

Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination: The Devotional Poetry and Prose by Dinah Roe. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. xi, 220 pp. ISBN 0-230-00507-1. \$65.00; £45.00.

In *Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination*, Dinah Roe contributes significantly to the growing interest in Christina Rossetti's theology and to the recent trend of examining Rossetti's devotional work. Roe also takes up the largely neglected perspective of looking closely at the Bible as Rossetti's primary literary influence. As her book's title suggests, she seeks to reconcile Rossetti's faith with her poetic imagination. Critics from Victorians, like Christina's brother William Michael, to contemporary feminists, like Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) and Germaine Greer (1995), have portrayed Rossetti the artist as being in conflict with Rossetti the devout Christian. Roe, however, seeks to break down this distinction between assertive poetry and reserved devotion by offering "a critical intervention in the feminist construction of Rossetti" and reminding readers that "making conflict into art is not a miserable act, but a redemptive one." Throughout her book, Roe focusses on the "redemptive" capacity of Rossetti's imagination that manifests itself in her devotional writings. She portrays Rossetti's religion as a muse that stimulates rather than detracts from her literary creativity, and argues that Rossetti's devotional writings do not depict passive renunciation, as feminists critics have often claimed, but active redemption.

Roe states that her primary purpose is "to demonstrate the effects of religious reading" on Rossetti's work. "Religious reading" refers both to Rossetti's reading of religious texts and her reading of non-religious texts through the lens of religion. Roe implements a methodology that focusses on the intertextual elements of Rossetti's work. By examining Rossetti's use of biblical and literary allusions, Roe makes clear how Rossetti both reframes secular writers in Christian terms and contemplates and interprets Christianity through imagination: "In her devotional prose and poetry, Rossetti invites her reader to engage with a sophisticated network of biblical allusion, in which Christian doctrine is re-thought and sometimes re-forged." Roe also looks at Rossetti's reading of the Tractarians, Isaac Williams in particular. While Rossetti was capable of reading them critically, as Lynda Palazzo (2002) has argued, Roe reveals the significant influence of Tractarianism on Rossetti's writing and thought.

In Chapter 1, Roe considers that influence. This is well trodden ground in Rossetti criticism – by G.B. Tennyson (1981) and more recently by Maria Keaton (2004) and Mary Arseneau (2004) – particularly in terms of how the Tractarian concepts of analogy and reserve apply to her poetry of figurative language and ambiguity. Roe explores these aspects of Rossetti's poetry, but her original contribution comes in her examination of Rossetti's biblical