

Outsiders Looking In: The Rossettis Then and Now edited by David Clifford and Laurance Roussillon. London: Anthem P, 2004. xiv, 284 pp. + 12 b/w illus. ISBN 1-84331-105-4. \$80.00; £45.00 (cloth). ISBN 1-84331-106-2. \$27.50; £16.95 (paper).

This collection of essays, growing out of a conference at Cambridge in 2001, begins and ends with studies in irony – both excellent. Jan Marsh’s “Sibling Cultures” explores the paradoxes, contradictions, and complications in the lives of all four Rossetti children as Anglo-Italians and Italian-English. One notable example stems from the children’s having spoken English with their mother and Italian with their father. Thus the stereotypical feminine *Italia* was their “fatherland,” while John Bull masculine England was the “motherland.” All four were not only outsiders looking in, but also insiders looking out. The essay is also noteworthy for the attention it pays to the often neglected Maria, the only one of the four to maintain the Italian form of her given name.

Florence Boos’s “Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s Poetic Daughters” looks at the paradox by which the author of such poems as the “True Woman” sequence in *The House of Life* – that made this reviewer wince even before his wife and daughter set in on him – became the stylistic model for two generations of female sonneteers. From Mathilde Blind to Olive Custance and “Michael Field,” these poets used such characteristic Rossettian techniques as allegory, ornate diction, sexual explicitness, and suspensive contrasts between octave and sestet, for distinctly un-Rossettian themes, from Blind’s political preaching to Augusta Webster’s exploration of mother-daughter relationships. All, however, are drawn to Rossetti’s pervasive mood of disillusionment and loss.

Sandwiched between Marsh and Boos are thirteen other essays on various topics and most of high quality. Reviewers of collections must choose between focussing on three or four essays in detail or trying to give a brief summary of each. To adopt the latter approach: Angela Thirlwell’s “William Michael and Lucy Rossetti: Outsiders Insiders” draws upon her biographical study of the couple. Both, she argues, were “true cosmopolitans.” But William’s cosmopolitanism and republican fervour was a product of intellect and conscious moral choice, while Lucy’s was forced upon her by tuberculosis, a cosmopolitanism of the body, not the mind. Thirlwell’s discussion of Lucy’s 1872 watercolour, *Fair Geraldine*, is of particular interest.

In “The Taxman and the Aesthete: The Canon According to W.M. Rossetti,” Peter Mandler looks at how William combined both sides of his life when his superiors at the Inland Revenue Office chose him as the perfect person to evaluate art collections in order to assess death duties. Included in his responsibilities was deciding what works were of “national, scientific, or historical interest,” and thus exempt from the whopping 8% levy. By looking at William’s decisions and his critical writings, Mandler also explores how they