CHAPTER V

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE STANZAIC STRUCTURE AND PROSODY OF "EDWARD EDWARD" AND "SISTER HELEN"

The rationale behind this dissertation is the fact that Rossetti has modelled "Sister Helen" closely on the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward", for as Grierson and Smith correctly point out "["Sister Helen's"] form is modelled on the ballad of 'Edward Edward'" (443), and more specifically Anne Henry Ehrenpreis affirms "... 'Sister Helen's' stanza form is modelled on 'Edward Edward's'" (11). This chapter is a very detailed study comparing and contrasting the stanzaic structure and prosody of "Edward Edward" and "Sister Helen". Its aim is to prove that "Sister Helen" is not artificial pastiche or a frivolous prosodic exercise, but rather an inspired attempt technically to create an artistically original and brilliant masterpiece.

"Edward Edward" is made up of 7 regular octave stanzas. All the stanzas are characterised by an identical bipartite structure: the first four lines are spoken by the "mither" and the last four lines are spoken by Edward. This regular alternation of question and answer throughout the poem is the most obvious and simplistic method by which stanzaic unity is effected. The other means by which it is signalled are as follows:
(i) "Any unusual and striking beginning may arrest our aural and visual attention and thus demarcate stanzaic wholes" (Ernst Häublein 45). The opening lines of the poem is a case in point: "Why does your brand sae drop wi' blude / Edward Edward?" The macabre picture of Edward with his sword dripping with blood straightaway rivets our attention.

(ii) As an added effect the opening lines form an initial question, and as Ernst Häublein rightly points out "initial questions ... jolt the reader into registering ... new stanzaic impetus" (48). This effect is felt most significantly in the opening lines of stanza 4 which follow immediately after Edward’s confession of patricide, and thus initiates a new phase in the poem’s development: "And whatten penance will ye dree for that, / Edward, Edward?"

(iii) Repetition is the most recurrent feature by which stanza limits are marked off. In every stanza lines 1 and 3, and lines 5 and 7 are the same. "Edward Edward" occurs in line 2 and "mither mither" occurs in line 6 of each stanza. So much so that only 2 lines, lines 4 and line 8 within the same stanza are different and they help to distinguish the two different sections in the poem.

(iv) Further this is underscored by the use of the "empty" or "musical" "O" which is used to begin the replies of Edward in the first 3 stanzas, which comprise one movement in the structure of the poem:
(v) The same "O" is used to conclude the mother's speech at line 4 of every stanza and Edward's speech at line 8 of every stanza throughout the poem, and thus becomes an indicator of emphatic stanzaic closure.

(vi) A surprise paradoxical ending which is also a hyperbolic expression closes emphatically not only stanza VII but also the poem: "The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear: / Sic counsels ye gave to me Ol!" "The reader" as Ernst Häublein correctly observes "tends to ponder such closures, because he is not gradually led to but frequently shocked into, them. Such a sudden climax may be called terminal heightening; which is defined as 'increased movement, tension or interest in the last segment(s)' by Paula Johnson" (qtd. in Ernst Häublein 65).

(vii) "Hell" implies a kind of finality, and can be classified in the words of Barbara H. Smith as an "unqualified assertion": "The last word, as it were, on which there is no need to elaborate, statements which cannot be further defined or qualified" (qtd. in Ernst Häublein 68). "Alas, and wae is me, Ol!" which concludes stanza III. is another instance of "unqualified assertion". It further gains in emphasis because not only does it close the stanza, but it also closes the first movement of the poem. As Ernst Häublein affirms "it provides a momentary standstill, a 'resting place' (Puttenham) at the end of a segment, from which the poem [carries] on by developing previous implications" (69).
"Stanzaic unity through framing" as Ernst Häublein remarks "may be defined as the recurrence of a particular element at both intra stanzaic boundaries" (72). It is completely absent in "Edward Edward"; however when we examine inter stanzaic relationships, we are able to perceive how preceding and following stanzas contribute to a single stanza's unity. Inter stanzaic analogy is perceived at both the lexical and syntactic levels in "Edward Edward." In both sections of the poem, the device of stanzaic catalogue is effective in enforcing interstanzaic unity. "hawk," "red-roan steed," "father," "penance," "tow'rs and ha," "bairns and wife," and "mither" are the variant items in each stanza. Similarly, at the syntactic level the two structures "O I hae kill'd my ..." and "And what will ye ..." effectively establish inter stanzaic unity in their respective sections.

A study of intrastanzaic relationships is followed by an analysis of interstanzaic correlations, based on the methodology used by Ernst Häublein in his book The stanza. He explains his approach in the following manner:

"By investigating stanzaic interrelations we are applying Elder Olson's structural approach to the stanza. Stanzaic relationship depends on what James V. Cunningham has defined as a 'system of propositions' i.e. 'a determinate relationship of signs forming an element in a composition consisting of successive elements of this nature' (Tradition and
Poetic Structure (Denver, 1960), p.15). In other words, we shall analyse the structure of stanzaic poems by determining the logical relations among their stanzas, which are regarded as basic units. Every unit embodies various elements of meaning, trains of thought and interacting logical drives, which constitute what members of the Chicago School call the dynamis, i.e. 'the shaping cause,' of any structural segment. I prefer the term stimulus, which is not loaded with Aristotleian connotations and involves the reader and the poem. It is also a more general term than 'impetus', which denotes urgency of movement characteristic of only one of the three following types" (82).

According to Ernst Häublein the four basic types involving fixed and mobile stanzas are:

(1) One or several fixed opening stanzas precede several mobile ones (L+E).

(2) Several mobile stanzas are followed by one or several fixed closural stanzas (E+L).
(3) One or several fixed opening stanzas precede several mobile ones which are terminally heightened by one or several fixed closural stanzas (framing: $L+E+L$).

(4) One or several exchangeable stanzas precede one or several fixed ones which are followed by one or several mobile stanzas ($E+L+E$).

"Edward Edward" belongs to the third (framing : $L+E+L$) type, and the logical dynamis of the poem may be summed up in stanzaic interrelationship terms as follows : ($L_4+E_2+L_1$). The first 4 stanzas of the poem in respect of stanzaic dynamis are of the light stimulus ($L$) type. "They link stanzas that seem to be independent and fix them in their position" (Ernst Häublein 84). The position of the stanzas within the poem is fixed and cannot be altered i.e. stanza 4 must follow stanza 3, and stanza 3 must follow stanza 2, and stanza 2 must succeed the first stanza. On the contrary the position of stanzas 5 and 6 is not fixed. The logical stimulus is stanzaicly limited: there is no logical progression from stanza 5 to stanza 6; the two units are logically unconnected and independent; they are exchangeable stanzas which contain different elements of a catalogue. The same basic idea is varied through structural analogy, and the symbol $E$ is used to characterise the exchangeable stanza. Stanza 7's position is fixed, and hence of the $L$ type, having a strong closural force.

Stanzaic progression in "Edward Edward" is "through the linked light stimuli of syntactically closed stanzas. Linkage of this sort cannot be
predicted because" as Ernst Häublein correctly observes "it is perceived ex posteriori" (100). This is because we have no clue in the preceding stanza as to how the following stanza will progress, and hence its position is determined ex posteriori. The stimulus of one stanza is taken up in a way which we realise only in the following stanza.

The initial stanza of "Edward Edward" introduces the theme, the main personae and sets the tone. the first section of the poem is in the form of an argument with the mother disagreeing with Edward's replies and he in turn offering alternative suggestions to the preceding ones. Consequently inter stanzaic progressive relationships are established ex posteriori: the nouns "hawk's blude" in stanza III and "steed" in stanza III fix the position of stanzas I and II retrospectively. The progression from the first phase to the second is marked retrospectively by the demonstrative pronoun "that," "And whatten penance will ye dree for that". Sequential relationships from stanza IV to stanza VII are effected through the conjunction "and." A rather weak stanzaic gradatio is evident in this section, where the sequence involves gradual intensification from Edward's material possessions to his family and finally to his mother.

"Sister Helen" unlike "Edward Edward" has only a 7 line stanza, but it is more complex than the 8 line stanza of "Edward Edward" because unlike it, it has a tripartite structure: the first 3 lines are spoken by the brother, the next 2 by Helen and the last 2 comprise the modulated refrain. The odd number of lines and the 3:2 disproportion of the lines
spoken by the brother and the sister prevent the stanza from having a clear cut symmetrical structure. Consequently Rossetti uses a dazzling array of various methods to effect stanzaic unity:

(i) The interjection "Oh" or "O" is used as a device of initial emphasis in 8 out of the 34 stanzas of the whole poem. Other interjections used are 'alas' and 'ah,' in which he combines the exclamation and the question to heighten the feeling of surprise conveyed: "Ah! What white thing at the door has cross'd, / Sister Helen"? This device of combining the exclamation and the question, even as Rossetti uses a wider variety of exclamations, to increase the initial element of surprise at the beginning of a stanza is absent in "Edward Edward." The initial question by itself is used only thrice by Rossetti to convey stanzaic unity, and most strikingly at the very beginning of the poem: "Why did you melt your waxen man, / Sister Helen?" but in "Edward Edward" the last four stanzas which comprise the latter phase of the poem, all begin with a question: "And what ... Edward Edward?" so much so as Ernst Häublein very perspicaciously points out "the question itself does not represent a departure from the expected norm but constitutes the basic principle. The mere recurrence of the basic principle of expectation, however, never contributes to initial or cloural emphasis and thus does not suggest stanzaic unity" (49). Thus a device which normally contributes to stanzaic unity is robbed of its unifying potential in "Edward Edward."
(ii) Another striking device which does not occur in "Edward Edward" to convey initial emphasis to denote stanzacic unity is the use of adverbs: "Here high up in the balcony" which is contrasted in the very next stanza, "Outside it's merry in the wind's wake."

(iii) The impact of emotional heightening through the use of an exclamation is increased considerably when it is linked to a phrase which implies a beginning as in, "Oh the waxen knave was plump today, / Sister Helen; / How like dead folk he has dropped away!"

(iv) Phonetic features like alliteration and assonance used for strong initial emphasis, mark stanzacic unity as in: "See, see, the sunken pile of wood, / Sister Helen, Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"

(v) Stanzaic unity results in the following stanza, because of the repetition of 'sad' which occurs initially and then throughout the stanza:

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
    Sister Helen,
    And weary sad they look by the hill."

"But he and I are sadder still,
    Little brother!"

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
    Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

A strong stanzacic gradatio can be seen in the use of "sad," "sadder still," and "most sad of all." The phrase "most sad of all" effects
stanzaic unity through its strong closural force by correlating the other occurrences of "sad" in the stanza.

(vi) "Questions that are posed and answered within a stanza may be regarded as a ... type of closure, because they involve a change of speakers or voices" (Ernst Häublein 61). In "Edward Edward" five out of the seven stanzas follow this very obvious and simplistic pattern. In "Sister Helen" however, out of the 34 stanzas, only in the last stanza Rossetti adopts this elementary device not only to close the stanza forcefully, but also the entire poem:

"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd
Sister Helen,

"Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"

"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"

It is also remarkable that this is the only instance in the whole poem in which Helen replies straightforwardly to her brother's question

(vii) "It seems almost paradoxical that questions, which normally set up tensions and expectations, should occasionally serve as closural features. If a question refers to the unanswerable, or if it is a rhetorical one, it may operate as ... stanzaic closure ... within the stanzaic unit or even in the question itself" (Ernst Häublein 63). In "Sister Helen" 12 out of the 34
stanzas close with a rhetorical question. This unusual method of closing a stanza is completely absent in "Edward Edward."

(viii) "Any succinct, proverbial, sententious, aphoristic, epigrammatic or summarising statement at stanzaic endings results in closural emphasis" (Ernst Häublein 64). Rossetti concludes stanza 23 thus:

"Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!"

(O Mother, Mary Mother,

Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!"

By doing so he reveals his poetic ingenuity in transforming the epigram 'love is blind' into 'hate is blind' even as he closes the stanza forcefully. In "Edward Edward" however only a very popular and ordinary aphorism "alas, and wae is me, O!" is used to conclude stanza 3,

(ix) The paradox (felix culpa) is used as a closural device in stanza 11: "The hour has come, has come at last, ...Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!" The arrival of the 3 pleaders marks the beginning of the end; this remarkable device is completely absent in "Edward Edward."

(x) "Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive" is a hyperbolic expression, whose closural force is increased by combining it with the aphoristic exclamation in the very next line: "Alas, alas between Hell and Heaven!"

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(xi) "No vesper-chime, but a dying knell, ... His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!" concludes stanza 29, and clearly reveals to us that Keith of Ewern is dead. Helen's revenge has been accomplished, and the poem should conclude here strictly speaking. However the poem continues and the rest of the poem deals with the fate of Helen and her soul and Keith of Ewern's soul. Thus the closure of stanza 29 serves as a point of departure to develop the train of thought further and to work the poem to its logical conclusion, which is expressed in:

(xii) The unqualified assertion of the last line of the poem: "Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!" However this device of continuing the train of thought after a 'momentary standstill' in "Sister Helen" is strikingly different than the manner it has been employed in "Edward Edward". In "Edward Edward" there is a logical continuation of the poem after the 'momentary standstill' at the end of stanza III: Edward confesses that he has murdered his father, and his mother asks him what penance he will do to atone for his crime. However in "Sister Helen" there is no logical connection between the end of stanza 29 where Keith of Ewern's death has been confirmed and the beginning of stanza 30 which expresses the brother's sorrow at the sound of Keith of Ewern's death knell; the rest of the poem reflects Helen's subtle and equivocative nature and her determination to destroy everyone else along with her. Thus Rossetti has more cleverly manipulated he device of 'the momentary standstill.'
Stanzaic framing which is completely absent in "Edward Edward," is present in the form of word repetition in stanzas 10, 26 and 32:

"They come by the hill verge from Boyne Bar,

Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?"

And

"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive

As he forgives, between Hell and Heaven!"

And

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,

Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!"

Intra stanzaic framing contributes to greater stanzaic unity which is lacking in "Edward Edward."

"Inter stanzaic retrospection establishes units which share certain features" (Ernst Häusle 1977). Inter stanzaic analogy, like in "Edward Edward," can be perceived at both the lexical and syntactic levels in "Sister Helen." But whereas in "Edward Edward" very simple devices of inter stanzaic recurrence which are obviously predictable have been employed, Rossetti uses more sophisticated devices with subtle variations to avoid monotony:

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(i) The most remarkable of all these is the 'modulated refrain' which has been analysed in great detail in the last chapter.

(ii) Only in the 1st and the last stanza of the entire poem the sentence boundary of the opening line occurs in the second line itself. In all the other stanzas the opening sentence ends in the 3rd line:

"Why did you melt your waxy man, Sister Helen?"

and

"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd, Sister Helen?"

Thus these 2 short sentences of the opening lines of the first and the last stanzas perform an important framing function.

(iii) Stanzas 4 and 33 begin with "see see ..." Stanza 4 marks the beginning of the last stages in the melting down of the wax figure, and stanza 33 marks the completion of the act. Thus the inter stanzaic recurrence of "see see ..." frames the important act of melting down the wax figure.

(iv) The stanzas containing Keith of Westholm's pleading begin thus: "He stops to speak ...," "Oh he says that ...," "He sends ...," "He yields ...," "He calls." A recurrent syntactic pattern is readily perceived, but unlike in "Edward Edward" where the recurrence becomes mere repetition, "And what will ye ...," Rossetti varies not only the lexical items on every occasion: "stops," "says," "sends," "yields" and "calls" but also once the basic syntactic pattern itself: "stops" is an intransitive verb whereas all the others

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are transitive verbs. Thus a highly sophisticated method of framing through interstanzaic recurrence has been used by Rossetti to ensure the integrity of poetic structure of his ballad, even as he aesthetically avoids the inherent drawback of monotonous repetition, so characteristic of the traditional ballad "Edward Edward."

A study of the stanzastic mobility of "Sister Helen" is complicated by the fact that unlike "Edward Edward" it is a much longer poem, having a more complex narrative structure involving more characters, hence it cannot be readily classified according to Ernst Häublein's types (96). The logical dynamics of the poem may be summed up in stanzastic interrelationship terms as follows: \[ E_5 + [L_30+E_2] + [L_5+E_4] + [L_4+E_4] + [L_4+E_2]. \] Although strictly speaking "Sister Helen" belongs to the 4th type: "One or several exchangeable stanzas precede one or several fixed ones which are followed by one or several mobile stanzas \((E+L+E)\)" (Ernst Häublein 96); it is obvious that \((L+E)\) types have been embedded within the \((E+L+E)\) type. The \([ \ ]\) square brackets indicate the 5 stages in the narrative structure of the poem. A careful study of each phase reveals the highly complex nature of stanzastic interrelationships and stanzastic progression of Rossetti's poem.

At the outset, as Ernst Häublein cautions us "we have to bear in mind that there are poems with recurrent stanzastic directional models
with or without logical progression; also, there are poems with or without stanzaic analogy that have exchangeable stanzas" (85). For instance, as we have already noted, although the opening line of stanza 1 and the opening line of stanza 34 are frames because of their foregrounded syntax, the two stanzas themselves are exchangeable in terms of logical interrelationships.

The first 5 stanzas comprise the introduction. All of them are of the exchangeable variety, that is the meaning of the poem would not be affected if their positions were altered. The two possible ways of alternate ordering of the stanzas are as follows: stanzas 4, 5, 1, 3 and 2 or stanzas 4, 5, 1, 2 and 3. The exchangeability is a result of:

(i) Helen and her brother not answering the questions directed at them and

(ii) the stanzas depict a scene which is essentially static. There is no logical progression whatsoever, as Helen and her brother discuss the state of the wax image which is being melted down. Rossetti, however, ensures that extreme stasis is avoided because:

(i) the stanzas cannot be exchanged at random within the section, leave alone within the entire poem, for instance stanza 2 can under no circumstances begin the poem.

(ii) Further, unlike "Edward Edward" the simplistic device of the catalogue is not employed, and above everything else
(iii) variety is provided by the modulated refrain.

Although there is no logical progression in the train of thought, the stanzas are nevertheless linked to one another in a complex manner by both ex posteriori and a priori methods, unlike "Edward Edward" in which the stanzas are related only by the ex posteriori method. Following are the ex posteriori methods used:

(i) The argument as to whether the work of melting down the wax image is over or not implicitly establishes a connection between stanzas 3 and 2 retrospectively by means of "logical inference and conclusion" (Ernst Häublein 103). This is evident in the adverbial clauses of reason "If now it be molten, all is well." and "But if you have done your work aright, / Sister Helen."

(ii) The use of the conjunction "but" in "But if you have done your work aright, / Sister Helen" retrospectively links stanza 2 with stanza 1.

(iii) The use of personal and impersonal pronouns: the "it" and "you" in "You said it must melt ere vesper bell, / Sister Helen" of stanza 3 refer back to the "waxen man" and "Sister Helen" in stanza 1. The opening question of the poem "Why did you melt your waxen man, / Sister Helen" is never answered directly by her throughout the poem, leave alone immediately, unlike in "Edward Edward" where the questions asked by the mother are immediately and unambiguously answered by the son in the same stanza itself. The answer to the opening question is to be gleaned
from the pleas of Keith of Eastholm, Keith of Westholm and Keith of Keith. Thus the first stanza is linked a priori to the remaining stanzas of the poem. As Ernst Häublein correctly observes the first stanza implicitly contains "a stimulus that points ahead, ... the structural implications of such stimuli are important, because a priori links are basically open; the logical unit consists of more than one stanza" (109).

Stanzas 6 to 17 comprise the second section in which Helen's brother goes outside to play, and as he is describing the scene outside, the three pleaders arrive. Keith of Eastholm pleads unsuccessfully to save Keith of Ewern's soul. Stanzas 6 to stanza 15 are fixed stanzas while stanzas 16 and 17 are exchangeable ones, that is stanza 17 may follow stanza 15, to be followed by stanza 16 without effecting any change in the overall meaning or structure of the poem. The stanzas are exchangeable because of the lack of logical progression, as Helen remains adamant and Keith of Eastholm persists in trying to evoke her sympathy by portraying Keith of Ewern's pitiable condition. Once again Rossetti skilfully avoids extreme stasis because:

(i) As mentioned earlier in chapter II the speeches of the three pleaders can never be interchanged.

(ii) The exchangeability is very minimal - only 2 stanzas whose position can be interchanged only within that section.

(iii) No catalogue is used.
(iv) Of the elegant variation "ban" for "curse."

(v) As usual the refrain is modulated.

A priori stanzaic progression is evident both implicitly and explicitly. The overall structure of the poem is implicitly one of a priori progression — will the pleaders succeed or not succeed in making Helen relent and thus save his life. Explicitly a priori progression can be seen from stanzas 8 to 11. Helen asks questions to which her brother answers directly only in the following stanza. So much so as Ernst Häublein remarks very correctly "the logical unit consists of more than one stanza ... the individual stanzas seem to lose their identity and merge into one large unit of the whole poem, whose closure is extremely impressive" (109-111):

"The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!"

Stanzaic progression through retrospective linkage is effected through the following means:

(i) Keith of Ewern is mentioned in stanza 13 after which all the personal pronouns "he" and "his" in the subsequent stanzas refer back to him.

(ii) The noun "wind" in stanza 13 refers back to the noun "wind's wake" in stanza 8 and links the two stanzas retrospectively.
(iii) Stanzas 15, 16 and 17 begin with the conjunction "but" and this links the stanzas retrospectively with the previous stanzas.

(iv) Stanza 15 is linked retrospectively with stanza 14 also by means of "logical inference and conclusion":

"The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
   Little brother!
   (O Mother, Mary Mother,
   If he have prayed, between Hell and Heaven!)

But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
   Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away.
My prayer was heard, — he need but pray,
   Little brother!"

Helen lays down a condition in stanza 14. From her brother's statement and her conclusion in the following stanza we are able to infer that Keith of Ewern is unable to pray and that even if he does so, it is doubtful whether his prayers will be heard.

(v) Another means by which these two stanzas are linked retrospectively is by the device of "stanzaic contrast": Keith of Ewern's prayer has not been heard, but in contrast Helen's has been heard, similarly in stanzas 6, 7 and 8:

"I'll lie on the floor
"Here high up in the balcony",

and

"Outside it's merry in the wind's wake"

the three prepositions link the stanzas retrospectively by contrasting the position of Helen, her brother and the three pleaders.

(vi) Most significantly, stanzas 8 to 11 which are linked a priori and thus form one stanzaic unit are simultaneously linked retrospectively by two means:

(a) The 3rd person plural "they" of stanza 10 refers back to the "three horsemen" in stanza 9 and similarly "I" of stanza 11 refers back to "you" of stanza 10.

(b) The stanzas mark definite and clear cut stages and elucidate aspects of the previous stanza: the sound of horses is heard, the three horsemen are sighted, their position is fixed and the direction from which they are arriving is ascertained, and finally Keith of Eastholm is identified clearly as he steps forward first to plead on Keith of Ewern's behalf. This sort of complex method of stanzaic progression using both strong and light stimulus to link the same stanzas both a priori and ex posteroiri is completely absent in "Edward Edward."

After Keith of Eastholm's unsuccessful attempt, Keith of Westholm attempts to make Helen change her mind in the third section comprising
stanzas 18 to stanzas 23. Stanzas 18 to 22 are fixed while only stanza 23 is exchangeable. However it can follow immediately after stanza 20 only. The exchangeability is due to the lack of progression as Keith of Westholm persists by repeatedly trying to make Helen relent. The monotony of extreme stasis is cleverly avoided by Rossetti because:

(i) Although stanza 23 is markedly similar to stanza 17 in the previous section, the two stanzas can never be interchanged because of the "but" in the first line of stanza 17 which links it retrospectively with stanza 15 and 16, and also because of the noun "agony" in stanza 23 which links it retrospectively through "mortal pain" with stanza 22.

(ii) The only one probable alternate position of stanza 23 is immediately after stanza 20.

(iii) No catalogue is used.

(iv) The refrain as usual is modulated. The nature of the progression is implicitly a priori because "Eastholm" has to be followed by "Westholm" and we are interested to know whether he will succeed where Eastholm has failed. Explicitly an a priori connection is established when in stanza 19 a command is given "Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce" which is immediately obeyed in the very next stanza where her brother says:

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"Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die."

Following are some of the means by which stanzaic inter relationships are established ex posteriori:

(i) Keith of Ewern is once again mentioned in stanza 20 and the subsequent personal pronoun "he" at the beginning of stanzas 21, 22 and 23 link these stanzas retrospectively. It also provides a retrospective contrast with stanzas 15, 16 and 17 which all begin with the identical conjunction "but."

(ii) "He yields" in stanza 22 meaning he surrenders under pressure marks the next stage of development after "he sends" and thus links stanza 22 ex posteriori with stanza 21.

(iii) The noun "wind's course" in stanza 19 establishes a retrospective link with stanza 13 through the noun "wind," similarly "hour" in stanza 18 with "hour" in stanza 11, and "agony," in stanza 23, through "pain" in stanza 22 with "torment" in stanza 13.

(iv) The adjective "white" in stanza 18 establishes an exposteriori link with the same adjective in stanza 11.

(v) The demonstrative pronoun "these" in stanza 22 establishes an ex posteriori link with stanza 21 because "these" stands for "ring" and "broken coin."
Stanzas 24 to 28 comprise the section in which the last pleader Keith of Keith makes a pathetic but unsuccessful attempt to prevent his son’s soul from being condemned to hell. Only stanza 24 is fixed whereas the remaining stanzas are exchangeable. The exchangeability is due to the persistent and repeated pleas "to save" something as important as "his dear son’s soul alive." The overriding concern for his son’s soul compels the aged father not only to humiliate himself by "kneeling in the road," but also to repeat the same plea again and again like a beggar. Once again Rossetti avoids the monotony of extreme stasis very adroitly:

(i) All the four exchangeable stanzas belong only to this section, "mighty baron" and "son" ensure that this so.

(ii) Although stanzas 26 and 27 are interchangeable no other stanza can come in between them.

(iii) Similarly stanza 25 cannot be followed by stanza 28. It can be only followed by stanzas 26 or 27.

(iv) No catalogue is employed and;

(v) The refrain as usual is modulated.

A priori stanzaic progression results implicitly because of the suspense generated as to whether he will succeed where the others have failed. An explicit a priori connection is established when a question is asked in stanza 25, "What here should the mighty Baron seek, / Little
brother?" to which either stanza 26 or stanza 27 could be the answer, so much so that stanza 25 to 27 can be construed as one logical unit. Retrospective progression is established by the following means:

(i) Once Keith of Keith is introduced in stanza 24 attention is focused entirely on him and the "he" and "his" of the remaining stanzas establish ex posteriori links with stanza 24.

(ii) The different characteristics the "fire" in hell are elaborated in stanzas 26 and 27 thus establishing ex posteriori links between the two stanzas.

(iii) The noun "hour" in stanza 24 establishes retrospective links with "hour" in stanzas 18 and 11.

(iv) Similarly the adjective "white" in stanza 24 establishes retrospective links with "white" in stanzas 11 and 18.

The last six stanzas comprise the concluding section of the narrative structure of the poem. Stanzas 29, 30, 31 and 32 are fixed whereas the last two stanzas are exchangeable ones. Ernst Häublein correctly points out "that this structural type is based on doubtful closure. Since the closural force of either mobile stanza does not exceed that of the other, the poem remains without poetic closure" (93). However the structural integrity of the whole poem is maintained because;

(i) the number of exchangeable stanzas is most minimal - only 2 stanzas and;
(ii) They can be interchanged only after stanza 32 and nowhere else in the poem and;

(iii) Through the use of the modulated refrain.

A priori stanzaic progression implicitly results after the failure of the three pleaders to make Helen relent, and suspense is created over the fate of both Keith of Ewern's and Helen's body and soul. Stanzas 30 and 31 are explicitly linked by a priori progression, because the question asked in stanza 30 is answered immediately and directly in stanza 31:

"Say, have they turned their horses round,
    Little brother?
They have raised the Old man from his knee,
    Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily."

Exposteriori links are established by the following means:

(i) Stanza 30 is linked retrospectively with stanza 29 when the little boy seeks clarification about the "heavy sound" of the "dying knell" of the previous stanza.

(ii) The personal pronoun "they" and "old man" in stanza 31 refer back to Keith of Eastholm and Keith of Westholm and to Keith of Keith respectively.
(iv) "Wind" in stanza 32 establishes retrospective links with "wind" in stanza 13 and stanza 19.

(v) "The wax" in stanza 33 refers back to "the waxen knave" in stanza 4 and "waxen man" in the first stanza and more specifically to "the thinned wax" in stanza 5.

(vi) "Flame" in stanza 33 refers back to the "flame" in stanzas 17 and "fire" in stanzas 26 and 27.

(vii) "Soul" in stanza 34 refers back to the "soul" in stanzas 26 and 27.

And finally,

(viii) "He and I" to "And he and thou, and thou and I" in stanza 13.

Thus with regard to all aspects of stanzaic structure - opening, closure, framing and recurrence and with regard to stanzaic mobility and stanzaic progression, Rossetti's "Sister Helen" is definitely more sophisticated than its original the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward." This analysis clearly reveals the brilliant artistic skill and technical versatility of the nature of Rossetti's literary escapism.

As Derek Attridge rightly observes "... in all verse from Middle English to the present the syllable plays a significant rhythmic role, frequently observing strict rules as to number and disposition" (61). "Edward Edward" a traditional medieval ballad, belonging to a predominantly rural and illiterate community, because of its oral and spontaneous method of story
telling displays a wide variation in the syllable count of each corresponding line for each stanza. For instance the first line of all the seven stanzas have the following number of syllables: 8, 8, 9, 10, 11, 11, and 11. Only lines 2 and 6 of the 8 line stanza which are repeated throughout the poem have the same four syllables each. Rossetti however who is writing "Sister Helen" in imitation of "Edward Edward" consciously and deliberately regulates the syllable count of each corresponding line, of each stanza which is repeated throughout the entire poem. Of the seven line stanza, line 2 has 4 syllables, line 5 has 3 syllables, line 6 has 7 syllables and line 7 has 9 syllables throughout the entire poem. Rossetti nevertheless artistically avoids monotony by cleverly varying the number of syllables respectively for each corresponding line — 4, 3, 7 and 9 syllables and this in spite of the fact that he is employing a modulated refrain throughout the entire poem.

Further all the words in "Edward Edward" are either monosyllabic or disyllabic and no word is trisyllabic. Whereas in "Sister Helen", as proof of literary sophistication and complexity we have words like "whatever," "balcony" and "terribly" which are trisyllabic.

"Almost all nursery rhymes, ballads, hymns, and other forms of popular verse and song use the four beat rhythm as the basis of their metre, most often in groups of four lines or in simple variations on this basic structure" (Derek Attridge 123). "Edward Edward" is no exception,
and the rhythmic pattern of any one of the stanzas can be set out as follows:

"Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair
\[ \text{O B o B o B o B} \]

Edward, Edward;
\[ \text{B B} \]

Your steed was auld and ye hae got mair;
\[ \text{O B o B o B o B} \]

some other dule ye dree, O'
\[ \text{o Bo B o B} \quad ((o)) \]

'O I hae kill'd my father dear,
\[ \text{o B o B o Bo B} \]

Mither, mither,
\[ \text{B B} \]

O I hae kill'd my father dear
\[ \text{o B o B o Bo B} \]

Alas, and wae is me O!
\[ \text{o B o B o B} \quad ((o)) \]

Derek Attridge calls the strong impulses in such a rhythmic sequence 'beats' and represents them with the symbol 'B,' and the weak impulses 'off beats' which are represented by the symbol 'o' (357). The symbol '((o))' represents an optional off beat with preference for omission. Thus the rhythm is perceived as repeated alternation of a stronger pulse.
and a fixed number of weaker pulses. When we reorganise the same rhythmic sequence taking into consideration the syntactic structure the following pattern results:

"Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair Edward, Edward;

\[ \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \]

Your steed was auld and ye hae got mair; some other dule ye dree, O''

\[ \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \]

'O I hae kill'd my father dear, Mither, mither,

\[ \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \]

O I hae kill'd my father dear Alas, and wae is me O!

\[ \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \bullet B \]

"Stanza forms" according to Derek Attridge "are abbreviated by indicating realised beats only" (357). Thus the stanza form of "Edward Edward" can be abbreviated as follows: 6.7.6.7. Which is actually two couplets of poulter’s measure. So called because of the generosity or carelessness of the 16th century poulterer whose eggs came in dozens of thirteen, or even fourteen (Derek Attridge 93).

A closer analysis of the rhythmic pattern of "Edward Edward" reveals that it has "duple rhythm": a single offbeat alternating regularly with a beat. According to Derek Attridge "most traditional ballads have a fundamentally duple rhythm" (100), and "Edward Edward" is no exception.
Further he remarks that duple rhythms are very commonly found in the English literary tradition for the following three reasons:

(i) It reflects the tendency of English speech towards an alternation of stronger and weaker stresses;

(ii) It matches the two rhythmic principles of English, the stresss timed rhythm and the syllabic rhythm, by providing one syllable for a rhythmic peak and one for a trough;

(iii) All it requires is a simple alternation between a relatively stronger and a relatively weaker signal (100-101). These three reasons correlate with the characteristic features of the duple rhythm of "Edward Edward."

A closer analysis of the rhythmic beats of "Edward Edward" reveals that there is a tendency for them to alternate between stronger and weaker. "Such an alternation in verse," according to Derek Attridge "is called a dipodic rhythm, and we can refer to the two kinds of beat as primary and secondary" (114). Usually the first and the third beat will be the primary beats and the second and the fourth the secondary beats. They can be indicated thus:

```
'Why does your brand sae drop wi' blude.'
   o     b o b o B o b
```
Dipodic rhythms are characteristic of strongly rhythmic elementary verse forms such as the nursery rhyme and the traditional ballads like "Edward Edward" (Derek Attridge 117).

Another striking feature of the rhythmic pattern of "Edward Edward" is the line opening which is a single offbeat. As Derek Attridge correctly points out, "[its] rhythmic function is very similar to an opening upbeat, or anacrusis, in music, providing a gentler introduction ... In ballad melodies, the anacrusis is more often than not at a lower pitch than the accented syllable that follows, reflecting its introductory character; and many ballads begin with an unstressed 'O,' serving little purpose except to give the musical anacrusis a vocal realisation" (102–3). This is clearly evident in the following line from "Edward Edward."

"O I hae kill'd my father dear"

\begin{verbatim}
O B B B B
\end{verbatim}

The initial offbeat smooths the beginning and introduces us gently into the line.

"If there is a strong tendency to link the offbeats with the following beats," Derek Attridge remarks that "the rhythm will be perceived as rising," (108). Most of the words and phrases of "Edward Edward" consist of an offbeat followed by a beat, for instance line 5 of stanza 7 is rising throughout:
Most importantly "to start lines consistently with an offbeat leading to a following beat is to encourage the reader to perceive a rising rhythm in what follows, and to end with a rising unit is to reinforce this tendency" (Derek Attridge 109). This is precisely what happens throughout in "Edward Edward."

This is what established the correlation between rising rhythms and metrical patterns that begin with an offbeat namely, the traditional iambic and anapaestic metres. "Edward Edward" is characterised by the iambic metre, throughout. To scan just one line:

\[
\text{I'll let them stand till they down fa}
\]

\[
\text{Mither mither}
\]

The caesura plays an important role in modulating the rhythm of a line of verse. In "Edward Edward" it occurs quite predictably and mechanically almost always at the centre of each line throughout the poem. The scheme for stanza 4 can be set out as follows:

\[
5 / 5
\]
Its obvious that the medieval ballad singer has not varied his caesura at all.

Enjambment is another means by which not only the rhythm of a line verse is modulated, but also the train of thought is organised. Its an important device which affects the rhythm and the narrative structure of the poem simultaneously. Using S.H. Burton's scheme to study enjambment as explained in his book *The Criticism of Poetry* it is plain that in "Edward Edward," the last four lines of every stanza have an identical enjambment pattern throughout:

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The vertical marks represent the beginning and end of sentences and the dots indicate end stopped lines (46). Limited variations can be seen only in the first four lines but even that is restricted because of every second line of every stanza being end-stopped, and except for stanzas 2 and 3 in which the sentence continues in the next line, in all the other stanzas the sentence also ends in the second line itself. The third line is run on in all the stanzas except in stanza 4 in which it marks the end of a sentence. The fourth line of all the stanzas marks the end of a sentence and the end of the mother’s speech. The complete pattern for stanza 4 is:

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"Edward Edward" the traditional ballad which belongs to the oral tradition is characterised by repetition to aid the memory of the ballad singer. The same repetition however has the negative effect of subduing the rhyme scheme of each stanza:
Edward Edward (repeated throughout the poem)

repetition of first line

O (repeated throughout the poem) — rhyme

a

Mither mither (repeated throughout the poem)

repetition of fifth line

O (repeated throughout the poem)

Thus in each stanza of eight lines there is virtually only one rhyme, namely 'a' of the third and fifth line of each stanza. Only stanzas 5 and 6 have perfect rhymes: ha', fa' and wife, life. All the other stanzas have imperfect rhymes: red, steed (consonance), mair, dear (consonance), that, boat (consonance) and dear, bear (consonance).

A close analysis of the rhythmic structure using Derek Attridge's system of beats - B and offbeats - o, reveals that like "Edward Edward" "Sister Helen" also has the four beat rhythm as its basis:

"He yields you these and craves full fain

\[ \text{o B o B o B o B} \]

Sister Helen

\[ \text{o B} \]
You pardon him in his mortal pain:

"What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?"

(O Mother, Mary Mother,

No more, no more, between Hell and Heaven!)

But when the rhythmic pattern is organised according to the syntactic units by taking into account only the realised beats, unlike "Edward Edward" it does not resolve itself into a simplistic formula like the 'poulter's measure.' The resulting pattern for "Sister Helen" is a lot more complex: 9:5:6. It is now obvious that Rossetti has subtly combined the four beat rhythm of the popular ballad with the five beat rhythm of the literary one. The first sentence which has nine beats can be divided into 5 + 4:

"He yields you these and craves full fain Sister Helen

You pardon him in his mortal pain."

The second sentence has a straightforward five beat rhythm:

"What else he took will he give again, Little brother?"
The refrain has a 2 + 4 beat rhythm:

(O Mother, Mary Mother, No more, no more, between
  o B o B o B o B o B o B

'He'll and Heaven!)
B o B

Derek Attridge enlightens us on the complex nature of the five beat rhythm in the following words: "That a five beat rhythm is a less simple and less salient perceptual form than a four beat rhythm scarcely needs demonstrating" (125-6). A four beat rhythm is a result of a fundamental alternation and doubling of an offbeat and a beat, whereas a five beat group cannot be explained in so simple terms: "a five beat group" as Derek Attridge very rightly points out "cannot be divided into rhythmically equal components larger than its five subdivisions [and consequently] the five beat line does not bring with it the sense of a strong underlying rhythm; it observes the heightened regularity of movement created by the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, without those rhythmic pulses grouping themselves consistently and insistently into twos and fours, and without any tendency for dipodic rhythms to make themselves felt. For this reason it strikes the ear as more faithful to the natural rhythm of speech" (126).

Thus the rhythmic pattern of Rossetti's "Sister Helen" is more complex than that of the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward." At first glance each line in each stanza seems to have a four beat rhythm:
quite like any other ballad, but when the syntax is taken into consideration it can be restructured as follows:

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Thus Rossetti by subtly combining the four beat rhythm of the traditional ballad with the five beat rhythm, succeeds in cleverly avoiding its monotony and its heirarchical structures by making the rhythm reflect the natural rhythm of speech. This subtle combination results in the creation of a constant tension throughout the poem between the rhythm of the language
and the elementary rhythmic form, for as Derek Attridge observes: "The five beat line is characterised by its rhythmic variety, allowing the natural movement of speech to be imitated or heightened as the poet determines" (132).

When an offbeat is manifested as two syllables it is indicated thus: \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) as in:

"Oh, its Keith of Eastholm rides so fast
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

Sister Helen,
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

For I know the white mane on the blast."
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

The hour has come, has come at last,
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

Little brother!
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)

Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!)
\( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \) \( \overset{\text{\tiny o}}{\text{\tiny o}} \)
Double offbeats are manifested in "Oh its"; "know the" and "between";
\[ \text{8} \quad \text{8} \quad \text{8} \]

consequently the rhythm of the first two lines is experienced differently as the duple line is upset and partial triple rhythm results. "The freedom" as Derek Attridge perspicaciously argues "to spic one kind of rhythm with touches of another, or to avoid the characteristics of either is a freedom on which the power and delicacy of rhythmic effects depend" (100). Rossetti has used this freedom with great power and effect not only to create a complex rhythmic pattern, but most importantly to make the rhythm express and mirror the meaning which he wishes to convey in that stanza. The triple rhythm is characterised by "rapidity and lightness" (Derek Attridge 99), and the first two lines in which the double offbeats occur mirror the speed and haste of Keith of Eastholm's arrival and the little boy's breathless excitement in conveying this information to Helen. Conversely Rossetti avoids using triple rhythm in the next two lines spoken by Helen. The slower and "somethat heavier movement of duple verse" (Derek Attridge 99) reflects the heavy sentence passed on Keith of Ewern and the slow manner in which it is being executed by her. Rossetti has subtly contrasted the triple rhythm with that of the duple rhythm to contrast the speed and haste and anxiety of Keith of Eastholm with the cruel and tantalising nature of Helen's reply. Thus unlike the traditional
ballad singer, Rossetti varies the rhythmic pattern of his poem by using and contrasting the less common and more complex triple rhythm with the more common and simpler duple rhythm, to more fully exploit the resources of the poetic medium.

"Dipodic rhythms are less common in triple verse than in duple, no doubt because" as Derek Attridge rightly points out "the triple units discourage a hierarchical structure based on binary units" (117). Thus wherever a triple rhythm occurs in "Sister Helen" a dipodic rhythm is absent, but sometimes, even when dipodic rhythms are present because of the underlying four beat structure, Rossetti varies the dipodic rhythm by emphasising not the first word which is the common practice, but gives it very little emphasis, and allows the first strong stress to fall on the third syllable. This subtle and sophisticated variation, as Derek Attridge correctly observes results in "an elasticity which permits a greater variety of tone" (119). For instance if we emphasise the first beat of

"His dying Knell between Hell and Heaven!"

\[ \text{O B \& b o B o b} \]

with a strong stress a heavy rhythm is established, meaning Keith of Ewern's death knell is heard. If on the other hand we do not emphasise it, and allow the first strong stress to fall on the second beat
"His dying knell between Hell and Heaven!"

The former strong insistent and predictable rhythm is replaced with a subtler variety of tone with the implication that the sound of Keith of Ewern's knell is fading away. Thus Rossetti has skilfully varied the literary use of the four beat verse by making it more elastic and flexible to suit both interpretations of the same line. This sort of sophistication in technique in varying the rhythm of the same line is completely absent in "Edward Edward."

The opening of each line of "Sister Helen" like that of "Edward Edward's" begins with a single offbeat which smooths the beginning and introduces us gently into the line. The "empty O" in stanzas 1, 2 and 3 of "Edward Edward" signal the beginning of Edward's replies. They have virtually no semantic content at all; even in stanza 3 when Edward confesses to patricide there's no need for him to be surprised, for after all he is the person who has committed the murder. But in "Sister Helen" Rossetti uses the "Oh" to express and convey genuine surprise and exclamation, as in stanza 4 to convey the boy's surprise at the change that the wax image has undergone: "Oh the wexen knave was plump today, / Sister Helen; / How like dead folk he has dropped away!" and as in stanza 11 when the boy announces the arrival of Keith of Eastholm, "Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast, / Sister Helen." Nevertheless, Rossetti uses the
"empty O" for its musical effect to begin each refrain, "O Mother, Mary Mother."

Rossetti most characteristically uses the rising rhythm throughout the poem by beginning each line with an offbeat and linking it with the following offbeat:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{He yields} & \text{you these} & \text{and craves} & \text{full fain.} \\
oB & oB & oB & oB \\
\end{array}
\]

The rising rhythm is further reinforced by the metre which is unstressed followed by stressed namely iambic:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{He yields you these and craves full fain.} \\
\end{array}
\]

But Rossetti avoids monotony by occasionally using a triple metre as in:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Outside its merry in the wind's wake.} \\
\end{array}
\]

Moreover, the anapaestic metre of this line typically echoes the lighthearted and 'merry' atmosphere outside Helen's room. This sort of a variation in metre is not found in "Edward Edward."

Rossetti further innovates by introducing a metrical pattern which begins with a stress followed by unstress as in:
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell.

The line is iambic throughout but "fell" is unstressed and "it fell" can be read as a trochee. As Derek Attridge tells us there is nothing structurally anomalous about this—a trochee which is a falling metrical pattern in a line which has a rising rhythm (109). Thus the rhythm and the metrical stress pattern are counterpointed "securing variety within regularity, freedom within form" (Burton 41). Most significantly, the trochee mirrors the falling sound of the words "it fell" a typical example of sound echoing the sense. This sophisticated device of counterpointing and making the sound of words to echo their sense is completely absent in "Edward Edward."

Unlike "Edward Edward" in which the caesura occurs mechanically and predictably almost at the centre of each line, Rossetti varies its position cleverly in the different stanzas of "Sister Helen". In stanza 34, the pauses occur in the following manner.

```
1 / 4 /

no caesura

1 / 4 /

2 / 4 /

no caesura
```
The caesura in line 1 and 3 of the stanza emphasises the exclamation "Ah!" and in the last line it underscores the complete sense of nihilism of Helen. Unlike the caesura in "Edward Edward" which has been used by the medieval ballad singer only as a convenient means to pause for a breather Rossetti uses it to highlight the semantic content of each line, even as he confers a musical architectonic on the stanza by consistently patterning the pauses: There is a pause after the first syllable, and the fourth syllable in lines 1, 3 and 7, and a pause after the second and the fourth syllable in line 4. These two designs, of 1/4 and 2/4, are harmonized in the last line as 1/2/4.

It is evident on studying the way Rossetti has employed enjambment in "Sister Helen," that his stanza is more "line moulded" than "Edward Edward". Using Burton's system, it is plain that the scheme for lines 4 to 7 remains constant throughout the entire poem:

There is variety only in the first 3 lines with the second line being run on stanza as in stanza 9 or end stopped as in stanza 3:
Stanzas 1 and 34 are more tightly organised with the sentence ending in the second line itself:

As in "Edward Edward" enjambment occurs only at the phrase or clause level: "Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day, / Sister Helen" and "See, see, the sunken pile of wood, / Sister Helen, / Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!" As Rossetti was writing a literary ballad, he has deliberately and consciously compressed the thought groups into the metrical framework, so much so that within the space of a seven line stanza there are at least 3 sentence endings, and on two occasions even 4. Nevertheless this is the same as in stanza 4 of "Edward Edward" which has the advantage of a longer 8 line stanza, and that too without a refrain. Thus Rossetti has done commendably well in the use of enjambment in spite of his handicaps.

"Sister Helen" whose stanza form is modelled on that of the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward" has the following rhyme scheme:
Strictly speaking as in Edward Edward there is only one rhyme in the seven line stanza, with the 1st, 3rd and 4th lines rhyming 'a'. Four words are repeated throughout the poem – Sister Helen, Little brother, Mother and Heaven. But Rossetti's poetic genius introduces striking variations even as he conforms to the original:

(i) the lines which rhyme 'a' contain the information in each stanza, but the same line unlike in "Edward Edward" is never repeated, and further three different words unlike in "Edward Edward" which has only two different words are used for the same rhyme – "to-day," "away" and "say" in stanza 4.

(ii) Rossetti even as he repeats the same word throughout the poem has made sure that they rhyme within each stanza: b - "Helen" and "Heaven" are pararhymes and c-"brother" and "mother" are perfect rhymes.

(iii) Occasionally he uses words which are strictly speaking not rhymes at all: "Halloo", "you" and "dew" in stanza 12.
Sister Helen       b
   a
  a
Little brother     c
Mother            c
Heaven            b

Strictly speaking as in Edward Edward there is only one rhyme in the
seven line stanza, with the 1st, 3rd and 4th lines rhyming 'a'. Four words
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are pararhymes and c - "brother" and "mother" are perfect rhymes.

(iii) Occasionally he uses words which are strictly speaking not rhymes at
all: "Halloo", "you" and "dew" in stanza 12.
(iv) Twice the demand of emphasis of meaning in stanzas 5 and 26 compel him to repeat the same word instead using another rhyming word: "blood" and "forgive" respectively. Thus Rossetti has used rhyme more skilfully and effectively than the traditional ballad singer to organise the thought content of his poem, and for euphonic purposes.

To conclude, Rossetti more than the traditional ballad singer has certainly imposed the genius of his own imagining and thought on the stanzaic structure and prosody of his literary ballad, "Sister Helen." Consequently "Sister Helen" is not a pastiche, but a strikingly original and creative work of art in its own right. Rossetti has not merely copied the stanza model and the prosody of "Edward Edward" but he has only used them as a model to create a technically superior work of art. His literary escapism has resulted in a unique literary ballad—"Sister Helen."