

"OPHELIA" IN ELIZABETH SIDDAL ROSSETTI'S POEM
 "A YEAR AND A DAY"

Christina Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburn and Theodore Watts-Dunton all considered "A Year and A Day" to be one of Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti's best poems.¹ Like her fourteen other poems, it is not long:

Slow days have passed that make a year,
 Slow hours that make a day,
 Since I could take my first dear love,
 And kiss him the old way:
 Yet the green leaves touch me on the cheek,
 Dear Christ, this month of May.

I lie among the tall green grass
 That bends above my head,
 And covers up my wasted face,
 And folds me in its bed
 Tenderly and lovingly
 Like grass above the dead.

Dim phantoms of an unknown ill
 Float through my tiring brain:
 The unformed visions of my life
 Pass by in ghostly train;
 Some pause to touch me on the cheek,
 Some scatter tears like rain.

The river ever running down
 Between its grassy bed,
 The voices of a thousand birds
 That clang above my head,
 Shall bring to me a sadder dream
 When this sad dream is dead.

A silence falls upon my heart,
 And hushes all its pain.
 I stretch my hands in the long grass,
 And fall to sleep again,
 There to lie empty of all love,
 Like beaten corn of grain.²

The speaker's attitude and the imagery in this poem connect strikingly