

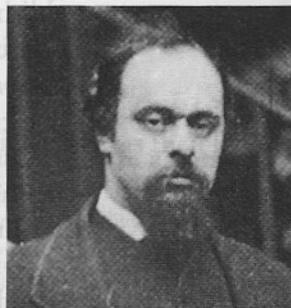
The Man and the Poet

Early life

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's father was an exiled Italian patriot, who transmitted his love for Italian poetry to his four children, and to Dante in particular. Rossetti was born in London in 1828. He had an irregular education. In 1845 he joined the Royal Academy of Arts but he was uncertain about his real vocation, whether he should become a painter or a poet.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

In 1848 he founded, together with the painters Ford Madox Brown, Holman Hunt and J. E. Millais, the **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**. They called themselves Pre-Raphaelites because they thought that art had degenerated after the Italian painter Raphael (1483-1520), because it had lost its ties with nature. The Pre-Raphaelites aimed at 'truth to nature' which had to be achieved by a minute description of detail in nature. They looked to medieval art as a source of inspiration to which Rossetti added a Gothic atmosphere of mystery inspired by the Middle Ages. Rossetti also expanded the Brotherhood's aims by linking poetry, painting and social idealism. In 1850 he met Elizabeth Siddal, who was to become the model of the group and married her in 1860. The Pre-Raphaelite movement entered a second phase in 1857 with Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) and William Morris (1834-96). This phase was characterised by a romantic enthusiasm for a legendary past and it enlarged its scope to include the crafts. The term Pre-Raphaelite became synonymous with a rejection of the external squalor brought about by the Industrial Revolution. His marriage ended tragically in 1862 when his wife died from an overdose of laudanum. In 1872, he attempted suicide and, although he recovered, he was a drug addict for the rest of his life. He died in 1882.



C. L. Dogson, 1863



■ D. G. Rossetti, *The Wedding of St George and Princess Saba*, 1857, London, Tate Gallery.

■ D. G. Rossetti, *The Bower Meadow*, 1872, Manchester, City Art Galleries.