

REVIEWS

Pre-Raphaelites in the Spirit World: The Séance Diary of William Michael Rossetti edited by J.B. Bullen and Rosalind White. *Letter from Anna Mary Howitt to Dante Gabriel Rossetti* edited by Lenore A. Beaky. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022. xi, 169 pp. + 9 colour plates. ISBN 978-1-78997-442-3. \$52.75.

Part of the extensive Peter Lang “Cultural Interactions: Studies in the Relationship between the Arts” series, for which J.B. Bullen serves as general editor, *Pre-Raphaelites in the Spirit World* provides for the first time a full and annotated transcription of William Michael Rossetti’s séance diary. A related document, a letter from Anna Mary Howitt to Dante Gabriel Rossetti from 1856, also published here for the first time, reveals the broad reach of Victorian spiritualism and the remarkable hold it took on the mind of one woman in particular. Both documents are part of the Special Collections of the University of British Columbia and were introduced through an earlier article by Bullen and White in the *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 29 (Fall 2020). As the book is divided into two parts, I shall first discuss Part I, Bullen and Rosalind White’s edition of “William Michael Rossetti’s Séance Diary, 1865-1868,” complete with a critical introduction and transcription of the manuscript, before discussing Part II, Lenore A. Beaky’s edition of “Letter from Anna Mary Howitt to Dante Gabriel Rossetti,” with its critical introduction and transcription of the manuscript.

Part I: William Michael Rossetti’s Séance Diary, 1865-1868

“For anything of this kind, including table-turning and spirit-rapping, my brother had a rather marked propensity and willing credence.” So William Michael Rossetti writes in his record of the twenty séances he attended, eight with his brother Dante Gabriel, between 1865 and 1868. In their introduction to the diary, Bullen and White describe the contrasting attitude between the Rossetti brothers. William Michael was the more removed figure, always skeptical to his brother’s eager embrace of the possibilities spiritualism might, particularly in the wake of his wife’s death in 1862: “Dante Gabriel acted as *éminence grise* for this project because, in contrast to almost all the other participants, he came to it as a believer in the possibility of communication with the dead.” Extending the context of Andrew Stauffer’s “Speaking with the Dead: The Séance Diary of William Michael Rossetti, 1865-1868” (*Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 24 [Spring 2015]: 35-42) – which examines Dante Rossetti’s specific interest in séances and communication with