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REMEMBERING CAYLEY: CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S "DEAREST FRIEND"

Diane D'Amico

Christina Rossetti's brother William Michael describes Charles Bagot Cayley as the man she loved "deeply and permanently" but refused to marry for religious reasons: "On his declaring himself she must no doubt have probed his faith, and found it either strictly wrong or woefully defective" (*Poetical Works* liii). Subsequent biographers have tended to follow this narrative, telling of a woman who renounced earthly love for the sake of her religion. For example, Mary Sandars sees Rossetti's refusal to become Cayley's wife as a giving up of what might have been "her life's happiness" (141). Kathleen Jones suggests that Rossetti probably "regretted her decision" not to marry Cayley (142). Telling of Cayley's niece and nephew paying a call upon Rossetti, Stanley Weintraub describes Mary and Henry Cayley as "a suggestion of what might have been," thus implying they were viewed by the aging Rossetti as the children she might have had if she had married their uncle (263). Repeatedly, in the story of the Rossetti-Cayley relationship, the emphasis is on a marriage that did not happen. Yet, shortly after Cayley died in December of 1883, Rossetti referred to him as her "dearest Friend" (*Letters* 3:169). Clearly, her rejecting his offer of marriage in 1866 did not end their relationship.[1] Thus, I wish to shift from focusing on a marriage that did not occur to focusing on a friendship that did. By setting aside the romance narrative, we are better able to discern in Rossetti's poetry and prose the narrative she created: a narrative of "tender friendship," telling of two people united by kind remembrances, not divided by religious differences. Indeed, despite such differences, Rossetti found in the narratives of her faith a way to extend such a friendship beyond time into eternity.

When Rossetti biographers address the subject of Cayley's religious beliefs, typically they describe him as an agnostic. For example, Jones writes

that Rossetti "could not contemplate marriage to an agnostic" (140). However, this assumption of Cayley's agnosticism seems based only upon William's 1904-memoir, yet William clearly states that all he knew for certain was that Cayley was brought up in the Church of England. Beyond that fact, he offers only conjecture: "I suppose like so many other men of an inquiring mind, he regarded all religions as much the same thing – a mixture of feeling with thought and also with assumption and legend, not with verification" (*Poetical Works* liii). Such a conjecture reveals more of William Michael's opinions on Christianity than it does those of Cayley. William's biographer Angela Thirlwell indicates that in terms of religious belief, William held an "agnostic position" and "a lifelong rejection of conventional religion" (102). If we are to gain insight into Cayley's religious opinions, we therefore need to consult other sources. Cayley's *Metrical Translation of the Psalms*, published in 1860, offers a reasonable starting place, for it includes a lengthy preface and numerous detailed notes in which Cayley addresses matters of Christian belief.

Significantly, in both preface and notes, Cayley presents himself as a member of the Anglican Church.[2] For example, in the preface, when writing of the use of the psalms during Anglican services, he refers to "our usual congregational responses" (v). In the notes to Psalm 51, he mentions the communion service, suggesting that he is a communicant (238), and most importantly, in the notes to Psalm 22, he refers to Jesus as "our Saviour" (220). Nothing in the preface or the notes indicates that he intended to set himself apart from the community of religious believers. In the notes, however, there are indications that Cayley was more inclined to read the Bible not so much as divinely inspired, as humanly authored in a particular time and place. Such an approach to biblical scholarship might well have troubled Rossetti. Indeed, when sending Lady Pauline Trevelyan a copy of this volume as a gift, although she refers to Cayley's translation as "noble," she expresses concern: "Some observations in the Notes I regret extremely" (*Letters* 1:132).

Unfortunately, Rossetti does not elaborate. Yet, keeping in mind her devotional poetry and prose, we can assume that she found regrettable Cayley's observations on The Song of Solomon. Rossetti often echoes this book of the Bible when writing of divine love. The sestet of her 1850-version of the sonnet beginning "What is it Jesus saith unto the soul," concludes with the bridegroom's call: "Winter is past, and Spring / Is come; arise, My love, and come away" (*Complete Poems* 2:461). In *The Face of the Deep*, her last work of devotional prose, she alludes to this Song of Songs when telling of the "gracious communion" between Christ and the soul (124). Cayley, on the other hand, sides with those scholars who find this book of the "scared Canon" to be primarily of "secular import" (230). Yet even more troublesome

than Cayley's views on The Song of Solomon must have been his remarks in his lengthy note to Psalm 49.15 ("But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me"). After questioning the view that this verse offers a promise of the Resurrection, he concludes: "[These words] may also be understood, and more in conformity with ancient Hebrew notions, to signify that they [servants of God] will be preserved by Providence from a violent and premature end" (235). Unlike Cayley, Rossetti read the Old Testament typologically. As she writes in *Seek and Find*, the "elder dispensation" provides "types and figures" of the new (21). Thus, for Rossetti, the books of the Old Testament repeatedly foreshadowed the coming of Christ and the promise of the Resurrection.[3] Not surprisingly, when writing of the "final beatitude," she recalls all the promises of eternal life to be found in the Old Testament: "Over and over again we recognise the one glorious hope of immortality persisting in patriarch, singing in psalmists, rejoicing in prophets" (*Seek and Find* 154). Among the many biblical verses she cites as proof is Psalm 49.15.

Cayley is aware that he may at times be offending his audience, as in his notes to Psalm 110: ("The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand"): "I fear I may have hurt the feelings of many of my readers by not putting a more theological construction on this psalm." He continues: "It is so easy from the standpoint of modern orthodoxy to understand it as a Miltonic dialogue between the Father and the Son.... But the Hebrew who wrote this had not so learnt to refine on the doctrine of God's unity from the formulas of Byzantine theologians; he would have shrunk from imagining him under the form of a man on earth, still more of *two* men" (270). If Cayley was at this time leaning towards a consideration of scripture within historical context, then although he may well have been comfortable using the term "our Saviour," he may have viewed Jesus of Nazareth more as a model of humanity than as the Son and co-equal of God. Even if Cayley had believed in the existence of a spiritual reality, if he had doubts regarding the Incarnation, Rossetti might have felt unable to become his wife. In the 1860s, she worshipped at Christ Church, Albany Street, where Henry W. Burrows was Perpetual Curate. Among his published sermons is one titled "The Incarnation." Although admitting that this doctrine may be hard to believe, Burrows stresses that it absolutely must be believed:

> Dear brethren, this is the Church's doctrine, not one jot or tittle of which can we afford to part with, not one assertion is there that we can allow to be watered down. He is very God, He who became man for us, not a being next to God, almost God, called God, but the co-eternal Son, begotten of His father before all worlds, the very and eternal God. (22)

It is not known if Rossetti consulted Burrows as she considered Cayley's proposal of marriage, and quite likely her decision to decline this marriage offer was based upon a complex mixture of facts, feelings, circumstances, and religious beliefs; nevertheless, the doctrine of the Incarnation was quite possibly a belief she felt a husband must share with her.[3]

Rossetti's refusal of Cayley's offer marks a dividing line in this friendship, and is thus worth considering in some detail. Although the precise date on which Cayley proposed is not known, epistolary evidence suggests that he chose a day between late August and early September of 1866. When writing to her close friend Amelia Barnard Heimann on 13 August, Rossetti offers not the slightest hint that she has received or will receive an offer of marriage; in fact, as she keeps house for William while their mother and Maria are on a month's holiday in Eastbourne, she describes her days as "blank of excitement" (*Letters* 1:280). By 11 September, however, she is away from home, "walking along the road with a party," while also managing to write to William to thank him for his offer that if she and Cayley marry they may live as "free inmates" of his household:[4] "As to money I might be selfish enough to wish that were the only bar, but you see from my point of view it is not. Now I am at least unselfish enough altogether to deprecate seeing C.B.C. continually (with nothing but mere feeling to offer) to his hamper and discomfort: but, if he likes to see me, God knows I like to see him, and any kindness you will show him will only be additional kindness loaded on me" (*Letters* 1:280-81). Since Cayley had very little income, William's offer would have removed a financial barrier to the union. This letter, however, is more than a thank-you note; it is also both a declaration that Cayley's love is of value to her and a request that despite her refusal of his marriage offer, he not be excluded from the Rossetti family circle. Keeping Cayley within that circle would be essential if their friendship was to continue.

William appears to have understood his sister's request. On 26 October, the day Rossetti returned from visiting their Polidori relatives in Gloucester, William wrote to Cayley, inviting him to dine at Albany Street, the family home. Although Cayley was not the only guest on the evening of 29 October (Charles Howell was also invited), such an invitation would have signalled to him a continued acceptance: he was to remain not only a male acquaintance, one to be invited to dine with the brothers at Cheyne Walk, but also, and more importantly, he was to remain a family friend, and as such he was to be welcomed by the Rossetti women as well. Significantly, in December of that year, Rossetti received from her mother as a birthday gift a copy of Cayley's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Rossetti was extremely close to her mother, considering her not only a loving parent but also a spiritual guide. Importantly, this gift from mother to daughter served both to recognize and

sanction a continuance of this friendship.

During the year of 1867, Cayley and Rossetti made gestures of thoughtfulness, as if beginning to establish the form their relationship would now take. In the late spring of 1867, Rossetti, having noted his interest in rhododendrons, offers tickets to a garden show (*Letters* 1:292). Later that summer, apparently having noted her interest in astronomy, an interest he shared, Cayley tells her of an upcoming meteor shower.[5] Each is indicating not only that the other has not been forgotten, but also each is expressing a desire to continue conversing, even if conversations at this time be ostensibly only about flowers and meteors.

That Rossetti was indeed often remembering Cayley during the year following his proposal is reflected in her sequence of Italian poems, titled *Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente: Canzoniere* [The Reddening of the Dawn: Songs]. In the fair copy, following Rossetti's signature after the word "Canzoniere," is the following phrase within quotation marks: "All' Amico Lontano" [To a Distant Friend].[6] Conflating Rossetti's life and work is problematic, for one can too easily reduce the poems to reflections of the life and thus ignore the poetic imagination. Indeed, the careful arrangement of these 21 poems so as to tell a story of friendship is evidence of Rossetti's narrative skill. Yet, so often does she allude to Cayley's poetry that the "distant friend" appears to be at least in part based upon him. Jan Marsh suggests that Rossetti's title can be read as a response to Cayley's *Purple of the West*, a series of mournful love poems published in *The Welcome* in 1863 (290-91). Moreover, Rossetti repeatedly echoes Cayley's Italian poems. For example, "'Blumine' Risponde," number 4, alludes to Cayley's prefatory poem to his translation of Dante's *Purgatory*, and number 5, "Lassu fia caro il rivederci," comes from the first line of his prefatory sonnet to Dante's *Paradise*.[7]

Even more striking as evidence of an autobiographical impulse is number six: "Non son io la rosa ma vi stetti appresso" [I am not the rose, but I was in the presence of it].[8] At the bottom of the manuscript page, Rossetti has written "Casa Leifchild" [The house of the Leifcihlds]. Perhaps this was a first title as she began to work on transforming her memories and her hopes into poetry. In any case, this poem indicates that the Leifchild home offered a sanctuary-like space for both Rossetti and Cayley, whether visiting alone or together. Translated, the poem reads:

> Happy house were many times now
> My beloved sits speaking and smiling,
> Happy woman sitting with him
> You cheer him with what you say and do,
> Happy garden where I walked,

Thinking of him, thinking and not speaking,
Happy day it will be when I return
Where walking, I thought of him.
And if he is there when I return,
If he welcomes me with his sweet smile,
Every little bird around will sing,
The rose will blush its pretty face –
May God give us that day in eternity,
And in that garden, paradise. (Crump and Andrighetti 1149)

Thus far, little has been written about the Leifchild family in terms of the Cayley-Rossetti friendship. William makes only a brief reference to some members of the family when indicating that Rossetti and Cayley continued to see each other even after she refused marriage: "[They] met every now and then either in my house or that of some friend (especially Miss Leifchild, the sister of Franklin and Henry)" (*Reminiscences* 2:313). Henry was a sculptor, well-known to the Rossetti brothers, and Franklin was a scholar and art critic to whom Cayley had dedicated his translation of Dante's *Inferno*. Not surprisingly, however, it is with the women of the family that Rossetti formed connections, and it seems, given this poem, that they recognized and accepted her friendship with Cayley.

Franklin and Henry Leifchild had four sisters: Jane, Sara, Elizabeth, and Medina. Elizabeth married James Baldwin Brown, minister of Brixton Independent Church, in 1843; her three sisters remained unmarried. Assuming that William followed the proper forms of address for unmarried daughters, the "Miss Leifchild," to whom he refers is the eldest, Jane. In 1867, the year Rossetti composed her Casa Leifchild poem, Jane was living at 16 Albert Road, near Regent's Park.[9] Most likely this is the "happy house" of the poem." The "happy woman," who sits with the beloved, may be based on Jane or perhaps Sara to whom Rossetti made a special effort to extend her friendship. In a letter thanking Miss Leifchild for her "kind hospitality," Rossetti writes, "Pray offer my love round your circle and especially to Miss Sara Leifchild" (*Letters* 1:307).[10] Possibly, the "happy woman" is a poetic blending of all three unmarried sisters, for all were intellectual women who might have shown an interest in Cayley's scholarly work. Significantly, however, the "happy woman" of the poem is not a threat to the speaker's relationship with her beloved, thus suggesting that the Leifchild sisters were never viewed by Rossetti as rivals for Cayley's affection.[11] Indeed, so welcoming was the garden of their house that Rossetti makes poetic use of it as the Eden-like site of a hoped for renewal of friendship with the man who has the "sweet smile."

As the speaker imagines that she might meet her friend in the "happy garden," the space becomes a pre-lapsarian world of singing birds and blushing rose. As the poem concludes, such a paradise prefigures the New Eden of eternity, where the speaker hopes that she and her friend will again be given that day of the blushing rose. In other words, she hopes that they will both be admitted into God's sight. Rossetti's choice of title, one that privileges the rose, prepares the reader for such a spiritual transformation. The rose was Rossetti's favourite flower, not only for its beauty but for its long association with both human and divine love. At times in both poetry and prose, she uses the rose as an emblem of Jesus as the saviour. In *Called to be Saints*, Jesus is referred to as "God's Rose" (138), and in the poem "Christmas Day," he is the "Rose of roses" (*Complete Poems* 2:214). The rose of the title, therefore, points neither to the beloved nor the speaker, but rather to an assertion: through her friendship with the man of the "sweet smile," the speaker has been brought closer to Christ. Significantly, whatever might have been Cayley's thoughts on the Incarnation, Rossetti is not weaving a narrative of a love that is forbidden by God.

After Rossetti's death, William found a fair copy of *Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente* in, as he phrases it, "the jealous seclusion of her writing-desk" (*Poetical Works* 493). He assumed that no one else had ever seen any of the poems. Thus far, no evidence has come to light to suggest otherwise. However, another poem, also left unpublished, may have been sent to Cayley at some point in the late 1860s: the poem beginning "Had Fortune parted us," later titled by William "Parted." At the bottom of the manuscript, Rossetti has written "Una replica / Lo vedesti, Cor mio" [A replica, / You saw it, My heart]. As William indicates, Rossetti's poem is a response to Cayley's "Moor and Christian," a poem spoken in the voice of a Muslim separated from his Christian beloved by his belief in "Allah" and her belief in "a Man-god."[12] Presumably working from the fact that "Moor and Christian" is included in Cayley's 1880 *Poems and Translations*, William dates Rossetti's poem as c.1880. Yet, "Moor and Christian" was first published in 1868 in *The Golden Sheaf*, a collection of poems edited by Rev. Charles Rogers. Also included in this volume is Rossetti's sonnet "Once for All." Quite likely, therefore, Rossetti read Cayley's poem in 1868, if not before, and then wrote her Christian response to it soon after.

Although Rossetti's Christian speaker "humbly" accepts that "God parts" her from her Muslim beloved, she offers comfort by arguing that since there is only "one Heaven," they should not "close that door / Against each other" (3:338). Furthermore, whereas Cayley's speaker poses questions, Rossetti's speaker offers answers. For example, fearing that "Allah eternally / May divide [them] up yonder," the Moor concludes mournfully: "Whom hath His paradise / To yield me beside thee?" (Rogers 50). Rossetti's speaker replies:

God's Love is higher than mine,
Christ's tenfold proved,
Yet even I would die
For thee Beloved. (3:338)

If Christ's sacrifice proved that God's Love is far greater than any human love and if even she, a human, would die for her beloved, then God's greater Love offers hope that the Christian speaker will not be eternally separated from her beloved, no matter religious differences. I do not mean to suggest Rossetti was imagining for the Moor and Christian a marriage in heaven. All she wrote, both poetry and prose, should be seen within the context of her belief in a transcendent existence beyond time and space. As she reminds her readers in *Seek and Find*, quoting Luke 20.34-36, "the children of the resurrection neither marry nor are given in marriage" (139). If we imagine Rossetti sending Cayley a copy of this poetic response to his "Moor and Christian," then we see her inviting him to continue a loving friendship, and asserting that such love would survive death, despite the fact they held different views on the nature of the "Man-god."

Rossetti's understanding of her faith did not prevent her from loving a person with differing religious views. Sara Leifchild was a Congregationalist, and Amelia Barnard Heimann, perhaps her closest female friend, was Jewish. Importantly, Rossetti would have found support for such love in her religious reading. According to E.D.H. Carmichael, in her recent work on Christianity and friendship, one of the most widely read sermons on friendship during the Victorian period was John Henry Newman's "Love of Relations and Friends," preached on the text of 1 John 7: "Beloved let us love one another for love is of God" (150). As an admirer of Newman, Rossetti may well have read this sermon in which he asserts that the "best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us" (59). Newman does not even suggest that those to whom we extend our love must be of a similar faith. Furthermore, as he develops his argument, he ties friendship and religion together: "But what is it that can bind two friends together in intimate converse for a course of years, but the participation in something that is Unchangeable and essentially Good, and what is this but religion?" (59).

Although Rossetti's faith was not a bar to keeping Cayley as her friend, attitudes towards male-female friendship during the Victorian period might have been. As Victor Luftig points out in his *Seeing Together: Friendship Between the Sexes in English Writing*, while Victorians praised same-sex friendship, "they voiced considerably more skepticism" when it came to addressing the possibility of friendship between men and women (19). Yet,

there is evidence that once a person was seen to be beyond a marriageable age, such friendships became possible. Dinah Craik, Victorian novelist and essayist, argues strongly for the value of such relationships for those "further on in life with whom the love-phase is past." For these, she claims the right, "which every pure and independent heart undoubtedly has, of saying: 'I take this man or woman for my friend: only a friend – never either more or less – whom as such I mean to keep to the end of my days'" (140-41). When Cayley proposed, Rossetti was 35, an age many Victorians would have viewed as past the "love-phase" for a woman. Yet, as Craik's essay implies, being seen by society as too old for romance may have had its benefits: Rossetti might more easily maintain a significant friendship with Cayley, especially since he also remained unmarried.

By 1868 this relationship seems safely passed the phase of any awkwardness arising from Rossetti's refusal of marriage. Subsequent stages in this friendship, however, are difficult to identify and describe, for only a few letters from Cayley survive. Yet the few extant suggest that the relationship was nurtured through acts, gestures, and gifts of a kind remembering. Writing on Christmas Eve of 1869, Cayley asks to be remembered: "Let me recall Blackheath then to your kind remembrances, & acquaint you with the one pretty ruin that it boasts" (Cayley, Letter). At this time Cayley was living with his mother and two sisters in Blackheath. Perhaps the "ruin" referred to is the ruin of St. Margaret's Church in nearby Lee. It seems Rossetti accepted Cayley's invitation. In a letter to her friend Caroline Gemmer, most likely written 4 February 1870, Rossetti tells of a visit she and Maria made to Blackheath, describing it as "one of the pleasantest things [she] has done this long time" (*Letters* 1:340). Clearly, both Cayley and Rossetti wanted to continue to see each other. Moreover, further evidence suggests that, as the years passed, Rossetti and Cayley were each attentive to the emotional needs of the other. From 1871 to 1872, when Rossetti was suffering some of the worst effects of Graves' Disease, being "wholly exhausted" by March 1872, as William recorded in his diary, Cayley continued to call (*Diary* 179). When Cayley's mother, Maria, died in December of 1875, Rossetti wrote to Dante Gabriel, strongly hinting that he send a note of sympathy to their "good old dear friend," who is "sensitive to friendly kindness" (*Letters* 2:80). Not long after Christmas 1876, Cayley returned from visiting his sisters, then living at St Leonards-on-Sea, with a sea-mouse that, as he states in his letter, he had preserved "in spirits of wine" as a gift for Rossetti, another kind remembrance (*Family Letters* 66).

While Cayley's letter indicates that he feels "diffident" about presenting her with what might be seen as a naturalist's specimen, her poem "My Mouse" indicates she was pleased with the gift, viewing it as an emblem of

their friendship. Building on the information provided by Cayley, that the scientific term for the creature is "Aphrodita acculeata or needly Venus," Rossetti begins with an allusion to the birth of the Greek goddess: "A Venus seems my Mouse / Come safe ashore from foaming seas" (3:505). In the second stanza, responding to its bright colours, she compares it to Iris, the winged goddess of the rainbow, while also recalling the moment after Noah's flood when the rainbow appeared in the heavens as an emblem of God's covenant: "Bright bow of that exhausted shower / Which made a world of sweet herbs flower." After transforming the rainbow of the Greek goddess into a symbol of Christian hope, Rossetti then blends love with hope: "Venus-cum-Iris Mouse / ... In no mere bottle, in my heart / Keep house." The manuscript of this poem is a fair copy which Rossetti has dated as "New Year 1877." As with "Parted," we do not know if she gave a copy of "My Mouse" to Cayley. Yet evidence exists that they did converse with each other by exchanging poems, and thus it is possible that "My Mouse" was sent as her thank-you note for this gift from the sea.

In fact, an exchanging of poems on the subject of the Greek goddess Venus had occurred five years before. In 1872 Cayley sent Rossetti a copy of his poem "The Birth of Venus" (*Poetical Works* 487). As her response, Rossetti wrote the sonnet "Venus's Looking-glass," the title of which alludes to both the Greek goddess's mirror and a flower, the open seeds of which resemble a mirror. Working with seasonal imagery, Rossetti weaves Greek myth with her Christian beliefs. During the "Summer heat," the speaker no longer saw the "Queen of Love," yet when autumn came, she saw "sweet Venus walk amid the wheat," and observed that seeing her, "every harvester" paused in his work, "laught and hoped and was content" (1:305). For those recognizing the religious significance of the harvest imagery, the message is clear: after death, there would be a heavenly reward for those who laboured. Cayley's poem is, as he indicates when publishing it in 1880, "founded upon an antique fragment," and hails Venus as "soother of mankind's vast distress" (*Poems and Translations* 12). Rossetti's response, not surprisingly, is to appropriate Greek myth so as to transform it into a Christian message of hope.

As Rossetti remembers and then reimagines her relationship with Cayley as well as acts as a partner in that relationship, a key word in the poetic narrative she creates is "hope," that is, the hope Dante writes of in canto 25 of *The Paradise*. Translated by Cayley the lines read: "Hope is that looking forward confident ... to future glory that doth stream from grace" (187). Such hope is expressed in 1867 when Rossetti transforms the garden of Casa Leifchild into a heavenly paradise. It is expressed in the image of the open door in her response to Cayley's "Moor and Christian," and in the figure of Venus-cum-Iris of "My Mouse." A similar message can also be heard in

"'Luscious and Sorrowful.'" Unlike the other three poems, this brief lyric can be found among Rossetti's published works, and therefore we can safely assume it was read by Cayley:

> Beautiful, tender, wasting away for sorrow:
> Thus today; and how shall it be with thee tomorrow?
> Beautiful, tender – what else?
> A hope tells.
>
> Beautiful, tender, keeping the jubilee
> In the land of home together, past death and sea;
> No more change or death, nor
> Salt sea-shore. (2:93)

In *A Pageant and Other Poems*, this poem appears immediately after the sonnet sequence *Monna Innominata*. Read in this context, "wasting away for sorrow" appears to refer to the unnamed lady. If, however, one recognizes the source of the title, the "thee" of the second line refers to the sorrowful bird of Cayley's "Noli me Tangere," published in the 6 September 1866 issue of *The Nation*:[13]

> Luscious and sorrowful, bird o' the roses,
> To the vexed March winds prematurely singing,
> Would that in warm hands I could have held thee,
> Kept from a withering chill thy timid heart.
>
> Now have I terrified, now have I pained thee,
> Now with stiffening blood have I tangled
> All thy bosom's tremulous plumage,
> For a thorn, for a thorn was against. (193)

Although few readers of Rossetti's 1881 volume would have been familiar with Cayley's poem, nevertheless, by echoing it, she makes an important gesture of friendship by publically acknowledging Cayley as a poet. Furthermore, by recalling his "Noli me Tangere," she engages in a private dialogue with him, revealing her reflections on what their friendship had meant to her in 1866 and what it had come to mean by 1881.

By recognizing that as poets both Cayley and Rossetti are working with legends of the nightingale's love for the rose, we can, in a sense, overhear this more private conversation. Although in choosing his title Cayley echoes the words of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene, in the body of the poem he draws heavily upon Persian love poems. According to Arthur Hatto, such

poems tell the sad story of the nightingale who when singing to the rose he loves, leans its breast against her and thus "pierced to the heart by her thorns, sings in anguish till he expires" (794). Rossetti's poem draws upon the Christian versions of such legends. In these Christian songs, the nightingale is often a symbol of the saintly soul longing for its heavenly home or the righteous soul welcoming the Second Coming of Christ (Hatto 797). Indeed, a drawing of a "nightingale on a thorny rose-bough" made by Rossetti in the margins of her poem "Dream-land," a poem telling of a woman seeking the "perfect rest" of those who await the "joy" of heaven, strongly suggests her familiarity with such symbols.[14] If we hear the "thee" of Rossetti's "'Luscious and Sorrowful'" as referring to Cayley's "bird o' the roses," then Rossetti's poem becomes a song of rebirth and resurrection in response to his more mournful poem of painful regret. In 1866, refusing his marriage proposal had not meant an end to their story. Indeed, the poem suggests that Rossetti is continuing her narrative of hope by suggesting that their friendship would survive death, bringing them to the "land of home together."

We know nothing regarding Cayley's response to Rossetti's message of religious hope. Yet his frequent visits to her home in 30 Torrington Square, where she and her mother had moved in 1876, suggest he wished to sustain and nurture their friendship. For Cayley, this friendship was to be conducted not only through poetic exchanges, and gifts from the sea, but also by being in the physical presence of his friend. By 1875, Cayley had taken lodgings at 4 South Crescent, Bedford Square (close to the British Museum and Torrington Square). Although no records exist indicating the frequency of his coming to call during the1870s, those that exist for the 1880s indicate a pattern of regular visits. In 1881, he called fourteen times, and in 1882 again he paid a call fourteen times.[15] Occasionally, he stayed to "tea" (a light supper) followed by a game of whist, which included Rossetti's mother and Aunt Eliza. Even though he may not have fully shared their faith, Cayley was an important presence in this female world. Rossetti let it be known that these visits mattered to her, as her letter of July 1881 indicates, inviting him to make up a missed evening of cards: "I hanker after that missed rubber. Will you – if you have a vacant evening – make it up after all?" (*Letters* 2:278-79). To an outsider, such evenings of whist and a shared meal might seem to be of a superficial nature, activities merely to pass the time. Yet, evidence suggests that a shared understanding of some depth formed between Rossetti and Cayley. When in 1883, he turned to the serious matter of writing a last will and testament, he wanted her thoughts.

Significantly, in her response, Rossetti addresses not just the present moment but the wholeness of their friendship. After greeting him as "My dear old friend," she responds to the "hint" that he may die before her:

> I will not dwell too much on the sad possibility you hint to me, but rather will put forward – as I sincerely can – the apparently at least equal probability that I become the leader and not the follower along that path. Nor will I care what are the steps so long as the goal is good. Nor will I despair of the good goal for either of us. Meanwhile I hope you have shaken off the neuralgia, of which I also well know the pain, and that many happy hours with the Leifchilds and other valued intimates remain in store for you. (*Letters* 3:98-99)

One might imagine, especially after reading *Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente* – with its numerous allusions to Dante – that Rossetti saw herself as a Beatrice-like figure who might lead Cayley to heaven. Given Rossetti's valuing of humility, casting herself in such a role seems unlikely. Certainly, if that was ever the case, by 1883 such imaginings belong to the past. In this letter, Cayley and she are cast as equals, fellow pilgrims who, after passing through death, might eventually reach the same good goal, that is, the same heaven. By this time in her life, although remaining a devout Anglo-Catholic, she is not preaching to her friend that he must follow her set of religious beliefs: the steps that lead to the good goal may vary. As she writes of death and the afterlife, she offers what her poems of hope have hinted at and what, one assumes, Cayley understood: acceptance. Even in 1866 when rejecting his marriage offer, she had not rejected him.

As her letter continues, Rossetti turns to practical matters of the here and now, apparently answering questions regarding Cayley's intention to make her his literary executrix and also to leave her a remembrance. In responding, she alludes to a time in the past when his family might have been angry with her, perhaps referring to her rejection of his marriage proposal:

> But, all else assumed as inevitable, I should value though I should not need a memorial. And three of the translations would be very dear: watching over them, I might in a measure nurse your name and fame. Yet, if you think any of your family could feel hurt, do not do it: very likely there was a moment when – and no wonder – those who loved you best thought very severely of me, and indeed I deserved severity at my own hands, – I never seemed to get much at yours. And some trifle that you had been fond of and perhaps had used would be precious to me. (*Letters* 3:99)

Rossetti acknowledges his kindness: he never was "severe" with her. There is something of an apology that she offers her friend, one that does not convey any regret that she refused marriage but rather regret that she may have pained him. She then accepts, as a close relative might do, the role of keeping his memory alive in the literary world. Most importantly, as a remembrance she suggests an object that is not only of sentimental value to him but is also a part of his daily life.

Cayley signed his will on 3 May 1883. Only two who are not family members are mentioned: Franklin Leifchild and Rossetti. Leifchild is simply identified by name and address, whereas Rossetti is referred to as "my dear and kind friend." Leifchild is left one of Cayley's watches, whereas Rossetti is to receive any money that might be made from the selling of his books and most importantly, his "best writing desk." Such an object was, not only as she had requested, one he had used, but also an object that could be seen as an emblem of a shared love for the beauty of the written word. The will also states that Rossetti "is entitled to reclaim or order to be destroyed any letters of hers which may be found among [his] papers or affects." Rossetti requested her letters be destroyed, except this one letter regarding the good goal, which apparently was returned to her when Arthur Cayley brought her the desk. That Rossetti saved this letter, leaving it for William to find after her death, suggests she wanted it to be part of whatever story might be told about her and her "dear old friend." Indeed, Rossetti's actions suggest she wanted the letter to be considered a central text in the telling of their story. In 1930 when writing of her Aunt Christina, her niece Helen Angeli described the letter as still lying in the desk, "coffin-like with its brass plates," thus suggesting that Rossetti had in her life always kept it within this remembrance (15).

Despite Rossetti's supposition that Cayley's family might have thought "severely" of her, no sign of such severity appears at the time of Cayley's death. On 7 December 1883, the morning after Charles was found dead, his brother – Arthur Cayley – and his wife convey the news to her personally. When recording this event in the diary Rossetti kept for her mother, she writes an uncharacteristically lengthy entry, one, therefore, worth quoting in full:

> While Christina was at litany Professor and Mrs. Cayley called to tell her the dreadful news that their brother Charles had been found dead in his bed the morning before. Coming in Christina saw them, then went & saw her dear friend lying just as found in the attitude of sleep; his hand that is just to his face. He is thought to have died quite painlessly, the heart stopping. [16] Miss Cayley (Sophie) was there, and asked Christina (offering her a bed) if she would attend the funeral at Hastings where he will be near his Mother. Christina bought a beautiful wreath at Covent Garden, & herself laid it on the sheet where other flowers were already lying." (Frances Rossetti, "Diaries")

While this entry shows a friend following social expectations in terms of viewing the body and bringing flowers, Rossetti also reveals a depth of feeling in the tender description of her "dear friend," lying as if asleep with "his hand just to his face."

In Sophia Cayley's letter of 7 December, she asks Rossetti to see if William would write "a short notice of Charles" for an appropriate paper

(*Family Letters* 139). William obliged, submitting a lengthy piece to the *Athenaeum*, in which he sketches a portrait of a gentle scholar: "A more complete specimen than Mr. Charles Cayley of the abstracted scholar in appearance and manner – the scholar who constantly lives an inward and unmaterial life, faintly perceptive of external facts and appearances – could hardly be conceived. He united great sweetness to great simplicity of character, and was not less polite than unworldly" (776). Some Rossetti biographers have found in this obituary evidence to support portraying Cayley as a rather foolish romantic figure: a "poor beg" on which Rossetti hung her love poems (Battiscombe 132). Rossetti and her mother, however, were deeply moved by this portrait: "Mama and I are delighting – what a word – in your article. She thinks it one of the best of the kind if not the best she ever read. *I* cannot write about it" (*Letters* 3:169). Another tribute to Cayley, one Rossetti also found moving, can be found in a letter of 15 December 1883, from the artist Frederick Shields to William: "I loved the absent-minded Soul, with all its grand capacities honored it – and always dwelt with pleasure on the face through which it shone (Shields).[17] When we set aside the lens of romance, as both William and Frederick do, we are closer to seeing Cayley as Rossetti saw him, a soul worthy of love.

Although both William and Rossetti were invited by Sophia Cayley to attend the funeral, neither did. In his diary, William indicates that he could not "easily absent himself" from work. Nothing is known of Rossetti's decision. We know, however, because she records it in her mother's diary, that on 11 December, she went to Covent Garden to purchase flowers to send to the funeral: "a Cross for herself & white flowers" for her mother. In choosing the cross of flowers, Rossetti may have been expressing her hope for her friend, for in Christ's Cross, she saw the "nucleus of heaven" (*Face of the Deep* 504). The selection of the colour white conveys both a renewal of innocence and belief that the soul was at peace. On 12 December, she records the burial in formal terms: "Charles Bagot Cayley was buried today at Hastings near his mother." The last time Cayley's name appears in this diary is in the entry for 15 January 1884: "Christina went to Hastings to visit Mr. Cayley's grave, returning in the afternoon." The choosing of this day seems to have had no special significance. Possibly, Rossetti waited until the Feast of the Epiphany had passed. Nothing is known of this visit. We can only imagine it by weaving together a few facts with conjecture.

Hastings is approximately 55 miles from London. After journeying by train, Rossetti most likely would have taken a carriage to the cemetery. Established in 1856 on what was once part of Priory Farm, the cemetery, today known as the Hastings Cemetery and Crematorium, is on Ridge Road, approximately three miles from the centre of the town. Although not an old

cemetery, by July 1883, there had been 11,084 internments ("Report"). Thus, Rossetti would either have had to ask for directions or been guided to Cayley's grave. Once inside the gates, there is a very slight uphill walk to reach the section where he is buried, a section that has been consecrated for Anglican burials.[18] At this date, there would not have been a gravestone, for according to Thomas Edir, support assistant for Hastings Cemetery, six months is typically allowed to pass before "erecting a headstone to allow for ground movement." One might imagine Rossetti alone at a new grave, yet possibly one of Cayley's sisters, Sophie or Henrietta, accompanied her. In any case, it is hard to believe that she then left the cemetery to board a train back to London, without having first called upon his sisters. Henrietta and Sophie were well aware that Rossetti had been a very important presence in their brother's life. In her letter of 7 December 1883, Sophie writes, "You were the friend I know he valued most" (*Family Letters* 139).

On 26 March, two months after visiting Hastings, Rossetti records in her financial notebook that she received four pounds from *The Century*, an American periodical, for "One Sea-side Grave," a two-stanza lyric that positions the speaker at the grave of one loved:

> Unmindful of the roses,
> Unmindful of the thorn,
> A reaper tired reposes
> Among his gathered corn
> So might I till the morn!
>
> Cold as the cold Decembers,
> Past as the days that set,
> While only one remembers
> And all the rest forget, –
> But one remembers yet. (2:167)

William assumed the poem was referring to Cayley's grave. Given Rossetti's later positioning of the poem when arranging her 1890 collection, it would appear William's assumption is correct, for she places it immediately after "'Luscious and Sorrowful.'" Yet little scholarship exists on the poem. For example, although Rossetti scholars have noted that "One Sea-side Grave" is a reworking of "From the Antique," a poem written almost thirty years before, but which she never published, little attention has been given to her choosing to revise this early manuscript to honour her friend. Possibly, the phrase "cold Decembers" brought to mind his recent death. Yet, if we carefully consider Rossetti's revisions, we also see signs of a desire to replace an expression of self-absorbed weariness with a memorial suitable for a grave of a beloved friend.

The most obvious revision is the dropping of the first stanza of "From the Antique":

> I wish that I were dying,
> Deep-drowsing without pain:
> I wish that I were lying
> Below the wind and rain,
> Never to rise again. (2:397)

Given the title, one assumes the speaker is someone from ancient times, possibly a Greek philosopher, expressing his desire for the eternal sleep of death.[19] In cancelling this stanza, Rossetti changes the speaker, and in so doing she significantly changes the meaning of what is now the first stanza of "One Sea-side Grave." Rather than being a continuation of a wish for forgetfulness, as it is in the original, it becomes a lamentation for the beloved dead. Also certain word changes made in the second stanza (now the first) further transform the poem from a pre-Christian to Christian sentiment. By changing the word "forgetful" in "From the Antique" to "unmindful," Rossetti alters the imagined land of the dead: rather than being a place where one might drink from the river of forgetfulness of Greek myth, it is "the intermediate state," the veiled land where the Protestant Christian soul rests between the time of the death and the Resurrection. Furthermore, by replacing the original image of a child reposing "without morn" with that of a reaper resting among "his gathered corn," Rossetti echoes numerous biblical texts, most obviously Rev. 14.13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... they rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." On the Last Day, the good worker will be admitted into God's sight. This message is developed further by Rossetti's alteration of line 8 of "From the Antique," a description of endless sleep ("So sleeping without morn"), to an expression of desire that the speaker also be included among those who rest only until "the morn" of the Resurrection.

When we consider Rossetti's act of transforming "From the Antique" into this poem of Christian hope, "One Sea-side Grave" becomes not only an elegiac remembrance to honour her friend, but also an expression of hope for his disembodied soul. Rossetti's change of title furthers this Christian message. Not only does the title allude to the fact that Cayley is buried in the sea-side town of Hastings, but it also calls to mind St John's vision of the end of time: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21.1). Moreover, by linking this biblical text from Revelation with the barrier death has now created between Cayley and herself, Rossetti points to a place

beyond time when all barriers dissolve, and thus, all those among the saved would be united, for as she writes in *The Face of the Deep*, "All who are united in Christ are thereby united to one another" (209). For such barriers to be swept away between herself and Cayley, he would need to be among the saved, a hope made possible by Rossetti's views on the intermediate state.

In *Seek and Find*, she reminds her readers that not until the Last Judgement shall anyone, living or dead, "be blotted out of His [God's] Presence" (23), thus implying that as the soul waited for the Resurrection, there might yet be the possibility for the soul to continue to learn and develop. Rossetti might well have been encouraged in such a belief through her friendship with Rev. Richard Frederick Littledale, whom she first met in 1864. Not only did Littledale argue for the validity of praying for the dead, an act many Anglicans perceived as being too close to coinciding with the Roman Catholic belief in Purgatory, but he also suggested that the hope of salvation did not end with a person's death (see his "Prayers for the Dead"). In a paper on "future probation," he argues that the "postponement of the judgment of the departed must have some motive," and he suggests that such "a motive would be the utilizing of the intermediate time between death and judgment for the gradual fitting of souls to enter on a higher life, by some process of purifying and educating" (207-08). On 16 December, the Sunday after Cayley's funeral, Littledale paid a visit to 30 Torrington Square. Perhaps he offered reassuring words of comfort, addressing not only Rossetti's grief but also her uncertainty regarding the state of her friend's soul.

Although those knowing of Rossetti's love for her friend might have recognized, as William did, that the sea-side grave of the poem was that of Cayley, nothing in the poem signals that fact. Nonetheless, her act of seeking publication suggests that making a gesture of public remembrance was of importance to her. In *Time Flies: A Reading Diary*, the most autobiographical of Rossetti's devotional works, she continues these public yet very private acts of remembrance. The only time Cayley's name appears in *Time Flies* is at the end of the reading for 8 May, Dante's birthday.[20] When imaging that one of the joys of the Resurrection might be the renewal of "beloved ties," Rossetti quotes canto 14.43-66 of Dante's *Paradise*. At the end of the quotation, she puts in parentheses the following: "Cayley's translation" (89). Yet so often does her friend appear to have been in her thoughts that one of the unifying themes of *Time Flies* might be labelled remembering Cayley. For example, a recent bereavement is the subject of three of the poems. As with all the poems in *Time Flies*, none is titled. In the reading for 16 January, a poem beginning "Love understands the mystery," the speaker suggests that grief is an inevitable consequence of love: "To love and to be grieved befits a dove / Silently telling her bead-history." The speaker, comforting perhaps

both herself and her readers, concludes: "Trust all to Love, be patient and approve: / Love understands the mystery" (*Time Flies* 13; *Complete Poems* 2:295). The roundel placed as the reading for 25 February begins with a mournful voice: "One sorrow more / I thought the tale complete." Again, a comforting response is offered: "Bear up in anguish, ease will yet be sweet" (*Time Flies* 39; 2:327). In the poem serving as the reading for 24 April, an especially personal note appears in the first lines: "Lord, what have I to offer? sickening fear / And a heart-breaking loss." Significantly, after the speaker accepts such fear and loss as her "cross" to bear, she asks God to accept her and her beloved as if they are one: "Accept the whole, my God, accept my heart / And its own love within: / Wilt Thou accept us and not sift apart?" (78; 2:301). The speaker simultaneously looks back to her relationship with the beloved dead, the love within her heart, and forward to the form such a love might take after the sifting of souls that will occur at the Last Judgement, hoping that her God will allow the loving bond created on earth to remain unbroken.

The poem Rossetti chose for 5 December, the day of Cayley's death, also looks forward to the end of time. I have used the word "chose" as opposed to "composed," for the poem seems to belong to an earlier period. The dominant melancholy tone is characteristic of Rossetti's youthful poems: "Bury Hope out of sight, / No book for it and no bell." This tone of lamentation continues: Hope's "power" and "grace" were as brief "As the fading of a flower, / As the falling of a leaf." The echoing of Ecclesiastes, so often characteristic of her early poems, is also heard: "Thus it hath been from long ago; / Thus it shall be beneath the sun." The last three lines, however, transform the piece from a lament of mournful world-weariness to a prophecy of rebirth:

> Only Death turns at our cries: –
> Lo, the Hope we buried with sighs
> Alive in Death's eyes! (*Time Flies* 232; *Complete Poems* 2:323)

Such movement from death to life, from burial to birth, follows that of the Anglican graveside service. As the body is lowered into the earth, the priest reminds the mourners of the fragility of human life: we are "cut down like a flower." Yet, after the dirt is thrown upon the coffin, they are told of the "sure and certain hope in the Resurrection."

The poem that serves as the reading for 12 December, the day of Cayley's funeral, is less a funeral piece than a dialogue, in which a troubled questioner is given comforting answers. For this selection, we know that Rossetti did indeed revise an earlier poem, one composed in 1858. By cutting several

stanzas from "Only Believe," the title of which is taken from Mark 5.36, Rossetti removes the image of a man grieving for the loss of a young woman with "golden tresses," thus making the remaining stanzas suitable for her relationship with Cayley. Furthermore, by beginning the 12 December poem with line 35 of the earlier piece ("Have dead men long to wait?"), Rossetti makes the poem less about grief and more about trust. The comforting voice assures the questioner that after a period in which "souls" must wait at "Heaven's gate," a time of joy and reward will follow:

> No fear, no pain,
> But after hope and sleep
> Dear joys again.
> Those who sowed shall reap. (*Time Flies* 239; *Complete Poems* 2:294)

By recognizing that Rossetti revised this poem so as to mark the day of Cayley's burial in Hastings, we see further evidence that Rossetti's faith offered her hope that her friend was not lost, despite whatever religious doubts he may have had.

A similar hope is expressed in the prose reading for 5 February, the Feast of St. Agatha. After noting that Quintianus' love for Agatha turned to hatred when she refused him, Rossetti asserts that not all human affection need turn to "dross" when tested by the "love of Christ": "Yet now and then two who have differed – and two who differ cannot both hold the entire truth – have loved on faithfully, believing and hoping the best of each other, one.... In such a case, where both have loved the Truth and have accounted it 'great ... and mighty above all things' [1 Esdras 3.10], there surely remains a strong consolation of hope to flee unto. For can an utter alien from God love Truth and make sacrifices for Truth's sake?" (27). Rossetti concludes the reading for the day by quoting Acts 17.23: "I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God" (27). Cayley loved Truth, and therefore, beyond death, they might reach the same goal. In the meantime, she would continue to love not only his memory but also, and more importantly, the friend whose soul still lived. The reading for 9 May makes explicit Rossetti's belief in the significance of such loving. Using Proverbs 17.7 ("A friend loveth at all times") as her text, Rossetti delivers a brief sermon on friendship:

> Death and the grave need make no difference. "Out of sight, in mind," would be a proverb worthy of Christians. Are we trembling, are we in agony, for our beloved dead? Very well; it is God's Will all-holy that so for the present it should be: but this does not by one hair's breadth trench on our privilege of loving at all times. (89)

Significantly, in such loving, she finds comfort: "What in this case or in that may befit us throughout eternity, we cannot foresee: but all time to the end of our days, is covered by that word of consolation, 'A friend loveth at all times'" (89).

The reading for 9 July, Cayley's birthday, offers further insight into the meaning this friendship held for Rossetti. This reading is the second in a series of three, which when combined creates a short sermon on human love. In the first of the series, Rossetti considers the most appropriate flower for love-lore to be the forget-me-not. Significantly, it is not its name that she expounds upon but rather its colours and structure: The "corolla is heavenly blue ... picked out with pink to stamp it as human and homely," and "its blossom stalk has a habit of dividing into a double spike of bloom ... showing us two that make up but one" (131). This theme of unity is then developed further in the reading for Cayley's birthday. Significantly, she begins with a personal recollection: "I possessed, so I write from memory – a most exquisite shell, composed of two halves, which joined together make up one flawless heart" (131). She continues: "Yet each by itself remains obviously imperfect and purposeless. Join them together and notch fits into notch; each brings out, proves achieves, the perfection of the other" (131). Her use of such a shell as an emblem of love underscores the significance of the bond that she and Cayley created over the many years of their friendship. Furthermore, her belief that her love for this man was countenanced by God is indicated by the line of thought expressed in the third and final reading of the series. First she weaves together both flower and shell: "Our study of a forget-me-not and of a shell will not entail loss of time – that irreparable loss! – if it helps us to realize that all reciprocal human love worthy of the name, exhibits a tinge of heaven as well as a warmth and colouring of earth." Then, using the metaphor of birth, she concludes that unless a human love "sets Christ before us at least as in a glass darkly, it were good for it not to have been born" (132). Her love for Cayley was a love worthy of birth.

At the same time that Rossetti was composing *Time Flies*, she was quite possibly preparing Cayley's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* for a new edition. Her personal copies, those given to her by her mother in 1866, have numerous pencil markings.[21] Yet now, as one studies these volumes, it is the image that first meets the eyes when opening volume three that is most striking.[22] Glued on the inside front cover of *The Paradise* is a photograph of Cayley. He is looking directly at the camera; thus, in a sense, he now looks out at the viewer from Paradise. Apparently, not long after his death, Rossetti transformed her copy of this volume into an expression of hope that her "dearest friend" would be among the saved. Perhaps at this time, Rossetti placed within the pages of *The Paradise* an additional object: "A faded sprig"

of Solomon's seal was found by Sarah Smith when she purchased this set of volumes in the 1970s (Denman and Smith 330). Smith indicates that the sprig was placed between pages 80 and 81, the text covering lines 58-99 of canto 11, a section telling of the love of St. Francis for his Lady Poverty.[23] Of course, since others owned the volumes previous to Smith (on a cover page of each volume is the inscription "To Cassie from Adrien"), this dried remembrance may have nothing to do with Rossetti's original ownership. Yet, Solomon's seal grows in the gardens of London; in fact, it grows today in the back garden of 30 Torrington Square. Thus, it is quite possible that Rossetti first pressed and then placed this sprig between these pages of *The Paradise*, where it, along with the photograph, served her as an object of remembrance.

As has been noted, Rossetti was familiar with the language of flowers. Yet Solomon's seal does not regularly appear in books on flower-lore. When included, as in Ernst and Johanna Lehner's *Folklore and Symbolism*, the meaning assigned to it – "concealment" – seems not applicable to either Rossetti or Cayley (125). Denman and Smith reasonably suggest that she may have associated the name of the plant with the "ancient talisman comprised of two interlaced triangles," symbolic of the Absolute, known by several labels, one of which is Solomon's seal (330). Furthermore, in *The Arabian Nights*, which Rossetti read when young, she would have found mention of a seal-ring sent from heaven to Solomon. Engraved with the name of God, this ring was said to have given the Solomon of these tales magical powers. Possibly, she also knew of legends that weave together plant and seal by telling of King Solomon marking with his ring the root of this plant to indicate its special qualities. (The root was believed to aid in knitting broken bones.) Rossetti's poetry often draws from the realm of folk tale and legend. Yet, it is more likely that if she did indeed place the sprig of Solomon's seal within the pages of Dante's *Paradise*, she did so because she associated the plant not with the Solomon of Arabian tales, but rather with the Solomon of the Bible, the Solomon who sang of Divine Love and the promise that Spring would come. Thus, the plant might have served Rossetti as a visual lesson to trust in such love, as she looked forward to the Resurrection.

Not surprisingly, in her nursery-rhyme telling of meadow and garden, included in the 1872 edition of *Sing-Song*, Solomon's seal appears in a garden with biblical associations.[24] To the best of my knowledge, this is the only poem in which Rossetti mentions this plant. If we conclude that she kept a sprig as a remembrance of Cayley, then this poem and its textual history become part of the story of their friendship, offering further evidence of Rossetti's placing that friendship within the context of the stories of her faith.

After the first stanza describing the wild meadow with its bluebells, buttercups, and meadowsweet, a spot for children's play, Rossetti describes,

in the second and final stanza of this nursery rhyme, a spot for adult meditation upon the life of Jesus:

> In the garden – what in the garden?
> Jacob's-ladder and Solomon's-seal,
> And Love-lies-bleeding with none to heal
> In the garden. (2:353)

While religious meanings might need to be explained to the child listener, the adult reader would likely recognize the allusions to the Old Testament figures Jacob and Solomon, both of whom can be interpreted as types of Christ. Although love-lies-bleeding has no direct reference to a biblical personage, given the other two flowers, this plant, especially with its drooping red blossoms, becomes emblematic not only of the sorrows of human love but divine as well, a meaning Rossetti suggests by using the capital "L." The final phrase of the penultimate line, "with none to heal," seems to leave the Christian narrative unfinished, as if when composing Rossetti had had the Garden of Gethsemane in mind. Significantly, twenty years later and approximately ten years after Cayley's death, when preparing *Sing-Song* for the 1893 edition, Rossetti added another plant to her biblical garden by changing the phrase "with none to heal" to "beside All-heal." Although little if any mention has been made of this revision, this small alteration changes the poem's meaning significantly. With this additional flower, an herb believed to aid in the healing of all wounds, the garden is no longer Gethsemane but the garden outside the empty tomb where Mary Magdalene saw the risen Christ.

Such looking forward on Rossetti's part to the healing of all wounds need not be associated only with her desire to see Cayley again. By the time Rossetti undertook preparation of the 1893 edition of *Sing-Song*, her mother had died, as had her Aunt Charlotte. She herself had undergone a mastectomy and was not expecting to live a long life. Yet, evidence is strong that through all such loss and pain, Cayley remained not only vividly alive in memory, but also a still-living presence she hoped to see again, once all had been healed by Love. For example, in *Verses* (1893), her last collection of poems, she placed "The Churchyard Song of Patient Hope," a poem addressed to a beloved friend, immediately after "Bury Hope," previously used in *Time Flies* as her entry for Cayley's death day (5 December). William Michael was the first to suggest the poem's possible association with Cayley (*Poetical Works* 470), and subsequent biographers have similarly noted it. However, as of yet, little attention has been given to Rossetti's first positioning of "The Churchyard Song of Patient Hope" as part of her devotional commentary on the Apocalypse. Considering this poem in the original framework offers further

evidence that as Rossetti remembered her friend, he was not imagined as a figure in a romantic narrative. Rather, he was to be recalled in association with the beloved women of her family.

In *The Face of the Deep*, "The Churchyard Song" serves as part of Rossetti's commentary upon Revelation 21.4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." In her lengthy response to this text, Rossetti reflects upon her own experience with bereavement. First, she recalls three women, now dead, whom she "loved and revered, and who in earlier days set before [her] examples of things lovely and of good report" (485). She tells of being with two of these women, most likely her sister and her mother, when they died, and the third, possibly her aunt Charlotte, she watched "nearly to the end" (486). She finds it easy to "contemplate" the wiping away of all tears for these women who were devout in their faith. She then offers a brief prayer: "God grant that I may witness the general and particular abolition of all these [tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain] when death shall at length be swallowed up in victory: that I, that we all, may witness and share in that rapture" (486). Immediately after the word "rapture," follows her churchyard song:

> All tears done away with the bitter unquiet sea,
> Death done away from among the living at last,
> Man shall say of sorrow – Love grant it to thee and me! –
> At last, "It is past."
>
> Shall I say of pain, "It is past," nor say it with thee,
> Thou heart of my heart, thou soul of my soul, my Friend?
> Shall thou say of pain, "It is past," nor say it with me
> Beloved to the end. (2:323)

Lest her readers begin to imagine for the speaker and her beloved Friend a heavenly reunion that mirrors an earthly marriage, Rossetti concludes her commentary on Rev. 21.4 by remarking on the last clause of the biblical text, reminding her readers that among the "former things" that must pass away will be marriage: The

> "flesh and blood endeared to us by a lifetime, the marrying and giving in marriage ... have passed away.... Had they not, neither would death and its associates have passed away." What is good must often be given up for something that is better. Who would perpetuate blossom and forgo fruit? (486).

At this point, approximately nine years after Cayley's death, Rossetti was not

thinking of what might have been, or even what was, but rather what her beliefs told her would be. Her acts of remembrance are not signs of regret but rather evidence of hope.

In *Reminiscences*, when telling the story of his sister's dying, William emphasizes how often Cayley was in her thoughts: "More than once, when she lay on her bed awaiting the manifest end in suffering and in patience, she spoke to me of him, and of her love for him, in terms of almost passionate intensity" (2:314). There is no reason to doubt William's recollection, yet his words should be placed in the context of his certainty that his sister should have married Cayley, despite any religious differences: "She would have been far happier, and might have become rather broader in mental outlook, and no one would have been any the worse for it" (2:313). A brother's love seems to have wanted a traditional romantic ending for his sister's life story: a happy marriage. However, one could also imagine other scenarios: As husband and wife, Cayley and Rossetti might have struggled with so many financial problems and frustrations that neither would have had the quiet time in which to think and write, or perhaps, Rossetti would have died as a consequence of pregnancy. We can imagine all sorts of post-wedding-day scenarios, yet we would be imagining the possible consequences of a choice that was not made and therefore, in a sense, we would be imagining a story that cannot be told. Rossetti and Cayley did not follow a romantic narrative in which male-female friendship leads to marriage. If we resist trying to fit their relationship into that pattern, then Rossetti need not be cast as the heroine of some sad love story of her own making, nor need Cayley be found wanting for failing to live up to some version of romantic hero. We can then begin to place their friendship, one so central to her adult life, in terms of Rossetti's conception of love.

At several points in *The Face of the Deep*, Rossetti sets Christ before the reader in the role of friend. He was to St. John "a tender Master and Friend"; to St. Thomas he was "Divine Lord and Friend"; and He is "our Brother" and "our Friend" (43, 293, 509). One of the most moving moments in which Rossetti associates friendship with Divine Love occurs in her commentary on Revelation 4.1 ("After this I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice said ... 'Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter'"). Mid-way through her commentary, Rossetti focuses on verbs relating to sight: to look, and to see. After asserting that at the end of time the "elect" shall know that the eyes of the Lord have been upon them continually, she places the sonnet which begins "Lord, dost Thou look on me and will not I." The sonnet concludes with the speaker asking the Lord to grant her "sight" so she might "see and love" Him. In the octave of this sonnet, the act of looking upon a loving friend is presented as a type of

prelude to this seeing of Christ: "Here if one loved me I should turn to see / ... And by a tender friendship make reply" (*Face of the Deep* 148; 2:207). Although Rossetti replied to Cayley's marriage proposal with a refusal, she replied to his love with a "tender friendship," weaving that friendship into the narratives of her faith. A loving friendship would help her see Christ in this world, if only in a glass darkly. A belief in the promises of Christ's Resurrection gave her patient hope that when all time had flown, she and her dearest friend would reach the same good goal, all pain and sorrow having passed away.

Notes

1. In *Reminiscences*, William gives the year of the proposal as on or about 1864; however, in *Poetical Works*, he sets the date in 1866. I am using the 1866 date, for available evidence suggests it is more accurate.
2. Charles's siblings may have been regular church-goers. His brother Arthur Cayley attended St. Mary's in Cambridge, and his obituary published in the *Guardian* (6 February 1895) mentions that he was a regular recipient of communion. I thank Tony Crilly, author of *Arthur Cayley: Mathematician Laureate of the Victorian Age*, for this information.
3. For a thorough discussion of the significance of the Incarnation in Rossetti's life and poetry, see Mary Arseneau (2004). For an insightful analysis of the significance of faith in shaping Rossetti's mature devotional poetry and prose, see Dinah Roe (2006).
4. Although William does not recall where Christina was at this time, he suggests she was not far from home. Marsh suggests she was in Gloucester, visiting her cousins (361). However, recently it was recognized that letter no. 283 (*Letters* 1:256) dated as 10 October 1865, should be dated 10 October 1866. The internal evidence of this letter indicates that Rossetti did not begin her Gloucester visit until 5 October. Therefore on 11 September, she must have been visiting someone else. I thank Antony H. Harrison for confirming this error in dating. Unfortunately, I have not been able to discover where Rossetti was in September of 1866.
5. This letter is held in the Angeli-Dennis Collection, U of British Columbia. Cayley may be referring to the Persiads, a meteor shower that occurs in late August every year.
6. A fair copy is held in the British Library, Ashley Manuscripts. At the end of each poem, Rossetti has placed the month and year; however, it is not known when she arranged the poems into this sequence, nor is it known when she created this fair copy.
7. For an insightful discussion of both Rossetti's and Cayley's use of Dante in their poetry, see Alison Milbank (2001).
8. Rossetti places quotation marks around her title, thus indicating that she is quoting another poet. Unfortunately, I have been unable to identify the source. Since she draws from Cayley's poetry when titling several other poems in the sequence, possibly she is doing so here as well. This maxim-like statement echoes a story from *The Gulistan* (Rose-Garden) by the Persian poet Sadi. *The Gulistan* was translated into English in 1808 by Francis Gladwin and then again by Edward Eastwick in 1852. One of Sadi's verses tells the story of "a piece of perfumed clay" that came to him while in the bath. The speaker asks, "Art thou musk or ambergris?" The clay responds, "Worthless earth was I, / But long I kept the rose's company; / Thus near, its perfect fragrance to me came" (Sadi 6). Given Cayley's scholarly interests, he may well have been familiar with Sadi's *Gulistan*.
9. According to the List of Wills and Probate for 1862, Jane Leifchild was living at 4 Fitzroy Terrace, Gloucester Road, Regents Park, the home of her uncle, the Rev. John Leifchild. Her father William G. Leifchild was living at 16 Albert Road. Both father and uncle died in 1862. It appears that Jane then moved to her father's house on Albert Road, for *The Royal Red Book* (January 1867) lists a Miss Leifchild at 16 Albert Road, Regent's Park.
10. Sarah Leifchild published at least two religious poems: "In a Corn-field" appeared in *Good Words* (1 August 1870) and "Knock and it shall be Opened" in *Sunday Magazine* (1 July 1871). Rossetti remained on friendly terms with this family. A letter dated 26 January 1875 to Alexander Macmillan refers to her "kind friends the Leifchilds" (*Letters* 2:39).
11. Finding in the poem evidence for her now disproven argument that the poems of *Il Rosseggir dell' Oriente* refer to William Bell Scott, Lona Mosk Packer saw the "happy woman" to be Alice Boyd and the garden to be that of Boyd's home, Penkill Castle. Imagining Alice to be Rossetti's rival for Scott's affection, Packer interprets the poem as one dealing with "the problem of the other woman" (239-40).
12. I am assuming that the speaker of this poem is male; however, the gender of the speaker is not specified. Cayley indicates in *Poems and Translations* that his poem is "based upon a Spanish source." I have been unable to identify that source.
13. The assumption sometimes made that in this poem Cayley is writing of his love for Rossetti is open to question. We do not know the composition date, nor do we know when he submitted the piece to *The Nation*. Although Cayley may be recalling a woman of his acquaintance, the subtitle of the poem, "English Anapests," suggests that, in part, the purpose of the poem is to engage in "Englishing" the quantitative anapest of classical Greek. I thank Christopher Bakken for his assistance in deciphering the possible meaning of Cayley's subtitle.
14. For a description of these illustrations, see William Michael's note to this poem in *Poetical Works* (478).
15. The daily diary that Rossetti kept for her mother covers 1 January1881 to the death of Frances Rossetti on 7 April of 1886.
16. A death notice appeared in the *Hastings Observer* (15 December 1883) indicating that Cayley died "suddenly of atrophy of the heart."
17. See Rossetti's letter to William dated 17 December 1883. This letter indicates that she enclosed Shields's letter, which William had apparently sent to her. She writes to William: "Having to write, I return Mr. Shields letter which I like truly" (*Letters* 3:169).
18. In January 2010, my husband and I visited Hastings Cemetery in search of Cayley's grave. According to cemetery records, Cayley is buried in section AD, row A: grave 4. Also buried in the grave is his sister Sophia Cayley. Records indicate she was buried 15 March 1889. We found a grave marker for Sophia, now fallen and lying in row B. We could find nothing on the face of the stone indicating that Charles is also buried in this grave, nor could we find a separate memorial stone for him. Henrietta is buried in the grave to the left of Sophia's: AD, row A: grave 5. She was buried 29 June 1886. Her stone is still standing. Cayley's mother is in section AD, row B: grave 1. I thank Pamela Barden and Dawn Keenan, administrative assistants for Hastings Cemetery, both of whom checked the cemetery records for me. Both have assured me that according to

these records, Cayley is buried in the same grave as his sister Sophia.

19. I thank Glenn Holland for this suggestion.

20. Rossetti's copy of *Time Flies* is now held in the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. No marginal notes identifying or mentioning Cayley appear. I thank Molly Schwartzburg, Curator of British and American Literature, for providing this information.

21. See Kamilla Denman and Sarah Smith for a detailed description of Rossetti's marginal notes and corrections (315-38).

22. On the back of the front cover of *The Notes*, there is a full-length photograph of Cayley standing and holding what appears to be a quill pen. Inside, *The Vision of Hell* and *Purgatory*, one finds a photograph of Dante's tomb. These four volumes are now held in the rare book collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. I thank Leslie Morris, curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, for making arrangements for me to examine them in March 2011. At that time, their condition was fragile, and therefore I was not able to arrange them in such a way so as to allow for the taking of useful photographs. The photographs of Cayley, however, are reproduced in Denman and Smith (337).

23. Sarah Smith has informed me that when she donated these volumes to Harvard, she kept the sprig of Solomon's seal.

24. I thank May C. Porco for her thoughts regarding this poem. I also thank Lorraine Janzen-Kooistra for her assistance in deciphering Rossetti's manuscript illustration: a faint pencil-sketch of a bouquet of flowers. Possibly, Rossetti has included Solomon's seal.

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