



*Dante Gabriel Rossetti*

*Collected Poetry and Prose*

EDITED BY JEROME MCGANN

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**Sonnet LXXXI. Memorial Thresholds**

What place so strange, — though unrevealed snow  
With unimaginable fires arise  
At the earth's end, — what passion of surprise  
Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?  
Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo! 5  
This is the very place which to mine eyes  
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,  
'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.  
City, of thine a single simple door,  
By some new Power reduplicate, must be 10  
Even yet my life-porch in eternity,  
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore:  
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor  
Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

**Sonnet LXXXII. Hoarded Joy**

I said: "Nay, pluck not, — let the first fruit be:  
Even as thou sayest, it is sweet and red,  
But let it ripen still. The tree's bent head  
Sees in the stream its own fecundity  
And bides the day of fulness. Shall not we 5  
At the sun's hour that day possess the shade,  
And claim our fruit before its ripeness fade,  
And eat it from the branch and praise the tree?"  
I say: "Alas! our fruit hath wooed the sun  
Too long, — 'tis fallen and floats adown the stream. 10  
Lo, the last clusters! Pluck them every one,  
And let us sup with summer; ere the gleam  
Of autumn set the year's pent sorrow free,  
And the woods wail like echoes from the sea."  
(1870)

**Sonnet LXXXIII. Barren Spring**

Once more the changed year's turning wheel returns:  
And as a girl sails balanced in the wind,  
And now before and now again behind

Stoops as it swoops, with cheek that laughs and burns, —  
So Spring comes merry towards me here, but earns 5  
    No answering smile from me, whose life is twin'd  
    With the dead boughs that winter still must bind,  
And whom to-day the Spring no more concerns.

Behold, this crocus is a withering flame;  
    This snowdrop, snow; this apple-blossom's part 10  
    To breed the fruit that breeds the serpent's art.  
Nay, for these Spring-flowers, turn thy face from them,  
Nor stay till on the year's last lily-stem  
    The white cup shrivels round the golden heart.  
(1870)

#### Sonnet LXXXIV. Farewell to the Glen

Sweet stream-fed glen, why say "farewell" to thee  
    Who far'st so well and find'st for ever smooth  
    The brow of Time where man may read no ruth?  
Nay, do thou rather say "farewell" to me,  
Who now fare forth in bitterer fantasy 5  
    Than erst was mine where other shade might soothe  
    By other streams, what while in fragrant youth  
The bliss of being sad made melancholy.

And yet, farewell! For better shalt thou fare  
    When children bathe sweet faces in thy flow 10  
And happy lovers blend sweet shadows there  
    In hours to come, than when an hour ago  
Thine echoes had but one man's sighs to bear  
    And thy trees whispered what he feared to know.  
(1870)

#### Sonnet LXXXV. Vain Virtues

What is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?  
    None of the sins, — but this and that fair deed  
    Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.  
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell  
Might once have sainted; whom the fiends compel 5  
    Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves

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