

THE Jael WHO LED THE HOSTS TO VICTORY:
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
AND PRE-RAPHAELITE BOOK-MAKING

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In 1896 Gleeson White, the contemporary authority on illustration, wrote an article for *The Pageant* praising the “new renaissance of the Pre-Raphaelite idea” displayed in the books of the nineties (81). *Fin-de-siècle* illustrators such as Charles Ricketts and Laurence Housman may have been “the true successors” of their sixties’ predecessors (Reid, 46), but they also, together with Lucien Pissarro, carried “the Pre-Raphaelite idea” into a new phase with their “persistent attempt to unify all the factors that go to the make-up of a book” (Symons, 84). Their interest in enhancing the beauty of a work of literature was not limited to ornamenting it with an interpretive visual design, but extended further to the entire architecture of the book. The art of the book conceived as a whole object was not, however, one of the skills of the first generation Pre-Raphaelites; they excelled not so much in making books as in ornamenting and imagining them. Despite the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’s innovative concern with, and approach to, illustration (Fredeman, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 185) and their frequent proposals for collaborative visual/verbal ventures, their periodical, the *Germ*, remains the only illustrated publication “to emerge from the combined efforts of the Brotherhood,” as W.E. Fredeman rightly points out (“Woodman,” 10).

I would like to propose, however, that it is in the publications of the “sister” to the Brotherhood that *fin-de-siècle* book artists put into practice the goals of the PRB’s “fantasy editions of illustrated books that never were” (Fredeman, “Woodman,” 9). Four of Christina Rossetti’s first commercially produced volumes – *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), *The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems* (1866), *Sing-Song* (1872), and *Speaking Likenesses* (1874)¹ – represent the actualization of the collaborative Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic. This aesthetic was informed not simply by the partnership of verbal and visual media, but also by a fundamentally cooperative impulse, evident in the banding together of the Brothers in the first place. That such a collaborative impulse was integral to Pre-Raphaelitism as a whole may be seen in the cooperative ventures of later