

Abstract

This MA thesis is concerned with the analysis of three poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The theoretical basis of this work is the theory of “ut pictura poesis” which examines the relationship between poetry and fine arts. In the case of Rossetti, this theory can be easily applied since Rossetti was not only a poet but mainly a painter. “The Blessed Damozel” which is the first poem to be analyzed, exists as a painting as well as a musical composition by Claude Debussy. The second poem in this thesis is “The Card Dealer” which was inspired by an actual painting by Theodor Van Holst, a copy of which Rossetti himself owned, though the original visual image is considerably modified in the poem. The last poem is “My Sister's Sleep” whose dramatic elements of individual scenes are quite outstanding. Just like the two preceding poems, “My Sister's Sleep” uses “painterly techniques” as well (the spatial composition of figures on the scene, emphasis on details, “painting” the scene and atmosphere, characterization, gestures, colours, materials, slowed-down tempo, general stasis of depiction, elongation of the tense moment to which the entire poem aspires, symbolism, mysticism, etc), which in effect create an easily imaginable mental picture that can be compared to actual Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

These (and many more) techniques Rossetti uses in a great deal of other poems, though in my view they can be perceived as most prominent in the three I have chosen to analyze. The aim of this work was to analyze thoroughly the painterly elements in Rossetti's poetry – with the help of *The Pictorialist Poetics* by David Scott and *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts* by Elizabeth Helsinger – and therefore to come to a better understanding of the Pre-Raphaelite arts, aesthetics, and their notion of beauty. The Pre-Raphaelite movement came into existence in the 19th century as a response to the state of the contemporary arts, following which it spiraled down into Decadence at the turn of the century, which remarkably changed the criteria of perceiving beauty. The present thesis was supposed to introduce the Pre-Raphaelite notion of beauty through Rossetti's poetry, and to make more available his complicated poetics as well as to uncover certain features of his work that characterize the less known side of the Pre-Raphaelite arts: poetry. Rossetti's *Sonnets for Pictures* and other “double works of art” are analyzed separately in another work in which more emphasis is given to the gradual transformation of the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics into the subsequent Decadence.