CHAPTER IV

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE SCHEMES AND TROPES OF "EDWARD EDWARD" AND "SISTER HELEN"

This chapter is a detailed and minute analysis comparing and contrasting the various schemes and tropes of "Edward Edward" and "Sister Helen." Leech defines schemes as "foregrounded repetitions of expression" and tropes as "foregrounded irregularities of content" (71). The purpose of this comparative and contrastive analysis is to emphasise at every stage, the greater degree of complexity and higher degree of sophistication of Rossetti’s ballad over that of its original. Rossetti used the ballad form as a means of literary escape to the glorious medieval past. This chapter demonstrates clearly that his effort is not pastiche; on the contrary it reveals the technical brilliance of his poetic genius in transforming this medieval literary form into a new and vibrant entity.

In the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward" free verbal repetition predominates: "Free repetition of form means the exact copying of some previous part of text (whether word, phrase, or even sentence)" (Leech 77). Lines 1 and 3 and lines 5 and 7 are the same for each stanza:

Why does your brand sae drop wi’ blude
Edward Edward?
Why does your brand sae drop wi' blude,
And why sae sad gang ye, O'?

'O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
Mither, mither;

O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
And I had nae mair but he, O'.

Line 4 in stanza 4 and 7 are identical: "My dear son, now tell me, O' -" Free verbal repetition is of two types and both the categories are manifested in "Edward Edward."

(i) Epizeuxis or immediate repetition eg: "Edward Edward" and "mither mither."

(ii) Plote or intermittent repetition eg: "My dear son, now tell me, O' -" in stanzas 4 and 7.

Free verbal repetition predominates in "Edward Edward" because it is a ballad belonging to oral literature. Primarily it serves as a mnemonic device for the illiterate ballad singer who is able to concentrate on the vital story element even as he narrates it by expanding it. The device is euphonic because of its musical potential and is pleasurable in itself. It further aids in the organisation of the stanza structure and the narrative format of the poem: line 1 and line 5 of each stanza are the first lines spoken by the mother and Edward respectively. But most important it can
also function as a "device of intensification" (Leech 78). Edward's grief is emphasised when he repeats:

"O I hae kill'd my father dear,
Mither, mither;
O I hae hill'd my father dear,
Alas, and wae is me, O!"

Similarly when he curses his mother, his bitterness and hatred is underscored in the repetition:

"The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear,
Mither, mither;
The curse of hell frac me sall ye bear:
Sic counsels ye gave to me, O!"

"Verbal parallelism" which is in reality "a partial repetition" comprising "an invariant part (the verbal repetition itself) and a variant part (the rest of the unit)" (Leech 77, 79) occurs strikingly in the second part (stanzas 4 to 7) of the poem. The mother begins each stanza with a question addressed to Edward thus: "And what ..." This kind of initial repetition which is the simplest variety of "exact verbal repetitions in equivalent positions" (Leech 79) is categorised as 'Anaphora.' Anaphora in "Edward Edward" serves a useful purpose in organising the narrative structure of the poem, by dividing it into 2 distinct phases (i) before and (ii) after Edward's confession of patricide.
Anaphora is also evident in Edward's replies: "O I hae kill'd my ..." His mother forces the truth out of her son, after two unconvincing and evasive replies. Here, anaphora most significantly reveals Edward's submissiveness to his mother and discomfort at her persistent questioning.

Rossetti emphasises his complete break with the traditional ballad and affirms the literary sophistication of his poem by almost completely avoiding "free verbal repetition," for as Rees says "repetition is one of its (the traditional ballad's) most important features, words, lines and even whole stanzas are repeated throughout the poem" (21). Unlike in "Edward Edward" there is no obvious instance of verbal repetition, and even in lines 2 and 5 of each stanza, which are the same throughout the poem - "Sister Helen" and "Little brother" Rossetti avoids the monotony of epizeuxis which is seen in "Edward Edward" : "Edward Edward" "mither mither." However Rossetti uses epizeuxis with striking results in the following instances:

(i) Helen who is anxious to know whether it is indeed Keith of Ewern's relations who have come seeking her, tells her brother "**Look, look,** do you know them who they are, / Little brother?" The use of epizeuxis reveals her nervousness and also the fact that it has become dark and there is limited visibility outside.

(ii) Once Keith of Eastholm is identified epizeuxis is used to emphasise her relief at the successful outcome of her witchcraft, and the mystery
surrounding the ominous circumstances of her revenge: "The hour has come, has come at last, / Little brother!"

(iii) Helen's eagerness to hear every word uttered by Keith of Westholm, as a strong wind tries to interfere is reflected in: "Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce, / Little brother!"

(iv) The last act of the tense drama is signalled by Keith of Keith's plea, and his arrival provokes her to say, "The short short hour will soon be past, / Little brother!" indicating that soon Keith of Ewern will die.

(v) Helen's steely resolve and hard heartedness, and the futility of the pleaders' efforts and the consequent destruction and sense of loss is seen in the line "(O Mother, Mary Mother, / No more, no more, between Hell and Heaven!)

Thus even a simple device like epizeuxis which has been so predictably and mechanically used in "Edward Edward" has been used with great skill in different contexts by Rossetti to produce striking results. He has used it only in significant moments, to convey important messages, and most important to reveal Helen's character and her temperament. His versatility and genius for improvisation is evident when he combines epizeuxis with the other type of intermittent verbal repetition the plebe: "Lost, lost all lost between Hell and Heaven!" The implication is that the overwhelming sense of loss is of an extreme kind to be expressed fully in a few words, so complete a loss demands manifold utterance. The apparent disorderliness
in the manner of repetition (Leech 79) by the introduction of the variant "all" is suggestive of the spontaneous nature of the passionate outburst, even as it emphasises the absolute sense of loss as the poem come to an end.

Other striking instances of ploce are as follows:

(i) "The time was long, yet the time ran, / Little brother."

The ploce conveys poignantly Helen's weariness and feeling of exhaustion after toiling at her task for three continuous days and three sleepleas nights.

(ii) "The hour, the sweet hour I forecast, / Little brother!"

The ploce emphasises the extreme state of excitation of Helen's mind at the arrival of her long awaited moment of revenge.

(iii) "Fire shall forgive me as I forgive, / Little brother!"

The ploce reinforces most effectively Helen's steely determination not to yield to the pleas of Keith of Keith to spare his son's life.

(iv) "A soul that's lost as mine is lost, / Little brother!"

The ploce conveys remarkably Helen's pathetic state as she acknowledges her own doom at the very moment of her victory. Rossetti has thus used the device of ploce, which is also present in "Edward Edward," in a
remarkably more effective manner to portray not only the nervous excitement of Helen's tormented mind but also the varied aspects of her character.

Rossetti further asserts his complete break with the traditional ballad and affirms the literary sophistication of his poem by using what Anne Henry Ehrenpreis, calls "the modulated refrain" (17). "A refrain" according to The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics "is a line or lines or part of a line repeated at intervals throughout a poem, usually at regular intervals, and most often at the end of a stanza" (686). Its presence in a poem is a sure indication of its primitiveness. It occurs very commonly in many traditional ballads, although it is not to be seen in "Edward Edward." However Rossetti has chosen this primitive device for his poem, and by doing so, he is able to establish "Sister Helen" firmly in the ballad tradition, and make it more primitive and traditional than "Edward Edward" itself. But for Rossetti the use of the refrain is not merely a gimmick to gain a superficial resemblance or attachment to the ballad tradition. He uses verbal parallelism, completely avoiding free verbal repetition, to "modulate" his refrain and to deeply and firmly incorporate it in the overall structure and design of his poem.

In Rossetti's "most ambitious and most celebrated refrain" (Anne Henry Ehrenpreis 16), sumploce, a type of verbal parallelism which is a combination of initial and final repetition has been used. The beginning of the refrain, "O Mother, Mary Mother" and its ending "between Hell and Heaven" are the invariant parts, thus we have the formula a...b
repeated in the refrain throughout the poem. Further the phrase "O Mother, Mary Mother" is of another type of verbal parallelism known as the epistrophe which has the formula (...a) (...a). Thus Rossetti uses a combination of two different types of verbal parallelism, symploce and epistrophe, in his refrain.

Almost always verbal parallelism coincides with syntactic parallelism, but Rossetti departs from established practice, by allowing for syntactic variants in his refrain:

(i) With a finite verb: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!"

(ii) With a non-finite verb: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!"

(iii) No verb at all: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!"

The refrain is always printed in italics, and enclosed in parenthesis to indicate that the lines are spoken by someone else other than Helen and her brother, and that the information contained in the variant part is an additional thought or explanation. The distancing and the objectivity are underscored by the use of the 3rd person pronouns "he" "she" "her" "they" and "it," and this is one of the important reasons for Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (17) and Joseph Knight (41) to liken it to the chorus in a
Greek tragedy. However there is one striking use of the first person plural pronoun "we" by which Rossetti conveys to us that the poem has universal implications for all mortals: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!".

The variant portion comprises:

(i) Attempts at seeking information: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?"

(ii) Expressing doubts about the information given in the stanza: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?"

(iii) New information being supplied which is relevant to the information in the stanza: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Oh, never more, between Hell and Heaven!" and new information which is irrelevant to the information in the stanza: "O Mother, Mary mother, / How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!"

(iv) An increase in the amount of information supplied in the stanza: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!" and finally,

(v) Repetition of information given in the stanza: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!"

Correspondingly the modulated refrain performs a wide range of functions in addition to the routine functions of an ordinary refrain namely
euphony and to mark off stanzaic units. In the traditional ballads, a line or lines of nonsense verse which has or have a musical effect comprises the refrain: In "The Falcon" (100) the refrain is as follows — "Lully, lulley, lully, lulley! / The facon hath borne my make away!" (Couch 430). The lack of semantic content combined with the predictable and unvarying repetition can result in tediousness and monotony. Rossetti avoids this by varying the refrain, and most important he endows it with semantic significance. Even refrains which are verbless are pregnant with meaning: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Alas, alas between Hell and Heaven." Here the variant portion "alas alas" is by itself a free verbal repetition of the type epizeuxis, but when read along with stanza 27 to which it belongs simultaneous with the musical effect the repetition produces, monotony is avoided because it is clear that a single "alas" will not quite adequately express the feeling of loss and sorrow at the fate awaiting Keith of Ewern's soul in hell. This testifies to Rossetti's great skill in combining free verbal repetition and two types of verbal parallelism, while at the same time eschewing the demerit of the former.

By doing this Rossetti successfully combines the spontaneity of free verbal repetition with that of the "subterranean rivers of corporate belief and sentiment which find their expression in the iterative procedures of ritual [by means of verbal parallelism]" (Leech 85). In the traditional ballad the refrain was merely a musical jingle in which the audience spontaneously joined in a lighthearted manner. On the contrary Rossetti's
modulated refrain, because of the verbal parallelism acquires a very solemn tone quite similar to the tone of liturgical language, which is very appropriate to the ritual of witchcraft in progress. This is especially evident in a very pronounced manner in the following two exchanges:

(i) "Little brother, whence come the three,
    Little brother?"

    (O Mother, Mary Mother,
    Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

(ii) "Look, look, do you know them who they are,
    Little brother?"

    (O Mother, Mary Mother,
    Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

In the traditional ballad, because of the free verbal repetition, and the virtual absence of semantic content in the refrain, the refrain contrasts both structurally and semantically with the rest of the poem. Structurally, it is a static point against which the rest of the poem develops. On the contrary the constantly varying refrain of "Sister Helen" dynamically mirrors the shifts and development of the action and the emotional content of the poem:

(j) "O Mother, Mary Mother,
    What rest tonight, between Hell and Heaven?"
(ii) "O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?"

(iii) "O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?"

The variant part of the above three successive refrains: "rest," "sight" and "sound" echo and serve to highlight the semantic content of their respective stanzas 6, 7 and 8 and emphasize the fact that Helen's period of waiting is over and that her moment of sweet revenge has arrived. And similarly in stanza 23 when the brother says that "That even dead Love must weep to see" Keith of Ewern's pathetic condition, Helen replies:

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

for which we have the refrain:

"O Mother, Mary Mother,
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven."

Thus, within the space of a single stanza the emotion of Love is (i) dead (ii) the origin of Hate (iii) and has finally become transformed to hate.
Moreover structurally, the type of verbal parallelism symposce used in the refrain provides a finely balanced contrast with the variant part sandwiched between the invariant parts. But more important semantically the invariant part provides a fine contrast - "Hell and Heaven" - which sums up very succinctly the theme of the entire poem: the long drawn out struggle to save atleast Keith of Ettern's soul from eternal damnation. It thus becomes the "pivot upon which the whole structure [turns]" (Poe 231). Correspondingly, the variant parts of the refrain in addition to emphasising some important aspect of the drama like setting for instance: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!" constantly reinforce the emotional content of the poem: "O Mother, Mary Mother, / Oh, never more, between Hell and Heaven!" Or do both simultaneously as in : "O Mother, Mary Mother, / His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!"

Rosetti uses a singular and striking "polyptoton : the repetition of a word with varying grammatical inflections" (Leech 82) to highlight the romantic atmosphere outside in which "the shaken trees" seem to gently "shake" the stars also: "In the shaken trees the chill stars shake."
seen in the way he has combined the different types of verbal repetition — epizeuxis and ploce, and the different types of verbal parallelism — epistrophe and symptole, and last but not the least verbal repetition and verbal parallelism.

When the poem begins Helen’s brother is restless and waits impatiently for Helen to complete her task soon. His impatience is revealed in the beginning of stanza 5 thus: “See, see, the sunken pile of wood, / Sister Helen, / Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!” He informs her and us that the waxen image of Keith of Ewern has almost been melted down. In the penultimate stanza of the poem he tells her and us that her job is over: “See, see, the wax has dropped from its place, / Sister Helen”. The waxen image has been completely melted down. Thus the immediate (epizeuxis) and initial parallel repetition or anaphora of “see” serves both as a framing device — the beginning of the end and the end itself, and as a means to reveal the little boy’s impatient character and temperament. In contrast repetition and parallelism have been used by the traditional medieval ballad singer in a very mechanical, colourless and obviously predicatable manner.

The language of a traditional ballad is simple and denotative. the illiterate ballad singer whose mental faculties are being strained to the uttermost, as he is composing his poem even as he is narrating it to his illiterate audience has neither the need nor the time to indulge in verbal complexities and semantic subtleties by resorting to the use of
figurative language, the meaning of the poem is always transparently clear, so that it can be immediately understood by his audience. "Ambiguity" as defined by Empson in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* "is any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language" (I), is very rarely present in the traditional ballad. Thus in "Edward Edward" the cognitive information contained in the poem is readily and clearly understood. Consequently no tropes occur. Even the very few metaphors used are commonplace and there is nothing striking or odd about them. In the following lines "feet" is a very common synecdoche whose semantic implication is immediately understood:

"I'll set my feet in yonder boat,
Mither, mither
I'll set my feet in yonder boat,
And I'll fare over the sea, O".

The feet of Edward represents the whole person of Edward. Similarly "brand," "hawk," "red-roan steed," "tow'rs," and "ha," are instances of metonymy whose semantic implications are obvious: they are all possessions of Edward which denote his status in society as a knight.

On the contrary in "Sister Helen" a literary ballad whose text appears in print to be read leisurely by literate and sophisticated readers, the language used is relatively complex and intricate. Ambiguity results because often the same word connotes different meanings. A large number
and a wide variety of tropes occur. Consequently this results in an overall density which is completely lacking in "Edward Edward."

The simplest types of tropes are those which are strikingly semantically odd:

(i) "Nay then, shall I slay a living man
   Little brother?
   (O Mother, Mary Mother,
   A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

where "living man" and "living soul" are examples of semantic redundancy or pleonasm. Helen tries to project herself as innocent by claiming that she is only melting a wax doll and not murdering Keith of Ewern. The irony is obvious, but what is more significant is the expression "living soul." The chorus exclaims in reply to Helen's rhetorical question that it is more important to save Keith of Ewern's soul from hell. The soul continues to be alive even after a person's death, irrespective of whether it goes to hell or heaven. But when the chorus exclaims "living soul" the pleonasm emphasises the fact that what is being referred to is not merely the state of life after death but more important that the spiritual health and welfare of the soul is possible only in heaven. A soul is alive only when it goes to heaven, and not to hell. Further, Rossetti complicates matters by punning on the word "soul" in "a living soul." "Soul" here could mean either: (a) the immortal part of a person or (b) the whole person itself as in "he's a dear old soul." As Leech correctly points out
"this type of pun [involving polysemy] which expresses two meanings through the same occurrence is ... its own justification, for it gives two meanings for the price of one, and so adds to the poem's density and richness of significance" (212). Hence what is remarkable here is the poetic genius of Rossetti which creates such splendid ambiguity by simultaneously combining pleonasm, and irony, alongwith punning.

In "Be very still in your play to-night, / Little brother." Rossetti resorts to the use of the oxymoron which is "the yoking together of two expressions which are semantically incompatible, so that in combination they can have no conceivable literal reference to reality" (Leech 132). It is obvious that one cannot remain still when playing. This seemingly absurd and self-conflicting statement's significance lies in the fact that it reveals her anxiety and nervousness that nothing should disturb the spell she has cast as she waits for news about the success or failure of her scheme of revenge.

Since Keith of Ewern has cheated Helen, and because she uses an obviously evil method to seek her revenge, tropes which Leech categorises as "honest deceptions" (167), often occur in the poem:

(i) "But he calls forever on your name, / Sister Helen" is an example of hyperbole with ironical implications - Keith of Ewern who has ignored her till now is forced to think of her always.
(ii) "He sees me in earth, in moon and sky, / Little brother!" is an instance of hyperbole with sarcastic implications, for now Helen need not go and see him.

(iii) "The way is long to his son’s abode, / Little brother," is an example of an "innuendo" "a special kind of ironic statement which is remarkable for what it omits rather than for what it mentions" (Leech 174-5). Helen implies that Keith of Ewern’s abode is in Hell.

(iv) "Yet here they burn but for a space, / Little brother!" is an example of litotes or understatement, which also functions as an innuendo-Helen implies that Keith of Ewern will burn forever in hell.

What is significant is that the irony which results because of these "honest deceptions" is not to be taken at its face value. Rossetti by apparently deceiving has actually emphasised the underlying semantic significance of the above quoted instances. "In both arts (painting and poetry) Rossetti laboured to achieve a highly concentrated imagery and a symbolism rich in connotations" (J.H. Buckley 165). This is manifested in the following manner:

(i) Simile: "How like dead folk he has dropped away!" which aptly describes not only the state of the wax doll, but also that of the condition of Keith of Ewern. This is emphasised by the little boy personifying an inanimate object, the wax doll, by the use of the personal pronoun "he." Rossetti thus combines simile and metaphor in one line. Similarly in "Fire
shall forgive me as I forgive," simile is used to compare not two objects but an abstract quality, and most significantly the picture of all consuming fire is impressed upon us by the negative implication that even if she spares Keith of Ewern, she will not be spared by his family members and that she will have to be burnt alive at the stake.

(ii) Synecdoche: "My heart for his pleasure fared the same," where "heart" the seat of all emotions, and the core of her being, represents her whole self. The synecdoche strikingly drives home the fact how completely and passionately she loved him.

(iii) Metonymy: "No vesper-chime, but a dying knell," the sound of one symbolises the end of the day, and the sound of the other the end of life. Death puts an end to a person's days spent on this earth. Rossetti is thus able to allude concisely to the fact that Keith of Ewern is dead, by combining metonymy with innuendo.

(iv) Transference of meaning: "In the shaken trees the chill stars shake." The breeze which shakes the leaves, seems to shake the very stars seen through the leaves. The stars emit a pale light, and this along with with the cold weather outside, is conveyed by the stars themselves being "chill." Thus Rossetti's synaesthetic metaphor, which transfers meaning from one domain of perception namely the weather, to another namely the stars, portrays very vividly the cold atmosphere outside. This is what led Joan Rees to remark "Rossetti's inward gaze is always intense and what he
sees is a drama so vivid and compelling that he must couch it in language which challenges attention by its own intensity and self-consciousness" (98).

As Peter Westland rightly remarks one of the important characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite poetry "was its love of symbolism" (56). One such symbol is love which is at the centre of the poem. It appears in capital letters in the distortion of a popular saying -love is blind-
"Hate, born of Love, is blind as he." But more important as Eric Warner points out "a special technique of Rossetti's is to let his fancy play upon a striking concept and weave it into an elaborate pattern (157). this is evident in the manner in which he uses the words "melt," "flame," "fire" and "burn", not only to describe the actual process of melting the wax figure in the present, but also to recall the intensity of their past love, and to emphasise the eternal punishment which awaits them both in hell.

Thus Rossetti's employment of both schemes and tropes is more complex and sophisticated than in "Edward Edward." He achieves this mainly by using the various schemes and tropes not in isolation but always in tandem. Thus Rossetti has vastly improved upon his original "Edward Edward" in which the traditional ballad singer has used no tropes at all, and used a few schemes in a monotonous, colourless and predictable manner. The detailed analysis clearly establishes that "Sister Helen" is not a pastiche. Rossetti's versatile genius has skilfully combined the schemes and tropes to create a new and unique work of art, even as he escapes o the glorious medieval past by writing "Sister Helen" in conscious and deliberate imitation of the traditional medieval ballad "Edward Edward."
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:

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