



## **Cosmopolitan Outlook as Space of Quest for Truth: William Michael Rossetti and his *Democratic Sonnets***

Zsuzsanna UJSZÁSZI

Independent scholar  
Nyíregyháza, Hungary  
zsuzsa.claribel@gmail.com

**Abstract.** Everyday cosmopolitan experience does not lead spontaneously to cosmopolitan outlook, whose crucial core is recognition. The formation of cosmopolitan outlook is a conscious intellectual process, and as such, it can be fostered and shaped, which is justification for a study of its conditions. After discussing ‘cosmopolitan’ as a term in philosophy and political science, the paper examines cosmopolitan outlook in the private sphere, as a mental space where recognition of cultural, political and moral values takes place. Quoting facts from the life and work of William Michael Rossetti, the investigation is intended to highlight the major constituents of his cosmopolitanism, especially as it is expressed in his *Democratic Sonnets*. William Michael Rossetti was an art and literary critic, who sporadically also composed poetry. His sonnet sequence reads best as the author’s commentary on political and social issues while insisting on such values as democracy, freedom, patriotism, justice and commitment to truth. The *Democratic Sonnets* is interpreted as imaging its author’s cosmopolitan outlook, realized not only with shifts in relative space (the two-volume sequence is subdivided into countries), but also with transitions between the national and the universal.

**Keywords:** transcending the national, source space, mental plane, space-time consciousness

---

## **Introduction: What is cosmopolitanism?**

The term ‘cosmopolitan’ is commonly associated with transcending the national in favour of the universal human. In our age of increased globalization, challenges to national sovereignty have led to a renewed interest in cosmopolitanism. What is cosmopolitanism? How is it connected with space?

The term ‘cosmopolitanism’ does not yield to exact definition; not only because it does not denote some one existing entity, but also because through history it has been applied to different concepts. In addition, the word is also used in journalism today as a derogatory term referring to international capital, meaning ‘homeless,’ ‘void of patriotic feelings.’ Ulrich Beck, leading theorist of cosmopolitanism in social science, also mentions that the same term may apply to two opposing types: “despotic” and “emancipatory” (2006, 44). Basically, the term allows three approaches: philosophical, empirical and normative, which seems to make possible a distinction between cosmopolitan outlook, cosmopolitan reality and cosmopolitan order. Cosmopolitan outlook is an attitude of mind that attempts to transcend, in the mental plane, its national allegiance with a sense of moral obligation to humanity. The empirical approach focuses on cosmopolitan reality, i.e., on existing transnational aspects of reality, whereas the normative approach describes a utopia, a vision of global governance. The focus of this paper is on cosmopolitan outlook.

The world change from a system of sovereign nation-states to globalization lends special significance to the idea of cosmopolitanism today. Beck identifies two periods of political modernity, according to the legitimacy source of international politics: the first age was founded on sovereign states and international law, whereas the second, cosmopolitan age is, or, rather, will be dominated by the human rights rhetoric. According to Beck, the present is “a muddle between the old order based on international law and the new order based on human rights” (2000, 83). Our age is an intermediate period, since the traditional order based on territoriality, collectiveness and borders is constantly redefined by the new phenomena of globalization. Especially since 1990, the end of the West-East geopolitical division of the world, challenges to the sovereignty of the national state call for the need of establishing an effective international order. In the present period, although most transnational issues are controlled by international law, global (e.g., the UN) and regional (e.g., the EU) governance systems as well as other international organizations as non-state political actors, there seems to be an urgency for comprehensive democratic control at regional and global level, as not all powerful actors of world economy and politics are formal organizations (e.g., international pressure groups). Cosmopolitan order, however, exists only as a utopia at present. The major means proposed to achieve global governance are through constitutionality, i.e., by institutionalizing interstate

---

cooperation and coordination (Ruggie 1998), or, as imagined by Robert Fine (2007) in a similar vein, through international law and cosmopolitan politics.

Cosmopolitan outlook means more than how the word ‘cosmopolitan’ is popularly used either as praise meaning ‘culturally sophisticated and well-travelled,’ or as denigration implying ‘living without commitment to the national.’ The etymology of the term cosmopolitan refers to *cosmos*, meaning ‘the universe,’ and *polis*, meaning ‘state,’ which suggests belonging to two communities. Diogenes identified himself a citizen of the universe, and later the idea of cosmopolitanism was maintained in a similar sense by the Stoics, by *Res Publica Christiana*, a church-centred medieval international order, and by Dante in *De Monarchia*, all claiming that humankind constitutes a single community. Since Enlightenment philosophy, which also maintained the primacy of the universal over the national in man, the ethical perspective has gained ground in cosmopolitanism, and its essential constituent became a concept of justice, equality of rights to individuals irrespective of nationality. For Kant cosmopolitan order was a space based on common humanity that ensures equal rights for every person in relation to his country as well as to others, and in *Perpetual Peace* (1795) he maintains that this higher order space will be achieved not as a supranational authority, rather through a world federation of republican states. In a Kantian sense, a cosmopolitan outlook implies existence grounded in national identity but also living in transition by thinking and acting beyond the local, national boundaries, without causing injury to others. We take cosmopolitan outlook in this sense, as personal ennoblement, a personally held ethical stance, which means a consciousness of universal human values, openness to other ideas and cultures, the capacity and willingness to put oneself in the position of others across national borders – a similar openness of attitude in William Michael Rossetti’s view of the world is recognized as a driving force in his cosmopolitanism.

The core concept of cosmopolitanism, the universal aspect of humanity, has been distorted through history several times, by colonial powers, communist internationalism, neo-colonialism and also other hegemonic pretensions of political powers. The attitude of global citizenship, “the ethos of the new cosmopolitan” (Strand 2010, 51), i.e., detachment from cultural patterns and local loyalties, should also be distinguished from cosmopolitanism in the traditional sense. In the nineteenth century, however, the true sense of the cosmopolitan idea was simultaneously rooted in the national and the universal human values. Because cosmopolitanism relates to basic norms, values and principles to be applicable throughout the entire world, like freedom, democracy, culture, equal treatment, etc., cosmopolitan outlook means affirming oneself and others as different and therefore of equal value.

Since ‘cosmopolitan’ implies a commitment to two communities, this simultaneity allows viewing cosmopolitanism in spatial terms. One community is

---

in the local, patriotic space, which is territorially bounded, where life in community takes place, whereas the other community is common universality. The latter exists in abstract space, which dispenses with borders, where ideas such as humanity and universal rights could be realized. Cosmopolitanism forces people to develop the art of imaginative crossing of borders as cosmopolitan competence means “both the location of one’s own lifestyle within the horizon of other possibilities, and the ability to see oneself from the viewpoint of those who are culturally other – as well as to practice this within one’s own experiential space through the imaginative crossing of boundaries” (Beck 2004, 153). It is important to consider this description, as exactly the same is performed by the speaker of William Michael Rossetti’s *Democratic Sonnets*.

### **William Michael Rossetti and the background of his cosmopolitan outlook**

A biography of William Michael Rossetti by Angela Thirlwell interprets his activity in the light of cosmopolitanism, which is given definition as follows:

Cosmopolitanism is free from [...] concepts of bipolar national oppositions, as it is also free of any gender implications. A cosmopolitan is an ‘inclusivist,’ a citizen of the world, equally at home in regions other than his or her native land, not indifferent to constitutions, religions, politics and beliefs but tolerant of other people’s rights to hold differing positions. (2003, 255)

Thirlwell mentions bipolar national oppositions because it seems that his birth predestined William Michael Rossetti to become a man of multiple cultural roots. Sibling of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti and Maria Francesca Rossetti, he was three quarters Italian and only one quarter English, as his mother’s father was also Italian, Gaetano Polidori.<sup>1</sup> The father, Gabriele Rossetti, arrived in England in 1824 as a political refugee, who maintained contacts with fellow Italians arriving in England (Doughty, 1960). William Michael Rossetti grew up in a multilingual household where the children used English with their mother, learned Italian from their father and could listen to political refugees speaking Italian and occasionally French. Gabriele Rossetti was a Dante scholar teaching Italian at King’s College, London, so the children became familiar with Dante as their cultural hero at an early age. From their mother and at school they learned about English culture and most importantly, about the art of Shakespeare (Thirlwell 2003). Although the four children grew up in the same environment, only William Michael Rossetti developed an attitude that can be termed as cosmopolitan. This underlines a certain natural

---

<sup>1</sup> Byron’s doctor, John Polidori was the Rossetti children’s uncle.

disposition in his character, which was only further shaped by social and cultural experience outside the family circle: his great range of contacts with notable personalities, his travels and the impressive variety of his informed interests.

A very important constituent of William Michael Rossetti's cosmopolitanism was his knowledge in the fields of literature, art and politics. Although a talented youth, William Michael Rossetti was denied the benefit of higher education and had to take up a job at sixteen in order to support the family. While working as a government clerk in the Excise Office from 1845 to 1904, where he rose to the position of Assistant Secretary, his industry and energy were divided between this job and his wide range of interests. William Michael Rossetti became a self-taught scholar and critic who acquired his erudition from books, travels and discussions with eminent personalities of his age. As a literary critic, he focused on the Romantics, wrote books on Shelley, Keats and Thomas Moore, and also edited their works. His favourite was Shelley, whose free spirit he admired and whose ideals of political freedom and near atheism he greatly shared. As chairman of the Shelley Society (1886–1895), he lectured on Shelley, and more than sixty of his articles written for the *Athenaeum* 1878–1895 were also mainly on Shelley. However, as a literary critic, William Michael Rossetti gave evaluation of contemporary English poets, too, first of all Swinburne, defending Swinburne's poetry against critical attacks, and his merits as a literary critic are also measured by his critical reception of contemporary Italian and American poetry. He lectured on Leopardi at the Taylor Institution in Oxford in 1891, and the first major public reception of Walt Whitman's poetry in Britain owes to William Michael Rossetti's essay in the *Chronicle* of 6 July 1867. He edited Walt Whitman's poems with a *Preface* in 1868, and also Longfellow's poems in 1870 in the "Moxon Popular Poets" series, among the twenty-one selections which he compiled for the series (Thirlwell 2003).

An important source of William Michael Rossetti's wide range of knowledge came from his extensive travels both in England and abroad. He accompanied his mother and Christina to Paris in 1861, Milan and Verona in 1865, which was the only occasion for the two to be in Italy. Most often the destination of his yearly foreign travels was Italy, and the major factor in his visits to Florence, Venice, Rome and other Italian art centres was an intense interest in arts, his ambition to build up expert knowledge by observing art in museums and galleries. Besides Italy, William Michael Rossetti also often travelled to Paris, went to Belgium with his brother in 1863, to Germany on his own in 1870, to Switzerland in 1894 and even as far as Australia in 1897. His home travels were related to friendships, his job at the office, and to his additional role there after 1897 of assessing works of art for tax exemption (Thirlwell 2003).

William Michael Rossetti's two-volume autobiographical work, *Some Reminiscences* reads as a detailed account of how, in relation to his job, interests

and travels, he met an impressive number of personages and also discussed matters of art, literature and politics with them. Thirlwell refers to an occasion when, inspecting the art objects of a Duke, William Michael Rossetti was able to exchange political views with the Duke's wife, one of Queen Victoria's daughters. Another example of his social contacts is that he discussed Shelley with George Eliot when preparing his first Shelley edition in 1869. On the development of William Michael Rossetti's cosmopolitanism, however, rather than contacts with important personalities of his age at home, it was his foreign relations that had a major effect, as these extended the arena of his activity beyond the horizon of the national border. William Michael Rossetti's interpretation of art won the admiration of John Ruskin, who recommended him to the American William Stillman, editor of the New York *Crayon*, as the London arts correspondent for the journal, where his series "Art News from London" was published in 1855 and 1856. In 1856 William Michael Rossetti was asked also to promote an exhibition of modern British art in America, which made it possible for Pre-Raphaelite art to reach the American public. Joining forces with a London art dealer, he organised the American Exhibition of British Art of over 350 art works in the autumn of 1857 in New York, and then the collection travelled to Philadelphia, Boston and Washington (Thirlwell 2003).

### **William Michael Rossetti's *Democratic Sonnets***

William Michael Rossetti's sonnet sequence *Democratic Sonnets* was written on issues of topical interest, as social and political commentary on contemporary public events and public figures. The poet's motivation was chiefly intellectual, namely, to give voice to his political and moral judgement and thereby provide a true picture of the contemporary world. In his quest for truth about the issues examined in the sonnets, the poet was guided by leftist political and social views and also sentiments against obscurantism, injustice and oppression, so his sonnet sequence displays sympathy for patriotic struggles, revolutions and republics. Most of these sonnets were written in the early 1880s, but if the volume had been published at the time of its composition, on the Eve of the Socialist movement in England, it would have stirred more public and critical interest. Although it was Dante Gabriel Rossetti who encouraged his brother to resume poetry writing and to compose, as it is recalled in *Some Reminiscences*, "a series of sonnets upon topics in which I felt some strong interest, not merely private or personal" (1906, 474), later, when in April 1881 he received pieces written for the projected sequence, it was he who started to have reservations. Dante Gabriel Rossetti found the poems too outspoken and politically subversive, therefore incompatible with a government clerk's position and career prospects (Thirlwell 2003). Nevertheless, William Michael Rossetti continued composing the sonnets and managed to complete

seventy-two by autumn. Finally, however, he gave up the sonnet project, and it was not until 1905 that, at the request of Ford Madox Hueffer, William Michael Rossetti revised the sonnets, and out of the seventy-two which had been completed,<sup>2</sup> he submitted fifty for publication in two volumes under the title *Democratic Sonnets* in 1907. Thus *Democratic Sonnets* was published over two decades after its composition, when it had lost its topicality and was read as retrospective. In addition, it was published in a significantly smaller size than originally planned. The original plan was for the sequence to comprise one hundred sonnets, framed by *The Past* as an introductory sonnet and “The Future” (it was never written) as the closing sonnet (Arinshtein and Fredeman 1971). Compared with the original projected sequence of one hundred sonnets, the picture of the contemporary world is narrower, as fewer nations and fewer issues are encompassed by this smaller sequence of 1907. What makes *Democratic Sonnets* a sequence of special interest?

*Democratic Sonnets* was written in an age whose major theme in poetry and art was pure aesthetic beauty, and the arena where attention to social and political subject could be paid was elsewhere, in the essay and in journalism, so the political theme in poetry could only have a less celebrated position. Another reason why William Michael Rossetti’s sequence is lesser known today is that for their poetic characteristics the *Democratic Sonnets* are not critically acclaimed as belonging to the first rank of nineteenth-century English poetry. However, measured against the best traditions of political poetry in the English language, the true merits of the sequence become clear. English poetry has always taken up political causes, and the most memorable works were produced by Marvell, Milton and Blake. The greatest romantic poets of the nineteenth century, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron as well as Browning, Swinburne and Morris, all responded to revolutions abroad and injustice at home. While their works treat the political theme on an abstract level and in combination with other lyric subjects, William Michael Rossetti’s sonnets differ in their “specificity and concreteness” (Arinshtein and Fredeman 1971, 254). The sonnets refer in their titles and dates to the events and public figures that inspired them, although they do not comprise explicit descriptions, rather, they are expression of the speaker’s intellectual and emotional response. If not for their poetic merits, the *Democratic Sonnets* are acclaimed for their choice and treatment of subject matters as poems written in the spirit of the best democratic tradition and composed not in a sentimental tone but with drama and vigour. In the Irish sonnets (*The Corn Laws, 1846; Irish Famine and Emigration, 1846-1860; O’Connell, 1847; Fenians, 1867*) the poet raises his voice against the

---

<sup>2</sup> The list of the projected one hundred sonnets, as well as fair copies of sonnets not included in the published sequence survive in manuscript form and were published in Appendix 1 and 2 of Arinshtein and Fredeman (1971).

---

effects of English dominion in Ireland. It was a daring act to attack British colonial policy by drawing attention to its dark consequences in Africa in *The Transvaal, 1881*, which “represents the earliest denunciation in verse of the British imperial policy of colonial wars and the annexation of African territories” (Arinshtein and Fredeman 1971, 256).

### Space in Democratic Sonnets

In the published volume, the fifty sonnets are arranged into national groups and are not framed by references to the temporal dimension of the presented contemporary geographical-political space. With a scheme that reflects a political consciousness of space, even in the published fragmented form of the original project, spatiality is a key concept. The sonnets are arranged in groups according to countries, and thus the speaker shifts from one location to another in each group. Yet the question arises: how is space conceptualized with a cosmopolitan view, beyond the obvious national, political-geographical perspective? Cosmopolitanism in *Democratic Sonnets* is not only recognized in the fact that the poet transcends the national borders of his own country and takes a view of America as well as of the leading powers of Europe, giving evaluation of some of the contemporary conditions from the political and moral standpoint of a republican and liberal democrat. In its Kantian sense cosmopolitanism is intellectual commitment to justice and the moral equality of all people; cosmopolitanism focuses on the universal. How does William Michael Rossetti reach the universal in the sonnets? How is political-geographical space extended to include the universal, how is it turned into cosmopolitan space?

Countries are clearly visible on a map, but the universal is invisible and, like all abstractions, is imperceptible in any other way but by abstract reasoning. Poetry, however, is an art of transforming the abstract and insensible into sensible experience through imaging. Abstractions can most often be accessed through metonymic and metaphorical thinking and can be represented through reference to the concrete, which involves analogical reasoning. Insensate experience is transformed into sensate cognition in poetry through our ability to project thoughts into another space or space-time and construct new conceptualizations of the subject. Cognitive poetic analysis follows the thought processes of the speaker in order to explore the new concept that an image forms of its subject. The present reality space of the speaker and his subject is called ‘ground space,’ whereas the new space set up with the purpose of new conceptualization is termed as ‘source space.’ Both the source space and its link with the ground space are various, but the latter allows classification as projection (perception or creation of similarity), pragmatic function (based on relation other than similarity) and schema mapping (a general schema is used to structure a situation in context) (Freeman 2002).



---

Space does not only refer to the geometrical qualities of a physical environment and does not only have the dimensions of height, length and depth. It is common knowledge that space also has a dynamic aspect, a temporal dimension, as all entities are in constant movement and change, therefore they exist in relation to space and time simultaneously. In his essay, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1813) Schopenhauer says: “[...] the representation of coexistence is impossible in Time alone; it depends, for its completion, upon the representation of Space; because, in mere Time, all things follow one another, and in mere Space all things are side by side; it is accordingly only by the combination of Time and Space that the representation of coexistence arises” (1889, 32). Following Schopenhauer’s view, this paper proposes to examine some of the *Democratic Sonnets* from the perspective of their temporal references as well.

In connection with a cosmopolitan view of contemporary reality, the major question is how space, the geographically fixed spaces of countries, is turned into cosmopolitan space. The speaker in *Democratic Sonnets* extends national space by establishing connections through time. As each connection creates a new space in which to view and interpret the subjects, many of the nineteenth-century events and public personalities in the sonnets are presented in relation to a wider space-time continuum. The speaker moves from the particular space of a discussed personality or event to another space which he sets up in the mental plane, and it is this mental leap that establishes connection between them. The resulting new concept illuminates the event or public character as an embodiment of the universal, as one following an already existing model in the common heritage of European civilization. What is the structure of such connections? The speaker’s shifts along the space-time continuum can be categorized according to their source spaces, and also according to the effects that they have on the structure of imagery and poetic diction. The new spaces affect the poetic diction and imagery in different manners, and considering the extents of their effects, the following types can be distinguished: 1) juxtaposition, where the source space is an extension added to the ground space to exist side by side with it, i.e., the new space does not extend over the entire diction but only governs one or two lines; 2) integration, where the source space is partially integrated in the ground space, and the target subject is interpreted as an individualized link in the common chain of humanity; 3) merger, where the integration of the source space in the ground space is complete, the ground space is ‘conquered’ and almost disappears.

This paper proposes to examine the source spaces in the sonnet sequence, which produce either analogical or relational mappings, with commentary on how these mappings affect the structure of poetic diction. Among the source spaces in the fifteen sonnets that allow such analysis, the following categories can be identified: 1) Time of Universalism; 2) Classical Antiquity; 3) Other history, myth or fiction; 4) Christian Faith.

## Source spaces in Democratic Sonnets

### 1) Time of Universalism – time of the Universe, of life on Earth and of human history

According to William Michael Rossetti's original scheme, three poems were intended as providing a frame for the sequence: "The Future" was not written, but *Dedication* and *The Past* form part of the published volume and carry their original function. *Dedication*, addressed to the memory of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, connects the ground space of the present with infinite space-time in its second quatrain, which views individual life and death in the larger context of universal human fate:

While day and night, procession multifold,  
Finite in infinite, their vigil keep,  
And men, ere yet the sickle reaps them, reap  
Harvest of grain and their own deeds untold

*The Past* follows history of life on Earth from the beginnings up to the present of nation states. Three other sonnets set up, through relational mapping, the mental space of 'time of human history' in their first lines: *Alsace, 1871* ("The wheel is come full circle"), *John Brown, 1859 –1863* ("When centuries shall call this nineteenth old") and *Rome and Italy, 1870* ("More than millennial has the cycle rolled"), whereas in a fourth sonnet, *The Brothers Bandiera, 1844*, a similar source space is established in the closing line ("Nine names inscribed in rolls of earth and heaven").

### 2) Classical Antiquity

Even when there is no attempt by the speaker to transcend the national, like in the Italian sonnets, where the main concern is appraisal of patriotism (*Cavour, 1861*; *Rome and Italy, 1870*; *Mazzini, 1870*), the speaker extends the present in three sonnets by introducing a space from the ancient past of Italy through names of characters as space builders. Referring to past events or characters always means representing them in the present, as they become visualized in the consciousness of the speaker and the reader. With such representation the poet's purpose is to evoke the national past, but in this case, the references to the ancient past of Italy can also be read as references to the common historical heritage of European civilization. The purpose is to provide a link by suggesting a model that operates through time and adds significance to the happenings in the present. In *Cavour, 1861*, so as to

illuminate Cavour's<sup>3</sup> true statesmanlike character, the speaker sets up a new space by referring to Curtius.<sup>4</sup> This reference highlights a contrast with the legendary hero of ancient Rome, "Not his to plunge and perish in the abyss./An immolated Curtius." Although the happenings related to this new space are not represented in detail in the poem, they become visualized in the consciousness of the informed speaker and reader. Similar space builders in the other two Italian sonnets are "Brutus, Camillus and Aurelius" in *Rome and Italy, 1870* and "Triumvir of Rome" in *Mazzini, 1870*, which set up spaces related to the glorious age of the Roman Empire first century B.C. What is noticeable here is how the source spaces work: it takes a leap in time for the speaker to establish a link with the common European heritage, but this also assumes an informed reader who can follow the speaker's leap. In *Mazzini, 1870*, the result of this leap is two spaces existing side by side in the consciousness of the reader: one is Mazzini<sup>5</sup> with his activity as described in the sonnet ("future truth's interpreter," "exiled," "never extinguished," etc.) and the other is the one evoked by "Triumvir of Rome." This metaphorical labelling applied to Mazzini is analogical identification since it evokes Lepidus,<sup>6</sup> a Roman politician who also spent the last period of his life in exile. The juxtaposition of two spaces allows the source space to retain its sovereignty and remain an extension of the ground space in a coexistence of equality. A similar juxtaposition of spaces is produced in the same sonnet through two other images: "The pilgrim Magus bearing nard and myrrh/To Freedom's manger-cradle." The spaces juxtaposed here are thus triple: Mazzini, the Magus<sup>7</sup> in ancient cultures, and the infant Christ (evoked by "manger-cradle"). This suggests that the cause of Italy's liberation is analogous to the promise of salvation which the birth of Christ meant for humanity. Mazzini's situation is viewed through the perspective of these spaces, wider than its own national space-time, as an embodiment of the familiar models of the magus and the birth of the Redeemer.

<sup>3</sup> Count Cavour was an Italian statesman of 1850s, a non-revolutionary but progressive-minded diplomat who almost managed to unite Italy. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* – abbreviated as EB in the Notes)

<sup>4</sup> According to legend, in 352 B.C. Curtius leapt into a deep chasm which opened in the Roman Forum and was said never to close until Rome's most valuable possession was thrown into it. As nothing was more precious than a brave citizen, the chasm closed when Curtius leaped into it. (EB)

<sup>5</sup> Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872) was a radical politician fighting for the unification of Italy, a leading figure of the Italian liberation movement, who was exiled in 1831 and lived in France, Switzerland and England, where he continued organizing his movement. (EB)

<sup>6</sup> Marcus Aemilius Lepidus was member of the Second Triumvirate with Marcus Antonius and Gaius Octavianus, but was forced into exile, deprived of all his offices by them in 36 B.C. and had to spend his life in obscurity. (EB)

<sup>7</sup> In ancient cultures, the Magus induced transition from normal to a higher state of consciousness through the stimulation of the senses by using psychotic substances (Luck 2006).

### 3) Other history, myth or fiction

In the following four sonnets the source field of conceptualization is some myth (the myth of Venice as queen of the Adriatic in *Manin, 1849*: “her dimmed sea-crown”), fiction (in *Dickens, 1870*: “Vanderdecken”<sup>8</sup> and “Laputa”<sup>9</sup> as space builders) or history where the new conceptualization relies on reference to a historical character (“Joan of Arc” in *The Brothers Bandiera, 1844*) or a recent event. In *The Red Shirt, 1860–1867*, for example, a sonnet on patriotism, the forceful imagery owes to references to the recent past of Italy. The red shirt uniform of Garibaldi’s legion<sup>10</sup> is pictured as a symbol of bloodshed: “the dripping hands of Italy/Bathed sacred in the drops her martyred sons have shed,” “the venomed blood of Tyranny,” “like Orsini’s<sup>11</sup> trunk-dissevered face.” The shirt is not simply red by colour, but on it “a redder trace/Of blood attests the patriot or his doom.” Red is also associated with “the conclave cardinals accurst” who elected Pius IX,<sup>12</sup> an enemy of Italian revolutionaries.

### 4) Christian Faith

The new conceptualization of the national is most frequently performed through spatial extension involving the domain of Christian Faith through biblical imagery or through reference to biblical events. In *The Brothers Bandiera, 1844*, the poet places the two heroes of the Italian liberation movement<sup>13</sup> higher than merely patriots dying for their country. They are elevated by the phrases “Christian circus-games with tigers,” “Martyrs” and “thorn-crown,” which establish new spaces transcending the space-time of Italy in 1840s and show the two patriots next to Christ and the Christian martyrs of ancient Rome. In *Mazzini, 1870*, the political leader is represented as a recurring figure of the space-time continuum, as the phrases “pilgrim Magus bearing nard and myrrh/To Freedom’s manger cradle” evoke spaces related to biblical time. In *John Brown, 1859–1863*, the biblical

<sup>8</sup> This is a reference to the story of the Flying Dutchman, a legendary ghost ship. In a story titled *Vanderdecken’s Message Home*, published in the May 1821 issue of Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, Vanderdecken is the name of the captain of the ship.

<sup>9</sup> Laputa is the name of a flying island in Jonathan Swift’s novel, *Gulliver’s Travels*.

<sup>10</sup> Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882) was a military leader in the movement for Italian unification, a follower of Mazzini, the leader of the revolt in Piedmont in 1834. (EB)

<sup>11</sup> Felice Orsini (1819–1858) was an Italian revolutionary who was executed for an attempt to assassinate the French emperor Napoleon III. (EB)

<sup>12</sup> When elected to the papacy in 1846, Pius IX supported the Italian nationalists, but later he was confronted both with the revolution of 1848 and the opposition of Count Cavour and the Piedmontese. (EB)

<sup>13</sup> Attilio and Emilio Bandiera, followers of Mazzini, were executed in 1844 aged 33 and 25 for preparing a raid on the Calabrian coast with the purpose to liberate political prisoners. (EB)

space set up in the last line (“This gibbet near a cross on Calvary”) allows John Brown<sup>14</sup> to be seen as a heroic victim of humanity, timeless like Christ. In the same sonnet, there is yet another connection through time: the last line of the octave represents a space centuries away in the future, where the present is portrayed from a future perspective through the words of schoolchildren memorizing their history lesson: “John Brown the martyr of black men bought and sold.”

*The Russian Serfs Freed, 1861* celebrates the abolition of serfdom in Russia, and through biblical imagery the event is represented as one in the chain of recurring happenings in the history of mankind. The images of “age-long cankering collar” and “serfdom’s curse” in the sonnet recall Paul instructing the Galatians to recognize the difference between being slaves to the Law and having freedom through faith in Christ and act accordingly, “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1 New Revised Standard Version). The extension of the ground space of abolition of serfdom in Russia allows the situation in Russia to be seen as a chance of salvation.

In Ireland, the hard situation of the people suffering heavily both from hard labour and from heavy dearth is represented as additional to the universal condition of Man. The poor in Ireland were suffering, while English oligarchs were enjoying the fruit of their toil. *The Corn Laws, 1846*,<sup>15</sup> which takes the form of a dialogue between a poor Irishman and an English oligarch, presents the situation in Ireland as aggravation of the biblical situation of Man, and outlines the universal human condition as life prolonging “its tedious thread.” God commanded Man, as it is recorded in Genesis 3:17, to earn his livelihood through hard labour, saying: “in toil you shall eat” and “by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.” This new space, which provides the true perspective from which to view the present in Ireland, is confirmed in the concluding line of the sonnet: “Our Lazarus eats; let Dives dine and whine” – which means that on the Day of Judgement divine justice will take care of the poor and will punish the oligarchs. The source space of the story of Lazarus, Dives and the Day of Judgement in Luke 16:19-3 is integrated into the treatment of the subject, suggesting that the two spaces are analogical and differ only in their time-levels on Earth. The new space makes the situation in Ireland appear as one modern embodiment of the attitude that determined the roles of Lazarus and Dives.

In a similar manner, the situations of the relevant nations in *Poland, 1863* and *Hungary and Europe, 1849* are interpreted in relation to the universal condition of

<sup>14</sup> John Brown (1800–1859) was an American militant abolitionist, executed for his activity in Virginia in 1859.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Corn Laws’ were trade laws between 1815 and 1846 to protect grain within the British Isles from lower price foreign import. Its consequence was also that poorer people could not afford to buy proper food, and this had heavy effects in Ireland. The Corn Laws were repealed in January 1846 (Eastwood 1996).

humanity. What is different here is that in these two sonnets the treatment of the subject dispenses with clear references to external realities through visual imagery, and almost the only mention of the facts that motivated the sonnets is their titles. *Poland, 1863* does not give explicit description of the political situation and no specific event or public character is referred to.<sup>16</sup> Instead, through the phrases “curse,” “expiated,” “plague” and “pest,” the speaker, whose purpose is to express sympathy for a nation going through suffering, sets up a mental space of ‘mankind under punishment by God,’ which is a condition often referred to in the Bible.<sup>17</sup> Poland is called a “plague-spot” in the very first line, and in the lines following this passionate statement, the political situation is represented not in concrete visual images but as an embodiment of a recurring pest that devastates the human world time and again. References to tyranny in Poland are metaphorical, as a pest, a curse (also emphasized in the rhyme scheme: “curse,” “murderers,” “hearse,” “nurse”) which breaks forth again and again until it is expiated irreversibly. The poetic diction is saturated with biblical imagery, so the integration of the source space in the ground space is complete.

*Hungary and Europe, 1849* was inspired by the poet’s sympathy with the cause of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849 and by his compassion for the sufferers of its fall. Thus oppression in the sonnet is political oppression, “the voice” is the voice of the victims of the revolution and “the evil throng” is the oppressors. This is how William Michael Rossetti comments on this sonnet in his introduction to the 1901 Stock facsimile edition of *The Germ*: “This sonnet was composed in August 1849, when the great cause of the Hungarian insurrection against Austrian tyranny was, like revolutionary movements elsewhere, precipitating towards its fall. My original title for the sonnet was, *For the General Oppression of the Better by the Worse Cause, Autumn 1849*. When the verses had to be published in *The Germ*, a magazine which did not aim at taking any side in politics, it was thought that this title was inappropriate, and the other<sup>18</sup> was substituted. At a much later date the sonnet was reprinted with yet another and more significant title, *Democracy Downtrodden*” (Rossetti 1901).

*Hungary and Europe, 1849* ranks among nineteenth-century political sonnets as having true poetical merits, and because of its subject, it has special significance for us Hungarians. These two facts are quoted as justification for a closer examination of

<sup>16</sup> In 1863 after the January Uprising, a revolt against Russian rule in Poland, an oppressive period of Russification and heavy retaliation began with executions, exiles and violence. (EB) In the sonnet, however, the only reference to the actual political situation is the date following the title.

<sup>17</sup> In the Old Testament pests, plagues and all epidemics are regarded as punishment from God. For example, David admits his guiltiness to God, who sends a three days’ pestilence on Israel in punishment (2 Sam. 24:15).

<sup>18</sup> The sonnet was published in *The Germ* under the title *The Evil Under the Sun* (Rossetti 1850, 192).

how the national Hungarian situation is interpreted in this sonnet as a case of the universal human condition.

*Hungary and Europe, 1849*

HOW long, oh Lord?—The voice is sounding still,  
 Not only heard beneath the altar stone,  
 Not heard of John Evangelist alone  
 In Patmos. It doth cry aloud and will  
 Between the earth's end and earth's end, until  
 The day of the great reckoning, bone for bone,  
 And blood for righteous blood, and groan for groan:  
 Then shall it cease on the air with a sudden thrill;  
 Not slowly growing fainter if the rod  
 Strikes one or two amid the evil throng,  
 Or one oppressor's hand is stayed and numbs, —  
 Not till the vengeance that is coming comes:  
 For shall all hear the voice excepting God?  
 Or God not listen, hearing? — Lord, how long?

In Christian Faith, the Lord's patience with the wicked is regarded as a possibility of their salvation, as God being merciful gives people a chance to turn away from wickedness – though this also allows sin to continue for a time. The octave of the sonnet focuses on the voice of human suffering, which is loud and can be heard not only beneath the altar stone, i.e., human suffering is not confined to the martyrs of religious oppression in the past.<sup>19</sup> The voice of human suffering is present in our world and will be heard all over the Earth until the Day of Judgement, but then, according to descriptions in the Bible, the change will be apocalyptic, sudden and unalterable. The Day of Judgement will mark a sharp turn by putting an end to suffering immediately, “with a sudden thrill,” and it will also be the day of great reckoning. The speaker of the sonnet describes this event in the spirit of the Old Testament as merciless and revengeful. The sequence of phrases “bone for bone,” “blood for righteous blood,” “groan for groan” echoes the biblical phrase “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Exod. 21:24 and Lev. 24:20). It is impossible not to hear the speaker's desire for divine retaliation in lines 6 and 7. What accounts for his anger? Seeing the wicked prosper often weakens people's faith in divine justice, yet the speaker of this poem has no such religious doubts, and the

<sup>19</sup> “Beneath the altar stone” is a reference to the ancient martyrs of religion, since it is a custom in the Roman Catholic Church to place the relics of martyrs or other saints in the central part of the altar stone, the table upon which the sacred mysteries of religious faith, the Mass is celebrated.

sounds of human suffering do not make him question the compassion and wisdom of God. His confidence that the Day of Judgement is certain to come is indicated by the present continuous form “is coming,” and thus the implication is that until that day, time passing is perceived as the coming of the Last Day. The first two of the concluding questions therefore are not signs of the speaker’s uncertainty; rather, they imply the impossibility of God’s ignorance or indifference. However, the final question “Lord, how long?” gives repeated emphasis to the human need to know how long it is until the Day of Judgement.

Although the poet’s inspiration came from contemporary political events, the sonnet discusses the issue of suffering caused by political oppression in a more universal plane. Through the biblical allusion to the Day of Judgement, the question about victory of the evil becomes one with the age-long human problem, i.e., how long evilness will be tolerated by God. The reference to John Evangelist and Patmos makes the reader think about what happened on the island of Patmos. Revelation records John’s visions of the end of the world, which followed the opening of the seven seals of the scroll one by one. The breaking of the fifth seal revealed underneath the altar the souls of Christian martyrs who had been killed because of the witness they bore to the word of God. They cried out in a loud voice, “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be, before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). Instead of being told in exact human terms how long they would have to wait, they were told “to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow servants and of their brothers and sisters, who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed” (Rev. 6:11). Apparently there is a clash between the human perception of time and its divine concept. From the human perspective, duration is what truly matters, i.e., “how long” it will take. From a divine perspective, however, duration is irrelevant. It is said in the New Testament,

[...] with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. (2 Pet. 3:8-10)

The point here is not only that God is eternal and holy, not bound by time like humans, but that God places qualities first. It is good acts and bad deeds that truly matter, and man is expected to be always ready for the great reckoning. The speaker of the sonnet opposes this implied divine perspective from a viewpoint of compassion with the sufferers of contemporary evilness by identifying with the voice of sufferers asking for divine justice. The source space is established by the



speaker with the obvious intention to make the contemporary evil in Hungary appear as a case of universal human suffering to be endured until the Day of Judgement. The source space is integrated into the interpretation of the subject of the poem, suffering caused by political oppression in Hungary, to such an extent as it replaces its representation and the two spaces merge as one. Thus the specific national situation is interpreted in the mental plane, through Christian Faith, as part of the universal human condition.

## Conclusion

Later in his essay Schopenhauer confirms his view of time and space, saying “the intimate union of both is the condition of reality which, in a sense, grows out of them, as a product grows out of its factors” (1889, 32). What follows from this? Without the time factor in our conception of space, the understanding as well as representation of reality is static and incomplete, therefore false. The complexity of reality can be explored and represented by mental shifts between spaces and also in the dynamic aspect of space: time. In my paper I studied William Michael Rossetti’s concept of space in his *Democratic Sonnets* and found that this concept of space transcends both the geographical-political boundaries and their temporal relations. The cosmopolitan outlook which aspires to perceive political reality in its true condition has space-time consciousness.

## Works cited

- Arinshtein, Leonid M. and William E. Fredeman. 1971. William Michael Rossetti’s *Democratic Sonnets*. *Victorian Studies* no. 14 (3): 241-274.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826265> (May 31 2012)
- Beck, Ulrich. 2000. The cosmopolitan perspective: sociology of the second age of modernity. *British Journal of Sociology* no. 51 (1): 79-105.  
<http://www.social-sciences-and-humanities.com/reading/Ulrich%20Beck%20-%20The%20Cosmopolitan%20Perspective%20-%20Sociology%20Of%20The%20Second%20Age%20Of%20Modernity%20-%20282000%20British%20Journal%20Of%20Sociology%29.pdf> (May 31 2012)
- . 2004. Cosmopolitical realism: on the distinction between cosmopolitanism in philosophy and the social sciences. *Global Networks* no. 4 (2): 131-156.
- . 2006. *The Cosmopolitan Vision*. Cambridge: Polity Press.  
<http://books.google.hu/books?id=XIU11RX8LAcC&printsec=frontcover&hl=hu#v=onepage&q&f=false> (May 31 2012)
- Doughty, Oswald. 1960 [1949]. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Victorian Romantic*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Eastwood, David. 1996. The Corn Laws and their Repeal 1815-1846. *History Review* (25) <http://www.orange.k12.oh.us/teachers/ohs/tshreve/apwebpage/readings/cornlaws.html> (June 6, 2012)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 1974. Fifteenth edition. Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton Publisher.
- Fine, Robert. 2007. *Cosmopolitanism*. London: Routledge.
- Freeman, Margaret H. 2002. Cognitive mapping in literary analysis. *Style* 31 May [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2342/is\\_3\\_36/ai\\_94775626/?tag=content;col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2342/is_3_36/ai_94775626/?tag=content;col1) (May 31 2012)
- Kant, Emmanuel. 1795. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm> (May 31 2012)
- Luck, George. 2006. *Magic and the Occult in Greek and Roman Worlds*. Second edition. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rossetti, William Michael. 1907. *Democratic Sonnets*. London: Alston Rivers LTD. <http://archive.org/details/democraticsonne00rossgoog> (May 31 2012)
- . 1901. Preface to the 1901 Stock edition of 'The Germ.' <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/courses/ennc986/class/reviews/wmintro.html> (May 31 2012)
- . 1906. *Some Reminiscences, Volume II*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. <http://archive.org/stream/someremiscenc02rossgoog#page/n9/mode/2up> (May 31 2012)
- , ed. 1850. *The Germ*. 1 (4): 192 <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/courses/ennc986/class/germ4-1.html> (May 31 2012)
- Ruggie, John Gerard. 1998. *Constructing the World Polity. Essays on International Institutionalization*. London: Routledge.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1889. *Two Essays. On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. On the Will in Nature*. London: George Bell and Sons. <http://www.archive.org/stream/twoessaysschopen00schouoft#page/32/mode/2up> (May 31 2012)
- Strand, Torill. 2010. The Cosmopolitan Turn: Recasting 'Dialogue' and 'Difference.' *Paideusis* 19 (1): 49-58. [http://uio.academia.edu/TorillStrand/Papers/286942/The\\_Cosmopolitan\\_Turn.\\_Recasting\\_Dialogue\\_and\\_Difference](http://uio.academia.edu/TorillStrand/Papers/286942/The_Cosmopolitan_Turn._Recasting_Dialogue_and_Difference) (May 31 2012)
- Thirlwell, Angela. 2003. *William and Lucy: The Other Rossettis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vanderdecken's Message Home. 1821. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. 9 (5): 127-131. <http://archive.org/stream/blackwoodsmagazi09edinuoft#page/124/mode/2up> (May 31 2012)