

The Paintings & Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

in the Department of Prints &
Drawings, British Museum, London

Notes written by Virginia Surtees

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in the British Museum

Arranged and edited, with notes,

by Virginia Surtees

1. THE SLEEPER. (1936-6-8-1) Pen and Indian ink; a margin washed with pink surrounds the drawing, 9 x $4\frac{3}{4}$ in./22.9 x 12 cms. c.1846-7. Inscribed upper left corner: 'E.A. Poe'; upper right corner: 'D.G. Rossetti'; lower centre (on a piece of paper that has been added): 'The Sleeper'.

On the right of the window-seat the sleeping girl leans her head against the wall while beyond the open window 'the dim unsheeted ghosts go by' as described by Poe in his poem which bears the title of this drawing, and to which this is an illustration.

2. HAMLET AND OPHELIA. (1974-4-6-11) Pen and sepia, 10 x 7 in./25.4 x 17.8 cms. c.1853. Inscribed with the title at the foot of the drawing in Rossetti's hand.

An early version of No. 10 differing in the action of the protagonists but illustrating the same incident in Shakespeare's play. Hamlet on the right in doublet and hose, wearing his sword and leaning on the side of a high-backed chair, speaks vehemently to Ophelia. His hands are raised as though to emphasize a point. She has rejected his suit and has turned away, covering her face with her hands in an action of despair. The book she has been reading has fallen to the ground.

3. MARY MAGDALENE AT THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE PHARISEE. (1912-11-9-5) Pen and brown wash, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. square/6.3 cms. square. 1853 or earlier.

Probably the earliest sketch for the elaborate pen and Indian ink design (Fitzwilliam No. 13). Mary Magdalene standing on a step with her hands clasped beneath her chin moves up the stairs to the right where a head can be distinguished through the window opening. Below, a lamb is nibbling at a vine growing against the wall and the lover gazes at the Magdalene, while in the background a woman and child observe her.

4. FOUND. (1910-12-10-1) Pen and brown ink, brown wash, and some Indian ink, and (the woman's dress only) touched with white, $8\frac{1}{4}$ x $7\frac{1}{4}$ in./21 x 18.4 cms. Monogram and date lower left corner: '1853'. Inscribed along the foot of the drawing: 'I remember thee - the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal.'

Completed design for the painting on which Rossetti was still working in 1881.

A farmer from the countrified south side of the Thames has brought his calf to sell in London and has come upon a woman whom he once loved and who is now a prostitute. He tries to raise her from the ground where she is crouching but she turns away her head in shame, pressing it against the graveyard wall. A tombstone at its corner bearing the inscription 'There is joy [in the presence of] the Angels in he[aven over] one sinner that [repenteth]' reflects the moral of the picture.

5. LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI. (1910-12-10-2) Pencil, pen, and wash, 13 x 17 in./33 x 43.1 cms. c.1855. Inscribed upper right in Rossetti's hand:

'I sat her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.'

A study to illustrate Keats's poem of the same title, though this version was never carried out.

The woman's lips are parted in song as she leans over the horse to the right, while the youthful knight seated behind her and fervently pressing her hand to his lips is captured in the tresses of her loosened hair.

6. ARTHUR'S TOMB. (The Last Meeting of Launcelot and Guenevere.) (1982-6-19-23) Water-colour, 9 x 14½ in./22.8 x 36.8 cms. Inscribed with title, monogram and date lower right: 'Arthur's Tomb 1854'. 1855.

According to Ford Madox Brown this Arthurian subject was completed in the autumn of 1855. Rossetti most probably added the earlier date (1854) on some later occasion, possibly when he had it back in 1878 and had forgotten the year of its execution.

Launcelot, leaning over the recumbent effigy of King Arthur gazes passionately at Queen Guenevere who, with upraised hand, refuses the kiss he begs of her. The tomb is decorated with scenes from the King's life; in the orchard on the left a horse is tethered beneath an apple tree, and in the immediate foreground, again on the left, an apple has fallen to the ground past which slithers a serpent.

7. PAOLO AND FRANCESCA DA RIMINI. (1981-11-7-17) Pencil, 8⁵/₈ x 6³/₄ in./21.9 x 17.1 cms. Probably 1855. Inscribed along the foot of the drawing in the artist's hand: 'Dante G. Rossetti to his friend Alex. Munro.'

Study for the left-hand compartment of a design in water-colour illustrating an incident told by Dante in Inferno, Canto V. Here, the two lovers, Francesca and her brother-in-law, are in the act of kissing while an open book from which the lover has been reading is about to fall to the ground.

8. SIR GALAHAD, SIR BORS AND SIR PERCIVAL RECEIVING THE SANC GRAEL. (The Attainment of the Sanc Grael.) (1885-6-13-81) Pen and brown ink, 10 x 13³/₄ in./25.4 x 34.9 cms. 1857. Inscribed with the names of the knights above their heads: 'Dom Galahad', 'Dom Percival', 'Dom Bors'.

Study for a design from Malory's Morte d'Arthur to decorate a wall bay in the hall of the Oxford Union Debating Society, space being allowed for the two circular six-foiled windows which pierced the bay. The design was discarded as a wall-painting but served later as the basis of a water-colour.

The figures of the knights are governed by the area required for the circular lights which has the advantage of enclosing them within a confined space, reminiscent of the artist's earlier work. Sir Galahad is here seen reverently receiving the Holy Grail from the Angel while leading forward Sir Percival whose sister, having died on the way, lies stretched on the ground. Over the head of the Angel hovers a dove carrying a censer; winged and haloed angels form the background.

9. SIR GALAHAD, SIR BORS AND SIR PERCIVAL RECEIVING THE SANC GRAEL.
(1910-12-10-3) Pen and brown ink; Indian ink for the head of Sir Galahad,
and some brown wash over faint red chalk, $9\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ in./25 x 34.9 cms.
1857.

Unfinished design related to No. 8. The figures are superimposed over
traces of red chalk which formed the outlines for the two windows.

The head of Sir Galahad was said by W.M. Rossetti to have been taken from
Algernon Swinburne who Rossetti met at Oxford for the first time in 1857.

10. HAMLET AND OPHELIA. (1910-12-10-8) Pen and ink, $12 \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ in./30.4 x
26.6 cms. Monogram lower right. 1858.

This illustration to Act III Sc.i in Shakespeare's Hamlet is set in a
small oratory where Biblical symbols are represented in the woodwork of
the misericorde seat and where the carved motif of the seat corners can
be recognized as the decoration adopted by Rossetti for many of his
frames. From a turret in the upperright corner the King and Queen look
down on the participants of the drama.

Hamlet, kneeling, with arms extended is speaking and acting wildly,
refusing to accept the letters and jewels which Ophelia is seeking to
restore to him.

11. WRITING ON THE SAND. (1886-6-7-14) Water-colour, $10\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in./
26.6 x 24.1 cms. Monogram and date lower right: '1859'. The original
paper (approximately $10 \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in.) was stuck onto a larger sheet so as
to enlarge this composition.

On a windy day a man and woman are walking on the seashore; with his
stick the man is tracing the woman's features on the sand.

12. MY LADY GREENSLEEVES. (1954-5-8-1). Water-colour, 12×7 in./30.5 x
17.8 cms. Monogram lower left. 1859. Inscribed with bars of music,
upper right, and two lines from the old ballad:

'Greensleeves is my Heart of Gold,
And who but my Lady Greensleeves?'

A kneeling girl holding a knight's helmet winds a green sleeve around it.

13. CASSANDRA. (1910-12-10-4) Pen and ink, touched with white, $13 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ in./
33 x 47 cms. Monogram and date lower right: '1861'.

'Rend, rend thine hair, Cassandra: he will go.
Yea, rend thy garments, wring thine hands, and cry
From Troy still towered to the unreddened sky.
See, all but she that bore thee mock thy woe:-
He most whom that fair woman arms, with show
Of wrath on her bent brows; for in this place
This hour thou bad'st all men in Helen's face
The ravished ravishing prize of Death to know.

What eyes, what ears hath sweet Andromache,
Save for her Hector's form and step; as tear
On tear make salt the warm last kiss he gave?
He goes. Cassandra's words beat heavily
Like crows above his crest, and at his ear
Ring hollow in the shield that shall not save.'

(D.G. Rossetti.)

Possibly originally intended as a study for a painting but reworked in 1867 and probably elaborated.

Cassandra rends her clothes in anguish as she prophecies the death of Hector who stands with his back turned on Andromache and their child. He shouts an order to the officer on the rampart walls. Seated on the right in a mocking mood Paris plays with Helen's hair who scowls as she arms him for battle. Priam, and Hecuba with her hands to her ears watch the harrowing scene.

14. A CHRISTMAS CAROL. (1954-5-8-7) Pencil, $16\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 in./41.9 x 35.6 cms. Monogram and date lower right: '1867'.

Study for a painting of the same title.

A girl seated, with head thrown back, plays upon a string instrument while singing a Christmas melody.

15. DANTE'S DREAM AT THE TIME OF THE DEATH OF BEATRICE. (1954-5-8-6) Coloured crayons, $23\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 in./60.3 x 50.8 cms. Monogram and date lower left: '1870'.

Study for Beatrice, half-length, reclining, with head thrown back, eyes closed and her hands folded on her breast. The heavy hair falls to below her shoulders. The head is taken from Mrs. Morris.

16. ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE. (1910-12-10-9) Pencil, 24 x $20\frac{1}{2}$ in./61 x 52 cms. c.1875.

In the foreground Orpheus plays upon his lyre and leads his wife Eurydice out of Hades, but turns and gives the fatal backward glance. Behind him are seated the lamenting figure of Proserpine, and of Pluto, who, by drawing aside a curtain reveals a stairway leading up to earth.

17. THE BLESSED DAMOZEL. (1954-5-8-5) Pencil with touches of red chalk, $9\frac{1}{2}$ x $11\frac{1}{2}$ in./24.1 x 29.2 cms. c.1876.

Study for the background of the painting (Fogg Museum of Art) of two lovers embracing. The man is leaning over to the left and places his head on the woman's left shoulder; she winds her arms around him, looks down to the right and clasps her hands on his left shoulder.

18. DANTE'S DREAM AT THE TIME OF THE DEATH OF BEATRICE. (1910-12-10-10)
Black chalk, 19 x 38 in./48.3 x 96.5 cms. c.1879.

Sketch for the second predella for the painting (Dundee City Museum) of Dante recounting his dream.

Three women grouped at the foot of the bed, standing, sitting, and kneeling, listen to Dante as he tells them his dream. Another woman sits apart, her head on her hand.

19. THE SALUTATION OF BEATRICE. (1910-12-10-11) Pencil over very faint red chalk, on buff paper, 15 x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in./38.1 x 26.7 cms. 1880-1881.

Seated on the rim of a well Love holds Dante by the hand while sheltering him under his outspread wing.

20. STUDY FOR THE HEAD OF A GIRL. (1910-12-10-7) Pencil, brush with Indian ink for the hair, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 in./16.5 x 12.7 cms. c.1849.

A young girl with dark curly hair faces to the front.

21. GROTESQUE SKETCHES. (1941-9-1-4) Pencil, over-all measurement of paper, 9 x 7 in./22.9 x 17.8 cms.

Unrelated figures on one sheet of paper: (1) a man with a spear and a crescent moon; (2) figures holding spears form a background for a winged dragon.

22. ANGEL WITH CYMBALS and WOMAN STANDING. (1941-9-1-1) Pencil, over-all measurement of paper, 7 x 9 in./17.8 x 22.9 cms. c.1855.

On the left a winged angel within a roundel, head raised, holding cymbals. On the right-hand side, and probably by Elizabeth Siddal, a sketch in pen and brown wash of a woman standing with back turned and arms outstretched, looking out of a window opening. Inscribed in a later hand: '? Mrs. Rossetti'.

23. ANGEL WITH CYMBALS AND A DOVE. (1941-9-1-2) Sepia and wash, over-all measurement of paper, 7 x 9 in./17.8 x 22.9 cms. Date lower left: 'Sep/9th'. c.1855.

On the left a slight sketch of a female figure turned to the left with head raised; another (?) figure behind her. On the right-hand side a roundel enclosing an angel with cymbals and, at the bottom, a dove and olive branch. Against this second drawing the same (later) hand has written: '?Rossetti'.

24. ANGEL WITH CYMBALS. (1941-9-1-3) Pencil, 7 x 4½ in./17.8 x 11.4 cms. c.1855.

Sketch for the angel with upraised arms, holding cymbals, and below a suggestion of a very fat bird.

25. THE MS AT EMS. (1939-5-13-1.(1)) Pen and ink, 4½ x 7 in./11.4 x 17.8 cms. From a letter to Mrs. Morris dated: 'July 21st 1869'. Inscribed with title in Rossetti's hand, lower right.

This, and the following nine sketches probably accompanied letters from Rossetti.

William Morris and his wife were at Bad Ems for her health and here Mrs. Morris is seen in her bath drinking from a goblet marked 'No. 2' while Morris reads to her from Volume 2 of his The Earthly Paradise. Ranged on a shelf behind him are the remaining volumes and in a row beside the bath are the filled glasses still to be drunk.

'The accompanying cartoon', Rossetti wrote to Mrs. Morris, 'will prepare you for the worst - whichever that may be, the 7 tumblers or the 7 volumes.'

26. THE GERMAN LESSON. (1939-5-13-1.(2)) Pen and ink, 5¾ x 7 in./14.6 x 17.8 cms. From a letter dated: '4th August 1869'. Inscribed with title in Rossetti's hand, lower right.

Morris holds a pair of trousers, questioning the maid who replies: 'Beinkleider', while Mrs. Morris lies writing on her bed. Framed on the back wall naked figures of Adam and Eve bear the title: 'Das Erdiges Paradies'; in the foreground a variety of clothes cover the floor.

27. RESOLUTION, OR, THE INFANT HERCULES. (1939-5-13-1.(8)) Pen and ink, 8 x 5¼ in./20.3 x 13.3 cms. Dated, not by Rossetti, lower left: '14.8.69'.

Naked, fat, and immensely angry, Morris pulls at the shower-bath chord which releases the water; this falls on his rough head of hair.

28. DEATH OF A WOMBAT. (1939-5-13-1.(6)) 7 x 4½ in./17.8 x 11.4 cms. Dated '6th November 1869' and inscribed by Rossetti beneath the mourning border:

'I never reared a young Wombat
To glad me with his pin-hole eye,
But when he most was sweet & fat
And tail-less, he was sure to die!'

Within a mourning border Rossetti, in a dark suit and weeping into a large handkerchief kneels beside the wombat lying dead on its back. Behind him on a memorial pedestal stands an urn shaded by a weeping willow tree.

29. MRS. MORRIS AND A WOMBAT. (1939-5-13-1.(3)) Pen and ink, $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in./18.4 x 11.4 cms. c.1869.

Mrs. Morris, her head surrounded with a halo leads a haloed wombat.

30. MORRIS IN A PUNT. (1939-5-13-1.(9)) Pen and ink, $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in./18.4 x 11.4 cms. In Rossetti's hand dated lower left: '11 Sept 1871' and inscribed at the foot of the drawing:

'Enter Morris, moored in a punt,
And Jacks & Tenches exeunt.'

Holding a fishing-rod but more intent on reading from a volume of The Earthly Paradise, Morris in fishing attire sits in a punt while pikes and tenches sport in the water.

31. THE BARD AND PETTY TRADESMAN. (1939-5-13-1.(5)) Pen and ink, $4\frac{1}{4}$ x 7 in./10.8 x 17.8 cms. Inscribed with the title, and below running the length of the paper: 'No. 1. London published as Lord Campbells Act forbids. One penny'.

Back to back stand two figures representing William Morris, the one on the left under an apple-tree looks upwards while playing on a lyre balanced on his stomach. The second figure, wearing a smock and standing beneath a pawn-broker's sign thumps on the counter with clenched fists.

32. THE NUN. (1939-5-13-1.(4)) Pen and ink, 7 x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in./17.8 x 11.4 cms.

Wearing a nun's habit, white coif, and a crucifix on her breast, the woman stands facing to the left. Her hands, though not shown, are clasped under her sleeves.

33. RUPES TOPSEIANA. (1939-5-13-1.(7)) Pen and ink, 7 x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in./17.8 x 11.4 cms. Title inscribed lower right.

Three pitchforks await Morris as he comes tumbling down a precipice, head first, feet in the air; spectacles, a knife and fork and an open volume of The Earthly Paradise scatter around him as he falls. On the top of the hill a ruined temple with a fragment of the pediment remaining is inscribed: '& Co.'. Seated below the temple and holding a banner which reads: 'We are starving' are six figures recognizable as members of the Morris Firm: Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, C.J. Faulkner, Philip Webb, Paul Marshall. A bearded man at the end of the row stands with head upraised and arms extended. The head of Mrs. Morris in a crescent moon, upper right, looks down upon her husband and below her, within the sun's circle, two men also survey the scene (perhaps Marx and Engels) while above their heads the dove of peace sits with outspread wings.

34. FROM A STATUE. (1939-5-13-1.(10)) Pen and ink, $7\frac{3}{4}$ x $4\frac{1}{2}$ in./19.7 x 11.4 cms. Initials 'D.G.R.' and dated: '20.9.78' (not in Rossetti's hand). Title inscribed by the artist at the top of the page, and at the foot: 'P.S. It also strikes me as possible that Ned may have heard from you I wanted it and sent it.'

Woman's head from a classical statue (the features are those of Mrs. Morris), in profile, looking down; shoulders and breasts.

35. MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS. (1954-5-8-4) Pencil, $13\frac{1}{2}$ x $16\frac{3}{4}$ in./34.3 x 42.5 cms. Date right: '26 July 1870'.

On a sofa, whole length. Her head which is on the right is supported by a cushion to which she raises her left hand.

36. MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS. (1954-5-8-2) Pen and sepia, 18 x $17\frac{1}{4}$ in./45.7 x 43.8 cms. Date lower right: '6 January 1872'.

Sleeping on a sofa with her knees drawn up and her head supported by her right hand.

37. CHRISTINA ROSSETTI. (1937-5-8-31) Black chalk, touched with white, $11\frac{1}{2}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$ in./29.2 x 21.6 cms. Monogram (G.C.D.R.) left. 1848.

The head is turned three-quarters to the left and the shoulders indicated; a small white collar is worn. Her hair is parted in the middle and drawn down over the ear and worn in a plaited chignon.

38. ELIZABETH SIDDAL. (1910-12-10-5) Pencil, $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $4\frac{5}{8}$ in./18.4 x 12.4 cms.

Seated, whole-length, her head in three-quarter profile to right resting on the back of the invalid chair; the eyes are cast down, her hands are folded in her lap.

39. ELIZABETH SIDDAL. (1910-12-10-6) Pencil, 7 x $7\frac{1}{2}$ in./17.8 x 19 cms.

Whole-length, seated in a basket chair with her head turned in profile to left. She is leaning forward, one hand hanging down between her knees, the other lying palm upward on her lap.

40. ELIZABETH SIDDAL. (1912-11-9-4) Sepia, pen and brush, $5\frac{3}{4}$ x 2 in./14.6 x 5.1 cms.

She stands, three-quarter length, facing the front and looking down. In her left hand she holds a book while with her right hand she clasps the wrist of her left arm.

41. ELIZABETH SIDDAL. (1954-5-8-3) Pencil, $7\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 in./19 x 15.2 cms.

Whole-length, facing to the right in a basket chair, cutting a pattern from a strip of paper.