

REVIEWS

The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Formative Years, 1835-1862: Charlotte Street to Cheyne Walk. Ed. William E. Fredeman. 2 volumes. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002. lxii, 402 pp.; 634 pp. ISBN 0-85991-528-X. \$165.00; ISBN 0-85991-637-5. \$165.00. *The Chelsea Years, 1863-1872: Prelude to a Crisis. I. 1863-1867.* Ed. William E. Fredeman. Volume 3. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003. xlviii, 601 pp. ISBN 0-85991-782-7. \$165.00.

As a consistent extension of the lives of the Pre-Raphaelites, the sphere of Pre-Raphaelite scholarship can be read as an equally bizarre narrative. When the restriction on the love letters of Dante Rossetti and Jane Morris expired on 27 January 1964, scholars queued at the British Museum much like fans rushing for tickets to a rock concert. The letters proved somewhat disappointing, for they suggested less the passion of Launcelot and Guenevere than the melancholy of two hypochondriacs sharing prescriptions for medicinal tonics and sneeze powders. Significantly absent from the queue were the editors of what was then the forthcoming Oxford edition of Rossetti's letters: Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, whose feuding literary partnership surpassed anything reported in the gossip columns about Martin and Lewis or Burton and Taylor. During the next three years Doughty and Wahl's four shoddy volumes were published and greeted with some savage reviews. One climax to that Oxford edition was Wahl's suicide in 1970, when he drove his car off a jetty in South Africa.

The greater climax is this long-awaited, monumental Cambridge edition scrupulously edited by William E. Fredeman. First commissioned by Oxford in 1973 to replace the Doughty/Wahl mess, Fredeman worked for a decade on his new *Correspondence* with boxes of file-cards and typescripts for a letterpress publication, but was soon reduced to the prospect of a microfiche edition until he switched in the mid-1980s to what was then the cutting-edge in computer software for scholars in the humanities – Note Bene – now long since obsolete. It was Fredeman's diligence that made his "Albatross edition" risky for publishers. He found 3,500 letters omitted from the Doughty/Wahl edition; he found "mistranscriptions, misdatings, and misprints; ... duplication of identical letters in two different volumes, a decade apart; and misidentification of recipients." He dismissed their annotations as "almost always pedantic" and sometimes "humorous, such as the substitution of 'Yawned on each other' for 'Fawned' in a note on 'Nuptial Sleep'" (1:xvii), an unintentional slip of Bowdlerizing that Robert Buchanan might have approved of.

In dramatic contrast, the excitement of this edition arises from its success