

THE SELF-REGARDING EMOTIONS IN THE
POETRY OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH
IN THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
TEXAS STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

DEPARTMENT OF
E N G L I S H

BY

MONA DEAN YOUNG, B. A.

DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST, 1955

Texas State College for Women

Denton, Texas

August, 19 55

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Mona Dean Young

entitled The Self-Regarding Emotions in
The Poetry of Christina Rossetti

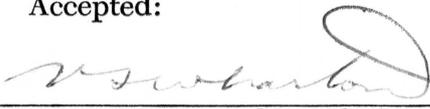
be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Committee in Charge of Thesis

Gladys Maddocks
Chairman, and Director of Thesis

Constance L. Beach
Antroy Nell Wiley

Accepted:


Dean, Graduate School

140708

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Once upon a time, in a faraway country, a great ruler sent a courier to all the far corners of the earth to find the wisest man. Many years later he returned accompanied by a young man with a bright look of wisdom in his eyes and an old man whose years sat heavily upon his shoulders. The courier introduced the young man as the wisest man in the world. "But who," asked the great ruler, "is the old one who stands beside you?"

"Why," replied the young man, "this is my teacher."

I would extend grateful appreciation to Dr. Constance L. Beach, who first introduced me to Christina Rossetti, to Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley, who gave me the tools to accomplish the analysis I have made, to Dr. Gladys Maddocks, who gave me encouragement and advice when I needed them most, and to Mrs. Vera L. Beck, who will receive my love and admiration for as long as I shall live because she taught me to love English literature and the English language.

Mona Jean Young

Denton, 1955

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
Problem of Emotions in Poetry	1
Necessity for biographical sketch	2
Necessity for review of criticism.	2
Sources.	3
Purpose of Thesis	4
II. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI	5
Birth and Siblings	5
First Verse	5
Family Background	6
Card incident	8
Schooling	8
Morbid curiosity and fear of death	9
First Poem	9
Publication of Juvenilia on Grand- father Polidori's press	10
Organization and Association of Pre- Raphaelite Brotherhood	11
Contributions to <u>The Germ</u>	13
Love affair with Collinson.	13
Turn to religion	14
Attempt by Collinson at reunion	15

Move from London: Struggle of two worlds.	16
Association with P. R. B.	19
Highgate Will: return to the world	21
Publication of <u>Goblin Market and Other Poems</u>	23
Refusal of Charles Bagot Cayley	24
Disease declares itself in earnest	24
Death of loved ones	25
Death and eulogies.	26
III. CRITICAL OPINION: 1848-1955	28
Purpose of Chapter.	28
Early works	28
<u>Goblin Market and Other Poems</u>	29
Other publications	30
Favorable and Unfavorable Contemporaneous Criticism	31
Arthur Clutton-Brock	31
William Sharp.	32
F. A. Rudd.	33
Edmund Gosse	36
Others	38
Poets	39
Modern Critics: Marya Zaturensks	40
Virginia Moore	41
Muriel Kent	42
M. M. Mahood	42

Points of Disagreement among All Critics	43
Peculiarity of Italian characteristics	43
Classification as an artist	44
Creator of a new feminine style.	48
Brevity and conciseness.	49
Intensely personal viewpoint	50
Love and fear in life	50
Literary style.	51
Comparison with Elizabeth Barrett Browning.	51
Absence of compulsion to be original	52
Reason for Lack of Agreement among Critics	52
IV. THE SELF-REGARDING EMOTIONS IN THE SECULAR POETRY OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI	53
Statement of Problem of Emotions in Poetry	53
Definition of the self-regarding emotions.	53
Problem of Emotions in Christina Rossetti's Poetry	54
Intermingling of emotions.	56
Transition between emotional changes	57
Poems Involving Emotions Experienced by Christina	58
Autobiographical poem: "The Prince's Progress"	60

Expression of mingled emotions in Short lyrics.	61
Expression of mingled sad emotions in short lyrics.	65
Poems Imaginatively Conceived: "The Iniquity of the Fathers," "The Ballad of Boding".	68
"Goblin Market"	70
Conclusion of Secular Poetry.	74
V. RELIGIOUS POETRY	76
Influence of Religion on Works	76
Quality of Religious Work.	77
Kinship with Oxford Movement	78
Comparison with Dante Alighieri	79
Division of Religious Works	81
Sources of Inspiration in Religious Works.	81
Release of emotion through religion.	82
Search for forgiveness for sins	83
Inspiration from biblical passages	85
Poems imaginatively conceived	86
Desire to Teach	87
Religious Allusions in Secular Works	88
Criticism of Religious Work	89
Egocentricity	90
Achievement of sublimity	91
Variety of verse form and style	91
Universality	92

VI. CHILDREN'S POETRY.	94
<u>Sing-Song</u>	94
Poems using first person.	95
Nonsense rhymes.	96
Moral and instructional rhymes.	98
Family background of Christina	98
Examples of Christina's moral literature for children	99
Poems on death of children	101
Refutation of stock themes	102
Poems beyond the comprehension of children	102
"Who Has Seen the Wind?".	103
VII. CONCLUSION	106
Aims of Paper	106
Agreement of critics on consummate artistry of Christina Rossetti	107
Final question and Resolution	108

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATION.	PAGE
Christina Rossetti, September, 1866 Pastel by Dante Gabriel Rossetti	x
Christina Rossetti, 17 years old Charcoal by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.	12
Christina Georgina and Mrs. Rossetti, 1877 Pastel by Dante Gabriel Rossetti	18
Christina Rossetti, 1865 Pencil by Dante Gabriel Rossitti	64
Christina Rossetti, 1877 Pastel by Dante Gabriel Rossetti	84



CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The problem of emotions in poetry is one that has interested critics from Plato to our present day. It has multiple facets dealing as it does with the emotions which the poet experienced, his emotions when he recalled the circumstance which inspired him and transferred it to paper, and the emotions that the reader experienced when reading the poem. This paper deals almost entirely with the emotions of the poet, because the emotions of the reader vary with each person when some word strikes a spark in one which may leave no impression with another. Strictly this paper deals with the recollection of an experience and the composition of a poem as a result of this recollection. In many cases the reader will find that no experience has been recollected but that pure imagination has fostered exquisite dream-children. The poetry in question is that of a late Victorian poetess, Christina Georgina Rossetti; the emotions which I shall attempt to study are hers. The problem of study is extremely complex inasmuch as there are many different kinds of emotions and many different ways to classify them. Because such emotions as pity, grief, fear, and anger seem so realistic as to have been actually felt by the writer of the poems at

the time of composition, some critics maintain that Christina Rossetti was not recalling her emotion in an aesthetic sense--that is to say sublimating the actual experience, contemplating and revising it, and finally dramatizing only the poetically useful part of it. It will be my problem to prove that though many of the poems may inspire self-regarding emotions--those emotions which cause the reader to identify himself with the personage who is the subject of the poem's action--she herself actually was recalling the emotion in the aesthetic sense.

One phase of the problem includes the limited and extremely personal range of Christina Rossetti's art. In order for the reader to appreciate thoroughly the handicaps under which she wrote, one chapter will be devoted to a biographical sketch; for, though a true artist should allow no external influences to interfere with or color his work, no person is alone in a crystal shell of his own. Christina was very close to maintaining a translucent veil between herself and reality for the sake of her sanity, if for no other reason. As will be revealed, her life was a study in withdrawal.

The poetical worth of Christina Rossetti must be explored, for if she is not a timeless and universal poetess then there is no necessity for a study of her. Therefore, extensive research will be necessary to discover how critics

ranked her then and how critics today regard her work in the light of modern techniques and in comparison to other poets who have stood the test of time and are the property of the ages. Finally, every poem must be considered and carefully studied with regard to the events in her life which caused her to write the poem, the time at which she wrote it, and particularly the emotions which she experienced before and during the time of composition. Naturally, every poem will not be studied individually, since Christina Rossetti wrote a total of 996 poems, greatly varied in worth. Despite the danger of categorizing poetry, or any type of art, necessity calls for some sweeping maneuvers in the interest of space and organization. Therefore, certain divisions will be made and the poems categorized accordingly. Then while only a relatively few individual poems will be discussed under each of those categories, the reader can readily see the poetry which will fit into each group and can consider the statements and discussions for whichever poem he may happen to read.

Any reader wishing to obtain a complete collection of Christina Rossetti's poetry should recognize the primary anthology, William Michael Rossetti's The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti. The most recent biography, to my knowledge, is Marya Zaturenska's Christina Rossetti. Other sources of biography and criticism include Dorothy

Stuart's Christina Rossetti, Eleanor Thomas's Christina Georgina Rossetti, and William Michael Rossetti's Rossetti Papers. Sources of criticism include C. T. Winchester's Principles of Literary Criticism, in particular his chapter on emotion in poetry; certain essays from Criticism, The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, edited by Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie, and George Saintsbury's Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism. Since she was an associate member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, research on Christina includes several authoritative biographies of that movement including Frances Winwar's Poor Splendid Wings, William Gaunt's The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy, and D. S. R. Welland's The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art.

In the following chapters I will attempt to present a picture of a woman's emotions which inspire creative genius. The reader will bear in mind always the purpose of the thesis and relate it to the facts presented.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

At 38 Charlotte Street in London eleven years before the reign of Queen Victoria, the family of an impoverished Italian exile was busily engaged in making a living and propagating the line of Rossetti. In 1827 Gabriele Rossetti and his wife Francesca Mary Lavinia Polidori gave birth to a daughter, Maria Francesca. A year later they had a son, Dante Gabriel, named after the great Italian poet, Dante Alighieri. The next year came another son, William Michael, and in 1830 a daughter, Christina Georgina, named for the niece of Napoleon Bonaparte. The children were all baptized in the Church of England, for though Gabriele was an Italian Catholic, Frances was a devout Anglican. Maria Francesca later entered a religious order of the Anglican Church; Christina lived in devoted austerity and saintly detachment for most of her life. Her religious beliefs, those of the old-fashioned, graceful, gentle High Church of England, were formed in childhood and retained throughout her life.

Very early, Christina composed verses far above the ordinary in facile literary expression. The earliest reported was recited, for she was too young to write, when she was only five years old:

Cecilia never went to school
Without her gladiator.¹

Where she found such a thought, if this verse really was conscious thought, is not known, though William Michael speculates on possible sources in his Memoirs. The name Cecilia might have come, he says, from a book which the little Rossettis skimmed quite often, The Looking-Glass for the Mind. The word "gladiator" was undoubtedly familiar to Christina, and it probably conjured up a picture of a "man capable of showing some fight for 'Cecilia' upon an emergency."² It is my contention that such a poem is the production of a child with an active imagination and a love of dashing heroes to whom the word "gladiator" was a strong melodious word, full and very pleasant on the tongue; and the name Cecilia was fragile, delicate, beautiful, and appealing to the Italian ear. A dominant characteristic in the later poems of Christina is her utter fascination with sound, as witnessed by "Goblin Market," "Repining," and "An Old-World Thicket."

At the age of five this daughter of the talented, eccentric Rossettis and Polidoris was proving her lineage. This quiet dark creature was the daughter of the poet of the

¹Marya Zaturenska, Christina Rossetti: A Portrait with Background (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 23.

²"Memoir," from The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti (St. Martin's Street, London: Macmillan and Company, 1924), p. xlix.

Italian Revolution. In Vasto in Abruzzi, Gabriele's birthplace, a statue was erected in the city square to commemorate Gabriele Polidori, fighter for Italian democracy. Nor was the family of Mrs. Rossetti tranquil and calm; Frances' brother Dr. John Polidori was the traveling physician to Lord Byron and the author of a Gothic novel, The Vampyre, which "outfrankensteined Frankenstein."¹ Involved in political scrapes and gambling debts, exiled from his family, and suffering from extreme melancholia, he committed suicide far from home. His name was never mentioned in either the Polidori or Rossetti households, but his portrait hung in Christina's house and was in the room where she died. In addition to the accounts of the strange family and eccentric kinsfolk, many legends are extant coloring the background of the Rossettis and their friends. One of the most amusing is this short anecdote reported by Logan-Pearsall Smith: "William Michael tells how not only the mind of Gabriele was haunted by Dante Alighieri, but his father's house in Charlotte Street was haunted by Dante, as by a banshee, whose shriekings, however, had grown so familiar to the Rossetti children that they ceased to listen to them."²

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 14.

²On Reading Shakespeare (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1933), p. 5.

Various incidents are reported from the lives of the little Rossettis: the games they played, the books they read, the vivid experiences that colored their childhood. Frances Winwar reports that the Rossetti children were charming intelligent children who played, among many other games, cards and, as children will, chose the suites as their own. She finds ironic symbolism in their choice of suites, as far-fetched and sentimental as possible, in my opinion. For Gabriel there were Hearts, symbolic for Lizzie Siddal and his various affairs; for Maria, clubs; for Christina, diamonds, a hard glittering cold quality steeped with inner fire; and for William Michael, spades, to dig the graves and retrieve the lost works of the Pre-Raphaelites.¹

Marya Zaturenska reports that the Rossetti children were given every literary advantage, far exceeding the training of most children of their day. Gabriele was a teacher of Italian at King's College in London and a scholar and authority on Dante Alighieri; Mrs. Rossetti was a teacher also who at such times as the family needed financial aid could and frequently did open a day school. By the time Christina was nine, she had already discovered Shakespeare and, of course, Dante. She was fascinated by Keat's "Eve of St. Agnes"; she reveled in its exquisite imagery.²

¹Poor Splendid Wings (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company), p. 22.

²Op. cit., pp. 10, 15, 19.

Despite such obviously fine training and opportunities this youngest Rossetti, Christina, was never particularly cheerful nor pleased with life, probably because of her deep sensitivity. When she was very young, she visited her Grandfather Polidori's home at Holmer Green in Buckinghamshire. While she was playing, she found a dead mouse, buried the tiny creature, and marked the spot. A few days later she returned, exhumed the mouse, and was terrified and revolted to see a large black insect emerge from the corpse. She fled in horror and never returned to the spot; and death became a thing of ugliness and distaste.¹

Christina was eleven years old when she wrote her first poem--"To My Mother on the Anniversary of her Birthday (Presented with a Nosegay)." The poem is short yet lacking the doggerel effect which most children create with their first stumbling rhymes.

To-day's your natal day;
 Sweet flowers I bring:
 Mother, accept I pray
 My offering.

And may you happy live,
 And long us bless;
 Receiving as you give
 Great happiness.²

¹Virginia Moore, "Notes and Comments: Christina Rossetti's Centennial," Yale Review, XX (February, 1931), 428-32.

²The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti, edited by William Michael Rossetti (St. Martin's Street, London: Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 82. Since all quotations from Christina Rossetti's poetry are from this edition unless otherwise stated, I shall not repeat the facts of publication in subsequent references.

This poem seems to reflect in simple language her passionate clinging to her mother, which was the motivating force in her later life and the source of much poetic inspiration. A year later Christina wrote "The Chinaman," which is, to say the very least, a curious poem for a child of twelve. It has very little meaning except for some obscure morbidity in the tone of the last two lines. The Chinaman fancied himself to be the center of the earth until an Englishman cut off his pig-tail. Then he could no longer appear on the streets because he was different from other men.

He said, and furious cast into the fire
His tail: whose flames became its
funeral-pyre.¹

In 1847 Grandfather Polidori published Christina's poems on his private press. The little volume, sixty-six pages long, contained all the poems which Christina had written over the course of five years. Her unmistakable talent is reflected even though many of these poems are merely childish doggerel. As her years progressed her gifts grew richer; her craftsmanship became more sure, more subtle. Yet even in these early poems her ever-recurring themes are present-- love, death, nature and religion--as well as the keen, fine sensory impressions so characteristic of her."² They "bear

¹Ll. 17-18, ibid.

²Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 35.

the indelible stamp of the author's personality."¹ A verse from "Will These Hands Ne'er Be Clean" written in September, 1846, reveals the deep sensitivity of her morbid clinging to the theme of death in its various aspects:

And so thy life will pass, and day by day
 The current of existence flow away;
 And, though to thee earth shall be hell and breath
 Vengeance, yet thou shalt tremble more at death.
 And one by one thy friends will learn to fear thee;
 Lonely amid a thousand, chained though free,
 The curse of memory shall cling to thee:
 Ages may pass away, worlds rise and set--
 But thou shalt not forget.²

Exciting things began to happen to Christina and her family in 1848. Dante Gabriel, always spectacular, had gathered a group of intent young artists and poets around him. They called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood because their aim was to restore art to the state of excellence which it occupied in and before the time of Raphael, the great Italian painter. The Pre-Raphaelite Brothers painted Christina with her haunting dove-gray eyes. Dante painted her in The Girlhood of Mary Virgin; Holman Hunt posed her dawn-colored eyes for the eyes of his Christ in The Light of the World. He described her as "exactly the pure and docile-hearted damsel that her brother portrayed God's Virgin pre-elect to be."³

¹Dorothy Margaret Stuart, Christina Rossetti (St. Street: Macmillan and Company, Ltd. 1930), p. 15.

²Ll. 38-47, The Poetical Works, pp. 94-95.

³Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., "The Rossettis," Bookman XLIX (April, 1919), 139-47.



The Pre-Raphaelites published a magazine, The Germ, to which Christina contributed several poems under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyn. The color, richness, and texture that characterized the Pre-Raphaelites in their painting and poetry appeared in these early poems, and yet they had something unique, something more evasive and delicate, a purity and simplicity of life uncharacteristic of the P.R.B. These poems were vaguely reminiscent of Simonides, Meleager, or other fine masters of the Greek Anthology, for the Pre-Raphaelites had really not affected Christina's clear simple style. She continued to ignore them, and as a result they sought to ignore her. Years later when she was successful and they as a group were still unrecognized, they still ignored her and tried to break the magic chain that bound them to the Rossetti family.¹

In 1849 Christina Rossetti fell in love with James Collinson, a young, meagerly talented painter whom Gabriel was sponsoring in the P.R.B. He was a Roman Catholic convert, and she was a member of the High Anglican Church, which was decidedly hostile to Roman Catholicism. To please her James first rejoined the Anglican Church, and he and she became engaged. Shortly, however, Collinson's conscience evidently began to hurt him. He was not a talented painter, as the rest of the Brotherhood was beginning to see. He became again a Roman Catholic; and Christina, whose force of will was iron-

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

like, especially where any point of duty was concerned, cancelled the engagement. Collinson went his mediocre way, but his act had struck a staggering blow to Christina's peace of mind. For many years she did not recover; she became more and more devout. She died a hundred times and was quite certain in her heart that she was never to fulfill her destiny as the Virgin for whom she posed--the Virgin of the Annunciation.¹ In the second issue of The Germ she published a poem under the pseudonym of Ellen Alleyn--"Song (Oh Roses For the Flush of Youth)," which would have laid her heart too bare to have been published under her own name. In the same issue Collinson published poems and etchings.

When she lost her earthly love, she turned to God, whose code of duty manifested itself in many ways in her activities. She forever dreamed of publication, yet flayed herself for her ambition. She regretted love lost more deeply than she could ever have told. She gave up chess when she thought she enjoyed winning too much. When the opera and the theatre gave her too much pleasure and distracted her mind from love of God, she gave them up with hardly a backward glance of regret. In the same spirit she sought unsuccessfully to forget James Collinson. Less than a year after she broke off the engagement, she fainted when she met him by accident in Regent's Part. He always existed for her even

¹Winwar, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

in her dreams, as she revealed in her poem "Mirage," which she wrote in 1860.¹

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
 Was but a dream; and now I wake,
 Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
 For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
 A weeping willow in a lake;
 I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
 For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
 My silent heart, lie still and break:
 Life, and the world, and mine own self, are
 changed
 For a dream's sake.²

Some years later after Collinson had married, he attempted to see Christina again. She and he are said to have planned an elopement but were prevented by Maria. Christina could have possibly lost her mind completely if she had committed adultery.³ She was always burdened by guilt revealed in such poems as "The Convent Threshold" and in such lines as the following:

My lily feet are soiled with mud,
 With scarlet mud which tells a tale
 Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
 Of love that shall not yet avail;
 Alas, my heart, if I could bare
 My heart, this self-same stain is there:
 I seek the sea of glass and fire

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 53.

²Ll. 1-12, The Poetical Works, p. 350.

³Zaturenska, op. cit., pp. 60-1. This same story was circulated in the United States about Emily Dickinson and her sister.

To wash the spot, to burn the snare;
 Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher:
 Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.¹

When Collinson died in 1881, perhaps she no longer yearned for him; she received the news of his death in silence.

In 1850 Mrs. Rossetti, in an effort to make money to support her family, opened a day-school where Christina taught for about a year. The school failed, and because of its failure, Mr. and Mrs. Rossetti and Christina moved to Frome, a small town in the country. None of the Rossettis being happy at Frome, all greeted with joy the news that William Michael had gotten a raise in salary at the revenue office and an appointment as art critic on the Spectator and that the family could be reunited in London. Christina's world changed on her return from the country in 1854; it split and became the source of conflict.

One was a world of sensuous imagery and warm coloring, full of paradisaical gardens and golden, never-falling fruit, in the arched shadows of which walked angels listening to an invisible choir whose exotic music seemed put to English words. The other was London-- a world where the stern realist God dwelt. A God of the Established Church. Human sacrifice--self-torture,--there are man's natural means of propitiating the unseen powers of Heaven.²

The struggle of these two worlds is never more clearly reflected than in her poem "The World," written just two

¹Ll. 7-16, The Poetical Works, p. 340.

²Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 65.

months after the death of her father in 1854. The poem is made up of biblical language, harsh images, and music full of powerful prose cadences of the King James Bible:

By day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:
 But all night as the moon so changeth she;
 Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,
 And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
 By day she woos me to the outer air,
 Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:
 But thro' the night a beast she grins at me,
 A very monster void of love and prayer.
 By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
 In all the naked horror of the truth,
 With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
 Is this a friend indeed, that I should sell
 My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
 Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?¹

It is a strange portrait of a vision of the universe made all the more strange by the fact that it is drawn by an attractive, gifted young woman. When one remembers that this young woman was troubled for her brother's and her father's spiritual well-fare, bewildered by the shock of her broken engagement to Collinson, and deeply grieved by her father's death, the presence of dark sediment in the clear waters of her mind does not seem strange. Her world had become not the world of Jesus Christ, for he came to save the world, not destroy it. From now on, her sensuous, passionate, and delightful nature, her love of color, warmth, and beauty were self-slain. Yet nature still rose to struggle with duty, and it

¹ Ll. 1-14, The Poetical Works, p. 182.



is this struggle that is reflected in her poetry in a war between pure beauty and didacticism.¹

In the years that followed the death of her father Christina cared for her mother, idolized her brother, and wrote poetry for publication in one or two magazines. Because of her deep affection for her brother Dante, she attended meetings and became a member of sorts of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The list of disciples was quite distinguished by this time, including Ford Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Thomas Woolner, John Ruskin, Frederick Shields, William Morris, Theodore Watts-Dunton, James Abbot McNeill Whistler, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Edward Burne-Jones, and Robert Browning.² Christina became one of the three heroines of the P. R. B. because of her magic gift for poetry. Elizabeth Siddal with her bright-gold hair was the sun; her love for Dante Gabriel and her classic features were the ideal of the brotherhood. Jane Morris, the love figurine William chose to fit into his house and furniture, beloved by two men, was the cold and distant moon. Long after the moon and the sun had abandoned their Pre-Raphaelite origins, the Victorian Saint remained as the most lasting heroine, ironically enough, of a group whose teachings she had never embraced. Even at parties she was the dove among the birds of paradise, as Mary

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 68.

²Mather, op. cit., pp. 139-147.

Howitt, an American poet visiting in England, testified in her vivid picture of a Pre-Raphaelite party:

. . . the guests and the beauty of the rooms, suggesting some medieval fantasy--which was exactly the effect the Pre-Raphaelites wished to produce, for their whole movement was a revolt against the ugliness and brutality of the world around them, and they hoped through their art to build a world of fantasy and romantic beauty to counteract it It was indeed very dreamlike and unreal as if the gas-lit, smoke-belching world outside had been exorcised out of existence Turning over the pages of Dante Gabriel's sketchbook she had seen, . . . handsome tall Mrs. Millais always dressed for festivities in that primrose-yellow satin that her husband loved best, or Elizabeth in that scarlet and olive-green in which she sat for Beatrice, her golden hair aflame in the shadow of a thousand lights, or Mrs. William Morris glimmering in the peacock-blue brocades which she so often affected, or perhaps Christina Rossetti (for she occasionally attended these affairs) remote and severely distinguished in her favorite dove-colored silk wreathed with black lace that one observer remembered her wearing at another Pre-Raphaelite gathering of that period. And then there were the men, young, eager, impatient for success; Ford Madox Brown with his golden beard and great height; Holman Hunt with his snub nose and dedicated air; Millais, princely and elegant and already on the road to popular success; the new poet who was beginning to rival Tennyson in esoteric circles, Robert Browning, dark, energetic, with a loud guttural voice; William Bell Scott before bitterness and failure had soured his generous temper; and handsome young William Allingham who had always looked like a knight out of some Celtic legend. These and many others . . . in their heat and youthful passion and violent color they were ushering in the last period of the Victorian age, that blending of nervous sensibility, that secret sense of coming evil that was to be known as the fin de siecle and was to end the century.

But this was the golden hour of the Pre-Raphaelites, before complete success had tarnished or defeat soured them. To be young and alive then was very heaven.¹

Tinker looks at these people more clearly and perhaps more surely than Mary Howitt did. In a short essay he exposes the whimsy, the ridiculousness, the wistfulness, and the humanness of the people. He laughs at them, but his is not unkindly laughter. A little mirth does well with the Pre-Raphaelites who were so incurably medieval and mystical. To look at them is "a little like looking at a collection of old photographs which make us feel that the dear, queer old creatures whom they represent lived a life which it is well for us not to forget and gave us something that has become a part of ourselves."²

In 1860 Christina went to Highgate Will, at St. Mary Magdalene's, and put on the dress of the associates--black with hanging sleeves and a lace-edged muslin cap with a veil. because, perhaps, Gabriel, the beloved and idolized brother, had married Elizabeth Siddal, his mistress for twenty years. Winwar believes that she turned her back on the world because she had seen enough of the horror and sordidness of it to loathe it.³ She was saved from becoming a nun of the Anglican

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

²"The Amusing Pre-Raphaelites," Essays in Retrospect (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 82.

³Op. cit., p. 303.

Church by the realization and acceptance of her responsibility to care for her mother and by her deep affection for Charles Bagot Cayley. She returned to the world but refused to communicate with her sister-in-law in any way. Christina had always been jealous of Lizzie Siddal, for this beautiful harlot had attracted the attention of Gabriel, lived with him in mortal sin for two decades, and finally, so Christina and Mrs. Rossetti believed, tricked him into marrying her. There was a latent cruelty in Christina which actually crystallized in intolerance and jealousy, and she was rigid with dislike and contempt for her brother's wife. More than anything else, Christina wanted Gabriel to recognize her as a poet of note and worth, yet he was forever comparing her work adversely with that of Lizzie, saying that Lizzie's work was far superior, and furthering his wife at the expense of Christina. Lizzie aroused a quiet, unchristian competitiveness in the Victorian Saint which was in a great part responsible for the overwhelming excellence of the poems in her first volume of poetry, which appeared in 1862, the year of her sister-in-law's death. Zaturenska reports that there was more passion in Christina's little finger than in the whole of Sid's long, slim body, and Christina never really paid more than grudging attention to Lizzie.¹ "In an Artist's Studio" tells her impression of Sid and pays a compliment to the golden-haired beauty in a left-handed way, saying that

¹Op. cit., p. 117.

Gabriel, the artist, loves her:

Now as she is, but was when hope shone bright;¹
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

For a time Lizzie was the blessed damozel of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the light of Gabriel's eye, but the movement needed something stronger than poor lovely Lizzie. "It needed a blessed damozel whose strength of spirit and creative intensity carried through its silver-soft sweetness a vein of iron."² In the end, the battle for the affections of the British public and Dante Gabriel Rossetti was won by the strong, swift, and very determined Christina.

After 1862 the name of Christina Rossetti was an admired and respected one in poetic circles. Gabriel urged her to publish again soon after Goblin Market and Other Poems. On May 7, 1864, she sent this letter to him saying, "Don't think me a perfect weathercock. But why rush the public with an immature volume?"³ She was working for quality as well as quantity. The English public waited breathlessly, and she was quite content to let them while she basked for a while in the bright light of approval, recognition, and love.

Love was Charles Bagot Cayley, who in 1866 proposed marriage to her in his stumbling humble way. She rejected

¹ Ll. 13-14, The Poetical Works, p. 330.

² Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 118.

³ William Michael Rossetti, ed., Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 50.

him, although she loved him and was never again free of him. As her reasons for her refusal she gave the following: she would have to leave her mother and brothers, who needed her; she would no longer belong to herself; she feared for his religious fate since he was an agnostic; and she had loved another and could not forget her painful experience.¹ Sonnets such as "April Violets," "A Pause," and "Later Life" reflect the feeling which she expressed, as quoted by Virginia Moore: "Part of my heart is dead, part sick, and part is all on fire within."² "Some inner necessity of sorrow and resignation drew her back in both cases [Collinson and Cayley], some perception that the real treasures of her heart lay not in this world."³ That same year she published The Prince's Progress and Other Poems, in which the cry of the mourners at the funeral of the dead princess who pined away because her lover came too late echoed the cry which Christina felt in her own heart at her self-enforced rejection of Charles.

She sought to please the reading public, and in the next years her work became even more popular. Gladstone was heard to pronounce the Maiden Song by heart.⁴ Two years

¹Winwar, op. cit., p. 310.

²Op. cit., p. 430.

³Paul Elmer More, "Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, XCIV (December, 1904), 817.

⁴Stuart, op. cit., p. 191.

later Christina's looks were destroyed by exophthalmic bronchocele or Graves' disease, which at this time declared itself in earnest--the disease which doctors today easily diagnose as goiter and which is equally cured by a simple injection of an iodine compound or in its most severe stages by a simple operation. This disfigurement caused her to withdraw from the public eye, seeing only close friends and family.

In 1876 Christina Rossetti and her mother moved to 30 Torrington Square, their last home. Six years later Dante Gabriel, who had never completely recovered from the harrowing experiences surrounding Lizzie's death, died of heart failure, drawing Christina with him closer to the grave and farther and farther from the real world. Though in the next year Algernon Swinburne dedicated A Century of Roundels to her, even this homage did not stir her particularly. In 1883 Charles Bagot Cayley died; three years later Mrs. Rossetti followed him. With the death of the last loved one Christina allowed herself to grow old; she was content not to be strong and was an invalid within five years, for she had lost her desire to live in a real world. The battle for supremacy was finished.¹

On December 29, 1894, Christina Rossetti died of cancer in her bedroom at 30 Torrington Square. Reports

¹Katharine Tynan Hinkson, "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Bookman, I (February, 1895), 28-29.

conflict as to the attitude of her mind when she died. Thomas says that William Michael was surprised that her religion had not brought her more peace of mind.¹ In his memoir William Michael records the following: "Not that she was ever abashed by pain, or craven-hearted--far indeed from that; but the terrors of her religion compassed her about, to the over-clouding of its radiances. At the close of a week of collapse and semi-consciousness, she died without a struggle, in the act of inarticulate prayer."² She was one who was "wrapt in fire . . . a pure and perfect spirit, . . . a disembodied soul of song."³ Seeking to prove her talent by some freak of nature or some natural phenomenon, critics and biographers have heaped praise and glory upon her. Anne Kimball Tuell has compared her with the moon: since the Advent Moon was her birth season and her death time, she was its laureate. Speaking in the present tense, she has asked us to think of the season before Christmas when the travelling world has acknowledged the bond of chaos and has waited breathlessly for new hope: "When the Advent Moon first shines upon the wintry world, the 'De Profundis' of her Christina's

¹Christina Georgina Rossetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 118.

²Rossetti, The Poetical Works, p. lix.

³William Sharp, "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, LXXV (June, 1895), 749.

spirit begins to grope for its new music."¹ As she has sung in "Advent":

This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
 These Advent nights are long;
 Our lamps have burned year after year
 And still their flame is strong.
 'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,
 Heart-sick with hope deferred:
 'No speaking signs are in the sky,'
 Is still the watchman's word.

Through the night the world waits and watches and then:

There no more parting, no more pain,
 The distant ones brought near,
 The lost so long are found again,
 Long lost but longer dear:
 Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
 Nor heart conceived that rest,
 With them our good things long deferred,
 With Jesus Christ our Best.²

More graphic, however, than words is the respect paid her in Wells Cathedral in Longon. There "withdrawn discreetly . . . in her niche stands . . . the statue of a lovely lady whom the scholars . . . have named Saint Christina."³

¹"Christina Rossetti," Victorian at Bay (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, Inc., 1932), p. 56.

²Ll. 1-8, 33-40, The Poetical Works, p. 202.

³Tuell, op. cit., p. 50.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL OPINION: 1848-1955

During her lifetime Christina Georgina Rossetti published thirteen separate volumes of poetry and prose and one collection of her works, which required a second edition fifteen years after the first printing. Two posthumous volumes were edited and published by William Michael Rossetti in 1896 and 1897. The purpose of this chapter will be to acquaint the reader with the major critical opinions regarding Christina Rossetti from 1848, when she first published, to the present day.

When Christina was seventeen, her early poems were printed privately on her grandfather's press. These little volumes are collectors' items today; but, at the time, they were printed merely for the amusement of Christina and were virtually worthless.¹ During the next year, 1848, "The Last Hope," which was afterward called "Heart's Chill Between," was published in The Athenaeum. This attracted no attention, and a week later its companion poem "Death's Chill Between" was printed, with the same results. For fourteen years

¹Dorothy Margaret Stuart, Christina Rossetti (Macmillan Co., 1930), p. 189.

Christina published miscellaneous pieces in magazines with no success and no recognition. Her name was associated with the struggling Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1850, when a total of seven of her poems appeared in the four issues of the ill-starred Germ. For ten years not a scrap appeared until 1861, when "Up Hill," "A Birthday," and "An Apple Gathering" were included in Macmillan's Magazine.¹

Still there was no attention directed to her works, until, as a result of the circumstances discussed in the previous chapter,² Goblin Market and Other Poems was published in 1862. A certain set of circumstances is necessary for the production of great art, as all true artists know. Critics have always agreed that isolation, a desire for creativity, a deep motivation, and a spark of genius must come together at the same time in sympathetic surroundings. For most people such a time never occurs; for a few, once in a lifetime. This moment was Christina's once in a lifetime, for all critics agree that Goblin Market and Other Poems was her greatest work. Her most lasting poetry was in this volume, and her soul was speaking in every line. Therefore, the greatest body of criticism, from her time to the present, is directed at this volume.

¹Ibid., pp. 26, 35.

²Supra, pp. 22-23.

Four years later there appeared a fine volume of poetry greatly admired by the critics of the Victorian period --The Prince's Progress and Other Poems. In particular F. A. Rudd, the champion of purpose literature, praised this work on the grounds that the message which it contained was truly spiritual and uplifting.¹ In 1870 a volume of short stories, Common Place and Other Short Stories, was published, and in 1872 one of the finest collections of children's poems in English Literature, Sing-Song.² This book is preferred reading for all school children between the ages of six and eight.³ Two years later two more volumes of short stories and essays appeared--Annus Domini and Speaking Likenesses. In 1879 Seek and Find, a prose collection of religious essays and stories, was published. In 1881 a volume of poems, A Pageant and Other Poems, comprising the majority of her religious poetry, appeared. In 1883 Letter and Spirit, another prose volume, and in 1885 Time Flies, collected prose pieces, were published. In 1892 The Face of the Deep, philosophical essays and stories, was published. In 1893 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published Verses, the last collection of verse to appear during her lifetime. She died in 1894. Two volumes

¹"Christina G. Rossetti," Catholic World, IV (March, 1867), 839-45.

²Stuart, op. cit., p. 190.

³Barbara Garlitz, "Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song and Nineteenth-Century Children's Poetry," PMLA, LXX (June, 1955), 539.

of posthumous verse were published by William Michael: New Poems in 1896 and The Complete Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti in 1904. One very poor novel, Maude, was brought out in 1897.¹

It is difficult to discover any tangible or constructive criticism of Christina Rossetti's poetry by her contemporaries. There are two groups--those men who were extravagant in their praise and those who considered her poetry mediocre and despised her as a person for her supposed affiliation with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

First among those critics who praised her was Arthur Clutton-Brock. He particularly admired her lyrical style:

Her voice is pure, if sometimes weak and thin; and it is full of a most moving, unforced tenderness. It is natural to speak of her voice, for it seems to sound in her verses--and it is not common for poets, even great ones, to produce that illusion, since the combination of quick emotions with perfect simplicity of mind is not common. . . . She has a fine though narrow command of rhythm. . . . The metrical scheme itself is irregular so that it may never become insistent and all obvious cadences are avoided. The beat is broken by long pauses, hesitations of thought, quick rushes of emotion.

He points to her lack of reaction to the self-regarding emotions--those emotions which are extremely personal and are not suitable subjects for literature and art: "In some of her lyrics the words seem to be falling naturally from her

¹Stuart, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

lips, urged by passions and checked by thought."¹ Such passages are common among critics who knew and loved Christina Rossetti. They begin in a very dignified way and swiftly lose themselves in the sheer art of her poetry, which inspires poetic response. "To know her was an education of the heart and a purifying of the soul," sings Watts Dunton.² Her voice he describes as "sweet as a silver bell."³ He makes the point that she never made up her mind to write, but rather wrote from impulse, which sometimes failed to come, resulting in the periodic voids in her history of publication.

Six months after Christina's death, William Sharp published an article in the Atlantic Monthly, in which he quoted some of her ideas on poetry and philosophy which may be a clue to much of the subject matter and style of her poetry. He recalls her saying on one occasion, "I am one of those who think with Bacon that the souls of the living are the Beauty of the World."⁴ In 1886 she had written a letter to Sharp in which she was arguing concerning poetical style: "I heartily

¹"Christina Rossetti," More Essays on Religion (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924), pp. 20-1.

²"Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Nineteenth Century, XXXVI (February, 1895), 355.

³Ibid., p. 357.

⁴"Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, LXXV (June, 1895), 737.

agree in setting the essence of poetry above the form."¹
 This statement is particularly valuable to a student of her poetry, since it explains exactly the practice which she followed in writing.

Among those unfavorable to Christina Rossetti was F. A. Rudd, the literary critic for the Catholic World. He was the leading exponent of duty and purpose in poetry, the father of the trend toward didacticism to counteract the effect of the revolutionary scientific discoveries that were shaking the faith of the Victorian world.² He had little good to say about Christina Rossetti's poems, but his opinions are of greatest importance because they reflect the opinions and feelings of a great many English people of the late Victorian period, the age of fear and uncertainty and confusion when people wanted to be told that things were always as they had been, and the world was not really in the state of turmoil in which it appeared. First, Rudd attacked the sadness which is the pervading note in her poetry. Rudd's recognition of sadness as the underlying theme is significant, for it indicates that he had read her poetry with a careful eye, if a prejudiced one. "There is the sadness decadent, the sadness senescent, the sadness bereft, the sadness weary, the

¹Ibid., p. 749.

²Thomas Maitland, "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti," Contemporary Review, XVIII (October, 1871), 335.

sadness despairing, the sadness simply sad, the grand sadness ineffable, and above all and pervading all, the sadness rhapsodical," says Rudd. "So sustained is the grief . . . that after protracted poring, we hang between . . . two conclusions. One is that Miss Rossetti, outside of print, is the merriest mortal in the United Kingdom: the other, that her health is worse than precarious."¹ One very lovely lyric, "May," attracts his special ire. Rudd seeks to find a moral where there is obviously not one intended:

'Sweet Life is dead'--'Not so:
 I meet him day by day,
 Where bluest fountains flow
 And trees are white as snow,
 For it is time of May.
 Even now from long ago
 He will not say me nay.
 He is most fair to see:
 And if I wander forth, I know
 He wanders forth with me.'

.

'How can you call him dead?
 He buds out everywhere:
 In every hedgerow rank,
 On every moss-grown bank,
 I find him here and there.
 He crowns my willing head
 With May-flowers white and red,
 He rears my tender heartsease bed:
 He makes my branch to bud and bear,
 And blossoms where I tread.'²

Rudd works mightily to find a moral and then finally gives up in disgust, saying that the poem sounds like a riddle--

¹Op. cit., p. 839.

²Ll. 1-10, 21-39, The Poetical Works, p. 320.

if there is a shadowy clue in the passing of May, he cannot guess what it can be: "If there is any conundrum intended, all we have to say is, we give it up."¹ Of all the poems in the two volumes, Goblin Market and Other Poems and The Prince's Progress and Other Poems, "Goblin Market" is the target for his most scathing sweeps. First, he completely ignores the moral of the love and sacrifice of one sister for another and criticizes the poem for its weak moral structure. The moral, he insists, "is not resist the devil and he will flee from you, but cheat the devil, and he won't catch you."² Second, Rudd objects to the meter of the poem: "Miss Rossetti cannot write contentedly in any known or human measure. We do not think there are ten poems that are not in some new-fangled shape or shapelessness."³ Rudd likes several of the poems in her books, however; and he is most generous in his praise of them. He is pleased with her lyric "Song" ("When I Am Dead, My Dearest"), which he considers indicates a maturity of emotion far outstripping her other work. He says: "Such bold insight into so profound a subject says more for the soul of an author than a whole miss's paradise of prettiness."⁴

¹Op. cit., p. 840.

²Ibid., p. 845.

³Ibid., p. 843.

⁴Ibid., p. 845.

Likewise, he enjoys the poem "Under the Rose (entitled "The Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children" in William Michael Rossetti's edition of her works) because it describes the inner feelings of a girl and is therefore interesting despite its dithyrambic verse form, against which he has been adamant. In conclusion, Rudd takes the stand for the Catholic World by being unable to see why Christina Rossetti is considered a poetess. She might mean to be a poetess, but her book will not answer a single test of poetry, as Rudd tests poetry. In short, "For imagination, she offers fantasy; for sentiment, sentimentality; for aspiration, ambition; for originality and thought, little or nothing; for melody, fantastic jangling of words" ¹

Not all the criticism of the age was of the two types mentioned above, however. Edmund Gosse predicts that Christina Rossetti will take her place in literature as one of the truly great women poets and correctly labels the germ of the qualities which have particularly characterized her poetry as "an entirely direct and vivid mode of presenting . . . the impression of richly coloured physical objects, a feat in which she sometimes rivals Keats and Tennyson; and . . . a brilliant simplicity in the conduct of episodes of a visionary character, and a choice of expression which is exactly in keeping with these, a sort of Tuscan candour, as of a sacred

¹Ibid., p. 839.

picture in which each saint or angel is robed in a dress of one unbroken colour."¹ He traces her progress through several volumes, and in all cases his criticism is soundly constructive and carefully, cautiously favorable. He finds the source of his greatest interest the union of fixed religious faith with a hold typically Pre-Raphaelite upon physical beauty and the richer parts of nature. She does not shrink from strong delineation of the pleasures of life even when she is denouncing them. Gosse is a product of his age in spite of his unusual far-sightedness, for he cannot understand why "Goblin Market" with its obscure moral values is more popular than the more obvious and very beautiful "The Prince's Progress." For himself, he much prefers the latter, particularly because of the verse form, which is "of the very highest romantic beauty."² He quotes his favorite passage, a beautiful description of daybreak:

At the death of night and the birth of day,
 When the owl left off his sober play,
 And the bat hung himself out of the way,--
 Woke the song of mavis and merle,
 And heaven put off its hodden grey
 For mother-o'-pearl.

Peeped up daisies here and there,
 Here, there, and everywhere;

¹"Christina Rossetti," Critical Kit-Kats (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 144.

²Ibid., p. 150.

Rose a hopeful lark in the air,
 Spreading out towards the sun his breast;
 While the moon set solemn and fair
 Away in the West.¹

The evidence of Christina Rossetti's popularity in her own time lies in the number of men, famous in their own right, who commented on her. John Ruskin was one who censured her "irregular measure," calling it calamitous.² Her devoted friend Charles Algernon Swinburne chanted her lines beginning "'Passing away, saith the World, passing away,'³ in his own emphatic manner, laid down the book with a vehement gesture, took it up again, read the poem through a second time, even more impressively, and exclaimed, 'By God! that's one of the finest things ever written.'⁴ Even Karl Marx was called upon to give his opinion of her work. Marx replied that she was what all artists should be: "non-political."⁵ When Gladstone, at a dinner party, was heard to repeat "Maiden Song" by heart, her fame was secure.⁶ Whether the Victorians admired her or were shocked by her, she was definitely a successful poetess.

¹Ll. 97-108, The Poetical Works, pp. 27-28.

²Thomas, op. cit., p. 135.

³Ll. 1, The Poetical Works, p. 191.

⁴P. E. More, "Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, XC (December, 1904), 815-21.

⁵Anne Freemantle, "Victorian Vignette," Commonweal, XLI (February 16, 1945), 1.

⁶Thomas, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

Other critics of the Victorian period, many of them poets in their own right, criticize her style and ability. Alice Meynell, a poetess of some note, accuses Christina of versifying by ear with a great deal of merely incidental beauty. She remarks that Christina portrays emotions very artistically but does not say how or by what method. Miss Meynell objects to the ambiguity of verse form and meter but commends Christina for being so strong and controlled in the leaping movements of the goblins and little creatures of her fantastic poetry.¹ Alice Law, another Victorian poetess, starts her discussion very sanely with a series of statements concerning the art of Christina Rossetti's poetry. The absence of all harsher and more rugged qualities, of topical didacticism and of any rigid philosophical system, as well as the seeming artlessness yet aesthetic beauty and finished perfection in the poetry give the impression of spontaneity and freshness. One of her greatest assets, continues Miss Law, is the power to reproduce "volatile emotions"² by means of poetic expression. By the time Alice Law begins to discuss emotion she too is emotionally over-wrought. For instance, ". . . she has condensed into word-crystals the

¹"Christina Rossetti," Littells's Living Age, CCIV (January, February, March, 1895), 569-72.

²"The Poetry of Christina G. Rossetti," Westminster Review, CXLIII (January-June, 1895), p. 444.

mind's melancholy vapors, its evanescent clouds of dream, that indescribable 'nothingness' which eluding our clumsier mental grasp floats tantalisingly about us, but threatens to melt imperceptibly at a touch."¹ She recognizes the similarity of Christina's colors to those of Dante Alighieri--flame with umber, russet on red--which she compares to a quaint jewelled setting of a thirteenth or fourteenth century manuscript. She also recognizes the similarities between Christina and Robert Herrick, which she describes as aesthetic mysticism and a rich melancholy.² Generally speaking, Alice Law's criticism is clearer than most, but she gives no foundation for her statements. This attitude is typical of the favorable critics of Christina Rossetti--a bit short on constructive criticism and extremely long on artistic appreciation.

How has she stood the test of universality which time places on all poets? Very well, compared to her friends in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Modern critics vary in their attempts to rank her. As with their brothers of the Victorian period, they have difficulty because the inspiration in her poetry sends them into ecstasies of praise with no actual analysis. This makes the gleaning of truly valuable criticism extremely difficult and also pays a compliment to

¹ Ibid., p. 445.

² Ibid., pp. 444-53.

Christina Rossetti's art. Marya Zaturenska, a poet in her own right, believes that the ease and spontaneity which exist in Christina's verse create the impression of conception of poems in white heat. Her poems seem practically to have written themselves. It is only on close examination that the real art is discernible. Miss Zaturenska compares "Song" ("When I Am Dead, My Dearest") and Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" in their exquisite simplicity.¹

Three modern critics who have read deeply in the collection of Christina's verse are Virginia Moore, Muriel Kent, and M. M. Mahood. Together they give a representative picture of the twentieth century's opinions of Christina Rossetti. Moore divides her poems into four divisions: love poems, philosophical or religious poems, children's poems, and nature poems. She advises the reader to judge the true worth of the whole by the best among them, adding that when Christina is bad, she is terrible. Miss Moore credits Christina with the following characteristics which make her poetry personally appealing: first, her incompatibility with spiritual hypocrisy as evidenced in her religious verse; second, her simplicity; third, her exactness of word choice, mentioning "Goblin Market" as a supreme example; and, fourth, her personal color which suffuses an idea and alters it by

¹Zaturenska, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

contact with the poet's mind, making it fresh and spontaneous.¹

Characterizing Christina Rossetti through twentieth-century eyes, Muriel Kent says that she was very reserved in her portrayal of beauty, yet exceedingly charming as in her nursery world of Sing-Song; she used rich colors, as for example those in "Goblin Market"; and she had no lack of dramatic sense, as in "The Ballad of Boding." She was sensitive to the influences of nature. She had a deep sense of responsibility but a habit of introspection through poverty and ill-health. She was subject to alternations of darkness and illumination but through it all maintained a beautiful simplicity, which is the greatest source of her charm.²

M. M. Mahood is particularly interested in the sonnets. She believes these to have the sense of lassitude which Christina's poetry characteristically imparts to the reader. The sonnets have rather unconvincing endings; for though they approach and recoil with a single wave of feeling, there is the lack of the traditional epigrammatic close. Further, Miss Mahood feels that her devotional verse is expressive of suppressed irreligious emotion. She feels that all that prevents her from being a great religious poet is a certain

¹"Notes and Comments: Christina Rossetti's Centennial," Yale Review, XX (February, 1931), pp. 428-432.

²"Christina Rossetti: A Reconsideration," Contemporary Review, CXXXVIII (December, 1930), 759-767.

morbidity which pervades her works. Despite the feeling among some critics that she is a "quiet sparrow among the colorful birds of paradise,"¹ she remains a great romantic and Pre-Raphaelite poet.²

There are certain points on which critics from both periods disagree, for the poetry of Christina Rossetti has been subject to much controversial criticism. The chief reason for this has been that her poetry is unclassifiable as to period or style. Three points which cause the most trouble in the minds of critics are her peculiar Italian characteristics; her obvious modernity, differing so radically from that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; and in recent years the question of whether she is a truly feminine writer with a new feminine style and, if so, what the characteristics of such a style are.

"One of the peculiar results of her bilingual heredity is that most of Christina Rossetti's Italian poems should sound like ingenious translations from English, while many of her more ecstatic English poems have the air of equally ingenious translations from Italian."³ Her poems show a curious mixture of the sensuous and pleasure-loving Italian

¹"Two Anglican Poets," Poetry and Humanism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 24-7, 51-3.

³Stuart, op. cit., p. 142.

qualities overlaid by the devout and ascetic English characteristics. Her instinct for style and capacity for passion show Italian blood, yet her passion was rigidly repressed, and her style was chastened to apparent artlessness by her English reserve. Christina Rossetti was undeniably thwarted at almost every turn in her life. She was denied love, and she denied herself worldly pleasures because of fearful religious beliefs. The fear of death was always with her because of her diseased body. Many critics believe that this frustration played a strong part in Christina's life, influencing her poetry to a great extent. Virginia Moore describes her final hours as follows: "Take a fiery Italian temperament, transpose it to Victorian England, convert it to the Anglican Church, and dress it in black silk and a tight little cap. What will happen? Something like the deathbed scene of Christina Rossetti when she went into a howling delirium and shouted at the top of her voice words which her brother Michael characterized as 'painfully shocking.'"¹

As the critics agree on the incongruousness of the mixture of temperaments in her heredity, so they disagree on her position. The first problem is that of whether or not she is to be considered a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. William Gaunt, biographer of the P. C. B.,

¹"Christina Rossetti," Distinguished Women Writers (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. [n. d.]), p. 45.

mentions her only briefly in his two-volume account entitled The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy,¹ and she is practically ignored in the most recent biography of the brotherhood by D. S. R. Welland.² On the other hand, H. V. Grierson calls her the truest Pre-Raphaelite of them all; and he records that she was the first success and the most lasting artist after Morris, her brother Gabriel, and even Swinburne had deserted the ideals of the movement. He then asserts without explaining his statement that her lyrics belong alongside those of William Blake, whom we know to be an eighteenth-century mystic poet, a forerunner of romanticism.³ Hugh Walker, in his outline of Victorian Literature, calls her a turn-of-the-century poet, and places her among a band of young poets including Fitzgerald, Arnold, and Clough. He says that she was influenced by the religion, the art, and the national sentimentality of the period and consequently reflects its attitudes. This reflection, he says, definitely dates her with the Oxford Movement and shows in her poetry through her morbid desire for greater opportunity for sacrifice and suffering.⁴ Eleanor Walker Thomas classifies her as an

¹London: Jonathan Cape, 1942.

²The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. [n. d.]).

³"The Pre-Raphaelite Group," Critical History of English Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 494-495.

⁴The Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), p. 101.

artist by saying that she is "the last effort of the nineteenth century spirit to escape from the world of science and machinery before learning to adopt and assimilate them."¹ Arthur Waugh presents several reasons for calling her a modern poet. He says that she had two infallible preservatives characteristic of her poetry: perfection of technique and sincerity of vision. Because she saw farther and felt more deeply than the Pre-Raphaelites did, she is not out of date. It is his opinion that her perfect technique and obvious sincerity will always be in good taste in whatever age she may be read; and, since taste commands poetry, her work will never be out of date. He feels that she was a captive of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood rather than the champion of it and, further, that the greatest harm ever done to her career was the unfortunate association of her name with them.² Perhaps even the Pre-Raphaelites themselves knew that she was of something far beyond them: for the ages rather than for a short-lived artistic movement in the time of Victoria. Ford Madox Hueffer says, "I consider Christina Rossetti to be the greatest master of words--at least of English words--that the nineteenth century gave us."³ She was destined to live beyond the era of the

¹Op. cit., p. 6.

²"Christina Rossetti, December 5, 1830; December 5, 1930," 19th Century, CVIII (December, 1930), 787-798.

³"Christina Rossetti," Fortnightly Review, XCV (March, 1911), 422.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who really closed an era, because she was something better, a quite modern figure in comparison to her brother Dante Gabriel. Her exquisite precision of words, a certain essence and nicety of diction, separated her from the P. R. B. She gives precise descriptions with the exact word necessary to give the proper connotation.¹ Marya Zaturenska quotes Alice Meynell as saying that Christina Rossetti has written an unquestionably twentieth-century poem in "Sleep at Sea." According to Zaturenska, Alice Meynell believes that the poem is as modern as any which we read today, employing the atmosphere, verse form, and imagery characteristic of the twentieth century. These characteristics make it clearly the work of someone born out of her time, or perhaps, more accurately, someone independent of milieu. The following stanzas bear out her statements. They are characteristically Christina's own, with her exceptional ability to rhyme, her short final line, her unearthly imagery, and her Biblical references and quotations:

White shapes flit to and fro
 From mast to mast;
 They feel the distant tempest
 That nears them fast:
 Great rocks are straight ahead,
 Great shoals not past;
 They shout to one another
 Upon the blast.

¹Ibid., pp. 422-429.

.
 'Wake,' call the spirits:
 But to heedless ears:
 They have forgotten sorrows
 And hopes and fears;
 They have forgotten perils
 And smiles and tears;
 Their dream has held them long,
 Long years and years.

.
 Driving and driving,
 The ship drives amain:
 While swift from mast to mast
 Shapes flit again,
 Flit silent as the silence
 Where men lie slain;
 Their shadow cast upon the sails
 Is like a stain.

No voice to call the sleepers,
 No hand to raise:
 They sleep to death in dreaming
 Of length of days.
 Vanity of vanities,
 The Preacher says:
 Vanity is the end
 Of all their ways.¹

These lines show a definite absence of any particular milieu and accordingly show that time is not the solution to the classification of Christina Rossetti.²

The problem of the feminine writer and the feminine style is an important question today. Several authorities believe Christina Rossetti to be the uniquely feminine poet, since she defies classification. Before such judgment can be

¹Ll. 9-16, 41-48, 73-88, The Poetical Works, p. 283.

²Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 87.

made, the qualifications or at least the general existent ideas of what a feminine poet is must be discovered. Of course, no one really knows what such qualities should be, though the problem has been extant for centuries. Beginning with ancient Greece let us consider the women that Meleager selected when collecting the works of Greek poets, for his anthology. One was Sappho, who is believed to have been the finest lyric poet produced by Greece, of whose works only a few magnificent lyrics remain; the other was Erinna, of whom nothing is known, though she is believed to have been about nineteen at the time of composition. The characteristics of the poetry of Sappho and Erinna are as follows: personal view point, brevity, delicate lyrical effects, and emotional qualities in subject matter.

Edmund Gosse of the nineteenth century contends that the foremost qualifications of a great woman poet should be brevity, conciseness, and intensely personal viewpoint. First, he believes that a woman must have brevity and conciseness because no long poems by a woman have ever been truly successful. The one artist who wrote long poems and competed with men was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Gosse contends that it was this desire to compete with men which makes so much of her poetry a trifle frenzied and hysterical. He points out that her Sonnets for the Portuguese, in which she was forced to restrain and limit herself, are her only creations of the first rank.¹

¹Gosse, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

Second, a woman must have an intensely personal viewpoint which can be achieved only through a life in seclusion, preferably in the company of women. Christina Rossetti must surely have attained that quality, for she lived among women during the greater part of her life even as Sappho did. She was always an associate of women: her home was always a house of women: her mother, her sister, and her aunts. Furthermore, her readers associate her with that unwordly race of fanatics, saints, dire prophetesses, and pure mystics like Saint Theresa, her sister Maria Francesca, Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Mew, Elinor Wylie, Leonie Adams, and the women poets in which the period abounded, including Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.²

At the same time paradoxically enough, Moore points out that a woman poet must have loved and suffered and lived a full life. Christina had three loves: two earthly--Collinson and Cayley--and one divine--Christ. The place of love in her life was an unsolved problem as was that of her religion. Even deeper than her religious faith went her fear of the known and the unknown alike. Fear was the real reason for her refusal to love. Religious incompatibility

¹Gosse, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

²Virginia Moore, "Notes and Comments: Christina Rossetti's Centennial," Yale Review, XX (February, 1931), 428-432.

was the excuse she gave for refusing Collinson and Cayley; Christ lost her allegiance on the day of her death, when she forgot him in her delirium revealing her secret self.¹

Finally, Virginia Moore describes the literary style of a feminine poet and attributes this style to Christina Rossetti: "Only a woman could have written her poetry, with its furious emotional preoccupation, nice discriminations, deft fingerings of objects as frail as spider webs, contradictions, meekness, pleasure in pain, and resolution to snare an invisible substance."²

Since Christina's life was a constant withdrawal from reality into mysticism, her narrowness of scope and her adherence to the qualifications mentioned above make masculine critics and poets believe that Christina is the feminine poet. It is interesting to know that women claim their representative to be Mrs. Browning with her larger scope, intellectuality, reforming political aspirations and philosophies, talent for scholarship, and hearty competition with men. Christina made no effort to compete with men, a fact which is perhaps the foundation of the classification as a feminine poet.³ She has a truly feminine genius which

¹ Ibid., p. 428.

² Ibid., p. 431.

³ More, op. cit., pp. 815-21.

brought a new note to Victorian poetry--"the sweet monotony of an 'aeolian harp' and a purely feminine spirit of inspiration." More goes on to say that she does not renounce the world in a burst of storm and fire as masculine poets seem to do--but allows the world to glide passively by her.¹

Finally, Christina Rossetti sometimes makes no attempt to be original but frankly takes her material wherever she finds it, twists it and turns it, and converts it with taste, style, and judgment into something all her own. Obviously the reason for this is that she is first and last an artist.² The fact that she is so excellent at that sort of thing makes her a little superior to the general group. Whether the champion of a feminine style or not, she is certainly a fine, talented poet.

The controversies which rage about Christina's poetry will never be solved because the critics can never be sure exactly what she had in mind when she wrote each poem. Those who knew her knew her only in passing and saw only a glimmering of the true passions which racked her, or knew her too well and as a result attempt to read meaning into her poetry where none exists. Perhaps the unknown is best, for she who never told her secrets would never want the world to know.

¹ Ibid., p. 821.

² Garlitz, op. cit., p. 542.

CHAPTER IV

THE SELF-REGARDING EMOTIONS IN THE SECULAR POETRY OF CHRISTINNA ROSSETTI

The main theme in the poetry of Christina Rossetti, according to most of her critics and biographers, is renunciation linked with religious faith. The passions associated with this theme are grief, pain, fear, love, sorrowing and dying, and resignation bordering on despair. Such emotions are not in themselves aesthetic, but their portrayal may be. When actually experienced they are self-regarding. When recollected or summoned up for poetic expression, when contemplated and portrayed, they afford a reader experiences that are in the realm of the aesthetic.

According to C. T. Winchester, the self-regarding, non-aesthetic emotions cannot be the subject of appeal in literature. By the same token a writer cannot write great poetry while under the stress of painful passions which inspire the self-regarding emotions in the reader.¹ If a reader actually experiences pity, grief, fear, love, and despair, then he has no aesthetic experience. It is my contention that Christina Rossetti vividly portrays self-regarding emotions but holds her readers in an attitude of

¹Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 63.

contemplation which induces aesthetic emotions. She wrote poetry which may be described in a phrase coined by William Wordsworth: "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" recollected by one who "had also thought long and deeply."¹ She exercised an artistic control which is now called psychological distance, specifically a personal relationship in which the personal quality was filtered out, a creative process which requires the paradox of the antimony of distance--the utmost decrease of distance without its entire disappearance. In other words, she was as close as she could be to the experience without becoming identified with it.²

Christina Rossetti was as close as possible to the experiences reviewed in her poems, and still she was never completely identified with them.

It is true that when a poet is intensely personal, quite frequently questions will be raised as to whether he is experiencing an aesthetic emotion in his portrayal or whether he is writing for cathartic release from passions too great to be borne. Was Christina Rossetti writing great poetry or was she merely seeking an outlet for strong emotions? Did she record her experience in the heat of

¹"Observations Prefixed to 'Lyrical Ballads,'" Criticism, The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, edited by Mark Schorer, Hosophine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948).

²Edward Bullough, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," Journal of Psychology, V (June, 1912), 87-118.

passion or did she contemplate in tranquillity? Recall again Wordsworth's definition of poetry and with regard to Christina take the statement by Frances Winwar, biographer of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and its friends and associates: "But, as in all sublimation of actual experience, Christina dramatized only part of her situation--the poetically useful. Her love for Collinson, her renunciation, her love for Cayley, and her renunciation of him. All her troubles and pain were only dramatized in part."¹ To say Christina did not recognize painful, self-regarding emotions in her poetry is to speak without authority, for Winwar reports Christina as saying, when Gabriel sent her some copies of his wife's poems to be included in a volume of Christina's own works, that Lizzie's poems were too painful and real. In a copy of the letter from Christina to Dante Gabriel dated 6 February 1865, included in Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870, Christina described Lizzie's poetry as "The evidence of another woman's bared, embittered soul."² They would have been as "cankered weeds" in the garden of her verse. Christina continues by saying that the poetry is too personal, picturing even Lizzie's face, voice, and manner.

¹Poor Splendid Wings (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1933), p. 302.

²William Michael Rossetti, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), pp. 73-75.

Let us consider the emotions which we label for simplicity's sake grief, pain, fear, love, and resignation. These are elemental emotions which become extremely complex when they inter-mingle with themselves. When I use the word emotions instead of emotion, I intend to call attention to the fact that though one emotion may be dominant, it is actually a compound of many and cannot be isolated. Each trace of other emotions gives a certain color or tone to the verse. Therefore, when one speaks of the emotions of grief in a poem, one refers to the emotion dominant and the other emotions rising to support or relieve or color it. The first sonnet of Monna Innominata, Christina Rossetti's sonnet of sonnets, is a perfect example of the inter-mingling of emotions that dominate her poetry:

Come back to me, who wait and watch for you:--
 Or come not yet, for it is over then,
 And long it is before you come again,
 So far between my pleasures are and few.
 While, when you come not, what I do I do
 Thinking 'Now when he comes,' my sweetest 'when':
 For one man is my world of all the men
 This wide world holds; O love, my world is yours.
 Howbeit, to meet you grows almost a pang
 Because the pang of parting comes too soon;
 My hope hangs waning, waxing, like a moon
 Between the heavenly days on which we meet:
 Ah me, but where are not the songs I sang
 When life was sweet because you called them
 sweet?¹

The yearning of the first line is followed by the drawing back in the second, third, and fourth; by the love in the

¹Ll. 1-14, The Poetical Works, pp. 58-59.

next lines, the grief mingled with love and the realization that when they are together they must part all too soon; by the seeming resignation in the last two lines "When life was sweet because you called them sweet." Here in imagery and style, Christina Rossetti is a master of contrast and of a skillful mingling of complex emotions. Her poetry is a study in wavering between happiness and sadness almost to the point of melancholia.

An example of this swift transition from light to darkness, this mingling and abrupt change of emotional tone, is in "An Old-World Thicket." The first seven verses are sublime lyric descriptions of the aspects of nature, the gayest, richest, headiest wine since Shelley's "The Cloud." Then, abruptly come these lines:

But I who say such things as I have said
Was overdone with utter weariness.¹

Misery piles upon misery as the imagery creates a picture. Finally, when the pain of some unknown sorrow grows too great for mortal flesh to bear, there comes the wail:

Such universal sound of lamentation

.

Moaning and groaning wrung by pain or fear,

Shuddering in the misery of its doom:
My heart then rose a rebel against light.²

¹Ll. 36-37, The Poetical Works, p. 64.

²Ibid., ll. 75, 79-81.

Again, no visible transitional passages occur as the mood changes. Suddenly, all is quiet as a golden sunset gilds the horizon. Why or how or when is unimportant, but the reader is left gasping in the face of beauty, overwhelming despair, and swift return to quiet peace. The poem has been labored over; its five-line stanzas have only two end-sounds. There is an absence of unconscious imagery. Every line contains an image of some type, for the most part complex. Christina Rossetti could not have written this poem under the stress of painful emotions. The emotions that she portrays may be self-regarding in the opinion of some readers, but to Christina Rossetti they are aesthetic.

Since Christina had experienced lost love, she was prepared to write graphically from experience, but she did not do so personally; she rather used her fertile imagination and manufactured a situation, a character, and a setting and dramatized her experience. In "Repining" she creates the picture of a woman longing for love to come and being disappointed and despairing when the beauty she had imagined is not hers:

She knelt down in her agony.
 'O Lord, it is enough,' said she:
 My heart's prayer putteth me to shame;
 Let me return to when I came.
 Thou who for love's sake didst reprove,
 Forgive me for the sake of love.¹

¹Ll. 152, p. 12. *Christina Rossetti*, p. 12.

To certain critics these last lines could indicate a certain guilt for having loved or even longed for love that was akin to Christina's deep religious faith and her renunciation of love for the sake of her God. This poem mingles love sorrowing for a lover, fear when he arrives, grief for the suffering of the world, and a great mixture of all these emotions and despair and pain in the last stanza. Though these are the ingredients of a tragedy, a story of woman's love and closely parallel to Christina's own love story, the poem is a masterpiece of carefully planned emotions. Christina uses the dolorous sounds created by repeating long and short "o" sounds in words such as tone, come, no, more, alone, undone, long, spun, dove, love, social company, and undertone. As the tone of the poem brightens when the lover comes at last, the last two lines of each stanza still end in the short and long "o" sounds as if testifying to the foreboding of the poem. Since her images in "Repining" are cold, difficult images containing consonantal sounds which make oral reading slow, the reader is forced to linger over the violence, strength, and vividness of the gruesome descriptions of war and destruction which are products of Christina's imagination and of her wide reading:

Far off the wind was muttering;

.

Upon its wings it bore the scent

Of blood of a great armament:
 Then saw they how on either side
 fields were down-trodden far and wide.
 That morning at the break of day
 Two nations had gone forth to slay.

As a man soweth so he reaps.
 The field was full of bleeding heaps;
 Ghastly corpses of men and horses
 That met death at a thousand sources;
 Cold limbs and putrefying flesh;
 Long love-locks clotted to a mesh
 That stifled: stiffened mouths beneath
 Staring eyes that had looked on death.¹

Unpleasant images for a lyric poetess, but very pictorial; no layman could possibly believe that Christina Rossetti, who hardly ever left London, could have experienced actually what is depicted.

The poem by Christina Rossetti which seems the most autobiographical is "The Prince's Progress." It is the story of a tardy prince who came just too late to free the enchanted princess from her imprisonment. The prince is the lover who never came for Christina.² The poem was written near the time of her renunciation of Gayley, when life was probably causing her much grief. The distractions which occupy the prince along his way may be the religious differences that Gayley was not strong enough to surmount for her love. When the prince arrives, the lovely princess is dead, and veiled figures sing,

¹Ll. 17-30, The Poetical Works, p. 12.

²Eleanor Walter Thomas, Christina Georgina Rossetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 175.

'Too late for love, too late for joy,
 Too late, too late!
 You loitered on the road too long
 You trifled at the gate:
 The enchanted dove upon her branch
 Died without a mate;
 The enchanted princess in her tower
 Slept, died, behind the grate.¹

A close study of the poem reveals careful and skillful workmanship. The rhyme scheme alone would indicate much thought and experimentation. The theme of the longing for the lover who never comes was one that Christina considered suitable for poetry. Her range of emotion is great in these long poems.

However, it is more difficult to convey the impression of mingled emotions, of change, of contemplation in short lyrics and sonnets. In a great number of lyrics of varying degrees of quality from very poor to extremely fine, two sonnet sequences Monna Innominata and Later Life, and several miscellaneous sonnets, the most noteworthy of which is "Rest," Christina manages to express changes of emotion and deep, convincing, intensely personal passion within a very little space. Even in fourteen short lines the tone and color are variegated. To discuss every lyric in detail would be repetitious and diffuse. Out of her lyric abundance, analytical emphasis should fall upon the memorable examples. For instance, of special sweetness are her songs wherein the

¹ll. 474-82, The Poetical Works, p. 34.

background is the English countryside with a difference. The aspects of civilization are absent, and green things, small creatures who leap or crawl, fly, or gambol, elms, limes, and willows which grow by clear streams, hawthorn hedgerows that border green cornfields, and the tinkling of sheep bells create an infinitely fascinating nature world of little animals and tall trees. Christina has the Italian love for purple and crimson which glow through the golden marigolds and the poppy brimmed with sleepy death. The lark, cuckoo, nightingale, robin, wren, and crow are joined as not in other English verse with the spider and the blue-black beetle, the frogs, moles, and mice. The little creatures are pictured in such poems as "Twilight Calm":

Oh pleasant eventide!
 Clouds on the western side
 Grow grey and greyer, hiding the warm sun:
 The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
 Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
 The stock-doves sit and brood:
 The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
 But lazily; pauses; and settles now
 Where once he stored his food.

.

The gnats whirl in the air,
 The evening gnats; and there
 The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
 For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
 Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
 Telling the self-same tale
 Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
 So echoes answered when her song was sung
 In the first wooded vale.¹

Other lyrics unite animals and birds such as "Summer" and "Spring Quiet." "Autumn," "The First Day of Spring," and "To What Purpose Is This Waste?" are all examples of cheerful picturesque poems that belie the sadness of a life devoid of love. Nature poems are not unusual for Christina. She did not commune directly with nature, however. She imagined a world more beautiful and perhaps more tender than the one discoverable in reality.² A perfect example of her own world more beautiful than nature itself is the one in "A Pause," which describes the shock of recognition and expectancy of a girl in love, written in the haze of remembered ecstasy, for Collinson was being pressed from her mind and Cayley was yet to come:³

They made the chamber sweet with flowers and leaves,
 And the bed sweet with flowers on which I lay;

.

My thirsty soul kept watch for one away:--
 Perhaps he loves, I thought, remembers, grieves.
 At length there came the step upon the stair,
 Upon the lock the old familiar hand:
 Then first my spirit seemed to scent the air

¹Ll. 1-10, 26-35, The Poetical Works, pp. 297-298.

²Thomas, op. cit., p. 173.

³Zaturenska, op. cit., p. 41.



Christina Rossetti

from a drawing made by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1865.

Engraved by W. E. Lockhart

Of paradise; then first the tardy sand
 Of time ran golden; and I felt my hair⁴
 Put on a glory, and my soul expand.

But these poems are only bright spots on a black field--the silver sheen on black velvet. For though Christina sang some happy songs of love and nature and youth, the majority of her songs are sad mirrorings of the more troubled aspects of love. She writes of love sought but never found in "By the Water" and in "Somewhere or Other," of love unreturned in "Touching Never," and of love scorned in "Twice." The sadness of her lovely lyric songs is like a low cry in the dark, the lament of a woman who has felt deeply:

Oh roses for the flush of youth,
 And Laurel for the perfect prime;
 And pluck an ivy branch for me
 Grown old before my time.¹

"Song" ("Oh Roses for the Flush of Youth") containing these lines Christina wrote before she was twenty years old; she had already lost one lover and had felt her life close. Yet this poem with its exquisite simplicity cannot be the outcry of a woman in the first flush of grief. This woman has recalled her bitter experience and become to a certain extent resigned to her fate. In "Sound Sleep," written some six months after the preceding "Song," Christina's full poetic powers reasserted themselves in the following verses about nature and love:

¹ll. 1-4, The Poetical Works, p. 292.

Some are laughing, some are weeping;
 She is sleeping, only sleeping.
 Round her rest wild flowers are creeping;
 There the wind is heaping, heaping
 Sweetest sweets of Summer's keeping,
 By the corn-fields ripe for reaping.

.

There by day the lark is singing
 And the grass and weeds are springing;
 There by night the bat is winging
 There forever winds are bringing ¹
 Far-off chimes of church bells ringing.

Examination of this poem suggests that Christina Rossetti could have been one of the greatest rhymsters in the English language, if her interests had lain in that direction. Instead Christina desires nothing but rest and sleep--oblivion --in the lovely "Remember" which is familiar to most of the anthologies of English verse and the anthologies of love lyrics.

Remember me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;²

and no one believes that he will forget, for in this lyric and its companion piece Christina Rossetti entangles herself inextricably in the emotions of the reader. No discussion of her lyrics would be complete without "Song," which appeals to everyone's senses and everyone's emotions and is undoubtedly one of the most popular poems that Christina Rossetti ever

¹Ll. 1-6, 12-17, The Poetical Works, p. 295.

²Ll. 1-2, The Poetical Works, p. 294.

wrote. Every trace of passion that can be conveyed is in it. It is the perfect synthesis of grief, love, pain, and resignation.

I shall not see the shadows,
 I shall not feel the rain;
 I shall not hear the nightingale
 Sing on as if in pain:
 And dreaming through the twilight
 That doth not rise nor set,
 Haply I may remember,
 And haply may forget.¹

The accented sound of "a" in rain, nightingale, and pain set up certain vibrations and create certain images in the mind of the reader. The rain, dreary and monotonous or tinkling and cool, is still the symbol of sadness when coupled with shadows. The nightingale is the bird of darkness; and when it is singing in pain it can only mean mourning. The story commonly associated with this poem is that it was written by Christina when her love for Collinson was causing her such anxiety and when she realized that to continue their engagement was futile. Yet William Michael Rossetti reports that it was written only two months after she met and fell in love with James Collinson, a period in her life when she was very happy.² It is not well to read autobiography into art.

Christina Rossetti could write anything she chose in any vein she chose. For example, in the same week she wrote "A Birthday" ("My Heart is Like A Singing Bird"), a poem in which she

¹Ll. 9-16, The Poetical Works, pp. 290-291.

²"Memoir," The Poetical Works, p. lii.

seems in high spirits, and "An Apple Gathering," which tells the story of love lost.

Even in the highly restrained sonnet form, she created important emotional conflicts. The first sonnet of the Monna Innominata, Christina Rossetti's exceptionally fine group of sonnets already referred to, is an excellent example of the inter-mingling of emotions. In addition to Monna Innominata and Later Life, her other sonnet sequence, which lacks something of the distinction of the first, Christina wrote several single sonnets which are of varying degrees of beauty. Perhaps the finest of them is one written before she was twenty, "Rest." This sonnet expresses utter resignation particularly in the line which reads "With stillness that is almost Paradise."¹ Her religion, her acquiescence to the world, her soul, her God--are all assured in this sonnet. It is indicative of her voluntary ecstasy and her stern self-willed rebellion which lie rooted within her, and it contrasts them with her new acquiescence.² She is still and quiet like the earth of a cornfield under which a volcano is preparing to erupt:

Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her heart has ceased to stir:

¹L. 8, The Poetical Works, p. 293.

²P. E. More, "Christina Rossetti," Shelbourne Essays Third Series (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 124-142.

Until the morning of Eternity
 Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
 And when she wakes she will not think it long.¹

Thus far, I have considered poems in some way related to Christina's personal life. Now let us consider three poems--three of her best poems--that are free of autobiographical relations and self-regarding emotions. Consider, first, "The Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children," in which there is essentially only one image--that of the rose coupled with the thorn. The story is of a child born illegitimately to a girl of a high-born family, conceived beneath a rosebush, born in the dust, and brought up in the mud. In a dramatic monologue Christina tells the story plainly, without figures of speech, relying on simple diction and irregular rhyme and meter to sustain the interest of the reader. The daughter loves her mother dearly but despises her for her weakness in not acknowledging their relationship. The daughter will do nothing about it however: "For blood is thicker than water and you're my mother still."² Where did Christina find inspiration to write such a poem? Doubtless from something she read, observed, or imagined. Second, there is "A Ballad of Boding," a horror story to equal any in English poetry. While it is almost too heavy with symbol

¹Ll. 9-14, p. 293.

²L. 394, p. 46.

and allegory, no one can ignore the hideous imagery of the monster which attacks the Love-ship and the Worm-ship. The monster is suggestive of Satan in his last hideous form in Milton's Paradise Lost; the plot, of the story "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The description of the monster draws upon details of horror:

Soon I spied something dim
 Many-handed, grim,
 That went flitting to and fro the first and
 second ship;

.

With a horny hand it steered,
 And a horn appeared
 On its sneering head upreared
 Haughty and high
 Against the blackening lowering sky.
 With a hoof it swayed the waves;
 They opened here and there,
 Till I spied deep open graves
 Full of skeletons
 That once were men and women
 Foul or fair;
 Full of things that creep
 And fester in the deep
 And never breathe the clean life-nurturing air.¹

The last of the secular poems, "Goblin Market," is the greatest piece that Christina Rossetti wrote. She who left London town rarely and reluctantly and always returned to it gladly and thankfully, who spent her life in nunlike seclusion, created this magnificent poem from pure imagination. Her achievement has been called "an authentic feat of the creative imagination, an extension of experience into an

¹Ll. 114-116, 123-136, p. 57.

unknown world."¹ B. Ifor Evans has written a critical study entitled "The Sources of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market.'" He says that the source of the decor of the poem could well be Thomas Keightley's The Fairy Mythology, which Christina Rossetti is known to have read. The fairies in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream or those in "The Fairies" by William Allingham, a close friend of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, might also have been a source. He says that the sumptuousness of the golden plates suggests an Arabian Nights motive. The calls of the peddlers in London town are the sources for the cries of the goblins because the Rossetti children were warned not to play in the streets around Charlotte Street house because of the undesirables who hawked their wares. Christina was trained in early childhood to be ware of such hucksters. Dante Gabriel's ill-disciplined menagerie on Cheyne Walk with all its strange and exotic animals² might have been the source for the choice of animal faces.³ Whether all these sources are true or whether "Goblin Market" sprang full-grown from her head is really of little importance except as a study in creation and the creative

¹C. M. Bowra, "Christina Rossetti," The Romantic Imagination (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 246.

²Modern Language Review, XXVIII (April, 1933), 156-165.

³Winwar, op. cit., p. 306. Dante kept armadillos, raccoons, peacocks, deer, a Brahmin bull, and a wombat.

process. As such it affords endless hours of pleasure for those who enjoy such studies, for "Goblin Market" is all things to all people. To Marya Zaturenska its splendid color, fantasy, imaginative beauty, and innocence make the Pre-Raphaelite dream. There is something so natural about the tripping metrics and the fairy-tale atmosphere in which the poem begins that its cumulative effect and great technical skill remain almost unnoticed at first. Then on reflection, the imagery takes on a glow; a warmth pervades the fairylike atmosphere; and under the innocent story of sisterly love, and longing after forbidden fruit, a sense of evil slowly darkens the atmosphere. The grotesque mingles with the trembling innocence that hovers over the abyss of the unnamable and repulsive.¹ To Marya Zaturenska "Goblin Market" is a disguised tribute to Christina's sister, Maria. After his marriage, Collinson attempted to see Christina again, and it is said that her passion returned and that for a moment she thought of elopement. Maria prevented Christina from committing a mortal sin which would have haunted her the rest of her life.² To C. M. Bowra, who does not know and who cares less about such things, the goblins have a certain independence and irresponsibility yet seem to be governed by rules of a

¹Op. cit., pp. 60-61.

²Ibid., p. 62.

natural universe.¹ To Eleanor Walter Thomas the poem is the embodiment of a strong nineteenth-century theme, the desire to escape from actuality. It is a poem which could not have been the result of labor and study or determination of will; it is rather the record of one of the happiest moments of a mind capable of great happiness.² "Goblin Market" is written in stanzas of varying length and meter, the verses being held together by rhyme employed in accordance with no perceptible plan other than the purpose of affording pleasure and a sense of melodic unity to the reader. It is indeed written in accordance with the Pre-Raphaelite theme of poetry for poetry's sake. It contains the richest imagery imaginable. The extreme lusciousness of the fruit which the goblins have to sell creates over all a suggestion of the allurements of sin, a touch of the uncanny and sinister fruits too beautiful to be true. In tumbling verse of rushing starts and stops describing the stumbling, harrying, hobbling of the goblin hucksters Christina creates an overall kinesthetic image of frenzy--the frenzy of too short life and too many beauties:

Down the glen tramp little men.
 One hauls a basket.
 One bears a plate,
 One lugs a golden dish
 Of many pounds' weight.
 How fair the vine must grow
 Whose grapes are so luscious
 How warm the wind must blow
 Through those fruit bushes!

¹Op. cit., pp. 247-249.

²Op. cit., p. 127.

.
 One had a cat's face,
 One whisked a tail,
 One tramped at a rat's pace,
 One crawled like a snail,
 One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
 One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.¹

The speed and irregularity of the poem make it alive with nervous hesitancy, with suspense, with quickening of life. Every type of sensory image confronts the reader--the taste of the fruit, the odor, the fresh bloom of it, the velvety texture, the rich color and sheen, the flashes of goblin faces leering and smirking above it. Moreover, the lush fruits on the golden platters are goblin-created of myths and dreams in the world created by Christina's fertile imagination. No such world ever existed except in her heart:

"Goblin Market" is Christina Rossetti's own, inalienably hers, a self-evoked world of strange beauty and terror, whose ageless denizens are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, and whose woods and waters are unknown of the visiting moon. . . . Plot and moral are both there, but if one hacks away the rich growth that hides them they will surely dwindle and die. The challenge of "Goblin Market" must always be to the eye and the ear rather than to the intellect.²

Most critics concur that the secular poetry of Christina Rossetti is undeniably her best because it contains the most variety of verse form including the ballad, idyl,

¹Ll. 54-62, 70-75, The Poetical Works, pp. 1-2.

²Dorothy Margaret Stuart, Christina Rossetti (London: Macmillan Co., Ltd., 1931), pp. 54-55.

carol, roundel, and sonnet, to mention a few.¹ Furthermore, in it Christina is sincere in what she has to say, though she says little that is truly philosophical or personal. She is singularly lacking in any self-consciousness about what she says and consequently writes in one of the least labored, least precious styles, rarely departing from exquisitely simple diction.² This simplicity and sincerity in portraying emotions creates a truly aesthetic reaction to her poetry.

¹Ibid., p. 128.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER V
RELIGIOUS POETRY

The great single force in the life of Christina Rossetti was her religious zeal. For her religion she gave up love, pleasure, and freedom. She retired to her nun-like cloister at No. 30 Torrington Square in 1882 and had little social life afterwards. Her truly romantic temperament, as fiery and excitable as Gabriel's, was countered, directed, and given distinction by her firm belief in God.¹ A dark God, a harsh God, an unseen God who decreed that all the pleasures of the world were hateful to Him is the hovering image in her poetry, the fanatic cruel image that drove her to morbidity, despairing acceptance, great love, and reverential awe. He inspired the emotions of grief, pain, fear, and love, which are the subject matter of her poetry:

The pressure of a tremendous faith circles and clamps together these songs. Perhaps they owe to it their solidity. Certainly they owe to it their sadness--your God [Christina] was a harsh God, your heavenly crown was set with thorns. No sooner have you feasted on beauty with your eyes than your mind tells you that beauty is vain and beauty passes. Death, oblivion, and rest lap around your songs with their dark wave. And

¹C. M. Bowra, "Christina Rossetti," The Romantic Imagination (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 245-270.

then incongruously, a sound of scurrying and laughter is heard. There is the patter of animal's feet and the odd guttural notes of rooks and thesnufflings of obtuse furry animals grunting and nosing. For you were not a pure saint by any means. You pulled legs; you tweaked noses. You were at war with all humbug and pretence. Modest as you were, still you were drastic, sure of your gift, convinced of your vision. A firm hand pruned your lines; a sharp ear tested their music. Nothing soft, otiose, irrelevant cumbered your pages. In a word, you were an artist.¹

Is it any wonder that over half of her poems are religious and devotional poems? Among her longest is "All Thy Works Praise Thee, O Lord: A Processional of Creation"; among her Juvenilia her poems bear such titles as "Earth and Heaven," "Mary Magdalene," "Resurrection Eve." She has a great host of devotional poems which are divided into such collections as Songs for Strangers and Pilgrims, Some Feasts and Fasts, Divers Worlds: Time and Eternity, New Jerusalem and Its Citizens, Christ Our All in All, Out of the Deep Have I Called Thee, O Lord, Gifts and Graces, The World: Self-Destruction, and various isolated religious poems which William Michael includes in this section of her anthology.

These poems all tell much the same story and only a few are considered individually great, for when she sings of religion her songs are inclined to become a trifle monotonous. The quality of the work on the whole is high and the poems

¹Virginia Woolf, "'I Am Christina Rossetti,'" The Common Reader, I Vol. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1948), p. 348.

taken as a group are excellent, however. All too frequently critics agree that she seems devoid of her usual buoyant spirit and energy and rather glides along without any striking passages. She seems a different person from the passionate woman with the vivid imagination and the love of beautiful things who desired a man enough to plan to commit adultery to be with him and damn her soul forever. In her stead there stands the meek, humble, adoring, fearful creature praising God in the highest, just as hundreds have done before her.

Some critics attribute the great devotional poetry of Christina Rossetti to external influences, saying that there is really no great originality in it. Perhaps the Oxford Movement, which bore upon Anglicanism, came nearer to directly influencing Christina Rossetti's religious poetry than any other action of her age; yet, as Marjory Bald points out, the only definite and tangible result of such an influence is one grave, calm sonnet to the memory of Cardinal Newman:¹

O weary Champion of the Cross, lie still:
 Sleep thou at length the all-embracing sleep:
 Long was thy sowing-day, rest now and reap:
 Thy fast was long, feast now thy spirit's fill.

.

¹ "Christina Rossetti," Woman-Writers of the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: University Press, 1923), p. 239.

Thy best has done its best, thy worst its worst: ¹
 Thy best its best, please God, thy best its best.

This expert is hardly the voice of an enthusiastic zealot for the Oxford Movement; it is merely a tribute to a strong, good man.

Christina Rossetti was perhaps closet akin to the middle ages and to Dante Alighieri, whose literary influence stirred her most profoundly.

Her father was a great student of Dante, and her brother executed one of the finest translations of La Vita Nuova that have ever been done. She had something of the Dantesque temperament--vehemence, delicacy, and ecstasy; but, while Dante could imagine the entire world, envision sun, moon, stars, and a realm of being apart from our world of time and space, Christina could conceive only a world restricted and concentrated by the processes of her own soul. He reached upward and outward into the abstract; she looked inward into the concrete. Characteristically she sought to escape even from starlight, in a close, secret grave, where she might forget all things and rest. She speaks of a kind of purgatory reminiscent of Dante's in "There Remaineth Therefore A Rest to the People of God" when she says,

Fear and hope and chastening rod
 Urge us on the narrow way:

¹"Cardinal Newman," ll. 1-4, 13-14, The Poetical Works, p. 280.

Bear we now as best we may
 Heat and burden of to-day,¹
 Struggling, panting up to God.

Dante walked as a living spirit through the world of the dead; Christina dreamed of dim voices, questioning and replying. The two poets were alike in their beautiful grave tenderness which sweetened the gloom of torment. Christina, in torment from the time she was fifteen until she died, never escaped the shadow of death. Life itself seemed almost a miracle and death the commonplace. Yet she, who should have died early, managed to live for sixty-four years. As to style, Christina and Dante have the same vitality of colors--not permanently painted as a canvas, as are Dante Gabriel's, but flushing and fading as if alive. This peculiarity of coloring is visible in all of Christina Rossetti's secular poetry and in a great deal of her religious work; for whenever a color is hinted at, a light seems to flare high and then to fade away, leaving a complementary color image. A perfect example of this rather unusual quality of color is the following verses from "Only Believe":

'Is there a bed above
 More fragrant than these violets
 That are white like death?'

'White like a dove,
 Flowers in the blessed islets
 Breathe sweeter breath
 All fair morns and twilights.'

¹ Ll. 6-10, The Poetical Works, p. 200.

'There heads are aureoled
 And crowned with gold
 With lights most rare.'

.
 'To them are given
 All odorous shady trees.
 Earth's bowers are wildernesses,
 Compared with the recesses
 Made soft there now.¹

Christina Rossetti worked to achieve spectacular effects with tone and image in her secular poetry. She presented, as a suitable theme for the free form of her verse, the picture of a lost and lonely woman who had renounced love. In this poetry she was experiencing truly aesthetic sensitivity and discretion. The same is true of some of her religious poems which are some of her finest work. They are divided into two groups. First are the poems which are the results of an inspiring religious experience contemplated and directed by thought. Second, are the ones, some of them very fine, which are didactic in nature, striving to teach the religion which she believed in so ardently. Naturally, there is some overlapping in these two groups, but I shall try to delineate them as clearly as possible.

When Christina Rossetti writes great religious poetry, her attitude seems incompatible with spiritual hypocrisy; she is simplicity personified; her choice of words is exact and exquisite. Her personal color suffuses an idea once that

¹ Ll. 5-16, 19-23, The Poetical Works, p. 205.

idea has been taken into her mind, later to be given out fresh, and re-baptized--altered by contact with a sensitive poet. She saturates a poem with values beyond matter and above temporary considerations.¹ She utilized all her poetic powers to describe a mystic experience. Sometimes she calls upon personal experience of a deeply individual nature describing some particular moving experience. Sometimes the source of her inspiration can be traced directly to some portion of the Holy Bible.

When her individualism is the source of inspiration, she inspires the finest feelings of sublimity. An example of the sublimation of a particular experience, the release of a sorrowing soul through God's love, is the poem "Balm in Gilead":

Heartsease I found, where Love-lies-bleeding
 Empurpled all the ground:
 Whatever flowers I missed unheeding,
 Heartsease I found.

Yet still my garden mound
 Stood sore in need of watering, weeding,
 And binding growths unbound.

Ah when shades fell, to light succeeding,
 I scarcely dared look round:
 'Love-lies-bleeding' was all my pleading;
 Heartsease I found.²

From this poem the reason for the enigma associated with Christina Rossetti's work is clear. There is a simple

¹Virginia Moore, "Notes and Comments; Christina Rossetti's Centennial," Yale Review, XX (February, 1931), pp. 428-32.

²ll. 1-11, The Poetical Works, p. 134.

experience, a tragic experience, hinted at. Yet the poem is, to eyes not looking for any particular moral or message, merely a beautiful lyric faintly reminiscent of Herbert, Crashaw, or Blake.

Perhaps Christina Rossetti is writing her greatest religious poetry, however, when she bewails her guilt for her sins. She reassures herself constantly that she will be forgiven, but the fear is there nevertheless. It is clearly mirrored in the sonnet "O Lord, I Am Ashamed to Seek Thy Face":

O Lord, I am ashamed to seek Thy Face
 As tho' I loved Thee as Thy saints love Thee:
 Yet turn from those thy lovers, look on me,
 Disgrace me not with uttermost disgrace;

.

O Thou Who callest sinners to repent,
 Call me Thy sinner unto penitence,
 For many sins grant me the greater love:
 Set me above the waterfloods, above
 Devil and shifting world and fleshly sense,
 And Mercy's all-amazing monument.¹

She begs for forgiveness and begs to be called to repent, but is never quite satisfied with her penitence. In "O Lord God, Hear the Silence of each Soul" she strikes a more universal note, entreating God to forgive all sinners:

O Lord God, hear the silence of each soul,
 Its cry unutterable of truth and shame,
 Its voicelessness of self-contempt and blame:
 Nor suffer harp and palm and aureole
 Of multitudes who praise Thee at the goal

¹Ll. 1-4, 9-14, The Poetical Works, pp. 265-6.



To set aside Thy poor and blind and lame;
 Nor blazing seraphs utterly to outflame
 The spark that flies up from each earthly coal.

My price Thy priceless Blood, and therefore I
 Price of Thy priceless Blood am precious so
 That good things love me in their love of
 Thee:

I comprehend not why Thou lovedst me
 With Thy so mighty love; but this I know,
 No man hath greater love than thus to die.¹

Immediately recognizable is the familiar ring of the last line. It might be a paraphrase of the famous verse from the fifteenth chapter of St. John: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (15:13) Christina Rossetti borrowed extensively from the Bible. The most obvious of these borrowings is from the Song of Solomon:

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up my
 love, my fair one, and come away.
 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over
 and gone;
 The flowers appear on the earth; and the time
 of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of
 the turtle is heard in our land;
 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
 and the vines with the tender grape give a good
 smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come
 away. (2:10-13)

In "Passing Away," the lyric admired so much by Swinburne, Christina uses away as her key-word and rhymes every line with that sound:

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:
 Winter passeth after the long delay:
 New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender
 spray,

¹Ll. 1-14, p. 267. Alfred Tennyson's Poetical Works, p. 267.

Christina Rossetti is a poet who creates the impression of many moods. Sometimes she is Saint Christina of the Wells Cathedral "withdrawn discreetly" in her niche, "the statue of a lovely lady" to be admired by the scholars.¹ At other times she is a great sinner or a passionate woman longing for her love. In all moods of her religious work there is certain sublimity, whether it be of a climactic character or of a restrained, soothing quality. There is an almost total absence of thrust and counter-thrust of conflicting ideas in her soothing poetry; her climactic is exciting argumentation when she seeks to describe some inspiring religious experience. Naturally, not all of this work is on the same level of quality:

One hundred and seventy-two pages of William Michael's collected edition are occupied by devotional poems culled from her various volumes . . . from anthologies . . . and from her notebooks and manuscripts. He has gleaned the stubble-fields most religiously; the harvest would be twice as rich were it half as great. When Christina Rossetti's right hand forgets its cunning her devotional verses can be as trite as the quatrains on a Christmas card, as stuffy as the smell of pitch-pine and red baize. When her imagination is working at high pressure, when she subjected to that inexplicable influence from without that is not unlike possession, it is difficult to find similes for her songs. They are as lambent as the glassy sea of the Apocalypse, as wistful as the face of a Florentine Virgin, as

¹Annie Kimball Tuell, "Christina Rossetti," A Victorian at Bay (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., Inc., 1932), p. 50.

gorgeous as the wings of Fra Angelico's
red-robed angels, as sonorous as an introit
by Palestrina.¹

An example of such a poem which seems to have been composed
under the aforesaid "high pressure" is "A Christmas Carol,"
a portion of which is quoted here:

In the bleak mid-winter
 Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
 Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on
 Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
 Long ago.

.
Enough for Him, whom cherubim
 Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
 And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels
 Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
 Which adore.²

One critic has noted an unusually egocentric quality
in her religious poetry. It is on these occasions that other
critics may find some justification for the accusation that
her poetry is largely self-regarding and not leading to
sublimity. This critic noted that there are seventy-seven
of her poems which begin with the pronoun "I" and only six

¹ Dorothy Margaret Stuart, Christina Rossetti (London:
Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 138.

² Ll. 1-8, 17-24, The Poetical Works, p. 246. This
song is included in the English Hymnal.

with "we"; twenty begin with "my" and only seven with "our."¹ We should remember, however, that religious poetry must be of a necessarily personal nature to be believable, since religion is an institution of faith and a compilation of reports of experiences of others.

Does Christina achieve sublimity despite introspection and egotism? The poem "Up-Hill" is one of her very finest, because the hope and promise of the poem are truly inspirational. It uses the first person and relates the simple acceptance of faith, maintaining a high degree of psychological distance:

But is there for the night a resting place?
 A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
 May not the darkness hide it from my face?
 You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
 Those who have gone before.
 Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
 They will not keep you standing at the door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
 Of labour you shall find the sum.
 Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
 Yea, beds for all who come.²

This poem may also be cited as an example of the infinite variety of Christina Rossetti's verse form. The question-and-answer structure is indeed not unlike a litany or a responsive reading in verse. The flow of the lines

¹ Walter de la Mare, "Christina Rossetti," Royal Society of Literature, Transactions, VI (1926), 83.

² Ll. 5-16, The Poetic Works, p. 339.

suggests the rise and recession of a tide or, more aptly, a wave of sound created by a congregation responding to the direction of a priest or pastor. Since she varied even the simplest quatrain with hundreds of strange and interesting combinations, a separate study could be made of her variations in verse form and meter alone. Dorothy Stuart describes the beauty of her religious verse in the following passage:

Christina Rossetti's praying-ropes are shot through with recurrent colours and patterns, with the green of the martyr's palm and of the heavenly pastures, the white of the martyr's robe and of the fields ripe for harvest. She makes antithesis and anaphora the woof and warp, and seems to take pleasure in the movement of the shuttle. . . . Alone among women writers of English Christina Rossetti is capable of giving life to lyrics worthy to rank with the best of Ken and Cowper, Watts, Wesley, and Newman.¹

The presence of such poetic devices as antithesis and anaphora, no simple mediums to work with by virtue of their subtle shadings of sound, testifies to the care and painstaking deliberation which accompanied the writing of these poems.

Therefore, because of the careful execution of her religious verse, though much is poor, much is monotonous, and much is egotistical, there is something for everyone. The simple and sincere universality of the emotions of such poems as "Lo, Newborn Jesus" and "O Lord Babe, If Thou Art He" would appeal to any one. "Time Passeth Away," "One Step More,"

¹Op. cit., pp. 147-149.

"Heaven Over-Arches Us," and "Grant us Grace" provide all that any reader of religious verse could ask. "A Hope Carol" is the expression in the heart of everyone who has ever longed for an experience with the Divine:

A night was near, a day was near;
 Between a day and night
 I heard sweet voices calling clear,
 Calling me:
 I heard a whirr of wing on wing,
 But could not see the sight;
 I long to see the birds that sing,
 I long to see.

Below the stars, beyond the moon,
 Between the night and day,
 I heard a rising falling tune
 Calling me:
 I long to see the pipes and strings
 Whereon such minstrels play;
 I long to see each face that sings,
 I long to see.

To-day or may be not to-day,
 To-night or not to-night,
 All voices that command or pray,
 Calling me,
 Shall kindle in my soul such fire
 And in my eyes such light
 That I shall see that heart's desire
 I long to see.¹

On the basis of such glorious poetry as this, the best of her verse is accordingly judged strong, inspirational, beautiful, and full of the divine vision of the Holy Spirit.²

¹ Ll. 1-24, The Poetical Works, p. 280.

² M. M. Mahood, "Two Anglican Poets," Poetry and Humanism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 27.

CHAPTER VI
CHILDREN'S POETRY

There remains yet one phase of Christina's work to be discussed, one type of poetry yet to be considered--her children's verses. She wrote one volume of children's poetry, Sing-Song, published in 1872, gay little poems, written ironically enough at a time when she was suffering most severely from exophthalmic bronchele and when her brother Dante Gabriel was suffering from extremely poor health preceding a physical and nervous breakdown. Despite handicaps, the poems contained in Sing-Song are an achievement. They are 126 miniature lyrics, quite frequently couplets, riddles, or quatrains. As Dorothy Stuart has said, "The essence of the true nursery rhyme, like the essence of the true ballad, is that it should seem as if no single person could possibly have thought of it and written it down."¹ Therefore only a true artist can accomplish such a feat of seemingly careless composition. Christina Rossetti has accomplished this; she, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mother Goose are almost alone in their field. The Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson can write prose, but only a few artists can accomplish the simplicity

¹Christina Rossetti (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 85.

and singing quality necessary while still maintaining thought and value.

First among the types of verses purely for children's pleasure is the type which appeals to the little ego. This appeal shows understanding of the psychology of childhood, for all children like to be the characters in poems whether the situation is familiar or novel.¹ Such a poem set in a familiar situation written in the first person is the following:

There's snow on the fields,
And cold in the cottage,
While I sit in the chimney nook
Supping hot pottage.²

In a more exalted mood and a novel situation is

If I were a Queen
What would I do?
I'd make you a King.
And I'd wait on you.

If I were a King,
What would I do?
I'd make you a Queen,³
And I'd marry you.

In the same vein is

I am a King,
Or an Emperor rather,

¹Ibid., p. 86. This knowledge is rather strange from Christina's point of view, for she was under the misapprehension that she was not fitted temperamentally either to understand or be understood by children. There is no trace anywhere in her poems of any regret that motherhood as well as marriage had been denied her.

²"There's Snow on the Fields," ll. 1-4, The Poetical Works, p. 427.

³"If I Were a Queen," ll. 1-8, p. 430.

I wear crown--imperial
And prince's feather.¹

In poems like these the child can exercise his imagination even beyond the poem which merely gives him the idea. Also a child likes to recognize the familiar objects of his own experience in the dignity of poetry, since they appeal to his ego. He can find verses in Sing-Song with weddings, funerals, daisies, daffodils, wrens, robins, the wind, and the rainbow. The same kind of people that he might know are also pictured.

Margaret has a milking-pail,
And she rises early;
Thomas has a threshing-flail,
And he's up betimes.
Sometimes crossing through the grass
Where the dew lies pearly,
They say 'Good-morrow' as they pass
By the leafy limes.²

There is, second, a type of nonsense rhyme which children dearly love. Christina Rossetti is fond of beginning such fancies with an if or a question, and she suggests such absurdities as Walter de la Mare and A. A. Milne invent when she writes this:

If a pig wore a wig,
What would we say?
Treat him as a gentleman
And say "Good-day."
If his tail chanced to fail,
What could we do?
Send him to the tailoress
To get one new.³

¹"I Am A King," ll. 1-4, p. 434.

²"Margaret Has A Milking-Pail," ll. 1-8, p. 435.

³"If A Pig Wore A Wig," ll. 1-8, p. 431.

She reminds one of Lewis Carroll when she says:

When fishes set umbrellas up
 If rain-drops run,
 Lizards will want their parasols¹
 To shade them from the sun.

Not quite so nonsensical yet truly a rhyme to make children laugh is the following:

The peacock has a score of eyes,
 With which he cannot see;
 The codfish has a silent sound,
 However that may be;

No dandelions tell the time,
 Although they turn to clocks;
 Cat's-cradle does not hold the cat,
 Nor fox-glove fit the fox.²

Children may miss in these verses the delightful surprise endings which they find in Milne's rhymes or the suggestions of games and stories which Stevenson furnishes, yet they may nevertheless often be set to wondering or to dreaming. And especially by the greatest of all children's poems, although adults claim it for their own; "Goblin Market," which is hindered only by length from being included in every volume of children's verse, are the childish fancies set tingling. "Goblin Market" has already been amply discussed in a previous chapter and, consequently, is only mentioned here.³

¹"When Fishes Set Umbrellas Up," ll. 1-4, p. 434.

²"The Peacock Has A Score of Eyes," ll. 1-8, p. 434.

³Supra, pp. 70-74.

Christina Rossetti published Sing-Song in 1872.

It was at this time that English children's poetry was following a vogue for nonsense rhymes because of Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass. About half of her poems, therefore, are nonsense rhymes, with the exception of a few isolated stanzas which will be discussed later. But at least half of the poetry reverts back to Watt's Divine Songs for Children and the Taylor's Original Poems for Infant Minds. Some contemporaries of Sing-Song were such popular anthologies of instructional poems as Children with the Poets, Little Lays for Little Folk, Chimes for Childhood, and The Horn of Plenty of Home Poems and Pictures. All these were naturally weakened by the movement to fantasy, but still remained didactic in the finest moral tradition.¹

Christina was familiar with moral literature for children, for Mrs. Rossetti kept her children "supplied with books having a directly religious or didactic aim--stories about 'good little boys and girls,' or alternative naughty ones, and other such matter."² The Rossetti children read, among other books, Maria Edgeworth's moral stories, Thomas

¹Barabara Garlitz, "Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song and Nineteenth-Century Children's Poetry," PMLA, LXX (June, 1955), 539-543.

²Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters, with a memoir by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis and Elvery, 1895), Vol. I, p. 61.

Day's Sandford and Merton, and Mrs. Sherwood's Fairchild Family.¹

With sentimental, almost mawkish subject matter Christina Rossetti turns her exquisite artistry to work and protests against boys robbing birds' nests:

Hear what the mournful linnets say:
 'We built our nest compact and warm,
 But cruel boys came round our way
 And took our summer house by storm.

'They crushed the eggs so neatly laid;
 So now we sit with drooping wing,
 And watch the ruin they have made,
 Too late to build, too sad to sing.'²

An example of a poem of pure didacticism is the following:

Seldom 'can't,'
 Seldom 'don't,'
 Never 'shan't,'
 Never 'won't.'³

In addition there are poems to teach the children to add, to tell time, to make change, to learn the months of the year, to learn colors. There are poems to teach values such as the following:

A diamond or a coal?
 A diamond, if you please:
 Who cares about a clumsy coal
 Beneath the summer trees?

A diamond or a coal?
 A coal, sir, if you please:

¹Carlitz, op. cit., p. 539.

²"Hear What the Mournful Linnets Say," ll. 1-8, The Poetical Works, p. 427.

³"Seldom 'Can't,'" ll. 1-4, p. 431.

One comes to care about the coal,¹
 What time the waters freeze.

The companion poem to the above has advanced a bit beyond the general age level of the children for whom Sing-Song was intended originally because modern children have no conception of the use of a flint. "An Emerald Is as Green as Grass" is still a lovely poem, however:

An emerald is as green as grass;
 A ruby red as blood;
 A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
 A flint lies in the mud.

A diamond is a brilliant stone.
 To catch the world's desire;
 An opal holds a fiery spark;
 But a flint holds fire.²

There is that classic poem "The Mole and Earthworm" to teach the children that all must die and that rank and wealth are of no worth:

A handy Mole, who plied no shovel
 To excavate his vaulted hovel,
 While hard at work met in mid-furrow
 An Earthworm boring out his burrow.
 Our Mole had dined, and must grow thinner
 Therefore he gulped a second dinner,
 And on no other terms cared he
 To meet a Worm of low degree.
 The Mole turned-on his blindest eye,
 Passing that base mechanic by.
 The Worm, intrenched in actual blindness,
 Ignored or kindness or unkindness,
 Each wrought his own exclusive tunnel,
 To reach his own exclusive funnel.
 A plough, its flawless track pursuing,
 Involved them in one common ruin.

¹"A Diamond or A Coal," ll. 1-8, p. 438.

²Ll. 1-8, p. 438.

Where now the mine and counter-mine,
 The dined-on and the one to dine?
 The impartial ploughshare of extinction
 Annulled them all without distinction.¹

Garlitz says that Christina also had a Dickensian melodrama in her poetry speaking out against social problems. Since she worked at the Magdalene Home for Fallen Woman, she often confronted the problem of a woman deserted:²

Crying, my little one, footsore and weary?
 Fall asleep, pretty one, warm on my shoulder:
 I must tramp on through the winter night dreary,
 While the snow falls on me colder and colder.
 and
 You are my one, I have not another;
 Sleep soft, my darling, my trouble and treasure;
 Sleep warm and soft in the arms of your mother,
 Dreaming of pretty things, dreaming of
 pleasure.³

Poems on the death of children were also common in this era, and Christina Rossetti wrote often on the subject. An example of one is the following:

Baby lies so fast asleep
 That we cannot wake her:
 Will the Angels clad in white
 Fly from heaven to take her?

Baby lies so fast asleep
 That no pain can grieve her;
 With a snowdrop in her hand,
 Kiss her once and leave her.⁴

¹Ll. 1-20, p. 445.

²Op. cit., p. 541.

³"Crying My Little One," ll. 1-8, The Poetical Works, p. 428.

⁴"Baby Lies so Fast Asleep," ll. 1-8, p. 442.

Since the critics have heretofore failed to be aware of the kinship of Sing-Song with moral literature for children, perhaps this failure has been the cause of their opinions that the few poems about death were the result of morbidity and were of an extremely personal nature. This would, in turn, partly account for the accusation that everything Christina wrote was the result of a need for catharsis and a desire to write illness and depression out of her heart. It seems, however, that death was a standard subject for children's poetry, appealing as it did to the sentimentalism of their mothers.

Christina used stock themes for her children's poems, although of course her superior style, taste, and judgment greatly improved them. However, her volume ends with a refutation of the standard belief forwarded by the "Strive and Thrive"¹ school of children's poetry that if one will only try he cannot fail:

Swift and sure the swallow,
 Slow and sure the snail:
 Slow and sure may miss his way,
 Swift and sure may fail.²

This poem "abandons the optimistic maxims . . . for the somber realm of reality, for the personal inadequacies and the time and the chance that happen to all."³

¹According to Garlitz, A Moral Novel by Mary Howitt.

²"Swift and Sure the Swallow," ll. 1-4, The Poetical Works, p. 440.

³Garlitz, op. cit., p. 539.

Occasionally Christina Rossetti produced something which cannot under any circumstances be classed as a children's poem. Such a poem is "What Are They? Sea-Sand and Sorrow":

What are heavy? Sea-Sand and sorrow:
 What are brief? Today and tomorrow:
 What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth.
 What are deep? The ocean and truth.¹

This poem is perfect in its summation of the sadness and brevity of life, and as a result is anything but a children's poem, for a child could neither understand nor appreciate its beautiful simplicity. It has no title but needs none to present its simple yet beautiful message of universal appeal. Surely "'Good-bye in Fear, Good-bye in Sorrow,'" is equally beyond the comprehension of children and on a much too personal basis to be meant for them:

'Good-bye in fear, good-bye in sorrow,
 Goodbye, and all in vain,
 Never to meet again, my dear'--
 'Never to part again.'
 'Good-bye to-day, good-bye to-morrow,
 Good-bye till earth shall wane,
 Never to meet again, my dear'--
 'Never to part again.'²

The enigma of this poem will undoubtedly leave a questioning in the child's mind, but he will not trouble his mind about such a thing for long. The purpose of this is uncertain; the meaning is obscure; and the entire piece not meant for children.

¹Ll. 1-4, The Poetical Works, p. 440.

²Ll. 1-8, p. 441.

No discussion of the children's poems of Christina Rossetti would be complete without mentioning the poem which is the perfect synthesis of the three outstanding types of children's poems which Christina wrote. "Who Has Seen the Wind?" contains only eight lines, but it fascinates both children and adults. Little ones love to recite it because of its w and oo sounds. The passage of the wind is a familiar thing as well as their own presence in the poem, which excites them. On the other hand, the mystery of the invisibility of the wind excites them also:

Who has seen the wind?
 Neither I nor you:
 But when the leaves hang trembling
 The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
 Neither you nor I:
 But when the trees bow down their heads
 The wind is passing by.¹

In this chapter I have discussed the final type of poetry which Christina Rossetti composed. Her children's poetry is only a small volume, but it is approved and often required reading in English and American schools. As a result of the poetry discussed in this chapter, Christina Rossetti is a respected name in the field of children's verse. These poems are so universal in their appeal that we are forced to smile when we read the phrase "without

¹Ll. 1-8, p. 438.

permission" in the dedication in the front of the volume:

"Rhymes dedicated without permission to the baby who suggested them."¹

¹The Poetical Works, p. 426. The dedication of this book is to the nephew of Charles Bagot Cayley.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to show how the secular, religious, and children's poetry of Christina Rossetti was not the source of the self-regarding emotions of pity, fear, anger, and love. I have shown that critics have argued without success for a century over the condition of Christina's mind and spirit, as revealed in her poetry, because the only true source of her poetic inspiration was her own imagination. I have reviewed her life and shown that the experiences of which she speaks in her poetry did not happen to her in exactly the manner that she reported but were selected after contemplation as the most poetically useful. In many cases she changed the experience entirely; in even more she invented the story out of whole cloth.

Critics argue over points of source and inspiration, but as time goes on not one disagrees on the point that Christina Rossetti was a consummate artist. She was so artistic that her work appears to be casual and simple. The test of artistry is really how simple and sincere the artist can make his work. The trend in literary criticism today is to consider the form and style as well as the subject matter or source of inspiration, and Christina Rossetti's meets the modern artistic standards.

There is only one more question to ask before the conclusion of this paper can be reached: it is the question which was asked in the beginning and never successfully answered, for its answer lies with the reader of poetry. I have said that the reader can experience self-regarding emotions under the inspiration of the poetry of Christina Rossetti, or he can retain a required amount of psychological distance through Christina's own exercise of artistic control. The question is then as follows: Taken as a whole, does the poetry meet the essential requirement of poetry as set forth by William Wordsworth in his narrative poem, "Michael"? Does it lead the reader

. . . to feel
For passions that were not his own"?¹

If so, then it has accomplished the aim of all great poetry, and the problem of self-regarding emotions is present only for the reader and not for Christina Rossetti except through recollection, for Wordsworth says that no poet can create true art without emotion "recollected in tranquillity."² Winchester adds that no true art can be created in the presence of the self-regarding emotions: those emotions actually

¹ The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), ll, 30-1, p. 104.

² "Observations Prefixed to Lyrical Ballads," Criticism, the Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment collected Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1948).

felt in the act of creation.¹ My study has convinced me that she exercised her artistic control in the creation of psychical distance between herself and the art:

Christina had the faculty of seizing beautiful moments, exalted feelings, sublime emotions and working them up into limpid song that comes echoing to us from across soft seas. In all her lines there is a half-sobbing undertone--the sweet minor chord that is ever present in the songs of the Choir Invisible, whose music is the gladness as well as the sadness of the world.²

¹Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922), p. 63.

²Elbert Hubbard, "Christina Rossetti," Little Journeys to the Homes of Famous Women (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), p. 172.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS:

- Bald, Marjory A. "Christina Rossetti." Woman-Writers of the Nineteenth Century. Cambridge: University Press, 1923.
- Bell, H. T. Mackenzie. Christina Rossetti. A Biographical and Critical Study. London: Hurst and Blackett, Ltd., 1898.
- Beerbohm, Max. Rossetti and His Circle. London: W. Heinemann, 1922.
- Benson, Arthur Christopher. Rossetti. New York: Macmillan Co., 1904.
- Bickley, Francis L. The Pre-Raphaelite Comedy. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1933.
- Bowra, C. M. "Christina Rossetti." The Romantic Imagination. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949.
- Brooks, Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren. Understanding Poetry. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938.
- Burke, Kenneth. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Louisiana: State University Press, 1941.
- Cary, Elisabeth Luther. The Rossettis, Dante Gabriel and Christina. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1928.
- Clutton-Brock, Arthur. "Christina Rossetti." More Essays on Religion. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1928.
- De la Mare, Walter. "Christina Rossetti." Essays by Divers Hands. Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom. Ed. Walter de la Mare. London: Oxford University Press, 1926. Vol. VI.
- Ehrsam, T. G., Robert H. Deily, and R. M. Smith. Bibliographies of Twelve Victorian Authors. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1936.

- Einarson, Benedict, ed. and trans. Longinus on the Sublime. Chicago: Packard and Co., 1945.
- English Association. The Year's Work in English Studies. Vol. IV. Ed. for the English Association by Sir Sidney Lee and F. S. Boas. London: Oxford University Press, 1924.
- _____. The Year's Work in English Studies. Vols. XI, XII, XIII. Ed. for the English Association by F. S. Boas. London: Oxford University Press, 1930, 1931, 1932.
- Ford, Ford Madox. Memories and Impressions; A Study in Atmospheres. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911.
- Gaunt, William. The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy. London: Jonathan Cape, 1942.
- Gosse, Sir Edmund. "Christina Rossetti." Critical Kit-Kats. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.
- Gray, Nicolette Mary. Rossetti, Dante and Ourselves. London: Faber and Faber, [n. d.].
- Grierson, Sir H. J. C. and J. C. Smith. "The Pre-Raphaelite Group." Critical History of English Poetry. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.
- The Holy Bible. King James Version. New York: World Publishing Co. [n. d.].
- Hubbard, Elbert. "Christina Rossetti." East Aurora, New York: The Roycrofters.
- _____. "Christina Rossetti." Little Journeys to the Homes of Famous Women. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897.
- Hueffer, Ford Madox. "Christina Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelite Love." Ancient Lights and Certain New Reflections. London: Macmillan Company, 1911.
- Hunt, Violet. The Wife of Rossetti, Her Life and Death. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1932.
- Hunt, William Holman. Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. 2 Vols. London: Macmillan Co., 1905.

- Lucas, Frank Lawrence. Ten Victorian Poets. New York: Macmillan Co., 1948.
- Mabie, Hamilton Wright. Essays in Literary Interpretation. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1904.
- Mahood, M. M. "Two Anglican Poets." Poetry and Humanism. London: Jonathan Cape, 1950.
- Millett, F. B. Reading Poetry. New York: Harper Brothers, 1950.
- Moore, Virginia. "Christina Rossetti." Distinguished Women Writers. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., [n. d.].
- More, P. E. "Christina Rossetti." Shelbourne Essays. Third Series. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.
- Morse-Boycott, D. L. Lead, Kindly Light; Studies of Saints and Heroes of the Oxford Movement. New York: Macmillan Co., 1935.
- Reilly, J. J. "Christina Rossetti; Poet of Renunciation." Dear Prue's Husband. New York: Macmillan, 1932.
- Rickert, Edith. New Methods for the Study of Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927.
- Rossetti, Christina Georgina. Commonplace and Other Short Stories. London: F. S. Ellis, 1870.
- _____. The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti. London: Brown, Langham, and Co., 1898.
- _____. Goblin Market and Other Poems. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., [n. d.].
- _____. New Poems. Ed. by William Michael Rossetti. London: Macmillan Co., 1896.
- _____. A Pageant and Other Poems. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881.
- _____. The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti. Ed. with Memoir and Notes by William Michael Rossetti. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924.

- _____. The Prince's Progress and Other Poems. London: Macmillan and Co., 1866.
- _____. Sing-Song. A Nursery Rhymebook. New York: Macmillan and Co., 1924.
- _____. Speaking Likenesses. London: Macmillan and Co., 1874.
- Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters. Ed. with a memoir by William Michael Rossetti. 2 Vols. London: Ellis and Elvey, 1895.
- Rossetti, Maria F. A Shadow of Dante. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1910.
- Rossetti, William Michael, ed. Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1903.
- _____. Ruskin: Rossetti: Pre-Raphaelitism. Papers 1894 to 1862. London: George Allen, 1899.
- Saintsbury, George. Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism. (1780-1895). New York: Macmillan and Co., 1931.
- Schorer, Mark, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie, eds. Criticism. The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948.
- Shove, Frances. Christina Rossetti. Cambridge: University Press, 1930.
- Sitwell, Sacheverell. "The Three Phantoms of Miss Siddal." Dance of the Quick and the Dead. London: Faber and Faber, 1936.
- Smith, Logan Pearsall. On Reading Shakespeare. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1933.
- Starr, Nathan Comfort. The Dynamics of Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.
- Stuart, Dorothy Margaret. Christina Rossetti. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1930.
- Symons, Arthur. Studies in Two Literatures. London: Martin Secker, 1924.

- _____. "The Rossettis." Dramatic Personae. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1923.
- Thomas, Eleanor Walter. Christina Georgina Rossetti. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.
- Tinker, Chauncey Brewster. "The Amusing Pre-Raphaelites." Essays in Retrospect. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- Tuell, Anne Kimball. "Christina Rossetti." A Victorian at Bay. Boston: Marshall Jones Co., Inc., 1932.
- Walker, Hugh. The Literature of the Victorian Era. Cambridge: University Press, 1913.
- Welland, D. S. R. The Pre-Raphaelites in Literature and Art. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., [n. d.].
- Wells, H. W. New Poets from Old. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.
- Weygandt, Charles. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti." Time of Tennyson. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936.
- Winchester, C. T. Some Principles of Literary Criticisms. New York: Macmillan Co., 1922.
- Winwar, Frances. Poor Splendid Wings. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1933.
- Woolf, Virginia. "'I Am Christina Rossetti.'" The Common Reader. 1 Vol. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948.
- Wordsworth, William. "Observations Prefixed to 'Lyrical Ballads.'" Criticism, Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment. Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie, eds. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1948.
- _____. The Poetical Works of Wordsworth. Ernest de Selincourt, ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Zaturenska, Marya. Christina Rossetti: A Portrait with Background. New York: Macmillan, 1949.

ARTICLES:

- Bullough, Edward. "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle." Journal of Psychology, V (June, 1912), 87-118.
- Curti, Merle Eugene, ed. "A Letter of Christina Rossetti," Modern Language Notes, LI (November, 1936), 439-440.
- Dennett, J. R. "Miss Rossetti's Poems," The Nation, III (July 19, 1866), 47-48.
- Evans, B. Ifor. "The Sources of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market.'" Modern Language Review, XXVIII (April, 1933), 156-165.
- Freemantle, Anne. "Victorian Vignette." Commonweal, XLI (February 16, 1945), 441-443.
- Garlitz, Barbara. "Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song and Nineteenth-Century Children's Poetry." PMLA, LXX (June, 1955), 539-543.
- Hinkson, K. T. "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti." Bookman, I (February, 1895), 28-29.
- Hueffer, Ford Madox. "Christina Rossetti." Fortnightly Review, XCV (March, 1911), 422-429.
- Kent, Muriel. "Christina Rossetti: A Reconsideration." Contemporary Review, CXXXVIII (December, 1930), 759-767.
- Law, Alice. "The Poetry of Christina G. Rossetti," Westminster Review, CXLIII (January--June, 1895), 444-453.
- Lowther, George. "Christina Rossetti," Contemporary Review, CIV (November, 1913), 681-689.
- Maitland, Thomas. "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti," Contemporary Review, XVIII (October, 1871), 334-550.
- Mather, Frank Jewett, Jr. "The Rossettis," Bookman, XLIX (April, 1919), 139-147.

- Meynell, Alice. "Christina Rossetti," Littell's Living Age, CCIV (January, February, March, 1895), 569-572.
- Moore, Virginia. "Notes and Comments: Christina Rossetti's Centennial," Yale Review, XX (February, 1931), 428-432.
- More, Paul Elmer. "Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, XCIV (December, 1904), 815-821.
- Norton, Mrs. C. E. "'The Angel in the House' and 'The Goblin Market,'" Living Age, LXXIX (October, November, December, 1863), 124-129.
- Rudd, F. A. "Christina G. Rossetti," Catholic World, IV (March, 1867), 839-846.
- Sharp, William. "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Atlantic Monthly, LXXV (June, 1895), 736-749.
- Shipton, Irene A. M. "Christina Rossetti, The Poetess of the Oxford Movement," Church Quarterly Review, CXVI (July, 1933), 219-229.
- Sutherland, D. "Christina Rossetti," Literary World, XXVI (February 9, 1895), 40.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles. "New Year's Eve," Nineteenth Century, XXXVII (February, 1895), 367-368.
- Tynan, Katharine. "Santa Christina," Living Age, CCLXXII (February 17, 1912), 431-436.
- Watts, Theodore. "Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," Nineteenth Century, XXVII (February, 1895), 355-366.
- Waugh, Arthur. "Christina Rossetti, December 5, 1830; December 5, 1930," Nineteenth Century, CVIII (December, 1930), 787-798.
- Zabel, M. D. "Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson," Poetry, XXXVII (January, 1931), 213-216.