

WILLIAM BLACKMORE:  
PATRON OF DANTE ROSSETTI AND THOMAS MORAN  
AND ETHNOGRAPHER OF THE UNITED STATES

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The lawyer and entrepreneur William Blackmore (1827-78) is well known in British cultural history as a collector of archaeological and ethnographic specimens, notably from the United States of America, which were gathered together in the public museum he founded in Salisbury in 1867. He is also recognized, albeit to a lesser extent, as an early patron of the American landscape painter Thomas Moran (1837-1926). It is less well known that Blackmore was also a patron of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the 1860s, when he became a member of a small group of Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasts in Liverpool. The variety of Blackmore's interests, both cultural and commercial, raises the question of the extent to which there may have been connections among them: his ownership of landscapes of the unexplored American West may sit comfortably with his interest in American archaeology, but his taste for Rossetti seems to come from another sphere. Blackmore's American interests grew out of his business activities in the United States, but were also rooted in his personal background, his grandfather, Henry Shorto III (1778-1864), and mother, Eliza Sharpe Shorto (dates not known), having been closely involved in the study of Wiltshire archaeology (*Some Account* 83; Torrens). As for his connection with Rossetti, this seems to have been stimulated by the predilection for the artist's work which Blackmore encountered amongst business colleagues.

Whilst these two areas – archaeology and art – may not at first appear to be closely connected, they had features in common. Both were modish interests in the period, sharing an aura of cultural and intellectual sophistication, and both required financial means. They were thus appropriate pursuits for a middle-class entrepreneur. In the mid-nineteenth century the middle classes progressively sought the cultural, intellectual, and social distinction believed to be the corollaries of the political and economic power they had already