



Masterpiece of unrequited love

Dante's love depicted in Pre-Raphaelite painting

EMILY HAHN
EPOCH TIMES STAFF

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's largest painting depicts Dante's unrequited love in a quintessential example of the Pre-Raphaelite style.

Rossetti, possibly Dante's greatest fan, completed *Dante's Dream at the Death of Beatrice* in 1871. Dante Alighieri is best known for his *Divine Comedy*, considered a literary masterpiece of the Italian language and world literature.

Known as "il Sommo Poeta" ("the Supreme Poet"), he was also famous for his autobiographical work *La Vita Nuova*, and it is the following stanza from this work upon which the English painter based his painting.

Then Love said: "Now shall all things be made clear: Come and behold our lady where she lies." These "wilderling fantasies Then carried me to see my lady dead. Even as I there was led, Her ladies with a veil were covering her And with her was such a very humbleness That she appeared to say, "I am at peace."

In this stanza, Dante tells how in a dream he was led by a personification of Love to the deathbed of his beloved Beatrice. Dante actually met Beatrice only twice in his life. However, he writes that it was her purity that struck him so deeply and caused him to fall

hopelessly in love with her. Dante practised his courtship the medieval way – subtly and behind the scenes. He admired Beatrice from afar and idolised her in his writings.

In the painting, a dreaming Dante is led by Love to Beatrice just before she is carried off from this world forever. Dante's unrequited love for Beatrice glows as Love gives Beatrice the Kiss that Dante never gave.

Two attendant figures clad in green robes suspend a canopy over Beatrice as they cast sad glances at the poet. Blossoms cover the pall, and the floor is strewn with poppies.

A heart can be seen behind the pall, and above it hangs a lamp that is fading. Two scarlet birds, the colour of love, fly throughout the room as angels hover outside the window, ready to carry Beatrice to heaven.

A group of English painters, poets, and critics founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. Rossetti's attempt to link poetry, painting, and social idealism together contributed to the Brotherhood's guiding

principles and was key to its formation.

The Brotherhood encouraged artists to apply their own understandings and ideas to their art. The spiritual and creative integrity of medieval culture particularly intrigued the group. The Brotherhood tried to revive the aesthetic style prominent before that of the Renaissance artist Raphael.

The colour green dominates this work; even the skin tones have green hues. The figure Love contrasts with this by his red attire, and Beatrice stands out in her pale brightness.

The limited palette serves to spotlight the central figures. Orthogonal lines all point toward the central images, Love giving Beatrice a kiss.

The gazes of the other figures and even the ceiling lines all point toward the centre. Exits on both sides point both into and out of the central scene.

Pre-Raphaelite art was heavy with symbolism. The exits show how singular and lonely Dante was in his unrequited love for Beatrice. The

rest of the world outside the frames of the painting continued its daily activities while Dante watches Beatrice dying. But Dante himself described the scene as Florence mourning her passing, as the viewer sees church bells in the distance ringing.

Love holds an arrow in his hand pointed at Dante's heart, and a branch of apple blossoms, which symbolise Dante's love that never bore fruit – "plucked before the coming of fruit".

Poppies on the floor symbolise death, while sprigs of hawthorn in the attendants' hair show their connection with death. The dying lamp above the canopy symbolises the end of Dante's love for Beatrice. Both the vivid colours and extensive symbolism in this painting work to make it a quintessential example of Pre-Raphaelite art.

The original work was too large to fit the walls of the first buyer, so a perturbed Rossetti took the painting back and resold it several times before its final home at the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, England.

The future belongs to the right

A WHOLE NEW MIND

by Daniel H. Pink

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EPOCH TIMES STAFF

Daniel H. Pink's book, *A Whole New Mind – Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future*, a 2005 copyright, is one of those reads that will stick with me for a long time. Once I picked it up I could not put it down, and will re-read it again. The bright orange cover makes it easy for me to locate quickly if it gets temporarily shelved with other texts.

The author's abundant experience as a former presidential speechwriter is an asset for this text. His writing is logical, sequential and flows exceptionally well, from topic to topic, and chapter to chapter.

His premise, that the future of global business belongs to the right-brainers, and his well-thought out arguments are a guide to surviving in the fast-paced, topsy-turvy world we live in right now. Pink's explanation – that we are moving from the information age, left brain-thinking to right brain-thinking the conceptual age, and why – is beautifully supported by his observations.

He details the reasons for this switch with his three "A's" – abundance, Asia, and automation. Uncounted numbers of folks in Asia, particularly

India, can do rote, white collar work (left-brain) much less expensively than those who might hold similar jobs in the United States. This change affects all of us, and it seems only logical then to free ourselves to do more creating, inventing, and building (right brain thinking).

How to go about this? Before I comment on this, let's look at the book's beginning that outlines four major eras: the agricultural age (farmers), the industrial age (factory workers), the information age (knowledge workers) and the conceptual age (creators and empathisers).

Interesting, pertinent black and white drawings are sprinkled throughout the easy-to-follow text. Pink poses several crucial questions: can a computer do these tasks faster, is what I have to offer in demand in an age of abundance, and can someone overseas do it cheaper? Pink reminds us repeatedly that we live in an age of abundance and urges us to develop our creative abilities if we want to be competitive, whether related to commodities or to something else. To do this, we need to focus on six essential attributes he outlines and enlarges upon: Design – moving beyond function to engage the senses; Story – narrative added to products and services, not just argument; Symphony – adding invention and big picture



thinking, not merely detailed focus; Empathy – going beyond logic and engaging emotions and intuition; Meaning – immaterial feelings and values of products.

He calls Story the best of the six. The example of a wine label sticks in my mind.

The author supports his suggestions with many quotes from literature, the arts and great thinkers. Actually, what he applies to the business world has equal value for writers, musicians and other artists.

Pink did a fine writing job and expressed his thoughts in an easy to follow manner. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for professional/business success or personal fulfilment. The paperback version has been updated and includes new material. The text has been translated into 18 different languages.

Published by Marshall Cavendish

A love supreme

THE ANTIDOTE – Classic poetry for modern life

A reading from 'Dr Faustus' by Christopher Marlowe

CHRISTOPHER NIELD
SPECIAL TO THE EPOCH TIMES

Helen of Troy

*Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:
Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies!
Come Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena!
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
O thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.*

Romantic love inspires our finest and perhaps our most ridiculous emotions. It takes us a million miles from such dull necessities as reasonableness, proportion and common sense, and we are only too grateful for the holiday. For a moment everything seems possible. For a second we are heroes in some ancient story: Anthony and Cleopatra or Romeo and Juliet.

This mixture of the sublime and the comical is well caught in this extract from Marlowe's play *Dr Faustus*, in which the evil magician calls on a demon to bring forth the legendary beauty, Helen of Troy, whose abduction by Paris caused the Trojan War. No sooner has Faustus made his request, then it is granted. The Devil is nothing if not eager to please.

Helen enters and time appears to stand still: Marlowe's soaring poetry sweeps us into Faustus's awestruck reverie. "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships/ And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" he wonders, as we

Faustus is far from being the great hero: he is a pale, thin, book-devouring geek who wastes his genius on delusions of grandeur.

His claim that "Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked" is so silly to take seriously. This German university town may have been the home of the Protestant revolution, but it cannot withstand the epic comparison. It just sounds too prosaic. It's the equivalent of saying, "Instead of Troy shall Boston Common be sacked" while trying to keep a straight face. Still, brilliant poetry shines through his feverish idiocy. "O thou art fairer than the evening air/ Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars" is a stunning couplet that would reduce any lover to tears.

And yet at this peak of romantic vision, something distinctly odd happens – something we don't notice at first maybe, as we rush through all the unfamiliar classical allusions, while squinting at the footnotes. Faustus compares Helen to the male divinities Jupiter and the mysterious "monarch of the skies", so the gloating Satanist becomes, in turn, the hapless Semele ravished by Jupiter, and the sorrowful nymph Arethusa hunted down by the river-god Alpheus – believed to have been related to the sun.

Faustus is the butt of a cruel prank, one that takes him from dreams of becoming a kind of superhero to ending up as the archetypal female victim. On the one hand, on a psychological level, this may describe the tragic arc we trace when we are besotted with someone wildly inappropriate. On the other, this tells something about the seductions and stupidities of evil. After all, this is hardly likely to be the real Helen. In fact, while Faustus is waxing lyrical, the audience in the theatre may see this Helen for what she is: a smirking, scarlet-skinned, horned beast. The good doctor conjures up demons to transcend both God and humanity, but as he sweeps off the stage in triumph, the Devil has the last terrible laugh.

Christopher "Kit" Marlowe (1564–1593) was an English dramatist, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era.

Christopher Nield is a poet living in London.

JELMEXONE/OLIX



American writer John Updike dies

BOSTON (Reuters) - American author John Updike, a leading writer of his generation who chronicled the emotional drama of American small-town life with searing wit and vivid prose, died on Tuesday of lung cancer. He was 76.

"It is with great sadness that I report that John Updike died this morning," said Nicholas Latimer of Alfred A. Knopf, a unit of Random House. "He was one of our greatest writers, and he will be sorely missed."

Updike died in a hospice in Massachusetts, the state where

he lived for many years.

Updike was known for mining themes of sexual tension, and spiritual and moral angst in small-town settings – issues he explored through his four novels and a novella about the life of the fictional Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom.

Rabbit is Rich, published in 1981, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. A decade later, *Rabbit at Rest* won a second Pulitzer.

One of America's most prolific writers, Updike was acclaimed nearly as much for his short stories, poetry and

critical essays as for his novels.

For many readers, he was well known as a seemingly endless source of short stories in *The New Yorker* magazine.

Born in Reading, Pennsylvania, he studied English at Harvard University, where he contributed to, and later edited, the satirical *Harvard Lampoon* magazine. He later joined the writing staff of *The New Yorker*.

In a Reuters interview in 2005, he said his view of himself as a writer had changed in recent years as he produced

an increasing volume of art and literary criticism and struggled with the short-story medium.

When asked which genre he preferred – short stories, novels, poetry or criticism – he paused.

"If I had been asked that ten years ago I would have said short stories is where I feel most at home. I'm not sure I do feel totally at home any more, whether I have maybe written all my short stories," he said.

"In a short story, as short a form as it is, you've got to make everything count

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