

A PRE-RAPHAELITE ABROAD:
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI'S
"A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM"

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On 27 September 1849, William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti boarded a train in London on the first leg of a trip that would take them to Folkstone and from there by ferry to Boulogne, where they would catch another train to Amiens and Paris. From "A Trip to Paris and Belgium,"¹ as William Michael Rossetti entitled the verse journal that his brother kept during the trip and sent in letters to his fellow Pre-Raphaelites, the remainder of the itinerary of the two men can easily be reconstructed. In Paris they went on an excursion by rail to Versailles and then, on 15 October, they boarded a train that took them, again by way of Amiens, to Brussels, where they went on an excursion by cab to Waterloo before travelling by train to Antwerp, by boat and train to Ghent, and then by train to Bruges, their last significant stop before leaving Belgium, probably through Ostend,² for Dover in late October. Perhaps in part because it "was never actually compiled" by Rossetti himself and to an extent remains textually problematic,³ "A Trip to Paris and Belgium" has not been accorded the close attention that it warrants as a reflection of Rossetti's ideas and practices at the time of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848-53) and as an important instantiation of the Brotherhood's "'revolutionary' cultural program" (McGann 412).⁴ By no means unrelated to these matters is the journal's additional interest as a record of embodied experience or corporeality, which is to say, continuous, conscious awareness of the body and mind as (to borrow Maurice Merleau-Ponty's term, 292) "geared" into a particular place at a particular time and alert both to their physical situation and to its impact on perception, thought, and other sensory and intellectual processes.

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