

Handout 3 – Dante Gabriel Rossetti

- Was this well done, thou Robert Browning?
- —Me also, prayer for the one candle
- Burnt at thy shrine—to set me frowning?
- Me, swinger of the myrrh & sandal
- ~~Before thee,~~ as For thy nose, as for nose of Providence,
- Who for thy sake dreamed not a gibe ill
- At any verse in the Holy Bible;
- Who said—Take Virgil & take Ovid hence
- Off Hesiod—let old Melesigines
- ~~10Be off post haste on his yellow ridgy~~ Creak down at once on his yellow ridgy knees
- Who'd ask, if you showed fight for Dante
- If it was earnest or a blague you meant
- And cursorily in course of argument
- Had ~~brought to mind a man named~~ managed to remember Shakespeare
- —Who, Robert, in thy cause would break spear
- With Christian Muslem or Ashantee
- Who to any old book on any bookstall
- Which, opened, turned out to be not a tome
- Of thine, would say, as to the cook's call
- 20From the area, that her master's not at h[ome]
- “Thank you, I'm sorry to have troubled [you]”
- From their spoil giving thee thy double [due]
- And for the books, in this day [fashionable]
- [Did?] Dickens, Tennyson, & Thackeray

- (Wishing to ~~swear~~^{curse} but not for passion able)
- Lest ~~rend~~^{vamp} their crockery & crackery
- Or kick the bucket like Alnaschar;
- Me who in faith (theme then abhorred)
- ~~Turning an inkling of~~^{Though with a leaning towards} the Lascar,
- 30Would have girded my loins upon thy warrant
- And having hugged Ali hard & kist Yan,
- [~~With?~~] Taken up staff & cudgels for Mahomet;
- And at least felt sure (touching the Christian)
- That bread which Ezra & which Nahum ate
- (~~Brought~~^{Fetchèd} to them, wasn't it by raven,
- Grovelled prone in the trough of the desert
- At high noon when the sand is hottest
- Seething & writhing at their protest,—
- As they were painted by Simon Griesseart
- 40Gold saucers round ~~their~~^{each} numskull s shaven
- Tell me that that bread & the other bread
- Broken elsewhere for bond & brotherhead
- (For such, quoth I, is of the prophets)
- Was the devil's—just a baking of Tophets
- For Tophet is ordained of old—
- Yea for the King it is preparèd
- (Is now by Robert, am I told)
- [~~?~~] ^{And for all of us} from Japhet & Jared
- [?] him & me!—O Robert Browning
- 50[And?] also—me—to set me frowning
- Was this well done, thou Robert Browning?

Notes to Rossetti's Satirical Verse on *Christmas-Eve*

1. Myrrh - A bitter, aromatic gum resin exuded by various Arabian and African trees of the genus *Commiphora* (family Burseraceae), esp. *C. abyssinica* and *C. myrrha*, which was formerly important esp. in perfumery and as an ingredient of incense. Also in *Pharmacol.*: a tincture made from this, used medicinally as an astringent and expectorant. and in figurative contexts. Balm; sweetness; something which soothes, heals, or preserves
2. Sandal - A kind of half-shoe of red leather, silk, etc., richly embroidered and fastened with straps and bands, forming part of the regalia of a sovereign or of the official dress of a bishop or abbot.
3. Virgil / Ovid – Roman poets
Hesiod / Melesigines – Greek poets ('Melesigines' another name for Homer!)
4. Ashantee - One of the Akan peoples of West Africa; a member of this people. Also, their language.
5. Alnaschar - the name of a beggar in the Arabian Nights who destroys his means of livelihood because he indulges in visions of riches and grandeur – (in a reverie, he kicks over the basket containing glass he was selling, causing them to fall and shatter)
6. Lascar - (Freq. with capital initial.) An East Indian sailor. Anglo-Indian. 'A tent-pitcher'; also, an inferior class of artilleryman (more fully gun-lascar).
7. Ezra & Nahum – Old Testament Scribe and Minor Prophet (I think Rossetti is confusing them with Elijah)
8. Tophet - Proper name of a place near Gehenna or the Valley of the Son or Children of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where, according to Jer. xix. 4, etc., the Jews made human sacrifices to strange gods. Later it was used as a place for the deposit of refuse, and became symbolic of the torments of hell. The place of punishment for the wicked after death; the place of eternal fire; hell, Gehenna.
9. Japhet - ? (Jeptha?)
10. Jared – Son of Mahalaleel and father of Enoch. Lived for 962 years.

