



Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender and Time

Diane D'amico

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Since Arthur Symons's declaration in 1895 in the Saturday Review that Christina Rossetti was "among the great poets of the nineteenth century," Rossetti's image among critics has undergone permutations as divergent as Victorian culture is from postmodern. Now Diane D'Amico redeems Rossetti from the various one-dimensional castings assigned her across the generations -- those of a saint writing poetry for God; of a sexually repressed, neurotic woman of minor talent; and, most recently, of a subversive feminist questioning the patriarchy -- and renders a fuller, more intricate understanding of the poet than any to date. With flawless logic, balance, and clarity, D'Amico seals her case that Rossetti's faith, her gender, and the times in which she lived should all be considered to appreciate her poetic voice.

According to D'Amico, the image of Rossetti that can best serve as a guide to her more than one thousand poems reflects the centrality of her faith -- not as evidence of sexual repression nor necessarily as absolute truth, but as absolute truth for Rossetti. It will then become apparent how Rossetti's commitment to her Christian faith, her experience as a Victorian woman, and her poetic vocation are inextricably interwoven.



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