestead’. She links superstition to slavery to argue that if people were acting in accordance to God’s will then they would realise that He would not support the slave trade. She concludes by affirming that the real gift of the New Year is ‘the grace of God’ (46). God will forgive those who have acted wrongly, and mankind still has a chance of redemption if he puts things right and repents; the same kind of commitment to God that Rossetti argues for in ‘In the Bleak Mid-Winter’.

The Employment of Cyclical Poems by Rossetti and Hamilton

Rossetti and Hamilton write cyclical poems that move through the imagery of the seasons in order to: demonstrate their skills as poets, show an appreciation of the natural world and to further their religious and/or political agendas. Further, they do not respond to any specific location, but rather focus upon seasonal imagery. Hamilton’s poem ‘Retrospect of Song’ is written in the bardic tradition which gives the speaker the opportunity to sing about matters of war. In the poem winter is described as being ‘stern and drear’ with ‘drifting snows and storm blasts chilling’ (5, 6). This is opposed to ‘Spring’ which is associated with ‘buds and flowers’, to Summer with its ‘suns and Summer roses’ and to ‘golden Autumn’s dreamy skies’ (1, 2, 3). Winter is then linked to the battle for Italian independence. Winter’s snowstorms evoke for Hamilton ‘horrid war’s embattled fields, | And thousands wounded, killed or killing’ (7-8). Curiously, in the fourth stanza Hamilton quickly moves from singing the praise of nature with ‘ardent love and high devotion’ to ‘Garibaldi’s hymn, that swells | Round yon lone islet of the ocean’ (14, 15-16). This implicitly suggests that the unification of Italy that Garibaldi was fighting for is a natural state of being. Hamilton anticipates a time of rejoicing ‘[w]hen love, not wrath, bids slaves free’ and ‘Italia’s galling chain’ is broken (24, 20). Although she supports the fight for

unification Hamilton is also concerned about the human cost of the war. It can arouse ‘the soul of man | To deeds of blood and hostile daring’ (30-31). In the next stanza Hamilton calls for a state of brotherliness to return; in the form of a prayer she urges those fighting to

‘Hang ye the trumpet in the hall’;

Let brother clasp the hand of brother,

And learn the arts of war no more;

All strife and civil discord smother. (28-32)

The sounding of the ‘trumpet’ traditionally signals the start of a battle, but here Hamilton calls for the end of this signal. The only sound that the speaker now wants to hear is the ‘clasp’ of hands between brothers. Conflict on the other hand is associated with smothering which can mean simultaneously to kill by suffocation and to stop noise. Hamilton hopes that by stopping the noises associated with war, she will stop the conflict itself. The poem concludes with the speaker asking God, ‘who rides upon the storm | Of human passion’, to ‘[c]urb and subdue the demon steeds’ and end the war (37-8, 39). As in the first poem I discussed by Hamilton, winter is associated with battle; yet here God has control over the elements and potentially the battle’s result.

A second cyclical poem by Hamilton, ‘October, 1861’, moves from early spring to the cusp of winter, which the speaker predicts will conclude her life. October is a month which is dear to the ‘poet’s soul’ and gives her a feeling of deep calm (18), despite the fact that the October landscape charms the ‘heart and eyes’ of the speaker, she sees a robin who ‘trills his winter-warning ditty’ (18, 23). This adds an element of pathos to the poem, as the robin’s eyes ask for ‘crumbs and pity’ and prefigure the potential needs of the working classes during the winter months (24). Furthermore, the poet is particularly conscious of the association between winter and the end of life; she feels that time is now moving

quickly towards this inevitability. The speaker becomes more meditative in the final stanza of the poem:

The very soul of quietude is breathing
 O'er field and lake, with sweetest peace enwreathing
 My tranquil soul, from fonts of blissful feeling
 Sweet silent tears adown my cheeks are stealing.
 Spirit of meekness brooding in the air,
 On thy soft pinions waft my lowly prayer,
 That I may meet, calm, meek, resigned, and sober,
 My life's decline-my solemn-last October. (29-36)

This stanza presents a further example of the quiet and eerie landscapes that have been previously discussed in the work of Hamilton and Rossetti, particularly the notion that the 'soul of quietude is breathing'. As in the previous poem, 'October, 1861' ends in a prayer; the speaker hopes that she will be in a fit state to be judged by God upon her death. She prays to be 'calm, meek, resigned, and sober'. Contemplation of the end of life can be seen in Rossetti's work in 'After Death', 'Uphill' and 'Song: When I am Dead my Dearest', all from *Goblin Market and other Poems*. In 'Uphill' Rossetti describes the final journey of the speaker to a place of eternal rest. There will be 'comfort' for all those that are 'travel-sore and weak' and 'beds for all who come' (13, 16). Rather than focusing upon the psychology of the speaker as she journeys towards death, the speaker directs her attention to the inclusiveness of the destination.

Rossetti's cyclical poems concentrate predominantly upon the imagery associated with changes to the environment and tell us very little directly about the psychology of the speakers. The poems respond to *The Seasons* (1830) by the eighteenth-century poet James Thomson (1700-1748), which offer a playful and ornate response to winter, spring,

summer and autumn. The first and final two stanzas of 'A Year's Windfalls' have been included below as these focus upon the winter months:

On the wind of January
 Down flits the snow,
 Travelling from the frozen North
 As cold as it can blow.
 Poor robin redbreast,
 Look where he comes;
 Let him in to feel your fire,
 And toss him of your crumbs.

On the wind in February
 Snow-flakes float still,
 Half inclined to turn to rain,
 Nipping, dripping, chill.
 Then the thaws swell the streams,
 And swollen rivers swell the sea:
 If the winter ever ends
 How pleasant it will be. (1-16)

[....]

In slack wind of November
 The fog forms and shifts;
 All the world comes out again

When the fog lifts.
 Loosened from their sapless twigs
 Leaves drop with every gust;
 Drifting, rustling, out of sight
 In the damp or dust.

Last of all, December,
 The year's sands nearly run,
 Speeds on the shortest day,
 Curtails the sun;
 With its bleak raw wind
 Lays the last leaves low,
 Brings back the nightly frosts,
 Brings back the snow. (81-96)

The poem does not have the same level of verbal play as 'Sir Winter' and 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter', though 'nipping, dripping, chill' is reminiscent of the latter poem. This may be because a contrast is created between the freedom of the wind and the inability of Rossetti (as a woman within Victorian society) to travel freely. In the opening stanza the 'flits of snow' are described as '[t]ravelling from the frozen North' and in the final stanza the shortest day 'speeds' towards the speaker (2, 3, 91). Yet, this restriction does not apply to her imagination. This is a reverse of 'Winter: My Secret', in which the speaker sees the domestic sphere as a place that gives her power. Words associated with movement are employed throughout the poem: 'flits', 'blow', 'float', 'dripping', 'swell', 'shifts', 'loosened', 'drifting' and 'rustling'. Some of these words are less forceful than others, such as 'flits', 'rustling', 'drifting' and 'float', but taken together, they have a mischievous

quality that does not reveal the difficulties that seasonal changes in the weather can bring. The employment of these words also teases the reader, as it provokes them to try to make connections between the imagery and the psychology of the speaker. This is another example of Rossetti's evasive strategy – we cannot pin the speaker down. As a counter to the movement of the poem, Rossetti inserts the figure of the robin. In January she urges people to warm him within their homes and give him crumbs to eat. As Boos argues above, interest in the suffering of animals tends to be a characteristic of working-class women's poetry.²⁷¹ This is quite distinct from Rossetti's animal imagery in 'Sir Winter' where the 'plump housekeeper dormouse' is safely indoors, and the 'robin' has a waistcoat to keep him warm (10, 13). This potentially indicates that 'A Year's Windfalls' is a more socially aware poem, but the image is weakened because of the primacy given to the flux of the seasons. This again causes the meaning of Rossetti's poem to be obscured as her speaker resists a traditional nurturing female role.

The route to spring is very quickly established in the opening stanzas of the poem 'Spring Quiet':

Gone were but the Winter,
Come were but the Spring,
I would go to a covert
Where the birds sing;

Where in the whitethorn
Singeth a thrush,
And a robin sings
In the holly-bush. (1-8)

²⁷¹ Boos, ed., *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain*, p. 18.

‘Spring Quiet’, like ‘A Year’s Windfalls’, has a light tone and its short line lengths (three feet per line) and abab stanzas give the poem the tone of a nursery-rhyme. This leaves Rossetti little room for description. The speaker looks forward to going to a covert to see wild birds after their return following the end of the long winter months. The proximity between covert and convent is hard to miss, which may reflect the speaker’s desire to escape from everyday life and devote herself to God. Spring here is associated with birds, as opposed to its link to flowers in Hamilton’s poetry. Rossetti may be interested in birds because their flight can be simultaneously a form of escape and a way of being symbolically closer to heaven. This is a poem of anticipation: the poem is positioned within the winter period, but the speaker chooses not to dwell upon her current surroundings as she waits for the spring (which signifies new life both upon earth and in heaven). ‘Spring’ on the other hand describes the life that appears after its death-like hibernation during the winter months:

Frost-locked all the winter,
 Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
 What shall make their sap ascend
 That they may put forth shoots?
 Tips of tender green,
 Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
 Telling of the hidden life
 That breaks forth underneath,
 Life nursed in its grave by Death. (1-9)

As in ‘A Year’s Windfalls’, winter is associated with enclosure as ‘[s]eeds, and roots’ are described as being ‘[f]rost locked’. The frost preserves the seeds and roots so that they are ready to germinate during the coming spring. Rossetti uses the verb ‘to ascend’ rather than

the more typical 'to grow' when describing the maturation of the plants. This potentially links to Jesus's ascension into heaven, thus connecting the development of the plants to spiritual growth. Line four, '[t]hat they may put forth shoots', is a direct reference to Luke 21:30: 'When they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is now near at hand'. These signs of the coming summer are then equated to the signals that will reveal the end of the current age, or the second coming detailed in the book of Revelation (20:31). Yet rather than being apocalyptic, the poem explores with tenderness the preciousness of spiritual life with its 'tips of tender green'. However, the subsequent notion that life can be 'nursed in its grave by Death' is slightly troubling. This is reminiscent of Swinburne's process of dying into art to gain artistic life, which will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis considering the anti-pastoral garden. Unlike Swinburne's work, the poem reflects Rossetti's belief that this life is a form of preparation for the next life in heaven. The same is true for Hamilton, but her poetry focuses upon joys inherent within this life which transcend her working-class status.

Conclusion

Hamilton and Rossetti use winter as a theme or image within their poetry in order to create a link between their poetic identities and place (either specified or unspecified) and political or religious views. Hamilton uses winter to bring things out into the open, whilst Rossetti often uses similar winter scenes to obscure her intentions. A further difference between the poets is that Hamilton comfortably situates her poetry within her social class – even if she at times desires to transcend it. It is from this position that she is able to take on political commentary in 'Winter' by drawing attention to the strength of her working-class community and its undeserved poverty during the winter period. The politicisation of winter in Hamilton's poetry results from her direct experiences of the hardships faced by

the working classes during the winter period. This is a means by which to both endear her work to her middle and upper class readership and to reflect her community and working-class heritage. In 'Lines Written on the Birth of the Year 1853' Hamilton comments upon the negative impact of industrialisation which has exposed the need of society for God, whilst 'Retrospect of Song' offers her support for the Italian *Risorgimento*. Her working-class origins are not a restriction to her voice, but instead give Hamilton the freedom to remark upon issues such as war and poverty within a winter setting without restraint because she has no fear of losing her social position.

Through her winter poetry Rossetti writes in a poetic voice which is not necessarily gendered or political because she desires primarily to speak for God. For Rossetti, winter is a time which anticipates the birth of Jesus and a period of hibernation when the world is attacked by the snow of Jack Frost. The barren and snowy landscapes that are associated with the season, offer less opportunity for earthly vanity. Yet, there is also a playful element to Rossetti's employment of winter related imagery as it is associated with concealment, evasion and verbal play. This strategy gives Rossetti a degree of power over her readers as they do not fully understand her poetic motivations. In doing so Rossetti mimics the relationship that humanity has with God because we are not able to fully understand His plans. Ultimately faith, for Rossetti and Hamilton, is the driving force in their winter related poetry: this season strips away life, causes hardships and forces people to retreat indoors and thus exposes society's need for God.

Swinburne and the Industrial Poets: The Anti-Pastoral and the Garden

Introduction

The Victorian period saw a post-romantic resurgence of interest in the pastoral. It was not only high cultural writers such as Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne who were interested in the tradition, but also working-class poets. Some manifestations of the pastoral are traditional, as can be seen in the emblems and use of elegy by working-class poets. In other poems however the pastoral forms a hybrid with Decadent verse. This hybrid form cannot be accommodated within the traditional pastoral. Instead it belongs to what we might call the anti-pastoral: an aesthetic that appears to inhabit some of the tropes of pastoral tradition whilst working against their grain. For certain working-class poets their anti-pastoral poetry is inflected by a desire to give a more realistic portrayal of their lives than that offered by English verse grounded in the Hellenic celebration of shepherds and fertility. In this sense there is some inheritance from the Romantic pastoral of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. But I want to argue here that the emergent hybridity in these Victorian pastoral lyrics creates a more nuanced and psychologically complex poetry than is perhaps to be found in traditional pastoral. In a strange way, writers from both groups appear to have arrived at a concurrent use of the anti-pastoral. In the next two chapters contiguities are found in the themes and styles that are used by the poets and how they construct the relationship between their poetic self and a specific place – in this case the anti-pastoral garden. This is the first of the thematic-based chapters of this thesis which combine textual analysis with cultural knowledge of the pastoral tradition.

In the work of Swinburne, the French Decadent and pastoral tradition are undoubtedly focalised through the garden. The subject of the Decadent garden enables him to find an escape from contemporary existence through the creation of gardens that are inhabited by death in a manner that is colder and harder than Nicolas Poussin's (1594-1665) famed motto on the tomb of the Arcadian shepherds: '*Et in Arcadia Ego*'. For a number of working-class industrial poets, the garden is also a focal point, which provides them with a space to deal with artificial changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, and the natural phases of their lives. The gardens depicted by these poets do not adhere wholly to the expectations of the pastoral tradition, in part because they exhibit change and decay rather than being idealised or naive.²⁷² Unlike the pastoral, which depicts the idealised life of shepherds living in beautiful open countryside, such as we find in Theocritus's *Idylls* or *The Eclogues* of Virgil, the anti-pastoral garden can confront us with decay, decadence, sickness and enclosure as well as beauty. Indeed within such decay, as I will demonstrate, beauty has a residence. Perhaps most importantly, in the garden poetry of Swinburne and the industrial poets, three periods of change, which are returned to repeatedly, are relationships with women, loss of material goods and death.

In the Victorian period the pastoral mode was generally employed by poets associated with high culture; though the genre itself can incorporate low cultural elements. This can be seen in Shakespeare's *As you Like it* (1599) and two early pastoral poems by Milton, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1625). The three most notable Victorian pastoral poems are probably firstly, Matthew Arnold's elegy 'Thyrsis' (1865), which laments the

²⁷² For further general discussion of the pastoral mode in literature see Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935), Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and for a more concise overview of the genre see J. E. Congleton and T. V. F. Brogan's article on pastoral in 'The *New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1383). Owen Schur and Shelagh Hunter have written works which focus specifically on the pastoral mode during the Victorian Period: *Victorian Pastoral: Tennyson, Hardy, and the Subversion of Forms* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989) and *Victorian Idyllic Fiction: Pastoral Strategies* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1984).

death of the poet's close friend Arthur Hugh Clough and is based upon Theocritus's seventh 'Eclogue'. Secondly, the beginning of the 'The Scholar Gypsy' (1853) by Arnold, in which the outskirts of Oxford are presented as a pastoral landscape and thirdly, Clough's modernised classical pastoral, 'The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich' (1848).²⁷³ As well as the Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets to be discussed in this chapter, a connection between garden imagery and the pastoral can be found in work by two poets associated with Victorian high culture: Tennyson and Barrett Browning. In Tennyson's early poem 'The Gardener's Daughter' (1842) the speaker and his friend Eustace venture out from the city so that Eustace can paint a gardener's daughter called Rose. According to the speaker, his friend's painting is an idealisation fuelled by Eustace's love for his subject. The beauty of Rose is linked to the garden which surrounds her, and as a result she takes on some of the characteristics of its flowers. Barrett Browning also wrote 'The Deserted Garden', which appeared in *The Seraphim and Other Poems* (1838). Here, the garden is associated with happy memories of childhood, and is described as being a 'wild' place of 'adventurous joy'.²⁷⁴ In these two poems the pastoral is used to highlight and mirror the positive feelings of the speaker, both towards the garden space which surrounds her, and to life itself. In contrast, the work of Swinburne and the industrial poets shows a more tense relationship to the world immediately around them; as they at times project their insecurities and fears onto the gardens that they create.

The garden came to be incorporated into the pastoral literary tradition because of its connection to an ideal place and/or time. In fact, the word 'paradise' in Persian literally

²⁷³ The alternative title of the work is 'The Long-Vacation Pastoral'. It tells the story of the love of the upper-class Phillip for a peasant called Elspie. In order to escape the class prejudice that they encounter in Britain they decide to move to New Zealand.

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Seraphim and Other Poems* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 13, 17.

translates into English as ‘walled-garden’.²⁷⁵ The most celebrated garden in Western literature is, of course, the Garden of Eden, which was also a paradisiacal space. According to Michael Waters, the Victorians used the garden ‘to articulate their own experiences and states of mind – either those directly connected with gardens, or those which Tennyson poetically structured in Garden terms’.²⁷⁶ This is partially why the garden is able to symbolise, or help the speaker to make sense of, the changes that take place in their lives. The garden is able to present all of these varying conditions because, according to Pauline Fletcher, it ‘is the most complex and ambiguous of all landscapes’. It can reflect a person’s ‘emotions’ and can embody ‘his own idea of himself, or of his society’.²⁷⁷ For Swinburne and the industrial poets, the garden is a complex space that is not created only for pleasure, but as a place of memory, thought and even self-flagellation in the case of Swinburne.

For both groups, the garden has the potential to be a political space too, precisely because it can reflect a poet’s own ideas about the self and society. This further strain of the anti-pastoral anticipates the work of William Morris who, in his politically charged romance *News from Nowhere* (1890), describes all of England as a garden.²⁷⁸ A literary precedent for seeing the garden as a political arena can be found in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. In Act 2 scene 5 Queen Isobel conceals herself within her garden in order to listen to what the common people (the gardeners) are saying about the contemporary political situation. The older gardener and his assistant discuss the state of the country through politicised garden imagery. They contrast the order present within their garden to the disorder of the world outside. In working-class poetry the garden can in certain instances

²⁷⁵ ‘Paradise’ in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edn., online version. (2005). <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137340>> [Accessed on 2 Feb. 2011].

²⁷⁶ Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988), p. 100.

²⁷⁷ Pauline Fletcher, *Gardens and Grim Ravines: The Language of Landscape in Victorian Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 8.

²⁷⁸ William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ed. by David Leopold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 8.

be linked to what Elizabeth Helsinger terms a ‘rural scene’. These are sites of ‘contest for possession and definition of the country – in both local and national senses. Conflicting meanings of the land are invoked in a struggle for cultural representation which is also a struggle for political representation’.²⁷⁹ In several working-class poems, gardens are taken over by developers, thereby becoming a contested space because their working-class ownership is lost. Emerging from this embattled symbolic territory, the garden space also becomes associated with cultural representation and identity, as poets impose their hopes and fear of change onto the garden space, using it to preserve an individual and at times, group identity.

To begin with Swinburne, we find that he characteristically creates gardens that have an eerie beauty and are set in remote locations that are influenced by the French Decadent movement.²⁸⁰ In agreement with Charles Baudelaire, he wrote in a review of the French poet’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1862 that ‘the art of poetry has absolutely nothing to do with didactic matter at all’.²⁸¹ Eschewing a political agenda, the Decadents believed in ‘art for art’s sake’, rather than the Shakespearean ‘great creating Nature’; in the work of the Decadent poets, the argument of Perdita and Polixenes from ‘The Winter’s Tale’ (1623) has long been decided in favour of the latter. What the Decadent work of Baudelaire and Swinburne has in common is that both poets use natural imagery to make a connection between beauty and death. In Swinburne’s poem ‘*Ave Atque Vale: In Memory of Charles Baudelaire*’ (1867) he employs elements of the elegiac pastoral to celebrate the

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 7.

²⁸⁰ For a discussion of the Decadent movement see Chris Snodgrass, ‘The Poetry of the 1890s’ in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, Antony H. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 321-342 and Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy and Culture of the Fin-de-Siècle*, ed. by T. Jefferson Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). For further details on the influence of the French Decadent movement upon Swinburne see Catherine Maxwell, *Swinburne* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006) and Rikky Rooksby, *A. C. Swinburne’s: A Poet’s Life* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997).

²⁸¹ Cf. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 407.

life of the poet and to name himself as Baudelaire's successor. Swinburne does this by revealing overlapping content between his own poetic persona and that of his poetic brother. For example, Swinburne uses an epigraph from poem 100 of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) to open his work:

*Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.*

In the epilogue the speaker proposes that an undefined 'we' take some flowers to the grave of an unnamed dead person. This acts as a mark of respect for the dead, but for both poets, flowers can be a symbol of evil and decay within a given society. They are also a way of relating what Swinburne terms the '[s]ecrets and sorrows unbeheld of us' through their 'lovely leaf-buds poisonous'.²⁸²

Swinburne's desire to find repose surrounded by death is reflected in his use of nature imagery. According to Fletcher, his 'love of wild and solitary settings springs not merely from his rejection of society but from the most profound and passionate depths of his nature'.²⁸³ Through his garden settings Swinburne is therefore able to create a psychologised landscape. In contrast, there is evidence in his letters that he responded positively to the natural world, though there are perhaps not the rich descriptions of it that can be found in the work of John Clare and Thomas Hardy, for instance. The portrayal of the city of Cologne and its surrounding countryside in a letter to Henrietta Swinburne on 18 July 1855 is typical of his early prose responses to the natural world.

²⁸² Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878), 24.
25.

²⁸³ Fletcher, p. 191.

I liked the old city very much; it is so beautifully placid, down among the hills is a valley, and the country about it is most beautiful [...] All the hills are covered with woods, but here and there they open into smooth green lawns, and break into ravines where the streams are exactly like that of Mouncey, and the water just the moss-water colour.²⁸⁴

In this passage, Swinburne demonstrates an eye for natural beauty, although the description itself is quite sparse and perfunctory. This is different from the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth or Coleridge, for example, whose work displays a more emotional connection to nature.²⁸⁵ There is little sense of excitement and wonder at the natural world in Swinburne's work. In the opinion of fellow Pre-Raphaelite Morris, Swinburne's poetry was 'founded on literature, not on nature', and his gardens can often be elusive, bleak and erotic rather than realistic.²⁸⁶

A number of poems from his *Poems and Ballads* series present a world that has been over-taken by a kind of fallen garden. Traditional symbols of beauty such as roses and lilies are present, but these are either withered or are associated with death. Swinburne depicts wild or diseased gardens that are very different from the landscaped gardens that became increasingly popular during the Victorian period when ordered beds of flowers with intricate designs were the norm. The period also saw an increase in the number of public gardens such as those in Halifax, Belfast and London created for the enjoyment of society. Those which appeared in fiction also reflected this landscaping and organising trend, highlighting 'fragrance, [...] visual appeal, picturesqueness and the potential for

²⁸⁴ Swinburne, *Letters*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-62), p. 5.

²⁸⁵ For both poets nature can conjure up a feeling of awe and wonder. For further discussion see Stuart Curran, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Stephen Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁸⁶ 'Obiter Dicta by Contemporary Men of Letters' in Swinburne: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Clyde K. Hyder (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), pp. 115-114 (p. 123).

representation, and a moderate but not excessive degree of artifice'.²⁸⁷ Swinburne's gardens are certainly not picturesque, and rather than relying upon artifice, they are more likely to represent the relationship between the speaker's state of mind and the distorted physical world, as in 'A Forsaken Garden' and 'The Garden of Proserpine'. For instance, the speaker of the former poem from *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* asks the addressee to

[...] "look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die— but we?" (42-44)

The poem presents a reflection on the perceived inevitability of death, however 'but we' suggests that, like the waves, the speaker and addressee have broken this cycle by abiding within the garden. The speaker of 'The Garden of Proserpine' describes herself as being 'weary' of her existence living between the everyday world and the underworld.²⁸⁸ She associates the 'blown buds of barren flowers' with this half-life (14). Swinburne's garden spaces are often linked to the classical world and myth and are populated by a dejected or disillusioned speaker. In this his work relates to Tennyson's 'Marianna' (1830) from *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and *Maud* (1855) in which the psychological deterioration of the speaker is dramatised in the landscape.

The anti-pastoral gardens that are created by the industrial working-class poets are not concerned solely with creating spaces which display artifice and respond to their psychological state. Rather, they use the garden to explore periods of change in a different way; their work is more grounded in reality. This would be difficult to achieve through the traditional pastoral. The poets to be considered within this chapter generally come from

²⁸⁷ Waters, p. 8.

²⁸⁸ Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads: First Series* (London: J. C. Hotten, 1866), 15.

industrial towns in Blackburn, Lancashire and Northumbria. Samuel Laycock's parents were handloom workers from Yorkshire, but he later moved with his family to Cheshire where he worked as a cotton weaver and later as a foreman cut-looker. The Glaswegian poet James MacFarlan had a similar occupation as a weaver and pedlar. William Billington spent his life as an unhappy factory worker in Blackburn. The Northumbrian poet Joseph Skipsey was, in a sense, able to retain a connection to the land as he worked in the mining industry for the majority of his life. George Hull was a middle-class poet; his father was a merchant and his family had enough money to send him to dame school. He then went on to hold a number of clerical positions throughout his career. Hull is included in this chapter because he acts as a chronicler of the changes to the working-class poetic tradition in Blackburn.²⁸⁹ The effect of the Industrial Revolution is palpable in a number of works by these poets, where the garden acts as a safety net against the changes that are impacting Britain. Many of the poets exhibit a desire to preserve their gardens and implicitly their traditional way of life, as well as using the space as a receptacle for personal memories.

Working-class poets such as Hull, Skipsey, MacFarlane and Laycock at times employ garden imagery to make sense of the relationship between their poetic identity and the land within an industrialised society. In certain working-class poems it can be argued that the anti-pastoral impulse results from a desire to gain mental and economic freedom. These poems are written in the tradition of Clare's enclosure elegies. In 'The Lament of Swordy-Well' (1821-1824), written during his time at Helpstone, Clare describes the way in which his identity becomes subsumed into the land that is being re-possessioned. As John Goodridge sees it 'his own narrative persona in the poem can only weep and listen, as the

²⁸⁹ George Hull, *The Poets and Poetry of Blackburn: 1793-1902* (Preston: J & G Toulmin, 1902).

mature voice of Nature tells the story for him'.²⁹⁰ Yet Clare's poem does more than this because his speaker is able to give voice to all of the local inhabitants who have been negatively affected by the land enclosures.

I'm Swordy Well, a piece of land
That's fell upon the town,
Who worked me till I couldn't stand
And crush me now I'm down.

There was a time my bit of ground
Made freeman of the slave,
The ass no pounder'd dare to pound
When I his supper gave.²⁹¹

In stanza two Clare uses words associated with destruction such as 'fell' and 'crush' to describe the current state of the land, whereas before the enclosures, working on it could potentially bring about economic freedom. The enclosures, which Clare laments in 'Swordy Well', represent a marked shift in the lives of those working-class communities whose livelihood depended upon the land. The enclosures brought about the end of traditional rights, such as growing food and resisting seizure, which '[m]ade freeman of the slave'. The establishment of independent farms meant that land was also no longer shared between its owners and those who worked upon it.

By the Victorian period the majority of cultivated land had been enclosed. Those working-class labourers who had made use of common land in order to support themselves

²⁹⁰ John Goodridge, 'Pastoral and Popular Modes in Clare's "Enclosure Elegies"' from *The Independent Spirit: John Clare and the Self-Taught Tradition*, ed. by Goodridge (Helpstone: John Clare Society and the Margaret Grainger Memorial Trust, 1994), pp. 139-155.

²⁹¹ John Clare, *Major Works*, ed. by Tom Paulin and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 143, 1-8.

now worked on farms or had moved to industrialised towns and cities to find work – a process that is still very much under way in the earlier period of pastoral dominated by Wordsworth.²⁹² The appearance of a number of poems by working-class poets which connect the garden with the anti-pastoral coincides, then, with this change. Following land-enclosures the garden of an individual became an increasingly important space, perhaps because of a disconnection with the arable land, a sense of loss of a traditional way of life or because having a garden allowed for the ownership of something beautiful. For those of the working classes lucky enough to own one, a garden was a piece of land that could be used in a practical way to grow food, could be entirely decorative or even a wilderness. The garden had the potential to become a little piece of paradise for its owners as a place of respite and fun. A number of working-class garden poems exhibit anxiety, most often because of a feeling of disconnection and separation from tradition, while the garden remains behind. The anti-pastoral garden however is not necessarily a negative space; it can be physically beautiful and is sometimes used to retrieve positive memories.

Life changes relating to love and the family

In the work of Swinburne, Laycock and Hull there is a movement against the traditions of pastoral poetry that amounts to an anti-pastoral poetic. One feature of this verse is that it is used to show that the idealisation of the Victorian woman as the ‘Angel in the House’ is not sustainable because women, like gardens, are flawed and complex. The relationship between the (normally male) speaker and poet with women can give us clues with regard to how they construct their own identity and particularly their connection to the domestic sphere. One of the most significant connections between women and the garden in Western literature can be found in the Bible; Eve is given no physical description but we are told

²⁹² Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

that she was created out of Adam's rib in order to be a helpmeet for him.²⁹³ By the seventeenth century, in works such as *Paradise Lost* (1667), the role of Eve is expanded upon. Eve is possessed of a greater beauty than Adam but he is her intellectual superior. In the Victorian period a more complex Eve had a strong hold over the Pre-Raphaelite imagination. In Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862) Laura, in an echo of Eve, gives in to the temptation to eat the luscious fruit offered by the Goblin Men and subsequently enters into a death-like state. In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Eden Bower' (1869) a second woman, Lilith, who is purported to be first wife of Adam in the Jewish *Talmud*, is added to the Garden of Eden. Lilith is powerful and intelligent and as such she is able to control the snake that tempts Eve. Both women are beautiful but they present an ambivalent response to the angel/monster dichotomy, which has been associated with female characters in Victorian literature by the likes of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979). Swinburne and the industrial working-class poets use neither Eve nor Lilith within their poetry but arguably present versions of these figures.

Laycock, a handloom weaver from Marsden in Yorkshire uses the garden space to show his love and care for his wife and children, even though one of his children is now dead. In his 1894 poem 'My Garden' which appeared in *Warblins fro' an Owd Songster* his speaker appropriates biblical references to Jesus as both a gardener and shepherd who watches over his sheep.²⁹⁴ The fact that plants and flowers are fragile and have a relatively short life span can be a source of anxiety for the gardener. In the opening sequence to Laycock's poem a gardener tells of his investment and care for his garden. It is a metaphor for his home and family:

²⁹³ Genesis 2:21-24.

²⁹⁴ The most well-known passage in which Jesus is described as a gardener comes in John 20: 15-6, when Mary Magdalene mistakes the risen Christ for a gardener. Further, in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus submits to God's will that he should die for his people and is subsequently taken away by the authorities. John 18: 1-8, Luke 22: 47-54, Matthew 26: 36-56. On Good Friday Jesus is taken to Golgotha to be crucified, which according to John's account was a place where 'there was a garden'. John 19: 41.

My home is my Garden, and thousand of hours,
 Have I tended and watched o'er my plants and flowers,
 And this heart often throbs in my bosom for fear,
 Less the Spoiler should rob me of what I hold dear.²⁹⁵

There is a tension here between the role of Jesus as the good shepherd (as a person who watches over his sheep, which relates to the pastoral tradition) and Jesus the gardener, which can be linked to the anti-pastoral. This link can be made because The Garden of Eden is connected to the fall of mankind, which is also a key symbol in Decadent poetry. The flowers that the gardener looks after are metaphorically his wife and children, as contemporary readers would be aware of the traditional connection between flowers and women. The 'Spoiler' is initially a mysterious person or thing, but he is later revealed to be, in a Swinburnean move, the Angel of Death. The speaker relates that one night when he did not watch his garden, the 'Angel of Death' came along and stole his 'favourite flower'; most likely a reference to one of his children (7-8). This relates to a cold and bleak side of the pastoral wherein life is taken away early and the opportunity to seize the day is no longer available.

The poem contains fourteen lines, which would generally gesture towards the sonnet. However, Laycock deliberately does not employ its rhyme scheme and instead uses couplets which tend to be associated with the ode tradition. Like the ode, the poem is quite didactic and rhetorical, as it attempts to warn others to 'cherish' life because it is fleeting and cannot be restored: 'Let us cherish, and love, these dear flowers while we may, | Since we know not how soon death may take them away' (11-12). The link between the flower and his children highlights the fact that life is both fleeting and imperfect. However much they are loved, the flowers of the garden are earthly and will not last. They can therefore

²⁹⁵ Samuel Laycock, *Warblin's Fro' and Owd Songster*, 3rd ed. (Oldham: W. E. Clegg, 1894), 1-4.

only be a pale reflection of the garden of paradise that the speaker believes to be waiting for his family after death. Up until this point the imagery has a fairly conventional pastoral emphasis. An underlying tension in these poems, however, is that the working classes do not have the economic means which would fully enable them to adopt a *carpe diem* way of life. In Robert Herrick's (1591-1634) poem 'To the Virgins to Make Much of Time' (1633) the speaker instructs his readers to make the most of the time that they have on earth. The poem opens:

Garther ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.²⁹⁶

The speaker cautions that life goes by too quickly, and uses the image of the short life span of the flower to express this.

In George Hull's 'The Angel Bride' from his *English Lyrics and Lancashire Songs* (1922) the speaker looks back over significant events which he shared with his now deceased wife. The poem celebrates the life of Mary, but at the same time the spectre of her impending death looms over the poem, thus preventing it from fully entering into the *carpe diem* tradition. Stanza one details their meeting when he was 'little more than a boy, and she a little maid'.²⁹⁷ The two do not meet again for another five years as the speaker goes away to work in a neighbouring town – a place which is associated with 'foolish fancies' (7), in an echo of Wordsworth's 'Michael', first published in the 1800 version of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the Biblical parable of 'The Prodigal Son' (Luke 15: 11-32). When they are reunited they gaze at each other and the speaker becomes 'raptured' by the smile

²⁹⁶ Robert Herrick, *Works of Robert Herrick*, ed. by Alfred Pollard, vol. 1 (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1891), p. 102, 1-4.

²⁹⁷ Hull, *English Lyrics and Lancashire Songs* (Preston: Kitchine, 1922), p. 2.

of Mary (10). A tension is created by the two possible meanings of rapture. It can be a condition of ‘intense delight or enthusiasm’ or ‘the act of conveying one person from one place to another, *esp* to heaven [*sic*]’.²⁹⁸ The line therefore captures the delight of the early meetings of the two and foreshadows Mary’s death. In the final stanza the speaker confesses that he ‘half-forgot’ her when he went away, but she reveals that her love for him remained constant: “‘But I loved you all the time, alike in smiles and tears!’” (14, 16). The speaker half forgets the world which he has left behind, but Mary, because she has remained behind, has not changed.

The poem begins with an epigram based upon I Corinthians 15:55: ‘O grave! Where is thy victory? | O Death! Where is thy sting?’. It is likely that Hull used the King James Version of the Bible, but he makes three significant changes to the translation. First, he replaces the commas after ‘O grave’ and ‘O Death’ with exclamation marks. Second, he inserts the word ‘is’ into each line and thirdly he inverts the order of the two lines. It is possible that Hull did not have his Bible to hand and has misremembered the lines, but this does hint at his knowledge of the work. The epigraph suggests the difficulty for certain working-class poets to envision the victory over death that is promised in the Bible because of the hardships of this life. This is a tension that has been detected in Janet Hamilton’s work in the previous chapter of this thesis. Despite the fact that the epigram sets a dramatic and perhaps serious tone, the remainder of the poem continues in the lighter ballad tradition; each stanza rhymes abab and is followed by a chorus. In a sense, this reflects the desire of the speaker to retain positive (though perhaps idealised) memories of his dead wife, whilst at the same time remaining uncertain as to whether or not he will see her in heaven.

²⁹⁸ *OED*.

Mary! gentle Mary! your heart was ever true,
 Never purer Lily-Maid in England's garden grew!
 You were young, and I was young, and youth's bright day is o'er,
 But we love each other evermore, dear! (5-8)

The chorus remains the same until the final stanza, when the third line changes to 'You're in HEAVEN, and I'm on Earth, but LOVE'S bright day's Not o'er [*sic*]' (31), which may anticipate the reunion of the two in heaven. In 'The Blessed Damozel' (1846-1847) Dante Gabriel Rossetti presents an idealised imagining of a past love in heaven which could be read as a second instalment of Hull's poem:

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 robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
 No wrought flowers did adorn,
 But a white rose of Mary's gift,
 For service meetly worn;
 Her hair that lay along her back
 Was yellow like ripe corn.²⁹⁹

The most notable connection between the two poems is that both women are associated with flowers, as was the case in Laycock's 'My Garden' and Tennyson's 'The Gardener's Daughter' discussed above. In Hull's poem, Mary is described as being a 'Lily-Maid', but Rossetti moves further away from the sentimental tradition by only adorning his subject

²⁹⁹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems: A New Edition* (London: Ellis and White, 1881), 3-12.

with flowers. Here the flowers take on a cold aesthetic quality. They are symbolic, rather than representing an individual person, as is the case in Laycock's poem. She has 'three lilies in her hand' and her robe is decorated with a single 'white rose' (5, 9). The description of Mary as a 'lily-maid' is apt because she is a product of country life. The lily is also a symbol of purity, and is associated with the Virgin Mary.

Pre-Raphaelite poetry and art is renowned for its depiction of beautiful or provocative women and aesthetic poetry, a characteristic which unnerved contemporary critics such as Robert Buchanan.³⁰⁰ Descriptions of beautiful women enabled male poets to assert their masculinity within a society that was not convinced that the sensitivity and deep thought required to be a poet were manly qualities.³⁰¹ Yet, the women whose beauty is idolised in these works, such as Lizzie Siddal, Emma Hill (1843-1894) and Fanny Cornforth (1835-1896), often came from working-class backgrounds.³⁰² Martin Danahay explains that 'Pre-Raphaelite artists like Rossetti chose working-class women rather than women of their own class as models'.³⁰³ This is not to say that the artists did not find higher-class women to be beautiful, but that it was perhaps more acceptable for working-class women to be presented in an improper manner. As well as presenting evocative women Swinburne takes on the voice of a female poet, as can be seen in his voicing of the first female lyric poetess, Sappho. According to Yopie Prins 'Sappho has become

³⁰⁰ See Robert Buchanan, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry' in *The Contemporary Review*, 18 (1871).

³⁰¹ In 'Some Characteristics of Modern Poetry' Arthur Hallam describes Tennyson as being like Shelley and Keats a poet of sensation, which he defines as showing a 'luxuriance of imagination', a power to 'embody himself in ideal characters, or rather moods of character' and a 'vivid, picturesque delineation of objects'. This understanding of the poet moves away from the more feminine sentimental tradition which is associated with Felicia Hemans and William Wordsworth, which had been inherited from the eighteenth century. The article was first published in *The Englishman's Magazine* in August, 1831. cf. *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, ed. by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Plymouth: Broadview, 2005), pp. 540-555 (p. 546).

³⁰² See J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), particularly chapter one: 'The Ugliness of Early Pre-Raphaelitism', pp. 7-48. Bullen cites Frederick Hardman's comment from the *Blackwood Magazine* that the Pre-Raphaelites 'apparently select bad models, and then exaggerate their badness till it is out of all nature'. 'The Pictures of the Season', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 68 (1850), 77-93: 82. cf. Bullen, p. 7.

³⁰³ Martin A. Danahay, 'Mirrors of Masculine Desire: Narcissus and Pygmalion in Victorian Representation', *Victorian Poetry*, 32.1 (Spring, 1994), 35-54, 44.

synonymous with the woman poet'.³⁰⁴ She goes on to suggest that Sappho left to her Victorian successors a 'legacy of fragmentation'. This enables her poetry to be 'simultaneously dismembered and remembered, in a complex mediation between corpse and corpus: the body of the poet is sacrificed to the body of her song'.³⁰⁵ In a similar way, Swinburne's poetic female figures are associated with beauty and death, which are aesthetic and Decadent motifs; he dismembers objects which are associated with physical beauty within his garden space whilst also allowing them to become places of remembrance.

One of the most interesting poems by Swinburne that explores connections between the male poet and a beautiful woman in a garden environment is 'Before the Mirror' from the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. Decadent imagery is used to create the impression of beautiful stagnation. Here, and in a number of his garden poems, Swinburne seems to be interested in creating states of introspection rather than seizing the day. The work was composed as a response to *Symphony in White no. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864) by the aesthetic artist James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). In a letter to Whistler, Swinburne wrote that the idea for the poem 'was entirely and only suggested to me by the picture, where at once the metaphor of the rose and the notion of sad and glad mystery in the face languidly contemplative of its own phantom and all other things seen by their phantoms'.³⁰⁶ Superficially the poem appears to present a male artist's description of the ghostly reflection of a female subject.

Behind the veil, forbidden,

Shut up from sight,

Love, is there sorrow hidden,

³⁰⁴ Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 7.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8, 115-6.

³⁰⁶ Swinburne, *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 118-120.

Is there delight?

Is thy dower joy or grief,

White rose of weary leaf,

Late rose whose life is brief, whose loves are light? (8-14)

The face of the woman hidden behind the veil is obscured, and as a result the speaker cannot make sense of her emotions, even though the painting depicts Whistler's mistress Joanna Heffernan. The speaker asks himself, '[a]rt thou the ghost, my sister | White sister there | Am I the ghost, who knows?' (31-33). Swinburne considers whether the act of creating a poem about such a figure is a liminal experience which in turn could cause him to become ghostlike. This potential transformation has sinister undertones, which can be seen to link to the imperfection of the anti-pastoral rather than the idealised pastoral. It perhaps explains why Swinburne delights in the paradoxical condition of trying to bring the reflection in the mirror to life as a ghostly alternative to pastoral. The most famous example of this practice elsewhere in Victorian poetry can be seen in 'The Other Side of the Mirror' by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge (1861-1907). In the poem the speaker stands before a mirror and conjures a 'vision' who is

Unlike the aspects glad and gay,

That erst were found reflected there -

The vision of a woman, wild

With more than womanly despair.³⁰⁷

As in Swinburne's poem there is a sense that this woman is otherworldly and distinct from the speaker. It has been argued however that the use of the mirror device enables women to explore some of the darker facets of their identity in a space which is safe from the world

³⁰⁷ Mary Coleridge, *Collected Poems*, ed. by T. Whistler (London: 1954), 3-6.

around them.³⁰⁸ In Swinburne's 'Before the Mirror' on the other hand, it is unclear whether the poem depicts what the speaker would actually see, or whether this is just a figment of the poet's imagination. For instance, the opening two stanzas of the poem link the vision to red and white roses. The poem begins by stating that a 'white rose in a red rose-garden | Is not so white', perhaps because it reflects some of the colour of the roses which surround it.³⁰⁹ This is a whiteness that seems unavailable to nature, the world of the pastoral, and is only found in art. This implicitly suggests that a woman's true self is not completely visible to those that surround her. Rather than idealising the female figure, Swinburne holds her within a work of art.

The theme of liminality is also present in the 'Garden of Proserpine'; here, Swinburne considers a figure who spends half of her life imprisoned in the underworld in a place where 'life has death for neighbour' and there is 'no growth of moor or coppice' (17, 25). Like 'Before the Mirror', he uses anti-pastoral garden imagery to describe a woman who is remote from him. This strong female presence is reflected in the use of rhyme. The poem rhymes ababcccb, but only the b rhymes are masculine. This presents a tension between the masculine and feminine voices of the poem. The instability of the voice points away from the idealisation of the traditional pastoral. The poem describes Proserpine as she stands at the garden entrance to the Underworld. She wears a crown of poppies and occupies herself by preparing a tonic which will induce death, from the poppies that surround her. Interestingly the poem is one of three that Swinburne admitted to being autobiographical within the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. W. H. Mallock (1849-1923)

³⁰⁸ See Christine Battersby, 'Her Blood and His Mirror: Mary Coleridge, Luce Irigaray, and the Female Self', in *Beyond Representation: Philosophy and Poetic Imagination*, ed. by Richard Eldridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 249-272. Katharine McGowran has linked Whistler's painting to Coleridge's poem. 'Re-Reading Women's Poetry at the Turn of the Century', *Victorian Poetry* 41.4 (Winter, 2003), 584-589.

³⁰⁹ Swinburne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise, vol. 1 (London, 1925-1927), 1-2.

recollects that at a dinner party in the 1870s Swinburne suggested that in ‘The Garden of Proserpine’ he had ‘expressed his revolt against the flesh and its fevers, and his longing to find refuge from them in a haven of undisturbed rest’.³¹⁰ This assessment of the poem makes it sound slightly spasmodic. The figure of Proserpine does not exist in a state of undisturbed rest, since she spends half of the year in the underworld. The poem then expresses Swinburne’s desire for a place of rest, whilst at the same time being aware that this is not sustainable. Rather than aspiring towards victory through death, as in Laycock’s poem, Swinburne envisions a death-like state which is achievable in this life. Further, it is achieved not through the rapid movement implied by *carpe diem*, but through a kind of lethargy.

The poem also has elements that resemble certain works by his contemporaries. For instance, line nine – ‘I am tired of tears and laughter’ – resembles ‘*Vitae Summa Brevis Spem nos Vetat Incohare Longman*’ (1896) by Ernest Dowson (1867-1900); his description of ‘Barren Flowers’ echoes the vision of a corrupt society presented in Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* (9). These are all works that fall within the Decadent tradition. Equally, the introductory stanza responds to ‘The Lady of Shalott’ (1842) by Tennyson. Tennyson’s work cannot be described as Decadent, but it does have some of the elements that can be found in aesthetic poetry; though his poetry is perhaps more concerned with creating beautiful soundscapes. This link however does further affirm the notion that the anti-pastoral is a hybrid genre.

I watch the green field growing

For reaping folk and sowing,

³¹⁰ W. H. Mallock, *Memoirs of Life and Literature*, 1920, cf. Rooksby, p. 102.

For harvest-time and mowing,

A sleepy world of streams[.]³¹¹

The garden is positioned next to a *single* field which is part of a rural economy. This, taken with the repetition of the 'ing' rhyme and simple lexis, evokes a constrained space which is linked to sleep and potentially to death. In this the work links to another of Tennyson's poems, 'The Lotos-Eaters' (1832). This sense of enclosure extends to Proserpine's garden.

Then star nor sun shall waken,

Nor any change of light:

Nor sound of waters shaken,

Nor any sound or sight:

Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,

Nor days nor things diurnal;

Only the sleep eternal

In an eternal night. (89-96)

Within the garden there is no sunlight, starlight or change of light; it is possible that night-time is constant. This gives the impression that Proserpine is living a kind of half existence, as is also reflected in the way in which there is a feeling that the beginning of each of the 'Nor' lines is missing. The effect of this is that space is defined negatively, whereas in the traditional pastoral the landscape is idealised. This also creates the sense that there is something that the speaker is leaving out. All of these effects prevent the reader from creating a clear picture of what the garden looks like; Swinburne is more interested in creating atmosphere than adding solid detail. A sense of foreboding is fashioned in these closing lines by the use of anaphora and its resultant biblical resonance. The repetition of 'nor' jars against the lexis associated with movement. Yet, by citing these

³¹¹ Swinburne, *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, 5-8.

references to the cyclical nature of life, their ghost-like presence is evoked, and within the transient state of the garden there is a sense that they will return again. In Swinburne's poetry women are not idealised, but are enclosed within garden states which cause them to stagnate. In the two poems by Hull and Laycock the idealised women that are presented by the speaker are already dead at the start of each of the poems. Both poets use the garden as place which holds some of the memories of their lives together. The female subjects and speakers that are created by both groups of poets on the other hand show a complex relationship between the poets and the out of reach women that they portray.

Loss

Garden imagery can be used to convey the loss of a way of life, loss of love and material possessions. The anti-pastoral acknowledges that nothing in this life is perfect, but working-class poets respond to this truth with a positive attitude. It can therefore present a more realistic portrayal of the changes that take place to their way of life. Hull's 'Th' Owd Gate Deawn at th' End of Eawr Fowd' is a dialect poem written in the voice of a female speaker, in a reverse of Ellen Johnston's poem 'The Husband's Lament' from *Autobiography, Poems and Songs*, which mimics the voice of a male speaker. In the poem Hull's speaker anticipates the loss of a gate at the end of her garden. The loss of the physical object is not the greatest concern of the speaker; rather she is keen to preserve the memories which are associated with it. Unlike Swinburne's aestheticised female speakers, Hull gives what seems to be an authentic account of her voice, and as before, this is not an idealised version of the lives of the working classes. The subject matter of the poem does lend itself to verse written in the sentimental tradition, but the more dynamic tone of the speaker prevents this, thus enabling her to engage politically with the changes that are

taking place. The opening of the poem relays the sense of uncertainty and unease with regard to place that is felt by working-class writers. The poem begins:

They tell me this wauld's allus changin',
 I' th' country as weel as I' th' teawn,
 An' owd Slater said th' last day were comin'
 When his pair o' hand looms were poo'd deawn.
 To-day I could welly believe him [.]³¹²

The conversational facility from the first line onwards suggests that the speaker is letting you into her confidence. It is often difficult for people who are in the middle of change to grasp the extent to which things are moving on around them, but they are likely to notice the small transformations. This potentially makes changes that are happening in the lives of the working classes easier to deal with, without downplaying them. An unspecified 'they' have told the speaker that the world is always changing in the countryside as well as in the town. In line three 'Old Slater' comments that the day when his hand looms are pulled down would be the 'last day'. This marks the end of a particular way of life; these changes have a greater effect upon older members of the community because it takes them longer to adapt to change.

The speaker complains that land surrounding her house is being sold to make way for new houses, potentially to house workers needed for industrial developments in the area. The developers will soon start to pull down the 'garden hedges' and an 'owd gate' which is associated with a number of important memories for the speaker (6, 7). She voices these concerns directly to her readers in a non-sentimental fashion:

Yo' may think I'm quite silly for frettin'
 O'er sich a quare thind as a gate;

³¹² Hull, *English Lyrics and Lancashire Songs*, 1-5.

But it carries owd time on id' hinges. (13-15)

Hull describes the gate as carrying 'owd time on id' hinges'. It can keep alive memories of people and times that have passed by in a similar fashion to a clock's keeping track of time. The backward and forward motion of the gate's swinging is similar to that of a pendulum. The notion that objects and possessions can be receptacles for memories is important in working-class communities where individuals and families had few possessions. This was also seen in the previous section as working-class poets remember women who have died within a garden setting in order to preserve their memory. The objects within a garden can be just as significant as those within the home. The speaker used to swing on the gate when she was young, and further associates it with her now deceased father who would perch her on top of the gate as a child. She also remembers standing by the gate chatting to her husband Charlie in the period of their courtship. In spite of the changes that are taking place in the world that surrounds the speaker, she takes an optimistic view of the present and future. Her husband and children, who she considers to be 'two rooases [roses]', are still alive (54). This is distinct from Swinburne's aestheticised imagery because the roses have more than a superficial meaning. For instance, in Swinburne's poem 'Before the Mirror' the roses are aesthetically contained and distanced from the speaker; whereas the roses in Hull's poem are more natural and relate to human figures. The description does not necessarily gesture towards the sentimental tradition either, but is used to show how precious her children are to her. She values the love of her family above all other things. Her closing remarks are defiant in the face of change:

An' I'm sure, tekkin' life otogether;

We'n nod so mich cause to be sad;

For true love can drive away sorrow

Far better nor silver an' gowd;
 So I'll keep a leet heart for to-morrow,
 Though I'm loysin' th' owd gate I' eawr fowd! (55-60)

The speaker retains that she will stay positive; developers may be able to take away the gate but they cannot take away the memories that are associated with it. This suggests that it is possible to live your life partially through memory as well as through the activities of day-to-day life.

'Where are the Blackburn Poets Gone' by Billington explores developments in the local poetic tradition brought about by changes in the urban and rural environment in a more overt way than is seen in 'Th' Owd Gate Deawn at th' End of Eawr Fowd' by Hull. Rather than using the pastoral mode to escape from city life into the countryside, Billington uses nature and garden imagery to bring elements of the country into the town. This shows a move away from the traditional pastoral because the images that are used are closer to Swinburne's use of the Decadent. Blackburn was one of the first towns in Britain to be industrialised and had a strong cotton industry; the inventor of the Spinning Jenny (a catalyst for the Industrial Revolution), James Hargreaves (1720-1778) was a Blackburn weaver. In the final stanza of Billington's poem he aims to see a positive side to the changes which have taken place in the town.

In fine, may the bards of this smoky old town
 By their confluent gleams add a glow to its crown,
 "Like stars in one sky let them mingle their blaze
 Of light, nor be jealous of each other's rays"
 Like flowers in one garden put forth their bright bloom,
 Nor envy the fairest its tints or perfume;

The pipes of an organ all vary in tone,

Their sound must be several, their music is one.³¹³

In 'Prosperine' by Swinburne the sun and stars do not shine, but here their light has been overtaken by the gleaming of the fires from factory chimneys. The chimneys which dominated the skyline are seen by the poets to add 'gleams' and 'glow' to the 'crown' of the city. The poets are able to act as stars who shine rays of light over the town and are like flowers who come together to transform the urban landscape into a beautiful garden. Poems have the potential to rise above the realities of place, even though their rural landscape had been lost, a new garden can be superimposed over the industrial town via verse.

In Swinburne's poem 'A Forsaken Garden' from the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878), he expresses the loss of time and a concrete sense of place that relates to the elusive quality of the speaker. Rather than focusing upon the speaker or Swinburne, 'A Forsaken Garden' explores an isolated barren world in which death has been defeated. According to Rikky Rooksby this volume in general 'presented a Swinburnian turn from political verse to poetry of memory and regret, occasionally blazing into defiance. It has poems which celebrate the tradition of poetry, elegize poets, friends and family, and there are poems which hint at Swinburne's romantic disappointment'.³¹⁴ Like 'The Garden of Proserpine' which appeared in Series One of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne makes use of elements of ballad tradition in 'A Forsaken Garden'. The poem consists of ten eight line stanzas which have the extended ballad form ababcbcd. In doing so, Swinburne takes on what is traditionally an oral form of verse that is associated with minstrels who often came from lower class backgrounds. In the traditional ballad emphasis is often placed upon the

³¹³ William Billington, 'Poet's Corner', 2 May 1888 cf. Hull, *The Poets and Poetry of Blackburn: 1793-1902*, pp. 73-80.

³¹⁴ Rooksby, p. 230.

narrative rather than the speaker. This allows for a certain amount of distance between the poet and the subject/protagonist of their narrative. It also prevents the poem from becoming too didactic, a quality which, as previously noted, Swinburne did not admire in poetry. In contrast to 'The Garden of Proserpine' Swinburne's poetic identity in 'A Forsaken Garden' is elusive and is not tied to the garden setting that the poem presents.

The garden that is described in 'A Forsaken Garden' is not entirely fantastical, but there is a sense that it is otherworldly, which conveys a loss of connection to the world around him. Swinburne neither uses the more realistic settings of working-class poets, nor the idealised spaces associated with traditional pastoral. As was the case in 'The Garden of Proserpine' and 'Before the Mirror', Swinburne's gardens enable his speaker and/or subject to stagnate. This can be seen in the opening to 'A Forsaken Garden'.

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
 At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
 Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
 The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
 A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
 The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
 Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
 Now lie dead.³¹⁵

The use of assonance in this section is particularly lulling. It lulls the reader into a false sense of security that all is well, but this is very quickly undermined. A number of words are presented which refer to physical position such as 'coign', 'between', 'inland' and 'bottomless', but these do not give a solid sense of place. 'In a coign of a cliff', which opens the poem, has three potential meanings. The first is as a cornerstone, which responds

³¹⁵ Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878), 1-8.

to the geography of the garden. The second relates to a homophone of coign, 'coin' which could provoke an economically minded reading of the poem. Swinburne presents a world where money has become worthless, and contemporary laissez-faire economics has no place. Another print related definition – as a wedge of wood or metal securing type in a chase – links to the physical construction of the poem on the page. What all of these images have in common, is that they hint at a pushing away from the economic and social structure of society. They are seen to have little value for a poet who values art above all else.

In a similar way to 'The Garden of Proserpine' the poem creates a sense of enclosure via Swinburne's repetition of 'between' and the description of the garden as being 'walled round with rocks'. His suggestion that this is a 'ghost of garden' also has a similar effect to 'The Garden of Proserpine' as the speaker cannot help but to imagine what inhabited the space before. The anti-pastoral mode enables Swinburne to avoid grounding his poetic identity within a specific place and time. What is lost is a strong connection with the world around him. This is also true of the poems by Hull and Billington, as they try to hold onto items within their garden or to preserve a traditional way of life. The anti-pastoral gives the poets a form of expression that allows them to negotiate the disconnection that they feel with the world that surrounds them, thus enabling them to deal with periods of change or stagnation that take place in their lives.

Death

The anti-pastoral poems of Swinburne, James MacFarlane and Joseph Skipsey are as much about life as they are about death. Death is acknowledged within the pastoral tradition to be inevitable, and as such speakers are encouraged to make the most out of the time that they have on earth. 'The Little Garden-Grave' by MacFarlane and Skipsey's 'Baloo' use the

anti-pastoral to respond positively to death. Unlike the *carpe diem* tradition which promotes making the most of the experiences of this life, Skipsey and Swinburne's poems celebrate the state of naiveté in which we enter into this world and the fragility of our lives. This calls for sensitivity and open mindedness. The biblical account of the garden is associated with the resurrection of Jesus and consequently the resurrection of mankind, which suggests that life is everlasting rather than fleeting. The poems offer glimpses of the beauties still to be experienced in the next life. Swinburne however has little faith in Christianity; he views the life of Jesus to be a kind of myth, as can be seen in his poem 'Hymn to Proserpine' from the first series of *Poems and Ballads*: 'Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath; | We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness of death' (35-36). Within this worldview death and decay are a natural state of being and moreover provide a release from an unsatisfactory human existence.

MacFarlane in 'The Little Garden Grave' evokes a similar sense of isolation and decay to Swinburne's 'A Forsaken Garden'.

All alone, beneath the shadow
 Of the church wall old and grey,
 While the April rain is dancing
 O'er the golden path of May,
 Little Alice kneels at noontide
 In that lonely burial place,
 With the flowers of merry spring time
 Masking Death's cold phantom face;³¹⁶

³¹⁶ James MacFarlane, *Poetical Works* (Glasgow: Robert Forrester, 1882), 1-8.

An atmosphere of mystery and other worldliness is portrayed by the tension between the 'shadow' and the 'grey' colouring of the garden and descriptions of the movement of the rain and flowers: 'The April rain is dancing | O'er the golden path of May,' and the 'flowrets wave, | In a gleam of blessed beauty' (10-11). The first stanza of the poem describes a young woman, Alice, who 'kneels [...] all alone' in a church graveyard (5,1). As in Swinburne's poems and 'My Garden' by Laycock, there is proximity between the female subject of the poem and flower imagery:

Like a flower sits gentle Alice –
 Rose, full-blown with living breath –
 Or Hope's flower of promise planted
 On the sable crest of Death. (17-20)

Alice is likened to a rose, which is usually associated with love and desire, but here symbolises the expectation of a continued life in heaven after death. The flower is a symbol of hope rather than being an aesthetic image as it is in Swinburne's work. This is reflected in MacFarlane's use of formal effects, as in the last four lines of each of the two stanzas the words 'summer', 'wave' and 'grave' are repeated. Repetition and particularly the employment of wave imagery implies that the grave can be overcome – that life will return in a similar way to the recurrence of the seasons. The most well known contemporary Pre-Raphaelite poem to draw a comparison between the cyclical nature of the natural world and the immortality of humanity in heaven is Christina Rossetti's 'Song: When I am Dead my Dearest'. Rossetti's speaker requests that her beloved does not plant 'roses' or a 'cypress tree' at her grave site (3, 4).³¹⁷ This is because she believes that her soul will in no way be present there, but instead will be 'dreaming through the twilight |

³¹⁷ Christina Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. by R. W. Crump (London: Penguin, 2005), 52.

That does not rise nor set' (13-14). Rossetti acknowledges that the beauty of the natural world will be of little consequence in the next life; it is fleeting, but everlasting life is not. In a similar way to Laycock's 'In a Garden' and Hull's 'Angel Bride', she cautions her readers to not hold on too tightly to the things of this world. McFarlane equates death with sleep, earlier in the second stanza of 'The Little Garden Grave' we learn that 'all she loved on earth are lying | Sound and slumbering there' (13-14). In a similar way, in the godless and mythological landscapes which are created by Swinburne, flowers are often sleeping. They are thus able to return the next year even after they are killed off by the winter. If flowers are described as being asleep rather than dead, then it makes sense that they will wake up again on earth and not in heaven. A return to life in an imperfect or decaying world could potentially be a negative prospect. This is why Swinburne makes it clear that plant life is completely dead in 'A Forsaken Garden'.

In the final two readings of 'Baloo' by Skipsey and 'In a Garden' from the third series of *Poems and Ballads* (1889) by Swinburne death is approached from both innocent and experienced perspectives. 'Baloo' starts as a lullaby sung by a mother to her child but is overtaken by a lament because she is 'weary' and does not have enough milk to feed her child.³¹⁸ Skipsey successfully takes on a female voice and has the compassion to convey the anguish associated with her situation, even though this is quite removed from his own state as a male poet. It is likely that the baby was born out of wedlock; the 'he' that is referred to in stanza two is probably a past lover, although there may well be a residual suggestion of rape:

And had he but thought of the trouble;

And had he but thought on the pain:

³¹⁸ Joseph Skipsey, *Songs and Lyrics* (London: Walter Scott, 1892), p. 2.

Tho' green in the blade with the stubble,

I'm fated to bleach on the plain. (5-8)

This incident has made life much more difficult for the mother – she sees herself as having transformed from a 'rose' into a 'weed' (10, 12). Because the mother describes her baby as a 'blossom' she could potentially be a source of hope in her life but the ending of the poem is pessimistic. The anticipation of the end of her life becomes a source of solace: '[t]he longest lane yet had an end, and | The weary sleep sound in the grave' (1,13-16). The notion is similar to Swinburne's speakers who find solace in a garden of death.

The speaker of 'In a Garden', one of Swinburne's later poems, echoes the idiom of a small child, as the father draws the attention of his baby to significant things in the world around them and records his response. Superficially, the poem seems to be quite simplistic; it employs an abba rhyme scheme and has short but variable lines. The complexity of the poem lies in the way in which it distinguishes between the perspective of the baby and the adult. The poem has a Wordsworthian quality as it shows the receptiveness of the child to the world around him.

Baby, see the flowers!

Baby sees

Fairer things than these,

Fairer though they be than dreams of ours.³¹⁹

There is a sense here that the baby is able to see a better world than the one which is immediately perceptible. Perhaps the negative implication of this is that most adults have lost this ability. The baby takes a 'graver grace' when he hears the sound of the sea, but it is also 'touched with wonder what the sound may be [*sic*]' (15, 16). Instead of expressing frustration due to a lack of understanding of the sea, the baby instead exhibits 'wonder'. A

³¹⁹ Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads: Third Series* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1889), 1-4.

capitonym of grave (as a facial expression), is a resting place for the dead. Swinburne deliberately evokes these two meanings, but the latter is rejected by his young subject. This idealism does perhaps suggest that the poem should evoke the pastoral rather than anti-pastoral but as in Billington's poem 'Where are the Blackburn Poets Gone', poetry is not being used to gloss over an imperfect world. Swinburne's poem also creates a tension between the poet's position of experience and the speaker's innocence. This is most pronounced in the final stanza of the poem.

Baby, flower of light,

Sleep, and see

Brighter dreams than we,

Till good day shall smile away good night. (25-28)

The speaker takes pleasure in life on behalf of his baby; at the end of the day he looks forward to the next day, rather than towards death. The speaker concedes in the final lines that his vision of the world is not quite as idealistic as the one that he wishes his baby to see. It is for this reason that the traditional pastoral would not be an appropriate mode here. The anti-pastoral is necessary to convey the emotion and subtleties associated with death – something that the traditional pastoral cannot do as well.

Conclusion

The anti-pastoral is an appropriate form of expression for poets who wish to confirm that life is changeable and imperfect. For Swinburne, it enables him to create decaying, yet strangely beautiful spaces that can reflect his own psychological state, or allow him to retain control over another person. The garden can also be used as a way of escaping from the strictures of society. Further, its imagery can be employed by Swinburne to evade dealing with his own identity; even in poems such as 'The Garden of Proserpine', which

have autobiographical elements, Swinburne's poetic identity is unsettled and evasive. An exception can be found in 'In a Garden', a poem that describes a father and child sharing their impressions of the natural world. The working-class poems that I have explored within this chapter move away from the idealisation of the pastoral in order to give a more realistic view of their lives; one that acknowledges its positive times as well as hardships. Importantly they are interested in the safeguarding of memories and the preservation of a traditional way of life. In a sense the anti-pastoral, rather than being solely negative or escapist, is actually multi-faceted and nuanced. For instance, in 'My Garden' by Laycock the garden is described as being his home, whilst for Hull's speaker in 'Th' Owd Gate Deawn at th' End of Eawr Fowd' her husband and child are two roses within the garden. 'Baloo' by Skipsey diverges from this pattern; the use of flower and plant imagery framed within a lullaby aims to soothe away the violence or possible rape of the baby's mother. Even though she now describes herself as a weed, the connection does offer the possibility of a rebirth and redemption.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Cooper and the French Medieval Past

Introduction

The Victorian use of the Medieval in art, architecture and literature is multi-faceted: it can be escapist or idealised, a way of celebrating Britain's heritage, or can simply provide images and motifs. However, the writers considered in this chapter show a different trend, as they respond to elements of the French Medieval tradition. Within this chapter the contiguous tradition can be seen in the way in which Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Thomas Cooper simultaneously make use of the literature of the French Medieval past, in place of more well-known English writers. As a result, Rossetti and Cooper employ poetic techniques, settings and voices of the past in different ways in order to take a step back from the contemporary thus enabling them to return to it with lucidity and greater force. Rossetti appropriates the French Medieval poetry of François Villon to challenge contemporary aesthetic conventions as part of the Pre-Raphaelite defiance of contemporary Victorian high art traditions. The working-class poet Cooper on the other hand appropriates elements of the Medieval French and European troubadour tradition in *The Baron's Yule Feast* in order to highlight some of the discrepancies between the lives of the rich and poor. As I have argued in previous chapters, both Rossetti and Cooper, using in this case the French-Medievalist tradition, pursue an artistic agenda which runs counter to developments taking place within the realm of high culture; they therefore contribute to what appears to be an alternative tradition. The next two chapters focus on the Victorian vogue for Medievalism and present a move towards event-led analysis within the present thesis. If an interest in Medieval literature and culture was widespread during the Victorian period, then why then did Cooper and Rossetti contiguously respond to the French

Medieval past? This question will be explored in this chapter through poetry readings which show the significance of the French tradition to the poetry of both writers.

The work of Rossetti and Cooper has more in common with the Romantic rather than Victorian Medievalist tradition. According to Elizabeth Fay, Romantic Medievalism is part of a ‘Janus-faced movement, always looking back even as it looks forward, anachronistically replaying and revising history. [...] And the look back, always to look forward, can stem from conservative impulses as well as radical ones’.³²⁰ This practice is one that can be seen at work in Medieval texts by Cooper and Rossetti, who, I want to argue, challenge artistic and socio-political conventions within contemporary Britain through the turn to French Medievalism. The Victorians saw this period as a movement towards modernity, which may partially explain why progressive late Medieval/early Renaissance writers would have appealed to Cooper and Rossetti. Fay goes on to argue that ““medievalism” during the Victorian period comes to denote the sentimentalised imagining of the paternalistic medieval that developed in popular culture from the Romantic comprehension of the past’.³²¹ The Medievalist work of Cooper and Rossetti is not sentimental, and in fact neither is the rest of their oeuvre, because their work has a specific artistic or political agenda which resonates within contemporary Victorian society.

Running alongside the French Medieval influence, Cooper’s Medievalism is also interesting for the fact that he responds to the earlier Medieval period of the Saxon invasion (5th c. - 11th c.), rather than after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Chris Jones summarises Sharon Turner’s argument in *The History of the Anglo-Saxons 1799-1805* by commenting that there is an ‘evolutionary process of gradual sophistication’ which takes

³²⁰ Elizabeth A. Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 1.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

place in Saxon Britain.³²² This may in part explain why Cooper sympathises with and alludes to this period in particular as it was a time of technological advancement in Britain, in spite of the Britons being under the occupation of the Saxons. The Norman period on the other hand tends to be associated with oppression. Jones also notes that nineteenth-century writers engage with the Anglo-Saxon past either in a ‘teleological’ way – ‘that is to say, the past was used as a tool for explaining the present’ – or in light of an understanding of ‘historical change as progressive’.³²³ Cooper’s appropriation of the troubadour tradition has the effect of showing that there has been limited improvement in the socio-economic position of the working classes since the late Medieval period, but the past can also be used to partially explain the current attitudes to the living conditions of the group.

If we take, for example, Cooper’s *The Baron’s Yule Feast* as the primary test case here, it becomes apparent that he reworks the popular romance tradition of the troubadours in order to present a protest concerning the injustices of a stratified Victorian society. As Fay sees it ‘the *cansos* of the troubadour’ is ‘highly charged and politically coded poetry’ and the Romantics ‘saw in the troubadour a spirit of modernity and secularisation that could anticipate their own struggle with audience, politics and historical self-realisation’.³²⁴ Cooper uses the figure of the troubadour to the same effect, as he employs the tradition to try to gain a wider audience for his political message regarding the unequal treatment of the working classes within society. The troubadour figure also aids in Cooper’s historical self-realisation because it imbues his voice with the weight of past tradition. Rossetti’s goal when undertaking translation work, on the other hand, is to render a beautiful work of the past into English so that it can be appreciated by a new audience. This is unlike the translations of his fellow Pre-Raphaelite artist Algernon Charles Swinburne, who uses the

³²² Chris Jones, ‘Anglo-Saxonism in Nineteenth-Century Poetry’, *Literature Compass*, 7.5 (2010), 358-369, 360.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Fay, p. 8, 14.

subversive content of Villon's poetry to comment upon grotesque figures and corrupt institutions within contemporary society. These include the government and the prevalence of prostitution, which are explored in the poems 'Ballad of the Lords of Old Time' and 'Ballad of the Women of Paris'. Sexual imagery also appears to have been a motivation for looking back in this fashion as according to Yisrael Levin, Swinburne uses the Medieval as a source of inspiration for his 'transgressive and morbid eroticism'.³²⁵ Despite their differences, the work of Rossetti and Cooper expands the terrain which Medievalist literature could cover during the mid-nineteenth century; the poets do not necessarily rely upon British authors such as: Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Malory, the Gawain Poet and the author of *Beowulf*. However, the work of these writers can still influence their poetry, as will later be discussed with regard to connections between *The Baron's Yule Feast* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

Medievalism in the Victorian period

Victorian Medievalism was an entirely subjective practice which, whilst offering aesthetic grounding, also enabled artists and politicians to 'focus on what fit' their 'current imagination and taste'.³²⁶ As Loretta M. Holloway and Jennifer Palmgren see it in their introduction to *Beyond Arthurian Romance: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism*, the Victorians found in the Middle-Ages 'resources for faith, patriotism, or leisure'.³²⁷ There is therefore a tension between the cultural impact of the Medieval sources upon everyday life

³²⁵ Yisrael Levin, *A.C. Swinburne and the Singing Word: New Perspectives on the Mature Work* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 112.

³²⁶ Loretta M. Holloway and Jennifer Palmgren, 'Introduction', Holloway and Palmgren eds., *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

³²⁷ Charles Dellheim further comments that interpretations of the Medieval were directly influenced by the changes to industry and society brought about by the Industrial Revolution, 'notably the birth of a class society, the erosion of aesthetic standards, the creation of squalid cities, and perhaps above all, the condition of the working-classes'. 'Interpreting Victorian Medievalism' from *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, ed. by Florence Boos (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 39-58 (p.44). This is why Medievalism is an important vehicle for the expression of the working classes as well as writers such as William Morris who have socialist sympathies.

and the more idealistic, aesthetic or political appropriation by artists. Perhaps as a result Victorian Medievalism is a diverse practice. Walter Scott (1771-1832) had a perceptible influence over the way in which the Victorians viewed the Medieval period, particularly due to works such as: *Ivanhoe* (1819), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805), *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1805) and 'The Bridal of Triermain' (1813).³²⁸ Other key Romantic influences upon the Victorian imagination were Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), 'Christabel' (1816) by Coleridge and 'The Eve of St Agnes' (1819) and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' (1819) by Keats.³²⁹ The Victorians also drew directly upon works of Medieval poets such as *Le Morte D'Arthur* (c.1470) by Malory, the works of Chaucer and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th c.) by the Gawain Poet.

It is important to emphasise that these Medieval allusions were, in the Victorian period at least, more often than not used to make a political statement, as is evident in John Ruskin's chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic' in *The Stones of Venice*, Volume II (1853) and *Past and Present* (1843) by Thomas Carlyle. In the former Ruskin argues that the ornament both on a Victorian Neo-Gothic building and Medieval Cathedral can display the freedom and pleasure that the artisan takes in his work, in spite of the oppressive conditions of everyday life.³³⁰ *Past and Present*, on the other hand, deals with the 'Condition of England Question' by presenting comparisons between the Medieval period and Victorian Britain, in order to denounce the contemporary *Laissez-Faire* economic

³²⁸ For further details see the section on 'Walter Scott' in Derek Albert Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 117-118.

³²⁹ According to Richard Cronin, Keats 'made romance pictorial', so 'that to read through *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the romance that most strongly influenced the Victorians, is at once to follow a story and to wander through a gallery of pictures'. *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, p. 343.

³³⁰ This concept will be discussed in the next chapter of the thesis which considers the merging of the chivalric and grotesque artistic modes in the poetry of the William Morris and Gerald Massey. For further discussion of the impact of Ruskin's ideas upon Victorian poetry see Isobel Armstrong's chapter 'A New Radical Aesthetic: The Grotesque as Cultural Critique: Morris', in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 247-246.

liberalism and the pre-dominance of Utilitarianism. Significantly, Carlyle sees a contemptible present to be a foil to the past, as he compares the life of a Medieval monk with that of a Victorian factory worker. Yet, Richard Cronin comments that ‘medievalism is a mode favoured by poets who recognise themselves as anachronisms, practitioners of an art that could neither claim influence over the day-to-day business of life nor earn them a living’.³³¹ This statement is perhaps problematic because working-class poets who respond to the Medieval period in their work, such as Cooper and Gerald Massey (whose work will be discussed in the next chapter), do think that their work has the potential to change their day-to-day lives. Their writing thus responds to the sage discourse of Ruskin and Carlyle and the ‘Condition of England Question’.³³² Many depictions of what Florence Boos terms to be ‘Merrie England’ in the period, however, aimed to have the opposite effect, since ‘assorted Arthurian motifs appealed to fantasies of a harmoniously stratified feudal society’.³³³ The work of a number of contemporary poets is politically conservative in the sense that it aimed to keep people in their place and helped to act as a justification of Victorian England’s class-based society. Indeed, both Boos and Charles Dellheim have suggested that Victorian Medievalism relates to class and class-conflict. Dellheim argues that an important facet of working-class Medievalism was that it enabled writers to decry the “world they had lost”. They framed their protests in terms of the lost rights and immemorial liberties, echoing the “Norman yoke” theory of English history. This held that the Norman Conquest destroyed the representative institutions and political liberties of the

³³¹ Cronin, *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, p. 345.

³³² The term the ‘Condition of England Question’ was first coined by Carlyle in his work *Chartism* (1839). However, the theme was also dealt with in *Sartor Resartus* (1838), *Past and Present* (1843) and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850). The question relates to the divide that Carlyle and other novelists such as Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) in *Sybil* (1845), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) in *North and South* (1848) and Charles Dickens (*Hard Times*, 1854) have commented on between the rich and the poor. Carlyle also attacked the focus upon materialism within contemporary culture as well as *laissez-faire* economics which argues that the self-interest of business people within a competitive marketplace can lead to an improvement in the wealth of the nation and subsequently, social welfare. For further discussion see Michael Levin, *The Condition of England Question: Carlyle, Mill, Engels* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

³³³ Boos, ‘Introduction’, *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, pp. xi-x (p. xii).

Saxons’.³³⁴ Later close analysis of the writings of Cooper in this chapter suggests that this assessment of working-class appropriations of the Medieval is perhaps too reductive. I will go on to demonstrate that Cooper uses the voice of a European troubadour to test the morality and unnerve those within an Anglo-Saxon court setting. The troubadour enables Cooper to think about the union between nations, to enable the baron to show hospitality, to present his view that the Anglo-Saxon period was not entirely one of serf servitude and to show that some of those in a position of power could and should be fair-minded.

The French tradition

A renewed interest in the literature of French Medievalism during the Victorian period was inspired partly by the work of the troubadour poets who were writing between c. 1100 and c. 1300. Research into the writings of the troubadours as an academic discipline did not take off until the end of the nineteenth century.³³⁵ Yet, the legacy of the songs of the poets had been a regular influence on Western literature, particularly within the Romance genre.³³⁶ According to Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay ‘the rise of courtliness, in the senses both of “courtly love” and “courtly living” in which the troubadours played a determining role, helped to shape mainstream Western culture; while their commentaries as moralists, and as political cultural critics, provide vital testimony to the attitudes which underlie and helped to form our own’.³³⁷ Unlike *jongleurs* and minstrels, who often travelled around from village to village, the troubadours were situated for periods of time within continental courts. They were therefore in a position to influence Medieval society via their song.

³³⁴ Dellheim, p. 45.

³³⁵ Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, *The Troubadours: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2-3.

³³⁶ For further discussion of the nineteenth-century romance see Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and Leonée Ormond, ‘Victorian Romance: Tennyson’ and Richard Cronin, ‘Victorian Romance: Medievalism’ both in Corinne J. Saunders, ed., *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 321-340 and 341-359.

³³⁷ Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, ‘An Introduction’ in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. by Gaunt and Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-7.

Cooper aimed to achieve a similar effect by evoking the same tradition through the creation of an equivalent court world with a visiting singer. This is distinct from an example such as Barrett Browning's description of Robert as a troubadour and herself as minstrel singing to him from outside in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). Cooper does not necessarily see himself as the kind of minstrel found in Barrett Browning's work: his own voice is used to stage the tale of the Anglo-Saxon feast and to intervene with his comments upon it.

The troubadour tradition also featured in the widely popular Arthurian poetry of the period. Works such as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1856-1885) draw from the romance tradition and the troubadours, as well as from its base text Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. The work also aimed towards the realm of epic and questions of national identity, as Tennyson wished to create a poem that could comment upon England's past and present national identity. Cooper on the other hand retains a distinction between romance and epic in his Medieval-influenced work, and does not aim towards anything as grand as a visionary history of England. Rather, *The Baron's Yule Feast* uses the romance tradition of the troubadours to attack limiting class boundaries which had persisted since the time of Medieval Feudal society. Cooper's more famous work *The Purgatory of Suicides* (1845), like Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, is written in the epic tradition of Milton. Interestingly, both Cooper and Rossetti (and also Swinburne – the other Pre-Raphaelite translator of Villon) use Renaissance authors as prototypes for their work.³³⁸

³³⁸ Despite taking their name from Pre-Renaissance Italian artists, the English Renaissance remains a useful aesthetic standard for the group because it is associated with some of the most respected authors in the English language: Milton and Shakespeare, to name two. Shakespeare was so influential that according to Adrian Poole he provided them with 'a language for expressing and explaining themselves and their world, for talking to each other'. Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), p. 2. See also, Erik Gray, *Milton and the Victorians* (Ithaca, NY.; London: Cornell University Press, 2009) and James Graham Nelson, *The Sublime Puritan: Milton and the Victorians* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963).

Generally, the Victorian view of contemporary France was coloured by the seventeenth-century birth of Rationalism, the French Revolution (1789-99) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15). In addition, the French language was still the language of commerce and was seen as a key accomplishment for educated young women.³³⁹ Knowledge of French was a key skill for governesses and teachers – we perhaps first think of Lucy Snowe from Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette* and Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) by William Makepeace Thackeray – though the psychological dangers of such associations and training apparently affect Méné Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1895) in a more damaging way.

Rossetti's translations of Villon and other early French poets

Rossetti's enthusiasm for the Medieval period was likely to have been sparked early in childhood by works held in his father Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti's (1783-1854) library. As a well-known Dante scholar and Professor of Italian at King's College London from 1831-1847, he owned numerous editions of works by Dante Alighieri and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375). Rossetti's Medieval education expanded during his time at university. This was partially as a result of friendships with the first wave of Pre-Raphaelite artists William Holman Hunt and Sir John Everett Millais and later, his acquaintance with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. The Medieval period was central to the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic.³⁴⁰ Some of the most important works of Pre-Raphaelite Medievalism were the illustrations which members of the group contributed to the Moxon Tennyson. The group worked alongside him when they created illustrations for Moxon's 1857 edition of *Poems*, which would help to express both Tennyson's

³³⁹ Britta Martens, 'The Victorians' View of France', *Literature Compass*, 3.2 (2006) 562-571.

³⁴⁰ Medievalist works of art produced by these artists include Arthur Hughes's 'The Night of the Sun' (1860) and William Holman Hunt's 'Rienzi' and 'The Lady of Shalott' (1889-92). Millais also painted 'A Dream of the Past – St Isumbras at the Ford' in 1857 and William Bell Scott composed 'The Return from the Long Crusade' (1861).

Medievalist and non-Medievalist poems.³⁴¹ Liana De Girolami Cheney has noted that the group did

not attempt to paint in the manner or style of Medieval artists [rather] they attempted to emulate the spirit of Medieval art. In defining what the spirit was, they turned to literary sources rather than to the paintings themselves. In descriptions of the pure and holy life led by Fra-Angelico, they found a model for the spirit which they proposed to emulate in their own art.³⁴²

This practice of trying to emulate the spirit of the Medieval period relates to Rossetti's understanding of art as being a kind of substitute for religion.³⁴³ Despite the fact that he did not share his mother and sisters' Tractarian religious beliefs, many of his original Medieval inspired poems use catholic or high church iconography. This is most apparent in works such as 'Ave' (1847), '*Mater Pulchrae Delectionis*' (1847), 'The Blessed Damozel' (1847-1870) and the short story 'Hand and Soul' (1849). For Rossetti, it is through the depictions of the beautiful women in these art works that he finds a way to show the transcendent beauty which art can portray. It is not surprising therefore that Rossetti selects poems by Villon to translate which use Catholic imagery and/or a beautiful woman.

³⁴¹ Holmon Hunt contributed Medievalist drawings for 'The Ballad of Oriana', 'The Lady of Shalott', 'The Beggar Maid' and 'Godiva'. Rossetti created illustrations for 'The Lady of Shalott', 'Mariana in the South', 'The Palace of Art' and 'Sir Galahad' whilst Millais designed for 'St Agnes' Eve', 'Mariana', 'A Dream of Fair Women', 'The Lord of Burleigh' and 'The Day-Dream'. Some of the poems such as 'The Palace of Art' and 'Mariana' do not have any specific allusions to the Medieval period, but the Pre-Raphaelites have imagined the works to be set in this period. This gives us an idea of the extent to which the Medieval period permeates the aesthetic of the group.

³⁴² Liana De Girolami Cheney, 'Introduction', in *Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts*, ed. by De Girolami Cheney (New York: Mellen, 1992), pp. 1-7 (p. 4).

³⁴³ Paintings of beautiful women are a vehicle through which Rossetti can express a kind of spirituality, as can be seen in 'The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary' (1849), '*Ecce Ancilla Domini!*' (1850) and 'The Blessed Damozel' (1875-8).

Introduction to the translation of poetry

Translation during the Victorian period was not restricted to an interest in any period or culture in particular; translations came from the work of Anglo-Saxon, Classical, Eastern and Medieval poets. As J. A. George sees it, it became increasingly important to translate these works into the language of 'Shakespeare and Milton'.³⁴⁴ Shakespeare and Milton tend to be associated with Victorian high culture, and offered a way of writing that working-class poets tried to imitate in order for their work to be taken seriously. However, it is often the case that the language of Milton and some of the more elevated language of Shakespeare is difficult to emulate in their work.³⁴⁵ This may have resulted from differences in their education, life experiences and the amount of time that they were able to devote to writing.

Translation for each member of the Pre-Raphaelite group had a different purpose, yet the group were uniformly impressed by Edward Fitzgerald's translation of 'The Rubayat of Omar Khayyam' (1858), which sparked a contemporary rise in interest in the orient. Morris produced his own translation of the Old-English epic poem *Beowulf* which was published by the Kelmscott Press in 1895, though this was not the first English translation of the work.³⁴⁶ Furthermore, Morris was drawn to the Anglo-Saxon world that was portrayed in *Beowulf* because, as J. A. George sees it, it was 'anti-modern' and 'anti-urban'.³⁴⁷ These qualities are significant for Morris because he longed for a return to a pre-Industrialised world, as will be further discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

³⁴⁴ J. A. George, 'Poetry and Translation', *The Blackwell Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Richard Cronin and others (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 262-278 (p. 262).

³⁴⁵ Interestingly, the writings of Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), whose work was an influence upon Shakespeare, are not often alluded to in the work of Victorian working-class writers. A reference can however be seen in the poet Edwin Waugh's *Sketches of Lancashire Life and Localities* (1855), in which he comments that the countryside surrounding Haywood reminds him of a passage of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590). (London: Whittaker and Co., 1855), p. 208

³⁴⁶ *Beowulf* was first translated into contemporary English by Sharon Turner in 1805 and further translations into Latin and English followed throughout the nineteenth century. For further details see T. A. Shippey and Andreas Haarder, eds., *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1998).

³⁴⁷ George, p. 270.

According to Nick Freeman, Swinburne uses Villon's poetry to suggest that both Medieval French and Victorian cities 'were over-crowded, hypocritical in religious observance, filled with whores, and often brutally policed'; thus acknowledging some of the flaws of industrialisation. He uses 'the literature and culture of the past to shock, startle, and subvert the Victorian Bourgeoisie'.³⁴⁸ French Medievalism offers Swinburne, like Cooper, the perspective from which to critique inequalities within contemporary society. Swinburne's translations of Villon's work will be returned to later in the chapter.

Rossetti as a translator

I want to argue that Rossetti's translations of Medieval poets can be apolitical, and according to Paull Franklin Baum they are 'faithful without being literal'.³⁴⁹ Rossetti's most well-known Medievalist works are his paintings (*Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (1849-1850) and his 1872 work '*Beata Beatrix*') and his translations of Dante.³⁵⁰ Despite the fact that Rossetti uses Dante's work as a source of inspiration, there is not a complete affinity between the work of the two because of a perceptible distinction between their aesthetic practice. As Alison Milbank sees it, the sonnets that are included in Rossetti's *The House of Life* are 'pushed deathwards to achieve penance and solidity, [whereas] Dante's work is a writerly one, provisional and edited, existing in intertextual dynamic, with an element of interpretation and selection in the very substance of the work'.³⁵¹ Importantly, Rossetti did

³⁴⁸ Nick Freeman, 'The Gallows and the Nightingale': Swinburne's Translations of Villon' in *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism*, pp.133-146 (p. 142).

³⁴⁹ Paull Franklin Baum, *Poems, Ballads, and Sonnets by Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (New York: Doubleday Doran, 1937), p. 177.

³⁵⁰ The translation of this work has drawn greater critical attention than Rossetti's translations of Villon. See Jerome McGann, 'A Commentary on Some of Rossetti's Translations from Dante' in William E. Fredeman and David Latham eds., *Haunted Texts: Studies in Pre-Raphaelitism* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 35-52 and R. J. Woodhouse, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Translation and Illustration of the *Vita Nuova*' in Martin McLaughlin, ed., *Britain and Italy from Romanticism to Modernism: A Festschrift for Peter Brand* (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), pp. 67-86.

³⁵¹ Milbank, p. 129. Interestingly, Rossetti's translation practice imitates Dante's writing style. I will go on to show that when translating the work of Dante, Rossetti is a careful editor and mindful of intertextual links between the original text and the translation.

not translate the work of his Italian counterpart merely in order to copy his ‘style’ but rather as J. A. George suggests, to express ‘new modes of feeling’ in order to fashion a ‘new subjectivity’³⁵² His translations of Villon have a slightly different agenda as he is interested in bringing beautiful works of art to a new audience. Clues as to how Rossetti set about achieving this can be found in his Preface to *The Early Italian Poets from Cuillo D’Alcamo to Dante Alighieri (1100-1200-1300)*. The 1861 volume contains translations of the work of fifty-five poets including Dante Alighieri, Guido Cavalcanti, Dante da Maiano, Cecco Angiolieri, de Siena, Guigo Orlandi, Lapo Gianni, Dino Frescobaldi and Giotto de Bondone.³⁵³ In the Preface to the first edition Rossetti discusses his translation practice and the reasons why he felt it was important for these particular works to be translated into English. For Rossetti, the principal reason for a translation to take place is to enable a work of beauty to be appreciated by a new audience: he shows little interest in translating from, or to, a political context. Of the works translated in the 1861 edition, Rossetti claims that ‘these poems possess, in their degree, beauties of a kind which can never again exist in art; and offer, besides, a treasure of grace and variety in the formation of their metres’.³⁵⁴ Beauty is a central concern and he considers this to be of greater importance than rendering a literal translation of the text. He remarks that

[t]he life-blood of rhymed translation is this,—that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one. The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty.

Poetry not being an exact science, literality of rendering is altogether secondary to

³⁵² George, p. 227.

³⁵³ These poets listed are collected together in the first part of the work termed ‘Poets before Dante’; subsequent chapters are ‘Dante and his Circle’ and an ‘Appendix to Part II’.

³⁵⁴ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Early Italian Poets from Cuillo D’Alcamo to Dante Alighieri (1100-1200-1300)* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861), p. ix.

this chief aim. I say *literality*, — not fidelity, which is by no means the same thing.

(ix)

Rossetti's feelings about translation link back to the Pre-Raphaelite notion of emulating the 'spirit' of Medieval work in their own poetry.³⁵⁵ 'Spirit' is a term loose enough to give Rossetti the freedom to create translations which are faithful but not necessarily literal. Rossetti goes on to comment upon how this beautiful translation is to be achieved:

The task of the translator (and with all humility be it spoken) is one of some self-denial. Often would he avail himself of any special grace of his own idiom and epoch, if only his will belonged to him: often would some cadence serve him but for his author's structure—some structure but for his author's cadence: often the beautiful turn of a stanza must be weakened to adopt some rhyme which will tally, and he sees the poet revelling in abundance of language where himself is scantily supplied. Now he would slight the matter for the music, and now the music for the matter; but no, he must deal to each alike. Sometimes too a flaw in the work galls him, and he would fain remove it, doing for the poet that which his age denied him; but no,—it is not in the bond. (x)

The above passage highlights two problems that Rossetti faced in his capacity as a translator. First, there is a tension between recreating the structure of the original poem and fashioning a linguistically beautiful stanza that reflects the poet's work. Interestingly, the word 'cadence' is employed to describe the flow of the line of poetry. Cadence is usually a word that is associated with musical terminology and refers to the resolution of a phrase in a piece of music. This is significant because it implies that Rossetti is interested in the relationship between the metre and rhythm (the sound) of the original and the translation. The second dilemma faced by Rossetti is whether or not to correct what he terms to be a

³⁵⁵ De Girolami Cheney, p. 4.

‘flaw’ in the original texts. In these cases Rossetti is able to add a thought that was not available to the earlier poet because of his different life experiences. Yet, he does not take into account whether or not the original poet would have agreed that a particular section was flawed. This however does not necessarily affect Rossetti’s translations since he admits that it is not his place to attempt to correct the original, ‘it is not in the bond’. The use of the term ‘bond’ implies a reciprocal relationship, which is also suggested by Rossetti’s interest in the link between the cadence of the original poem and the translation and further, the idea of a shared ‘spirit’ between the writers.³⁵⁶

Rossetti’s translations of Villon

After the sixteenth century Villon’s reputation went into decline both in France and in Britain; his work was increasingly considered to be ‘shameful’, ‘cowardly’ and ‘low’.³⁵⁷ During the nineteenth century, there was a resurgent interest in Villon. This happened first in France in the 1830s and 1840s when writers such as Théophile Gautier and Victor Hugo (1802-1885) began to celebrate Villon’s bad taste. For instance, in *Les Grotesques* (1844) Gautier considers Villon to be a second order poet who explored subjects such as the grotesque, the whimsical, the trivial, the ignoble, projections, strong words, popular sayings, metaphors and bad taste:

*Dans les poètes du second ordre vous retrouverez tout ce que les aristocrates de l’art ont dédaigné de metre en oeuvre: le grotesque, le fantasque, le trivial, l’ignoble, la saillie hasardeuse, le mot forge, le proverbe populaire, la métaphore hydropique, enfin tout le mauvais gout avec ses bonnes fortunes, avec son clinquant.*³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Michael Freeman, *François Villon in his Works: The Villain’s Tale* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 179.

³⁵⁸ Théophile Gautier, *Les Grotesques* (Paris: Nizeet, 1856), p. 2.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, interest in Villon had spread to Britain. According to Robert Morsberger, within a decade ‘Villon attained a remarkable vogue in England, became a fad, and appeared in a rash of translations, biographical sketches, and imitations’.³⁵⁹ Morsberger identifies Rossetti as the first English translator of selections of Villon’s work, he was followed by Andrew Lang (1844-1912), Edmond Gosse and Walter Besant (1836-1901). The first full translation of Villon into English by John Payne followed in 1878.³⁶⁰ Swinburne’s translation appeared later the same year.

Initially, the translations of Villon that were produced by Rossetti came out of a shared project with Swinburne to translate the French poet’s complete works which never came into fruition.³⁶¹ Rossetti completed his three translated poems between 1869 and 1870 and they were later published in his 1870 volume *Poems* and again in *Poems: A New Edition* (1881).³⁶² Rossetti and Swinburne may have been concurrently drawn to Villon’s poetry because it is subversive and often takes the form of parody, his bad taste would have been an attraction for Swinburne in particular. Villon’s principal theme was his own life (which for the most part was based in Paris) and the poverty he endured. His most famous works are *Le Petit Testament* (1456), a verse rendering of a mock will and *Le Grand Testament* (1461), a collection of poems that explore aspects of his life. Swinburne was interested in Villon’s work because it penetrated the gritty reality of French society and discarded its polished veneer. According to Levin ‘Swinburne’s choice of poems was clearly more provocative than Rossetti’s’. He links Swinburne’s translations to the ‘grotesque’ which is ‘all about the mixing of categories – of high and low, moral and

³⁵⁹ Robert E. Morsberger, ‘Villon and the Victorians: The Influence and the Legend’, *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, 23.4 (Dec., 1969), 189-196, 190.

³⁶⁰ François Villon, *The Poems of Master François Villon of Paris, Now First Done into English Verse, in the Original Forms*, trans. and ed. by John Payne (London: The Villon Society, 1878).

³⁶¹ This is discussed by Nick Freeman in ‘The Gallows and the Nightingale: Swinburne’s Translations of Villon’, pp. 133-146.

³⁶² Rossetti used an edition of Villon’s work edited by Paul Lacroix as the base text for his translation. *Oeuvres Complètes de François Villon*, ed. by Paul Lacroix [P. L. Jacob] (Paris: P. Jannet, 1854).

immoral'.³⁶³ As commented above the grotesque was, according to Gautier, a key feature in Villon's second-order poetry. Swinburne was interested in Villon's more offensive poems, such as 'Complaint of the Fair Armouress' and the 'Ballad of Villon and Fat Madge'.³⁶⁴ The latter poem, translated between 1862 and 1863, describes an encounter between Villon and a prostitute who is well known to him at a brothel. The poem is boisterous and grotesque, and is very different from Rossetti's poem 'Jenny' (1848), which only deals with the quiet aftermath of sex between the speaker and a prostitute. The speaker claims that he 'loathe[s] the very sight of her like hell', as she only wears a 'gown, girdle, [and] surcoat', though this does not effect her endearment to him (13, 14).³⁶⁵

When all's made up she drops me a windy word,
 Bloat like a beetle puffed and poisonous:
 Grins, thumps my pate, and calls me dickey-bird,
 And cuffs me with a fist that's ponderous.
 We sleep like logs, being drunken both of us; (21-25)

Blow, hail or freeze, I've bread here baked rent free!
 Whoring's my trade, and my whore pleases me;
 Bad cat, bad rat; we're just the same if weighed.
 We that love filth, filth follows us, you see;
 Honour flies from us, as from her we flee

³⁶³ Levin, p. 112.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Swinburne also translated: 'A Double Ballad of Good Counsel', 'Fragment on Death', 'Ballads of the Lords of Old Time', 'Ballad of the Women of Paris', 'Ballad Written for a Bridegroom', 'Ballad Written Against the Enemies of France', 'The Dispute of the Heart and Body of François Villon', 'Epistle in Form of a Ballad to his Friends' and 'Epigraph in Form of a Ballad'.

³⁶⁵ Swinburne, trans., 'The Ballad of Villon and Fat Madge' by François Villon. The poem was not published alongside Swinburne's other translations of Villon which were published together in the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878). However, the poem can be found in the 'Uncollected Poetry' section of: Swinburne, *The Major Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann and Charles L. Sligh (Yale: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 411.

Inside this brothel where we drive our trade. (30- 36)

Madge is also very different from Rossetti's aesthetically beautiful women: Persephone, Astarte Syriaca, the Virgin Mary and Beatrice. She farts, bloats, grins and thumps the speaker's head. In the next stanza the speaker comments that 'whoring's my trade', and is happy to admit to the pleasure that he gets from this particular prostitute. Interestingly, he associates prostitution with vermin such as 'rats' and 'cats', commenting that '[w]e that love filth, filth follows us, you see'. The subject matter of the poems translated by Swinburne will be shown to be quite different from those selected by Rossetti. These deal with beautiful women and religion, which are two key themes in Rossetti's work. Jerome McGann suggests in his introduction to the three Rossetti translations on the *Rossetti Archive* website that 'The Ballad of the Dead Ladies', 'To Death, Of His Lady' and 'His Mother's Service to our Lady' are central to the structure of Rossetti's 1870 edition of *Poems* because 'they graphically emphasize the continuity of sacred and profane love'.³⁶⁶ Antony Harrison has commented that Swinburne praised Rossetti's 'fidelity to the mood of the original and his reproduction of its emotional effects'.³⁶⁷ The difference in approach of Rossetti and Swinburne to the translation of Villon may in part explain why the poets did not complete their planned joint translation of his complete works.

The title of Rossetti's first translation in the set, 'The Ballad of the Dead Ladies', is likely to have drawn the attention of the Pre-Raphaelites. For the group, a dead woman could be a beautiful object, an aesthetic which they share with Edgar Allan Poe,

³⁶⁶ McGann, 'Introduction to Three Translations by Victor François Villon, 1450', <<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/49-1869.raw.html>> [Accessed on 6 February 2011].

³⁶⁷ Antony H. Harrison, *Swinburne's Medievalism: A Study of Victorian Love Poetry* (London: Louisiana State University Press, c1988), p. 13. Harrison then goes on to quote Swinburne's response to Rossetti's translations: They reveal a 'full command of that lyric sentiment and power which give to medieval poetry its clear particular charm [and which] is plain alike from the ending given to the "old song" of Ophelia and from the marvellous visions of Villon's and other French songs. [...] The very cadence of Villon's matchless ballad of the ladies of old time is caught and returned. The same exquisite exactitude of translation is notable in 'John of Tours' — the old provincial song long passed from mouth to mouth and at last preserved with all its breaks and lapses of sweet rough metre by Gérard de Nerval', p. 13-14.

particularly in ‘Ligea’, ‘Morella’ and ‘The House of Usher’ from *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840). Millais’ most renowned depiction of an aesthetically beautiful dead woman is his painting ‘Ophelia’ (1852); here the subject lies on her back in a stream holding flowers and is surrounded by an array of foliage along the riverbank. An important distinction between Villon’s poem and the work of the group however is that a single woman is usually meditated upon in Pre-Raphaelite art, as opposed to the catalogue of beautiful women of the past found in the ballad. In Villon’s poem each woman receives little or no description, but the language is still aestheticised. The poem opens:

Tell me now in what hidden way is
 Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
 Where’s Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
 Neither of them the fairer woman?
 Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
 Only heard on river and mere,
 She whose beauty was more than human? ...
 But where are the snows of yester-year? (1-8)

The speaker of the ballad laments the fact that he is not able to access these beautiful women who are hidden from him, ‘[b]ut where are the snows of yester-year’. It is possible that Rossetti sees his own work as a response to Villon because he wishes to portray in his poems and paintings, women ‘whose beauty was more than human’. Rossetti attempts to match the beauty of the women with beautifully sounding verse. He uses assonance throughout the stanza that renders the consonants less harsh. The syntax of the stanza is comprised of interrogatives; the effect of this is that it gives the women alluded to a mysterious quality. These qualities can also be seen in ‘The Blessed Damozel’. Here he describes a beautiful woman who has ascended into heaven and is looked upon by her

beloved on earth. This environment enhances her beauty; the description given by the speaker shows her to have become almost transcendent. Her eyes are not just deep, but are ‘deeper than the depth | of waters still at even’ and her hair is not adorned with jewels or ribbons, but ‘seven’ stars (3-4, 6).

The second translation in the group ‘To Death, Of his Lady’ also deals with the theme of the death of a woman. The poem is directed to a personified Death, who has taken away the speaker’s beloved. He comments that death will be his enemy until the time of his own demise. The poem in its entirety is included below:

Death, of thee do I make my moan,
 Who hadst my lady away from me,
 Nor wilt assuage thine enmity
 Till with her life thou hast mine own;
 For since that hour my strength has flown.
 Lo! what wrong was her life to thee,
 Death?

Two we were, and the heart was one;
 Which now being dead, dead I must be,
 Or seem alive as lifelessly
 As in the choir the painted stone,
 Death! (1-12)

In the second stanza the speaker concludes that until the time of his own death he will be lifeless; because their two hearts had combined, he is metaphorically now dead. The speaker asks a personified Death, why she had to die, ‘what wrong was her life to thee’.

This translation was published in 1861 a year before the death of Rossetti's wife Elizabeth Siddal from a laudanum overdose potentially triggered by depression in February 1862.

The third poem in the group, 'His Mother's Service to Our Lady', has links to poems which Rossetti addresses to the Virgin Mary. Rossetti is not necessarily interested in the figure of Mary as the mother of Jesus but as the embodiment of a female trinity. In his poem 'Ave', the speaker's prayer begins:

Mother of the Fair Delight,
Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight,
Now sitting fourth beside the Three,
Thyself a woman-Trinity,
Being a daughter borne to God,
Mother of Christ from stall to rood,
And wife unto the Holy Ghost. (1-7)

Rossetti is intrigued by the figure of Mary because of her ability to be simultaneously the daughter of God, the mother of Christ and the wife of the Holy Spirit, thus making her a powerful and 'perfect' female icon. In line thirteen Rossetti's speaker sees that the great mystery of Mary is that she is 'fashioned like us, yet more than we!'. This position is similar to Villon's inability to see around him women who compare to the famed beauties of the past like Hipparchia and Lady Flora in 'The Ballad of Dead Ladies'.

In a similar way, Villon's poem of praise to the Virgin Mary is unusual and quite different from the Catholic Prayer 'Ave Maria' which is a poem of praise to the virgin.³⁶⁸ The poem begins:

³⁶⁸ The Latin form of the prayer is 'Áve María, grátia pléna, Dóminus técum. Benedícta tu in muliéribus, et benedíctus frúctus véntris tui, Iésus. Sáncta María, Máter Déi, óra pro nóbis peccatóribus, nunc et in hóra mórtis nóstrae. Ámen'. In English this translates as 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us

Lady of Heaven and earth, and therewithal
 Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell,
 I, thy poor Christian, on thy name do call,
 Commending me to thee, with thee to dwell,
 Albeit in nought I be commendable.
 But all mine undeserving may not mar
 Such mercies as thy sovereign mercies are;
 Without the which (as true words testify)
 No soul can reach thy Heaven so fair and far.
 Even in this faith I choose to live and die. (1-10)

The first line of the poem uses a stereotypical description of Mary as both 'lady of heaven and earth', but the second line turns slightly sinister as the speaker also refers to her as the 'Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell'. This translated line is reminiscent of the work of Swinburne, who uses the uncommon word 'cleft' in several of his poems, and may suggest that Swinburne helped with the translation or in the editing process.³⁶⁹ Problematically Villon's speaker calls upon Mary to ask for her intercession, in order to be able to dwell with her in both heaven and hell upon her death. This description however may link Mary to the figure of Proserpina (or Persephone in Greek) from Classical mythology. According to legend she had to remain in the underworld after her abduction for six months of the year because she had eaten six pomegranate seeds whilst there. This myth was also to influence Dante Gabriel Rossetti's double work 'Proserpine' (1871-1882 and 1872). McGann suggests that the myth 'focuses Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sense

sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen'. 'Latin Prayers', *Adoremus: Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy*, <http://www.adoremus.org/Latin-Prayers.html> [Accessed on 1 February 2011].

³⁶⁹ The word cleft can be seen in poems such as 'Cor Cordium' from *Songs before Sunrise* (1871), 'A Lamentation' from *Poems and Ballads*, 'The Garden of Cymodoce' from *Song of the Springtides* (1880) and 'Loch Torridon' from *Astrophel and other Poems* (1894).

that art's imaginative sources are located in the underworld — which is simultaneously the historical past and the personal unconscious (not necessarily to be seen as a Freudian unconscious). The function of art is to restore communication between these severed worlds'.³⁷⁰ This implies that the works of both poets are only superficially about religion, but rather are concerned with the origins, and attainment of beautiful art. The above readings suggest that there is an affinity between Rossetti and Villon, as a number of poems that were later to be produced by Rossetti would feature beautiful dead women, the Virgin Mary and Proserpine. Because Rossetti's principal aim in translation is to transfer to a new audience an art work of beauty he does not, like Swinburne, select poems for translation upon the basis of their provocative content. Rossetti's translations provide further evidence that his engagement with the Medieval French tradition is motivated by aesthetics rather than politics.

Thomas Cooper and the troubadour tradition

Cooper was one of the most outstanding autodidacts of the nineteenth century. In his *Autobiography* he details the books that he was able to access and memorise; included among those listed are works by: Robert Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton. It is entirely possible that Cooper is exaggerating his achievement, but the breadth of his reading is apparent in *The Purgatory of Suicides* (1845), in his numerous essays and the meticulously researched self-help book, *Triumphs and Perseverance and Enterprise, in Learning, Science, Art, Commerce and Adventure* (1856).³⁷¹ In his preface to the latter volume Cooper wrote that:

³⁷⁰ McGann, "'Proserpine': Scholarly Commentary' from *The Rossetti Archive*, <<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/1-1872.s233.raw.html>> [Accessed on 20 February 2011].

³⁷¹ The *Purgatory of Suicides* is an epic poem that was conceived between 1843-45, during Cooper's imprisonment for sedition in Stafford jail. For further critical comment see Stephanie Kuduch, 'Sedition, Chartism, and Epic Poetry in Thomas Cooper's *The Purgatory of Suicides*', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.2 (Summer, 2001), 164-187. For details of other writings by Cooper see the section on 'Thomas Cooper' hosted on Ian

The highest talent is wasted if the will is weak; and the patient worker, even if possessed of only moderate abilities, often reaches the goal which a more brilliant but less persevering aspirant fails to attain. The following biographical sketches of the achievements of men famous in many fields of enterprise, and distinguished by the perseverance they exhibited, will, it is hoped, stimulate the youthful reader to attempt to follow in their footsteps.³⁷²

This passage suggests that Cooper's political writing has some of the force of Thomas Carlyle, when he argues that anyone is able to improve themselves through will power and perseverance. This is a style which may have developed after Carlyle advised him to begin writing prose in 1845. Cooper had dedicated his epic poem the *Purgatory of Suicides* to Carlyle. Cooper then took the initiative to send off a copy of the work to the author, and received a positive reply dated 1 September 1845. Carlyle comments that he is able to discern 'traces of genius' in the poetry but continues, '[i]f I might presume to advise, I think I would recommend you to try your next work in *Prose*, and as a thing turning altogether on *Facts*, not *Fictions*'. This is particularly important given the current political climate, as he sees 'too horrible a Practical Chaos round us; out of which every man is called by the birth of him to make a bit of *Cosmos*: that seems to me the real Poem for a man, — especially at present'.³⁷³ Cooper's *The Baron's Yule Feast* has a similar drive to this later political prose, and can be seen as a direct response to society's 'Practical chaos' which negatively impacts upon the lives of the working classes.

Cooper's *The Baron's Yule Feast* is quickly established to be a political poem, as on the frontispiece to the volume Cooper identifies himself as a Chartist poet. Some early

Petticrew's *Minor Victorian Poets and Authors* website, hosted at < <http://www.gerald-massey.org.uk/cooper/index.htm> > [Accessed on 18 February 2011].

³⁷² Thomas Cooper, *Triumphs and Perseverance and Enterprise, in Learning, Science, Art, Commerce and Adventure* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1856).

³⁷³ Thomas Carlyle, *Memoirs of the Life and Writing of Thomas Carlyle with Personal Reminiscences: Part One* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger, 1881 repr. 2005), p. 307.

drafts for the poem were written whilst Cooper was working as a correspondent for the *Rutland and Stamford Mercury* in Lincoln as early as 1836.³⁷⁴ *The Baron's Yule Feast* was not published until 1845, after the publication of his epic poem *The Purgatory of Suicides*. Cooper wrote a poem which prefigures *The Baron's Yule Feast*, 'To Lincoln Cathedral'. The poem was composed in 1829 and pre-dates his involvement with the Chartist movement. Here, he sees the Cathedral as an emblem for the injustices which were brought about by feudal society.

HAIL, awful pile! Child of Time's midnight age,
 Now Mother in its youth renewed! The tomb
 Of regal priests who banqueted on joys
 Wrung from the peasants' woes: disciples strange
 Of Him whose coat was woven without a seam
 Throughout; who had not where to lay His head!
 Great sepulchre of haughty gloom and grandeur
 Bestriding earth, like as thy shrined dead,
 While living, did bestride the human mind
 Thy veritable being, which thy frown
 Stamps on our consciousness so solemnly,
 Would seem, like shapes in fables of thy times,
 A phantom too unreal for our belief,
 Were we not witnesses that oft the mind,
 Disordered and oppressed by strong disease,
 Creates, in throes of thought, its images

³⁷⁴ See Cooper, 'Chapter Xi: Lincoln: Busy Life as a Newspaper Writer: 1836-1838' in *The Life of Thomas Cooper: Written by Himself*, pp. 112-122 (p. 114).

Of gorgeous dress and stature giantlike

Dwarfing the voluntary portraitures

Sketched by Thought's pencil in the hours of health.³⁷⁵

Cooper subverts the ode, by dedicating his poem to a building which he detests. This is because it is symbolic of the oppression of the working classes, even though it is physically beautiful. The poem opens with the pun 'Hail, awful pile!', which reflects the destruction to the lives of the working classes that the cathedral symbolises. Cooper attacks the hierarchy of the church when he comments that the tombs of the cathedral are occupied by 'regal priests who banqueted on joys | Wrung from the peasants' woes'. He thus suggests that even though the feudal system of tithes (which took away a considerable percentage of the income of the poor) may now be over, the cathedral stands as a reminder that the oppression of the working classes has not yet come to an end. The 'giantlike' 'stature' of the building has enabled it to stand the test of time, also meaning that the fixtures and decorative flourishes or 'gorgeous dress', such as the statues, pointed arches and vault detail, have survived.

The poem contains links to Rossetti's art-catholic poems via its use of Virgin and child imagery. In the first two lines of 'To Lincoln Cathedral' the building is referred to as 'Child of Time's midnight age, | Now Mother in its youth renewed!'. These images are used to make a political point rather than to revel in the cathedral's aesthetic qualities. This is enforced by the fact that the form of the poem is slightly awkward. It consists of 19 lines which rhyme Abcdefeghijklmnop. There are only three rhymes in total and it is entirely possible that these are accidental. The poem therefore has something of the feel of free verse. It was written when Cooper was 24, and according to his *Autobiography* he had already completed a vast program of reading by this point. Cooper deliberately creates a

³⁷⁵ Cooper, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Cooper* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1877), 1-19.

fragmented poem to reflect his hostility towards the cathedral's symbolism. In a similar way, *The Baron's Yule Feast* uses its Medieval court setting to step back from the contemporary and re-enter it with a voice which has the power to comment upon the harmful discrimination present within a class-based Victorian society that still apparently resembles Medieval feudalism.

The work is predominantly set in the Anglo-Saxon Torksey Hall during the time of a Christmas feast. Its key themes are rulership, the role of the poor within society, hospitality and the distinction between French (Norman) and Anglo-Saxon (British) hospitality. The long poem also considers issues surrounding national identity and its security. The various poems make use of strongholds, borders and turrets that can keep certain people out whilst letting others in. In its construction, the work resembles *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer, as it comprises of a range of tales told by a troubadour, the woodman, the Lay Brother of Saint Leonard, the gosherd, the swineherd and the baron's daughter, Edith. Its stories range between morality tales, tragedies, comedies and tales of love. It is also reminiscent of the opening of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which is set during the New Year's Eve feast at King Arthur's court. The work is partially a way of showcasing the author's talents, though he tries to retain the appearance of modesty by suggesting in his Advertisement that he expects the work to receive little praise.

The poem is introduced by the voice of Cooper rather than the Norman minstrel who is later added. His primary role is to revive the scene of the Yule feast from the rubble of Torksey Hall. Yet, before this, Cooper wishes to introduce himself and his work:

A prison-bard is once more free;

And, ere he yields his voice to thee,

His song a merry-song shall be.³⁷⁶

Significantly, as previously mentioned, the volume was published after Cooper's Chartist prison-rhyme *The Purgatory of Suicides*, which was written largely during a period of imprisonment in Stafford Jail in 1842. After this period Cooper drastically reduced his radical behaviour and followed a path that would eventually lead him to the church. *The Baron's Yule Feast* could therefore be seen as an attempt by the poet to be welcomed back into the Victorian home, during the less active period of the Chartist movement. However, this does not mean that his work plans to be politically neutral, particularly as Cooper is still keen to introduce himself as a Chartist.

Another role of the speaker is to pass judgement upon the court and to comment upon the stories told within it. This is most apparent at the start of the Third Canto. Here, Cooper's speaker intervenes to comment upon the discrepancies between the lives of the rich and the poor. It responds to the earlier 'Woodman's Song' in the Second Canto, in which the speaker argues that he would not wish to be a king, gentleman or a priest. He would not be a king with his 'gaudy gear', pampering and 'gew-gaw gold to wear [*sic*]' (2:2, 4), because he wishes to be where he can 'sing | Right merrily' (2:5-6). He feels the most comfortable

Where forest treen,

All gay and green,

Full blythely do me cheer. (2:7-9)

The woodman prizes his freedom to roam about and spend time in the forest over the 'gaudy' riches that are associated with kingship (2:2). The underlying reason for the woodman's acceptance of his place is that he would not wish to have the responsibility that

³⁷⁶ Cooper, *The Baron's Yule Feast: Christmas Rhyme* (London: Jeremiah How, 1846), 1:68-69. All further references refer to this edition.

these positions entail, without the desire to help others in a position less fortunate than himself. He states that a gentleman would see the petitions of the poor as being an inconvenience, as he would fear that ‘the hungry poor should ban | My halls and wide-parked grounds’ (2:12-13). The Third Canto of Cooper’s work opens in a manner which is more aggressively political when he speaks directly to his contemporary Victorian audience:

Lordlings, your scorn awhile forbear,
 And with the homely Past compare
 Your tinselled show and state!
 Mark, if your selfish grandeurs cold
 On human hearts so firm a hold
 For ye, and yours, create
 As they possessed, whose breasts though rude
 Glowed with the warmth of brotherhood
 For all who toiled, through youth and age,
 T’ enrich their force-won heritage!
 Mark, if ye feel your swollen pride
 Secure, ere ye begin to chide!
 Then, lordlings, though ye may discard
 The measures I rehearse,
 Slight not the lessons of the bard
 The moral of his verse. (3:13-28)

‘[H]omely Past’ may imply that for Cooper the past was a better time, but it is likely that this is a comment upon the way in which the past is viewed with rose-tinted glasses in contemporary society. Cooper goes on to comment that ‘selfish grandeurs’ and ‘cold [...]

hearts' are universal (3:16-17). The key difference between the two periods is that elements of chivalric brotherliness have been lost within Victorian society, implicitly causing those in a position of privilege to be less likely to help the poor. He hopes that his readers will respond to the moral lessons concerning good conduct that are presented through the minstrel.

Cooper then goes on to ask his audience whether the wounds that are inflicted within contemporary society heal those of the past. He gives an applied example which is measured to provoke a sentimental reaction in his reader.

Think'st thou we suffer less, or feel
 To-day's soul-piercing wounds do heal
 The wounds of months and years?
 Or that our eyes so long have been
 Familiar with the hunger keen
 Our babes endure, we gaze serene
 Strangers to scalding tears? (3:41-47)

In order to enforce his critique of the deliberate blindness of society to the hunger of the poor, Cooper returns to the Yule feast with a description of all of the foods that are served. The first dish of the feast is the 'head of the brawny boar, | Decked with rosemary and laurels gay' (3:148-9). The feast also includes a 'huge pig' and '[s]o luscious a fig' (3:154-155). All members of society are able to partake in the feast, but this was not possible in contemporary society.

The telling of stories was just as important as the food served at the Yule celebration and the jovial atmosphere gives the visiting troubadour the opportunity to both entertain and influence the court. Amusing the court relates to the Medieval tournament and the hope of gaining the favour of the host. The troubadour claims that he does not

relate stories in the hope of receiving a monetary reward; '[h]e will not sing for the Baron's gold | But for love of minstrelsy' (1:254-255). His reward will implicitly be that he is fed well and is included in the festivities. The foreign minstrel, who we learn has previously been entertained at a Norman court, is described as being "'Right Welcome!'", but his appearance is still met with an element of uncertainty and danger (1:245). Cooper comments: 'And in the Baron's eye dwells doubt, | And his daughter's look thrills "danger"' (1:247-248). The potential pleasure of a good story wins out and the stranger is allowed to stay.

The troubadour's first story is 'The Daughter of the Plantagenet' which is described as being a 'fanciful romaunt' (1:273). The use of 'romaunt', derived from the Anglo-Norman and Middle-French word for romance, aligns the work with contemporary popular romaunts by Barrett Browning; the 'Romaunt of the Page' (1839) and 'The Romaunt of Margaret' (1837). The minstrel's first romance is not concerned with a knight's journey to the Holy Land to take part in the crusades, and his resulting 'gallant deeds', but instead focuses upon a much smaller locality. The story has links to 'The Eve of St. Agnes', *Romeo and Juliet* and Byron's *The Bride of Abydos* (1814). This is because it is concerned with the themes of forbidden love and escape. The link to 'The Eve of St. Agnes' is particularly prominent because of the link between Madaline and Agnes; only Madaline is willing to escape with her lover – 'The Daughter of the Plantagenet' on the other hand explores what may have happened if she had stayed.

The lover of Agnes, Romara, is described by the minstrel as a 'brave', 'noble [...] warrior' but because of Agnes' overprotective father he is not able to see her and she is unwilling to run away with him (1:1:18, 19, 29). He displays this bravery when, on the way back from one of the couple's forbidden meetings, he saves Agnes' father from drowning in the river:

Hark! hark! again!—‘tis a human cry,
 Like the shriek of a man about to die!
 And its desolateness doth fearfully pierce
 The billowy boom of the torrent fierce;
 And, swift as a thought
 Glides the warrior’s boat
 Through the foaming surge to the river’s bank,
 Where, lo!—by a branch of the osiers dank,
 Clingeth one in agony
 Uttering that doleful cry! (1:2:34-43)

There is no indication in these lines that saving the drowning man will have negative consequences and, if anything, his bravery is likely to bring some form of reward. In the end though, it is through his rescue that the lord (Agnes’s father) finds out about the relationship between his daughter and Romara. This is seen to be intolerable and the baron subsequently has Romara executed. Interestingly, this story has a larger significance within *The Baron’s Yule Feast* because it relates to an incident that takes place at the conclusion of Cooper’s story; the minstrel saves a ferryman from a river nearby Torksey Hall. This results in the lord giving his permission for the minstrel to marry his daughter Edith. The work concludes with the couple’s marriage.

I have previously argued that *The Baron’s Yule Feast* has a structure which is reminiscent of *The Canterbury Tales*, yet Cooper also incorporates elements of the French tradition in his work. These are perhaps added to enforce the fictional joining of Anglo-Saxon and Norman traditions through the marriage between the troubadour and the baron’s daughter. A further link to the French tradition can be seen in the way in which Cooper refers to the work as a ‘metrical essay’ in the Advertisement. The use of essay here is

closer to the French verb ‘essayer’ which translates as ‘to try’ or ‘to attempt’. This gives the pretence of modesty as it suggests that the work is experimental and not perfect. Another use of French literary tradition, which retains connections to Chaucer’s ‘The Miller’s Tale’, is the employment of the fabliau tradition in the ‘The Miller of Roche’. This is told by the Lay Bother of Saint Leonard’s table and not by the foreign troubadour. The tale is bawdy and is enjoyed by the audience within the hall. It is interesting that Cooper uses an appropriated French literary form to present a story which is crude and makes fun of people’s imperfections and superstitions.

At the start of the story, the Prior of Roche is introduced and described as being ‘beyond reproach’ (1:2). The tale then changes direction and introduces the titular miller’s wife, who we are told confesses her sins and takes absolution every day. The prior’s ‘zeal’ in doing this is said to be ghostly, suggesting that there is something otherworldly about him (1:12). The story then changes focus again; the miller is working late when a ‘drenched beggar-lad stumbled’ into the mill (1:36). The miller feels sorry for him, saying that ‘[t]he sight o’ ye stirs up one’s pity!’ and invites him to receive hospitality in his cottage (1:54). The miller’s wife, Joan, however does not want to open her home to him because it is a ‘strange time of night’ and visitors can ‘put folk in a fright’ (1:109-110). The miller intercedes and he is allowed to stay. It is then revealed that the beggar has strange powers, and is able to conjure food by writing words with some chalk that he is carrying.

“In the stars I have skill,

“And their powers, at my will,

“I can summon, with food to provide us:” (1:145-147)

The miller and his wife, following the beggar’s example, start to eat the food and eventually also become drunk. The beggar then makes a disturbing proposition that he will

bring forth the devil. The miller and his wife are more worried about this because of its potential affect upon their souls. The miller urges the beggar to stop, but he replies:

“I must on

“Till my conjuring’s done;

“To break off just now would be ruin:

“So fetch me the thorns,

“And a devil without horns,

“In the copper I soon will be brewing!” (1:229-234)

When the devil appears there is a brief skirmish and he is allowed to escape. It is later revealed that he bore a striking resemblance to the prior of Roche. The final moral of the story is ambiguous as no characters come out of the tale well, though the poem ends with a chastisement of the miller’s wife for not being hospitable. If she had offered the beggar food and drink then there would have been no need for the beggar’s conjuring. However, Joan could be argued to have been acting in defence of her home and was therefore right to be wary of strangers.

The protection of the home (and also national borders) is an important facet in a later story related by the foreign troubadour entitled ‘Sir Raymond and the False Palmer’. The speaker tells the reader in passing that Sir Raymond will be journeying to Jerusalem to take part in the Crusades. Sir Raymond sees it as his duty to go, and furthermore worries that he will be labelled as a ‘craven’ if he tarries (3:26). Rather than focusing upon his journey to the Holy Land and his exploits there, the majority of the story concentrates on a palmer who comes back from the war to tell Sir Raymond’s wife Gertrude that her husband has been killed in battle; ‘he telleth, in accents dread and drear, | Of De Clifford’s death in the Holy Land’ (3: 67-68). At this point the palmer leaves Gertrude to her grief, but eventually returns to look in on her. Gertrude realises in due course that she ‘liked her

gallant guest' (3:93). This is because the palmer is able to soothe her with stories and songs. Eventually the pair decides to wed, but the service comes to be interrupted by Sir Raymond who has returned from Jerusalem unharmed. He then kills the palmer outright for trying to usurp his place whilst he has been away defending his family's honour and that of his country. We do not know if the palmer was mistaken in thinking that Sir Raymond had been killed, or deliberately usurped his place. The knight's reaction to the palmer may be seen as extreme to a modern audience, but his actions reflect the importance of protecting the home both during the Victorian and Medieval periods. Cooper's work reflects both a contemporary desire to protect the home and nation and an uncertainty with regard to foreigners (in this case the French). Cooper's work calls for understanding between people of different races and religions and suggests the positive impact that international alliances could have. The second agenda of *The Baron's Yule Feast* is to highlight unequal stratification within contemporary society, as he uses his own speaker to comment upon the differences between the rich and the poor.

Conclusion

Rossetti and Cooper both use literature from the French Medieval period to create work which is very different from each other, in theme as well as form. Rossetti chooses to only translate poems by Villon which he aesthetically responds to; he therefore presents an edited Villon to his contemporary audience. Cooper on the other hand, exploits the position of the troubadour poet as being an outsider in society in order to draw his readers' attention to unjust attitudes towards the poor within Victorian society. Cooper sees himself as an inheritor of troubadour traditions; as an entertainer he presents stories which can at times be humorous, solemn or tragic, but as a commentator and moralist he also attempts to draw

the attention of his readership to inequalities within his own society. Even though Cooper takes a step back from the voice of the minstrel, he attempts to create a work which would have a similar political impact to the poetry of the original troubadours. Both Rossetti and Cooper do not see themselves as ‘anachronistic’ writers, as suggested by Cronin above, because they considered their poetry able to challenge contemporary notions of what art should be and the socio-economic conditions prevalent in contemporary Britain.³⁷⁷ Rossetti helps to revive the reputation of a French Medieval poet Villon whose writings had fallen out of favour because he valued his art work and wanted to increase its accessibility. Cooper on the other hand uses the French and European troubadour tradition in order to give his voice weight to comment upon the unfair stratification of contemporary society and the need for more integration both between social classes and different nations.

³⁷⁷ Cronin, *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, p. 345.

William Morris, Gerald Massey and the Chivalric-Grotesque

Introduction

Stefanie Markowitz in *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* uses the term ‘Chivalric Grotesque’ to describe the Crimean war related poetry in William Morris’ *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), but the term is not fully defined in the work.³⁷⁸ Further, the chivalric and the grotesque are not often considered together in the criticism of Victorian poetry: in this chapter they will be. Morris and Gerald Massey’s poetry, which responds to the Crimean War, exhibits elements of both traditions and suggests some contiguity.³⁷⁹ The chivalric-grotesque poetry of Massey and Morris in *War Waits* (1855) and *The Defence of Guenevere* focuses upon honour and acting correctly during a state of war or a conflict situation. Isobel Armstrong in her chapter ‘A New Radical Aesthetic – the grotesque as Cultural Critique: Morris’ from her influential work *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, has commented that Morris uses the grotesque to argue against the cultural changes taking place within an increasingly industrialised society. Yet here the work of Massey is added to this debate, thus providing evidence that the use of the grotesque as a form of cultural critique can also be found during this period in the work of a middle-class poet, Morris, and Massey, a working-class poet.

The chivalric-grotesque is often seen either when the chivalric Medieval world is used as the physical staging for the grotesque or, in situations of combat, death and imprisonment: points at which social and military order appears to break down. In the

³⁷⁸ Stefanie Markowitz, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 161.

³⁷⁹ The Crimean War (1853-1856) will not form a major part of the argument of this chapter, as the concluding chapter of the thesis looks at war poetry as a distinct genre. Markowitz, makes a distinct connection between *War Waits* by Massey and Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere* to the Crimean War in *The Crimean War in the British Imagination*, p. 161.

work of both poets, breaches in expected behaviour take place during a time of social upheaval. For Massey, the entry of the British into the war is not necessarily a righteous act, as it causes the undignified deaths of men from all social classes. In Morris's poetry, a pattern is discernible whereby the desire to return to a state of chivalric order and tradition follows a period of grotesque unrest. This practice also reflects Morris' aversion to industrial progress, and promotion of craft based production processes. States of war can bring about heightened levels of anxiety and a feeling of being continuously under threat. The other side of this however is that states of war and conflict can instil a sense of camaraderie and often cause national identity to be a more crucial factor in day to day life. In this chapter I will argue that these conditions can generate the chivalric qualities of 'loyalty, comradeship and prowess' in individuals, as well as their obverse counterparts: 'treachery, faithlessness and cowardice'.³⁸⁰

The Victorian grotesque has been 'connected to problems of orderliness, legitimacy and cultural debasement. As an aesthetic practice and critical category it was judged in relation to orders of art and legitimacy of modes of knowledge'.³⁸¹ Here, Trodd, Barlow and Amigoni imply that the grotesque mode reveals tensions between high and low culture and high and low art, as these can be linked to both 'orderliness' and 'cultural debasement'.³⁸² The grotesque is potentially an egalitarian form of expression that is able to move between the above categories. But the critical problems that the grotesque is associated with – 'orderliness, legitimacy and cultural debasement' – also appear to haunt the Victorian return to Medieval conceptions of chivalry in both working class and Pre-Raphaelite verse. Furthermore, it emerges that it is these qualities that are of particular interest to Morris and Massey as two men with radical axes to grind, because they help to

³⁸⁰ Richard W. Barber, *The Reign of Chivalry* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), p. 51.

³⁸¹ Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow and David Amigoni, 'Introduction: Uncovering the Grotesque in Victorian Culture', in *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p. 10).

³⁸² Ibid.

facilitate a challenge to accepted codes of behaviour, legitimate authority and can confront inequalities with regard to social class. The unexpected alignment of chivalric modes and grotesque effects offers a discourse through which radical sentiment can be explored and advanced.

The grotesque in Victorian literature

I want first to keep the two categories apart. The grotesque and the chivalric have, after all, distinct critical heritages that do not straightforwardly combine. The grotesque as an artistic mode retains elements of the original Latin *grotto*, meaning small cave. The earliest grotesque paintings were found in the Emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea* palace complex in Ancient Rome. Victorian constructions of the grotesque were influenced most immediately by Edmund Burke's 'On the Sublime and the Beautiful' (1756). Burke's work is significant because it paved the way for the grotesque to be seen as a means of artistic transcendence in the nineteenth century, through the invocation of *Paradise Lost* (1667) by Milton. John Ruskin was arguably the most prominent critic of the grotesque during the Victorian period, and an inheritor of Burke's conservative aesthetic interests. He considered that the grotesque mode could, in certain instances, be a form of high art, particularly when it exhibited what he termed to be nobility and truth. In the 'Grotesque Renaissance' from *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin writes that the grotesque that verges upon high art is a 'thoroughly noble one [...] which arises out of the use or fancy of tangible signs to set forth an otherwise less expressible truth; including nearly the whole range of symbolical and allegorical art and poetry'.³⁸³ His description gives an example of the 'orders of art' that the grotesque can portray, as discussed at length by Trodd, Barlow and

³⁸³ John Ruskin, 'Grotesque Renaissance', in *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols. (Orpington: George Allen, 1886), p. 132.

Amigoni.³⁸⁴ Both during the Victorian period and in contemporary literary criticism, the grotesque is therefore an unstable term. Mary Russo in *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* succinctly summarises the two most prominent contemporary schools of thought: ‘The comic grotesque has come to be associated with Mikhail Bakhtin on carnival in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), while the grotesque as strange and uncanny is connected to Wolfgang Kayser’s *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, to the horror genre, and with Freud’s essay “On the Uncanny”’.³⁸⁵ A combination of both forms of the grotesque will be shown to be employed by Morris and Massey; this allows them to present deviations from ideal conduct (symbolised by the code of chivalry).

According to Bakhtin the Medieval carnival is a manifestation of folk culture, which enables participants to be periodically free ‘from all religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism, from all mysticism and piety’.³⁸⁶ The specific carnivals which he describes had long since passed into obscurity by the nineteenth century, but times of working-class frivolity can be seen maintained throughout Britain, in traditions like May Queens and the May-pole and the local fairs that offered Hardy the motif for a novel.³⁸⁷ Bakhtin goes on to describe carnival as being, ‘the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter’ and ‘a true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal’ (p. 8, p. 10). Further, it is a time during which ‘prevailing truths and authorities’ are challenged (p. 11). In contrast, the rules of chivalry are more concerned with stasis and the maintenance of the political and social *status quo*. The celebration of natural cycles of change and renewal became increasingly difficult as the nineteenth-century progressed, because the natural world was being eaten up by industrial progress. The Industrial Revolution brought about

³⁸⁴ Trodd, Barlow and Amigoni ‘Introduction: Uncovering the Grotesque in Victorian Culture’, p. 10.

³⁸⁵ Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1995).

³⁸⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 7.

³⁸⁷ These are preserved in the novels of Thomas Hardy, particularly in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886).

irreversible change to the economy of towns and villages.³⁸⁸ The employment of the chivalric-grotesque by both Massey and Morris enables both writers to mourn for and protest the loss of a traditional way of life.

As Kayser sees it, the grotesque mode can be used to represent ‘a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statics, symmetry and proportion are no longer valid’.³⁸⁹ This form of the grotesque can be seen in the poetry of Morris and Massey in their use of distorted bodies, as will be further discussed below. In the Victorian period Kayser’s grotesque is elsewhere manifest in the work of Robert Browning and *Sartor Resartus* (1833-1834) by Thomas Carlyle.³⁹⁰ According to Harold Bloom works such as ‘Caliban upon Setebos’ (1864) and ‘Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came’ (1855) show Browning to be ‘the great modern master of the grotesque’.³⁹¹ This can be seen in the description of the landscape by the speaker of the latter poem, which is seen to be ‘penury’ and displays ‘inertness and grimace’.³⁹² On a more local level this is conveyed in the account of thistles which have pushed above the other plants and subsequently had their heads ‘chopped’ off and the ‘dock’s harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk | All hope of greenness’ (68, 70-71). Browning’s poetry is used as an example of the grotesque by the influential Victorian critic Walter Bagehot (1826-77) in his essay ‘Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning; or Pure, Ornate and Grotesque in English Poetry’, published in the *National Review* in November 1864. According to Bagehot, Browning’s work is grotesque because

³⁸⁸ This theme has been discussed in greater depth in the introduction to this thesis and the earlier chapter: ‘Swinburne and the Industrial Poets: The Anti-Pastoral and the Garden’. Significantly, Raymond Williams argues that a tense relationship between the town and the city had existed long before the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The myth of the pastoral often exposes the distinction between idealisations of country life and its actual hardships. *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993).

³⁸⁹ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), p. 21.

³⁹⁰ For discussion of the link between Carlyle and the grotesque see Paul Barlow, ‘Thomas Carlyle’s Grotesque Conceits’, in *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, pp. 37-60.

³⁹¹ Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby, *The Grotesque* (New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism, 2009), p. xv.

³⁹² Robert Browning, *The Major Works*, ed. by Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 60.

it is able to present something which is perfect in a way that has an element of deformity. This is unlike the work of Charles Dickens, who rather than using the form as a mask for purity, reveals that grotesque features and movements are a manifestation of psychological instability. His grotesque characters are the most familiar demonstration of the form to modern readers, particularly Miss Havisham and Abel Magwitch from *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), *David Copperfield's* (1849-1850) Uriah Heep and Wilkins Micawber and Daniel Quilp from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1841).³⁹³ In all of these characters there is a link between physical impairment, immoral conduct and unstable psychology. The character of Tiny Tim from *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is exempt from this equation as he is an angelic child who uses his disability to set a good example. Grotesque characters on the other hand are marked out by the lack of symmetry in their physical features and movement that is erratic, eccentric or awkward. In chapter six of *The Old Curiosity Shop* Quilp is described via Little Nell as having an 'uncouth appearance and grotesque attitude'.³⁹⁴ As Quilp reads a letter 'he began to open his eyes very wide and to frown most horribly'. He goes on to scratch his head in 'an uncommonly vicious manner' and 'bite the nails of all of his ten fingers with extreme voracity'.³⁹⁵ Grotesque appearance is used by Dickens to signal problems within contemporary society. For instance, the terrifying appearance of Magwitch to the young Pip outlines the prejudice and unease of Victorian society towards criminals; the grotesque acts as a mask that conceals his gentlemanly characteristics. In the visual arts these characters were brought to life in the illustrations of Dickens' novels by George Cruikshank (1792-1878), Hablot Knight Browne or 'Phiz' (1815-1882) and John Leech (1817-1864). The drawings were based upon the social satires

³⁹³ For further consideration of this topic see Michael Hollington, *Dickens and the Grotesque* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

³⁹⁴ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Brennan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 50.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

of William Hogarth (1697-1764) and the grotesques of James Gillray (c1756-1815) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827).³⁹⁶ The illustrations of Gustav Doré (1832-1883) in *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872) also present a grotesque vision of some of London's poorer districts.³⁹⁷

It is possible to discern elements of the grotesque in Pre-Raphaelite works such as Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' (1862) and *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872), as well as the paintings by the later Pre-Raphaelite G. F. Watts (1817-1904), including 'Hope' (1885) and 'The Minotaur' (1885).³⁹⁸ The most notable example of Rossetti's grotesque can be seen in her description of the Goblins in 'Goblin Market'. One goblin has a 'cat's face' and another 'like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry'.³⁹⁹ The second important grotesque image comes when Lizzie returns from obtaining the fruit from the goblin men which will save her sister. Lizzie is covered in the juice of their fruit and therefore invites her sister to 'kiss me' and '[e]at me, drink me, love me; | Laura make much of me:' (465, 471-472). These images are grotesque in Kayser's sense of the term due to the presence of unnatural and unseemly creatures and the use of bodily distortion. The poem has links to the chivalric-grotesque because the sanctity of the sisters' home is disordered as a result of the appearance of the goblin market and the effect which the proprietors' fruit has upon Laura. Rossetti portrays the closeness of the two sisters when Laura returns from eating the fruit of the goblins. They are 'like two pigeons in one nest | Folded in each other's wings' (185-186). This is counter to the description of the goblin men who are 'queer' or 'sly brothers' (94, 96). Throughout the poem all characters cross

³⁹⁶ See Jane R. Cohen, *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1980).

³⁹⁷ The accuracy of Doré's illustrations can however be doubted since he journeyed to London to view the subject matter of his illustrations, but they were drawn from memory in his Paris apartment.

³⁹⁸ Colin Trodd, 'Turning Back the Grotesque: G. F. Watts, the Matter of Painting and the Oblivion of Art', *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, pp. 173-196.

³⁹⁹ Christina Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, ed. by R. W. Crump (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 71, 75.

the line of what would have been considered to be appropriate behaviour. For instance, when she is given some of the fruit we learn that she ‘sucked and sucked and sucked the more, [...] she sucked until her lips were sore’ (134, 136). One of the key grotesque images in the poem comes when Laura tells her sister that she ‘cannot think what figs | My teeth has met in’ (173-174). This is because she has involuntarily taken something harmful into her body; it is also a crossing of the barrier between acceptable and unacceptable conduct.

The remnants of chivalry and the Victorian gentleman

The chivalric code which is referred to in the poetry of Massey and Morris is based in large part upon Medieval chivalry as mediated through romance literature in works such as *Lancelot* (late 12th century) by Chrétien de Troyes, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Late 14th century) and Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). Massey’s understanding of chivalry was also influenced by Christian Socialism. He first began writing for the *Christian Socialist* in 1850 and went on to contribute an article to the newspaper on 3 May 1851 entitled ‘The Brotherhood of Labour’. In the article, Massey indicates that no man, regardless of class has a ‘divine right to be isolated from the Brotherhood of Labour’. He uses biblical language to call his readers into action: ‘Thou shouldst [*sic*] be doing something, for the world, the good and glorious world!’. This gives every man the opportunity to avoid being a ‘nonentity’. Work is depicted as a factor which can enable a person, who has been ‘cold and lifeless’, to become a ‘warm, living, breathing thing pulsing, with all rich yearnings for humanity!’.⁴⁰⁰

By the Victorian period the chivalric code of the Middle Ages had been adapted to suit its socio-economic conditions. According to Richard W. Kaeuper in *Chivalry and*

⁴⁰⁰ Gerald Massey, ‘The Brotherhood of Labour’ in the *Christian Socialist*, 3 May 1851.

Violence in Medieval Europe, traditionally, ‘at the centre of chivalric ideology’ was the exhibition of ‘prowess’ during war.⁴⁰¹ Kaeuper goes on to suggest that the other important tenets of Medieval chivalry were proper conduct, or ‘a lively concern about the expected way in which knights should treat each other when they fight’, and the importance of ‘loyalty’ to king and the church. These were key to establishing a knight’s identity.⁴⁰² In the romance languages (French, Spanish and Italian) knight means horseman, but the English word comes from the Anglo-Saxon, *cniht*, which translates ‘boy’ or ‘servant’.⁴⁰³ These two definitions hint at the tension between self-interest and regard for others in a knight’s conduct. Chivalrous conduct in the nineteenth century is often associated with ‘the gentleman’ and thus tends to apply to aspirant middle-class and upper-class men in Victorian literature – typically because of their good manners and breeding. The term becomes a torturous one for Dickens’ Pip, but the Victorian gentleman was not always a symbol of the *status-quo*. Mark Girouard has commented that ‘[t]hroughout the nineteenth century [...] individuals or groups who were proud to call themselves gentlemen set out, with what may reasonably be described as chivalrous enthusiasm, not to support the existing order, but to make radical changes to it’.⁴⁰⁴ Massey’s poetry does have this goal in mind but he did not see himself as a traditional gentleman. The Pre-Raphaelites, on the other hand, were a group of mostly middle-class gentlemen who aimed to make radical changes to British art. Members of the Christian Socialist movement (F. D. Maurice, J. M. F. Ludlow and Charles Kingsley) and middle and upper-class Chartist sympathisers (Ernest Jones and Feargus O’Connor) also had a similar agenda. Not all gentlemen were radicals,

⁴⁰¹ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 161.

⁴⁰² Kaeuper, p. 170, 187.

⁴⁰³ Richard W. Barber, *The Reign of Chivalry* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), p. 9.

⁴⁰⁴ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

and indeed most based their status upon ‘quasi-feudal appeals to social hierarchy’.⁴⁰⁵ The use of the grotesque by writers who adhere to gentlemanly and chivalric codes, it could be argued, goes against their expected conduct: the grotesque ordinarily permits free play and a disregard for authority.

The social position of the nineteenth-century gentleman did not necessarily give him a greater degree of freedom than the lower classes because in certain instances his conduct needed to be highly-tuned. John Henry Newman (1801-1890) in *The Idea of a University* (1852, 1858) produced a famous definition of the gentleman which was highly restrictive and promoted personal integrity above all else.⁴⁰⁶ The most notable difference between Newman’s gentleman and the Medieval knight is that he should be ‘one who never inflicts pain’.⁴⁰⁷ This goes against the central tenet that the Medieval knight should exhibit prowess in warfare. Newman’s ideal gentleman is his ideal Victorian Christian; specifically a Christian who practices the doctrine of reserve:

He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking. [...] From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. [...] He is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles; he submits to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Lauren M. E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 26.

⁴⁰⁶ By the 1850’s Newman had defected from the High Anglican faction of the Christian Church to Roman Catholicism, so his definition of a Victorian gentleman is influenced by his Catholic faith.

⁴⁰⁷ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University Defined and Illustrated: Discourses Delivered to the Catholics of Dublin* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1852, repr. 1999), p. 189.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 189-190.

Unlike the Medieval knight, Newman's gentleman takes a back-seat in social situations – it would not be appropriate for him to regale his company with stories of his heroic exploits, in the manner that Sir Gawain relates the tale of his quest to find the Green Knight to King Arthur's court upon his return. The knights featured in the poetry of both Morris and Massey are more active, they do not relate stories of their heroic deeds to others only because of pride, rather they aim to highlight injustices and to change perceptions. Further, Newman's gentleman is 'tender' and 'gentle' and 'guards against unseasonable allusions'. He should follow the Greek maxim that you should treat your enemies as friends. For Newman, this responds to Christ's teaching that his followers should turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39, Luke 6:29) – a standard that was difficult, if not impossible, for most Victorians to uphold. Most Victorian gentlemen sit somewhere between the two extremes of radical and good Christian, as is the case with the speakers in Morris' and Massey's poetry.

William Morris

The Defence of Guenevere contains poems such as 'A Good Knight in Prison', 'The Haystack in the Floods' and 'Riding Together', which combine elements of Medieval chivalry and the grotesque in order to both question the response of society to the Crimean War and to the Industrial Revolution. Morris depicts a rotten, oozing and stone cold society which is far removed from his utopian vision of Britain in *News from Nowhere*. The volume was the first to be published by a member of the Pre-Raphaelite group and appeared whilst Morris was still studying at Exeter College, Oxford. His volume is eclectic; it ranges between Arthurian settings, a Froissartian view of the Hundred Years' War and a self-constructed world of fantasy, which incorporates established characters such as Rapunzel and those of his own creation. Morris's poetry also takes on a range of

themes which include a consideration of death, love, the role of women, chivalry, beauty and sensuality. What I am terming the chivalric-grotesque is noticeably not an appropriate mode for all of the poems in the collection as it presents a tension between grotesque play and the re-establishment of order. However, it becomes crucial when standards of ideal chivalric behaviour have been crossed in cases of murder, tyrannical leadership or improper conduct during and after a battle takes place.

Morris's career was perhaps the most politically active of all of the Pre-Raphaelites. Yet, his work did not become overtly so until the 1800s with the publication of *A Summary of the Principles of Socialism* (1884), *Chants for Socialists* (1885), *The Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1891). A number of critics have commented upon the link between Morris's left-wing politics and his literary production.⁴⁰⁹ According to Nicholas Salmon his early radical poems and activities hint at his later political stance.⁴¹⁰ Morris' early poetry was formed in a melting pot of influences. Early in his life he became interested in Medievalist and Early English texts. Morris published Medieval works such as *The Order of Chivalry* (1892-1893) through the Kelmscott Press, and his interest in the period culminated in the publication *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* in 1896. Morris was also particularly fond of the Medieval romances of Sir Walter Scott, notably *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *The Lady of the Lake* (1806), *Rob Roy* (1818) and *Ivanhoe* (1820). Further, from an early age he had been interested in

⁴⁰⁹ For further discussion of the connections between Morris's politics and literary works see: Edward Palmer Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1988), Jeffrey Skoblow, *Paradise Dislocated: Morris, Politics, Art* (London: Virginia University Press, 1993), Bradley J. MacDonald, *William Morris and the Aesthetic Constitution of Politics* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington, 1999), Regina Gagnier, 'Review: *William Morris and the Aesthetic Constitution of Politics* and "John Paul Cooper: Designer and Craftsman of the Arts and Crafts Movement"', *Victorian Studies*, 43.2 (Winter, 2001), 350-352, Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, 'William Morris, Print Culture, and the Politics of Aestheticism', *Modernism/Modernity*, 15.3 (2008), 477-502, Mark Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', *The History of European Ideas*, 24.3 (1998), 175-94, Michael Mendelson, 'The Wood Beyond the World and the Politics of Desire', *Essays in Literature*, 18.2 (1991), 211-34 and Andrew Belsey, 'Getting Somewhere: Rhetoric and Politics in *News From Nowhere*', *Textual Practice*, 5.3 (1991), 337-51.

⁴¹⁰ Nicholas Salmon, "The Down-Trodden Radical": William Morris's Pre-Socialist Ideology', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, 13.3 (1999), 26-43.

Gothic architecture. Fiona McCarthy notes that during his time at Marlborough College (1849-51) he was able to take advantage of its extensive holdings relating to architecture.⁴¹¹ Whilst at Oxford the works of Ruskin, particularly *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), were to have a profound influence upon him and the rest of his set. Partially as a result of this reading, during the summer of 1855 Morris, William Fulford and Edward Burne-Jones embarked upon a journey to visit a number of Gothic cathedrals in Northern France.⁴¹² It was upon this momentous trip that Morris decided not to enter the church, as he had previously intended, but to become an architect. Subsequently, when he left Exeter College in 1856 he was articled to G. E. Street (1824-1881), who was a prominent figure in the Gothic revival movement.⁴¹³ During this period he also took it upon himself to learn a number of different craft techniques, which in part accounts for the tension between high and low art exhibited in his work.

Knowledge of the aesthetic theories of Ruskin and Gothic architecture had a significant impact upon poetry by Morris which displays elements of what I term to be the chivalric-grotesque. In Ruskin's chapter from *The Stones of Venice*, 'The Nature of Gothic', the Gothic and the grotesque are deliberately and purposefully linked. The grotesque is considered to be the fourth most important facet of Gothic architecture.⁴¹⁴ In

⁴¹¹ Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 44.

⁴¹² Morris wrote numerous letters back home from France which describe his wonder of the cathedrals that he encountered. These letters have been edited by Kelvin Norman in *The Collected Letters of William Morris: 1848-1880*, vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁴¹³ The revival of the Medieval Gothic style of architecture began in the late eighteenth century in Britain. According to John Ruskin: 'Pointed arches do not constitute Gothic – nor vaulted roofs – nor flying buttresses, nor grotesque sculptures; but all or some of these things – amid many other things with them – when they come together so as to have life'. 'On the Nature of Gothic', *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1853 repr. 1891), p. 152. The two key early works in the style are Strawberry Hill, designed by Horace Walpole (1717-1797), and William Thomas Beckford's (1760-1844) Fonthill. For further discussion of the Victorian Gothic revival see: Alf Bøe, *From Gothic Revival to Functional Form: A Study in Victorian Theories of Design* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), Jeremy Cooper, *Victorian and Edwardian Furniture and Interiors: From the Gothic Revival to Art Nouveau* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), and Gavin Stamp, *An Architect of Promise: George Gilbert Scott Junior (1839-1897) and the Late Gothic Revival* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002).

⁴¹⁴ The other facets are: 1. Savageness, 2. Changefulness, 3. Naturalism, 5. Rigidity and 6. Redundance. Ruskin goes on to discuss each of these terms in the chapter but the grotesque is discussed separately in the

the ‘Grotesque Renaissance’ a late chapter in *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin distinguishes between the comic-demonic grotesque, whose characteristics were nobility and truth, and the ignoble grotesque which was considered to be ‘frivolous, artificial, sensual and base’. The type of grotesque which is produced is contingent upon the way in which the artist ‘plays’. Artists who produce the first kind of grotesque ‘play wisely’; those who produce the sensuous grotesque play out of ‘necessity’ and those who do not play at all produce the ‘terrible’ grotesque.⁴¹⁵ According to Ruskin the grotesque is not necessarily a political form because the production of a grotesque work of art can be linked to the moral character and psychology of the artist. In response, poems in *The Defence of Guenevere* that present elements of chivalry through the grotesque mode are often implicitly political. According to Isobel Armstrong, the poems are ‘an attempt to *be* the form in which modern consciousness shaped by work and labour sees, experiences and desires, to be what it imagines and myths it needs to imagine with’.⁴¹⁶ She goes on to suggest that the voice of modern consciousness presented in Morris’ Medievalist poems show the ‘grotesque creation of the longings of modernity, the representations of and by the nineteenth century subject. So *The Defence* is an intensely analytical work’.⁴¹⁷ Man’s fall from the chivalric ideal is revealed through society’s ‘longings’ for sex, wealth and power; all of which are

later chapter ‘Grotesque Renaissance’. Ruskin goes on to explain that these characteristics ‘are here expressed as belonging to the building; as belonging to the builder they would be expressed thus: 1. Savageness or Rudeness. 2. Love of Change. 3. Love of Nature. 4. Disturbed Imagination. 5. Obstinacy. 6. Generosity’. From ‘On the Nature of Gothic’, p. 154.

⁴¹⁵ Ruskin comments that the human imagination ‘in its mocking or playful moods [...] is apt to jest, sometimes bitterly, with an under-current of sternest pathos, sometimes waywardly, sometimes slightly and wickedly, with death and sin; hence an enormous mass of grotesque art, some most noble and useful, as Holbein’s *Dance of Death*, and Albrecht Durer’s *Knight, Death and the Devil*, going down gradually through various conditions of less and less seriousness into an art whose only end is that of mere excitement, or to amuse by terror’. ‘Grotesque Renaissance’, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2 (Orpington: George Allen, 1886), p. 131. For further discussion of the grotesque see Frances K. Barasch, ‘Theories of the Grotesque’ in *The Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, ed. by Irena Rima Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 85-89.

⁴¹⁶ Armstrong, p. 236.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 241.

taken to excess as a result of corruption. This potentially presents a society which is trapped by its own vices.

The Defence of Guenevere

In Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*, the representation of individuals can be grotesque within the context of a flawed chivalric world, in which paralysis (through the *rigor mortis* of a dead body, for instance) combines with images that ooze or are fluid. As a consequence, many of Morris' poems from within the genre combine the idiom of chivalry with the rotten, hideous and visceral. The volume opens with a dramatic monologue which gives the work its name. 'The Defence of Guenevere' presents the psychological interrogation of a flawed character who reflects the grotesque world which she inhabits. During the course of the poem Guenevere uses confused and circular speech to delay her imminent execution until the Arthurian knight Lancelot arrives to save her. As is the case with Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), it is difficult for the reader to understand the speaker's motivations. Lancelot and Guenevere are featured again in the next poem in the volume, 'King Arthur's Tomb'. Both characters coincidentally meet at the tomb of King Arthur and during the encounter find that their erotic passion has waned since Lancelot killed Arthur.⁴¹⁸ Their adultery is remembered through the prism of the king's death and the subsequent downfall of his realm. The grotesque is seen here in the way in which Guenevere feels repulsion in the presence of someone that she had previously thought to be attractive:

Why did your long lips cleave

⁴¹⁸ This version of the text comes from *Le Chevalier de la Charette* or *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart* (c. 12th century) by Chrétien de Troyes, rather than Malory's more famous text *Le Morte d'Arthur*. In Malory's text Arthur is killed by Mordred (most often reputed to be Arthur's illegitimate son).

In such strange way unto my fingers then?
 So eagerly glad to kiss, so loath to leave
 When you rose up?
 Why sicken'd I so often with alarms
 Over the tilt-yard? Why were you more fair
 Than aspens in the autumn at their best [...] (249-255)

These lines initially describe Lancelot kissing Guenevere's hand as a prelude to their affair, but the image is almost macabre and has undertones of assault: Their previously experienced passion becomes disgusting in the absence of its original heat. 'Cleave' is a particularly interesting word choice by Morris as it has two potentially relevant meanings: 'To part or divide by a cutting blow' or, to 'adhere to' (*OED*). The line simultaneously refers to the way in which Lancelot cleaved the head of Arthur from its body and the cleaving of the two adulterous lovers during sex. The collocation of the two may explain why Guenevere feels sickened, even though she does not understand this herself.

Golden hair is referred to throughout the volume and is often as a source of power or a substance that is highly prized; this is evident in 'Rapunzel' when the witch tries to obtain her captive's yellow hair. Yet within 'King Arthur's Tomb', it seems to symbolise death.

And she would let me wind
 Her hair around my neck, so that it fell
 Upon my red robe, strange in the twilight
 With many unnamed colours [...] (44-47)

This is reminiscent of Robert Browning's sinister work, 'Porphyria's Lover' in which the speaker strangles Porphyria with her own hair in order to retain possession of her forever. Browning's troubling speaker freely admits that:

[...] and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her.⁴¹⁹

Porphyria does not struggle whilst she is being murdered because she lacks the physical strength to protect herself against her assailant but Guenevere permits her hair to be used to wrap around Lancelot's neck. This action shows a slightly masochistic strain in Lancelot and the allusion to the 'red robe' represents the flowing of his blood as he acts out his own death.

The description of Arthur's dead body is also grotesque, which may reflect the unnaturalness of his death.

"And thereupon Lucius, the Emperor,
 Lay royal-robed, but stone-cold now and dead,
 Not able to hold sword or sceptre more,
 But not quite grim; because his cloven head
 Bore no marks now of Launcelot's bitter sword,
 Being by embalmers deftly solder'd up". (225-230)

The notion that Arthur's body is now 'stone-cold' indicates that it has become its own monument: It is also a reminder of the cold reality of death, a state from which there is conventionally no return. '[C]loven' literally describes the result of decapitation, yet also relates to cloven-footed animals such as sheep and goats, as well as to the devil; this adds a sinister quality to the image. We then learn that embalmers have 'solder'd up' the body of king Arthur, which moves away from his body having a marble-like quality to the implication that it has become fluid in some way. The need for his body to be soldered

⁴¹⁹ Robert Browning, *Major Works*, ed. by Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). 38-41.

together draws attention to the unnaturalness of the act of soldering. Arthur's body now bears no evidence of it having ever been cloven in two, thus gesturing towards the supernatural and giving it an unctuous quality. The grotesque turning of the marble to fluid links to embalming, which uses fluid to repair and/or preserve the corpse. This description is very different from Welsh, Cornish and Breton folklore which claims that Arthur did not die at all but instead would arise from sleep when he was most needed to defend his people. The story of Arthur's death is also different to the story related by the poet laureate Tennyson in 'The Passing of Arthur' from the *Idylls of the King* (1856-1885). Here, Arthur is mortally wounded by Mordred after winning a bloody battle. He is later lifted onto a boat and attests that he will be going on a long journey to 'Avilion'.⁴²⁰ This poses the question of whether a peaceful end is possible within Morris's grotesque world, for the dead cannot rise to become heroes once more.

The grotesque aftermath of death is also portrayed in 'Golden Wings'. It tells the story of a lady who is left to pine when her knight goes off on an adventure; she sends songs out to him in the hope that he will quickly return to her. The process of waiting takes its toll on the speaker – in a heightened state of emotion she takes off her clothes in anticipation of the couple's sexual reunion. After the knight does not arrive again she leaves the castle, but we do not know for what purpose at this stage. In the morning both she and her knight are found dead. This in itself is not necessarily grotesque as their deaths are only briefly related. Yet, the slain man's feet are described as 'stiffen'd' as a result of *rigor mortis*, which links to the marble-like quality of Arthur's dead body in 'The Death of Arthur'. Further, the grotesque can be seen in the contrast between the description of the castle and its surroundings given at the start of the poem and that found at its conclusion. At the beginning of the poem a 'wallèd garden' surrounding a castle exists within a 'happy

⁴²⁰ Alfred Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*, ed. by J. M. Gray (London: Penguin, 1996), 427.

poplar land' (1, 2). 'Red apples' shine over the walls of the garden and a boat which sits on the moat is a place where lovers would 'sit there and kiss | In the hot summer noons, not seen' (7, 19-20). By the end of the poem:

The apples now grow green and sour

Upon the mouldering castle-wall,

Before they ripen there they fall:

There are no banners on the tower.

The draggled swans most eagerly eat

The green weeds trailing in the moat;

Inside the rotting leaky boat

You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet. (235-238)

The red shining apples are now 'green and sour' and the castle wall is 'mouldering'. Ripe apples are associated with beauty and fertility, but here they are linked to the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden: 'Before they ripen there they fall'. Within this fallen place 'draggled swans' gluttonously eat green weeds in the moat. The boat which once housed young lovers is rotten and leaking, thus providing a contrast to the rigid feet of the speaker's dead lover. Similarly, Sir Peter's castle in 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End' is described as rotting: 'A lonely gard with rotten walls [sic]' (138) and '[h]is rotten sand-stone walls were wet with rain' (573). This image usually reflects a society that has become corrupted in some way. There is also a reference to rotting in 'The Gilliflower of Gold': 'Yea, do not doubt my heart was good, | Though my sword flew like rotten wood' (13-14). This indicates that fighting may be one of the symptoms of a corrupted society as well as crumbling castles which are the seats of power. In 'Golden Wings' there are 'no banners on the tower' which implies that the castle is not protected and is a prime target for attack (238).

In this grotesque chivalric world the imagination of death can be just as grisly as its actuality, as has been seen in Lancelot's wrapping of Guenevere's hair around his neck as a kind of noose. This motif can also be seen in the concluding stanzas of 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End'. After the death of her husband Sir Peter, Alice is left with a strange obsession with her own death, or more accurately the possibility of an Arthurian half-life waiting to be recalled to action in Avalon. This thought is described as being '[l]ike any curling snake within my brain' (526). She hopes that if she hides her head beneath her cushions in bed and lets her imagination take hold, then this will have a cathartic effect and she will finally be left in peace (527-528). As she drifts into sleep she starts to forget 'that I am alive and here' (532). Death itself is as simple as a kiss, but the waiting to be recalled to earth in Avalon is more sinister.

[...] Lying so, one kiss,
 And I should be in Avalon asleep,
 Among the poppies, and the yellow flowers;
 And they should brush my cheek, my hair being spread
 Far out among the stems; soft mice and small
 Eating and creeping all about my feet,
 Red shod and tired; and the flies should come
 Creeping o'er my broad eyelids unafraid;
 And there should be a noise of water going
 Clear blue, fresh water breaking on the slates,
 Likewise the flies should creep—God's eyes! God help,
 A trumpet? I will run fast, leap adown
 The slippery sea-stairs, where the crabs fight.

Ah! (537-549)

Alice imagines being in Avalon asleep and powerless to stop animals from crawling over her until such a time as she hears the trumpet call to return to life. The animals distort the speaker's body as they spread out her hair, mice eat and creep close to her feet and flies encroach upon her.

A further interesting example of the chivalric-grotesque can be seen in the disturbing poem, 'The Wind'. Here, 'an orange [...], with a deep gash cut in the rind' acts as an omen for the death of Margaret within the speaker's dream-state (12). In 'Golden Wings' the protagonist was associated with an apple, a traditional symbol of femininity, but here an orange is used to make the link. The orange works well in this instance because it is physically more vulnerable and has more of a propensity to show damage. Its juice can be seen to ooze from it, but this is not the case with an apple. The speaker worries that if the orange moves then faint yellow juice will ooze out like blood from a 'wizard's jar'. This grotesque image is slightly odd as the analogy of blood coming from a 'wizard's jar' is not what we would expect and again hints towards the supernatural. The relationship between the speaker and Margaret is necessarily obscured by Morris, who leaves his readers to fill in his blanks. We are told that during one of their meetings the speaker

[...] held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away from me,

While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,

And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see; (40-42)

The spasm that affects Margaret could be a result of an illness, psychological upheaval or pain, and thus indicates to Morris' readers that all is not well. Further, we do not know how Margaret is later killed and the speaker is left to make sense of her bloody corpse.

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,
 Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,
 Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.
 I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out afar,
 The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar; (76-80)

Her body and clothes are saturated with blood, including the flowers that the speaker placed upon her earlier in the poem. This is a visceral imagery which sets out to repulse a reader. This is very different from the aestheticised dead women that are found in the work of other Pre-Raphaelite artists, particularly Millais' painting 'Ophelia' which was briefly discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis. The movement of the orange then draws the speaker back to the present but the memory of the oozing of blood remains with him, as a reminder of the constant threat to human life within a chivalric-grotesque society.

In 'The Haystack in the Floods', when Jehane and Sir Robert come close to the camp of their enemy – Godmar – they see the grotesque image of thirty heads lined-up together along the side of the road: 'In one straight line along the ditch, | They counted thirty heads' (37-8). When they are subsequently captured Jehane delights in the prospect of being able to 'strangle' or 'bite through' their captor Godmar's throat whilst he is sleeping (91, 92). Jehane's desired act suggests that the line between what is good and bad in society is blurred. When Jehane defies Godmar and refuses to become his concubine his physical response to this insolence is described by Morris as recalling the movement of a puppet:

And strangely childlike came, and said:
 "I will not". Straightway Godmar's head,
 As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
 Most sharply round, and his face burn'd. (125-128)

‘I will not’ is Jehane’s answer to Godmar’s threat for her to comply with his wishes. He cannot stand an affront to his authority and as a result his body becomes distorted. The use of the word ‘hung’ in the stanza potentially foretells his death. His burning face is also a sign of the devil, or perhaps that he is bound for hell; he is not a knight but something grotesque and base, revealed within the dark heart of the chivalric ideal. As a result of Jehane’s insolence, Sir Robert is given a knightly death by the sword. Yet after this has taken place Godmar and his men do not show respect towards his body; they ‘beat | His head to pieces with their feet’ (150-151). These lines respond to Bakhtin’s notion of the grotesque as being an authorised (though sadistic) time of play, because Godmar’s men make a game out of death. This play however is sanctioned by a corrupt leader rather than the monarchy or the church. Order is restored only when Jehane is able to ride away from the scene towards the town of Chalet. In contrast, the restoration of order within contemporary society is more complex than this as it would require a change in attitudes towards industrialisation. As argued above, within Morris’ chivalric-grotesque world attitudes and states of being are difficult to change.

‘Riding Together’ opens by describing two fellow knights who are out journeying together. The phallic imagery of ‘[o]ur spears stood bright and thick together’ potentially sets the poem up as a celebration of chivalric manliness (21). The two knights are joined by an army of sixty who are ‘threescore spears together’ (25). The knights have a solid group identity which is represented by the ‘banners’ that ‘streamed behind’ them as they ride (22). These banners suggest that all is well within chivalric society. This ideal is quickly disrupted by the appearance of a group of ‘pagans’ who are their enemy (26). In the ensuing battle, the speaker sees the death of his riding companion: ‘I saw him reel and fall back dead’ (36). The speaker continues to fight madly with his men at his side, but we

are told that this is in 'vain' (41, 42). He is defeated and captured by his enemy. As a result:

They bound my blood-stain'd hands together,
 They bound his corpse to nod by my side:
 Then on we rode, in the bright March weather,
 With clash of cymbals did we ride. (45-48)

The speaker is forced into a horribly unnatural grotesque situation. As in 'The Haystack in the Floods', no respect is shown to the dead: the speaker and his dead comrade are bound together. This is similar to the disrespect shown to Sir Robert's dead body in 'The Haystack in the Floods'. The nodding of the dead man suggests a grotesque type of agency or animation, and it gives the impression that he is ironically being forced to assent to his fate. The binding of the speaker's blood-stained hands implies a grotesque breaking down of the conditions that would normally allow art to flourish. Typically, in Morris's work the hand is a symbol of aesthetic beauty, as in poems such as 'The Defence of Guenevere', 'Rapunzel' and 'Spell-bound'. This could be seen as an example of Ruskin's 'terrible' grotesque as the restraints upon the speaker prevent him from playing.⁴²¹ In line with Ruskin's commentary this image 'jests [...] with an undercurrent of pathos [...] with death and sin', by causing the speaker to give the physical impression that he acquiesces to his death and admits to being in a state of sin, even though this is against his will.⁴²² This final image responds to the lifeless bodies of Arthur and Jehane's slain knight in 'Golden Wings'; the nodding of the speaker's head could be an echo of the movements associated with *rigor mortis*.

⁴²¹ Ruskin, 'Grotesque Renaissance', p. 131.

⁴²² Ibid.

Gerald Massey

Massey displays a grotesque falling away from the chivalric ideal in *War Waits* in order to question British involvement in the Crimean War. The coming of the Crimean War had a perceptible impact upon the way in which working-class poets responded to their physical environment and how they constructed their poetic identity. The grotesque mode as it is understood by Ruskin, to be a means of expressing a moral or psychological upheaval, was an effective way for poets like Massey to respond to the conflict. Yet the grotesque also enables him to show the human cost of war, and the bloody conditions that the men in the Crimea encountered. In *War Waits* Massey includes poems that debate the righteousness of war, and the proper conduct of those fighting and left behind. In his short author's note which opens the volume Massey comments that:

These rough-and-ready war-rhymes can scarcely be looked upon as poetic fruit maturely ripened, but rather as windfalls, shook down in this wild blast of war. I hasten to present them while they may yet be seasonable, lest they should not keep. [...] I have called them 'Waits', conscious that they do but make a rude music in this dim night of war; and I dedicate them to the memory of John Bright, who fell so recently and so gloriously fighting the battles of the enemy.⁴²³

The first phrase of interest in Massey's note is that he describes the poetry contained in *War Waits* as being 'rough-and-ready war-rhymes' and not 'maturely ripened' poetic fruit. This indicates that the goal of the volume is not necessarily to attain a high level of artistic merit, but instead to present his interpretation of the experiences of soldiers and those left at home during the war. The war is described as being an untameable, 'wild blast', which suggests that it is not possible to capture the immediacy of it through carefully considered, highly wrought poetry. Further, the poetry has a 'seasonable' life (thus extending his fruit

⁴²³ Gerald Massey, *War Waits* (London: David Bogue, 1855), p. ii. All references below refer to this edition.

metaphor). This implies that Massey believes that his poetry may not last long after the close of the war and it therefore avoids becoming an artistic manifesto written only for posterity. The aim of the volume is to make an immediate impact, a ‘rude music’ to critique British involvement in the war, which suggests that his writing might be disconcerting to some.

Significantly, the note ends with a dedication to John Bright (1811-1889), who falls ‘gloriously fighting the battles of the enemy’. This superficially indicates that the fallen man is a soldier, but John Bright was a well-known politician and skilled orator. For instance, Bright first spoke out for an end to the Corn Laws in Rochdale in 1838, and in 1839 was involved in the founding of the Anti-Corn Law League. He thus had links to the largely working-class Chartist Movement, which had supported the abolishment of the laws. More importantly, because of his pacifist Quaker beliefs, Bright took a public stance against the Crimean War. This lost him a great deal of support (and eventually his seat in parliament in 1857), because the war was seen positively within contemporary society. This was partially due to the fact that the Crimean War was the first conflict to be truly put under national scrutiny, since news from the battle-fields could quickly be relayed to Britain via the telegraph. For the first time newspapers sent reporters and photographers to the front-lines to document the war; artistic responses were heavily influenced by these reports and photographs. As Natalie Houston points out, the resultant poetry contributed to the public’s imagining of the war, as did the staged photographs taken by Roger Fenton and William Simpson’s war sketches, which appeared in *The Illustrated London News*.⁴²⁴ The majority of these varied media presented the war positively to the British people.

⁴²⁴ Natalie Houston, ‘Reading the Victorian Souvenir: Sonnets and Photographs of the Crimean War’, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14.2 (Autumn, 2001), 353-383.

Like Bright, Massey puts forward in *War Waits* his own non-violent protest against the unnecessary shedding of predominantly working-class blood during the war. Interestingly, this protest is held in tension with the patriotism and delight in the visceral that can be seen in the work. As in Morris's poetry, there is a divide between the idealised world of chivalry (which tends to be associated with fealty to the state) and the grotesque falling away from this standard, which happens when we are brought into close proximity with the bodies of fighting men and women. Yet problematically for Massey, allegiance to God is of greater importance than to the state. He no longer lives in a world in which the king or queen is unanimously believed to be God's representative on earth. His work thus questions whether religious beliefs marry with the bloody reality of war.

Massey, the son of a canal boatman, was originally from Tring in Hertfordshire. He had little formal education and was set to work at a local silk mill aged six. His education was supplemented by reading the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan (1628-1688) and a range of periodicals and newspapers. In later life when more works were available to him Massey read voraciously. Like many other autodidacts he had a varied and impressive career. At fifteen he left home in order to make his way in London. By 1848 Massey was settled as a clerk and had published his first volume of poetry, *Poems and Chansons* (1846), and had joined the Chartist movement. The poetry that he was to produce in support of the movement, which appeared in *Voices of Freedom and Lyrics of Love* (1850) and *Babe Christabel and Other Poems* (1854), was to influence work in *War Waits* (1855). This is because the poems aim to have the same immediacy and political force. In 'A Call to the People: 1848' from *Voices of Freedom and Lyrics of Love* Massey describes the Chartist cause as being a kind of (holy) war. The work acts in a similar way to *War Waits*, with its emphasis on peaceful protest, as it uses violent language to give force to its protest.

Curst, curst be war, the World's most fatal glory,
 Ye wakening nations, burst its guilty thrall!
 Time waits with out-stretcht hand to shroud the glory
 Grim glave of Strife behind Oblivion's pall,
 The tyrant laughs at swords, the cannon's rattle
 Thunders no terror on his murderous soul.
 Thought, Mind, must conquer Might, and in this battle
 The warrior's cuirass, or the sophist's stole,
 Shall blunt no lance of light, no onset, backward roll.⁴²⁵

The sounds that Massey uses within his poetry can be argued to be grotesque. There is a tension between noises of a battlefield that are expected and unexpected, such as the laughter, the 'rattle' of the cannon and 'thrall' of the waking nations. This indicates that everything is not quite right. The speaker begins the stanza with a spondee, 'Curst, curst' which seems to enforce the negativity and bluntness of the war. Paradoxically the line ends with an oxymoron; as well as being a curse, the war is a 'fatal-glory', which adds to the tension between victory and bloodshed in combat. This causes the reader to question the speaker's attitude to the battle that he describes. The ambiguity is retained until the close of the stanza. The sound-scape of the poem is unsettled here; there is a tension between the sounds evoked ('laughs' and 'thunders') and onomatopoeic word, 'rattle'. Words such as 'swords', 'canons', 'murder', 'terror' and 'thunder' suggest an active response to an adverse situation, yet rather than advocating violence, the poem makes its point by evoking the reality of an oppressive landscape through violent language.

⁴²⁵ Massey, *Voices of Freedom and Lyrics of Love* (London: J. Watson, 1850), 73-81. All further references refer to this edition.

Imagery which anticipates the chivalric-grotesque of *War Waits* can be seen in ‘Labour’s Social Chivalry’ and ‘The Lords and Land and Money’, which appear in the same volume. In the first poem Massey describes the Chartists as being ‘true knights [...] in Labour’s Social Chivalry’, a ‘brave brother-band; | With honest heart and working hand’ (23-24, 1-2). Yet, we are told that some in their number have ‘[e]yes full of heart-break’ and they ‘bleed’ like martyrs for the Christian Socialist cause (15,16). These images are not necessarily grotesque – but they do gesture towards the darker imagery which is discussed by Wolfgang Kayser and the psychological torment associated with Ruskin’s grotesque. The focus upon the shedding of blood has also been seen in Morris’s chivalric-grotesque poetry.

War Waits

There is a tension within *War Waits* between patriotic fighting for your country, the Christian ideal of turning the other cheek, and the glory that can be achieved through war. The chivalric-grotesque enables Massey to negotiate these concerns by presenting war as a grotesque field of play which causes bodily distortion, and presents the supernatural and visceral. Problematically for Massey, his point of return to order is not necessarily the state (which he believes to be flawed), but rather, God. As a result, the grotesque is used to describe the British state and soldiers on both sides of the war. This indicates that the war reflects negatively upon all those who take part in it.

Massey’s poem ‘A Battle Charge’ begins with the exclamatory ‘[h]elp!’. This has the effect of involving the reader from the offset.⁴²⁶ Throughout the work the speaker suggests that England is worth fighting for because of its age (‘Old England’), heritage and because it is under the protection of God (1). We are told that the soldiers fight ‘[i]n the

⁴²⁶ Massey, *War Waits*, 1. All references below refer to this edition.

name of the most high God', but this is a notion that Massey challenges throughout the volume. An emotive grotesque image is used to hold the attention of the reader, as the speaker describes the soldiers as being '[i]n the red pass of bloodiest peril | They fight, with their feet for death shod' (5-6). A subsequent emotive image in the second stanza then calls for vengeance for the murder of children.

The blood of thy murdered Children

Cries from that Crimean sod;

Avenge it! avenge it! avenge it!

In the name of the most High God! (13-16)

The call for revenge aims to provoke action in others. The grotesque image of the spilt blood of children is further emphasised by the repetition of 'cr' sounds in line 14 and 'avenge it' in line 15. The repetition of 'avenge it' is potentially grotesque because it helps to create a distorted sound texture that reflects the atrocities that are commented upon in the stanza. In this section of the poem Massey questions whether it is right for Christians to stand by and do nothing whilst children are being murdered, but problematically, the God of vengeance tends to be associated with the Old Testament, rather than the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.

The ballad form of the stanza contributes to the poem having the feel of a Chartist marching song; these were specifically designed to be easily remembered and sung by large groups at meetings.⁴²⁷ This form can be used to convey the outrage of a group, thus adding further voices to that of Massey. The potential communal voice can also be seen when the speaker suggests, '[l]et us lift up our luminous brow' to the stars that shine upon the soldiers (20). Light imagery continues to be an important feature in the poem. For

⁴²⁷ For further discussion of the links between Chartist poetry and song see Timothy Randall, 'Chartist Poetry and Song', in *The Chartist Legacy*, ed. by O. Ashton, R. Fyson and S. Roberts (Rendlesham: Merlin, 1999), pp. 171-195.

instance, in stanza three a star shines upon the soldiers with a 'dear blessed beauty' (18). The speaker asks the star to lift the soldiers up upon its 'luminous brow' because it 'crests upon the forehead of freedom' (19, 20). This links to the notion that they are soldiers of light, which is a characteristic of a chivalric knight, and is also associated with Jesus, who is described by John as the 'light of the world' (John 8:12). 'A Battle Charge' is perhaps the most patriotic poem within the volume, but this is undermined by other poems which explore the grim realities of war.

Later in the poem we learn that those who are left behind to bury the dead are described as having 'bloody-hands, eyes red and burning' (35). This links to the red, devil-like face of Godmar in Morris's 'The Haystack in the Floods'. The grotesque image shows the way in which unnatural death can cause bodily distortion in those that it affects. It parallels the description of the enemy as being like a Bacchus who is '[b]lood-drunken and dance[s] on the sod | That is quick with the Flower of our Nation'. Massey asks if this is done 'in the name of the most High God'? This classical reference suggests that acts of atrocity during war are not in-keeping with a benevolent Christian God. As in Morris's 'Riding Together' and 'The Haystack in the Floods', the disrespect for your opponent that is shown here moves away from the expected codes of chivalric conduct during a time of conflict. Yet, in the poem's concluding stanza the speaker argues that as a punishment for his behaviour Bacchus should be 'hurl'd' 'down to the dust' where he shall 'sit in his desolation, | Till he weep bitter tears of blood' (44, 47-48). This practice is usually associated with religious statues, most often that of the Virgin Mary and therefore is an appropriate punishment for a figure who has acted in a sacrilegious manner. This image is also used by Massey to signify religious martyrdom. It gives pause to the brutality of the imagery in order to give the reader the opportunity to reflect upon the fact that humanity exists on both sides of a war's dividing lines. This behaviour unsettles the parameters of

the chivalric framework, even if the soldiers believed God to be on their side, they act in a way which lacks compassion. This causes the Bacchus figure to be representative of the falling away of society from the chivalric ideal. Furthermore, in 'After Alma' we learn that the British are guilty of a similar crime during the Battle of Alma. The speaker recalls that: 'But Yesterday! [...] For us they pour'd their blood like wine, | From life's ripe-gather'd clusters' (27, 29-30). Massey reveals that there is a move away from ideal chivalric conduct in soldiers on both sides of the war.

'A Cry from Exile' is concerned with the problems associated with a soldier's pledge of allegiance to his nation, rather than to God. Soldiers are '[t]hy darlings leal and true to thee, thou dear old Motherland!' (6). This image, which portrays soldiers as potentially unmanly 'darlings', is quite unsettling and jars against Victorian 'muscular Christianity'.⁴²⁸ The final stanza of the poem is more revealing, as it considers whether it is right that the purpose of a number of British men's lives is to die in combat:

O! many are the gallant hearts will never answer

when

Thy clarion-cry shall call us up to the field again!

And many are the tears must fall, and prayers go up to

God,

But swift the vintage ripens, and the wine-press shall be

trod!

The Harvest reddens rich for death! the Reapers clench

the hand,

⁴²⁸ For further discussion of 'Muscular Christianity' see: Donald E. Hall, *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

And Victory comes to clasp his Bride, thou dear old

Motherland. (31-36)

The grotesque can be seen in this stanza in Massey's use of three words which can potentially restrict or distort movement, 'trod', 'clench' and 'clasp'. They foretell the deaths that may await the soldiers in a war, which will permanently stop their movement. This language is held in tension with the familiarity of 'dear old Motherland', which should soothe away worries of death. Mother imagery is often associated with nurture and protection, but here the British motherland cannot prevent loss of life in war. The speaker goes on to attest that: 'O! many are the gallant hearts will never answer when | Thy clarion-cry shall call us up to the field again!' (31-32) The superficial meaning of these lines is that many soldiers will be dead before the next battle, but a more disturbing possibility is that they may not go to heaven. They could fail to hear Gabrielle's trumpet heralding the final judgement, or never run in the Fields of Elysium, the classical final resting place for Gods and heroes – thus indicating that God may not view the deaths that take place within the war as just. The speaker goes on to attest that 'many are the tears must fall, and prayers go up to God', when men die in battle. A patriotic reader would read 'must' literally, but Massey's speaker is more sceptical. Particularly, as in the next two lines he grapples with why God would allow soldiers to be cultivated to brutally die in battle. Massey uses religious imagery to symbolise this; their bodies will be crushed like grapes until the blood oozes from them. This is reminiscent of the oozing orange in Morris's 'The Wind'. They are a harvest which is reddened 'rich for death' and the 'Reapers clench the hand' around them (35). This implies that the reapers squash their harvest rather than using the traditional scythe. The result of this harvest of death is victory. In the final line the personified 'Victory' comes to 'clasp' (again a verb which encloses and stops movement) 'his Bride, thou dear old Motherland' (36). Nuns are usually described as being the brides

of Christ, but here Massey equates Britain to Jesus/God. This image sits on a fine line between the grotesque and blasphemy, as was seen in Massey's description of the enemy as a Bacchus who will eventually weep tears of blood in repentance for his crimes against British soldiers. Massey's use of the biblical images of the ripening 'vintage' and the 'wine-press' echo the contemporary belief that it is part of God's plan that some men must die to bring about a victory over an enemy. However, harvest imagery has other resonances for Massey, as it was used in his prologue as a way of describing his war poetry. In traditional working-class communities, its coming typically sustains life, but here it acts to take it away. The harvest is also associated with the security of the home rather than adventure, thus suggesting that victory is bitter-sweet.

Throughout Massey's text Britain is associated with the grotesque. In 'War Rumours' a personified Britain plans to 'dash Freedom's foes adown Death's bloody slope' (31). In 'The Battle March' the traditional flower imagery used to depict women is usurped by a dangerous rose whose 'stem is thorny, but doth burst | A glorious Rose atop!' (17-18), whilst 'Her foot-prints [are] red with blood!' (40). The most interesting example of the association between Britain and the grotesque comes from 'Nicolas and the British Lion'. Provokingly Nicholas the Lion-Tamer, who represents the enemy, can be seen to be associated with Christianity: St Stephen was thrown to the lions and Nicholas is a Christian Saint, well-known for his charity, and in modern incarnations as Father Christmas. Yet in 1 Peter 5.8 the devil is associated with a prowling lion: 'Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour'. These references cause the reader to question the actions of the British lion. The first and penultimate stanzas of the poem are included below:

He called to North, he called to South,
 "Come, see the world's great show!

I'll thrust my head in the Lion's mouth",
 And he laught, "Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho!"
 "I am the Lion-Tamer dread
 I make the old brute quail!"
 The Lion he shook his incredulous head,
 And wagged his dubious tail. (1-8)

[...]

He thrust his head in the Lion's month:
 Ho! Ho! but the sport was rare!
 The Lion smelt blood in the giant's breath,
 And his clencht teeth held him there.
 Then he cried, from between the gates of
 death,
 With the voice of a Spirit in bale,
 "Now God-a-mercy on my soul!
 Does the Lion wag his tail?" (25-32)

'Nicholas and the British Lion' geographically shifts from the terrain of war to a carnival 'show' which draws crowds from 'north and south'. This theatrical setting draws out Massey's use of performance and metaphor. The lion tamer, Nicholas, claims that he will make the lion 'dread' and the 'old brute quail', but rather the lion is 'incredulous' and 'dubious'. In the final line of the stanza we learn that he wags his tail, suggesting a lack of aggression and contentment. This gives Nicholas the confidence to put his head into the lion's mouth to demonstrate his dominance. The lion smells blood on Nicholas's breath and as a result clenches his teeth. This is a particularly interesting use of the grotesque because it involves bodily distortion (the biting off of Nicholas's head) and invasion into another person's space. The final lines spoken by Nicholas before he is killed are telling: "Now God-a-mercy on my soul! | Does the Lion wag his tail?". The man representing the

enemy believes in God, and wonders at the fact that the lion can kill him without any change in his demeanour. It also suggests that the lion is happy to kill Nicholas, which is slightly unsettling. Superficially, the poem appears to be patriotic – an easy British victory over its adversary. Yet Massey, through Christian allusions, questions the righteousness of a victory over someone who is unable to fight back. This certainly moves away from the expected codes of chivalry, as in ‘Shameful Death’ from Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere*, vengeance is sought after a man is attacked from behind. This gives him no opportunity to retaliate and he is subsequently hung, which constitutes an un-knightly death.

A final example of the way that Massey combines the chivalric with the grotesque to question the interests of a nation in war can be seen in the final stanza of ‘War-Winter’s Night in England’, which responds to Robert Browning’s ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad’ and the ‘Foresters Song’ from *The Foresters* by Tennyson.⁴²⁹ As was discussed above, contemporary understandings of the war were influenced by newspaper reports, photography and poetry. It is no coincidence therefore that Tennyson was also the author of the most well-known poetic response to the Crimean War, ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ (1854). Like ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’, both *The Foresters* and ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad’ are patriotic poems which idealise Britain, and are written by poets

⁴²⁹ Browning presents England in ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad’ through the idealising eye of a traveller. He begins his poem, ‘Oh, to be in England | Now that April’s there’ (1-2). He is delighted by thoughts of the tiny leaves of an ‘elm-tree’, a ‘chaffinch’ singing in an orchard, and an array of ‘blossoms and dewdrops’. *Robert Browning’s Poems* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1876), 6, 7, 12. In Act Two, Scene One of Tennyson’s 1892 work *The Foresters* (a play based upon the adventures of Robin Hood) the men and women of Sherwood Forrest sing that ‘[t]here is no land like England’ (1). Tennyson’s use of the phrase ‘[w]here’er the light of day be’ would have been likely to pique Massey’s interest because it relates to his descriptions of Chartists and socialists as being soldiers of light (2). Massey subscribes to Tennyson’s notion that Englishmen are ‘tall and bold’ and have ‘hearts of oak’ which suggests both stability and longevity (8, 4). The song calls for these Englishmen to protect England, to ‘strike’ for it against tyrants; a theme which is recurrent in Massey’s poetry (9, 11). Interestingly, the song is sung by men and women who have been outlawed from society yet still chose to fight against a corrupt king and help the poor, which again may reflect Massey’s own social position. *The Works of Tennyson: The Eversley Edition*, ed. by Hallam, Lord Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1907-1908).

associated with Victorian High Culture. A stanza of Massey's more sceptical version is presented below.

O, there's no land like England,
 Wherever that land may be!
 Of all the world 'tis king-land
 Crown'd, by its Bride, the Sea!
 And they shall rest I' the balmiest bed,
 Who battle for it, and bleed for it!
 And they shall be head of the Glorious Dead,
 Who die in the hour of need for it!
 And long shall we sing of their deeds divine,
 In songs that warm the heart like wine,
 As we sit by the household fire,
 And the tale is told of this night of War,
 How we held our hearts, like Beacons, up higher,
 For those who were fighting afar. (113-126)

In this stanza England is described as being a 'king-land' whose bride is the sea, thus referring to England's impressive naval history. Massey superficially praises those who 'battle', 'bleed' and die for their prestigious nation because this can bring glory. Interestingly, these images are not associated with the grotesque, because it presents the point of view of the state and those at home, who are influenced by biased reports of the war. The poem also explores the practice of glorifying the dead; those who lose their lives in combat become the 'Glorious Dead' (119). A number of the men fighting in the Crimean War were from the lower classes. The war gives them the opportunity to be seen

as heroes by those at home for a short period. Yet, the patriotic speaker of this poem fails to acknowledge that war in the Crimea is grotesque, de-humanising and brutal.

Conclusion

The chivalric-grotesque poetry of Massey and Morris uses a combination of poetic form and imagery to convey grotesque lapses in good conduct during times of social upheaval, specifically during and after the Crimean War. In the work of Morris, we see the falling away from, and the return to, societal norms in the chivalric-grotesque whereas Massey's volume reveals his apprehensions about the savagery and necessity of warfare in accordance with his Christian Socialist beliefs. In line with Isobel Armstrong's argument discussed above, both poets contiguously use the mode to critique contemporary society. Morris employs it to argue for the benefits of returning to a pre-industrial world because he considers that Victorian society had created negative social and political conditions which had caused Britain to become involved in destructive conflicts such as the Crimean War. The chivalric-grotesque is the best mode to represent this because the chivalric element of the critique is able to comment upon the problematic conduct of individuals, whilst the grotesque is able to expand this to society more generally because it can encompass the falling away of a community from an authority figure. In Massey's poetry the knightly qualities of the Christian Socialist are implicitly pitted against the grotesque imagery of war. The chivalric-grotesque is used to show that war is a destructive state, which requires loss of life for a cause which will not improve the living conditions of the working classes. Both the grotesque and chivalric mode in art can be associated with Victorian high art and high culture. When the two are brought together to form the chivalric-grotesque, this new mode is used to argue for an alternative dominant culture. For Massey, this is one without the hypocrisy of the state, which follows the Christian God. In Morris's case, it is based

upon older chivalric values, such as honour and correct conduct, which have become obsolete since the onset of the Industrial Revolution.

Coda: Pre-Raphaelite and Working-Class Poetic Responses to the Famine in Lancashire

The main body of this thesis has been concerned with elaborating what I have termed a contiguous tradition between Pre-Raphaelite and working-class poets. While the elements that make up this contiguity are characteristically variable and the routing of the relationship needs teasing out, it is important to note that interactions also occurred in more direct ways. My conclusion or coda is a case in point. The Pre-Raphaelite contributions to Isa Craig's (1831-1903) *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire* aimed to combine with working-class responses to the famine of the 1860s. They reveal a more direct and specific interaction between the two groups (via social intervention) than I have previously examined. The contiguous tradition allows for the possibility of direct involvement, but its occurrence is dependent upon the right calibration of circumstances. The humanitarian drive to provide relief for the victims of the Lancashire Famine (1861-1865), through the publication of a collection of poems, provides such an example. For the Pre-Raphaelites, publication within *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire* (1863) offered the opportunity for members of the group to simultaneously promote their own work and to intervene on an issue of contemporary social importance. Within this coda, I will contrast a Pre-Raphaelite inclusion in the collection from Christina Rossetti, 'A Royal Princess', with Eliza Cook's contribution, 'Stanzas to my Starving Kin in the North', to the working-class poet Edwin Waugh's response to the famine, *Home-Life of the Lancashire Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* (1862). Here, questions of form are important to understanding the different responses of the poets to a specific historical event, and the coda thus provides a final test case for the productive implementation of Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism.

Isa Craig's edited volume, *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire*, was published by the Victoria Press, which was founded by a prominent member of the Langham Place Group, Emily Faithfull (1835-1895) in 1860. The press would go on to publish the *Victoria Magazine* and the *Victoria Regia* (1861). The latter was the show piece of the press; it was a highly ornate collection of poetry and prose which honoured Queen Victoria. Significantly, it contained works by a range of celebrated contemporary writers such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) and Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-1864). Partially as a result of the popularity of the volume, Faithfull and the Victoria Press were conferred the honour of 'Printer and Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty' in 1862. Because of this success, Craig informs us in the Preface to *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire*, that 'Miss Faithfull undertook to print and publish a thousand copies free of expense, the compositors of the Victoria Press volunteering their services, and Messrs. Richard Herring & Co. furnishing the paper gratuitously, so that the proceeds of the sale will be devoted to the object to which the volume is dedicated'.⁴³⁰ In the wake of the success of the *Victoria Regia*, and also considering the fact that Faithfull had been able to secure free production, Craig's volume was positioned to do well commercially. Yet, the popularity of the book would depend upon the contributions that Craig was able to secure. In this Craig did reasonably well – the collection would contain poetry by Mary Howitt, George MacDonald, Frederick Locker Lampson and William Allingham, as well as the then unpublished poets Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

It is interesting that Christina Rossetti offered her poem 'A Royal Princess' to the project without having received any direct solicitation from Craig. On 13 November 1862 she wrote to Craig relating that she had received a request for a contribution from

⁴³⁰ Isa Craig, ed., *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire* (London: Emily Faithfull, Victoria Press, 1863).

Barbara Bodichon (1887-1891). In response she offered 'A Royal Princess' with the promise of an alternative if it was too long. The letter goes on to say:

May I ask you to favour me by forwarding to me the proof of my piece as I am desirous to correct it myself, thinking that so few errors are likely to creep in. As I know not what poets are on your list, nor how many may be wished for, perhaps I had better say that if you would like a piece from the pen of C. B. Cayley the translator of Dante, I think it possible I might be able to procure one for the volume as Mr Cayley is our old friend. But of course I cannot promise that he would do us such a favour. I only think it is not impossible.

In this letter to Craig, Christina Rossetti reveals an anxiety about the presentation of her poem within the collection, perhaps because she would not know which poets she would appear alongside. Rossetti goes on to suggest that she may be able to persuade Charles Bagot Cayley (1823-1833) to contribute a poem.⁴³¹ This is presented as a favour to Craig, but it is likely that both parties would benefit. Contributors to the volume were not paid, and thus were condescending to help and to secure the involvement of their friends and acquaintances (however genuine the offer of help may have been). Cayley is persuaded to contribute a poem to the collection because of his friendship with Rossetti rather than necessarily having an interest in the working classes. As a result, upon Rossetti's recommendation Cayley's poem '*Ad Sepulcrum*' was included in the collection.

The final line-up of contributors included a number of works from poets related to the Pre-Raphaelite group: Dante Gabriel Rossetti ('A Sudden Light'), Christina Rossetti ('A Royal Princess'), William Bell Scott ('Four Sonnets from Early Italian Pictures'), William Allingham ('After Sunset'), and of course, Cayley ('*Ad Sepulcrum*'). The volume

⁴³¹ This offers a small glimpse into the relationship of Cayley and Rossetti; their engagement had been broken in 1850 due to religious differences, yet here twelve years later, Rossetti is still willing to promote his work.

has a slightly unusual trajectory; it begins with a dignified sonnet by Emily Taylor which praises the spirit of the people of Lancashire for not losing hope during a time of hardship. Taylor's speaker hopefully believes that at the end of time God will 'repay | With tenfold good the sorrow of today' (13-14). The volume ends however with a light verse piece by Locker Lampson, 'The Jester's Plea'. Because of his apparent foolishness, the jester is able to speak with insight upon the world around him. In the first stanza the jester suggests that the 'merry world' can appear to some 'ugly' and sinful, whilst to others it can be 'pleasant' (5, 3, 4). Social position is seen to be arbitrary since we all 'eat, and drink, and scheme, and plot, | And go to church on Sunday' to receive absolution. The jester appears to poke fun at the similarities between the different classes of society, but this is to illustrate a more serious point; the commonalities between all people should catalyse compassion. In the penultimate stanza the jester considers that pity is more important than 'passion', praise or 'piety' (42-44). With this comes the 'holding out a hand to those | That wait so empty-handed' (47-48). Within the context of Craig's volume, the jester's plea calls for aid for the people of Lancashire because it entreats the richer in society to hold their hands out to those in need. The rest of the volume is a mixed bag of poems, incorporating religious meditations, aesthetic pieces and works with a feminist or socialist leaning.⁴³² 'The Jester's Plea' provides an uplifting conclusion to Craig's collection since it is light-hearted, yet contains a serious message. Further, the reader would be left feeling positive because they had already helped the people of Lancashire by buying the collection.

A number of local working-class poets, such as Edwin Waugh, Samuel Laycock and William Billington composed their own responses to the famine. These poems gained both a local and national reputation. The majority of the poems were initially produced as

⁴³² For further discussion of the contents of the volume see: Julie M. Wise, 'From Langham Place to Lancashire: Poetry, Community, and the Victoria Press's *Offering to Lancashire*', *Victorian Poetry*, 43.3 (Autumn, 2009), 517-532.

broad-sides or printed in local newspapers and journals. A few were also included in national papers such as the *London Daily News* and *Illustrated London News*. Famine-related poetry by the most popular poets of the area was also published in volumes. Waugh published *Lancashire Lyrics* in 1865, whilst Laycock's poems were distributed over several volumes: *Lancashire Rhymes* (1864), *Lancashire Songs* (1866) and *Warblin's from an Owd Songster* (1893). *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire* (1865) and *Lancashire Lyrics* (1866), compiled by John Harland, also contain poetry which responds to the tragedy.

Edwin Waugh produced a kind of miscellany of work from the period entitled *Home-Life of the Lancashire Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* (1867).⁴³³ The collection contains poems by various poets such as Billington, Laycock, Eliza Cook, Joseph Ramsbottom and Samuel Bamford. Waugh's edition also includes newspaper articles published in the *Manchester Examiner* and *The Times* in 1862 (including letters and speeches), a description of the lives of operatives in Blackburn, Preston and Wigan and a chapter entitled, 'Wandering Minstrels; or, Wails of the Workless Poor'. The poetry within Waugh's collection responds directly to the famine and cannot always find solutions, yet it can still be playful and jovial. This is because, according to Brian Hollingworth, some of the best working-class poetry from the period delights in the 'oddities of people' and their failings. It is often full of wit, yet also portrays the dignity of those facing adversity.⁴³⁴ Waugh's *Home-Life of the Lancashire Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* and Isa Cook's *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire* present two different class-based perspectives of the famine period. In the latter, the poems do not necessarily

⁴³³ Edwin Waugh, *Home-Life of the Lancashire Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* (London: Simkin, Marshall, & Co., 1867). All subsequent Lancashire poems are taken from this edition.

⁴³⁴ Brian Hollingworth, *Songs of the People: Lancashire Dialect Poetry of the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 6.

respond to the famine directly, but they have been carefully arranged by Craig to give an appropriate middle/upper-class response.

Christina Rossetti's 'A Royal Princess' and 'Stanzas to my Starving Kin in the North' by Eliza Cook.

Christina Rossetti's poem 'A Royal Princess' can be compared to Eliza Cook's 'Stanzas to my Starving Kin in the North', which is included in Waugh's edition. Both women lived outside of the Lancashire area during the period of the famine, which gives their work a degree of distance. In the fourth chapter of this thesis I argued that life experiences (which during the Victorian period were significantly influenced by a person's class) can have an impact upon the way in which writers artistically respond to the world. This is apparent in the two poems discussed below, as the middle-class Rossetti has never been in a position to feel hunger. Partially as a result, her poem is allegorical, whilst Cook's contribution directly engages with the social reality of the famine and evokes a sense of pathos. Cook's poem begins, 'Sad are the sounds that are breaking forth | From the women and men of the brave old North!' (1-2). Cook uses the term 'sounds' rather than cries in the first line of the poem. 'Sound' is more dignified than other possible word choices like shrieks, cries or sobs. These 'sad [...] sounds' do, however, have impetus and can be heard by a wide audience as they 'break forth' like waves from Lancashire. Implicitly, the sounds of the men and women of Lancashire have reached Cook, who ensures that through her poetry, news of the hardships of its people can reach a greater audience. This fits with Cook's project to further the voice of the working classes through her own *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-54), as was discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. Unlike, Christina Rossetti, Cook is sure of, and makes public her project to contribute to the social improvement of the working classes.

In Cook's poem the famine has turned Lancashire into an uncanny place. In line two it is described as the 'brave old North', which evokes an unfamiliar land of fable or saga. The North is a place where 'wrinkles gather on childhood's skin', the faces of the youths are 'pallid and thin' and 'haggard' silent people bear 'death-chains with patience and prayer' (5, 6, 18). According to the speaker, there is hope for the people of Lancashire, even though they are geographically isolated and depicted as other, they are seen as suffering 'brothers and sisters' who will be helped through the crisis by 'God and the People' (11-12). The people of the North deserve this help because although they may 'look on the Hunger-fiend face to face' everyday, they remain loyal to their community and help each other (16). It is for this reason that the people of Lancashire have gained the 'Sympathy, Feeling, and Hope' that will pull them through the crisis (23). Unlike Cook's description of Lancashire as uncanny, William Allingham's sonnet 'After Sunset' from *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire*, depicts the tranquillity and beauty of nature which comes at the end of the day with the 'Sun's death' (3). As Night creeps through the landscape, it comes alive with energy and mystery. The wind loiters and '[s]eethes with the clamour of ten thousand rooks' (12). The speaker describes these as 'sacred moments. One more Day | Drowned in the shadowy gulf of bygone things' (13). Allingham's poem celebrates the importance of taking pleasure in a natural world which can be both a source of comfort and inspiration. Allingham's contribution provides a poem of hope to Craig's collection, whilst Cook's contribution is more realistic.

The final stanza of Cook's poem contains a direct address in which the speaker shows empathy with the people of Lancashire. She claims to 'weep that starvation should guerdon your toil' (30). The poem ends with a kind of vision of glory. Cook sees the people standing 'proudly mute – | Showing *souls* like the *hero*, not *fangs* like the brute' (31-32). This is interesting because the flourishing of working class poetry during the

period attests to the fact that they did not remain mute. Here, silence is used to describe the peoples' refusal to resort to physical violence. Silence is praised because it protects the soul from the sin of acting in violent retaliation.

Christina Rossetti's poem 'A Royal Princess' opens provocatively as the speaker claims that she would rather 'be a peasant with her baby at her breast', but for her realm she shines 'like the sun' and is 'purple like the west' (2, 3). Rossetti shows that her life is full of inconsequential and transient things; her 'fountains cast up perfumes' and 'gardens grow | scented wood and foreign spices' (7-8). The princess is trapped in a world of beauty, yet when she looks into the mirror she only sees a 'solitary' figure (12). Time moves slowly and her days seem to be without end. The princess has entered into a life of melancholy filled by the dreary days which characterise the life of Mariana in Tennyson's poem of the same name. Like many of her poems, 'A Royal Princess' offers a response to the wisdom of Solomon from the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. The book argues that everything in life is meaningless, including human endeavours, pleasure and wisdom, in a life without God. The princess has status and is surrounded by finery but this does not bring her any sense of happiness or fulfilment. At a banquet the princess holds a beautiful fan of 'rainbow feathers and a golden chain', which symbolise her captivity (53). Despite her unhappiness, she is shown to have a greater degree of wisdom than her father. He considers that his earthly strength lies in the 'so many head of cattle, head of horses, head of men' which he owns (29). The princess realises that 'these too are men and women, human flesh and blood' who have been 'trodden down like mud' (35, 36). The princess does not view the plight of these people dispassionately. Interestingly, as was the case with Cook's speaker, the princess shows empathy; the knowledge of the peoples' plight causes her heart to sink like 'a human stone' (39). Dante Gabriel Rossetti's contribution to the volume, 'Sudden Light', may superficially appear to not have much in

common with other poems in the collection because it is quite abstract and impressionistic. Yet, it can also be argued that the poem exhibits an empathetic experience. The poem centres on a moment when the speaker has a feeling that he has been in his current location before:

I know the path beyond the door,
 The sweet fresh smell,
 The sighing sound, the lights around
 the shore. (3-5)

The poem focuses upon the senses: the smells, sights and sounds which will soon meet him. In the second stanza the speaker describes a moment when a veil lifts and he recalls that the subject of the poem has ‘been mine before’ (6). In the final stanza the speaker proclaims that because ‘[b]efore may be again’ the two should be ‘for ever lain | Thus for love’s sake (11, 13-14). He sees two figures locked together in a chain of sleeping and waking which will ‘never break’ (15). The poem portrays an evocative, highly personal moment in the life of the speaker which focuses upon love and hope. This could be argued to respond to the importance of the bonds which are formed between the people of Lancashire which can be a source of strength.

The final section of Christina Rossetti’s poem relates an uprising of the poor resulting from poverty and a lack of food. The princess describes the people as being like ‘famished’ dogs and she thus resolves to try to save at least a few of them (66). The people of the kingdom call for the life of the king and his family. Instead of becoming angry, the princess decides to give all she has to the people to enable them to buy bread, even if this results in her death (115-117). This is an action provoked by love, as she has learnt that her own life is meaningless. She comments that, ‘[t]his lesson I have learned which is death, is life; to know. | I, if I perish, perish. In the name of God I go (22-23). Death in Rossetti’s

view is the beginning of a new life in heaven. Her poem therefore promotes the importance of acting for the benefit of your fellow man even if the result is death. Other Pre-Raphaelite poems within the collection also focus upon the importance of relying on God in situations of adversity: ‘*Ad Sepulcrum*’ by Cayley and ‘Four Sonnets from Early Italian Pictures’ by Bell Scott. Like Rossetti’s princess, the speaker of ‘*Ad Sepulcrum*’ talks of the casting off of worldly things and becoming ‘poor’, because they are of no use to him in the next life (125). ‘Four Sonnets from Early Italian Pictures’ on the other hand relates the vision of God which is presented in works by the Italian early Renaissance artists Pietro di Bartolo, Ambrogio de Lorenzo and Sano de Pietro. These painters see God as a ‘high God’ and ‘pitiful Creator | Who numbered, measured, weighed all things that be’ (1:2-3). He has the power to make as ‘one the many minds of men | subduing each and strengthening all’ (2:2-3). The final sonnet considers the glory of God and the unworthiness of His people to partake in this glory. God has the power to send ‘pestilence and other ills’ to his people but they can only ‘trust’ that he is acting for their own good (12-14). It is unclear whether this understanding of God would offer any comfort to the victims of the famine but Bell Scott’s sonnets follow the biblical account. They affirm that the Christian God is all loving and powerful and as such He does allow for disaster as part of his overall plan.

Rossetti’s poem implicitly calls the readers of *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire* to act on the behalf of the people of Lancashire as part of their Christian duty.⁴³⁵ Ironically, those who aid the victims of the Lancashire famine do not need to face death, but starvation is a very real possibility for those whom they help. In this sense, Rossetti’s poem could be argued to make a bolder statement than that of Cook’s ‘Stanzas to my Starving Kin in the North’, which calls for brotherly compassion and sympathy. Craig must have

⁴³⁵ Interestingly, according to Jan Marsh, ‘A Royal Princess’ was written for the Portfolio Society and is likely to have been a response to the American Civil War. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 276.

recognised the strength of Rossetti's implicit appeal as she places 'A Royal Princess' second in the volume. In effect, a poem of dedication (Taylor's dedicatory 'Sonnet') is followed by a poem of action. This sets the tone for a volume which stresses both sympathy and active support. Rossetti's response is quite stylised and has self-sacrifice as an affecting denouement. It focuses upon the royal speaker and her relationship to the hungry outside the castle walls. Cook's poem, on the other hand, calls for understanding and support for those who face hardships. The point of view which is exhibited in these poems therefore reflects the class-based experiences of the women. For instance, Cook would have found it difficult to talk about the shedding of wealth (which she had never had), and Rossetti could not have accurately written about what it felt like to be hungry. Even though Rossetti writes in an allegorical way, her poem is direct and forceful. This causes it to be as effective as Cook's realism in supporting the famine cause.

The Cultural Neo-Formalist criticism contained within this thesis has enabled me to discuss the cultural and artistic significance of lesser-known writers and texts in relation to the work of a well-known group. Further, whilst this thesis contains some examples of working-class poetry that are more obviously formally complex and well written (as well as culturally significant), a number of the poems discussed are not formally complex and/or may not obviously link to a particular cultural event. The latter poems thus do not easily lend themselves to certain modes of criticism. This is because literary criticism always holds the danger of ignoring certain kinds of writing because it seeks out and considers only that which will help to validate and sustain its own methods. It thus researches what it already values, whether that be evidence of power struggles, complex form or cultural significance. For New Historicist and strictly Formalist critics, this has limited their interest in certain types of working-class poetry; that is to say, those poems which are not necessarily related to power structures or do not have what might be called

an interesting form. The Cultural Neo-Formalist focus of this thesis has instead enabled me to increase the number of working-class texts which are of interest to critics by broadening (and making more inclusive) the ways in which we might respond to different forms of poetry. Within my research, the form of a work of poetry, whether complex or simple, is significant because of the way in which it resonated in its contemporary cultural moment, as is the case in the differing responses to the Lancashire famine.

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