As one of the long, monumental poems of the nineteenth century, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The House of Life* has received due critical attention. In fact, the first literary notice of Rossetti ever to appear was prompted by the publication of the sixteen sonnets entitled "Of Life, Love, and Death", which came out in the *Fortnightly Review* in March 1869. The following year, when he published his *Poems*, containing "Sonnets and Songs, towards a work to be called 'The House of Life'", Rossetti, for the first time in any extensive way, exposed his poetry to the scrutiny of readers other than his personal friends. The most devastating attack on that volume—one which stunned Rossetti into an eleven-years' silence—was Robert Buchanan's, and his charge of "fleshliness" was levelled primarily at *The House of Life*.

1 The text of *The House of Life* used throughout is the edition of Paull Franklin Baum (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), which follows that in *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, edited with Preface and Notes by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911). Quotations from Rossetti's works other than *The House of Life* are taken from the latter volume, hereinafter cited as *Works*.

2 H. Buxton Forman, "Criticisms on Contemporaries: No. VI. The Rossettis. Part I. [Dante Gabriel Rossetti]", *Tinsley's Magazine*, v (September 1869), 142-51. It is not unlikely that Rossetti ventured into print at this time to advertise his forthcoming volume. Forman later reviewed Rossetti's *Poems* in *Tinsley's* (viii (March 1871), 150-60), and the review was combined with his earlier article to form the chapter on Rossetti in *Our Living Poets: An Essay in Criticism* (London: Tinsley, 1871).

3 xi, n.s., v. 266-73.

4 London: F. S. Ellis, 1870. For the editions of this volume, see p. 299, n. 1.

5 The several "trial books", or proof copies, will be discussed later in this paper. Rossetti had published poems previously in *The Germ* and other periodicals, but never so many. His only other volume, *The Early Italian Poets* (London: Smith, Elder, 1861), contained only translations.
House of Life sonnet “Nuptial Sleep”, which Rossetti dropped from the completed sequence.¹

Biographers and critics alike have been tantalized by Rossetti’s poem; it challenges their imaginations and taxes their ingenuities, but it refuses to yield up its meaning. Critics as diverse as Paull Franklin Baum, F. M. Tisdel, Ruth Wallerstein, C. M. Bowra, 

¹ There is some confusion about the dropping of “Nuptial Sleep” from The House of Life. Paull Franklin Baum, in his edition of the poem, says that “Nuptial Sleep” “... was not cancelled ... until after the sixth printing of the 1870 volume, in 1872” (p. 74); but in his later edition of Rossetti’s Poems, Ballads and Sonnets (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1937) he notes that “it was withdrawn in the seventh edition, 1872...” (p. 264). I have been unable to trace Poems through more than six editions, the number given by William Michael Rossetti in his Bibliography of the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1905, p. 5). There seems to be no agreement as to the date of the sixth edition. In the above-cited work, William Michael Rossetti says that “there were several editions (six up to 1874), of the volume of poems” (p. 19); in his Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer (London: Cassell, 1889), he closes his discussion of 1871 with a note from F. S. Ellis stating his intention of advertising a 6th edition (probably “... the second five hundred out of a set of a thousand copies which had been printed some while previously”, William reasons, p. 159). However, the 6th edition is announced as “now ready” in the advertisement section appended to the large paper edition of Dante and His Circle (London: Ellis, 1874). In any event, “Nuptial Sleep” had not been suppressed by the time of the 1873 Tauchnitz edition, prefaced with a Memoir by Franz Hüffer (Leipzig, vol. 1380). Oswald Doughty, in A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 2nd edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), says only that “Nuptial Sleep” was “omitted from all editions after 1879, because of Buchanan’s criticism, until 1904 and onwards” (p. 638 n.). The poem was first restored to The House of Life, piratically, in 1894, in an edition published by Copeland and Day of Boston. Announced as “Being now for the first time given in its full text”, this edition has a corrupt numbering system and includes as Part III the eleven songs which Rossetti incorporated into the 1870 version. “Nuptial Sleep” is generally numbered VIA in scholarly discussions, following the practice of William Michael Rossetti in 1904. As to the admissibility of the sonnet into the completed sequence of 1881, William Michael Rossetti seems to have vacillated in his critical and editorial position. In the Collected Works (London: Ellis, 1886), he says, after first defending the sonnet on moral grounds, that Rossetti’s own decision to withdraw the sonnet commands his own: “And, besides, it could not now be reintroduced into the House of Life, which he moulded into a complete whole without it, and would be misplaced if isolated by itself ...” (vol. i, p. xxxiii). By 1904, he had decided that restoring the “banished” sonnet was more important than any damage that might occur to the unity and structure of The House of Life; and he retained “Nuptial Sleep” in his final, and most authoritative, edition of his brother’s works in 1911.
J. R. Wahl, and Oswald Doughty— to mention the important and modern ones— have brought to the poem various critical techniques, but as yet neither critic nor biographer has produced a key that unlocks the door to The House of Life. Like "The Blessed Damozel", the poem remains essentially enigmatic. In contrast, Swinburne, with characteristic perspicacity, despite the excesses of his impressionistic criticism, suggests at once both the essence of the poem and its primary limitation, which has proved to be the stumbling-block to most critics—its harmonious diversity:

This "House of Life" has in it so many mansions, so many halls of state and bowers of music, chapels for worship and chambers for festival, that no guest can declare on a first entrance the secret of its scheme. Spirit and sense together, eyesight and hearing and thought, are absorbed in splendour of sounds and glory of colours distinguishable only by delight. But the scheme is solid and harmonious; there is no waste in this luxury of genius: the whole is lovelier than its loveliest part.

Because The House of Life contains no obvious external plan, many critics have refused to accept the poem as a unified whole. Even critics who find a kind of private or personal experiential unity in the poem, such as C. M. Bowra and Paull Franklin Baum, are not inclined to attribute to it a formal structure; they tend to dismiss Rossetti's subtitle, "A Sonnet-Sequence", as misleading and suggest in its place either "series" or, more recently, "cycle" as more accurately defining the relationship of the sonnets. This tendency has led critics to concentrate on individual sonnets within the sequence, to compartmentalize the poem, perhaps in the hope that a room-by-room analysis may eventually reveal the form and shape and structure of the edifice itself. The biographical critics, notably Rossetti's most authoritative biographer, Oswald Doughty, like to read the poem as autobiography, or, as they like to put it, utilizing Rossetti's own term for the Vita Nuova, "autopsychology".

1 Cited separately as used.
3 Douglas J. Robillard, "Rossetti's ' Willowwood ' Sonnets and the Structure of The House of Life", Victorian Newsletter, no. 22 (Fall 1962), pp. 5-9.
4 Works, p. 296, by which biographical critics mean simply, autobiographical. Cf. my application of the term to the sequence, p. 334.
exclusively on the love element in the poem, these critics see *The House of Life* as a biographical document from which the life of the poet can be recreated. These two views of the poem, both emphasizing the biographical importance of *The House of Life*, are antithetical only in that one is inductive, the other deductive: one utilizes known biographical facts for purposes of explication and sees the biographical element as constituting the primary unity of the poem; the other treats the poem as a kind of anagrammatical sonnet-memoir in which Rossetti recorded the crises of his life.

Both views beg the question of the artistic integrity of the poem itself by denying Rossetti a poetic sensibility sufficient to balance the content and the form of *The House of Life*.¹ The critical problem posed by the poem is succinctly stated by Howard Mumford Jones:

Researches into the number and nature of Rossetti's models and mistresses undoubtedly throw some light on the meaning of *The House of Life*, but if we knew as little about the personal life of its author as we know about the personal life of Shakespeare, *The House of Life*... would still remain a great, a beautiful, and an enigmatic work of art. Biography may explicate without explaining, and one of the present embarrassments of scholarship is that we know too much about the poets and not enough about the poetry.²

The purpose of the present paper is to re-examine *The House of Life* as a complete poem, as a finished work of art. Its first concern is to discuss the organizational structure of the poem, against the complex compositional history; to relate the meaning of the title to the form of the poem, and in turn to demonstrate that the form is integral to the structure as Rossetti intended it in his final version of 1881. Because what Paull Franklin Baum has called the "biographical imperative" has so clouded critical discussions of *The House of Life*, the second concern of this paper is to examine the relevance of the biographical claims made about

¹ This is the basic charge made by a recent critic. See Harold Weatherby, "Problems of Form and Content in the Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Victorian Poetry*, ii (Winter 1964), 11-19. "... Rossetti often failed to work out a proper relationship between what he had to say and the way he went about saying it" (p. 11).
the poem. The third concern, in the final section, is to suggest a reading of the poem based on the preceding discussion, concluding with an interpretive analysis of *The House of Life* as a kind of “In Memoriam”, a retrospective review of Rossetti’s life “transfigured” in artistic terms that are essentially elegiac.

I

It is not known precisely when Rossetti first conceived the idea of grouping certain sonnets and songs under a single title. William Sharp says that Rossetti “originally intended to call his Sonnet-Sequence *Sonnets and Songs of Love, Life, and Death*, but abandoned this title for the more epigrammatic one. . . .”¹ At any rate, it must be conceded that by March 1869, when he published the first sixteen sonnets in the *Fortnightly Review*, the possibility of grouping them had occurred to him. Douglas J. Robillard is one of the few recent critics to give attention to the structure of *The House of Life*. He sees these early sonnets as showing “the effect of deliberate choice and arrangement”² when they are viewed against both the 1870 fragment and the completed sequence of 1881. The 1870 version was carefully worked by Rossetti, as the various shiftings in arrangement in the several “Trial Books” for the 1870 volume make clear.³ The completed poem of 1881, included in *Ballads and Sonnets*, demonstrates further alterations in the order of the sonnets, adds several sonnets from the 1870 *Poems* which were not among the fifty sonnets “towards” *The House of Life*, and drops the eleven lyrics from the original plan of the poem, which was to include, probably in imitation of the *Vita Nuova*, both sonnets and songs. A point that some critics, including Robillard, perversely seem to ignore is that the 1881 version represents Rossetti’s final evolution of the scheme of the poem, and it is this version to which critical attention must be directed.

After Rossetti’s initial period of literary creativity, extending roughly from the period of the P.R.B. and *The Germ* to that of

² See p. 300, n. 3.
the second "Brotherhood" and The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, that is between 1848–56, Rossetti directed his energies primarily to painting, limiting his literary activities to translations, which culminated in 1861 in the publication of The Early Italian Poets. In 1862, as is well known, his despair over the death of his wife led him to entomb his poems with Elizabeth Siddal. Then, in 1868, Rossetti, who, as William Bell Scott said, "was a poet before he was a painter, and will probably retain his place as a poet when his pictures are mainly remembered by their poetic suggestions in design"; began to turn his attention again to verse. By August 1869, he had had privately printed, in the so-called "Penkill proofs", "some old and new poems—chiefly old", as he wrote his mother: "My object is to keep them by me as stock to be added to for a possible future volume." He continued to add poems, through a succession of three more proof-volumes by early October, and on the 25th of the month, he had his buried poems recovered from Elizabeth Siddal's grave. After two further proof-volumes, the poems were issued in the spring of 1870.

The years between 1868 and 1872 mark the second and major period of Rossetti's literary activity. During these years the majority of the sonnets finally included in The House of Life were written. Significantly, however, in the fragmentary version of 1870, Rossetti included both old and new sonnets; and in the final version he drew from the sonnets written during his last creative period, 1880–1. Thus, each version of The House of Life, and to a lesser extent the "Sixteen Sonnets", contains sonnets covering the whole of Rossetti's life to the point that the version was published. The poem is not therefore simply a record of one period of the poet's history; rather, it spans his entire career, proportionately balanced.

Although Rossetti's method—composition, cumulation,
publication—was sporadic, it is clear from his own statements that he was, from the outset, working within a general framework. He obviously regarded the 1870 version as fragmentary, as the title "Sonnets and Songs towards a work to be called 'The House of Life'" indicates. And in "The Stealthy School of Criticism," he refers to the portion published in 1870 as "my first published instalment of the whole work". Between 1870 and 1881, he decided to include only sonnets in the poem, and he subtitled the completed poem, "A Sonnet-Sequence". Although the finished poem, and the evolution of its development, point toward completeness, Hall Caine comments that "though called a full series of sonnets, there is no intimation that it is not fragmentary as to design...". Other critics have been unwilling to accept *The House of Life* as a sonnet sequence, arguing, with C. M. Bowra, that it differs from the Elizabethan series in not presenting a kind of real or fictitious story, and from later sequences in not recording a single crisis in the life of the poet. Bowra is undoubtedly correct in saying that the poem "reflects not a crisis but a lifetime", and it is a part of Rossetti's plan that the poem should do just that. It may be that his decision to use the term "sequence" was both late and arbitrary; it is certainly true that as a sequence *The House of Life* differs from the sequences of Shakespeare and Drayton, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti. But there are unifying qualities other than narrative which may link sonnets in a sequence. The most obvious unifying device, apart from the narrative, is theme, and sequences such as Donne's *Holy Sonnets* are akin to *The House of Life* in that they represent variations on a single theme rather than direct or indirect narration. The theme which Rossetti aimed at presenting in *The House of Life*, he clarified in his defence of the *Poems*, 1870, against Buchanan's attack: it was,

1 *Works*, p. 617.
4 See Caine, pp. 244, 255; Baum, *The House of Life*, pp. 35-36.
he said, "the analysis of passion and feeling".1 The one hundred and one sonnets of the completed version offer variations on that theme.

The basic reason for the pedantic quibblings over the use of the term "sequence" for The House of Life stems ultimately from a failure to recognize, quite apart from interpretation, Rossetti's purpose. His brother, William Michael Rossetti, provided in 1889 a prose paraphrase of The House of Life, together with a brief introduction, in which he denied unity to the series:

Besides the charge of obscurity, an objection which I have sometimes heard raised against The House of Life is its want of absolute cohesion; the series, it is averred, does not form one consecutive poem, but only so many sonnets of sufficiently diverse subject-matter, grouped together. Now this is abundantly true as a fact: whether it forms a solid objection either to the sonnets regarded as a series, or to the act of the author in thus combining them, is a question which readers will decide for themselves. . . . It may be true that he included in the series one or two compositions . . . which he would not have been disposed to publish at all unless as members of a sequence; but he certainly never professed, nor do I consider that he ever wished his readers to assume, that all the items had been primarily planned to form one connected and indivisible whole.2

Subsequent critics have echoed William Rossetti's point of view, but that Rossetti did not think of the sonnets as forming an indivisible whole can be shown to be manifestly untrue. Turning again to that most important critical document, "The Stealthy School of Criticism", it will be remembered that Rossetti was answering charges of "fleshliness" which Buchanan had made in connection with certain sonnets of The House of Life, "Jenny", and other poems. Buchanan singled out "Nuptial Sleep" as a particularly vile example of Rossetti's nastiness. Rossetti's primary defence against Buchanan was that he had unfairly taken his examples out of context:

A Sonnet entitled Nuptial Sleep is quoted and abused at page 338 of the Review, and is there dwelt upon as a "whole poem", describing "merely animal sensations". It is no more a whole poem, in reality, than is any single stanza of any poem throughout the book. The poem, written chiefly in sonnets, and of which this is one sonnet-stanza, is entitled The House of Life. . . .3

1 Works, p. 620.
3 Works, p. 617.
In his full-scale attack on Rossetti in the *Fleshly* pamphlet of 1872, Buchanan made capital of Rossetti’s insistence that *The House of Life* be considered an “uncompleted whole” and devoted an entire chapter to exposing the poem as a “hotbed of nasty phrases”.

Writing in the year of Rossetti’s death, William Sharp, one of the young friends of Rossetti’s later years, said that the best possible title for *The House of Life* would have been the present sub-title, “A Sonnet-Sequence”, “for the series is as much a poem of interlinked stanzas as if the latter followed each other without break of page in the manner of coherent verses . . .”

Part of the confusion seems to derive from the obscurity of the “epigrammatical” title itself—*The House of Life*; and perhaps the unity of the poem would be more readily conceded if Rossetti had let the basic themes of the poem serve, as Sharp says he once intended, and as the *Fortnightly* sonnets confirm, for the title. The consensus among commentators is that the title derives from astrology, in which the chief of the twelve houses is the House of Life. William Michael Rossetti explains that Rossetti was always “fond of anything related to astrology or horoscopy”:

and I understand him to use the term *The House of Life* as a zodiacal adept uses the term “the house of Leo”. As the sun is said to be “in the house of Leo”, so (as I construe it) Rossetti indicates “Love, Change, and Fate”, as being “in the House of Life”; or, in other words, a Human Life is ruled and pervaded by the triple influence of Love, Change, and Fate.

There seems to be no recorded evidence of Rossetti’s actual intention in choosing the title, *The House of Life*. William Michael Rossetti’s explanation is recondite enough to be plausible, but it is only a supposition; and in all likelihood he expropriated it from Hall Caine, another young friend of Rossetti’s later years, who commented that “the title is an astronomical, not an architectural figure.” It is precisely this structural implication of the controlling metaphor of the epigrammatical title that militates against an astrological interpretation. No critic thus far has

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2 Sharp, p. 409.
3 *DGR: D&W*, p. 183.
4 Caine, p. 30.
successfully related *The House of Life* as an astrological image to Rossetti's poem. Even Paull Franklin Baum, the best exegete of the poem, was unable to apply the title in any meaningful way. He concluded his brief discussion of the title with the statement that "Rossetti possessed a great deal of out-of-the-way information, but it is doubtful if he attached any specifically 'scientific' meaning to the phrase 'house of life'".¹ Swinburne, in his review of Rossetti's *Poems*, pointed, in praising *The House of Life*, to an architectural interpretation of the poem's structure, with its "mansions", "halls of state", "bowers of music", "chapels for worship and chambers for festival".² His interpretation also provides a suggestive clue to the interrelationship between the individual sonnets within the sequence, by emphasizing the diversity of the several groupings and by qualifying the emotional range of the sonnets within the total framework of the house image. In the Prefatory Note to the Siddal Edition of *The House of Life*, William Rossetti, who, it will be recalled, saw no basic unity in the poem, dismissed the idea of a formal structure and abandoned the poem to the ingenuity of the individual reader:

... I know of no reason why a poet who has written various poems at various times, upon themes not incompatible but sometimes different—all the poems being in one same metrical form—should not link them together under a common title, and present them to the world as having any such amount of inter-relation as may be found in them upon perusal.³

The final, 1881 version of *The House of Life* is, however, a closely-structured poem, consisting of 101 sonnets ("Nuptial Sleep" having been suppressed), divided into two parts: Part I entitled "Youth and Change", Part II, "Change and Fate", the whole introduced by a sonnet on the sonnet. William Michael Rossetti comments that "in this introductory sonnet the Poet indicates his conception of the quality and function of the Sonnet as a form of poetic invention and composition".⁴ Many critics have extolled this sonnet as a particularly apt and succinct

¹ Baum, *The House of Life*, p. 34.
² See p. 300, n. 2. Without emphasizing too insistently the analogy, it is worth recalling that the word "stanza" in Italian means *room*. Compare Rossetti's comment in reply to Buchanan, p. 305.
³ London: Ellis and Elvey, 1900, p. 11.
⁴ *DGR*: *D&W*, p. 184.
definition of the form, but, as Paul Franklin Baum correctly observes, it is far more applicable to the sonnets within the sequence than it is to the sonnet as genre, for the definition fails to distinguish the sonnet from other lyric forms except by its condensation. As Baum puts it:

Are not all such poems a moment's monument—the expression of a single incident or of a concentrated mood? Are sonnets any more or less revelatory of the "Power" that begets them or the "Soul" that produces them? Do not other poems treat of Life, Love, and Death?¹

Rossetti's familiarity with the sonnet was such as to make him almost an authority on the form.² He had translated the sonnets of the early Italian poets—of Dante and his contemporaries—and he knew thoroughly the sonnets of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and the later nineteenth-century sonneteers. In fact, so seminal was the form in Rossetti's mind that at least one of his great oils—the replica of The Blessed Damozel which he made for Frederick Leyland (now in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) in 1879, and for which he designed the frame—suggests strongly in its bipartite structure, consisting of picture and predella, the octave and sestet of the sonnet form.

The structural similarity between The House of Life and the sonnet form is immediately apparent. Divided into two parts, the 101 sonnets are proportionately grouped so that Part I contains fifty-nine sonnets (sixty with "Nuptial Sleep" restored), approximately four sevenths of the total number, which is the ratio of the octave to the sestet within the Petrarchan sonnet. In addition, there is in the thematic continuity of the idea of "change" which links the two parts, the same kind of variation on original pattern which frequently characterizes the Petrarchan sonnet. Another analogy is to be found in the division itself.

¹ Baum, The House of Life, p. 60.
² Hall Caine, in his Sonnets of Three Centuries: A Selection, Including Many Examples Hitherto Unpublished (London: Stock, 1882), acknowledges Rossetti's mastery of the sonnet form; and in his Recollections, Chapter VIII is devoted almost exclusively to Rossetti's critical comments on the sonnet, excerpted from his letters to Caine. As children, all three Rossettis had played at making sonnet bouts-rimés, at which Dante Gabriel was most proficient; as mature writers, all three devoted a considerable portion of their creative energies to the writing of sonnets.
which parallels Rossetti’s almost unique characteristic among English sonnet writers of breaking the sonnet between the two halves.¹

Rossetti may have taken the idea of imposing a sonnet-like structure on The House of Life from two similar examples in Christina Rossetti’s 1881 volume, A Pageant and Other Poems. “Monna Innominata” and “Later Life” are both sonnet sequences, the first containing fourteen sonnets, the second twenty-eight. Christina Rossetti subtitled “Monna Innominata”, “A Sonnet of Sonnets”, and “Later Life” she called “A Double Sonnet of Sonnets”.² Rossetti’s scheme for The House of Life differs from his sister’s grouping of her sonnets, of course, in that it abandons the precision of numbers and substitutes in its place the external form of the Italian sonnet.

The Introductory Sonnet, within this general structure, then, becomes a commentary not on the generic form of the sonnet but on the individual sonnets comprising the larger sonnet, which is itself metaphorically translated into the image of the house. Professor Baum, in his notes on this sonnet, cautions that its role in prefacing the series is too frequently lost sight of.³ In his note on the poem in his edition of Rossetti’s Poems, Ballads and Sonnets, Baum says:

It describes the function of the sonnet as he will use it in the Sequence: each is to be, whatever its thought or mood, the memorial of a special moment. The emphasis is therefore on the stanzas as single entities rather than on their continuous development of clearly related themes.⁴

While this reading of the sonnet is undoubtedly correct, it is also possible to extend the application to the entire sequence, that is to the whole sonnet of sonnets. The juxtaposition of Time in

¹ In his Recollections, Hall Caine observes: “Rossetti was not the first English writer who deliberatively separated octave and sestet, but he was the first who obeyed throughout a series of sonnets the canon of the contemporary structure requiring that a sonnet shall present the twofold facet of a single thought or emotion. This form of the sonnet Rossetti was at least the first among English writers entirely to achieve and perfectly to render” (p. 31).

² Although unpublished until 1881, both poems appear to have been written much earlier. For a discussion of “Monna Innominata” see Lona Mosk Packer, Christina Rossetti (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 226; for “Later Life”, pp. 300–1.


⁴ p. 259, n. 1.
the octave with the figure of the sonnet as a monument of a moment suggests the wider interpretation of the moment as movement, as in momentum, referring to a course of events extending over a prolonged period of time, such as life itself. Thus, while each of the sonnets may be, as W. M. Rossetti says, "occasional", commemorating poetically a specific "passion" or "feeling", associated with a specific moment, the larger sonnet celebrates not the ephemeral and evanescent sensations stimulated by particular occurrences but the residual emotional recollections of a lived life. The larger sonnet is the frame, or house, in which that life is contained.

_The House of Life_, then, is not simply an accidental and haphazard collocation of sonnets thrown together without thought, plan, or coherence. Rather, it is a highly, if somewhat artificially, structured poem, worked over a period of twelve years, but expanded in scope, as is evident in Rossetti's inclusion of both old and new sonnets, to cover the whole of the poet's life. The poem does reflect, as C. M. Bowra says, "not a [single] crisis but a lifetime". It is, as W. M. Rossetti notes, "a sort of record of his feelings and experiences, his reading of the problems of life—an inscribed tablet of his mind. . . ."

With one final quotation this section can be concluded. Paull Franklin Baum, using an argument far different from that outlined above, observes that _The House of Life_ is "the house of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's life, the story of the poet's own experience . . .". Baum's concluding statement in this passage leads logically to the next aspect of the poem which must be considered—the relative emphasis which the biographical element assumes within the poem. _The House of Life_, Baum concludes, records the story of the poet's own experience—not a story complete in all its details, because such would be impossible with Rossetti's conception of art, but a complete revelation of his heart, its joy and its suffering; and yet not of his heart alone, but of his other emotions as well. It has little unity of a formal kind; on the contrary, its unity is the unity of Rossetti's life.

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1 _DGR: D&W_, p. 181.  
2 p. 203.  
4 _The House of Life_, p. 46.
Although there is in *The House of Life* a structural unity which has not previously been recognized, it must also be admitted that, in part, the unity of the poem is, as Baum says, "the unity of Rossetti's life". But in allowing *The House of Life* biographical significance, it is important to reiterate, with Baum, that there is in literature no "biographical imperative"; and, with Jones, that "biography may explicate without explaining".

The tendency to interpret *The House of Life* in literal, autobiographical terms has characterized critic and biographer alike. Rossetti's own aversion to biographers, the obscurantism of his "philadelphic guardian",¹ the ambiguity of Rossetti's several comments about *The House of Life*, and the paucity of factual detail documenting Rossetti's love life, especially the relationship with Jane Morris—all have served to aggravate the curiosity of his readers and have led the commentators to search the poetry for confirmation of biographical assumptions impossible to validate from other sources. The almost necrophilic romanticism attached to the interment of his poems with Elizabeth Siddal and their subsequent recovery from her coffin has served to heighten the preoccupation of readers with Rossetti's early love and marriage, and has led to a plethora of morbid speculation on the nature of their relationship, the events surrounding her death, and the effects of her death (was it suicide?) on Rossetti's successive physical debilitation: ill health, insomnia, paranoia, addiction to chloral, attempted suicide in 1872, and subsequent death at 54.

Early commentators tended, like Ruth Wallerstein (1927), to read *The House of Life* sonnets as "autobiographical, telling in various forms the story of Rossetti's love for his wife".² But even to the most casual reader of the sequence, it is apparent that not all the sonnets in what may be called the "story" or narrative line of *The House of Life* refer to the same woman. The recognition of this fact led logically to the question of the identity

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of the "New Love", first introduced in Sonnet XXIV. *The House of Life*, then, posed a biographical mystery which it became necessary to solve.

In the first extended critical study of the poem, in 1917, Frederick Tisdel attacked this problem with a view to throwing "light on the mystery of the poet's life" and "to help clear up some of the obscurities of the sonnets". Since, for Tisdel, as for most later critics, the sonnets stood as more or less autobiographical vignettes "occasioned", as William Michael Rossetti said, by some actual incident or by some dominant emotion, a study of the chronology of the sequence might bring them into closer connection with the poet's life. Drawing primarily on William Michael Rossetti's three sets of dates for Rossetti's poems and on evidence supplied by other sources, such as Rossetti's letters to Hall Caine and William Bell Scott, or on the known dates of initial publication, Tisdel established a chronological arrangement (which has subsequently been altered by later critics) for *The House of Life*. If his compositionally chronological arrangement were correct, he reasoned, the known facts of the poet's life ought to give some clue to the interpretation of the sonnets written at a particular period, and the sonnets in turn ought to throw light on the inner and more profound emotional experiences of the poet.

Although Tisdel, after some desultory application of this method to the poem, concluded only that the sonnets take on a "profound human interest and make more clear and intelligible the poet's melancholy and desolation and despair", he opened what may be called the back door to the poem, through which most subsequent critics have entered *The House of Life*.

Hall Caine, in his revision of his *Recollections*, offered the first veiled account of the dilemma which constitutes the principal biographical "mystery" of Rossetti's life:

1 "Rossetti's 'House of Life'," *Modern Philology*, xv (September 1917), 258.
2 *Works*, p. 651.
3 *DGR: D&W* (1889); *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Classified Lists of His Writings with the Dates* (London: privately printed, 1906); *Table of Contents, Works* (1911).
4 In Hall Caine's *Recollections* (1882), and *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott and Notices of His Artistic and Poetical Circle of Friends, 1830-1882*, edited by W. Minto (London: Osgood, 1892).
5 p. 276. 6 p. 84.
If I had now to reconstruct his life afresh... it would be the figure of a man who, after engaging himself to one woman in all honour and good faith, had fallen in love with another, and then gone on to marry the first out of a mistaken sense of loyalty and a fear of giving pain instead of stopping, as he must have done if his will had been stronger and his heart sterner, at the door of the church itself.... It would be the figure of a man who, coming home late at night to find his wife dying, probably by her own hand, was overwhelmed with remorse, not perhaps for any unkindness, any want of attention, still less any act of infidelity on his part, but for the far deeper wrong of failure of affection for the one being to whom affection was most due.¹

The hunt for the innominata was thus launched by Caine. Her presence, though acknowledged, was not pursued by Tisdel, but his compositional chronology of the sequence made the identification of the most probable candidate a relatively easy task. When Paull Franklin Baum published his edition of *The House of Life* in 1928, he first introduced the New Beloved into the poem as a *dramatis persona*, though he was careful never to reveal her identity. In his later work on the poem, in 1937, Baum still refrained from a direct identification. His reticence is not simply coyness or a deference to taste; it is a refusal to construct biographical fact on poetic evidence. He was content to relate "what he knows, to try to avoid the temptation to hint more than is actually known".² Actually, in his handling of *The House of Life*, Baum's whole position vis-à-vis the relation of biography to the poem is ambivalent. On the one hand, he maintains that we are justified in reading the poem autobiographically; on the other, he is thoroughly cognizant of the dangers inherent in carrying such a reading to its logical conclusion.

With less trepidation, Rossetti's most recent and best biographer, Oswald Doughty, gave the New Beloved a name in 1949, though his "evidence" was no less circumstantial or "poetic" than Baum's two decades before. To Doughty, "*The House of Life* and Rossetti's biography are interdependent, each in some degree illuminating the other".³ Biographical necessity forces Doughty, not infrequently, to reconstruct from the poetry those aspects of Rossetti's life that are obscured. Although Doughty, in his Preface, identifies Rossetti's passion

² Baum, *The House of Life*, p. 49.
³ *A Victorian Romantic*, pp. 384-5.
for Jane Morris as one of the "almost inescapable conclusions" upon which the "facts overwhelmingly insisted," there is little more than speculative evidence, chronological accident, and biographical recreation from the poetry to support what seems to be not so much a conclusion as a forced thesis. Further chronological support was supplied by John Robert Wahl, a student of Professor Doughty, in his edition of *The Kelmscott Love Sonnets of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, itself built on the conclusion-thesis established by Doughty in his biography. Given the thesis as established fact, a later critic, W. D. Paden, was able to extend its application to account not only for the confusion within *The House of Life* itself, but to explain Rossetti's physical and psychological decline after the publication of *Poems, 1870*:

... In the series of sonnets and lyrics called *The House of Life* he placed a few poems he had written to Lizzie among many that he had recently written to Jane, for did not Love include them both? Also, since many men, after reading a number of poems about a beloved, would ask (or at least ask themselves) who she might be, it was prudent to preface the collection by a note which without actual mendacity would encourage the supposition that most of the poems had been written before Lizzie's death. His present love must be dissembled; Jane's good name must be protected.

But by these actions he aggravated the tensions in his mind. Steadily there rose into his awareness the conviction of his guilt, once enforced by his wild grief for Lizzie (whom he had betrayed for Jane) and now inflamed by his love for Jane (whom he had betrayed for Lizzie); it grew darker as his mind laboriously sought some image as a vehicle for his haunting sense of ever-increasing anxiety, and took shape as the belief that by desecrating Lizzie's grave in order to celebrate his love for Jane, he had drawn a curse upon himself.3

The expectation that documentation for the Rossetti-Jane Morris affair would be forthcoming with the opening of the restricted letters last year at the British Museum has not been realized.4 Among most Pre-Raphaelite specialists the consensus credits the liaison, but as yet the evidence to support it is exceedingly tenuous, although their are several indirect allusions

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1 Doughty, p. 8.
3 "La Pia de'Tolomei by Dante Gabriel Rossetti", *Register of The Museum of Art* (University of Kansas), ii (November 1958), 14.
4 One hundred and fourteen letters to Jane Morris, deposited in The British Museum in 1939 by Dr. Robert Steele were released from restriction on 27 January 1964, fifty years after the death of Jane Morris.
in the letters of William Morris, edited by Philip Henderson. That the relationship was more than friendship seems highly probable given the propinquity between the two, the number of Rossetti’s pictures for which Jane Morris posed, and the not inconsiderable correspondence, which, however unrevealing, indicates a privately shared and perhaps clandestine union. Obviously, an established and fully documented relationship between Rossetti and the wife of one of his closest associates would have immense biographical relevance. But the question to be answered in connection with The House of Life pertains not to the biographical relevance, but merely to the critical acceptability of using the poem to substantiate biographical speculation. In the first report on the Rossetti-Jane Morris letters in the British Museum, Lady Mander (R. Glynn Grylls) notes, with apparent disappointment, that the letters are “inconclusive, providing no evidence to support the conjectures of contemporaries and those survivors of the period who could speak with authority...”. After a brief analysis, she concludes:

The long-awaited letters answer none of our questions. More important, there remain Rossetti’s sonnets and his pictures for which Jane Morris was the model.

The House of Life, then, at least for Rossetti’s next biographer, promises fair to remain a biographical, rather than a poetic, document.

It is not infrequently suggested that Rossetti was consciously deceptive in his comments about The House of Life, that he purposely dissembled in order to protect both his own privacy and Jane Morris. Doughty, for example, argues that in the prefatory note to the completed poem in Ballads and Sonnets,

1 The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends (London: Longmans, 1950). See especially Morris’s letter to Mrs. Coronio, 25 November [1872], in which, recapitulating his 1871 trip to Iceland, he says: “I am going to try to get to Iceland next year... I know clearer now perhaps than then what a blessing & help last year’s journey was to me; what horrors it saved me from” (p. 51.)

2 In addition to the letters in the British Museum, there are in the collection of Mrs. Janet Camp Troxell of New Haven, Connecticut, thirty-six letters from Jane Morris to Rossetti.


4 Lady Mander’s biography appeared too late to be considered in this paper.
Rossetti attempted to mislead his readers by saying that "many among those [sonnets] now first added are still the work of earlier years". Doughty interprets Rossetti's use of the term "earlier" as meaning that the poems "were written in youth, and so would be interpreted, biographically, if at all, as inspired by the woman who became the poet's wife". It may as logically be countered that Rossetti's statement is, in fact, true; that the caution may be a conventional one used by poets to indicate that the poems printed at a given time do not all belong to the same period of composition. After all, twenty-eight of the new poems added to the sequence date from a period a decade previous to the publication of Ballads and Sonnets. The argument that Rossetti was consciously trying to hide the fact that many of these poems were inspired by Jane Morris seems hardly tenable. In the light of the difficulty that later biographers and critics have had authenticating the liaison, it surely cannot have been broadcast during Rossetti's own lifetime. In fact, it is doubtful whether, except for family and close friends, the directly personal references in The House of Life were in any way a concern of contemporary readers of the poem.

The principal contribution of the biographical critics to an understanding of Rossetti's work has been to establish with reasonable accurateness the compositional chronology of The House of Life. But, in considering the poem almost exclusively from this chronological vantage, the biographical critics have failed to consider the poem as a finished work of art. They seem to have lost sight of the fact that in rearranging the sonnets in their final form, Rossetti had artistic motives overriding those designs at mystification which have been attributed to him. There is, I think, little obfuscation in his notebook entry addressed "To the Reader of The House of Life": "The 'life' involved is neither my life nor your life, but life representative, as tripled with love and death." In the final manuscript of Ballads and Sonnets, Rossetti inscribed a prefatory note containing

1 Doughty, p. 380.  
2 Works, p. 638.  
3 Formerly belonging to Charles Fairfax Murray and now in the Library of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. This is probably the note Rossetti discussed with Watts-Dunton in their correspondence in the summer of 1881.
"disavowal of personality in the sonnets": "To speak in the first person is often to speak most vividly: but these emotional poems are in no sense 'occasional.'" After emphasizing the "representative" quality of the "Life" involved, which is associated with love and death, aspiration and foreboding, ideal art and beauty—the three major subjects of The House of Life sonnets—Rossetti concludes: "Whether the recorded moment exist in the region of fact or of thought is a question indifferent to the Muse, so long only as her touch can quicken it."

As a statement of that artistic process of transmutation which Rossetti, in the opening sonnet of Part II (LX), calls "Art's transfiguring essence", the above quotation defines accurately the vitalizing force whereby the imagination "esemplastically" (to borrow Coleridge's term) converts the dross of actual experience into the gold of art. Many critics argue that these "disavowals"—which, it must be remembered, Rossetti did not finally append to the 1881 version of The House of Life—are simply the poet's attempt to remove himself from an obviously autobiographical poem. But the problem is one of emphasis. In stressing the generalized life recorded in the sequence and in denying the "occasional" quality of the emotions of the sonnets, Rossetti is suggesting, perhaps prescribing, a reading of The House of Life as a complete poem, which the fragmented readings of the chronological-biographical critics subvert and distort. William Michael Rossetti records, on the authority of Charles Fairfax Murray, that Rossetti "had on one occasion expressed a certain inclination to write and publish some sort of exposition of The House of Life". That such a performance was alien to Rossetti's nature, even had he lived to accomplish it, is perfectly true. In a prose scrap in one of the notebooks, Rossetti offered the only apologia requisite or possible for the poet:

Why should an inventor usurp the critics' share of function by replying to them? or refuse to admit, as they practically assert, that he was born to do work which they were born to talk about?

1 Baum, The House of Life, p. 47.
3 Works, p. 636.
Like Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Rossetti's *The House of Life* was composed over a period of years and subjected to considerable revision and rearrangement before its final publication; like *In Memoriam*, *The House of Life* reflects the personal struggles and crises of its author's life; like *In Memoriam*, *The House of Life* makes an aesthetic as well as a personal statement; like *In Memoriam*, *The House of Life* is essentially elegiac, though it differs from Tennyson's poem and the other major elegies in English literature both in its form and in the directness with which the poet makes his personal statement.

The sonnet sequence is not altogether alien to the presentation of elegiac themes; in fact, most sequences in their emphasis on mutability and death as the two principal enemies of love closely echo the "formal" elegies. And in stressing the poet's individual response to crisis, and in their commemorative element, the elegies are closely akin to the sequences. Both media are basically subjective, both are semi-narrative; both present dramatically the poet's attitudes and his responses to the recurrent, unalterable, and antithetical themes of life: youth and age—life and death—time and timelessness—permanence and mutability—love and loss. Traditionally, the point of division between the elegy and the sonnet sequence has been in the preoccupation of the sonneteer with the ubiquitous problem of love's vicissitudes and the celebration of the beloved; the elegy, on the other hand, has as its initial aim the commemoration of the worthy dead. Indirection characterizes both forms, since it is the sublimation of the immediate subject, the distillation of generalized meaning from particular experience, that accounts for the universality of the elegy and the sonnet sequence. Through indirection, the sonneteer, though usually focusing on individuated experience, conveys the essence of love, and portrays an idealized beloved; the elegist transcends the restrictive personality of an Edward King, a Keats, or a Clough, finding in their loss a universal truth about the human condition. The roundness, the completeness, the microcosmic quality of both the elegy and the sequence make them able
vehicles for the comprehensive, synthesized view of experience which so frequently impels them.

Despite the subjectivity of the elegy and the sequence, they cannot generally be read with an exclusive autobiographical emphasis, precisely because of the universal quality of their themes. The dangers inherent in biographical "in-reading" can be surveyed readily in the scholarship on Shakespeare's sonnets, from Oscar Wilde to A. L. Rowse; but this is not to imply that either form obviates personal statement or the revelation of the poet's ideas and philosophy of experience. Milton, after all, hardly knew Edward King; and the romantic elegists—among whom Arnold must, paradoxically, be included—conventionally used the elegized subject as only a kind of springboard for the projection of self. However, even the romantic elegists did not resort to the open expression of personality which is apparent in In Memoriam.

Following convention, Tennyson installs Hallam as the elegized object of In Memoriam, but the figure of Hallam which emerges is almost totally depersonalized. As the source of the poet's overwhelming grief, Hallam (or at least his loss) is symbolically portrayed; as the means of the poet's redemption, both psychological and spiritual, he assumes proportions virtually allegorical. But Hallam is only the indirect subject of the elegy, for In Memoriam deals principally with Tennyson; it is an apologia for Tennyson's rather than Hallam's life. The autobiographical elements in the poem, however, are not intended to be taken at face value—as such they are meaningless: "'I',' Tennyson said, "'is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking thro' him.'" ¹ The emotional course of the poem—from death, through grief and despair, to the promise of a new life, based, as Tennyson insists, on "Faith in a God of Love"—becomes what A. C. Bradley (the best commentator on the poem) has called "a sort of Divine Comedy, cheerful at the close".² Rossetti's admonition concerning The House of

Life may with equal applicability be directed to the readers of *In Memoriam*: "The 'life' involved is neither my life nor your life, but life representative..."¹ The reader who approaches *In Memoriam* only as a means of recreating Tennyson's life will find the poem a tenuous document indeed. Without pressing too closely the analogy between *In Memoriam* and *The House of Life*, it is clear that the biographical problems presented by both poems are similar and that the subject of both poems is, to an extent that must be critically discerned, the life of the poet sublimated through the "transfiguring essence of art". Neither poem can be read as actual biography; each reveals its author's ideas through indirection by focusing on an objectified subject which provides the central unity of the poem: Hallam, the elegized hero of *In Memoriam*; Love, the commemorated ideal of *The House of Life*. The obvious distinctions between the two poems lie in their divergent forms which, it has been suggested, frequently converge thematically.

It is necessary before proceeding to an analysis of *The House of Life* as an elegy, briefly to recapitulate the earlier conclusions made in this paper regarding the form and structure of the poem, for it is in relation to that form and structure that the new reading has most relevance. The architectural interpretation of "house" in the title suggests an external structure or "frame" for the sonnet sequence. It should be noted that the image, unlike *tree* or *plant* or *leaf* (as Whitman uses it) is non-organic, in both the physical and the critical sense, and that it comprehends a unity appropriate to a long poem comprising more than one hundred smaller units. Swinburne, speaking of the several and various "rooms" of the house, envisioned a structure whose unifying characteristic was its diversity, a structure diametrically opposite, say, to Cummings's metaphor in *The Enormous Room*. The "rooms" in *The House of Life* are as various as the experiences which transpire within them, that is, as various as the individuated "moments" of a lifetime. Yet, within the total complex of the poem, those experiences—and they are themselves selective—coalesce, fuse, and are integrated into the whole. No single

¹ *Works*, p. 638.
room stands outside the house; no experience is extraneous to the makeup of life; all are encompassed within the architectural frame. The Introductory Sonnet serves as a kind of prologue to prepare the reader for the house; as such, it functions not unlike the prologue to *In Memoriam*. Like that poem, the Introductory Sonnet fuses form and function in a kind of thematic précis of the larger poem, and, itself a sonnet, it announces the subjects both of the individual sonnets within the sequence and of the larger sonnet, or house, in which they are framed. That the formal structure of *The House of Life* is that of the sonnet, divided proportionately into two parts that suggest the octave-sestet structure of the Petrarchan sonnet is consistent with the seminal quality of the sonnet form in Rossetti's mind and also with the bipartite balancing of theme which is developed within the two parts of *The House of Life*. This sonnet-structure at the same time clarifies the meaning of the Introductory Sonnet on the sonnet. *The House of Life*, then, is a sonnet of sonnets, arrived at after several tentative arrangements with which Rossetti experimented over a period of approximately twelve years. The poem, consisting of numerous "monuments" of "moments", is itself, finally, a retrospective "monument" of the synthesized moments, or, in other words, of the continuum, of Rossetti's life.

Most previous analyses of *The House of Life* disregard Rossetti's careful structuring of the sonnets within the sequence and concentrate either on the individual sonnets considered chronologically or on groups or sub-sequences within the poem which seem to be related thematically. The weaknesses of the chronological-biographical approach have already been sufficiently indicated. The most provocative analysis yet to appear—that by Douglas J. Robillard—considers the "Willowwood" sonnets (XLIX-LII), which appeared in all three versions, as "central... to the pattern of the work...a pivot on which the whole

1 See p. 300, n. 3. Although he did not develop the idea, Robillard also suggested elegiac overtones to *The House of Life*: "It is not, strictly speaking, an elegy, nor did Rossetti probably mean it to be. But it does partake of some of the machinery of the elegy—notably in its passages of grief for the loss of the beloved, in the constantly personal note of remorse for loss and wasted opportunity, in the range of mood and idea typical of the cyclical poem—and herein lies at least some clue to its pattern" (p. 6).
structure turns". Robillard's discussion of the dramatic importance of the "Willowwood" sonnets is ingenious; less convincing, however, is his failure to indicate in clear terms the structure of the sequence of which "Willowwood" forms the "centerpiece". The principal limitation of his analysis is that it focuses exclusively on the 1870 fragment, which Robillard feels contains "essentially what Rossetti wanted in story and mood". He sees the 1869 *Fortnightly* sonnets, which are introduced by the "Willowwood" group, as forming the nucleus of *The House of Life*. In his view, apparently, the 1870, and especially the 1881, ordering of the poem introduced many sonnets which simply filled gaps in the cyclical pattern which Robillard imposes on the original sixteen sonnets. Since "Willowwood" is climactic, the sonnets following it (in both versions) seem to constitute a "grab-bag stuffed with whatever Rossetti had in the way of leftovers...". At best, Robillard feels, these sonnets give the poem only a kind of "mechanical" balance. For all his emphasis on the order of *The House of Life*, Robillard, in effect, dismisses, at the expense of Rossetti's own structure, the entire second half of the poem. And because Rossetti's structure overshifts the "symmetrical" balance of his own nine cyclical groupings, he resorts to the old subterfuge of chronological evidence: "... If we accept Doughty's account, this change [the divisioning of the sonnets into two parts] may be explained as a biographical problem rather than a structural one."

What is long overdue is an analysis of *The House of Life* based on the final structure which Rossetti evolved in the 1881 *Ballads and Sonnets* version of the poem. The major themes of *Life, Love*, and *Death*, are introduced in the Introductory Sonnet on the sonnet: controlling themes, they define not only the subjects upon which the individual sonnets offer variations; they are also the sources of the larger sonnet's unity. The division of the poem into two parts—"Youth and Change", "Change and Fate"—contributes further to the unity of the poem by balancing the two contrasting halves of life—youth and age—the single constant of which is *Change*. Youth, the subject of Part I, is synony-

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1 Robillard, p. 6.
2 Ibid. p. 8.
3 Ibid. p. 7.
mous with Love, and the inexperience of youth supports an optimistic hope in Love that by the end of Part I has begun to be overtaken by an awareness of mutability and ultimate death. Fate is inexorable: it is the price man pays for the innocence of youth; but it is at the same time a vital balancing force, without which the maturer view of experience—leading at the end of The House of Life to "The One Hope"—would be virtually impossible. Thematically, then, The House of Life is poetically conventional: its thematic progression—from innocent joy and hope, through disillusionment brought on by the recognition of the evanescence of beauty and love, to an ultimate acceptance of a transcending hope, a higher faith—echoes recurrent themes in romantic poetry. At the same time, the poem utilizes all the stereotypes of earlier sonnet sequences.

One aspect of The House of Life that is frequently overlooked is the retrospective mood of the entire poem. While the chronological-biographical critics emphasize the occasionality of the individual sonnets as monuments of separate moments in Rossetti's life, the poem as Rossetti finally shaped it transcends the immediacy of experiences and emotions recounted in the separate stanza-sonnets. Both Part I, which carries the burden of the narrative, and Part II, which is largely reflective, look back—or, perhaps, more accurately, down—through memory and time on the life transfigured in the poem. The life transfigured is obviously that of the poet, but in surveying past experience from the vantage of maturity, Rossetti altered radically the point of view. By selection, rearrangement, and grouping, he has upset the biographically sequential ordering of experience. And by substituting a fictive or virtual life for a literal one, he has shifted the contextual relevance of the individual sonnets from the actual occasion which inspired them to their positioning within the complete sequence. This retrospective mood is one of the

1 That "Youth" and "Love" are in fact synonymous can be clearly demonstrated from those sonnets in Part I in which for "Love" Rossetti substituted "Youth" in the title (see the notes to the Appendix). It would seem that Rossetti must originally have intended to subtitle Part I "Love and Change"; William Michael Rossetti invariably refers to it by that title, even in the notes to the 1911 Works (p. 651).
principal elements contributing to the elegiac quality of *The House of Life*.

*The House of Life* has been called a "House of Love" by many critics, and, indeed, the poem is a love poem. The individual lyrics treat the several aspects of love, both physical and spiritual, but the sequence itself is abstract and idealistic. Despite the hyper-realism of some of the descriptions of physical love—in such sonnets as "Nuptial Sleep" (VIA), its companion-piece, "Supreme Surrender" (VII), "The Kiss" (VI), and "Silent Noon" (XIX)—Rossetti carefully keeps indistinct the portraits of both beloveds. The real-life Elizabeth Siddal and Jane Morris emerge, if at all, only as physical manifestations of Love idealized in the poem. Each is hyperbolized in conventional sonnet terms: the beauty of one is genius (XVIII); the other is Juno, Pallas, and Venus, fused into the perfection of another Helen (XXXIII).

The narrative of the two beloveds occupies the first forty-five sonnets of the sequence, from "Love Enthroned" to "Secret Parting". In the opening sonnet, Love reigns supreme over all other "Powers [that] the heart finds fair". Truth and Hope, and Fame—indeed, Youth, and even Life itself—are all subsumed in Love. The apotheosizing of Love is followed by "Bridal Birth" (II) and "Love's Testament" (III), in which the poet and the Beloved become, sacramentally, both the parents and the children of Love: Love is born of their passion, and they in turn are reborn spiritually through "Death's nuptial change", from the union of Love and Death. Sonnets IV through IX celebrate the sensual joys of physical love, and in Sonnet X the poet eternizes the Beloved in "The Portrait":

Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

Sonnets XI through XXII are tributes to the lovers' shared activities: a love letter, a walk, reciprocal vows, a day of love—including "Silent Noon" (XIX) and "Gracious Moonlight" (XX)—the Beloved's beauty, and Love itself, "our light at night and shade at noon" (XXII). Sonnet XXIII is transitional for there occurs the first hint of distraction or discontent as the poet
is tempted by the attractiveness of other charms, by "Love's Baubles" proffered by a lady in Love's retinue. Love chastizes the poet:

"Lo! when the hand is hers,
Follies of love are love's true ministers."

Sonnet XXIV contains the first reference to a "New Love" and to "Old Love fugitive," shrouded in night-rack. Obscurely couched in a simile, the reference simply documents a generalization made about mutability, but this sonnet, which Rossetti originally entitled "Pride of Youth and Change," rationalizes the fickleness of the youthful heart, perhaps not without a tinge of guilt:

There is a change in every hour's recall,
And the last cowslip in the fields we see
On the same day with the first corn-poppy.
Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary!

Thus, the Old Love is replaced by the New, and with XXV ("Winged Hours") a new series of commitments, protestations, eulogies, fears, and frustrations is inaugurated. The fate of the Old Love is left as vague as that of Browning's Duchess, but by Sonnet XXXVI ("Life-in-Love"), it is made fairly unambiguous that she has died. This sonnet is the culmination of several foreshadowings in the intervening stanzas of a separation between the poet and the New Beloved. Both affairs have occupied the spring and summer of the poet's life, and in Sonnet XXX ("Last Fire") there is the first foreshadowing of the approach of winter. In Sonnet XXXVII ("The Love-Moon"), Love again chastises the poet for inconstancy. In the sestet, which is antiphonal, the poet indicates that in both loves he sees only the means to gain the ideal of Love itself:

"... shall not Death make manifest
In these the culminating changes which approve
The love-moon that must light my soul to Love?"

Love's chastisement again effects a change in the poet's fortunes, and Sonnet XXXVII is transitional, leading to the dissolution of the relationship with the New Beloved, which occurs with "Secret Parting" (XLV). Paradoxically, what the poet learns is that just
as *Change* characterizes *Youth*, so it also characterizes *Love*, for the two are inextricably linked. *Spring* gives way to age and age to the greatest change of all, most feared by lovers, *Death*. "The straits of change" (XLIV) cannot be forced; *Love* lasts an hour and the lesson to be learned, always too late, is patent:

... all is vain

And that Hope sows what Love shall never reap?

After *Love*, there is only *Memory* to parade "the Past before thy face" and lure "Thy spirit to her passionate portraiture..." (XLVI). In sonnets XLVI to XLVIII, the poet engages in self-pity over his loss, until finally he concludes, in "Death-in-Love" (XLVIII), that Death and *Love* are one. This sonnet should be compared with its companion, "Life-in-Love" (XXXVI), for in that sonnet the death of the Old *Love* clouds with forebodings of loss the presence of the New *Love*. Now, *Love* itself is dead, and there is no new love to distract or assuage the poet's grief.

At this point occur the "Willowwood" sonnets (XLIX to LII). Willowwood may be roughly equated with a state of morbid rememberings, perhaps with self-pity itself. In the third sonnet of the group (LI), *Love* sings about the vanity of hope lost and says that it is better to forget than to "Steep deep the soul in sleep till she were dead". The poet does not immediately respond, but *Love*’s song forces on him a series of reflections crucial to his understanding of life and of change as life’s basic principle. He begins in "Without Her" (LIII) to accept reality, until in No. 3 of "True Woman" ("Her Heaven", LVIII), he can recognize

in every kiss sealed fast

To feel the first kiss and forbode the last.

*Love*’s first gift had been the Old *Love* (see Sonnet X, "The Portrait"); the New Beloved had also been a gift of *Love*. Only after the poet has come through his grief and despair is he ready for "*Love*’s Last Gift"—Poetry:

**LIX**

Love to his singer held a glistening leaf,
And said: "The rose-tree and the apple-tree
Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest-marshal, the year's chief,
Victorious Summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea
Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.

All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love
To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang;
But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise."

With this sonnet, Rossetti concludes Part I of The House of Life. And he seems to be confirming in this conclusion the old romantic tradition of poète maudit: only through suffering and loss and grief and despair can the poet acquire the experience of a poetry worth making. Significantly, Part II opens with two sonnets on the nature of poetry and the way in which the poet transfigures life into art: "By thine own tears thy song must tears beget, O Singer!" (LXI).1

Part II of The House of Life is often taken to be only a kind of miscellany of sonnets on various subjects, having little unity. While this part does lack the narrative continuity of Part I, its unity hinges on the emotional crises, on the loss and disillusionment of the experiences described in the first part. After the loss sustained in youth, the poet moves in the second part into the autumn of his life, and this is a period coloured by the despair and unhappiness of youth's spring-love recollected. Dedicating himself to "Love's Last Gift", his poetry, the poet has only bitter-sweet memories of the time of youth. It should be noted that while seventeen of the sonnets in Part I have "Love" in the title (and at least eleven others contained the word "Love" in earlier drafts), none of the sonnets in Part II employs it. Part II deals with life without love, or life in which the grief of earlier, ephemeral love becomes the source of the poet's artistic inspiration. And the memories, the remembrance of the "momentous memorable" fires of youth (LXII) are a constant reminder of the

1 With which compare Matthew Arnold in "The Strayed Reveller":

such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing.
impermanence of life, the evanescence of beauty, the shadow of mutability which encompasses life and points always toward death.

Even yet the rose-tree's verdure left alone
Will flush all ruddy though the rose be gone;
With ditties and with dirges infinite.  (LXIV)

The poet's preoccupation with mutability causes him, as he moves into the autumn of his life, to contemplate his own life's fortunes, not only as lover but as artist as well. His past life lies waste behind him. His "Work and Will" have been vitiated by "their life sailed by":

Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory feet of Death?  (LXV)

Reviewing his past life in "The Heart of the Night" (LXVI), the poet prays for yet a chance to exercise his will and in work to find peace. Perhaps he may, "though late,/Even yet renew this soul with duteous breath..." (LXVI). This note of optimism leads him to seek out the path missed and to resolve, "I must go back":

Yet though no light be left nor bird now sing
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,
That the same goal is still on the same track.  (LXVII)

Though uncertain in "A Dark Day" (LXVIII) whether this hour "bodes...some harvest of new tares", whether even his prayer is vanity, the sudden appearance of "A Sunny Day at the Close of Autumn" (the original title of "Autumn Idleness", LXIX) brings him hope:

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass;
Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew;
Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.
And here the lost hours the lost hours renew
While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,
Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.

He climbs to the height of "The Hill Summit", and again he reflects on his past life. Even what little he has attained is threatened as he travels "the bewildered tracks till night":

Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last night.  (LXX)
Following "The Hill Summit", there occur three sets of linked sonnets which most commentators feel do not fit into the sequence of the poem: "The Choice" (LXXI-LXXIII); "Old and New Art" (LXXIV-LXXVI); and "Soul's Beauty" (LXXVII) and "Body's Beauty" (LXXVIII)—these last paired poems having been originally written after Rossetti's own pictures. Professor Baum is right in saying that the choice was made for love from Sonnet I; and while spring lasted the choice was maintained, even in the face of change and loss. But these sonnets (LXXI-LXXIII) offer three choices which are in fact no choice. The refrain that links them is the same: "To-morrow thou shalt die." What the poet has learned is the simple truth of the vanity of human wishes: all things—love, religious commitment, contemplation—lead to the same end. Humanity, Rossetti says, echoing in his imagery and thought both Tennyson and Arnold, is enisled and helpless:

From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furtherest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

(LXXIII)

He turns next to Art, old and new. His life once devoted exclusively to love has been dedicated to art, to poetry, to song. In art, he has sublimated his previous desire for ideal beauty, physically manifest. These sonnets are almost parabolic: Art is sacred; the artist must "look through" the external forms of beauty to their higher reality, and in that capacity the artist serves as God's priest. Pride, the "soulless self-reflections of man's skill" (LXXIV), may lead the artist astray into the fields of vanity. Number 3 of "Old and New Art" ("The Husbandman", LXXVI) suggests the metaphorical relationship between the artist and the ideal; and the sonnet is an exhortation to the artist to remain steadfast in the pursuit of his ideal:

2 Here Rossetti may be comparing the earlier view of the fictive poet with the later. Compare also Chiaro's lesson about art in "Hand and Soul".
Stand not ye idle in the market-place.
Which of ye knoweth he is not that last
Who may be first by faith and will?—yea, his
The hand which after the appointed days
And hours shall give a Future to their Past?

The two sonnets on Soul's and Body's beauty contrast spiritual with earthly love. The poet speaks of beauty enthroned "under the arch of Life". Love and Death are the guards at her shrine, at which he has always worshipped (both as lover and artist) and "in whose praise/Thy voice and hand shake still" (LXXVII). But in youth, he says, comparing himself by implication to Adam, who was tempted by the witch, Lilith, "before the gift of Eve", his devotion to Ideal Beauty had been misdirected and the spell of physical attraction went through him,

and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair. (LXXVIII)

As the poet continues his retrospective survey of his past life, he becomes more honest, less inclined to rationalize his weaknesses. Many of the sonnets assume the form of dialogues between the past and the present of the poet, who maintains a dialectical position not always capable of resolution. In these later sonnets, he becomes obsessed with death, and memory seems to throw before him as on a screen—or, to use his own recurring image, in a dark glass—his past, which presages his destruction. "The Monochord" (LXXIX), for all its complexity and obscurity, provides only questions, but the image in the title conveys adequately enough the spiritual dilemma of the poet whose instrument is single-stringed. In "From Dawn to Noon" (LXXX), the poet continues to review his life and "in things long past" to trace "new features". With Sonnet LXXXI ("Memorial Thresholds") he reflects on the vanity of attempting to immortalize mortal hours. Recollecting a particular place (presumably associated with his youthful life), he says that "a single simple door/... must be/... my life-porch in eternity". This sonnet is often glossed with special reference to Rossetti's own emotional involvements, but no such particular references need be read into the poem. In fact, the memorial thresholds may be simply the portal to the House of Life itself, which will but prove the mortal
porch to the House of Eternity. "Hoarded Joy" (LXXXII), which reiterates the theme of *carpe diem* from Part I, leads to "Barren Spring" (LXXXIII). The joys of youth (and love), which, if postponed in the summer of life, may be lost forever, are in the poet's autumn, desolate. His life

\[
is\ twin'd
\]

With the dead boughs that winter still must bind, (LXXXIII)

and the spring no longer concerns him. "Farewell to the Glen" (LXXXIV) looks back nostalgically to other springs in "fragment youth", when even the melancholy produced by sadness was bliss. The reference to the Glen and the stream suggest immediately Penkill Castle, the Penwhapple, and "The Stream's Secret".¹ This context makes Sonnet LXXXIV perhaps the most particularized sonnet in the sequence and tempts an extension beyond the poem itself. However, because Rossetti does not himself violate the innominate identity of the two beloveds in Part I, it can be interpreted generally as applying to the fictive history of the poet.

Sonnets LXXXV to C all treat, in varying form, the impending death of the poet. They are cumulative in the sense that as reflections on the poet's past and present life—the present predicated on or conditioned by the past—they lead, by a kind of free association, from one to the other. LXXXV ("Vain Virtues"), which William Sharp called one of the most "terrible and impressive sonnets in our language";² considers unfulfilled promise, which leads to "Lost Days" (LXXXVI), in which the poet envisions his "murdered sel[v es]" that he will encounter inevitably in Hell. The vision introduces "Death's Songsters" (LXXXVII),³ that sonnet which has conventionally been taken

¹ Probably the best explication of "The Stream's Secret" is that of Professor Baum, in which he discusses the compositional history of the poem, begun during Rossetti's 1869 visit to Penkill. Baum is careful to point out, however, that the poem "is a work of the imagination, not a biographic document" (Poems, Ballads, and Sonnets, "Introduction", p. xxxv). Professor Baum's scholarship on Rossetti was of a consistently exemplary calibre; his passing in July 1964 is a loss that will be felt by all students of Rossetti.² p. 429.

³ On this sonnet see Joseph F. Vogel, "The House of Life, LXXXVII", *Explicator*, xxi, no. 8 (April 1963), item 64.
to be, as Baum says, "an echo of Rossetti's contemplation of suicide in 1868-69". \(^1\) "Hero's Lamp" (LXXXVIII) is a classically metaphorical treatment of the futility of love, in which Love himself is described as "Death's pallid neophyte". "The Trees of the Garden" (LXXXIX) poses again the familiar question about the meaning of life. "Is it", the poet asks, "all a show,—/A wisp that laughs upon the wall?" Sonnet XC ("'Retro me, Sathana!'"), though obviously Miltonic, is a conventional eternizing sonnet on the death of time, and the cessation of change, death, and mutability. Sonnet XCI ("Lost on Both Sides"), which one critic has associated with Rossetti's failure in both art and poetry,\(^2\) again expresses the frustration of the poet's hopes in his search for peace. This sonnet is followed by the linked sonnets of "The Sun's Shame" (XCII-XCIII), in which again the transiency of life, the impermanence of life's fruits, is the theme. Those in the "green World" will be allowed their hour to be "merry with the Spring", but youth and hope are only mockeries. Like Gray, looking down on the boys at Eton innocent at their games, the poet, "for whom/Inveteracy of ill portends the doom" (XCIII), is made no happier by his understanding, for it obviates his ever recapturing the bliss of ignorant innocence. "Michelangelo's Kiss" (XCIV) suggests a parallel between the great artist and Vittoria Colonna and Dante and Beatrice. Both Michelangelo and Dante served their ideals without the concomitant of physical love. Their rewards were small in life, the poet says; but in querying what the rewards of death may be in comparison, the poet intensifies the irony of his own position, with which he contrasts by implication that of the great artist and poet, whose two roles, paradoxically, are blended in his own nature. "The Vase of Life" (XCV) is vague in its direct reference, but it juxtaposes the figure of the runner depicted on the urn who laughs and weeps, yet who "at last" is crowned and still a youth, with the poet who, employing the urn figuratively and symbolically in all stages of his life, retains it now as the

\(^1\) The House of Life, p. 200. \\
receptacle for his ashes. The Vase of Life is ironically also a funeral urn.

In "Life the Beloved" (XCVI), the poet speaks of Life as "thy spirit’s friend and love", and even his preoccupation with death cannot wholly extinguish the hope that life conveys. The memory of spring produces an optimism that triumphs, albeit briefly, over the inexorability of winter and points to another spring, which for the poet must come after death. His strong sense of life will not let him completely dismiss hope. But he turns immediately in "A Superscription" (XCVII), beginning with the often-quoted speech of the poet’s present self:

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell . . .

The promise of his past life appears as a palimpsest, obscured by the realities of the life he has lived, a sea-shell echo (but from the dead sea), a glass "where that is seen/Which had Life’s form and Love’s . . .". This and the next sonnet, "He and I" (XCVIII), in which the poet’s present life still speaks, dramatize the poet’s disillusionment with himself. His fields, unlike those of the runner in XCV, have not been won, and he marvels that two such separate selves could be combined in a single life. In the last group of linked poems, and the final sonnets before the epilogue, "Newborn Death" (XCIX-C), Death is envisioned as an infant which his worn mother, Life, "the lady of all bliss" (C), has placed upon the lap of the poet. This babe is contrasted with the babe in "Bridal Birth" (II) in Part I, who was Love. Love and Song and Art have all died for the poet, and now there is only left for him the imminence of his own death, for which, not without misgivings, he longs. As Love’s last gift was Song and Art, so Life’s last gift to the poet is Death. What remains is "The One Hope" (CI), the final sonnet in The House of Life—a dimension beyond life, beyond love, beyond art, the beginning of a new immortal life, a new cycle; as John Lindberg has suggested, the prologue to "recurring cycles as an aesthetic extension of personality".¹

¹ "Rossetti’s Cumaean Oracle", Victorian Newsletter, no. 22 (Fall 1962), p. 20.
To conclude, then, *The House of Life* may be viewed, from one vantage at least, as an elegiac poem in which Rossetti surveys the crises of his life from youth to death. Unlike conventional elegies, *The House of Life* does not employ the intermediary object of the dead friend or noble man. More direct, it is an intensely personal poem, but it cannot, as Rossetti finally arranged it, be read in literal, chronological, autobiographical terms. It echoes, certainly in Part I, the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, though it goes far beyond Dante’s poem. Perhaps, after all, the term which Rossetti applied to the *Vita Nuova* can be used to describe *The House of Life*. For it is a kind of “autopsychology” in which Rossetti transfigured his own life, distilling the essences into a monument, which, though personal, may, like the particular experiences of the sonnets themselves, be construed as universal.

In a little-known sonnet entitled “Love’s Ghost”, the now almost forgotten blind poet, Philip Bourke Marston,1 commemorated *The House of Life*. Perhaps as well as any statement his sonnet may serve as a fitting epigraph for Rossetti’s poem:

> Is it the ghost of dead and buried Love
> Which haunts the House of Life, and comes by night
> With weary sighs, and in its eyes the light
> Of joys long set? I hear its footsteps move
> Through darkened rooms where only ghosts now rove—
> The rooms Love’s shining eyes of old made bright;
> It whispers low—it trembles into sight—
> A bodiless presence hearts alone may prove.

> I say, ‘Sad visitant of this dark house,
> Why wanderest thou through these deserted rooms,
> A dreadful glimmering light about thy brows?
> Thy silent home should be among the tombs.’
> And the ghost answers, while I thrill with fear,
> ‘In all the world I have no home but here.’

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1 In *A Last Harvest: Lyrics and Sonnets from the Book of Love*, with Biographical Sketch by Louise Chandler Moulton (London: Elkin Mathews, 1891), p. 108.
The following chart is designed to facilitate the comparison of the three published versions of *The House of Life*, and to enable the reader to comprehend at a glance the shifting structure of the sequence, in those three versions. The 1881 version, Rossetti’s final working of the sequence, is taken as the definitive text. Variations in title within the three versions are indicated by parentheses; other variations, in manuscript or "Trial Book", are given in notes, such as references to *The Kelmscott Love Sonnets*. For convenience, titles of individual sonnets are neither italicized nor placed within quotations. Three stars (*** ) in the 1870 column signify a sonnet which, though not included within the fragmentary version of *The House of Life*, nevertheless appeared in the *Poems* (1870), and was later incorporated into the sequence.

The first two columns, providing date of composition and date of first publication, are helpful in tracing Rossetti’s structuring of the sequence. With only one exception (LXXXVI), there is no disagreement concerning date of first publication; there are, however, slight differences of opinion as to the dates of composition of a few of the sonnets. The dates provided here represent the combined opinions of William Michael Rossetti (in *Works*, 1911), Paull Franklin Baum (in his edition of Rossetti's *Poems, Ballads, and Sonnets*, in which the dating of many of the sonnets differs radically from the dates assigned in his edition of *The House of Life*), and Oswald Doughty (in his biography of Rossetti, *A Victorian Romantic*). Since there is no edition of Rossetti’s works which establishes a text based on a collation of all the known manuscripts, and on the several "Trial Books", these dates must be taken as tentative; however the datings are based on an examination of all available sources, and in all probability they do not present a considerable margin of error.1

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1 I should like to thank my former graduate student, Mrs. Denise Cummings, for her assistance in gathering some of the materials for this paper, and especially for her help on the chronology of *The House of Life*.
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**[THE SONNET]**

**Part I: Youth and Change**

1871 1881 I Love Enthroned
1869 1870 II Bridal Birth¹
1869 1870 III Love's Testament II (Love's Redemption)²
1869 1870 IV Lovesight III Lovesight
1871 1881 V Heart's Hope
1869 1870 VI The Kiss IV The Kiss
1869 1870 VIA Nuptial Sleep³ V Nuptial Sleep
1870 1870 VII Supreme Surrender VI Supreme Surrender
1869 1870 VIII Love's Lovers VII Love's Lovers
1870 1870 IX Passion and Worship⁴ VIII Passion and Worship
1868 1870 X The Portrait IX The Portrait
1870 1870 XI The Love-Letter X The Love-Letter
1870 1870 XII The Lovers' Walk
1871 1881 XIII Youth's Antiphony⁵
1870 1881 XIV Youth's Spring-Tribute⁶
1854 1870 XV The Birth-Bond⁷ XI The Birth-Bond
1870 1870 XVI A Day of Love XII A Day of Love
1871 1881 XVII Beauty's Pageant⁸
1871 1881 XVIII Genius in Beauty
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Part II: Change and Fate

<p>| 1873         | 1881           | LX    | Transfigured Life |     |     |     |      |
| 1880         | 1881           | LXI   | The Song-Throe |     |     |     |      |
| 1873         | 1881           | LXII  | The Soul’s Sphere |     |     |     |      |
| 1869         | 1869           | LXIII | Inclusiveness&lt;sup&gt;23&lt;/sup&gt; | XXIX | Inclusiveness | XIV | Inclusiveness |</p>
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**SYNOPSIS**

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<th>Poems, 1869</th>
<th>Ballads and Sonnets, 1881</th>
<th>Part I</th>
<th>Part II</th>
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<td>before 1868</td>
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<td>54 (+Nuptial Sleep)</td>
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<td>after 1872</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>4 (+Intro. Sonnet)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>59 (+2)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>101 (+2)</td>
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Symbols: TB = Trial Books (1869-70); PFB = (1) House of Life, (2) Poems; D = Doughty; KLS = Kelmscott Love Sonnets; WMR = DGR: D&W; F = Manuscript of The House of Life in the Fitzwilliam Museum.

1. Entitled "Bridal Birthdays" in F.
2. Entitled "Flammifera" in TB.
3. Originally entitled "Placata Venere", WMR.
4. Entitled "Love and Worship" in TB.
5. Entitled "Love's Antiphony" in KLS.
6. Entitled "Spring Tribute" in KLS; D suggests "Love's" originally.
7. Entitled "Nearest Kindred" in TB.
8. Entitled "Love's Pageant" in KLS, and in F.
9. In F, the following note occurs: "Print this after Newest Kindness [p]page 120."
10. Entitled in one of the manuscripts, according to PFB (1), "Love's changes".

The sonnet was first published in Athenaeum, No. 2810 (3 September 1881), p. 305. Entitled "Pride of Youth and Change" in F, but deleted.

11. Entitled "Between Kisses" in KLS.
12. Entitled "Love's Compass" in KLS, and in F.
13. Entitled "Lovelight" in KLS, and in F.
14. Entitled "My Lady's Gifts" in KLS.
15. Entitled "Love-Measure" in KLS, and in F.
16. Entitled "The Love Lamp" in KLS, and in F.
17. Originally entitled "Sleepless Love", according to D. Also in F.
18. Entitled "Between Meetings" in KLS, and in F.
19. Entitled "Love's Moments" in F, but deleted.
20. The Fitzwilliam manuscript of this sonnet has at head: "Of Life, Love and Death: Sonnets." WMR in Works dates sonnet 1852; in DGR: D&W, 1869.
21. Entitled in one manuscript "Dies atra 1st May 1869", according to PFB (2).
22. Entitled "The Stillborn Hour" in F, but deleted.
23. Entitled "For Answer or Inclusiveness" in F.
24. Entitled "Work and Will" in F.
25. Entitled in one manuscript "A Sunny Day at the Close of Autumn dated Sevenoaks, Nov. 1850", according to PFB (2).
26. Entitled "From the Hilltop" in F.
27. First published in Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868 and entitled "Sibylla Palmifera".
28. First published in Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1868 and entitled "Lady Lilith".
29. Entitled "Joy Delayed" in F.
31. Entitled "Deadly Sweetness" and "Death's Sweetness" in F, but deleted.
32. No. 2 of "The Sun's Shame" entitled "The World's Soul" in F, but deleted.