**Dante Rossetti "Genius in Beauty"**

Beauty like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,—
Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time,—
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeathes\*
Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
Even through all change the indomitable song;
So in likewise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

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The poet compares his lady with the creations of Homer and Dante and with the personifications of Spring and Summer. She is the equal of all these even her shadow breathes a "love spell" from "its shadowed contour on the wall" (1. 9). Also there is an air of mystery surrounding her "sovereign face," which is portrayed as "musical" (1. 4), repeating a form of imagery we have met elsewhere. This occurs again in the lines:

As many men are poets in their youth,

But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong

Even through all change the indomitable song; (11. 10-12)

That is, men who are touched by the beauty of someone like-the poet's beloved (if there is anyone like her) are transformed into creators and capture a vision of woman which is preserved against the destruction of change. So too this poet is creating a portrait of woman that she may be protected from the "envenomed years, / Whose tooth ••• Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong" (11. 12-14). "Beauty like hers is genius" (1. 1), but 1t requires the imaginative gift of the poet to preserve it for us. The lady for all her loveliness is like the poet, mortal. Baum does not feel that this poem fits into Part I; .yet it seems obvious to see it as part of the theme of beauty in "Youth and Change."

The idea of beauty as Rossetti presents it has some overtones of Platonism. Implied in the relationship between lady and Eros is her special knowledge of Eros which enables her to offer gifts of a unique quality. She seems to participate somehow in the essence of Love, or, to cast it in Platonic terms, the beloved appears to know the ideal Form of Love. This would account for the extraordinary way in which "The follies of Love" become "Love's true ministers" at her touch.

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