The Philosophy of Life Reflected in The Poetry of Emily Jane Bronte and Christina Georgina Rossetti

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE
REFLECTED IN THE POETRY OF
EMILY JANE BRONTË AND CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

by

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Date May 15, 1944 Approved Clarice E. She
Director of Thesis

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PREFACE

Purpose of this Work

The writer of this thesis became interested in the poetry of Christina Georgina Rossetti through the study of "The Blessed Damozel," a poem by her brother Dante Gabriel. After receiving some helpful suggestions from her adviser, the writer decided to make a rather thorough and careful study of Miss Rossetti's poems. In the meantime, the adviser, Dr. Myrta E. McGinnis, head of the English Department, selected Dr. Clarice Short as director and guide for the study. Dr. Clarice Short suggested that the writer make an additional study of the poetry of Emily Jane Brontë to ascertain likenesses and unlikenesses in the two poets, thereby making it a comparative study.

After utilizing every available source in Forsyth Library to gain knowledge about the two poets and after a rapid reading of the poems of these two women, the writer decided upon making a comparative study of the religion or philosophy of life of Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti through the medium of their literary works.
In pursuing this study, the author read practically all the poems of Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti. During a rapid reading of the poems, she selected for a more detailed and thorough study those poems of each poet which seemed to be pertinent to and illustrative of the proposed problem.

As far as the writer could learn, there are not many graduate students who have written theses on these two poets. In consulting the lists of theses available in Forsyth Library, the author found that Miss Wilhelmina Rose Schreiner wrote a thesis in 1937 entitled: "The Criticism of Emily Brontë," and Miss Mary Louise McCluskey on "Christina G. Rossetti: The Development of her Character and its Effect on her Poetry" in 1941. Both of these studies were made at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1931, Miss Eleanor Walter Thomas wrote a doctoral dissertation: "Christina Rossetti" at Columbia University.
In a comparative study of "The Philosophy of Life Reflected in the Poetry of Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti," it is appropriate to present to the reader those biographical aspects which have a bearing upon the likenesses or differences of character and attitudes of these two nineteenth-century poets.

Patrick Brontë, Emily's father, was the eldest son of Hugh Prunty, Brunty or Brontee, and Alice McClory, a Roman Catholic. His parents were poor peasants, native to southern Ireland, who later settled in the north in County Down. At sixteen, Patrick left home to open a public school at Drumgooland, where he taught five or six years, meanwhile preparing himself for higher studies. In 1802 he bid farewell to Ireland, studied at Cambridge, and upon receiving an A.B. degree entered St. John's. Upon the advice of a Presbyterian friend, he affiliated himself with the Church of England. On leaving St. John's he was ordained to the ministry and accepted a curacy at Wethersfield in Essex. Masson expressed the opinion that "nature had not intended him for a parson; he was far
more fitted to be a soldier or a fighting politician."¹

In the summer of 1812 while Patrick was curate at Hartshead in Yorkshire, he fell in love with Maria Branwell, the daughter of a middle-class Cornish merchant of Penzance. She was a quiet, timid, unassuming little woman—not pretty, but elegant—a well-educated young maiden of good English stock. On December 29, 1812, the young couple married and began housekeeping at the Hartshead curacy, where the two oldest children, Maria and Elizabeth, were born. Three years later the young curate moved his family to Thornton. Here the other four children were born: Charlotte in 1816, Patrick Branwell in 1817, Emily Jane in 1818, and Anne in 1819.

Seven years after her marriage, the consumptive and delicate mother's health was completely shattered. Hoping that the buoyant country air might arrest the progress of her illness, the Brontës moved to the Haworth Vicarage in 1820. Mrs. Brontë, however, was too weak and too ill to gain much pleasure and benefit from this change of climate and environment; in fact, she soon discovered that she was suffering from cancer.

The patient, uncomplaining little wife had found her husband to be a very unsociable partner. He spent much of his time secluded in his study, even taking his

meals alone. Masson made this statement about him:

Patrick was a man of contradictions. He was a son of the soil with the tastes and habits of a scholar, a self-made man stoically independent, and a Tory to the backbone. He was a man of laudable ambitions, violent prejudices, and some rather petty foibles.²

Meanwhile the mother became so weak that she had to forego the companionship of her little ones. During the last months of her intense suffering, the father remained constantly at her bedside. In September, 1821, she died, leaving six little children under seven years of age.

All of the Brontë children, except Maria, were too young to realize fully the loss of their mother. They had been weaned away from her long before she died, and knowing that there was serious illness in the house, they expected very little consideration and less indulgence. They learned to amuse themselves quietly, and only when alone upon the moor did they enjoy complete freedom in their childish play. They had no playmates in the nearby vicarages, nor were they permitted to associate with the village children.

Never were sisters so attached and devoted to each other. They were to be company enough for each other all their lives. Maria, the oldest, was a motherly girl, who cared tenderly for her little sisters, Emily and Anne.

² Loc. cit.
Occasionally at breakfast or tea, Mr. Brontë would entertain Emily with Irish tales of horror or violence, or discuss Tory politics or the events of the day with the older girls.

About a year after their mother's death, Miss Elizabeth Branwell came to Haworth to take charge of the Brontë household and supervise the education and training of her dead sister's children. Miss Branwell, a very small, old-fashioned, silk-dressed lady, who took snuff, was very lively and intelligent and was not afraid to tilt arguments with Mr. Brontë. She taught the girls sewing, cooking, and other household duties. Unfortunately, she was not a sweet-natured woman with a motherly heart and to yield to her old-maidish discipline was a tonic too bitter and too disagreeable for the children; they grew daily more reticent and self-contained. Speaking of Emily, Mme. Duclaux says:

Remembering her earliest childhood, she would recall a constant necessity of keeping joys and sorrows quietly not letting others hear; she would recall the equal love of children for each other, the love of the only five she knew in all the world; ... 3

In 1823, Mr. Brontë decided to send all the girls, except Anne, to Cowan's Bridge, a school for clergymen's

daughters, in charge of the Rev. Carus Wilson. The building was damp, poorly heated and poorly ventilated, unfit to house young growing children. The food was scanty, ill-prepared, and unpalatable. Once enrolled in this charity institution, there was very little hope of escape. Having had no experience, the girls imagined that all schools were like Cowan's Bridge. Maria was at variance with every principle of the school and became the laughing-stock and scapegrace; Emily, the prettiest, not quite five years old was the favorite, the pet nursling. Maria's health began to fail from day to day till the authorities finally sent for Mr. Brontë. He was terribly shocked on seeing her condition and took her home, where after a few days she died. Elizabeth, also slowly succumbing to consumption, was taken home by a servant and died before summer. Charlotte and Emily returned to Cowan's Bridge after spending the mid-summer vacation with their father; but before winter set in, they came home ill.

Charlotte, being the oldest now, took charge of helping the aunt with the housework. A regular routine of work—carpet brushing, dusting, sewing, reciting their lessons—occupied their time during the day. Each girl took her turn in doing the cooking, baking, washing and ironing till she had learned all details accurately. Emily was always very willing to shoulder the hardest work.
In the evening, they gathered in the parlor or in the stone-flagged kitchen with their old servant Tabby. Here they formed their Empire of Angria, peopled it with heroes of history or great characters of literature, and wrote dramas, poems or romances about them. "They were all hero-worshipers and their heroes for the most part were Toriest of the Tory."  

When in January, 1831, Charlotte, the leader in these childish plays, went to school at Roe Head, Emily and her younger sister Anne began their own play, the Gondal epic. The prose literature of Gondal has been lost, but the poems as Emily wrote them are still with us; she composed them during a period of twelve years, from 1836 when she returned home from Roe Head, to her death in 1848.

Emily had a passionate love for all dumb creatures but cared little for children and hated strangers. To help her overcome this unsociable tendency, Charlotte suggested that Emily go to Roe Head with her. The exchange of a quiet, secluded, but carefree home life for a disciplined routine in school was too much for Emily. After a three months' stay, she became ill and returned home. Miss Ellen Nussey, Charlotte's friend, came to visit the Brontë's in the meanwhile. Emily took a liking to Miss Nussey and is said to have invited her for a walk.

4. Masson, op. cit., p. 27.
"Shy and silent as Emily was, Ellen found her 'intensely lovable.'"⁵

In fall, 1836, Emily accepted a teaching position near Halifax. Hard work and long school hours, however, impaired her health, and she came back to Haworth in spring.

At the ages of twenty-four and twenty-six respectively, Emily and Charlotte entered the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels. Here they felt "that difference of nationality and religion made a 'broad line of demarcation' between them and the rest of the school."⁶

They found it difficult to adjust themselves to the new and strange surroundings: "the refectoire, with its foreign cookery; the oratoire, with its crucifix; the lecture pieuse at night which the little ultra-Protestants hated; the foreign names and voices in the streets; the bell of St. Gudule."⁷ They had been brought up in an anti-Catholic household and hated all foreigners, especially the Belgians because they were Catholic foreigners.

"The silent Emily was head-strong, prejudiced and

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5. Ibid., p. 46
6. Ibid., p. 54
7. Loc. cit.
often homesick; her English Protestantism recoiled from the 'gentle Jesuitry' about her."⁸ However, Emily's dislike of the Catholic religion softened and many of the Catholic practices made a deep impression on her sensitive mind.

"While in Brussels she grew to love the great Cathedral of Saint Gudule. She would go there in the evenings with the unwilling Charlotte to Benediction,"⁹ a service which seems to have appealed to her.

This time Emily was determined to stay at her task till she had accomplished a certain amount. She studied German, French and Italian, worked hard at drawing and music and in six months became a proficient musician. She enjoyed reading the German romanticists, but she had a dislike for the French writers. Monsieur Heger termed her capacity for logic and for argument as "unusual in a man, and rare, indeed, in a woman."¹⁰ He said that "she should have been a man: a great navigator."¹¹

During her second year in Brussels, Emily acted

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⁸. Ibid., p. 55.
¹¹. Loc. cit.
as assistant music teacher. The term had hardly begun
when a message reached the Brontë sisters that Miss Branwell
was seriously ill. While they were hastily getting ready
to go home, they received a second letter bearing the sad
news of their aunt's death. On their arrival at Haworth,
after traveling all day and night, they learned to their
deep sorrow that their aunt had already been laid to rest
in the nearby churchyard.

They consoled their old father, who was lonely and
distressed. Emily, seeing her opportunity to remain near
her beloved moors, offered to take care of the father.
She was the best suited for this task and was extremely
happy to live her free life at Haworth. "'Liberty was
the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it she perished.'"\(^1\)
She amused herself with her pets and her garden. "She
was more alone in company than in solitude which she
could people with her fancies and only on the moors did
she feel herself in communion with something outside of
herself."\(^2\)

Emily had no companions, yet her surviving friends
praise her for her never failing, quiet unselfishness, her
willingness to help others.

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12. E. C. Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*
(New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1924), p. 96 (Charlotte's words)

108:537, October, 1930.
In 1845 Charlotte accidentally lighted upon Emily's poems, which she had written in a microscopic hand, and read them without her permission. Emily resented that act terribly. "From that time Charlotte's sisterly affection was tinged with feelings of admiration and remorse—remorse for her failure to appreciate Emily at her true worth and win her confidence."\(^{14}\)

Branwell and Emily cherished a deep love for each other. Often had they been thrown upon each other for mutual sympathy and enjoyment. Now that he had turned out to be a drunkard and an opium addict, Emily grieved and worried about him. Night after night, he came home intoxicated, raving and delirious. Charlotte ignored him for two years. Emily, however, loved him with a true sister's compassion, and while she detested his sin, she hoped to win him back by love. Many a night she awaited his coming home and helped him to bed. One night drunken Branwell set the bedclothes on fire. It was Emily who came to his rescue, who placed him in her own bed and assured the girls there would be no further danger. Where she slept that night, no one knew.

After a life of dissipation and sin, Branwell finally came home to die. "He was singularly altered and softened, gentle and loving to the father and sisters

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 535.
who had borne so much at his hands."\(^15\)

On September 24, 1848, Branwell's end seemed near. All were gathered around his bed: the old father, praying Anne, loving Emily. During his last agony "he rose to his feet and died erect after twenty minutes' struggle."\(^16\)

Branwell's death affected Emily deeply. On his funeral day she contracted a cold which turned into an acute inflammation of the lungs. She refused the care of a doctor and insisted on fulfilling her daily duties with exactness and resoluteness. She arose every day to feed her dogs. Toward the end of the month she could whisper only in gasps. On December 29, 1848, shortly before two o'clock she said to Charlotte, "If you will send for a doctor, I will see him now!"\(^17\) But it was too late. Trying to rise, she died.

"I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in this world," wrote Charlotte when her sister was dying. "Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like her; but indeed, I have

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never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone."  

In the Rossetti household, Christina Georgina was the youngest of four children. All of them were born in London: Maria Francesca in 1827, Dante Gabriel in 1828, William Michael in 1829, Christina Georgina in 1830. They were baptized in the Church of England.

Gabriele Rossetti, the father, came from Vasto in the Abruzzi, kingdom of Naples. In his early youth, he showed an innate ability in drawing and verse writing. He went to Naples in 1803, attended the University of Naples, and was appointed custodian of Ancient Bronzes in the Naples Museum. In 1814 he allied himself with the Liberals and later became a supporter of the movement for obtaining a constitution for the Neapolitan kingdom. Fearing a military uprising, King Ferdinand I granted the constitution. Shortly afterwards, however, he abrogated it and treated its advocates as criminals. Rossetti fled in disguise to Malta and landed in London early in 1824. Two years later he married Frances Mary Lavinia, the second daughter of the well-known Italian gentleman, Gaetano Polidori. As a young man, Polidori had served as secretary to the renowned dramatic poet Alfieri. In

18. Masson, op. cit., p. 75
London he taught Italian, translated the poetry of Milton into Italian, and wrote many books.

In 1831, Rossetti was elected professor of Italian in King's College, London. His leisure hours he devoted to the production of literary works, both prose and verse. The latter secured for him a considerable fame in Italy as a patriotic poet; but the former, dealing largely with the interpretation of Dante and other medieval writers, caused a stir among Englishmen which won him some few sympathizers but many opponents. His works were banned in Italy.

Rossetti did not become a naturalized Englishman but remained a true Italian patriot. He was very congenial and winsome, was cheerful in spite of his exile and his struggle with fortune, possessed a strong character, and was "'a father in a million,' as his elder son loved to speak of him."¹⁹ Though he never wholly abjured the Roman Catholic creed, he was for many years a free-thinker, who, nevertheless, adhered to the moral and spiritual teachings of the Gospels. His wife was a devout Anglo-Catholic, fervent in training her children in the Christian religion which "was indeed the prevailing influence in the

childhood of the Rossettis."\textsuperscript{20} She was half English and half Italian, but she was typically English in person and character. Her education was good; she knew three languages and cultivated her mind by miscellaneous reading. She was seldom seen in society and found enough pleasure and entertainment in her family circle. Besides faithfully discharging her domestic duties, she tutored her two daughters in the rudiments of learning and in singing and dancing. The children were always with their parents, who took great interest in their childish pranks and fancies. "The family was pious, proud, frugal, intelligent, and unusually affectionate one to another."\textsuperscript{21}

Many distinguished Italian friends—exiles, patriots, politicians, literary men and musicians—gathered at the Rossetti home in the evenings to discuss and denounce the political events of their native country. Since the children were trained from early youth to speak Italian to their father, they were able to understand and follow most of these divers trends of new thought that stirred the little society. Very few English families associated

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with the Rossettis.

Except for occasional visits to her maternal grandparents and maiden aunts, who had lived in the countryside for some years, Christina spent her childhood almost entirely in London. Later she visited several seashore resorts: Brighton, Hastings, and others, and went to Scotland for a brief stay. She is said to have been lively, irritable at times on account of her delicate health, and even careless about her lessons. Despite her youthful seriousness, she always knew how to laugh off her troubles and enjoy fun. She began to write rhymes when she was barely twelve. Many of these verses are playful and ironic.

In 1842, she composed the verses "To my Mother" on the anniversary of her mother's birthday. Her grandfather Polidori had them privately printed. With the publication of these verses, written in a spirit of true filial love, Christina made her debut in the literary world.

Christina, being the youngest, had the good fortune of sharing in the studies and gifts of her talented elder brother and sister. Maria became an Anglican nun. Christina was passionately attached to her and greatly admired her strong and saintly character. Christina was very fond of her brothers, Dante Gabriel and William Michael. At one time Dante Gabriel caused her much concern because he was "drifting from the faith which was the
lodestar of her life into associations from which her virginal reticence may well have shrunk back alarmed; ..."22

Her brother William Michael declares that there were two motive powers in Christina's life: religion and love. The Christian religion had been implanted into her heart by her mother; and, from the moment she was mature enough to think for herself, her religion permeated her every thought and act. She banished from her mind any thoughts that threatened to disturb it, and she sacrificed earthly love and joy for it. She bore a deep love for Jesus Christ. "'Christ is God' was her one dominant idea."23 She believed firmly and absolutely all revealed truth and abhorred all arguments on matters of faith and dogma. Her guiding principle toward her fellowmen was: "Judge not, that you may not be judged;" and an intolerant spirit toward the views of others was foreign to her; in fact, William Sharp, who knew her for twelve years, believed that "she had much sympathy with the Church of Rome and held great admiration for its ordered majesty of organization. . . ."24 And yet the veneration accorded to Mary, the mother of Christ, by Roman Catholicism proved a stumbling block to

22. Waugh, op. cit., p. 795


Christina, perhaps because of her insufficient and incorrect information on the Catholic practice.

She had a deep reverence for God's name, and she told Katharine Tynan that "she never stepped on a scrap of torn paper but lifted it out of the mud lest perhaps it should have the Holy Name written or printed upon it." 25

Christina was possessed of a great diffidence and despondency, especially toward the end of her life. Even when she was young, she was keenly aware of her shortcomings and human weaknesses—often more exaggerated than real. There were moments in her life when her soul was tortured with overscrupulosity, with a sense of unworthiness and even with an uncertainty of eternal bliss.

Love was the second motive power of her life. On her kin, particularly on her mother, she lavished her first and deepest affection. Christina's whole life was one of continuous devotion to her mother and she could not bear to be separated from her even for a few days. Her death in 1886 left a deep wound in Christina's heart.

She found consolation in God, to Whom she clung in joy and sorrow.

Twice in her life she tasted the sweetness and the bitterness of human love. When she was eighteen, James

Collinson, a young Pre-Raphaelite painter, presented himself as a suitor. He had been a devout member of the Church of England, but he had become a convert to Roman Catholicism shortly before he met Christina. When he learned that Christina, who had responded to his proposals, would never consent to marrying a Roman Catholic, he reverted to his former creed, made a second marriage offer and was accepted. Two years later, he had such qualms of conscience that he returned to the Catholic Church. Thereupon Christina canceled the engagement, not, however, without bitter suffering. The loss saddened her life for many years.

The second love-affair occurred later when Christina was in her early thirties. Charles Bagot Cayley, a friend of Dante Gabriel, often visited the Rossetti home and Christina found great pleasure in his company. He was a writer, a linguist, and a scholar who had translated Dante. "She loved him deeply and permanently..."26 Since "he united great sweetness to great simplicity of character and was not less polite than unworldly,"27 he appeared to have been the person best fitted to be her life partner. But when he asked for Christina's hand in marriage and

27. Ibid., p. liv.
"was questioned as to his religious views and had perforce to confess himself unorthodox,"\textsuperscript{28} she declined his offer. However, this time she did not deny herself the pleasure of his friendship, which she cherished as long as he lived. Her brother can give no exact reason for her second refusal of marriage, but he hints at religious incompatibility.

Like her mother, Christina seldom went out into society; yet she became acquainted with all the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with whom she, like her brothers, was closely associated. She apparently enjoyed her contacts with this stimulating group. In 1850, she contributed some of her finest lyrics to \textit{The Germ}, the Pre-Raphaelite publication.

Ill health and partial blindness forced her father to give up his employment, and the care of the household fell to Christina and her mother. For two or three years, they conducted day schools—the last one in Somerset—which were not very successful. Early in 1854, the family returned to London, where the father died.

Her foreign travels were few. In 1861, she, with her mother and brother William Michael, made a brief visit to Paris, Rouen, and Normandy; in 1865, the three journeied

\textsuperscript{28} Waugh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 791.
to North Italy, where they visited Como, Pavia, Verona, and Milan.

Besides being well versed in Italian, Christina also knew French, some German, and a little Latin. She read a considerable number of books in her sixty-four years. She knew the Bible thoroughly and also had read the Confessions of St. Augustine and the Imitation of Christ. Pilgrim's Progress was one of her favorite books; she disliked Milton's Paradise Lost.

Christina's health had been rather delicate ever since she was fifteen. Various maladies had threatened to sap her physical strength at different intervals and had brought her face to face with death. Illness caused by cancer made her bedfast in August, 1894. She suffered with patience and resignation. Shortly before her death, she endured heartrending fear and anguish. In the early morning of December 29, 1894, she died peacefully, praying inarticulately to the last.

Both Emily Brontë and Christina Rossetti were the daughters of educated men. Something of the independent, determined spirit of their fathers seems to have been characteristic of both women. The families of both were set apart by different cultural backgrounds from their immediate neighbors, a fact which explains in part the intense affection which each seemed to feel for the other.
members of her family. Each household was a little island in a "wan sea" where the imagination of each woman was kindled because of the lack of outside interests.

Emily Brontë's resentment of the "gentle Jesuitry of Brussels" is typical of the religious intolerance of both Emily and Christina. They differed in their allegiances but were somewhat similar in the narrowness of their sympathies.

The first poems of both women were written secretly and were brought to publication and subsequent fame by loyal members of the family—Emily's by Charlotte, Christina's by her grandfather.

Both Emily and Christina died unmarried. As far as is known, Emily had no lovers; Christina refused several suitors. Emily's aloof nature shut her off from masculine companionship; Christina forewent marriage because she would not violate her religious principles. Undoubtedly, these two lonely women have met in the realms of heaven where perfect happiness and complete satiety stilled their yearning desires. The strong souls of the two might recognize their kinship and rejoice in each other's blissful companionship.
A RESUME OF SPECIAL COMMENTS BY CRITICS IN REGARD TO THE RELIGIOUS, MORAL OR ETHICAL SPIRIT OR ATTITUDE OF THESE POETS

During the past fifty years, various literary men and women have arrived at some discriminating conclusions regarding the life and works of Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti. From these literary criticisms one can select a few special comments that throw light upon the religious, moral or ethical attitude of these two poets.

In regard to Emily Brontë's moral or ethical attitude, Bradby expressed this view:

The inner life of Emily, her thoughts and dreams had no relevance to 'that state of life into which it had pleased God to call her.' It was hard for Emily to adjust herself to the claims of real life because she lacked some of the normal sympathies and affections which help to make real life interesting. She could feel significance and beauty in the wildest forms of nature, but not in the lives, loves, joys, and sorrows of those among whom her lot was cast.¹

Pertinent to the ethical spirit of Emily, Augustus Ralli made this statement:

Differ as may the poet of fairyland from the poet who, beginning with the beauty of nature thereafter

includes man, and so rises to believe in a divinely ordered universe, they are one in this: their vision of beauty has brought them peace on earth. It is not so with Emily Brontë who, though rivalling them in beauty, is at peace only with nature and not with man. . . . Emily falls short of supreme greatness in that she is muted by a trespasser in her imaginative Eden. The earth must be delivered from a man's presence before she can recognize it as Godlike; she is inspired by night--especially winter nights, when human activity is suspended for many long hours, or starry nights which suggest remote worlds where perhaps sin is not, -- . . by snow which muffles human footsteps and masks human traces, by time and death which defeat man and make his mightiest happenings--his battles and empires, his material progress, the voices of orators, even the cry of sufferers--a momentary break in the eternal silence.  

Arthur Symons voiced his opinion about Emily Brontë in the following lines:

The stoic in woman has been seen once only, and that in the only woman in whom there is seen the paradox of passion without sensuousness. She required no passionate experience to endow her with more than a memory of passion. Passion was alive in her as a flame is alive in the earth. . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

This creature had, in herself and in her imagination, something solitary and sorrowful. . . She who believed in the indestructible God within herself, was silenced forever; . . .

May Sinclair, a biographer of the Bronte sisters, gave a good account of Emily's religious spirit:


... She never speaks the language of religious resignation... It is most unlikely that she relied, openly or in secret, on 'the merits of the Redeemer, or on any of the familiar consolations of religion. As she bowed to no disaster and no grief, consolation would have been the last thing in any religion that she looked for.

There was but little humility or resignation about Emily Brontë.

She could not accept the Christian idea of separation and the Mediator. She knew too well the secret. She saw too clearly the heavenly side of the eternal quest. She heard, across the worlds, the downward and the upward rush of the Two immortally desirous; when her soul cried, she heard the answering cry of the divine pursuer: 'My heart is restless till it rests in thee.'

About Emily's ethical or moral attitude, Miss Sinclair remarked the following:

Strangers received from her an impression as of a creature utterly removed from them; a remoteness scarcely human, hard to reconcile with her known tenderness for every living thing. She seems to have had a passionate repugnance to alien and external contacts... .

And yet in the depths of her virginal nature there was something fiercely tender and maternal.

... Her passionate pantheism was not derived; it was established in her soul. She was a mystic, not by religious vocation, but by temperament and by ultimate vision. She offers the apparent anomaly of extreme detachment and of an unconquerable love of life.

It was the highest and purest passion that you

can well conceive. For life gave her nothing in return; . . . neither praise nor fame . . . ; nor friendship, nor love, nor vision of love. All the things 'passed her by with averted head'; and she stood in her inviolable serenity and watched them go, without putting out her hand to one of them.

Now follow the critical excerpts about Christina Georgina Rossetti. Miss Dunbar, in her discussion of The Family Letters of Christina G. Rossetti, made this statement about Christina:

As religion determined (very beautifully) the content of most of her poetry, so it was also religion that determined (perhaps less happily) the course of her life. The mystery by which Christina Rossetti was able to reproduce in verse her moods of intense devotion is something one scarcely cares to invade with unanointed feet.

But as far as her own life is concerned, it is scarcely possible to regard her uncompromising attitude toward religion as an unmixed blessing. In repeated small matters it seems to have involved unnecessary sacrifice on her part.

Miss Kent gave the following report about Christina's religious attitude:

No one can judge properly the poetry of a religion unless he is inside of it.

A French writer has said that "only the saints know how to love"; her poems show that she had attained to the highest branches of that learning.

... Like an earlier saint Mechtilde of Magdeburg she would have asked, "Of what use is it to love God if we are grim and forbidding to our neighbors?" ...

Some of Christina's critics regretted that she lacked

5. Ibid., p. 195-199.

Hellenic spirit... In effect, they ruled that a poet may express every longing—except a thirst for God. A modern writer, Osbert Burdett in The Beardsley Period took a juster view: "The life and poetry of Christina Rossetti were the fit reflection of each other... Her seclusion was proper to a contemplative mystic. She was a poet, a saint, one of those whom the Church of England has placed its soul in peril by neglecting."7

Relative to Christina's religion Arthur Waugh made this comment:

"Hers was a stern God," says her latest biographer (Mary F. Sanders Hutchinson) but that is perhaps in itself a too stern judgment. There was really nothing stern about Christina Rossetti's religion for its final sanction lay in a harmony of will and purpose. The God of her faith did indeed demand the full service of the soul, but He repaid the sacrifice with interest. In quietness and confidence His servant found her strength.8

Paul E. More contributed this report concerning Christina:

The culmination of her pathetic weariness is always this cry for rest, a cry for supreme acquiescence in the will of Heaven, troubled by no personal volition, no desire, no emotion, save only love that waits for blessed absorption. Her later years became what St. Teresa called a long "prayer of quiet"; and her brother's record of her secluded life in the refuge of his home reads like the saintly story of a cloistered nun. It might be said of her, as of one of the fathers, that she needed not to pray, for her life was an unbroken communion with God... It is a sign of her utter womanliness that envy for the common affections of life was never quite crushed in her heart. Now and then through this monotony of resignation there wells up a


sob of complaint. 9

Virginia Moore presented a different slant on the religious attitude of Christina:

While discounting fame, she wrote poetry worthy of fame; while holding herself unworthy of the veil, she took the veil in every way except outward act. Love was the unsolved problem of her life—the wish to love, the wish to be loved, integral to the human spirit. But deeper than love was religion. And deeper than religion was fear—fear at the roots of her, fear of the known, fear of the unknown, fear of losing the safety of her mother, fear of tempting the terrible wrath of God. Fear was the real reason why she refused to marry James Collinson. . . And fear of man, the reverse side of which was love for Christ, made her renounce Charles Bagot Cayley. . . It [religious incompatibility] was not a reason; it was a despairing woman's excuse to herself and the world.

. . . know her for a member of that unworthy race of fanatics, saints, dire prophets and pure mystics who subsist alternately on fear and faith and whose natural garb is a harsh hair-shirt. Saint Teresa was her sister; Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Mew, Elinor Wylie and Leonie Adams are her kin, though the genealogy be obscure. 10

A quotation by Theo. Watts-Dunton about Christina reads thus:

In worldly matters, her generosity may be described as boundless; but perhaps it is not difficult for a poet to be generous in a worldly sense—to be free in parting with that which can be precious only to commonplace souls. What, however, is not so easy is for one holding such strong religious convictions as Miss Rossetti held to cherish such generous thoughts and feelings as were hers about those to whom her shibboleths meant nothing. This was what made her so beautiful and such a blessing to all. The indurating


effects of a selfish religiosity never withered her soul nor narrowed it. With her, indeed, religion was very love--

A largeness universal like the sun.\textsuperscript{11}

W. J. Stillman expressed his impression of Miss Rossetti in these words:

The faith in the divine flamed out in her with a mild radiance which had in it no earthly warmth. She attracted me very strongly, but I should as soon have thought of falling in love with the Madonna del Gran Duca as with her.\textsuperscript{12}

William Sharp explained the reason why Christina is often believed to have joined the Catholic Church:

The circumstance that a clergyman came regularly to talk and pray with her--to be, in fact, her confessor--is undoubtedly responsible for the assertion that in later life she was a Roman Catholic.\textsuperscript{13}

About Christina's cheerful bearing of the trials of life, Mr. Sharp said:

The weight of the pain of the world, of the sorrow of life, had long made hard the blithe cheerfulness which she bore so passing well, though it was no garment chosen for its own comeliness, but because of its refreshment for others. An ordered grace was hers in all things, and this matter of cheerfulness, she created what she did not inherit; rather she gained by prayer and renunciation and long control, a sunlit serenity which made her mind, for others, a delectable Eden, and her soul a paradise of fragrance and song.


Cheerfulness became a need of spiritual growth,... She had ever, in truth, at least in later life (and my acquaintance with her extended through a period of twelve years) a gracious sweetness that was all her own. An exquisite taciturnity alternated with a not less exquisite courtesy of self-abandonment. ... It was impossible to have with her even the least degree of intimacy and not experience this quietude of charm,—a quality that made her so remote of approach, but so near when reached.14

Katharine Tynan, who became acquainted with Christina about 1885 when she sent her first volume of poems, Louise de la Valliere, to Christina to have the poems evaluated by her, wrote:

... She had scruples about the sadness of her poetry. "I was a melancholy girl," she said, "so I am a very cheerful old lady." She was not an old lady, but she had chosen so far as she could to be Victorian middle-aged. Something of a death-in-life it seemed to the girl coming in from outside, to be shut up in an ill-lit house in Torrington Square, with two or three old ladies getting up to their centuries.15

Katharine Tynan called at Christina's home to inquire about her in her last illness, not hoping or expecting to see her; but as Katharine's name was taken up to Christina, she wished to see her. In regard to Christina's intense human affection, Miss Tynan remarked:

I think in spite of the human passion which beats through much of her poetry she was of the women who are to be Brides of Christ, own sister to St. Teresa and St. Catherine of Siena. Perhaps it was part of


her greatness, of the whole woman she was, that she laid such passionate hold on the human love and relinquished it with such pangs and tears.

She was not Italian for nothing. There was nothing at all of England in her way of loving, the mortal love or the Divine love. She might have been one of those Italian nuns of whom Mrs. Humphrey Ward says that, deprived of their daily Communion, they faint and wither away. She was born mystic. England had no part in her; but England is immeasurably the gainer for that revolutionary bee in the bonnet which drove Gabriele Rossetti out of Italy and into England. Mystic and vestal virgin as she was, she was so much woman that the love she had refused and set on one side, preferring a heavenly love to an earthly, was her inspiration scarcely less than the heavenly.

Her poetry tells that she regarded herself as a sinner. Yet surely no one in our time was more of the stuff of saints, fitter for the Kingdom, than crowned and haloed and palm-branched Santa Christina.

Last year a young English poet, Elizabeth Belloc, the daughter of Hilaire Belloc, presented a charming account of Christina Rossetti. The following paragraphs have been taken from it:

In Christina Rossetti, the genuine religious fire of the Middle Ages finds the typically English outlet of lyric poetry. This is the keynote of her whole life and work. Three-quarters Italian by blood, she was inspired with an ardor and devotion which in Italy would have created a saint of the Catholic Church. If she had not disappeared among the countless unknown saints of the communion, her name would have lived on among the Blessed, with St. Catherine, St. Elizabeth, St. Joan. Her work is a cross-section of the thoughts and feelings that move in a nun's soul, and there is brought out in her, into the bright light of

16. Ibid., pp. 435-36
CHAPTER III

CITATION AND DISCUSSION OF POEMS THAT REFLECT THE RELIGION OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE OF EMILY JANE BRONTÉ AND CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

Poetry, in its many literary forms, may be an expression of the poet's beliefs, convictions, and visions; or the outburst of his feelings and emotions; or the divulging of his passions hidden in the innermost depths of his heart.

This chapter embodies a discussion of the poems which reveal, in so far as can be ascertained, Emily Bronté's and Christina Rossetti's attitude toward earth, their reaction to humankind—social attitudes and self-appraisal, their attitude toward God and formal religion, their feeling toward death, and their conception of life after death.

Attitude Toward the Earth

Several critics are of the opinion that Emily Bronté nurtured in her heart a deep, pagan-like love for the earth. In her poem, "I See Around Me Tombstones Grey,"¹ she makes a firm declaration of her kinship with the earth. The earth is her mother, her nurse who laments the loss of her children

through death.

"Ah mother, what shall comfort thee
In all this boundless misery?"

So firmly rooted was Emily's affection for Mother Earth that not even

"... Heaven itself, so pure and blest"

could wield an attraction powerful enough to draw her spirit to higher levels of love, and clinging tenaciously to earth she cries out,

"We would not leave our native home
For any world beyond the Tomb.
No--rather on thy kindly breast
Let us be laid in lasting rest;
Or waken but to share with thee
A mutual immortality."

If there be immortality, Emily is willing to let the earth share it with her.

In another poem, "Shall Earth No More Inspire Thee," Emily again voices her preference of earth to Heaven.

"Few hearts to mortals given
On earth so wildly pine;
Yet none would ask a Heaven
More like this Earth than thine."

Christina Rossetti, in the poem "Sexagesima," also envisions earth in the role of a kind mother who serves as a stepping-stone to the realms of Heaven for her

2. Ibid., p. 163.

children in their earthly sojourn;

"Mother she is and cradle of our race,
A depth where treasures lie,
The broad foundation of a holy place,
Man's step to scale the sky."

and after death has laid claim on her children, Mother
Earth again takes their mortal remains into her bosom
until the final trumpet blast shall summon all flesh to
rise unto judgment.

"She spreads God's Acre where the happy sleep
All night that is not night."

Heaven holds a greater charm than earth for Chris-
tina. She acknowledges that

"Of beauty earth is full:
Say, to our promised heaven
Can greater charm be given?
Yes, for aye in Heaven doth dwell
Glowing, indestructible
What here below finds tainted birth
For, filling there and satisfying
Man's soul unchanging and undying."4

To Christina earth also meant a place of rest. In
the poem "Rest"5 she calls upon earth to envelop a loved
one so that she may enjoy repose.

"O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her, leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs."

Already in early life Christina sensed the emptiness
and fleetingness of worldly pleasures and she cries out

4. Ibid., 84.
5. Ibid., p. 293
with Ecclesiastes

"Of high and low, of great and small, 
Vanity is the lot of all."

This theme recurs in very many of her poems. About the brevity of man's earthly existence, she says in "The Lowest Room" 6

"A bursting bubble is our life; 
I also, what am I?"

In "Saints and Angels" 7 a similar sentiment prevails.

"This life is but the passage of a day, 
This life is but a pang and all is over."

In the poems "Patience of Hope," 8 "A Vain Shadow," 9 and "The Heart Knoweth its Own Bitterness," 10 Christina set forth her realization of the impermanence of this world. In the first poem she bemoans the passing away of the beauties of nature but in her reverie, consolation comes to her heart at the thought that although

"All come and go, all wax and wane,"

there is One Who is immutable and eternal. In the second poem, the poet expresses an awareness of the deteriorating state of all earthly things.

6. Ibid., p. 16.

7. Ibid., p. 249.

8. Ibid., p. 250.

9. Ibid., p. 283.

10. Ibid., p. 192.
"The world,—what a world, ah me!
Mouldy, worm-eaten, grey:
Vain as a leaf from a tree
As a fading day."

In the third poem, Christina points out that there will never be complete satiety and perfect happiness for man as long as he is

"... in this world of hope deferred,
This world of perishable stuff:--
Eye hath not seen nor ear hath heard
Nor heart conceived that full 'enough':
Here moans the separating sea,
Here harvests fail, here breaks the heart:
There God shall join and no man part,
I full of Christ and Christ of me."

The oft-recurring reference to life's vanities in Christina's poems is faintly re-echoed in some of Emily's. In the poem "Plead For Me" Emily seems to be cognizant of the hollowness of worldly honors and she hints at her reasons for withdrawing into seclusion:

"Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run
And on a strange road journeyed on
Needless alike of Wealth and Power--
Of Glory's wreath and Pleasure's flower."

In "Anticipation" she admits that

"A thoughtful Spirit taught me soon
That we must long till life be done;
That every phase of earthly joy
Will always fade and always cloy--"

and she realizes that no joy in this life is ever unalloyed.

12. Ibid., p. 231.
"A Day Dream" deploys the wedding of joyful May with her lover June. Nature is arrayed in splendor and cheer. The observer, however, is sad because she knows that birds and flowers must pass away. But in a vision spirits come to her telling her to rejoice because life after this life is so pleasant that it behooves her to be joyous.

"Because they live to die."

Sometimes, even awakened, she believes that the prophecy of the spirits is true.

In "How Clear She Shines" Emily again turns to the comforts of fantasy and reverie and manifests her indifference to the praise or blame of the world. She fancies that in the worlds of the stars there are none of the wrongs that afflict this world.

"I'll think there's not one world above,
Where Wisdom ever laughed at Love,
Where Pleasure still will lead to wrong
And helpless Reason warn in vain;
And Truth is weak and Treachery strong,
And Joy the shortest road to Pain;
And Peace, the lethargy of grief;
And Hope, a phantom of the soul;
And Life, a labor void and brief;
And Death, the despot of the whole!"

13. Ibid., pp. 198-200.
Christina was not only deeply imbued with a disgust for life's vanities, but she also entertained a great horror for the allurements of the world. She recalled Christ's warning his followers not to make friends with the world, for in her wickedness she is unsurpassable. In the sonnet "The World" Christina makes some very significant utterances regarding the opposite aspects of the world by day and the world by night. By day the world appears as the sweet, honey-tongued wooer; by night she is recognized as the fiendish prowler she actually is.

"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 hand.
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?"

Christina's realization of the transitoriness of the world about her did not blind her to the charms and beauties of nature and the vastness of the universe. She could feel the pulsation of love in "subtle fountain-rills".

15. Rossetti, *op. cit.*, p. 182
and in "the glow-worm's spark." The weak grass blown to and fro by the wind bespoke strength to her and encouraged her to bow her head in submission to God's designs.

"Tho' knowing little, doing what I know, 
And strong in patient weakness till the end." A rose unveiled in the sun inspired her to place a symbolical utterance at her favorite flower's command:

'I am the most fair 
Yet all my loveliness is born 
Upon a thorn.'

Likewise no virtue is acquired or practiced without self-denial.

The poem "An Old-World Thicket," like many of Christina's nature poems, abounds in symbolism and in imagery noted for its exquisite beauty and its minuteness of detail so characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite art. The poet, conscious of nature's exuberance in song and fruit, deplores her own empty-handed and seemingly fruitless life in an outburst of self-reproach and grief:

"Sweetness of beauty moved me to despair, 
Stung me to anger by its mere content 
Made me lonely. . .


17. Ibid., p. 347.
18. Ibid., p. 136.
19. Ibid., p. 156.
20. Ibid., p. 64.
For all that was but showed what all was not,
But gave clear proof of what might never be;
Making more destitute my poverty,
And yet more blank my lot,
And me much sadder by its jubilee."

Joy can be so intensely sweet and beauty so exquisitely
gorgeous as to cause delightful pain.

Although nature, in its diverse moods and forms,
had moments of darkness, compatible with human despair,
at times it arose in all its splendor and magnificence.

"Soft purple shadows paved the grassy space
And crept from height to height,
Each twig was tipped with gold, each leaf was edged
And veined with gold from the gold-flooded west."

The last two stanzas depict a homeward bound flock of
sleep walking peacefully.

"Mild face by face, and woolly breast by breast,
Patient, sun-brightened too,
Still journeying toward the sunset and their rest."

"Freaks of Fashion" presents a bird council
basily engaged in the selection of new spring styles for
the eager fledglings.  "From House to Home" contains
some pleasantly realistic bits about such humble creatures
as lizards, hedgehogs, and mice.

"My trees were full of songs and flowers and fruit;
And mice lodged in their root."

22. Ibid., p. 20.
In "The Key-note" the bleak, cold winter, "ice-bound, hunger-pinched, and dim," is made more bearable by the robin whose

"... hips and haws and ruddy breast
   Made one spot warm where snowflakes lie."

Unlike Christina, for whom the blasts of winter lingered too long, Emily preferred the

"... wintry light o'er flowerless moors--" and musingly rejoiced that

"... full many a night
   The snow shall clothe those hills afar
   And storms shall add a drearier blight"

before, once again,

"The violet's eye might shyly flash
   And young leaves shoot among the fern."

Reluctantly submitting to the inevitable recurrence of spring and summer, Emily avowed

"Yet my heart loves December's smile
   As much as July's golden beam;
   Then let us sit and watch the while
   The blue ice curdling on the stream."

23. Ibid., p. 397.
24. Ibid., p. 354.
25. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 96.
26. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
27. Ibid., p. 96.
28. Ibid., p. 97.
Emily loved the Yorkshire moors over which

"... the wind was roaring
Through the waned autumnal sky;
Drenching wet, the cold rain pouring
Spoke of stormy winters nigh." 29

There on the heath mingling with the howling winter wind or swaying with the soft summer breezes, Emily could find an outlet for the wild, pent-up, untameable, as well as the more tender and calmer, feelings rampant in the inner recesses of her free and pagan soul. With Shakespeare’s King Lear she could conjure the forces of nature:

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" 30

The "Night-Wind" 31 held a particular enchantment for Emily. Through the open window in the stillness of the night it whispered lowly to her that

"... Heaven was glorious
And sleeping Earth was fair!"

Unwilling to heed the night-wind’s beckoning and resisting its inspirations, Emily bade it

"Play with the scented flower,
The young tree’s supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow!"

29. Ibid., p. 90.


31. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 146.
However, the night visitant refused to depart and pressing a warm kiss, sweetly sighed, "I'll win thee 'gainst thy will."

Pursuingly and hauntingly the homeless and eternal wind persisted:

"Have we not been from childhood friends?
Have I not loved thee long?
As long as thou hast loved the night
Whose silence wakes my song.

And when thy heart is laid at rest
Beneath the church-yard stone
I shall have time enough to mourn
And thou to be alone."

Whilst there was still a home at Haworth, Emily could not live elsewhere. Nothing was dearer to her than the old house where she could watch

"The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The garden-walk with weeds o'ergrown."

Before her eyes stretched a panorama of

"... a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side;
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere--"33

Few and limited in variety were the flowers growing on the misty uplands. Emily, like Christina, apparently had her favorite among the flowers. She showed a predilection

32. Ibid., p. 94

33. Loc. cit.
for the blue bell or the harebell, for it was

"Dear to me in deep green dells--
Dearest on the mountains wild."34

In the poem "The Bluebell"35 she definitely stated why she preferred the blue bell saying

"The blue bell is the sweetest flower
That waves in summer air;
Its blossoms have the mightiest power
To soothe my spirit's care.

There is a spell in purple heath
Too wildly, sadly dear;
The violet has a fragrant breath
But fragrance will not cheer."

Shortly before Emily's death her sister Charlotte scoured the glens and sheltered crevices of the heath for a lingering heather-bell to bring to Emily.

Neither poet was unconscious and unappreciative of the beautiful and agreeable aspects of nature nor was either insensible and indifferent to nature's grim and disagreeable realities. Emily was passionately attached to earth, for it refrained from impinging on her liberty but satisfied the cravings of her stubborn will. Christina detached herself from the earth and its false and empty pleasures, recognizing in a cornfield the field of some unearthly harvest and in the distant hills the Everlasting Hills of the heavenly Jerusalem.

34. Ibid., p. 94.
35. Ibid., p. 106.
"All things in tune, myself not out of tune," Christina wrote in the twenty-first sonnet of "Later Life: A Double Sonnet of Sonnets." The entire irrational creation formed a sweet melodious symphony in the praise of its Creator. And yet the world's pleasant harmonies are incomparable to the joy that reigns in heaven among the angels over the return of a repentant sinner.

"Yet than the voice of the whole World
There is a sweeter voice,
That maketh all the Cherubim
And Seraphim rejoice:

That crieth at the golden door
And gaineth entrance in:
That the palm-branched and radiant crown
And glorious throne may win:--
The lowly prayer of a Poor Man
Who turneth from his sin." 37

Reaction to Humankind--Social Attitudes
and Self-appraisal

Perhaps the best and most reliable criterion to use in analyzing a poet's philosophy of life is a careful consideration of his dealings and contacts with human beings whether they be real people or purely imaginary ones.

Neither Christina nor Emily mingled with society,

36. Rossetti, op. cit., p. 79.
37. Ibid., p. 113.
and they were hardly ever seen outside of their immediate home circle. Yet their poems are replete with feelings of love, kindness, pity, and forgiveness toward their fellowmen.

Emily never sought human associations; she seldom experienced them even casually and avoided them carefully. This aloofness and shyness left her knowledge of human nature very limited. Her manifest antipathy and passionate aversion to every alien and external contact drove her home from Brussels. Yet her feeling toward people around her was benevolent. Most of Emily's poems pertain to scenes and characters in the "Gondal epic" and are expressions of imagined feelings and situations. There are poems of war, of conquest, of rivalry. The poet's imaginary people are motivated by emotions which in part reveal the inner life of Emily Brontë herself. She alternately pities and scorns the unfortunate who has been enslaved by vice and begs Heaven to be merciful to him.

1. The Gondal story has its setting on an imaginary island in the North Pacific. Emily, with her sister Anne, peopled Gondal with an imaginary race of strong, passionate, and liberty-loving people. Emily's prose literature, forming a full detailed background for the Gondal poems, has been lost, with the exception of a short journal fragment. The poems, recently edited by Mr. C. W. Hatfield from the manuscripts as Emily wrote them, were composed through a period of twelve years and are highly objective. Miss Fannie E. Ratchford, a Brontë critic, has arranged the poems as the Gondal epic.
"Well some may hate, and some may scorn
But my sad heart must ever mourn
Thy ruined hopes, thy blighted fame.

One word turned back my gushing tears
And lit my altered eye with sneers.

Do I despise the timid deer
Because his limbs are fleet with fear.

Let pity's heart as tender be:
Say, "Earth lie lightly on that breast,
And, kind Heaven, grant that spirit rest." 

In "The Wanderer from the Fold" Emily shows the fickleness of human friendship, and bewailing her inability to help an erring one who has deviated from the straight path, she pledges her sympathy and a kind remembrance of him.

"How few, of all the hearts that loved
Are grieving for thee now!

I marked the whitening wave,
And wept above thy fate the more
Because I could not save.

It reeks not now, when all is over;
But yet my heart will be
A mourner still, though friend and lover
Have both forgotten thee!"

Thoughts of imprisonment and exile must have wrung sighs of anguish from Emily's liberty-loving heart. A prisoner, pining away in the thralls of a wet dungeon,

---


"I used to weep even in my sleep
The night was dreadful, like the day.
I flung myself upon the stone
I howled and tore my tangled hair,
And then, when the first gush had flown,
Lay in an unspeakable despair.

Sometimes a curse, sometimes a prayer
Would quiver on my parched tongue;
But both without a murmur there
Died in the breast from whence they sprung."

Then the captive bolsters up hope and courage anew to
"Shake off the fetters, break the chain
And live and love and smile again."

On different occasions, Emily had tasted the pangs of homesickness for her moors, and she became sad on seeing others destined to suffer the same fate. Willingly she offers herself vicariously.

"If Heaven would rain on me
That future storm of care,
So their fond hearts were free
I'd be content to bear."

At eighteen Emily wrote a poem which is an expression of disillusionment and loneliness.

"In secret pleasure, secret tears,
This changeful life has slipped away
As friendless after eighteen years,
As lone as on my natal day."
Once she loved people and longed for someone to love her. At first she trusted men, but through sad experiences she found mankind to be "all hollow, servile, insincere;" but what was worse, she had come to doubt herself.

Emily's biographers seem to be rather certain that she never had an attraction for romance. Yet she wrote poems about faithful and unfaithful love. Mr. Bradby says that "Emily was a poet and poets can feel passionately about imagined experiences as well as about contacts with real life." Tennyson's "Maud" illustrates this statement. In the poem "Remembrance," which she probably composed at Brussels, the passion of human love is very marked and vehement. The theme of the poem is fidelity to a first and only love.

"No other Sun has lightened up my heaven; No other Star has ever shone for me: All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given-- All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee."

The same loyalty of love to love rings true in another poem.

"The heart I love, whate'er betide, Is faithful as the grave And neither foreign lands divide Nor yet the rolling wave."

9. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 223
10. Ibid., p. 118.
Emily could imagine and feel the bitterness and woe that engulfed the heart of a husband betrayed and deserted by his wedded love. Driven by grief and frenzy to end his own life, he desires her

"... pictured face to view;
And then I go to prove if God, at least, be true!

There, go, Deceiver, go! My hand is streaming wet;
My heart's blood flows to buy the blessing--To forget!
Oh could that lost heart give back, back again to thine,
One tenth part of the pain that clouds my dark decline!

And yet for all her hate, each parting glance would tell
A stronger passion breathed, burned in this last farewell.
Unconquered in my soul the Tyrant rules me still;
Life bows to my control, but Love I cannot kill!

Emily never manifested fondness and love for children or playmates, but she wrote a charming little lullaby for the infant of a Gondalan heroine:

"This shall be thy lullaby
Rocking on the stormy sea,
Though it roar in thunder wild
Sleep, stilly sleep, my dark haired child.

When our shuddering boat was crossing Elderno lake so rudely tossing
Then 'twas first my nursling smiled;
Sleep, softly sleep, my fair browed child.

11. Ibid., pp. 86-87
Waves above thy cradle break,
Foamy tears are on thy cheek
Yet the Ocean's self grows mild
When it bears my slumbering child.\textsuperscript{12}

Several very fine poems are unplaced in the
Gondal story, but they are highly personal and indicative
of Emily's moods and attitudes. She avows that in
"ardent youth" she was a militant defender of truth and
right.

"For truth, for right, for liberty,
I would have gladly, freely died."\textsuperscript{13}

Now she has quit fighting, not because she believes less
in these inalienable prerogatives, but because she is
conscious of the futility of the struggle.

The first two stanzas of the poem "Strong I Stand\textsuperscript{14}
portray the natural, proud Emily Brontë who scorns
"All the puny ways of men;"
but the last two stanzas express Emily's realization of
the weakness of her first attitude.

"With the humble I will be;
Haughty men are nought to me."

In four short lines Emily utters this strange and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 71
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 129
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 55-56
\end{itemize}
cynical remark,

"Had there been falsehood in my breast
No thorns had marred my road,"\textsuperscript{15}

Emily seems to infer that had she made compromises with honor, she should have had no difficulties.

"My Comforter"\textsuperscript{16} contains passages typical of Emily's inner fire:

"Deep down--concealed within my soul,
That light lies hid from men,
Yet glows unquenched--"

Visions of black dungeons, of hopeless parting, of frenzy and agony are threatening to overpower her strong and rugged soul.

"So stood I, in Heaven's glorious sun
And in the glare of Hell
My spirit drank a mingled tone
Of seraph's song and demon's moan--
What my soul bore my soul alone
Within itself may tell."

Whether the Comforter was a heavenly or an earthly being, is undiscernible.

In the poem "Lines"\textsuperscript{17} Emily holds out encouragement for the joyless struggle; Christina emphasizes the rest and not the struggle. In "Who Shall Deliver Me?"\textsuperscript{18} Christina impetrates God for grace to curb her evil

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 188
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 195
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{18} Rossetti, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 228.
cravings for "ease, rest, and joys:"

"Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go."

Through some of her poems runs a thread of weariness and ennui. In one of the sonnets from "Later Life,"¹⁹ the poet declares that she is sick of every place and everything around her:

"I am sick of self, and there is nothing new;
Oh weary impatient patience of my lot!—"

In another sonnet from "Later Life"²⁰ she is obviously so weighted down with heaviness of spirit that she is incapable of shaking off this oppressive spell. Recalling the unweariness of her Lord, she begs to be remembered "as once the Thief in Paradise."

"So tired am I, so weary of to-day,
So unrefreshed from foregone weariness
So overburdened by foreseen distress

I scarce can rouse myself to watch or pray
To hope, or aim, or toil ..."

Much of Christina's poetry is tinged with sadness and has an undertone of melancholy arising from a feeling of spiritual depression or a sense of self-reproof. In "What Would I give?"²¹ she expresses a deep concern for

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19. Ibid., p. 78.
20. Ibid., p. 74.
her "heart of stone ice-cold" and "of all hearts the worst of all." In "Downcast"²² the poet wishes that she were a morning star, a perfect rose, or a spotless lily doing some good for mankind. But as it is

"... I, only I,
Am changed and sad and cold, while in my soul
The very fountain of delight is dry."

"Come Unto Me," "Symbols," and "In Patience" convey the same sentiments.

In "Songs for Strangers and Pilgrims" Christina states that alternating joys and sorrows are allocated to every human being. Every cloud has a silver lining, and every Good Friday has its Easter morning. There is no joy without its attendant sorrow; there is no sorrow without its consequent joy.

"Sorrow hath a double voice,
   Sharp to-day but sweet to-morrow:

Pleasure hath a double taste,
   Sweet to-day but sharp to-morrow:

Pleasure set aside to-day
   Comes again to rule to-morrow:
   Welcomed sorrow will not stay,
   Farewell to sorrow!"²³

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²². Ibid., p. 328.
²³. Ibid., p. 142.
In another breath she says that "a merry heart is a continual feast,"\(^{24}\) for its sunny smile and its buoyant spirit is like a refreshing fountain.

In spite of her secluded and cloistral life, Christina had many intimate contacts with the nieces and nephews of her brother William's family in which she lived for a short time. "Sing-Song--a Nursery Rhymebook" bears this prefatory note--"Rhymes dedicated without permission to the baby who suggested them."\(^{25}\) This infant was the son of Professor Arthur Cayley, a close friend of Christina. Her tender and motherly heart prompted her to color her verse with simple and childlike imagery, such as the moon "within a misty veil,"\(^{26}\) or the daisy standing "up like a star,"\(^{27}\) or the swallow dipping and curving in its flight.

"Fly away, fly away over the sea,
Sun-loving swallow, for summer is done."\(^{28}\)

Occasionally she slipped into these verses a note of sadness, such as erecting "a tombstone of snow" for "a song-singing thrush"\(^{29}\) or "motherless children on the wide,\(^{29}\)

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"Goblin Market"\textsuperscript{31} is a charming, fantastic fairy tale full of merry elfin laughter and elfin enticements. The goblins lure "sweet-tooth Laura" to barter her golden lock for the luscious fruits grown in "that unknown orchard." It is an allegory and pleases even nine-year-old children who have had experience with fairy lore and poetry. It is regrettable that Christina did not write more poetry for children beyond the nursery level.

Christina expresses her belief in and her admiration for man's wonderful potentialities and capacities of assuring himself a happy earthly life and a blissful eternity thereafter in these lines:

"Little and great is man:
Great if he will, or if he will
A pigmy still;
For what he will he can."\textsuperscript{32}

Thoroughly imbued with true Christian charity, Christina was always mindful of our Lord's injunction, "Love your neighbor as yourself." She exemplifies this law of love in "Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock"\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 436.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 121.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 147.
\end{itemize}
in which she depicts a wealthy princess, who, indignantly refusing to harbor our Lord in the person of a poor widow, an old man, and an innocent child, merits the rebuke,

"Thou didst it not unto the least of these, And in them hast not done it unto Me."

"Despised and Rejected" presents the same theme.

Assiduously she avoided every act or word which would give scandal to her fellowmen, and she exhorts all to

"Lead lives of Love, that others who Behold your lives may kindle too With Love and cast their lots with you."\textsuperscript{34}

In many of her poems, Christina reiterated a longing to love and to be loved.

"Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone, My heart that breaketh for a little love. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . All love, are loved, save only I: their hearts Beat warm with love and joy, . . . . ."\textsuperscript{35}

Love seems to have been her vocation. Christina's love for her mother was more than mere filial affection; it was an idealization, a passionate loyalty. In her tender years, Christina wrote her first poem in honor of her mother's birthday and presented it to her with a nosegay:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 347.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 344-345.
\end{quote}
"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."\(^{36}\)

Several years before her mother's death, Christina prefaced her book of poems with a "Dedicatory Sonnet"\(^{37}\) which betokens her childlike devotion and gratitude towards her mother.

"Sonnets are full of love, and this my tome
Has many sonnets; so here now shall be
One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me
To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,
To my first Love, my Mother, . . . ."

While visiting friends in the country, Christina penned "Lines to my Grandfather," which reveals her love, deference and obedience toward her beloved grandpa. It is a child's account of nature's decking herself with blossoms and flowers in early spring.

When her nephew Michael, William's youngest son, was dying, Christina begged and obtained permission to baptize the infant. Her brother doubts whether any act in her life gave Christina as much true joy and heartfelt

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 82.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. lxxiii.
satisfaction. She felt certain that she had through the baptismal rite added to the ranks of the Holy Innocents another

"... blessed Michael in heaven's lofty dome
Without a sword.

The youngest bud of five,
The least lamb of the fold,
Bud not to blossom, yet to thrive
Away from cold:
Lamb which we shall not see
Leap at its pretty pranks,
Our lamb at rest and full of glee
On heavenly banks." 38

Twice romance deeply engaged Christina's heart and each time religious scruples brought the affair to an end. The second experience, however, left its indelible impression upon her sensitive, restrainedly but deeply passionate nature. In that gorgeous lyric "A Birthday" 39 the poet greets love with the blithesome heart of a singing bird and reveals the meaning of love to her.

"My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is a gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

38. Ibid., pp. 412-413.
39. Ibid., p. 335
Raise me a dais of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me."

This ecstatic song of gladness finds a counterpart in the sonnet sequence "Monna Innominata." 40 Here in the role of a Beatrice answering Dante, or in the guise of a Laura disclosing her heart to Petrarch, Christina allows a passing glimpse into the depths of that love to which she had denied earthly fulfilment:

"But by my heart of love laid bare to you  
My love that you can make not void nor vain,  
Love that foregoes you but to claim anew  
Beyond this passage of the gate of death,  
I charge you at the Judgment make it plain  
My love of you was life and not a breath."

As she draws her drama of love to a close, she utters these poignant and superb lines:

"Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?  
The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,  
A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;  
The silence of a heart which sang its songs  
While youth and beauty made a summer morn,  
Silence of love that cannot sing again."

In "The Convent Threshold" 41 the theme again is renunciation of earthly love. The poet standing on the

40. Ibid., p. 58.  
41. Ibid., p. 340.
threshold of her convent encourages her lover to renounce the world and follow her footsteps in treading the narrow, rugged road to eternal joys. In revealing the struggle raging within herself, she says:

"My words were slow, my tears were few; But through the dark my silence spoke Like thunder."

To show how much pain and suffering her high resolve cost her, she continues:

"If now you saw me you would say: Where is the face I used to love? And I would answer: Gone before, It tarrys veiled in Paradise."

"A Bride Song"42 is very fine love poem abounding in excellent concrete details which make it distinctively Pre-Raphaelite. It contains strains characteristic of the early Tennyson. The poet singer is willing to forego all the joys that come to her from the beauties of nature and is ready to sacrifice even the comforts of life to have a tryst with her beloved.

"The desert would be As gushing of waters to me, The wilderness be as a rose, If it led me to thee, O my love."

Other soul-searching poems are "Husband and Wife," "Wife to Husband," and "Shall I Forget."

42. Ibid., p. 390
It is not hard to understand that the poet’s renunciation of this great passion of her life demanded a great sacrifice. The poem "Memory" is the expression of conscious renunciation from which emanates a lasting pain resulting from the desire to possess that which was relinquished.

"None know the choice I make: I make it still
None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
Breaking mine idol . . . ."

Perhaps it is part of her womanly greatness that she held on to human love with such tenacity and denounced it with such pangs. In "The Lowest Room" is a detectable feeling of personal envy for the common affections of life. Christina contrasts the life of two sisters: one chose the ordinary lot of a woman with a husband and family; the other, like the poet, chose the consolations of lonely patience with Mary of Bethania. Visions of earthly love never forsook her completely but abode with her as a dream.

"O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet
Whose awakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

..................
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago."\(^45\)

Had Christina not been a woman who was capable of intense
feeling and strong affection, she would never have espoused
religion so fervently. A firm determination welled up in
her heart to heed the voice calling from afar, "Follow,
follow,"\(^46\) and she resigned herself to be
"Unseeking and unsought."\(^47\)

Attitude Toward God and Formal Religion

There is a wide difference between the religious
convictions of Christina Rossetti and those of Emily
Brontë. Christina's renunciation of earthly love evolved
from her unswerving fidelity to her religious principles.

"I took the perfect balances and weighed;
No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise;
Weighed: found it wanting: not a word I said,
But silent made my choice."\(^1\)

Like the author of the *Imitation of Christ*,\(^2\) she

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2. A 15th century treatise on Christian perfection
   by Thomas a Kempis.
was unwilling to be consoled by any creature, and she sought comfort in communings with her Divine Savior. She chose to crown her self-denial with thorns rather than with bridal lilies, and embracing her cross, she often kissed it and perhaps even moistened it with her tears. Lifting up her eyes to heaven she pleads with her thorn-crowned King:

"Accept the whole, my God, accept my heart
   And its own love within:" 3

Then there seem to follow moments of faltering in her noble choice, and with a divided heart she confesses

"I love and I love not: Lord it breaks my heart
   To love and not to love.
   Thou veiled within Thy glory gone apart
   Into Thy shrine which is above,
   Dost Thou not love me Lord, or care
   For this mine ill?"...  
"I love thee here or there
   I will accept thy broken heart--lie still." 4

In the poems "Afterward He Repented" and "Worship God," Christina voices regret and remorse for her reluctance in heeding Christ's invitation to dedicate her young heart to His service; in "Sursum Corda" and "Not Yours But You," she fearfully but hopefully listens for the "Give Me thy heart" 5 and willingly acquiesces.

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4. Ibid., p. 242.

5. Ibid., p. 130.
Christina had an ardent faith in God and a personal love for Him. She believed in the Unity and Trinity of the Godhead. She opens "Later Life" with a profession of her belief in the eternal existence of God when she says,

"Before the mountains were brought forth, before Earth and the world were made, then God was God:
And God will still be God when flames shall roar Round earth and heaven dissolving at His nod:"

She regards God as a just Father Who does not fail to mete out to each one according to his deserts.

"And this God is our God, even while His rod Of righteous wrath falls on us smiting sore:
And this God is our God forever more,
Through life, through death, while clod returns to clod."

Her confidence in God is not shaken even though He should chastise her, for whom God loves He chastises.

"For though He slay us we will trust in Him;
We will flock home to Him by divers ways:
Yea, though He slay us we will vaunt His praise."

In "I Do Set My Bow in the Cloud" a steadfast confidence in God's inscrutable wisdom and a resignation to His Divine Providence prevails.

6. Ibid., p. 73.
7. Loc. cit.
8. Loc. cit.
She proves her acceptance of the belief in a Triune God in "Martyrs' Song."  

"God the Father give us grace
To walk in the light of Jesus' Face:
God the Son give us a part
In the hiding-place of Jesus' Heart:
God the Spirit so hold us up
That we may drink of Jesus' cup."

Christina also believed in the Divinity of Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father.

"For unto us a Child is born
Upon this happy Christmas morn:
For unto us a Son is given,
First born of God . . . "

Realizing our unworthiness to thank God adequately for His gift, the poet proffers the Christ Child as a commensurate reciprocal.

Another poem, in which Christina evinces that Christ is God, is "Thou art Fairer than the Children of Men." 

She declares that Christ

". . . is Rose of Sharon nobly born,
Our Rose without a thorn;
And He is Lily of the Valley, He
Most sweet in purity
But when we come to name Him as He is,
Godhead, Perfection, Bliss,
All tongues fall silent, while pure hearts alone
Complete their orison."

10. Ibid., p. 236.
11. Ibid., p. 117.
12. Ibid., p. 226.
In "The Love of Christ Which Passeth Knowledge"\(^1\) Christina hears Christ speak to her as her Redeemer:

"I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame; I, God, Priest, Sacrifice."

In confirming Christ's words: "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, it shall be given unto you," Christina says:

"In Thee God's promise is Amen and Yea. . . . . . . . . . .
Shepherd and Door, our Life and Truth and Way:
Nay, Lord, what art Thou not?"\(^1\)

It seems strange that Christina should consider the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, a cardinal error in Roman Catholicism when she herself manifested such deep love toward Jesus Christ, Mary's Son. Could she disown the mother of her Redeemer? She unites her praises of the Blessed Virgin Mother with Wordsworth's "Our tainted nature's solitary boast"\(^1\) in the poem "The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin,"

"Purity born of a Maid:
Was such a Virgin defiled?
Nay, by no shade of a shade.
She offered her gift of pure love
A dove with a fair fellow-dove.
She offered her Innocent Child

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 215.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 223-224.

The Essence and Author of Love;
The Lamb that indwelt by the Dove
Was spotless and holy and mild;
More pure than all other,
More pure than His Mother
Her God and Redeemer and Child."16

She salutes Mary with the Archangel Gabriel's
greeting

"All hail!
Blessed among women, highly favoured."17

and, like Gerard Manly Hopkins, who calls Mary's rose

"Christ Jesus, our Lord, her God and her Son,"18

Christina styles Mary in one of her poems the

"Rose delicious, but that
Jesus is the one Delight;
Flower of women, but her Firstborn is
mankind's one flower:"19

and in another she says

". . . He is Rose of Sharon nobly born
But when we come to name Him as He is,
Godhead, Perfection, Bliss."20

In the school of self-abnegation, Christina became
sensitively alert to her failings and spiritual needs of
life. Once she had a high opinion of herself but now in
the spirit of true humility, she prays:

18. Roy J. Deferrari, Appreciation through Reading
20. Ibid., p. 226.
"Lord, I am waiting, weeping, watching for Thee: 
My youth and hope lie by me buried and dead, 
My wandering love hath not where to lay its head 
Except Thou say, 'Come to Me.'" 21

She alleges that once she placed her trust in her own strength and, like the foolish man in the Gospel, built her house on the sand, to see her hopes and ambitions shattered; but now she despises honors and beseeches God,

"Give me the lowest place; not that I dare Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died That I might live and share Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me That lowest place too high, make one more low Where I may sit and see My God and love Thee so." 22

Her brother William Michael ordered the last stanza of this poem to be inscribed as an epitaph on her tombstone in 1895, as he thought it a fitting expression of her un- faltering faith and confident hope.

Christina's religious life approaches very nearly the life of a nun whose first and foremost duty is to strive for Christian perfection thereby glorifying God and insuring the salvation of her own immortal soul and

22. Ibid., p. 237.
then drawing souls to God through her exemplary life. In "Every One That is Perfect Shall Be as his Master" the poet, asking how we can all become Saints, answers that the love of God can make us like St. Peter or like Christ's bosom friend, St. John. As another prerequisite for becoming perfect, she proposes dying daily to self as the Saints did.

"Bear all they bear without replying;
They grieve as tho' they did not grieve,
Uplifting praise with prayer and sighing."

Only in very few poems does Christina assume the role of a moralist. Conscious, however, of Job's words that "man's life on earth is a warfare," she warns mankind against its three sworn enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Each tempter in turn sets before the poet his allurements who rebuffs him each time by holding before him the infinite graces merited for us by Christ through His death on the cross.

"Sweet, thou art young."
"So He was young
Who for my sake in silence hung
Upon the Cross with Passion wrung."

"Look, thou art fair."
"He was more fair
Than men, Who deigned for me to wear
A visage marred beyond compare."

23. Ibid., p. 213.
"And thou hast riches."
"Daily bread:
All else is His: Who, living, dead,
For me lacked where to lay His Head."

"And life is sweet."
"It was not so
To Him, Whose Cup did overflow
With mine unutterable woe." 25

Most of Christina's poems grouped under "Christ Our All in All" are pious aspirations and ejaculatory outpourings of her soul to Christ in which she pleads for her own spiritual interests so that her prayers seem to savor of selfishness and self-centeredness. But upon closer examination one finds that she does not seem to be unmindful of her obligation to pray for the spiritual and temporal needs of all men. Her social consciousness is not an arraignment of man for sins nor a cry to him to change or mend his ways, but rather a prayer to God for man.

"Lord, speak and grant us ears to hear Thee speak;
Lord, come to us and grant us eyes to see;
Lord, make us meek, for Thou Thyself art meek;
Lord, Thou art Love, fill us with charity." 26

Emily's religion is a little like that of Milton's Lucifer and Byron's Manfred. She is too proud and independent to ask much even of God. In "The Old Stoic" 27

25. Ibid., p. 146.
26. Ibid., p. 169.
27. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 163.
she expresses her need for one thing--liberty.

"And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is--"Leave the heart that now I bear
And give me liberty."

. . . . . . . . . . . . .
'Tis all that I implore--
Through life and death, a chainless soul
With courage to endure!"

Her stern and unbending soul had a strong dislike for
creeds or religion. She rejected all religious views
which she had heard promulgated from her father's pulpit
every Sunday. In "No Coward Soul Is Mine"28 she cries out

"Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of Immortality."

Emily tolerated no intermediary and had no use for
anything that stood between her and God.

There seem to be some mystic elements--not neces-
sarily religious--in "The Prisoner."29 The poet envisions
a woman captive "confined in triple walls" and "darkly
lodged" who is visited and consoled by an unearthly mes-
senger who


29. Ibid., p. 236.
". . . comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars;"

Then the poet describes the course of this ecstatic phenomenon.

"But first a hush of peace, soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.
Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels—"

"Oh dreadful is the check—intense the agony" when the spirit is released from the ecstatic union and brought down to the realms of bodily consciousness. And yet the privileged soul seems to be willing to suffer

". . . no torture less;
The more that anguish racks the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald Death, the vision is divine."

In "The Night-Wind" there is also a touch of mysticism and enchantment in the persisting voice of the angel lover.

Emily believed in the indestructible God within her self, her immortal soul, the breath of God, and she
gives expression of this conviction when she asserts

"O God within my breast
   Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in Thee."30

Attitude toward Death

and Conception of Life after

Death

In their attitude toward death, the two poets are
direct opposites. Christina harbors almost a luxurious
attitude toward death whereas that of Emily is rather
belligerent. The earth, the grave, quiet death seem
beautiful to Christina. Emily recognizes the necessity
of death, but manifests no yearning for it or a pleasant
anticipation of it.

Emily defied death to her last breath with an
indomitable will.

"No promised Heaven, these wild Desires
   Could all or half fulfil;
No threatened Hell, with quenchless fires,
   Subdue this quenchless will!"1

But grim death tore her out of a happy life as she tried
to rise from her sofa. She was detached from human asso-
ciations, but she had an unconquerable love of life. In

30. Ibid., p. 243.

1. Ibid., p. 220.
"The Philosopher"² she expresses this love:

"I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
Nor stretching eager hands to Death
Implored to change for lifeless rest
This sentient soul, this living breath."

Disdainfully she upbraids death for its impotence in destroying the soul.

"There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void
Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed."³

In another poem she states her belief in the immortality of the soul which must be free from the shackles of sin before it can enjoy the Beatific Vision.

"I know our souls are all divine;
I know that when we die,
What seems the vilest, even like thine
A part of God himself shall shine
In perfect purity."⁴

Emily seems to have some idea of eternity which she calls "the gulph o'er which mortality has never been."⁵

She usually does not give an exact description of heaven or hell but suggests the escape of the soul into nature, mingling there with the earth, the sky, and the wind.

Here and there in her poems, she inserts a line which

². Ibid., p. 221.
³. Ibid., pp. 243-244.
⁴. Ibid., p. 143.
⁵. Ibid., p. 38.
gives a rather vague hint of heaven, such as "I see
heaven's glories shine" or "and from that world of heav-
enly light." However, in one poem she mentions that at
the death of good men the Saints swell their heavenly
music for joy that another one has been added to their
number.

"... with louder sound
The golden harp-string quiver
When good men gain the happy ground
Where they must dwell forever."

Likewise, she states that for the souls of those who abuse
the time of grace, God's wrath

"... . . . . . . . .
Will never pity know,
Will mock its victim's maddened prayer,
Will triumph in his woe.

Shut from his Maker's smile
The accursed man shall be:
Compassion reigns a little while,
Revenge eternally."

Christina's poem "Introspective" is very much like
Emily's "Old Stoic" in its bold defiance of fate, an atti-
tude not very common in Christina's poetry.

"I did not start when the torture stung
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Let it come tenfold if come it must
But I will not groan when I bite the dust."

7. Ibid., p. 173.
8. Ibid., p. 120.
9. Ibid., p. 121
As previously stated, death was a "welcome, holy slumber, holy quiet"\textsuperscript{11} to Christina. She looked upon death as an escape from loneliness, remorse, fears, and earthly vanities. These sentiments permeate many of her poems. Death was also a rest from the weariness, pains and sorrows of this earthly life, for

"Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be."\textsuperscript{12}

In "Looking Forward"\textsuperscript{13} Christina expresses a longing for peace and hope that she may bring forth fruit in eternity.

"My quickened dust may blossom at your feet.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

. . . she has her wish at last;
Barren through life, but in death bearing fruit."

Christina had often felt that her life was devoid of fruits and good works. In "Symbols"\textsuperscript{14} she wreaked wrath upon a rosebud which failed to blossom and upon a pair of birds for neglecting to raise their young, only to merit this rebuke from them:

"Because we failed dost thou complain?
Is thy wrath just? And what if God,

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 112.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 293.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 294.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 116.
Who waiteth for thy fruits in vain,  
Should also take the rod?"

In some of her poems on death, the poet regards death in the same light as St. Francis de Sales, who says that it is "the drawing out of this miserable life in which we live dying and continually die living." In "Later Life" she bids death to

"Unveil thy face, 0 Death who art not Death."

and in "Night and Death" Christina affirms that some day this truth shall be acknowledged by all.

"When earth's fleeting day is flown,  
All created things shall own,  
Death is Life, and Death alone."

Miss Elizabeth Belloc stated that in Christina Rossetti

... there is a death within a death. There is the mystical death of the soul courageously accepted in the name of life to come. Throughout her work there is a sense of this life being dead to her and she seems to strive and stumble across its shards toward the magnificent promise of another life, whose sunrise colors were always dawning before her eyes and whose music was always echoing in her soul.

There were moments in Christina's life that filled her with fear that she "May miss the goal at last, may

17. Ibid., p. 109.
miss a crown."19

This thought spurred her on to bear as well as she could the

"Heat and burden of the day,
Struggling, panting up to God."20

On her journey to eternity, the poet wonders and questions herself

"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 that door."21

In a few of Christina's poems, there seems to be an intimation of a place or state of detention of the soul after death before entering upon the joys of heaven. The poet may refer to Purgatory in these lines:

"One dreamless sleep from work and sorrow
But re-awakening on the morrow."22

Similar strains are found in "Sleeping at Last," and "When I am Dead, my Dearest."

Katharine Lee Bates wrote this beautiful and fitting poem on the passing of Christina:

"It was little for her to die,
For her to whom breath was prayer,
For her who had long put by
Earth-desire;

22. Ibid., p. 238.
Who had knelt in the Holy Place
And had drunk the incense air,
Till her soul to seek God's face
Leapt like fire."

Through many of her poems rings the cry of yearning for heaven:

"It's oh in Paradise that I fain would be,
Away from earth and weariness and all beside:
Earth is too full of loss with its dividing sea,
But Paradise upbuilds the bower for the bride." 24

In "Passing Away" 25 she longingly and patiently awaits the final summons of her heavenly Bridegroom who assures her of His coming:

"Though I tarry, wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray:
Arise, come away, night is past and lo it is day,
My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.
Then I answered: Yea."

Christina's vision of Paradise was clear and her many poems on this subject abound in numerous concrete and detailed descriptions of the blessed:

"Multitudes, multitudes stood up in bliss
Made equal to the angels, glorious fair:
With palms, harps, wedding-garments, kiss of peace
And crowned and haloed hair.

25. Ibid., p. 191.
They sang a song, a new song in the height,
   Harping with harps to Him who is strong
   and true:
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new
   light,
   Lo all things were made new.

Each face looked one way like a moon new-lit,
   Each face looked one way towards its Sun
   of Love;
Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored it
   And knew no end thereof."26

In the poem "Eye Hath Not Seen"27 the poet distin-
guishes no difference in the glory and happiness of Saints
and Angels, for

"... Angels flying to and fro
   Are not more white
   Than Penitents some while ago,
   Now Saints in light:
   Once soiled and sad--
   Cleansed now and crowned, fulfilled and
   glad."

Apparently, Christina is convinced that the bond
of earthly ties which existed between members of a family
is not dissolved or diminished in heaven but rather en-
hanced.

"Now yearning through the perfect rest
   Perhaps they gaze.
   Earthwards upon their best-beloved
   In all earth's ways:

27. Ibid., p. 148.
Longing, but not
With pain, as used to be their lot."\(^{28}\)

The poem "Advent" contains the same trend of thought.
The triumphant souls in heaven keep an ever watchful eye
on their militant brethren here below:

"Friends watch us who have touched the goal.
They urge us, come up higher.
With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ.--They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb.

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."\(^{29}\)

The greater part of this poem was set to music for
Christina's funeral service at Christ Church. Her brother
William heard it sung and testified that it was beautiful
and touching.

With St. John in the Apocalypse, Christina soars
into the insurmountable heights of the Heavenly City where

"Twelve thousand times twelve thousand voices
in unison,
Swell the triumph, swell the praise of
Christ the King."\(^{30}\)

and follow the Lamb whither it goes. Among this infinite

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 149.


\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 211.
multitude, she perceives representatives of all ranks and stations in life:

"Great mitred priests, great kings in crowns of gold, Patriots who head the army of their sons, Matrons and mothers by their own extolled, Wise and most harmless holy little ones, Virgins who, making merry, lead the dance, Full-breathed victorious racers from all runs, Home-comers out of every change and chance, Hermits restored to social neighbourhood, Aspects which reproduce One Countenance, Life-losers with their losses all made good, All blessed hungry and athirst sufficed, All who bore crosses round the Holy Rood, Friends, brethren, sisters, of Lord Jesus Christ."

The poem "By Way of Remembrance" resembles Dante Gabriel's "The Blessed Damozel." The speaker speaks of the love of those re-united in heaven in the terms of earthly love. Another poem which is somewhat like "The Blessed Damozel" is "A Burden" in which the poet questions the whereabouts of the dead. She treats the behavior of those who are dead in a concrete manner.

Her poems about heaven are beautiful, but none describes a mortal on as exalted a plane of contemplation as the nun in Tennyson's "Saint Agnes' Eve." Christina does not entreat the Lord to "break up the heavens" and

31. Ibid., pp. 212-213.
draw her to Himself as His bride, "a glittering star," nor does she with a mystic's vision penetrate into the hidden splendors of Paradise where her Heavenly Bridegroom is waiting to give her the delectable and never-ending embrace.

In a few poems Christina makes reference to hell as a place of eternal torment and indescribable anguish where there is

". . . blackness of darkness for ever,
   A fire unextinguished, a worm's indestructible swarm;
   Where no hope shall ever be more, and love shall be never." 33

She describes the condition of a damned soul in the depths of hell in "Babylon the Great" 34

"Her heart lusts not for love, but thro' and thro'
   For blood, as spotted panther lusted in lair;
   No wine is in her cup, but filth is there Unutterable, with plagues hid out of view."

In "O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!" 35 Christina addresses the leader of the fallen angels for whom hell was created.

"O fallen star! a darkened light,
   A glory hurtled from its car,
   Self-blasted from the holy height:
   O fallen star!"

34. Ibid., p. 284.
35. Loc. cit.
Love is the unconsuming flame which permeates Christina Rossetti's entire volume of verse. Whether it deals with themes of earthly things or reaches up into the realm of spiritual values, love is still the center, the main spring.

"Love is all happiness, love is all beauty,
Love is the crown of flaxen heads and hoary;
Love is the only everlasting duty;
And love is chronicled in endless story,
And kindles endless glory." 36

36. Ibid., p. 97.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Philosophy of Life of
Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti

In this study of the poetry of Emily Jane Brontë and Christina Georgina Rossetti with the view of discovering and determining their religion or philosophy of life, the writer has found some striking contrasts.

The two poets show some difference and some similarity in their attitude toward the earth. Emily loved the earth so passionately that she was ready to forego the bliss of heaven and become one with the earth. It was her kind mother, her loving nurse with whom she desired to make her abode forever. Christina also regarded the earth as a mother insofar as it provided man with an earthly subsistence. She enjoyed the beauties of earth in a sensible way but did not permit her heart to become captivated by earthly pleasures and allurements. This earth was to Christina a land of pilgrimage to a better home beyond.

In their reactions to human beings, the two poets show some contrasts. Emily not only avoided social contacts, but she also failed to deal with real people in her
poems. Therefore, it is very difficult to gain knowledge of her feelings toward real people from her poetry. However, on studying her poems in which she wrote about imaginary persons, one finds a rather sympathetic Emily, full of ruth towards these characters in their misfortunes and hardships. Towards herself Emily was stern and unpitying. Sometimes she seemed to experience a certain sense of loneliness which turned into joy whenever she could feel herself in harmony with the wind, or other forces of nature. There is also present in her a deep-seated craving for liberty and for some unattainable being, whether earthly or heavenly is not easily discernible:

"--And even for that Spirit, Seer, I've watched and sought my lifetime long; Sought Him in Heaven, Hell, Earth and Air, An endless search--and always wrong!" ¹

Christina did not isolate herself from humanity, neither was she self-centered. Her love towards her family and toward mankind was intense and passionate. She was very kind and tender toward her fellowmen. She led a life of renunciation and self-restraint and devoted herself to the service of others, to religious contemplation, and to poetry. Her austerity towards herself is crystallized in her own words:

¹. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 221.
"Therefore in patience I possess my soul;  
Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face  
To pluck down, to build up again the whole—  
But in a distant place.

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them;  
This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet:  
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,  
My heart remembers it." 2

In her utter loneliness and in her disappointment in earthly love, Christina sought consolation and happiness in religion. Even deeper than her affection for mankind was her love and thirst for God. With an unflagging and ardent faith and a profound humility, she clung to Christ, her Savior Whom she endeavored to emulate. Christina was not a reformer nor a revivalist, but through her unassuming fidelity to duty and to prayer for all fellowmen, she wrought much good for God and man. Despite her being a staunch adherent of the Anglican communion, Christina was thoroughly Catholic at heart. Her brother William Michael stated:

I have often thought that Christina's proper place was in the Roman Catholic Church, yet I never traced any inclination in her to join it, nor did she ever manifest any wish to enter upon the conventual life—3 I think she held herself unworthy of attempting it.

Unlike Christina, Emily had a decided contempt for creeds and religion. She would not accept an intermediary, or a Redeemer, and was too independent to seek consolation

2. Rossetti, op. cit., p. 25.
3. Ibid., Memoir, p. lv.
in God or in religion. Emily escaped the painfulness and grimness of this life's realities through fancies, the gloomiest and most passionate in kind. Christina, on the other hand, found an outlet for the weariness and painfulness of the world in religious imaginings and in religious meditation. Her poetic musings were often mournful, but her poems were never morbid when she remembered that after this earthly strife an abiding peace was to be her eternal recompense. These sentiments of Christina are similar to those of St. Francis de Sales who said: "There is nothing so bitter, but it becomes sweet in the hope of eternal goods."4

Emily realized that death and immortality were to be the lot of all mankind. She, however, defied death with a stubbornness of will that does not often find its equal. Christina embraced death as a dear friend, for she felt certain that death would be a surcease of this weary life, a portal to blessed absorption in heaven. To Emily, the earth and nature in its wildest moods was a veritable Paradise. No wonder she fought death to the end with such violent and passionate intensity of feeling. Life beyond the grave had little or no attraction for Emily. Christina, on the contrary, yearned for heaven with the ardor and faith of a saint. To Christina the breath

of her earthly life was love of God and love of fellowmen which found its culmination in the Beatific Vision, among the Saints of God.

"Life that was born to die
Sets heart on high,
   And counts and mounts
Steep stages of the sky.
Two things, Lord, I desire and I require;
   Love's name, and flame
To wrap my soul in fire." 5

5. Ibid., p. 271.
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