The most striking quality of Brotherhood literary painting is its representation of wholly fictive scenes as historical events occurring at a specific time and place in the past. In formal terms, this method transforms literary events into types, manifestations of transcendent ethical principles within historical time. But, in keeping with the Brotherhood aesthetic, the underlying purpose of this mode is moralistic. Setting imagined events in the hard world of fact—the representation of Lorenzo and Isabella at a family meal or Claudio and Isabella in a prison cell—is intended to force the viewer to see the ethical conflicts that these scenes embody as experienced within the daily actuality of human life; any idealization or mimetic failure would attenuate this moral purpose by removing the event from that shared, tangible world in which moral choices must be made.

It is this Ruskinian drive toward moralized realism that the Brotherhood saw as setting their own literary painting apart from contemporary work in this enormously popular genre, from what Stephens dismisses as "the ever-repeated themes taken from the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ and the like,—at best but second-hand ideas" (Stephens, Hunt, 10). Stephens’s comment points to the Brotherhood impulse, so evident in the treatment of scriptural history, to break away from exhausted visual conventions so as to gain for their themes fresh intensity through novelty and surprise. Furthermore, the elimination of such popular subjects as The Vicar of Wakefield indicates the Brotherhood rejection of the sentimental mode, that arousal of feeling for its own sake they called "slosh," for the tough-minded visual representation of daily activity embodying severe ethical conflict. Furthermore, the Brotherhood felt literary paintings should demonstrate "thought," the careful arrangement of accurately presented fact so as to figure ethical principles. As Stephens states, "They determined these pictures should at least mean something; be no longer the false representations of sham sentiment, but express thought, feeling, or purpose of the painter’s own mind, not a chromatic translation of a novelist or poet. Here lies the gist of Pre-Raffaelitism; this is what really distinguishes the movement" (Stephens, Hunt, 12–13).

But, as Stephens correctly observes, Brotherhood literary
paintings often provide less a "chromatic translation of a novelist or poet" than "purpose of the painter's own mind." The tendency of all Brotherhood work toward such expression of the "painter's own mind" becomes more pronounced in literary painting because private vision is less fully controlled by the subject matter. The fresh treatment of scriptural material can provide a publicly available reading because of the traditional typological meanings implicit in the subject. But in applying this same desire for originality to literary painting, the Brothers turn to new subjects, such as the poetry of Keats or Browning, for which there is no traditional contextual meaning, no interpretation shared by artist and audience. Since meaning is not generated by the subject, it must be created by the artist, often through a highly personal reading of the text.

Characteristically, it is Hunt who most consistently constructs his literary painting according to a figural scheme. Indeed, Hunt considered the moralized treatment of literary material as one of the founding ideas of the Brotherhood. In his 1846 conversation with Millais, he proposes the ethical reading of Keats's poem that underlies his Flight of Madeline and Porphyro (Eve of St. Agnes) (R.A., 1848): "The story in Keats's Eve of St. Agnes illustrates the sacredness of honest responsible love and the weakness of proud intemperance, and I may practise my new principles to some degree on that subject" (Hunt, 1:85). In the autobiography, this assertion of the revolutionary nature of such moralized illustration of Keats immediately follows his declaration of the importance of historicist treatment of the biblical story. The juxtaposition indicates Hunt's sense of a continuity between the figural treatment of imaginative literature and of Scripture. In each, the shock of historicist presentation evokes the presence of the divine within the temporal world.

The flight of Madeline and Porphyro during the drunkenness attending the revelry casts the Keatsian richness of tactile detail into moral types. In characteristic Brotherhood fashion, Hunt seeks to create the illusion of an observed historical event. The mistletoe was hung to get what Hunt calls "the approximate night effect," the bloodhounds painted from life and the models taken from the artist’s circle so as to intensify the sense of participation (Hunt, 1:98). The composition represents a conflict between opposing moral principles. Madeline and Porphyro, the types of "honest responsible love," look back upon the world of "proud intemperance" from which they are about to escape. Associated with the lovers is another figure of love, the dogs whose "sagacious eye an inmate owns."

Opposed to the lovers are multiple types illustrating the
"weakness of proud intemperance." In the foreground, the object of the stares of the fleeing couple, is "the Porter, in uneasy sprawl." The "huge empty flaggon by his side" is a detail from the text, but the objects in the lower right—the wine vessels, the unused horn, and the key—are additional elements invented by Hunt to figure the "weakness" of intemperance as opposed to the power of sacred love seen in the fallen chain and opened door. The sleeping page in a direct line with the fallen porter is invented by Hunt as another modulation of the theme. The addition of these moralized details indicates the degree to which Hunt's painting depends upon a very personal, very Puritanical reading of the text, the extent to which he has imposed his own high valuation of "responsible love" onto Keats's poem.

Form is moralized. The lines of the painting equate porter, page, and revelers. From the two drunken men who have neglected their domestic responsibility, the eye is led to the illuminated revelry of those whose intemperance has corrupted the entire household. There is no single principal light; illumination falls on lovers and revelers equally in order to emphasize the ethical contrast. The gaze of the lovers is not directed toward each other in a show of personal sentiment, but toward the fallen porter, the type of the moral corruption from which they are escaping. The unnatural size of the porter, his virtual giant-like stature, is partly due to difficulties with foreshortening by the young artist, but it is also indicative of how close such moralized literary painting can come to the allegorical mode.

The divergence of what Hunt called the "new principles" of the Brotherhood demonstrated in this painting from Academic practice becomes clear through comparison with a literary painting done by Hunt before the Brotherhood period, Little Nell and her Grandfather (1845). Here, the lack of hard-edge outline and the concern with atmospheric effects rather than the solidity of objects removes the event from the tangible world of common experience. There is no "thought," no effort to draw the facts of daily life into an ethical pattern. In The flight of Madeline, the lovers look not at each other, but at the porter, for the purpose of this painting is not to evoke the emotional quality of romantic love but to demonstrate the divine power of sacred love. In this earlier work, Nell and her grandfather gaze into each other's faces in a composition that stresses not moral principles but mutual love, the strength of personal feeling between two individuals.

In the year following Hunt's Flight of Madeline, Millais, with his ability to absorb and master styles, produced Lorenzo and Isabella
Plate 20. Holman Hunt, Little Nell and Her Grandfather. Reproduced by permission of the Sheffield City Art Galleries.
Literary Painting

(R.A., 1849), illustrating Keats's "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil." Although the work appears to carry out Hunt's high aims for literary painting, it also turns figural methods toward a distinctly secular celebration of eroticism. Executed when Millais had become as "ardent an admirer of Keats" (Hunt, 1:103) as had Hunt and Rossetti, it was the first joint project of the group and was signed with the initials "PRB." With its flat picture plane, uniform illumination and lack of compositional focus, the work rejects the manner of the Royal Academy. In method, it is historicist. In an early sketch (no. 230), the Duomo of Florence appears through the arched window, much as the Ponte Vecchio appears through a window in Rossetti's Dantean illustrations, to set the event firmly in history. In the detailing, Millais is concerned with archeological exactness. He sketched the design for the rear wall from a Gothic revival pattern of the 1840s (no. 235) and the dress from a recently published book of historical costume (no. 237). Here, as in Brotherhood history painting, the conscious violation of Academic conventions of composition and lighting suggests the accidental quality of an observed event and the use of members of the circle as models enforces the sense of historicist participation.

In a narrow sense, the painting adapts typological methods by showing the present as prefiguring a future event known to the viewer from the narrative context. The pot of basil in the right background as well as the spilling of salt and cracking of a nut by the brother refer to the death of Lorenzo. Furthermore, in choosing a text to accompany the painting, Millais uses not only the lines describing the scene on canvas—"They could not sit at meals but felt how well / It soothed each to be the other by"—but those presenting the event prefigured by the painting, the murder of Lorenzo:

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each unconfines
  His bitter thoughts to other, well-nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
  Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad.
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Working in his initial enthusiasm for the Brotherhood and still under the influence of Hunt, Millais felt a continuity between his figural treatment of literary and of scriptural subjects. In the same year that Lorenzo and Isabella was exhibited, he drew a design for a painting entitled "The Eve of the Deluge" (no. 257). This composition, which he showed to his colleagues, presents, like Lorenzo and Isabella, a domestic grouping around a table; his explication, in a letter to Combe of 1851, indicates that he in-
tended each character to figure a different moral principle. The scene is set at a wedding-feast during the Deluge:

The bride elated by her happiness, will be playfully showing her wedding-ring to a young girl. . . . A drunkard will be railing boisterously at another. . . . There will also be the glutton quietly indulging in his weakness, unheeding the sagacity of his grateful dog. . . . Then a woman (typical of worldly vanity) apparelled in sumptuous attire. . . . All deaf to the prophecy of the Deluge. . . . All but one figure in their midst, who, upright with closed eyes, prays for mercy. . . . I hope by this great contrast to excite a reflection on the probable way in which sinners would meet the coming death.¹

In the contemporaneous Lorenzo and Isabella, this same composition is applied to a literary rather than a scriptural subject. But since Keats's poem, unlike the subject of the Flood, provides no readily available context, moral and sacramental significance must be created by the artist's handling of the material. With its evident division into opposing groups, the painting can best be read, using the model of Hunt's own explication of his Flight, as figuring the conflict between malice and love. In the left-hand group embodying the varieties of malice, the clearest example of hatred is the brother in the foreground viciously cracking a nut while gazing at Lorenzo and Isabella. Behind him is a falcon tearing a bird's feather, one of the moralized details added from earlier sketches. The similarity between bird and man is emphasized by the formal equivalence of pose, each tilting forward with an echoing curve of the back, and conceptually in that each demonstrates his true nature through play, one in rending a feather, the other in breaking a nut. The brother is given a chair of ball-and-claw design so that even the legs of the chair seem to reach out to tear and rend. And yet, it is important to note that the bird and chair are not to be seen in the modern sense as representing the psyche of the brother, but rather bird and the man are each types, varied phenomenal manifestations of the principle of hatred.

The brother's elongated leg connects this group to the opposing elements embodying the different forms of what might be called noble love. The dog, as in Hunt's Flight the emblem of selfless love, shrinks from the brother's kick and, powerless, is yet protective, unlike the negligent, sleeping dog beneath the brother's chair. Isabella's chair is not clawed but carved, and bears the initials "PRB" as a kind of authorial commentary. The servant behind Isabella represents another type of love, the concern of the domestic servant. The lovers, oblivious to the varied expressions of care and malice around them, see
only themselves. The opened blood oranges on the plate not only prefigure the violence that will punish their love but rather daringly indicate the sexual basis of their attraction.

The passing of the oranges also follows the characteristic Brotherhood practice of evoking scriptural parallels. At this Last Supper, betrayed by those at the table, Lorenzo, dressed in a Christ-like dress reminiscent of Rienzi, passes the sacrament of the opened orange among those still faithful to him. There are thirteen people present; a passionflower blooms on the pillars behind the lovers' heads. Within a figural aesthetic, such iconographic associations suggest how the patterns of betrayal and martyrdom shown in the life of Christ continue through historical time. Yet, this application of religious symbolism to erotic content also indicates the connection of this work to the religion of Eros that flourishes in the art and literature of the later nineteenth century. The transformation of the sacrament to an erotic symbol, the punning use of the passionflower for its sexual rather than sacred meaning, the conception of Lorenzo as a martyr to love anticipate such works as the post-Brotherhood version of "The Blessed Damozel" in its use of Christian iconography to endow erotic life with significance.

In his own post-Brotherhood treatment of Keats's poem *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* (1868), Hunt, too, reverses the traditional meaning of Christian symbolism, here bringing out the decadent elements in the text. Isabella engages in a necrophilic worship of the flowering plant, which is set upon a prie-dieu covered with an elaborate altar cloth. Within the parodic conception of a religious sanctuary, the unmade bed serves as the antechamber and, as in the *Ecce Ancilla*, the lighted lamp indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In the same year that *Lorenzo and Isabella* was exhibited, Millais began *The Woodman's Daughter* (R.A., 1851), another figural treatment of a contemporary poem. The painting is based on Patmore's "The Woodman's Daughter," a melodramatic narrative of the seduction of a young girl by the squire's son, her drowning of the illegitimate child and consequent insanity. In particular, the canvas illustrates the moment in childhood when, as described in the lines exhibited with the painting,

He sometimes, in a sullen tone,  
Would offer fruits, and she  
Always received his gifts with an air  
So unreserved and free.

As in *Lorenzo and Isabella*, or even *The Carpenter's Shop*, the work is prefigurative in that the childhood scene foreshadows fu-
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ture suffering as well as figural in that the characters typify ethical principles. The red hair of the young squire as well as his preternaturally adult expression transform him into a type of the demon-child-lover and contrast to the innocence shown in the girl and the hardworking dutifulness embodied in the father. The offering of berries, a traditional emblem of sexual temptation also used in "Goblin Market," shows the boy as the embodiment of sexuality as well as pointing ahead to the future seduction. Even the landscape, painted in situ, is turned to moralistic purposes. The young plants in the foreground show the youthful present; the forest in the background the traditional dark wood in which the girl will be seduced and eventually drown her child.

Millais’s literary paintings indicate the transitional historical position of the Brotherhood artist, poised between sacramentalism and modernism. If Lorenzo and Isabella and The Woodman’s Daughter look back to the figural mode of Carlyle and Ruskin, his Mariana (R.A., 1851) looks ahead to the symboliste manner, to the use of color and detail to evoke diffuse emotion. This symboliste mode spoke deeply to Millais’s imagination connecting him with the similar impulses in Rossetti’s Brotherhood work and with his poetic contemporaries, particularly Tennyson. Indeed, the distinction made by Arthur Henry Hallam in his 1831 essay on Tennyson between the poetry of "reflection" and of "sensation" applies equally well to Millais’s Brotherhood productions. If Lorenzo and Isabella is a work of "reflection," an example of visualized moral thought, his Mariana provides the visual equivalent of one of Tennyson’s best poems of "sensation" in which, in Hallam’s words, the mind trembles "into emotion at colors, and sounds, and movements."

Just as for Tennyson the line from Measure for Measure, "Mariana in the moated grange," suggests neither the action of the play nor its ethical issues, but only a mood of claustrophobic dread, so, for Millais, Tennyson’s poem suggests only an emotive state that can be evoked through tangible, visual forms. Within this symboliste conception, then, the Brotherhood style of minute particularity is turned to radically different purposes. Detail is employed not to typify but to evoke, not to figure a moral principle but to objectify an evanescent emotion. The extreme clarity of the style functions not to show the tangibility of the ordinary world but to mimic the hallucinatory mental state that is the subject of both poem and painting. The mouse whose squeaking is heard with such intense clarity by Mariana as to
Plate 25. John E. Millais, Mariana. From the Makins Collection.
become a shriek (ll. 63–64) is moved from behind the wainscot to scurry across the floor. The autumn leaves blown through the open window evoke the decay entering the interior space of the “dreamy house” (l. 61) that is her mind. Even the posture of Mariana in which the traditional erotic pose of outthrust hips is covered with heavy velvet suggests the suppression of sexual energy that, distorted, emerges as madness. Even William Michael Rossetti perceived the emotive rather than figural quality of the work: “Millais has expressed the weariness of mind by an outward action. . . . The house is haunted only by a thought” (Fine Art, 207–8).

Of this painting, Ruskin said, the “lady in blue is heartily tired of her painted window and idolatrous toilet table” (12:323). He is correct, but for the wrong reasons. Although the Brothers were aware of the Tractarian controversies of the moment, the painting does not dramatize theological disputes. Here, the characteristic Brotherhood correspondence between domestic details and religious iconography functions not to reinforce but to subvert received Christian morality. Mariana is placed between a stained-glass representation of the Annunciation and a household altar, details not present in Tennyson’s poem. Whereas in the Germ version of “My Sister’s Sleep” such parallels to the Virgin praise the value of chastity, here the reference is ironic. Trapped by Christian sexual repressiveness, twisted by such constraints and unable to escape, she is forced toward madness. Perhaps it is this powerful evocation of repressed female sexuality that made the work on its exhibition “a great favorite with women, one of whom said it was the best thing in the exhibition” (PRBJ, 91).

In his St. Agnes Eve of 1854 (no. 338), Millais also suggests the destructive effect of sexual repression through the ironic reversal of Christian symbols. In looking again to Tennyson, Millais fastens on the erotic ambiguities in the poet’s depiction of a nun on Saint Agnes Eve praying for a vision of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Here, as in Mariana, a single female figure stands at an open window as if awaiting her lover. But within this cold winter landscape, the nun’s virginity becomes identified with sterility; the twisted body of the crucified Christ above her personal altar is equated with the gnarled leafless tree in the garden. As in Hunt’s Flight of Madeline, the half-opened gate suggests escape into sexual fulfillment. In its vision of a virginal young woman looking outward for a rescuer, this work, much like The Order of Release, suggests Millais’s erotic feelings, especially for Effie Ruskin, to whom he gave the drawing. It appears that this personal meaning finally became evident even to Ruskin, for
when his marriage was breaking up, he told his wife that he now considered the drawing an unsuitable gift.  

Millais's best-known literary painting, *Ophelia* (R.A., 1852), continues his identification of virginity with madness. The painting again treats a single female figure, again focuses on a single moment of intense emotion. The remarkable detailing of the vegetation gives the work, like *Mariana*, a preternatural clarity that replicates the hallucinatory vividness of the world as seen by a deranged mind. And as in *Mariana*, the literary context functions not to provide the narrative line but to provide reasons for the disturbed emotions of the main character. Here, the painting appears to follow its source in illustrating Shakespeare's suggestion that Ophelia's madness arises from her inability to face the intense sexuality of the Danish court. The Queen describes Ophelia's final garland with sexual innuendo (4.7.168-70); Millais presents the English flowers overgrowing the pool and pushing to the front of the picture plane not as figures of the redemptive beauty of God's Creation but as signs of the fertile energy of the natural world. Within Millais's religion of Eros, Ophelia, like Lorenzo, becomes a martyr to unfulfilled love; her upraised hands, like the hand of the young Jesus in *The Carpenter's Shop* (plate 5), appear ready to receive the stigmata.

The divergence of *Ophelia*, and of *Mariana*, from the Brotherhood goal of moralized literary painting appears sharply when these works are contrasted to Hunt's treatment of a scene from Shakespeare, his *Claudio and Isabella* (R.A., 1853), based upon the prison scene in *Measure for Measure*. Neglecting Shakespeare's concern with the problematic nature of a choice between a man's life and a woman's virtue, Hunt turns the scene into a work that, in William Michael Rossetti's words, "shows forth the opposition between moral elevation and moral cowardice" (*Fine Art*, 236). Here, Brotherhood detailing presents Claudio's emotions, particularly his fear of death described in the quotation in the catalogue:

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Claud.
Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
'Tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.
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*Measure for Measure*, act iii, scene I

But Hunt's representation of the inner life carries with it moral judgment. As William Michael notes, "The impulse which di-
rects Claudio’s unconscious hand to the manacled limb expresses as fully and quietly as we conceive it, the dread of death and the ignoble hope” (Fine Art, 236). Even the “Claudio/Juliet” scratched on the wall of the condemned cell links the obsessive quality of his love with his failure to repent.

From original conception to completed canvas, Hunt worked carefully to eliminate evocative sentimental elements in order to present a scene figuring this clear moral distinction. In the first sketch (1850, no. 112), Isabella clutches her brother in a gesture of deep feeling. In the completed canvas, she is restrained in posture and separated from her brother to become a type of “moral elevation” contrasted, through this characteristic Brotherhood composition, to the “moral cowardice” figured in her brother. The only connection between the two are her overly large hands that, appearing virtually detached from her body, form a symbol of redemptive prayer on his chest.

As the work developed, Hunt’s use of light, like his composition, became increasingly moralized. Following historicist principles, Hunt gained permission to draw from a prison cell in Lambeth Palace; he tells of hanging the lute in the “little window recess to get the true light upon it” (Hunt, 1:215). It is this “true light,” in both the visual and moral sense of the term, that is the center of the work. In the 1850 sketch, one light floods the interior of the cell and another illuminates Claudio’s face. In the final painting, both the prison cell and Claudio’s face are cast into darkness while Isabella’s face is partially illuminated by the brilliant sunshine that fills the out-of-doors. The sunlight beyond the cell irradiates a naturalistically treated landscape that, like Isabella’s prayerful hands, figures the answer to Claudio’s words, quoted in the catalogue, expressing his fear of death. The apple trees in bloom suggest the promise of resurrection and the steeple in the far background the revelation of immortality through the church. In Hunt’s sacramental vision, the sunlight itself manifests the presence of God. As Stephens notes in moralized, Ruskinian language, Claudio has “turned his back upon the light” (Stephens, Hunt, 22). In the darkened cell that is the image of his own mind, Claudio not only looks away from his sister, who is illuminated by this sunshine, but also spurns the promise of redemption figured by the light that is God.

Hunt’s allegiance to figuralism continued beyond the Brotherhood period. The bright sunlight that figures the promise of immortal life to Claudio offers the same promise to the fallen woman in The Awakening Conscience (R.A., 1854). For
Millais, however, the authentic power as symboliste artist that appears in his Brotherhood literary painting continues into the later 1850s in a series of enigmatic paintings—*Autumn Leaves* (R.A., 1856), *A Dream of the Past; Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (R.A., 1857), *The Vale of Rest* (R.A., 1858), *Apple Blossoms* (R.A., 1859)—that point inward to the flux of emotion.

Of these, the most successful is *Autumn Leaves*. Begun shortly after Millais had completed his illustrations for the Moxon Tennyson, *Autumn Leaves* fully realizes the symboliste impulse evident in his Brotherhood illustration of Tennyson. But whereas Millais’s *Mariana*, as well as Tennyson’s poem, still refer to action within the literary source to account for the emotions of Mariana, *Autumn Leaves* indicates a conscious desire by the artist to eliminate narrative elements entirely from his work. His wife notes in her diary that Millais “wished to paint a picture full of beauty and without subject.”

Contemporary critics recognized the painting as repudiating the figural methods of the Brotherhood and yet accepted it as working within another well-defined mode, describing this rejection of narrative line and moral content for emotional suggestiveness as following the manner of Giorgione. William Michael Rossetti finds in the painting the same quality of complex, enigmatic feeling brought into stasis that his brother had praised in his sonnet on “A Venetian Pastoral, by Giorgione; in the Louvre” printed in *The Germ* and that Pater defines as the distinctive achievement of the School of Giorgione in *The Renaissance*. He says, “It is a work entirely of sentiment and effect; the evident object being, as in some pictures of the Venetians and eminently of Giorgione, to convey an emotion at once intense and undefined. Story there is none” (*Fine Art*, 217). Ruskin, too, evokes Giorgione in describing Millais’s use of mimetic accuracy for emotive purposes. In *Academy Notes*, he says that the work is “by much the most poetical work the artist has yet conceived; and, also, as far as I know, the first instance of a perfectly painted twilight. It is easy, as it is common, to give obscurity to twilight, but to give the flow within the darkness is another matter; and though Giorgione might have come nearer the glow, he never gave the valley mist” (14:66–67).

The Giorgionesque quality of mystery, the suggestion of meanings that elude definitive reading, emerges from disjunctions within the painting itself. There is a disquieting stylistic break between Brotherhood scientific detailing and Giorgionesque colorism, between the leaves in the foreground rendered with such botanical particularity and hard-edge detailing that
each species is identifiable and the coloristic treatment of the girls' hair and dress, as well as of the landscape and atmosphere of the background. The twilight sky is a wash of pale yellow into which the line of poplars disappears. The sharply defined, tangible world of fact seems to dissolve into mist, or into dream. Then, too, there is a marked disparity between the Victorian viewer's expectation of a symbolic genre scene in the manner of F. M. Brown's *Work* or *The Hireling Shepherd* and the enigmatic quality of the depicted action. Inexplicably, the girls are detached from their task of gathering and burning the leaves. Each stands isolated, caught up in her own inner life, a solitary individual locked in the Paterian prisonhouse of the mind. Each is suspended in the somnambulistic trance so characteristic of women in the work of the later Rossetti and of Edward Burne-Jones.

Although landscape and event carry strong associations—the burning leaves of autumn and the glow of twilight suggest old age and death contrasted to the youthfulness and innocence of the girls—the force of the work is not directed toward the figuring of human mortality through natural fact and daily incident but rather toward the evocation of the evanescent feelings created by such a scene. The stylistic softening of the physical world and the inwardness of the actors suggest that the subject is not the manifestation of the divine within the phenomenal but the emotive response of the individual sensibility to external event. Millais's comment quoted by Hunt suggests that his conception of the work was *symboliste* rather than figural: "Is there any sensation more delicious than that awakened by the odour of burning leaves? To me nothing brings back sweeter memories of the days that are gone; it is the incense offered by departing summer to the sky; and it brings one a happy conviction that time puts a peaceful seal on all that is gone" (Hunt, 1:286). For Millais, then, the subject of the painting is not the transcendent but the favorite theme of the *symboliste* artist, memory, the complex and "delicious" mental "sensation" stimulated or "awakened" by incidents in daily life.

For Rossetti, as for Hunt and Millais, literary subjects offered a freedom to express personal imaginative impulses. If during his Brotherhood period Rossetti could work communally on moralized treatments of literature, he also shared with Millais an occupation with the claustrophobic repression of feeling that leads to madness. Although he sought to give his fictive subjects historical settings, there appears in these Brotherhood works the
tendency toward dream vision that culminates in his medieval fantasies of the 1860s. And if his illustrations of the *Vita Nuova* at first follow a figural program that points toward the transcendent, by the end of his Brotherhood association, the incidents from Dante have been transformed into representations of purely personal feelings.

Prior to the Brotherhood, Rossetti had experimented with literary illustration, selecting subjects from Poe, from German fairy tales, and from *Faust*. In the early days of the Brotherhood, he continued to illustrate *Faust* (nos. 34, 34A, 35, 35A, 36); but a comparison of his *Faust: Gretchen and Mephistofoles in the Church* (no. 34) of 1848 with his drawings of two years earlier, *Mephistofoles outside Gretchen's Cell* (no. 17) and *Faust with Skeletal Death* (no. 18) indicates his rapid assimilation of Brotherhood ideas. The pre-Brotherhood works draw upon the English caricature tradition. Mephistofoles outside the cell is a grotesque, dressed in a highly theatrical costume. The scene of Faust threatened by death is equally exaggerated in the swirl of Mephistofoles' cape and the lascivious poses of the female figures. The mode is non-naturalistic and ahistorical; the feeling is openly sexual. *Gretchen and Mephistofoles in the Church* (no. 34), done by Rossetti as a member of the Cyclographic Society, the immediate forerunner of the Brotherhood, is, in contrast, a tightly controlled moral statement conceived within a naturalistic scheme. As in *Lorenzo and Isabella*, the drama of sexuality takes place against the backdrop of an oblivious common humanity sketched with a high degree of particularization. Against these upright forms, the curve of Gretchen's body becomes an expression of moral agony. In the "Criticism Sheet" circulated within the group in July 1848, Hunt was quick to praise this typifying of sexual guilt: "Margaret enduring the taunting of the evil spirit who is pressing her weight of sin into her crouching and repenting self" (*PRBJ*, 110). Yet, for all the orthodox moralism, Rossetti, even in this early Brotherhood work, cannot wholly contain the supernatural within the bounds of the natural. The devil clearly contradicts the form of what is virtually a genre scene, and Millais, in his Criticism Sheet, criticizes his colleague for employing this exhausted visual convention: "The Devil is in my opinion a mistake; his head wants drawing and the horns through the cowl are common-place and therefore objectionable" (*PRBJ*, 110). The flaming sword in the foreground bearing the motto "Dies Irae," so similar to the crossed palm and briar in the *Girlhood* of the following year, also
violates naturalism, although Millais felt this detail justified by its moral purposes: "The flaming sword well introduced and highly emblematical of the subject" (PRBJ, 110).

Rossetti soon turned from Faust with its orthodox religious associations to the work of the then relatively unknown poet, Robert Browning. The "prodigious influence" of Browning within the group is attested by their delight in hearing Rossetti read the poet's work aloud (Stephens, DGR, 26–27) and the inclusion of Browning as a "two-star" Immortal in the list compiled by Rossetti and Hunt in 1848 (Hunt, 1:159). Although many of Browning's explicit statements about art, particularly the Ruskinian assertion of the religious value of intense sense perception in "Fra Lippo Lippi" (ll. 282–96, 313–15), draw upon the same sacramental theory that informs Brotherhood work, the young Rossetti's attraction to the poet derives more from their shared occupation with the intensity of the moment and with hidden impulses that are close to madness. This congeniality of imagination is evident in Rossetti's first water color, the illustration of Browning's "The Laboratory" (1849, no. 41).11 Here, Rossetti does not seek to typify moral principles, but to evoke the psychological atmosphere of the poem. The manic intensity of the speaker's hatred is conveyed through the focusing of the composition on the "delicate droplet" (l. 43) of poison as well as through the chiaroscuro illumination of her face and theatrically, perhaps too theatrically, clenched fist. Even the sense of compression created by the curved top of the frame points to the feeling of pent-up aggression. The work follows Brotherhood practice in the historical treatment of literature, but the effect of historicism in this case is to weaken moralistic purpose. Here, setting the fictive event in historical time serves the same function as it does in Browning; placing the event in the court circles of the Ancien Régime relativizes moral judgment by seeing murder as following the mores of a vanished society.12 In its form, too, the painting can be seen as the visual equivalent of the poem, for within the tightly enclosed space of the canvas, as in a dramatic monologue, there is no alternative presented to the homicidal madness of the protagonist; there is only the passion itself.

Browning also provides the subject for Rossetti's one painting done from a contemporary literary source, "'Hist!' Said Kate the Queen" (1851, no. 49). This oil painting illustrates lines from one of Pippa's songs in "Pippa Passes":

"'Hist!'—said Kate the Queen;
But "Oh!"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
Plate 32. D. G. Rossetti, "‘Hist! Said Kate the Queen’" (no. 49). Reproduced by courtesy of the Provost and Fellows of Eton and Chatto and Windus Ltd.
Although "Pippa Passes" is composed as a series of moral contrasts between Pippa and those who overhear her songs, Rossetti ignores the figural possibilities of his source as well as its contemporary setting. Instead, the relation of painting to poem is closer to that between Tennyson's "Mariana" and Measure for Measure or Browning's own "Childe Roland" and King Lear. For the lines from Browning touch off an entirely personal vision in the painter's mind, and the canvas illustrates this private world rather than the action of the poem. The canvas presents a dream-vision of a queen living in an Asolo of the imagination. As Rossetti moves from temporal to mental reality, he leaves behind scientific Brotherhood style. The hard-edge outlines dissolve, and the picture plane flattens. The maidens in the middle distance are arranged in serial patterns rather than with documentary randomness. In its decorative quality, the work points ahead to his treatment of medieval material in the 1860s.

In the same letter of November 1848 in which he outlines his historicist aims for The Girlhood, Rossetti mentions the Vita Nuova as "a work offering admirable opportunities for pictorial illustration: a task which I am now resolved to attempt" (Letters, 1:49). At this early point in his Brotherhood career, Rossetti felt a continuity between the treatment of scriptural and Dantean subjects, for in each the artist translates into visual form historical yet clearly figural events described in a verbal narrative. To Rossetti in 1848, the events of the Vita appeared meaningful in their fusion of historicity and sacredness; Beatrice was still, in Auerbach's words, "an earthly person who really appeared to Dante" and, simultaneously, "an incarnation of divine truth." As much as he identifies with the Florentine Dante, in his earliest illustrations of the Vita Rossetti employs a historicist style to bring out the intermingling of the sacred and the human in Dante's life.

The Salutation of Beatrice (no. 116A), a drawing of 1849–50, remains close to the medieval religious quality of its source. Like the paired Girlhood and Ecce Ancilla, this work uses the diptych form to represent the prefigurative nature of earthly events. The two panels—the left showing the meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Florence, the right their meeting in Paradise—are visually separated to show difference in historical time, yet joined within a single frame to show their simultaneity in God's time. The separate compartments are connected by an emblematic device
that suggests the interpenetration of divine and human time. In the space between the panels, the child Love gazes at a sundial; above his head is the date of death of Beatrice, 9 June 1290. The date sets the event firmly within historical time, while the personification of Love, set outside the visual representation of history and observing the shadow of the sundial fall on the number 9, sets past and future within the timeless present of God's foreknowledge.

In the left panel, the salutation in Florence, the hard-edge, rather awkward treatment works to establish the historicity of the event. Dante's head and his costume are modeled after a contemporary portrait; the costumes of the women and of the page provide the illusion of archeological accuracy. The architectural detailing, particularly the fresco behind Dante and the trefoil railing, as well as the view of the Arno in the far background, a characteristic device in his Brotherhood illustrations of Dante, set the event firmly in a particular time and place. As in The Girlhood, these objects of daily life appear as types. The volume of Virgil that Dante carries prefigures his journey through the Inferno to Paradise. The clear visual parallels of Beatrice accompanied by two women suggests, without annuling the historicity of the meeting in Florence, how the second event is contained within the first.

From the beginning of his Brotherhood years, Rossetti worked on a favorite subject from the Vita, Dante drawing an angel on the first anniversary of the death of Beatrice. In his drawing of 1849 (no. 42), the signature "Dante G. Rossetti P. R. B." and the dedication "To his PRBrother John E. Millais" assert his intention of treating the subject according to Brotherhood principles. The hard-edge modeling, the awkward posture of the characters, particularly of the young boy at the right who appears to be scratching his leg, the detailing of surfaces, such as Dante's chair, and the Florentine street-scene visible through the window establish the work as, in Rossetti's own terms, "pictorial illustration," the representation of the domestic ambience of the actual historical event described in the text. The treatment remains firmly natural rather than supernatural, yet the household objects bear figural significance. The half-empty hourglass indicates this moment as a midpoint in Dante's life before being received into heaven by Beatrice. The statue at the left refers to Beatrice in showing Mary crowned as received into heaven, and the rose indicates the final attainment of heavenly joy. In suggesting such sacred meaning through a domestic scene, the drawing is continuous with such Brotherhood scriptural work as
PLATE 35. D. G. Rossetti, Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast, Denies him her Salutation. Reproduced by permission of the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.
the Passover design (no. 78A) (plate 11), as well as with his treatment of contemporary domestic life in "My Sister's Sleep."

His Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage Feast, Denies him her Salutation (1850, no. 50) continues this historical manner. The incident is represented as described in the Vita, including specific details mentioned in the text, such as the fresco on the wall of the house, the mocking women, the friend pulling Dante by the hand. No supernatural elements intrude. But this work, unlike The First Anniversary of 1849 (no. 42) (plate 34), does not add to Dante's account a set of symbolic visual parallels. Instead, it is almost pure "pictorial illustration," with the sacred meaning of the scene communicated primarily through the viewer's knowledge of the entire text.

Rossetti's treatment of Dantean material during the early Brotherhood period, then, tends toward history painting. Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante (1852, no. 54) draws upon both the Purgatory and the Vita to invent a subject that is carefully conceived as being historically possible. He describes his scheme in a letter of 1853 to his Brotherhood colleague Thomas Woolner: "It illustrates a passage in the Purgatory . . . where Dante speaks of Cimabue, Giotto, the two Guidos (Guincelli and Cavalcante, the latter of whom I have made reading aloud the poems of the former who was then dead) and, by implication, of himself. For the introduction of Beatrice, who with the other women (their heads only being seen below the scaffolding) are making a procession through the church, I quote a passage from the Vita Nuova" (Letters, 1:123). In the watercolor, Giotto, with Cimabue looking over his shoulder, paints the portrait of Dante in the Bargello, while Guido Cavalcante reads from a volume of Guido Guincelli's poems and Beatrice passes beneath the scaffold in a procession of women. The scene "illustrates a passage in the Purgatory" in that this incident prefigures the future meeting of Dante in Purgatory (11. 94-99) with the painter Oderisi, who speaks of Giotto wresting fame from Cimabue in painting just as Guido Cavalcante does from Guido Guincelli in poetry. The "introduction of Beatrice," however, fits only tenuously into any prefigurative plan; rather, her inclusion points to the personal element in the work. Rossetti concludes his explanation by saying, "I have thus all the influence of Dante's youth—Art, Friendship and Love—with a real incident embodying them." Just as Rossetti notes that in canto 11 of the Purgatory Dante speaks "by implication, of himself," so in this watercolor Rossetti is expressing through his characteristic identification with Dante his own youthful desires for artistic fame, for "Friendship" within the
Brotherhood, and for sexual fulfillment. Still absorbed in the Brotherhood manner, however, Rossetti does not express qualities like “Love” and “Friendship” through allegorical personification, as he does in such post-Brotherhood works as the *Beata Beatrix* (1864, no. 168) (plate 39), but as figured through historical events, “with a real incident embodying them.”

By the end of the Brotherhood period, the stylistic balance in Rossetti’s treatment of Dante has begun to shift from the historical to the symboliste, from domestic realism to dream-vision. The 1853 reworking of *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (no. 58), like the earlier version (plate 34), represents an event in the life of the historical Dante, but introduction of a visionary style moves the work beyond historical documentation. Stephens’s reading of his Brotherhood colleague’s work is useful in pointing to Rossetti’s means of evoking the sacred:

> We see ... a serene landscape, comprising a sunlit meadow, a shadowy wood, and, overhead, that brooding, softly-glowing firmament which, with Rossetti as with other poet-painters, attests the perfect peace of a Paradise beyond the grave. In this way, the artist took us from the busy Arno, past the dim, half-lighted room where Dante sojourned with his grief, and through the narrow pass of Death, whose purifying function is indicated by the basin and its appurtenances, until, remote but bright, the pleasuance of Eternity is discovered to be “beyond the veil,” which is represented by the portiere. (Stephens, *DGR*, 35)

As in the 1849 version, the room itself is rendered with historical consistency. The daily life of Florence is visible through the windows, the figures wear medieval dress, and the room is filled with domestic objects, such as the hourglass, oval mirror, lilies, and painting of Virgin and Child, that demand figural reading. But the style attenuates the materiality of these objects. The use of watercolor softens the outlines and eliminates the close detailing shown, for example, in the earlier version’s treatment of the surface of the chair. Without a hard, overall illumination, objects lose their tangibility, fade into sunlight or into shadow.

In the passage at the left, through the antechamber into the out-of-doors, the naturalistic style finally dissolves. The objects in the antechamber, which Stephens correctly sees as suggesting the “narrow pass of Death,” retain some tenuous connection to historical probability, but in their treatment appear more as the iconic symbols of medieval art. Finally, the evocation of heaven through the “serene landscape” shows Rossetti less as the artist as scientist than as “poet-painter.” The radiance at the top of the staircase and the blurred rather than leaf-by-leaf detailing of the
trees suggest not domestic fact transformed into type but a wholly non-naturalistic vision.

The same occupation with finding tangible expression for the visionary also informs the Brotherhood version of Rossetti's best-known poem, "The Blessed Damozel." As it appeared in the second issue of The Germ, the poem follows a Dantean, religiously orthodox mode. Although it does not draw directly upon biblical typology as does "My Sister's Sleep," the Germ text manifests the same habit of mind, the "intimate intertexture of a spiritual sense with a material form" (D&W, 127) that William Michael saw as the defining quality of the Brotherhood, a quality that his own brother absorbed primarily from Dante. "Her bosom's pressure must have made / The bar she leaned on warm" (9) because, like Beatrice in Paradise, she retains a bodily form. And like Dante's Inferno and his Paradise, the Damozel's Heaven is seen as a sacred, yet tangible world:

We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Sometimes is felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His name audibly.

(14)

In this Brotherhood version, tree and Dove function traditionally, as material signs of the sacred. In particular, the Dove operates in the Germ text much as it does in The Girlhood or The Carpenter's Shop, as a physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

As in the case of "My Sister's Sleep," before including this Brotherhood poem in his 1870 volume Rossetti carefully removed the transcendental context that had given religious consistency to the original. The result is to liberate the erotic impulse present in the Germ version and thus create a work praising an earthly rather than a spiritualized Eros. In The Germ, stanza 8 pictures a scene of holy virgins engaging in the chaste pastimes of Heaven:

Heard hardly, some of her new friends,
Playing at holy games,
Spake, gentle-mouthed, among themselves,
Their virginal chaste names;
And the souls, mounting up to God,
Went by her like thin flames.

*The Germ text of "The Blessed Damozel" is reprinted in Appendix 2. Stanza numbers in parentheses refer to this Germ text.
By 1870, "holy games" had been altered to "loving games." By 1872, "virginal chaste names" had become "rapturous new names" and, finally, by 1881, "heart-remembered names." By 1876, the first two lines had been entirely recast to become explicitly erotic and the first four lines of the stanza then read:

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their rapturous new names.

It is this unequivocally erotic passage that occupies the center of Rossetti's first design for the background of the painting (1876, no. 244G). In this distinctly post-Brotherhood work, Rossetti's visual interest lies in the newly introduced erotic elements. The embracing couples are each represented in a circular form illustrating the restoration of separated halves to a perfect physical unity. The patterned rose-hedges in the foreground also suggest through design a unity achieved through physical intertwining. And the significance of this visual celebration of physical union is deeply personal; in the two couples embracing in the foreground, each woman has the head of Janey Morris.

In the Germ version, the Damozel is not Rossetti's later fleshly woman but the virginal, virtually presexual young woman that is the chief subject of his Brotherhood work, including The Girlhood, Ecce Ancilla, and "My Sister's Sleep." Described in this early text as having a "wise simple mind" (16), her request to Christ is that of a naif, unaware in her holy simplicity of the spiritual riches that she might receive:

There will I ask of Christ the Lord
This much for him and me:—
To have more blessing than on earth
In nowise; but to be
As then we were,—being as then
At peace. Yea, verily.

Within the Dantesque context of the original poem and with specific reference to the "virginal chaste" nature of the Damozel, the words "blessing" and "peace" here suggest a continuance in heaven of the asexual, saintly life lived on earth. By 1870, heaven is still imagined as the continuation of the life lived on earth, but Rossetti removes such religiously resonant terms as "blessing" and "peace" to transform these same lines into a vision of the endless enjoyment of sensuality:

Only to live as once on earth
With love,—only to be,
Literary Painting

As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.

The force of the erotic feeling present in the Germ version is evidenced most clearly in the way that, once the religious frame is removed, language that remains essentially unchanged from Brotherhood to post-Brotherhood versions takes on a clear sexual meaning. To give two examples:

And I myself will teach to him—
I myself, lying so,—
The songs I sing here; which his mouth
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
Finding some knowledge at each pause
And some new thing to know.

(15)

He shall fear, haply, and be dumb.
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

(20)

In the Brotherhood version, "knowledge" and "new thing to know" suggest a Neoplatonic spiritualization of earthly love; the "love" in stanza 20 refers to the "virginal chaste" relationship that meets the approval of the "dear Mother." With "love" redefined as Eros, "knowledge at each pause, / Or some new thing to know" (1870) suggests the continuous refinement of sexual pleasure in each other. "Love" becomes fleshly eroticism praised by a Mary whose unconventional symbolic meaning draws upon Rossetti's newly created mythology.

If the values of the post-Brotherhood version are heterodox in the elevation of fleshly love, the form is post-Christian in its appropriateness to a world from which God has disappeared. The tangible details in the poem no longer signify a transcendent reality, but objectify diffuse emotion. The tree with its dove and the murmuring leaves of stanza 14 now function as an evocative landscape, a background as emotively appropriate to the lovers as the entwined foliage surrounding the embracing couples in the completed painting. Its force derives not from parallels with religious iconography but from traditional associations of the pastoral landscape with sexual delight. But because Rossetti, unlike Blake or Yeats, could not construct a consistent mythological system in which traditional symbols are revalued, the conventional meanings derived from the original Christian context continue to cling to the Dove, to Mary, and to heaven itself.
Thus, the post-Brotherhood text suggests not what Rossetti intended—a new mythology celebrating the high value of Eros—but what he himself felt, an inner conflict between a longing for the Dantean spiritualization of love and an intense attraction to the pleasure of earthly eroticism.

The same liberation of a personal eroticism appears, too, in his post-Brotherhood visual treatment of Dante. The *Beata Beatrix* (no. 168), completed in 1870, is, for example, in many ways continuous with his earlier figural treatments of the *Vita*. The painting grew from an earlier sketch of his wife begun before her death for, in Rossetti’s words of 1863, “a picture of Beatrice” (Surtees, 1:94). As late as 1871 Rossetti could justify the work in Brotherhood terms by noting that it “illustrates” the *Vita*, “embodying, symbolically, the death of Beatrice, as treated in that work”; it renders death “under the resemblance of a trance, in which Beatrice seated at the balcony over-looking the City is suddenly rapt from Earth to Heaven” (Surtees, 1:94). The Ponte Vecchio and Duomo in the far background set the scene in a historically real Florence. As in *The Salutation of Beatrice* (No. 116A) (plate 33) of 1849–50, the sundial with the shadow pointing to nine sets the event at a specific moment in historical time.

But for all the vestiges of Brotherhood figuralism, the completed painting follows new formal principles; there emerges here the allegorical, visionary manner barely contained in his earlier work. The bird bringing the poppy of death is given a halo; a personification of Love walks the streets of Florence. Instead of the random groupings that, as in *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (1849) (plate 34), offer the illusion of an observed historical event, this composition, like the completed *Blessed Damozel* (no. 244), is highly symmetrical; Dante and Love appear on either side of Beatrice’s head, with the light from the Arno forming a nimbus about her face. Similarly, the hard-edge manner gives way to colorism, and the uniform lighting so closely tied to Brotherhood historicism is replaced by chiaroscuro. This softened outline and diffused light had appeared in his Brotherhood Dantean work, but only to indicate a reality beyond the temporal, notably in *The First Anniversary of 1853* (no. 58) (plate 37) where the out-of-doors representing the Paradise that Beatrice and Dante achieve is contrasted to the earthly room in which Dante writes. In the *Beata Beatrix*, however, the visionary style controls the entire painting as if, within Rossetti’s post-Brotherhood imagination, the physical world had wholly disappeared.
In its rejection of a naturalistic style, then, the work breaks with Brotherhood ideas of literary illustration. The event is no longer represented as a historical fact, but employed as a symbol for the emotions of the artist, used to express the mixture of guilt and love that tormented Rossetti after the death of his wife. As in the revision of "The Blessed Damozel," elimination of the figural mode releases the eroticism implicit in earlier work. Although Rossetti, with overt fidelity to religious orthodoxy, describes his Beatrice as in "a trance . . . suddenly rapt from Earth to Heaven," he shows her as a woman, with lips parted, in a moment of sexual ecstasy.

2. Discussion of this painting is indebted to research by Ms. Linda Granfield.
4. Ibid.
5. This element in Pre-Raphaelite work is discussed by Christ, The Finer Optic, pp. 61–64, although she does not discuss Millais's Mariana.
9. The analysis of this painting is indebted to the research of Ms. Toby Gang.
11. Stephens suggests that Rossetti was attracted to the poem as early as 1845 (Stephens, DGR, 26 n. 1).
14. As in the case of "My Sister's Sleep," critics have failed to consider the relationships between the Germ text and later versions. See Weatherby, "Problems of Form and Content," and McGann, "Rossetti's Significant Details."