

Selected Prose of Christina Rossetti edited by David A. Kent and P. G. Stanwood. New York: St. Martin's, 1998. 404 pp. ISBN 0-312-15903-X, \$49.95.

Victorianists, and more specifically students of Christina Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelitism, must be grateful to David Kent and Paul Stanwood for producing a volume that brings together a significant sampling of Christina Rossetti's prose works, many of which are relatively rare and have until now been available only from major research libraries. Three of Rossetti's works of fiction are complete in this volume: *Maude*, *Speaking Likenesses*, and *True in the Main*. The four most interesting stories from *Commonplace* are here ("Commonplace," "The Lost Titian," "Nick," and "Pros and Cons"). Among Rossetti's miscellaneous prose works, Kent and Stanwood reprint Rossetti's two essays on Dante and her entries on Leopardi and Petrarch from John Francis Waller's fourteen-volume *Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography*. Half the volume is dedicated to Rossetti's six works of devotional prose, about twenty pages each to *Annus Domini*, *Seek and Find*, and *Called to Be Saints*, thirty pages each to *Letter and Spirit* and *Time Flies*, and just over forty pages to *The Face of the Deep*. These texts are preceded by a substantial introduction that provides an overview of Rossetti's work in prose and recent criticism of it, and they are followed by a section of notes, a selected bibliography, and an index. Each prose work is also preceded by a brief descriptive note on the characteristics of the originally published text (in some cases, such as *Called to Be Saints*, usefully detailed), the source of the text for this edition, and the most important critical commentaries on the work.

The volume reflects solid scholarship: the editors have carefully inspected textual variants (manuscript variants appear in brackets within the selections), and they make note of Rossetti's own annotations to her manuscripts and her changes to the texts of works after their first editions. (Of particular interest in this regard is *The Face of the Deep*, which went through seven editions). The editors demonstrate familiarity not only with the manuscript and printed versions of Rossetti's texts but also with secondary materials, including critical articles, books, and reviews (though one longs for more selections from reviews in the introductory notes to each work and more commentary on reception). The "Introduction" provides an efficient, balanced, and focused summary of historical contexts and critical issues surrounding Rossetti's prose works and it presents commentary on some little known Victorian texts that help gloss fundamental religious values and social perspectives of Anglo-Catholic authors Rossetti knew and admired (such as William Henry Burrows and Bishop George Moberly).

The passages chosen for inclusion from Rossetti's works of devotional prose are normally important ones, though students of Rossetti might well quibble with the editors on this issue. One recognizes the difficulty, however, of selecting the most crucial forty pages for instance from the 550-page *Face of the Deep*. Of more critical moment is the Index to the volume, which is less thorough and complete