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DANTE GABRIEL AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: A PAIRING OF IDENTITIES

By Norman Kelvin

THE INTEREST OF THIS ESSAY will be, as far as possible without neglecting other issues, the pairing of brother and sister – of their minds, their sensibilities, their poetry, and indeed their practice of poetry and the visual arts. Thus I shall bring into view one meaning, among others, of intertextuality: the ways in which the works of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti inform, shape, quote, and reconfigure each other.

As Jerome McGann aptly notes, in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must Be Lost*, "the only adequate interpretation of a work of art is a responsive work of art" (21), and when we become aware of pairing within Christina's ouevre, and the obvious pairing within Dante Gabriel's, and at the same time seek to pair brother and sister, the mere listing of specific doublings becomes exponential. There is, to begin, D. G. Rossetti's well-known practice of writing sonnets for his pictures, and painting pictures for his sonnets, as well as confronting body and soul in his story "Hand and Soul." One could also, if reckless enough, collate and thus compare two or more versions of the same poem, because Gabriel continuously revised his own work. This is less true of Christina Rossetti, if we stick to printed versions of poems published in England, and this immediately contrasts brother and sister.

The largest issue, and the most controversial, in speaking of brother and sister, is Dante Gabriel's taking it on himself to recommend – even request – revisions of Christina's poetry as she was preparing it for publication. Whether this practice should be viewed as collaboration or as erasure of Christina's subjectivity as poet and person, is confronted head-on by Alison Chapman and, by implication, by Lynda Palazzo and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra in, respectively, The Afterlife of Christina Rossetti; Christina Rossetti's Feminist Theology; and Christina Rossetti and Illustration. Jan Marsh's earlier *Christina Rossetti*: A *Writer's Life*, though not under review here, has much to say on the issue and is so often cited as to establish its presence in the debate. For other reasons, so too is the presence of the first volume of Antony Harrison's *The Letters of Christina Rossetti,* and to a lesser extent Diane D'Amico's *Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time*.

In the pairing of Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, an appropriate beginning is to juxtapose their biographies. At the outset was the closeness of brother and sister as members of a closely knit family. As they got older their affection for each other and their loyalty remained constant, but their adult lives took on sharp differences only partially explained by Victorian constructions of masculinity and femininity. As the favored son, Dante Gabriel was permitted to study painting while the other children – William Michael and Maria, as

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well as Christina – were obliged to work to support the entire family when the health of the father, Gabriele, declined. But Christina was also a marriageable daughter, who, for reasons of religious differences, was deserted by one suitor and rejected a second. Given the precarious relations between Dante Gabriel and Elizabeth Siddal, the woman to whom he was vaguely engaged for ten years and to whom he was married for the last two years of her life, it seems marriage was perceived as perilous by both sister and brother.

A significant correspondence that gives way to divergence is their mutual absorption in the relation of matter and spirit. Both, in their poetry, see the material as emblematic of the spiritual. For Gabriel, much indebted to Dante, it is the beautiful woman who embodies the spiritual, the spiritual itself clearly defined as earthly love. For Christina, the material means, primarily, nature other than human nature – trees, flowers, animals. It may seem that a divergence between brother and sister is sited in this contrast, but it could be argued that both were indebted to the Romantics, who, taken together, broadly embraced the span from spiritualized human love to the location of the spiritual in rocks and rills and streams. But their divergence, on this level, is more significant. For Gabriel, the love inspired by the woman he sees as beautiful is consecrated as spiritual, but the spiritual has no meaning for him other than its embodiment in the woman. For Christina, the spiritual is God, the certainty that there is a realm beyond the material, in which indeed the spiritual is to be found by those who can read the material world correctly. Gabriel's spiritualized love is the result of a circular process: the love the woman inspires is inherently spiritual – like Dante encountering Beatrice, Gabriel experiences immediately the spiritual, in the material, when he loves; but for Gabriel the fulfilled love combines the erotic with the spiritual and remains forever dependent on the image and presence of the woman. The debt to Dante is itself curtailed: there is no realm for Gabriel beyond earth itself. For Christina, there is a realm – the ultimate reality – beyond earth. The spiritual, for her, does not turn back upon itself. The message she seeks to read in natural objects is the message of Christ; indeed, she seeks in flowers and animals the presence of the Divine Spirit. Christ is Christina's beloved, and she seeks to be loved by Christ in return, or, more precisely, since she sees herself as sinful and unworthy, to be received with the forgiveness that is part of Divine love.

It is not being arch to say that, in addition to his poems and paintings, the boudoir is the site of spiritual love for Gabriel. As for Christina, she seeks the spiritual in the privacy of her own room in her parents' house – her mother's after the death of Gabriele Rossetti in 1854, and in attendance at Christ Church in Albany Street and in works of charity. As for the privacy of her own room, she locked away in a box poems of religious doubt, so that her mother would not read them. Both Gabriel and Christina had their sensibility, to different degrees, shaped by Dante, since the father, Gabriele, spent his life searching for the key to the alleged presence of a political tract in Dante's work, but it is Gabriel who found his direct master in Dante, the poet of sublime faith that there is a realm beyond earth, while for Christina, the influence of the more liberal voices in the Tractarian Movement were more important in encouraging her to see the natural world as a symbolic showing forth of the goodness of God, of the immanent presence of Christ.

In the books reviewed here, these issues are touched on in varying degrees of frequency and with varying stress. Other purposes, themes, and conclusions are central for their authors or editors, and it is necessary to present them in their own terms. The first two volumes of the late William E. Fredeman's long-awaited edition of the correspondence of D. G. Rossetti are presented as a single unit under the heading "The Formative Years: 1835–1862:

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Charlotte Street to Cheyne Walk." It would require a separate essay to give the full story of how this edition was conceived and how it fared thereafter, but Fredeman's own "Introduction" provides a succinct and pointed summary. Under the sub-head "An Editorial Misadventure," written possibly in 1998 (Fredeman died in 1999), the "Introduction" begins: "The publication of these first two volumes . . . marks the culmination of an editorial hegira that began nearly 25 years ago. It was launched as a pair of 'Mack the Knife' reviews (a genre in which I have attained an altogether undeserved reputation) of the Doughty-Wahl edition of Rossetti's letters, published in four volumes (*sans* index), by Clarendon in 1965–67, in which I exposed the surprising lacunae of the edition, pointed to a few of the editorial shortcomings, and suggested that Clarendon might . . . consider publishing an 'Aladdin edition' offering new lamps for old. When . . . [I was] invited . . . to re-edit the letters in 1973 . . . I was too flattered to recognize the quagmire into which my enthusiasm and inexperience would lead me." Though the common hurdles could eventually be overcome, the "Introduction" continues, "Unanticipated obstacles . . . are something else, and . . . two proved almost insurmountable. The first was the revolution in computer and type technology that occurred . . . in the late 1970s . . . . Clarendon's original intention was to set the volumes by letter press, but by 1980, when the letters occupied some 8,000 pages of typescript, it became obvious that no publisher would print the letters from hard type . . . . Shortly thereafter the edition fell victim to press retrenchment and to my seeming dilatoriness." However, "complete conversion was finally achieved, but only at the cost of time-consuming reformatting to remove the last vestiges of several layers of shadow code embedded in the text." As for drawing on the Doughty-Wahl edition for "the basic research for factual and other information," thus avoiding duplication of effort, it "was too unreliable to risk using it as a source." The four volumes "constitute an editorial nightmare, containing every possible kind of error . . . mistranscriptions, misdating, and misprints . . . duplication of identical letters in two different volumes . . . and misidentification of recipients." Fredeman's "Introduction" asserts also that 3,500 letters were omitted, and it calls attention to the lack of an index to the four volumes (xv–xvii).

The justice of this condemnation, that is to say, the frequency with which these errors (and others Fredeman lists) occur, the reason or reasons that Doughty and Wahl may not have discovered any of the additional 3,500 letters located by Fredeman, and the reason why there is no index – surely the decision not to produce one was made by Clarendon – could be established only by collating the two editions (when the present one is completed) and by telling the painful Doughty-Wahl-Fredeman saga from at least one other perspective. At present, we can only be glad that an edition in which we can place confidence is under way, and, as a secondary matter, wait until someone has the zeal and purpose to compare the editions in detail.

A question we can raise now, with the first two volumes of Fredeman's impressive edition before us, is a perennial one and subject to more than one answer: How does an edition of letters relate to biography and autobiography? Arguably, every collection of correspondence to which an editor has provided an introduction and notes identifying recipients, persons mentioned in letters, and events public and private, is both an autobiography and a biography. The letters, if they were published without any editorial intervention at all, would constitute an incipient autobiography. And their significance as such is never erased. But the adding of an editorial apparatus immediately redirects the collection toward the genre of biography. In fact, there are editions in which the letters are embedded in a running editorial

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narrative, and the difference between these and works known as biographies is a matter of proportion – the varying amount of space devoted to presentation of the letters and to commentary upon them, the weighing of their significance in the narrative of the letter-writer's life and works.

If the question had never before been raised, the first two volumes of Fredeman's edition would force it into existence. All that prevents us from reading the volumes as a competition between the materials for Rossetti's autobiography and an imperative urge by the editor to overwhelm them and produce a biography is Fredeman's consistent goal, which is, simply, to serve whoever makes use of the edition, so that, despite the most elaborate apparatus this reviewer has ever seen in an edition of Victorian letters, we never *do* feel that Fredeman's voice is competing with Rossetti's. Volume I begins – after sixty-two pages of front material – with the heading "1835–1847," followed by a sub-head "Major Works of the Early Years"; and the information is further divided into "Literary" and "Artistic." We are then given a brief "Summary of the Years' Letters." This is followed by a chronology of "The Early Years 1828–1847," The letters themselves begin with a notation, such as "35.1," indicating that we are reading the first letter dated 1835, and so on to "54.66," the last letter written in 1854 that is included in the edition. The letters themselves are presented in clear text, and idiosyncrasies of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization – if there are any in the holographs – have been silently erased. This is in keeping with an assertion by Fredeman, in discussing his editorial principles, that he will not attempt to approximate a facsimile or produce a diplomatic edition. The annotations, as might be expected, are as thorough as Fredeman's extraordinary purposefulness and quest for completion can produce. The letters for each year are prefaced by the same kind of material that introduces the first year. The "Biographical and Analytic Index," at the end of the second volume, runs to nearly one hundred double-column pages.

To break the bibliographic spell I have inadvertently created, I have to confess that it is painful to think of Fredeman's undertaking. There are another 20 years of letters needed to bring us to the end of Rossetti's life. As to what we may expect, we are informed, under a sub-head in the "Introduction" titled "Description and Statistical Survey of the Edition" (followed by the further division "Overview") that "the Correspondence will appear in three sets of letter volumes; each terminating in a crisis year, or turning point, in Rossetti's life. . . ." The present set, *The Formative Years*, culminates "in the death of Elizabeth Siddal and [Rossetti's] removal to 16 Cheyne Walk, his last permanent residence; Volumes 3 to 5: *The Chelsea Years*: *Prelude to Crisis* (1863–1872) will end with his breakdown and attempted suicide following Buchanan's attack in *The Fleshly School of Poetry*; and Volumes 6–9: *The Last Decade:Kelmscott to Birchington* (1873–1882) will conclude with his letter dictated four days before his death." Thus, we may expect, in connection with the seven projected volumes, at least two more internal indexes, each 100 or more pages in length, and it is a fair guess that if Fredeman had lived to see the edition completed there would have been a cumulative one.

I have room to allude only briefly to the letters themselves, and my impression is that the most full and moving narrative contained in the correspondence tells the story of Gabriel and Elizabeth Siddal, from Gabriel's apparently happy, playful admonition to Christina that she must not try to rival "The Sid" in poetic achievement to his efforts to respond to the many condolences that poured in when his wife died. The split between his private and public self becomes apparent at the time of the tragedy. On the one hand, his acknowledgments of sympathy were as responsive and aware of the recipients as possible under the turmoil of guilt

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and remorse that beset him. On the other, he fled immediately, after Lizzie was found dead, to his parents' home for shelter and acceptance. One need not speak clumsily and unfeelingly about a return to the womb. It is enough to note that it was not to friends to whom Rossetti, constructed by some twentieth-century critics as a prototype of the counter-culture figures of the 1960s, went for help. It was to his mother and his sister, to the domestic scene, the site of family affection, where he knew he would receive support and would not be judged.

Much else abounds, of course, in the 800 letters that comprise the two volumes. From the beginning, what comes through most of all is a young man of total confidence in his dealings with others – with friends, acquaintances, patrons and the publisher Alexander Macmillan. Supported by his family, as Fredeman's notes tell us, Gabriel moves through early training in art, joining Ford Madox Brown as his student. He then became the leading figure in the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He developed close relations with Ruskin, who also became Elizabeth Siddal's patron. When Effie Gray deserted Ruskin and petitioned for an annulment of their marriage, Gabriel, in writing to friends about the scandal, was worldly-wise yet sober and even sympathetic to Ruskin. The letters record also Gabriel's prolonged and eventually successful efforts to complete, organize, and publish his translations of *The Early Italian Poets* (1861), his first book-length work. His dependence on family shows even here, as with the lack of confidence characteristic when he discussed his work, he submitted his translations to William Michael with a plea that the latter read them and revise them if need be (William Michael did). And finally, the letters tell us of his helping – or commandeering – the effort to place Christina Rossetti's first book of poems with Macmillan. These are not the letters of a person turned inward. Despite the many expressions, direct or indirect, of doubt about his own abilities, he wanted the world to take notice of him; and his letters, amplified by Fredeman's notes, let us know that it did.

Fredeman's edition may discourage the writing of any further conventional biographies of Rossetti, since its extraordinary apparatus includes all but the connective narration that one expects in a biography. What is left, assuming the edition will reach completion, is space for new readings of Rossetti's poetry, prose, and paintings as well as for a new edition of his poetry and prose. In two recent works, Jerome McGann has provided us with both: *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must b*e *Lost* (2000) and *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Poetry and Prose* (2003).

What is always a source of pleasure in McGann's discussions of Rossetti is his original, confident locating of Rossetti in a context of Modernism – of early twentieth-century poetry and painting – as an imperative presence, reminding us that when we read Rossetti we must historicize ourselves as readers shaped by the twentieth century and historicize Rossetti's works, reading and seeing them against those of early Modern writers and painters whose dictum was "make it new."

A few pages into his book McGann establishes the "inner standing point" – a term taken from Rossetti and applied to him – that will govern his interpretation: Rossetti uses the term in "The Stealthy School of Criticism," a rejoinder to Buchanan's attack in "The Fleshly School of Poetry." Defending his poem "Jenny," and using the term "treatment from without" to characterize what Buchanan wanted, Rossetti writes: "I [did not] omit to consider how far a treatment from without might here [in writing "Jenny"] be possible. But motive powers of art reverse the requirement of science, and demand first of all an *inner* standing-point. The heart of such a mystery can only be plucked from the world in which it beats and bleeds,

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and the beauty and pity can come with full force only from the mouth of one alive to its whole appeal, such as the speaker put forth in the poem" (McGann 2003: 337–38). McGann amplifies the term and frees it from its single context, writing that Rossetti "cultivated an art of the inner standing point, where the acts of the artist – poet or painter – are as much the subject under study as any of its manifest, referential forms" (152).

This theme is frequently alluded to in the book, but the desire to test and clarify Rossetti against Modernist conceptions requires a move in another direction: "The extreme artifice of . . . Rossetti's style, grounded in imitation and pastiche, was rejected in the Modernist verse horizon as merely mannered," McGann writes (5). Turning to what Rossetti *is*, leaving aside for the moment what he is not, McGann continues: "If Rossetti, like Duchamps, is primarily a conceptual artist, his proper subject is the cognitive nature of immediated sensual perception" (7). "Immediated sensual perception" is clearly that which is made available by Rossetti's inner standing point, but, McGann reminds us, the "inner standing point" is, in the first place, a concept – a verbal articulation by Rossetti of what the experience of creating a poem or painting is like, and thus an idea or concept accessible to the reader of the essay in which he employs it.

An invitation to explore a whole new world of meaning is part of McGann's assessment of Rossetti as a writer of political poems: "Consider the epochal political year, 1848. The February Revolution sends its tremors across Europe, even across the Atlantic. Emerson and Clough leave their comfortable situations and go to Paris in the fall to witness the momentous events first-hand. That same year – as everyone who knows Rossetti knows – brings an *annus mirabilis* in his imaginative life. But the events in France and Europe do not draw. . .the passion of his mind . . . . He writes two sonnets about the revolutions of 1848, both skeptical . . . ." (9). This is an invitation to ask why the Revolutions of 1848 did not ignite revolutionary passions in England in general, and McGann's observation suggests the ways in which Rossetti was like, rather than unlike, the vast number of his British contemporaries. The Englishness in Rossetti's complex being is particularly noticeable when we contrast his virtual silence in 1848 with his passionate commitment to Italian poetry; and when we recall that Italy was one of the major sites of the revolutions. But Rossetti's Englishness is not the subject of McGann's book.

It is with the question of Rossetti and politics on hold, that McGann returns – brilliantly – to locating Rossetti in a site defined by Modernism. Speaking of Rossetti's painting and his poetry, McGann writes that the pictures titled *Fazio's Mistress, Mona Vanna*, and *Lady Lilith* (1863–68) can all be usefully compared with Manet's *Olympia* (1863–65). "Whereas Monet's treatment of the Venetian style is ironical and self-consciously 'modern,' there is no irony in Rossetti's pictures . . . . A painting like *Fazio's Mistress* is more an artifice of absorption – almost an act of magic, like a Joseph Cornell collage – than a bold play of conscious wit. Such pictures operate as machines of desire. They come to realize a space extending beyond the picture's framed locality, a space which, if entered, 'vivifies' all within it according to the one law of desire, dialectical exchange." In this context, McGann quotes the first four lines of "Life-in-Love":

> Not in thy body is thy life at all
> But in this lady's lips and hands and eyes;
> Through these she yields thee life that vivifies
> What else were sorrow's servant and death's thrall. (20–21)

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McGann's gloss of these lines leads to one of the main themes of his book, and indeed of Rossetti's life and work: "Life in Love is an action . . . and it is marked by embodied transfers of care and attention. Imagined in purely aesthetic terms, it appears as Rossetti's 'double work of art': the creation of a poem to accompany and 'interpret' a picture, the creation of a picture to re-realize a poem" (21).

The theme of the "double work of art" informs McGann's entire book, and it informs Rossetti's life and work, both deliberately and in ways Rossetti did not himself see as continuous with those he contrived. I am simply extending this insight when I say that the theme of pairing – including the pairing of Gabriel's life and work with Christina's – shapes his art and the complex brother-sister, artist/artist life-narrative that accompanies it.

But to focus for a moment on McGann's own theme, it is necessary to start with the crucial significance he attributes to Pater's essays, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti" and "Aesthetic Poetry," as well as to the "Conclusion" of the *Renaissance:* "Rossetti's doubled pursuit of poetry and painting becomes for Pater an emblem of [the] 'new school' of artistic practice, the Aesthetics, whose leading idea was to overthrow the 'Manichean opposition of spirit and matter.' 'As with Dante,' Pater says, in 'Rossetti,' 'the material and the spiritual are fused and blent"' (145). McGann continues: "We must not forget that Pater [set out] to explain the relation of art and philosophy, and to suggest how Rossetti's 'new school' had renovated the understanding of that relation." Pater's fundamental idea is 'that philosophy will serve culture to the extent that it can function as art' . . . . [The] Paterian texts show how well he understood the importance – for philosophy as well as for art – of working from what Rossetti called 'an inner standing-point.' Pater's 'philosophy of experience' is a conceptual translation . . . of Rossetti's artistic practice" (146).

McGann reproduces Rossetti's infamous (to some) sonnet "Nuptial Sleep," which is "about making love," and continues: This sonnet "is a model, even an exegesis, of what happens in Rosseti's portraits . . . . In those unforgotten, unforgettable faces (of Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris), a disturbing male gaze turns to look back at itself, at us, men and women both" (153–54). Thus it is we – the modern viewer and reader – whom McGann, in this culminating vision of doubling, sees as playing the role of the opposite presence: "Through the distorted lens of Rossetti's erotic fantasies . . . we yet perceive loved and loveable forms of a human world that . . . this art . . . has at once baffled and pursued. The candor of this game of loss is Rossetti's preserve of knowledge and its broken remains" (154). McGann continues: "Rossetti's whole career was an effort to put the artist's work 'at the service of mind.' Rossetti's . . . portraits of ladies are mirrors of a transcendental Venus and of the higher order she embodies" (156). McGann calls our attention to the fact that *The Blessed Damozel,* as well as other Rossetti paintings, creates "contrasting representations of space both to make an argument about the intelligence of art and to fashion a form of transcendental belief." And as for the later dream of the "Intelligence of Love," Dante's avowal in *La Vita Nuova,* it "was perhaps most completely realized in the astonishing *Astarte Syriaca,* a dream of knowledge that would be open, shameless, and –consequently – forbidden" (156–157). This is a culminating and explanatory reference to "the game that must be lost." McGann has, in his conclusion, brought us face to face, so to speak, with Rossetti's love for Jane Morris: *Astarte Syriaca* is her portrait, just as *Boca Bacciata* is a portrait of Fanny Cornforth, "a beautiful cook [Rossetti] met on the street" (154).

Hidden in all this are other games that must be lost and that come to light when we note that McGann, if only for rhetorical reasons, has paired Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris, and,

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when we add, somewhat asymmetrically, Lizzie Siddal, portrayed as *Beata Beatrix,* Dante's Beatrice, rather than as an image of sensuality; and note that Lizzie stands between Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris. It is asymmetrical because Fanny Cornforth was Rossetti's model and mistress while Lizzie still lived, and a cause of Rossetti's collapse into grief-ridden guilt when Lizzie died of an overdose of laudanum in 1862; and Jane Morris succeeded both Fanny and Lizzie. With Fanny, Rossetti betrayed his wife – a game that was lost tragically. With Jane Morris he betrayed a male friend – her husband William Morris. That Jane Morris is on record as having said she never loved her husband may have mitigated Rossetti's feelings in playing the role in their lives that he did, but could not, with his immersion in the forbidden, help stabilize a mind and temperament burdened with the ever-present memory of his own behavior in the months before Lizzie's death. Indeed, the largest game of all that Rossetti lost was the game of life. His love had to be pursued on a precipice. We are confronted by a final pairing in which each of the constituents is unstable – the art that never realized his dream of perfectly embodying the sensual and the spiritual; and his impossible loves: Fanny Cornforth, the cook met on the street; Jane Morris, whose beginnings were humble enough (she was the daughter of an Oxford stable hand); and Lizzie Siddal, an employee in a dress maker's shop who, under Rossetti's tutelage, became an adept visual artist and poet, and who completes the trio of working-class women in whom Rossetti saw beauty of body and spirit combined. It is tempting to say that here too, we have a pairing – the working-class origin of the beloved woman as the fixed leg of a compass, with no apologies to Donne, and the radically different kinds of temperament and beauty that distinguished each woman from the other two.

In *The House of Life,* a collection of sonnets that was to be a life-long work, there was, we know, room for both Lizzie Siddal and Jane Morris. But these sonnets, written at different times as "portraits" of each, were to prove as unstable as his relations with the women who inspired them. They underwent continuous revision and reorganization within the work itself; and had Rossetti not died at the age of 54, he undoubtedly would have made further additions and changes. *The House of Life* becomes a double entity – a quest on Rossetti's part that was never completed; and an option for the reader to choose, however contingently, a finite version. We can stop time, say *this* is a version of a poem in *The House of Life* I choose to read, even as Rossetti, the lover, the artist, and the dreamer never could – cut off, rather than stopped, by death. It is possible for us to read a finite text, like McGann's own edition of Rossetti's *Collected Poetry and Prose.* If there is a game here, it is one in which, fortunately for the reader, winning or losing is not the issue. The simple pleasure we take from art – from Rossetti's poetry and prose – is self-validating.

McGann's edition of *The Collected Poetry and Prose of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* appeared in 2003. To speak first of its organization is to admire the intelligent and imaginative arrangement of the contents. After a lucid introduction, which gives us the life, Rossetti's theory of art, and an illuminating discussion of individual poems and paintings, the poetry and prose are presented in eight sections. This organization is the syntax of a statement McGann is making concerning his reading and understanding of Rossetti's life work. The eight sections are these: *Poems* (1870, 1881); *The House of Life* (1870, 1881); *Sonnets for Pictures and Other Sonnets* (1850, 1870, 1881); *Ballads and Lyrics* (1881); *The Early Italian Poets* (1861, 1874); *Other Translations; Prose;* and *Posthumously Published and Uncollected Writings.*

The texts, McGann tells us, were "prepared from the scholarly texts of the *Rossetti Archive,*" and "I have here chosen texts that in my judgment are the best 'reading' texts from those . . . in the archive" (xxviii). The notes for each work allow us to travel to the point where

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the decision to name a version as "reading text" was made, as well as giving us the impressive scholarship that explains in detail the existing versions, the meaning of the titles of poems, and other insights that let us know McGann's critical perception is very much present in writing annotations.

It is useful, next, to note the emphases that the book's organization creates. *The House of Life,* actually a part of *Poems* 1870 and the enlarged edition of 1881, is given its separate identity because of its central importance to Rossetti. It is sufficiently complex as well to stand alone as an aesthetic achievement. Starting in 1847, Rossetti was "revising it until its latest lifetime publication in the *Poems and Ballads* of 1881" (386), and as I have said, it is plausible to think he would have continued to do so had he lived beyond 1882.

In giving prominence to *The House of Life*, McGann has early established the tragic, unfulfilled quest for love as the union of the flesh and the soul that characterized Rossetti's life as much as it did his art. "The ambiguities (in the work as a whole) pivot around Rossetti's complex love commitments to the memory of Elizabeth Siddal, and to Jane Morris, with whom he fell in love in the 1850s" (386). Thus the love of two women structures this central work. Although Elizabeth Siddal and Jane Morris are paired only in the sense that one is memory and the other living, memory is a palpable presence, equal in vividness to the image of the living woman.

The nearly equal prominence McGann gives to *Sonnets for Pictures* continues to present Rossetti's way of introducing pairs and then creating an expanding circle of paired objects or persons – in this case, poems and paintings. Consider the sonnet "Astarte Syriaca." Written to accompany the picture, it is a portrait of Jane Morris, one of the sensuous portraits of women that succeeded paintings and drawings on Dantean and Arthurian themes. It is the fullest realization of the theme announced as early as 1850 in the *Germ,* in Rossetti's story "Hand and Soul" – the artist's performative act of intellect. In the *Germ* appeared also (for the first of many times) "The Blessed Damozel," a poem for which a painting followed. The juxtaposition of the two poems and two paintings reveals a multiplying of pairings. *The Blessed Damozel*, not painted until 1875–78, is less sensuous than the poem that preceded it. In the painting it is not obvious that the damozel's bosom warms the gold bar of heaven, and though the face is earthly enough, it is counterpointed by the three angels in the lower half of the painting. "Astarte Syriaca," by contrast, has nothing of the Christian heaven in it, as why should it? The poem apostrophizes the female figure as "Mystery; lo! betwixt the sun and moon/Astarte of the Syrians: Venus Queen/Ere Aphrodite was . . . ." There are sensuous lines in the sonnet, to be sure. The figure is "Beauty's face to be: That face, of Love's all penetrative spell/Amulet, talisman, and oracle, – Betwixt the sun and moon a mystery." But the shift away from an earlier focus on her body ("Her twofold girdle clasps the infinite boon/Of bliss whereof the heaven and earth commune") ends by leaving the earth altogether (she is betwixt the sun and moon.). In both pairs, we are witnessing a dialogue between painting and poem, but the outcome is different in each. In the painting that later follows the poem (*The Blessed Damozel*), an image gives equal weight to heaven and earth, but keeps them separately present. In "Astarte Syriaca," a poem written just after Rossetti had presented in the painting by that name the unreserved sensuality of the female figure –perhaps the most sensual of Rossetti's portraits of women – the sensuality is distilled off by the relocating of the figure *beyond* Earth. The two sets of a painting and a poem face each other and demonstrate between them how unstable, how uneasy Rossetti was, in representing body and spirit. The two pairs in this respect are typical. Throughout his life work, Rossetti

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searched for a stability that he never reached. As McGann has put it, he performed in a game that must be lost.

It would be aestheticizing biography to use the same terms to pair Gabriel and Christina Rossetti. In any event, my first interest here is to speak of recent scholarship and criticism that have restored Christina to her rightful place as a major Victorian poet. My second is to pair her with D. G. Rossetti.

Antony Harrison's edition of Christina Rossetti's *Letters* is so different from Fredeman's of her brother's as to belong almost in a different genre. Fredeman's is in all but name a species of biography, while Harrison's is unequivocally a collection of letters. The apparatus for the most recently published volume (3 [1882–86]) includes, along with a list of necessary abbreviations, an Introduction and a succinct chronology of the years of Christina's life, as well as an index of recipients and a general index. The annotations are, for the most part, brief; and directions for finding further information are given under "Editorial Procedures," a part of the front material.

There is something poignant in the bracketing of the letters between 1882 and 1886. The first year is that of Dante Gabriel's death and the last, that of her mother, Frances Lavinia Polidori Rossetti. Christina, in the years covered in this volume, lost her first companion and collaborator in her quest for success as a poet and the mother who, after her father Gabriele died in 1854, became the most important person in her life. It was in the family home that Christina lived, and it was there, too, that she conducted a silent dialogue with her mother, in addition to a freely open one. For both, Christianity as defined by the Tractarian Movement was a source of certainty that Christ was their savior, that heaven existed, and that there was comfort and joy in accepting these beliefs. But Christina, in the privacy of her room, wrote poems expressing doubt. The dialogue was between her mother's unqualified faith and Christina's quest for confirmation of her own faith.

Christina, however, was also much engaged with society. Anyone acquainted with her life history knows of her work with prostitutes in the Highgate Penitentiary, her opposition to vivisection and her asking friends to sign a petition to Parliament in support of a bill to ban it, and her campaigning in favor of the bill to raise the age of consent. Also, in 1882, when news of the British suppression of a revolt in Egypt led William Michael Rossetti to write to their mother that his income tax had been increased "for the valued privilege of murdering Egyptians," Christina wrote: "How willingly would I *incur* income tax for the sake of *not* murdering Egyptians or any one else: and our mother would I am sure double or triple hers for the same object" (*Letters* 3: 52. CR to WMR, July 26, 1882). The letter is often cited as one of her few direct comments on Imperialism, and it is also a glimpse of the closeness between mother and daughter, as much as it is anything else.

The years covered in Volume 3 of the *Letters* are also those in which Christina hoped to write for the *Eminent Women* series a biography of Adelaide Proctor, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, or Ann Radcliffe. Although nothing came of the project, it occasioned brisk correspondence that shows her eagerness to be a published writer of prose, as well as of poetry. Perhaps the most important event of these years, other than the two deaths, was the publication of two of her devotional works, *Letter and Spirit: Notes on the Commandments* in 1883, and *Time Flies, A Reading Diary* in 1885, both issued by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. In a letter to Frederick Shields, April 1885, she speaks of *Time Flies*, and of Shields's plan to provide a cover design, which illness prevented him from doing: "Pray do not bestow another thought on the beautiful work you meant to do for me . . . . Will you

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write to Mr. McClure [her editor at the S. P. C. K.] or shall I? My book must trust for success to its inner graces and not to the mantle of your name and fame." And indeed, Christina Rossetti's devotional works *were* successful, an important matter in any overall view of her life and work. Withal, the letters in Volume 3 are written by a woman who is gracious, politic when necessary, active in causes in which she believes, warm and loving toward family and friends, and, despite demurrals, confident of her literary gifts.

It is a different Christina Rossetti – or a different reading of the life and work –that informs Alison Chapman's *The Afterlife of Christina Rossetti*. The book is a recuperation of the life and work of Christina Rossetti, and as such it is, at times, at variance with the impression I formed in reading the letters, for in them I consistently find a strong, independent figure. Chapman early defines her feminist approach and indicates the reading it makes available. At a tangent to my reference to Christina's concealing from her mother poems that expressed religious doubt, Chapman expands the view and gives concealment itself a large – even symbolic – significance: "Ironically," Chapman writes, "the attempt to preserve her privacy by the withholding from publication of anything that might be read as a comment upon her personal life, and her anxious destruction of family correspondence, served to bolster her image as the superlatively feminine, an image produced by the sentimental tradition that interpreted women's poetry as autobiographical writing. Deleting the personal . . . did the very reverse of protecting her identity from the voyeuristic gaze of her readership" (11). This is one meaning of Christina's afterlife. More on the same subject is developed when Chapman comments on Christina's early story, "Maude." At the request of the dying Maude, her cousin Agnes "does not open and read the contents of the locked book she finds [but] we know from the beginning of the story that it contains a mixture of diary entries, extracts, and Maude's poetry – all not intended for public consumption." And "Agnes's act of placing the manuscript in Maude's coffin uncannily prefigures D. G. Rossetti's . . . seal[ing] his poetry manuscript in his wife Lizzie Siddal's coffin, full of remorse and guilt for her death." Moreover, "by burning the manuscripts . . . and burying the locked book with Maude, Agnes performs literally what the narrative does rhetorically: an erasure of the personal" (13).

An important concern of Chapman's is the "recovery of lost voices," the subject of Chapter 2. In a quite brilliant way, Chapman locates her own feminist discussion in a context of New Historicism, Freudianism, and deconstruction. She begins by quoting from Rossetti's *Time Flies, A Reading Diary* (1885): "The voice is inseparable from the person to whom it belongs. The voice which charms one generation is inaccessible to the next. Words cannot describe it, notes cannot register it; it remains as a tradition, it lingers only as a regret" (28). Chapman then shifts the focus somewhat: "In the collapse of woman into experience – into text, which categorized nineteenth-century notions of female creativity, the voice is taken to be the pure expression of the poetess, directly associating lyric cries with the author. Late nineteenth-century representations of Christina Rossetti frequently invoke her lyric voice as an index of the historical personage" (37). And concerned as she is with loss, erasure, and a clear understanding of what it is that needs to be recovered, Chapman ends her discussion of "lost voices" by offering the classroom, with the implied act of writing, as a site for further exploration of the problem: "[A]wareness in academic discourse and in classroom discussion, should fall upon the act of critical writing . . . as a part of the process of reading other-wise, as a confrontation and communication with the other which refuses to master or exorcise dead voices or textual traces." This would "open opportunities for . . . exploring the critical voice as one that intertwines presence and loss in its engagement with the text." With Christina

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Rossetti and her poetry understood as a focus, Chapman concludes: “[We] must resist trying to master and stabilize the other, and instead listen to its voice as one inhabiting our reading and our writing and that tells us what representation leaves behind” (44–45).

At times Chapman succeeds admirably in turning her theory into praxis, as in her discussion of *Goblin Market*. She begins by quoting the following lines (ll. 310–16):

> Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
> But feared to pay too dear.
> She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
> Who should have been a bride:
> But who for joys brides hope to have
> Fell sick and died
> In her gay prime. (148)

“It is clear from the poem that Jeanie is both a prostitute and a consumptive,” Chapman writes. “Jeanie is a victim of the multiple meanings of consumption: tuberculosis, fallenness, and commodification. But as a result Jeanie is also a compelling figure for the oscillation of the fallen woman’s femininity across the boundaries of the separate spheres, and an oscillation that is dangerously transgressive, and also a figure for the authorial signature rhetorically linked as woman poet to the fallen woman” (148). Chapman touches on a major theme of my review-article – pairing and doubleness, in which the pairing of Christina and D. G. Rossetti is the largest and most significant of all: “‘Goblin Market’ dramatizes these issues of influence, agency, and transgression as it engages in its textual consumption of its literary other. Jeanie is related to D. G Rossetti’s ‘Jenny’ . . . . Jenny is either asleep or on the point of sleep (significantly, her exact state of consciousness is difficult to determine), and the speaker establishes his interior monologue upon her absence and reassuring otherness, so that he can even read her thoughts: ‘Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams.’ . . . [But] the prostitute is also . . . the speaker’s ‘monstrous double,’ for his status as a writer is figured in the poem as analogous to Jenny’s profession” (148–49). Jenny is thus a threat, and “it is inscribed and held by virtue of a reflexive doubling within her figure: she is both an object and a sign for the feminine subject subsumed by the text” (149). Chapman continues, “Jeanie also represents the elided history of literary production behind ‘Goblin Market’; that is, the text’s commerce with D. G. Rossetti’s poem . . . as well as his influence in the shaping of [‘Goblin Market’], for he had urged a change of title and the removal of the dedication to her sister Maria, thus removing reference to a female literary genealogy” (149).

Near the conclusion of her reading of “Goblin Market,” Chapman writes: “In the model of literary influence suggested by D. G. Rossetti’s relationship with his sister . . . the precursor is the other that threatens to consume the subject . . . . Jeanie’s presence-in-absence represents the abject position; she has been seduced into becoming a commodity (or a ‘nobody’) by the goblin-market and through literary influence, for Jeanie figures as a metonymy for the textual precursor of ‘Goblin Market,’ the poem ‘Jenny,’ which in turn signifies the author who revises, or consumes, the *Goblin Market* volume. And yet Jeanie is also remembered and serves as a warning, and thus is given an agency as the precursor. Jeanie’s namesake, Jenny, also resists wholly losing her agency and autonomy, and the memory of Jeanie/Jenny inspires Lizzie to overcome the threat of the goblins and their wares. Thus, as the figure of literary influence, Jeanie suggests the horror and necessity of engaging with a textual other,

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which both establishes literary identity and also threatens to overwhelm it. Jeanie as the abject signifies the unstable doubleness of the intertextual engagement" (151–52).

Chapman's reading of "Goblin Market" certainly breaks new ground. Yet, though her references to ambiguity and the unstable doubleness of the intertextual engagement can lead us down many roads, there is one of less interest to her that I think is worth exploring. It is true that D. G. Rossetti's insistence that Christina change the title and remove the dedication to Maria erases part of her identity. But the body of the poem remains essentially as she wrote it. More problematic, the afterlife of "Goblin Market" registers an incredible range of interpretation. The poem was reinvented in the twentieth century as a children's classic and years later as a pornographic text in the pages of *Playboy.* As a result of this multiplying of its status as a commodity, Christina Rossetti is indeed erased. Yet one very literal meaning of the text's afterlife, starting at the moment of its completion and publication, is its commercial success. It was immediately popular, both in England and America. And of interest here, it was issued eight years before the publication of D. G. Rossetti's first collection of original writing, the *Poems* of 1870. It is true that as Christina began her career as a poet, her brother moved to take charge (making more changes in some of her poems than he did in "Goblin Market") and took it upon himself to write to Alexander Macmillan to recommend he publish *Goblin Market and Other Poems*. But if Christina's letters to her brother provide a valid parallel intertextuality, the reading is ambiguous enough. At first she accepted Gabriel's initiating discussion with Macmillan but later let her brother know she would take charge of negotiations herself. Moreover, she was gratified by D. G. Rossetti's woodcuts for the first edition, and firmly disapproved of subsequent illustrations for further editions published during her lifetime. And in doing this, in her later years, she appears as the autonomous author. If nothing else were germaine, the intertexuality set up by Christina's text and her brother's woodcuts asks that we speak of pairing – of text and of autonomous selves. As a coda, it is worth noting that "Goblin Market" has, in its multiple textual conditions, sold more copies than of all D. G. Rossetti's poems together; and is better know, though – and this supports Chapman – Christina appears and disappears at various points in this long history of *Goblin Market.* As for the doubling with "Jenny," the agency Chapman notes in Jeanie – its success in saving Laura through Lizzie – suggests that in some way "Goblin Market" is stronger than its precursor. None of this counters the essential truth of Chapman's reading, but it indicates that her own terms – ambiguity and intertextual doubleness open – more avenues for exploration than can be encompassed in any one reading.

Lynda Palazzo's *Christina Rossetti's Feminist Theology* supplements, augments, and eventually parts company with Chapman's book. To begin at the beginning, I quote the first paragraph of Palazzo's "Preface": "Christina Rossetti published six volumes of devotional prose . . . beginning with a prayer book, *Annus Domini,* and ending with . . . *The Face of the Deep* . . . [a] commentary on the Book of Revelation," and "these were very popular in her day and widely used even by the clergy." Palazzo argues that until recently Christina's devotional works have been neglected; and still to be done is to revalue them as theology, not continue to use them simply as a "gloss to her poetry" (ix). The six works are *Annus Domini* (1874), *Seek and Find* (1879),*Called to be Saints* (1881), *Letter and Spirit* (1883), *Time Flies* (1885), and *The Face of the Deep* (1892).

Palazzo's book succeeds in reorienting our view of Rossetti's career as a writer and our interest in it. The publication dates of the six works make clear that the writing of them spanned the better part of her career. Their popularity ought to cause us, if our predominant

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way of locating her is to see her first as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, to alter our view. Palazzo returns us to Christina's biography to note that the church she and her mother regularly attended, Christ Church in Albany Street, was an active Tractarian parish, under a "fervent disciple of Pusey, the Rev. [Charles]Dodgson" (3). This is important because Pusey had proclaimed the sinfulness of Eve as a burden passed on to all women, and Christina's response to such a doctrine was bound to figure as doubled anguish. "She did not have an easy passage into religious maturity," Palazzo writes. "Her confirmation into the Anglican Church finally took place in 1846 after a period of great spiritual difficulty" (3).

What was the religious world Christina Rossetti had entered? For the purposes of this essay, Palazzo's introductory observations are important: "The Tractarian Movement brought with it a renewed emphasis on woman's sinfulness . . . and role in the Fall" (xii). Pusey, leader at this time of the Tractarian Movement, focused "on the role of Eve in the Fall and her consequent legacy of corruption" (xiii). And as Jan Marsh suggests (Palazzo quotes her), Rossetti "was marked for life by exposure to Puseyite thought" (4).

It is only too obvious that for someone as strong-willed and independent as Christina showed herself in other matters, the doctrine of woman's inherited sinfulness was a source of instability of vision, of the pairing of submission and resistance. And surely the six devotional volumes constitute a site in which performative ambivalence was enacted. Although I believe Palazzo gives too simple an account of Christina's association with feminist groups like the Langham Circle and the Portfolio Club – too simple because Christina's association with them was either tangential or short-lived – (and is too summary in her reference to Christina's opposition to the Suffrage Movement), it is true that in the act of writing devotional texts, Christina "laid claim as a woman to full participation in her Christian heritage" (47).

Annus Domini is a collection of prayers, addressed to Christ. Each prayer is preceded by a text from Scripture. Although I do not find in the prayers a resistance to male privilege or a turning toward social problems, as Palazzo does, she is right in stressing Christina's rendering of Christ's message as gender-free, offering redemption from sin for *all*. Palazzo's readings are in part revelatory, in part unconvincing. The first prayer is a response to a text taken from Genesis: *"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."* The prayer that responds to this text means men and women both: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Seed of the woman, Thou who has bruised the serpent's head, destroy in us . . . . the power of that old Serpent the devil . . . . [S]et up Thy kingdom, and for the death he brought in, bring Thou in life everlasting." Palazzo's reading is just when she says "'Christ, Seed of woman,' born through her agency, has power over the serpent, and woman is in turn empowered by this relationship to request the healing promised and the reversal from the kingdom of death to one of life" (48). But Palazzo continues her gloss: "Presented in this way, woman has greater authority than man to deliver the prayer" (48). If Palazzo means that the prayer foregrounds Eve's sin, then Palazzo is right. If, however, the emphasis is on Christina's contemporary world, and the word "us" signifies women and men both, then, without ignoring the fact that it *is* a woman who has written the prayer, I see nothing in the words that privileges woman as the maker of the petition.

Appropriately, because of its inherent challenge and because it was written late in her life *The Face of the Deep*, a commentary on *The Book of Revelation,* finds Christina at her profoundest, and in a way the devotional works preceding it are a preparation for the challenge of writing it, part of a life-long performative search for her own faith. It is also a text that

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occasions some of Palazzo's strongest readings. She quotes: "'I am the Alpha and Omega'. – Thus well-nigh at the opening of these mysterious Revelations, we find in this title an instance of symbolic language accommodated to human apprehension; for any literal acceptance of the phrase seems obviously and utterly inadmissible. God condescends to teach us somewhat we can learn, and in a way by which we are capable of learning. So, doubtless, either literally or figuratively, throughout the entire Book. Such a consideration encourages us, I think, to pursue our study of the Apocalypse, ignorant as we may be. Bring patience to our quest, and assuredly we shall not be sent empty away" (117). Palazzo comments: "The words of scripture are symbols in the Romantic definition, and are therefore in themselves valuable in that a symbol always partakes of that to which it points, its divine referent accessible to the imagination of the devout believer through the redemption of Christ and the operation of the Spirit. The Incarnational poetics are here applied directly to God's word" (117). Christina claims authority not by erudition but by imaginative response. Palazzo effectively adds: "One must also take into account the value which the Tractarians and post-Tractarians placed on inspiration and faith" (118). Moreover, it seems to me Palazzo is on solid ground when she next quotes *The Face of the Deep*: "St. Paul has written 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach.' Yet elsewhere he wrote: 'I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith . . . which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice'." Rossetti responds to these words: "To expound prophecy lies of course beyond my power, and not within my wish. But the symbolic forms of prophecy being set before all eyes, must be set for some purpose: to investigate them may not make us as wise as serpents; yet ought by promoting faith, fear, hope, love to aid in making us harmless as doves. 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it': – God helping us, we all great and small can and will run" (118). Palazzo aptly notes: "The quotation of an unpalatable, oppressive viewpoint, followed by 'and yet' or 'but' in order to introduce her own views is typical of Rossetti's commentaries" (118).

The strongest and most convincing general argument in the book is that Rossetti identifies "wisdom" as a feminine and powerful attainment. In making this argument, Palazzo carefully, and with many references, establishes wisdom, in Christina's work, as woman's form of knowing: "[Rossetti] unobtrusively emphasizes the role of wisdom in revealing the message of the inspired text." Further, and offering explicit support for as much of Palazzo's argument as I have cited, Rossetti claims that "although the Father of lights may still withhold us from knowledge . . . he will not deny us wisdom" (119). Convincing, too, is Palazzo's comment: "Freed by the emphasis on imagination in scriptural interpretation, Rossetti is able to use her experience as a woman: daughter, sister and friend. She sets before her readers the role of 'The Virtuous woman' of Proverbs who 'openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness,' claiming for all women a special kinship with her: 'Wisdom, then, associates with kindness; to cultivate kindness is to frequent the society of wisdom. A clue especially vouchsafed to us women'" (119–20).

Had Palazzo left it as this, she would have made a strong and conclusive point. But she continues, "Writing about the scriptures is woman's work, as women are traditionally creative and imaginative," quoting Christina to support this: "Whereas . . . 'every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary', so wrought: 'all women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun

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goat's hair"'(120). Palazzo has called attention to a subtle difference in the offering of wise-hearted men and wise-hearted women: the men's offering is described in general terms, that of the women in detail and at greater length, and women are in that respect being privileged. But it seems to me to be applying Rossetti's imaginative method of reading scripture to the reading of Rossetti's own words, to say that the quoted text signifies that "writing about the scriptures is woman's work." Something other is needed in reading Rossetti's clear words than a hermeneutic approach to the language *she* uses in her quest for an understanding of the symbolic statements of Scripture.

Palazzo's conclusion makes for me a more acceptable claim, and is introduced by a truly interesting juxtaposition of stages in Rossetti's life and career: "By the time she writes her last volume, *The Face of the Deep,* Rossetti has come a long way from her early Pre-Raphaelite days, when with the publication of *Goblin Market* she was hailed 'High Priestess of Pre-Raphaelitism' and the 'Jael who led the [Pre-Raphaelite] hosts to victory,"' in the words of Edmund Gosse and A. C. Swinburne repectively. Palazzo asserts that Rossetti, however, remains – in her devotional texts – "remarkably true to the vision of many of her early poems," and cites again texts she had discussed as she developed her reading of the devotional works. And as Palazzo's "Conclusion" approaches its own end, I find her retrospect in some ways more convincing than specific arguments along the way. The meaning of Rossetti's works is that "spiritual life grows out of daily interaction with one another in the world, and spiritual lessons are not learned in isolation . . . . Worse than any suffering through weakness or through error is a self imposed separation from God and from the rest of humanity: 'The willfully dead sever themselves from the Tree of Life . . . . Dreadful were it simply to be shut up with self in a grave-like solitude" (142). Palazzo is surely right to quote these brave words from *The Face of the Deep,* written ten years after the death of the brother with whom she had accomplished a true parity as fellow artists, and six years after the death of her mother, with whom she lived, each reinforcing the other's devotional ardor; and two years before her own death. Her mind was truly a country of its own. Noticeable, too, there is in the allusion to solitude a critique of her own earlier practice of concealing and burning poems and correspondence. And Palazzo's gloss of the quoted passage requires no suspension of disbelief: "[Christina] does not [in *The Face of the Deep*] use . . . any . . . word that would mark the volume as a record only of feminine experience. She is not . . . substituting female experience for male, but is searching out lessons in all areas of daily life, taking her place as a woman, a teacher, and an interpreter within the community of Christians" (142).

If, as Palazzo asserts, it was her creative imagination that enabled Christina to read scripture as she did, and if it was D. G. Rossetti's creative imagination that posited a spiritual goal for love of a beautiful woman, then there is an alternative way of viewing the ostensible gap between their respective questing. The writing of devotional books ceased only because illness and death prevented Christina from going on. Her quest for understanding had reached a bold attempt to interpret the most difficult scriptural text of all. That she recognizes she is an interpreter of symbols in reading *The Book of Revelations*, means that she is indeed returning to her Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasm, using it for a new purpose. D. Gabriel seeks the spiritual in the material. As for Christina, in her series of devotional books, conceivably ended only by death, is there not a parallel with the *House of Life,* serially revised and conceivably stopped only by Gabriel's death? And if Christina, despite a theology based on faith, accepts the material world as the place in which love and wisdom are enacted, is she not viewing with compassion the same world her brother viewed with longing?

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Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's *Christina Rossetti and Illustration*, the final book that will be reviewed here, is truly rewarding. A work of impeccable scholarship, it is a gathering and organizing of information, its themes and emphases solidly grounded in publishing history. Moreover, though she wants to recover Rossetti and her work and put them in the foreground of nineteenth-century studies, she sees no problem in reading Christina and D. G. Rossetti as collaborators, equals in a mutual effort. She briefly puts Christina in parallel with the young, just-beginning D. G. Rossetti: "In her twenties [Christina] studied with Ford Madox Brown," as did D. G. Rossett in *his* twenties,"and tried her hand at portraiture and wallpaper design; she continued to sketch occasionally, throughout most of her long life." Although Kooistra immediately limits the parallel – telling us Dante Gabriel was "singled out from an early age as the family artist" – she does not believe that Christina was in consequence marginalized, though, to be sure, her brother's "career as a painter and illustrator had a profound effect on[her] life" (4–5).

Kooistra builds the relationship into a profoundly positive one for Christina. Of the ten illustrations for books that Gabriel executed in his lifetime, four were for two of Christina's books, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862) and *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* (1866). Agency is shared by Christina and Gabriel; in fact their "creative partnership gave them an unusual degree of control over the final product. The . . . illustrations for the two volumes were determined by the author and her artist rather than by their publisher," Alexander Macmillan, despite his standing rule that *he* was to give instructions to the designers of his books. "To his chagrin," Kooistra writes, "Macmillan had to put up with this subversive encroaching on his own province when Dante Gabriel followed his own lead in selecting pictorial subjects" (10) for Christina's books. Moreover, noting that it is usual to blame Gabriel for the delays that prevented the appearance of the two volumes as Christmas books, Kooistra takes an independent view: "Christina's complicity in the publishing delays should be recognized," though Kooistra's case here is somewhat dubious, since her view is that Christina thought it essential Gabriel's illustrations should be part of her books (10).

An even more striking observation follows: "If Christina Rossetti was, indeed, as Swinburne . . . hailed her after the successful publication of *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, 'the Jael who led the [Pre-Raphaelite] host to victory' (11), this may be ascribed to the fact that of all the Pre-Raphaelite poets, only she produced her poetry in a physical form which conformed to the movement's commitment to visual/verbal and author/artist partnerships" (11). Were it not for the invoking of the Pre-Raphaelite principle, we might see Gabriel as the *junior* partner here.

However, putting aside for the moment Gabriel's role in Christina's career, Kooistra continues: "Rossetti's most collaborative partnership was . . . with Arthur Hughes, who illustrated her two works for children, *Sing-Song* and *Speaking Likenesses*," published in 1871 and 1874, respectively. "*Sing-Song* was brought out by the Dalziel Brothers under the Routledge imprint for the Christmas market of 1871 . . . . Rossetti was particularly aggressive in her negotiations for an appropriate illustrator for this book. In April 1871[she] wrote the Dalziels that her acceptance of their offer was conditional on her independent approval of the artist" (12). Kooistra quotes from her letter: "I . . . agree to the terms you propose and will send you a note to that effect, *if* you will first inform me whom you intend employing to design the illustrations and *if* of course the name pleases me" (12). The emphasis on the "if's" is Kooistra's. It serves to illustrate the particular feminist reading of Rossetti that she is engaged upon. Her Rossetti, at least in her career up to this point, is an aggressive, confident author,

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well aware of what is needed to sell her books – that is, effective illustrations – and confident in her own judgment as to who might best provide them. And doing the job well meant, in this case, that the artist truly collaborate with her: "The degree of collaboration between artist and author . . . is unique because Hughes worked from Rossetti's own illustrated manuscript, in which she had included small pencil sketches above each poem" (12).

Aside from this matter of collaboration, which will return us to Christina's and Gabriel's, Kooistra's interest is in "a materialist hermeneutics," a term she uses, freely acknowledging her debt to Jerome McGann's discussion of bibliographical codes and their integral part in the meaning of a text and experiencing it, particularly as he developed the concept in *Black Riders* and *The Textual Condition.* Approaching any book "from the perspective of a materialist hermeneutics means being equally attentive to linguistic and bibliographic codings. It also requires a charting of literary and social histories always in the making . . . . As McGann explains in *The Textual Condition,* 'the meaning of the texts' will appear as a series of concrete and always changing conditions: because the meaning is in the use, and textuality is a social condition of various times, places, and persons' . . . . *Goblin Market,* for example . . . is never the same work when it assumes a different physical manifestation, and our understanding of either her individual poem or her oeuvre as a whole lacks necessary context when we ignore its material form(s)" (16). With *Goblin Market* in focus, Kooistra adds that failure "to attend to the historical particularity of [Christina's] texts and their transmission in the marketplace has resulted in certain scholarly fallacies. One particularly egregious example . . . is the uninvestigated truism long reiterated in Rossetti studies: that *Goblin Market"* was a Victorian nursery favorite. "This critical commonplace is supported by neither the poem's publication nor its reception history" (14–15).

This takes us back to the collaboration with Gabriel, who provided sensual, mystical woodcuts for the frontispiece and title page, drawings clearly meant for an adult audience. With full focus now on brother and sister, and referring to *The Prince's Progress* as well, Kooistra writes: "The collaboration of the two Rossettis ensured that the books would be, within the constraints of the commercial publishing industry . . . works of art in themselves . . . unified books with most . . . aspects of their physical appearance in concert. In addition to providing a frontispiece and title page for each book, Dante Gabriel . . . designed the bindings, helped in the selection of colors, advised about the size of page and type of paper, and supervised the printing" (60). That Alexander Macmillan, publisher of both volumes, agreed to Dante Gabriel's assuming so executive a role was both a wise business move and one that enhances Macmillan's stature as a figure in the history of publishing. "Out of the Rossetti collaboration," Kooistra writes, "emerged trade books whose overall coherence inspired others in the Victorian publishing industry" (60). Lewis Carroll, also published by Macmillan, recommended *Goblin Market* and *The Prince's Progress* as models for various aspects of his own book, *Phantasmagoria* (60).

Another of Kooistra's observations brings D. G. Rossetti's *Hand and Soul* into view: "For both Rossettis the combination of picture and word . . . symbolically combined the material 'body' (the picture) with the intangible 'soul' (the verse) . . . . If, as William Michael [Rossetti] avers, one of Pre-Raphaelitism's defining characteristics is the 'intimate intertexture of spiritual sense with material form' (Rose 18) then the movement found one of its most characteristic expressions in the illustrated books produced by Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the sixties" (66–67).

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Not only were Pre-Raphaelite aspirations realized in the collaboration that produced *Goblin Market,* but the closeness between brother and sister broke publishing rules when they turned, later, to *The Prince's Progress:* "The degree of cooperation between Christina and Dante Gabriel on the title poem and illustrations for her second volume of poetry is probably unprecedented not just in the poet's career but also in the history of Victorian publishing. The Rossettis discussed the structure and the staging of the poem, as well as its incidents and characters, in a copious correspondence throughout the winter months of 1865 while Christina was staying at Hastings for her health. Particularly significant in terms of their artistic partnership is that Dante Gabriel seems to have begun work on preliminary studies for the illustrations before the poem itself was finished . . . . Thus the creative processes of composing pictures and poems occurred in tandem rather than in sequence . . . . providing unusual opportunities for reciprocal influence" (75–76). The significance of this for all I have been discussing cannot be overestimated.

In addition to providing an illuminating account of the pairing of Christina and Gabriel, Kooistra's book covers the fascinating story of the production history of Christina's works from their initial publication to the last years of the twentieth century. We learn how and when *Goblin Market* was transmuted into a book for children: "*Goblin Market* gained entrance into the realm of children's literature with its appearance in class readers" (195) at the end of the nineteenth century, and quickly thereafter proliferated in this category, even while the same period saw Macmillan re-issue it in 1893 with spiritual/erotic illustrations by Laurence Housman. And Kooistra's closing comments on this edition are an effective instance of her materialist hermeneutics: "The success of Housman's *Goblin Market* with a new generation of consumers shows the extent to which books and their readers are constructed by their specific cultural and historical contexts. The author, an aging woman with only a year remaining to her, could not help thinking that Housman's illustrations 'falsified' her poem, even while fin-de-siècle readers saw them as 'verifications' of her fantasy. The gap between the sixties and the nineties was a wide one . . . . Along with changes in the social and material system of production and reception, the hermeneutic context for Rossetti's work had necessarily changed. The dynamics of book history show that *Goblin Market* could not be the same poem when it was produced in 1893 as it had been in 1862 – or in 1910, 1933, 1973, or any other of the reproduction dates in the twentieth century" (90).

It is useful now to return to the relationship between Christina and Gabriel, and summarize some aspects of it that Kooistra presents, because her book has to be read against the other recent work on Christina Rossetti considered here. A brief catalogue will do: Working together, brother and sister fulfilled the Pre-Raphaelite quest to unify word and image. Christina published original poems before Gabriel did, her first volume appearing in 1862 and his first collection of his own poems in 1870. As for intertextuality on the level of poetic concept and language, I have already, in commenting on Alison Chapman's book, suggested, as Chapman herself does, that *Goblin Market* not only responds to Gabriel's "Jenny," but engulfs it, removing its ambiguity and endowing Lizzie with the agency to contain it – indeed, to send it back to D. G. Rossetti once *Goblin Market* has assessed and assimilated it for its own purposes. How many other poems by Christina do this? The juxtapositions are not as apparent, but a search for them would be rewarding. As for success with the public, *Goblin Market* has outsold all of D. G. Rossetti's poetry combined, and Christina's devotional books have had their own strong audience, including clergymen who have quoted from them in their sermons. Like her brother, she was astute in business dealings, and that she sold her

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copyright to the SPCK, as we learn from Kooistra's book, only speaks of her ability to be different in different contexts, not of contradictions. If we put aside Dante Gabriel's success as a painter and think only of his poetry and then of Christina's, hers has reached more varied audiences – Victorian adults, children, devout members of the High Church movement, and as Kooistra also tells us, connoisseurs and collectors of limited editions.

As for the pairing of Christina and Gabriel, there is multiform interconnectedness of which production of text and image is an important but not exclusive meaning. Each sought the spiritual in the material. In her poems and devotional books Christina celebrates flowers and animals, living entities that are both symbols and incarnations of divine love. For Gabriel, for whom Dante was a life-long influence, it is the beautiful woman who incarnates divine love. Of interest, there is not a word on record in which either Christina or Dante Gabriel was judgmental of the other, or scoffed or sneered at the other's understanding of the spiritual. They respected not only each other's ideas but each other's needs. They saw that desire has more than one name but remains desire. They were equals in each other's eyes.

Christina is no longer a marginal figure in nineteenth-century studies. The publication of R. W. Crump's variorum edition of her poetry (1979–90) and the many critical and historical studies of her works and career, of which those considered here are only representative of relatively recent attention, makes the point as concretely as possible. As for Dante Gabriel, it is not that much longer ago since he too was moved from the margins to the center, not so very long since anthologies of Victorian poets classified him as "minor." It is as two figures placed on a single, high plane that Christina and Dante Gabriel meet each other today. If they are not mirror images of each other, that is simply to say their lives and their works are engaged in multiform intertextuality, a process that requires initial differences to give way to a single identity, while at the same time remaining part of two individual identities.

That we live in a visual culture today, as has often been observed, cannot erase the Rossettis' importance and achievements as poets. No one would think of ignoring the text of *Goblin Market* because illustrations for it abound. No one can pretend to be interested in Rossetti's paintings but have no interest in the poems he wrote for them: the poems that generate a most intimate form of intertextuality, in which one without the other is incomplete. Indeed, what has happened in the material context of our superabundant visual culture is that we now *expect* to read Dante Gabriel as painter-poet – a single entity; and as the result of Kooistra's book it should not be long before anyone interested in Christina's works will see that the visual is an insistent presence in the material existence of her books and a critical obligation for anyone engaged in a hermeneutic approach to her work. Kooistra's pairing of Christina and Gabriel Rossetti has resulted in a work of cultural history, in which brother and sister help make that history.

I have already said that both D. Gabriel and Christina set impossible goals for themselves. It was not possible in the nineteenth century to reach the spiritual through matter, as Dante did, creating figures in the *Inferno* who passionately live – and in a fixed manner – their earthly desires in an afterworld. Christina and Gabriel were both engaged in a game that had to be lost, here on earth. If I do not see Christina as a consistently erased figure, as does Alison Chapman, I can see how Chapman's interpretation fits some of Christina's life history, and certainly witnesses and challenges the subordinate place she was assigned by early and mid-twentieth century canon-makers. If I do not always see a feminist theology in Christina's devotional works, as Lynda Palazzo does, I do see that Christina has, by putting

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herself forward as an interpreter of biblical texts and by substituting "all" for an assumed male-gendered community, moved sharply away from the view of women that the Tractarian Movement, so greatly influential upon her in other ways, endorsed. Finally, what all the books considered here signify is that Gabriel and Christina Rossetti are as much in the foreground of Victorian Studies as are figures like Tennyson and Robert Browning who have always been there. And that is not the result of a transient critical view. In both their unity and their separate identities, their achievements will keep them there.

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