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A Thesis

A CONTRAST

OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

AND EMILY DICKINSON,

[To which is added a
Critical Bibliography
of Antecedent Writings
About Them]

by

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(B.S., Worcester State Teachers' College, '38)

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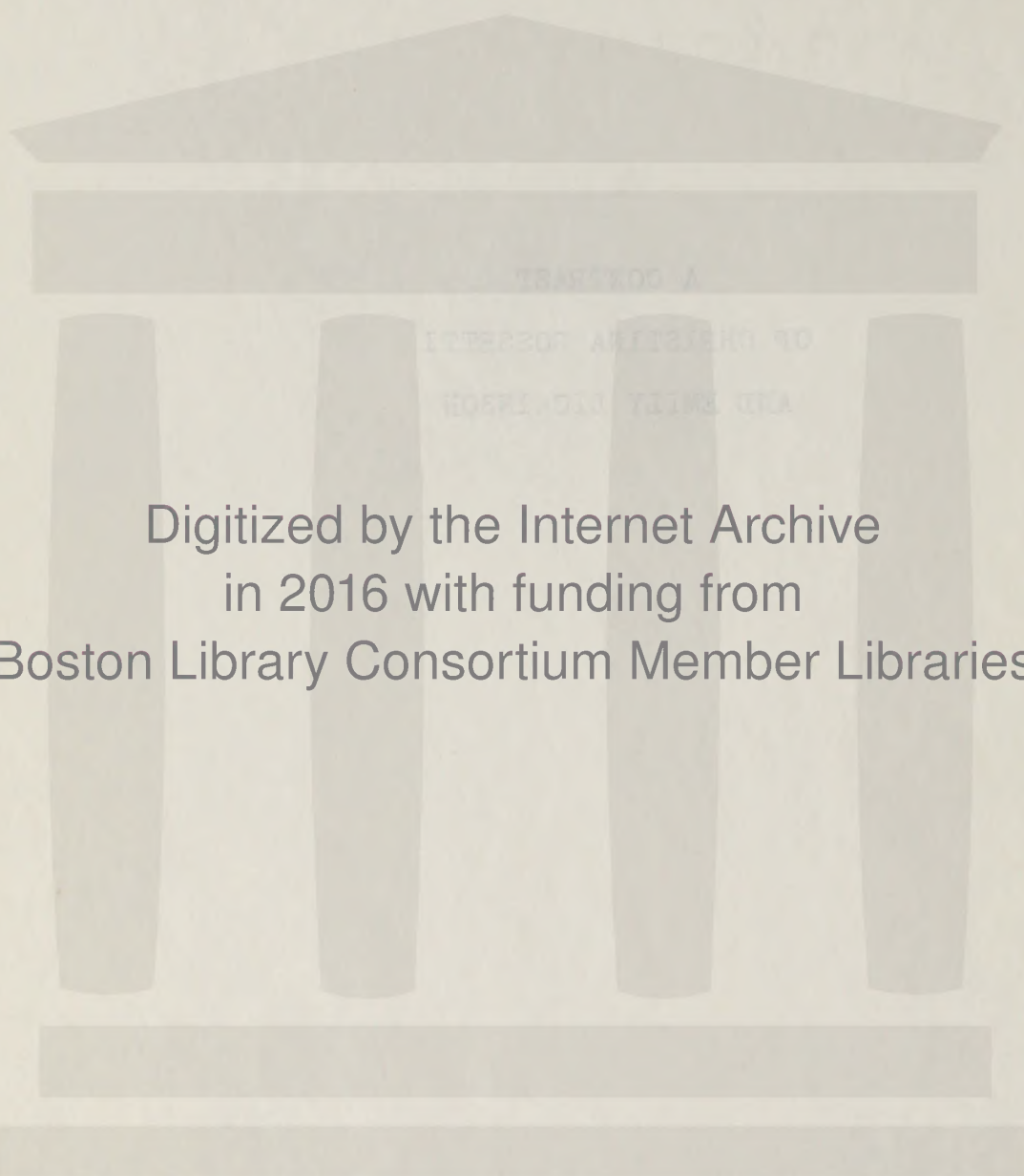
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A CONTRAST

OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

AND EMILY DICKINSON



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In the midst of whalebone and a multiplication of petticoats, Emily stands apart. She is a pioneer. The Hinterland of poetry and of self-discovery was her chosen ground. Emily was honest and compassionate. But in an age noted mostly for its godliness and stuffiness, Emily's kind of wisdom appeared heretical. She might easily have been burned as a witch. But her mischievous brain, for all its sorcery, was just as afraid of the brimstone as her more orthodox neighbors. This is quite certain, even if Emily did compose a piano piece entitled The Devil.

While "unattached ladies" were crocheting tidies or weeping copiously over the latest Broadway hit, East Lynn, and while they were shivering delightfully over Miss Prescott's Circumstance or making custards for supper, Emily was writing down her "bulletins from Immortality." Godey's Lady's Book, for June, 1869, sets forth: "We are frequently inquired of in reference to hoop skirts whether they are still going to remain in fashion or not. We do not think it can be a matter on which there can be any doubt. Hoop skirts are too comfortable and economical to be readily given up ..." Emily's concern is rather with "a new fashion in the wind." However, without the world knowing anything about it, Emily did change a style. Alone in her room, she had loosened her poetic corset-strings. Her followers have been exceedingly grateful. They could breathe at last.

There is more than a matter of corset-strings between Emily and Christina. Emily stamped her foot at God. Christina would never have dared. Here is the difference between them. Contemporaries, one in England and the other in the new England, in outline their lives are essentially the same. An ocean between them, yet their spiritual orbits must often have crossed. Emily must have waved a rebellious handkerchief in greeting; Christina must have looked up from her prayers. And God must have kept His respectable distance.

"The process of interiorization", as Mr. Trueblood calls it, was in both Emily and Christina. They both wore stoic mail. Emily's is charged with lightning. Christina's is meek as a sleepy kitten. Each had turned away from love for which their natures cried. What happened afterwards is poetic history.

Their rhythmic patterns are distinctly unlike. Now the hop-skip metre that Emily uses is the unwitting pattern of a toad. Now it is in the prim pattern of a bang in the face. Now it is the pattern of Death on a tight-rope. But never is it defined, or imprisoned by rule.

I. A. Richards makes this discovery in Principles of Literary Criticism, "Most rhythms are made up as much of disappointments and postponements and surprises and betrayals as of simple straightforward satisfactions." This most approximately describes Emily's rhythms. She gives us sudden

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"The process of inspiration," as Mr. T. W. Higginson calls
it, was in both Emily and Christina. They both were poets.
Emily's is charged with a strain. Christina's is
such as a flash of lightning. Each had turned away from her
which in the distance stood. What would have happened to
poetic spirits.

Their poetic instincts are distinctly alike. Now the
poet's eye that Emily sees in the melting pattern of
a word. Now it is in the grain pattern of a word in the face.
Now it is the pattern of music on a staff-paper. But never
is it defined, or imprisoned by a fee.

I. A. Richards notes this discovery in Principles of
Literary Criticism, "our rhythm and sense are made up of
their elements and arrangements and surprises and surprises
as of simple things toward criticism." This most
approximately describes Emily's rhythm. She gives us human

starts, a bit of level going, and then at an exasperating moment, a pause. While everything is too quiet for comfort, there is another poetic eruption followed by a none too soothing cadence of silence. To read Emily aloud, as, of course, she should be read, is to experiment with the chemicals of sunlight and shadow.

Ruskin censured the "irregular measures" in Christina's verses. When Christina did not conform, it was through a fault. She could not transcend her irregularities. A shortened line, or an omitted rhyme, stares out unhappily from the page. Unconventionality embarrassed Christina. Emily could turn somersaults with half-rhymes and three-quarters rhymes. Emily would still be disconcertingly natural. Christina gives "satisfactions." Emily never is boring.

There were three gentlemen in Christina's life. The Bridegroom won her hand. As a result, there are several hundred lines of dull piety.

At first it was Charles Cayley who translated the Gospel into Iroquois and who was most terribly "interested in the Gulf Stream." That he was dear to Christina cannot be doubted. She called him, "my blindest buzzard, my special mole." But then again it was James Collinson who wandered back and forth between Roman Catholicism and the Church of England. After a while it was the One.

Her life and her poetry are deceiving with their calm exteriority. Underneath the smooth surface is hysteria. Christina and her poetry are inseparable in this sense: Christina stifled her emotions in life; in poetry she could not hide them. Poetry was Christina's life more than the real experience. The trouble with a great deal of her work lies in that pronouncement. She never clearly defined for herself the distinction between art and life. She confused them. Then she denied one altogether.

The result is a kind of blur or ambiguity. By ambiguity difficulty in understanding is not meant. Christina is rather too easy. Her images are not steep. Her metaphors are not rocky. But neither has her work in general the clarity of simplicity. Nor has she contrived symbolistic blurs.

An artistic blur is a creation that calls for superior technique. To suggest the fog of Waterloo Bridge does not imply haphazard strokes. To omit details and yet give the feeling of their occult presence is to paint both physically and metaphysically. When Christina is tenuous, which is nearly all the time, it seems to be a result of dubious intention. Indirection is not a method unless it is controlled indirection. Poetry does not have to be vague. Paul Valéry has noted correctly that "most men have so vague an idea of poetry that the very vagueness of their idea is for them a definition of poetry."

Hands, do what you're bid:
 Bring the balloon of the mind
 That bellies and drags in the wind
 Into its narrow shed.

Mr. Yeats would have condemned Christina's verses.

They belly and drag in the wind. Emily's are always judiciously stalled. Without grounding of any kind, a verse is only a drift of words. Christina's verses can be easily called drifts, or, to be a little more specific, driftings to heaven.

Nowhere does Christina indicate any other direction than Up. But even in her devotional pieces, there is a tangle of diffuse purpose. The purpose was never more explicit than "to express some feeling." The "feeling" was usually a spiritual longing for love, not for Mr. Cayley or Mr. Collinson. Christina emphasized this. True she was a regular attendant at church, kept communions, fasts, oblations, the practice of confession, and attended all meetings. She had a certain fanatic devotion for her religious duties.

Still, how is her continual renunciation of the world and the flesh, and her desire for union with Christ to be interpreted? Christina cannot really be called a mystic. On the other hand, it is not necessary to call her a pervert. It is only honest to admit that her heavenly thoughts were not devoid of earth. Her denial of even the most ordinary sense experiences looks like an admission of fear. Both of these manifestations are characteristics found in

Hand, to what you're bid:
Using the hollow of the hand
The palm and fingers in the wind
Into the narrow band.

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son. Christina emphasized that there are a regular
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Both of these characteristics are characteristic of her in

the hyperthyroid.

William Michael Rossetti states that his sister suffered from the insidious extreme of the disease. This is not an attempt to prove that Christina wrote exophthalmic poetry. It could be done. Its only relevancy, however, is the undeniable symptom in her work.

There is never any true heroic proportion in Christina's renunciation, as far as her poetry is concerned. If it is inescapable that some of her life is reflected in her poetry, if not all of her life, the renunciation is only an experience without any special richness or depth. The experience of denial is negative in her work. The emotional context is too cloudy for any distinction to be made between the logic of denial and the act itself. In Emily, the distinction becomes the logic of emotion. The ars moralis and the ars poetica fuse. The tragic necessity is felt by the reader as truly as if the dramatic background were given.

Only theater recorded
Owner cannot shut

is the heart. Melodrama was not in Emily's repertoire.

... How complicate
The discipline of man,
Compelling him to choose himself
His pre-appointed pain.

There was no Greek pantheon to direct Emily's life. There was, however, the strict idea of fate which permeated Puritan theocracy. This was apt to take an inverse turn, as Mr. Tate shows:

Mastery of the world by rejecting the world was the doctrine, even if it was not always the practice of Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather. It is the meaning of fate in Hawthorne; his people are fated to withdraw from the world and to be destroyed. And it is the exclusion theme of Henry James.

Emily's rejection of the world takes on the form of a Greek drama. In her rejection is all the lyrical intensity of Aeschylus. Christina's rejection takes on the form of a tedious Restoration drama. The moral always sticks out.

Christina's poetry is never a victory. It is nearly always spiritually limp. In the contest by which saintliness is won, Christina was never confident. It is this lack of confidence which makes her poetry so weak in substance.

Dante Gabriel once wrote her to beware "of what might be called a falsetto-muscularity of style." There was never any danger of this. Paul ¹Emer More admires the feminine quality in Christina's writings. Mr. More is speaking out of sentimentality. What makes Christina's work generally poor is its femininity. Mr. More is also admitting the priority of his own sex. When he sanctions poetry written by a woman, it must never be unwomanly.

It is much more difficult for a woman to be a poet. She must rid her work of the generic prejudice against her. Otherwise her work will seem but a fanciful interruption from the duties of a home. If the poet happens to be a maiden lady, her writing may easily take on the color of wish-fulfillment.

The psychology of a poem, however, does not always have to coincide with the psychology of the poet. The biographic should never be an intrusion. In Christina there is no dichotomy between the two psychologies. It follows, therefore, that being a sentimentalist in life, she is also a sentimentalist in poetry. She gives us no reason to believe otherwise. Her poetry is really an historical effusion of a self-willed martyr. The fact that it is in the form of poetry is only incidental.

Somehow, when she says that death meant to her "Thine arms at last", instead of a beautiful religious aspiration, there is something distinctly cloying.

The modern mind is, of course, too suspicious. And poetry has too often been thought of as a branch of endocrinology. Granting both these errors, and believing poetry to be as normal a behaviorism as bricklaying, one feels that Christina has still to prove that her private feelings were subordinate to her craft.

This is not a condemnation of eroticism in poetry. It is a condemnation of the misuse of poetry. There is love in nearly every line of Sappho. But there is also something more. There is perfection of style. Marguerite de Navarre does not let us forget that she is a woman. But she also makes us remember that she is a poet. Edna Millay is always the young girl of seventeen. As the poet of early love, she

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 poetry is only incidental.

Therefore, when the eye first falls upon her "The
 eye of fact", instead of a beautiful religious expression,
 there is something strikingly original.

The author's idea of woman, her emotions, and
 poetry has not often been shown of as a source of religious
 poetry. In fact, both these errors, and both have poetry to
 be as normal a development as anything else, and this fact
 Christian has tried to prove that her poetry is in a sense
 subordinate to her art.

This is not a condemnation of emotions in poetry.
 It is a condemnation of the abuse of poetry. There is love
 in nearly every line of her art. But there is also something
 more. There is a reflection of reality. Sentimentality is
 gone and left behind her in a woman. But she also
 said us however that she is a poet. She will be alive
 the young girl of yesterday, as the poet of early love, she

is excellent. She is too theatrical, however, in her expression of the deeper passion. Marianne Moore spends out her love on goldfishes and steamrollers. Marianne Moore's style has all the numbingness of Emily's verse. But one has to prefer a steamroller to eternity.

Christina's poems are temptations in the midst of a liturgy. But Christina was never a great enough saint to make her temptations interesting.

There is also an irksome kind of innocence about Christina's poetry which gives it, along with its other deficiencies, an old-maid quality, an innocence coupled with "virgin impatience." The poems reflect a being who rejected reality because she had not the courage to experience it. This is a serious infection. It keeps the reader from true evaluation. If Christina is sincere, then, why does she sound so insincere? In spite of her aversion to all physical intimacies, and her distrust of instinct, she gives herself away. In the privacy of another language she could admit her normal human desires. In twenty-one Italian poems, Il Roseggiar Dell'Oriente, Christina is no longer inhibited. What is there to be said about,

The Bridegroom fetcheth home the Bride;
His hands are hands she knows, she knows His side.

Freud could give an analysis. Just as Christina was continually dosing and summoning doctors, yet outlived all of her family except Michael, so is her poetry tinged with hypochondria.

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 on Goldilocks and the Three Bears. But she has to give
 all the possibilities of Goldilocks. But she has to give
 a new quality to it.

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 What is there to be said about

The Bridgeman's feet have the grain;
 His hands are made the same, the crown his side,
 Frost could give an analysis. Just as Christina was content
 with being and summing doctors, yet envied all of her
 family except Michael, so is her poetry tinged with psychomedia.

It is quite true that a great deal of literature is a result of hypochondria. Skilled handling pulls the work out of its pathological condition, however. But Christina is bromidic and never artistically so. Treatment is the test. Treatment is style. When the style is commonplace, and when the thought is also out-worn, there is nothing to keep it from oblivion.

Arnold's definition of literature as a criticism of life brings out a paucity in Christina. Her work is made up of flatulent statements. She needed a bit of rebel's blood in her. Meekness in poetry can devitalize. Emily, on the other hand, was fearless in her criticism of even

God's adroiter will
As boy should deal with lesser boy ...

or she is outraged by the injustice done to Moses. This was blasphemy to Christina.

The risk in these two personalities is that while Christina is over-serious, Emily may seem flippant. If the tone of Emily's work is often presumptuous, Christina's work verges on stale earnestness.

Something must be said of the character of a poem as well as of the poet. If there is a feeling that the fibres in the work of art are sound, that is, that they are not accidental fanfares, the work has a certain resilience. It is this core of integrity which pulls a poem away from the reader. The poem should show a certain amount of resis-

In the first place, the author of the book is a student of psychology. This is evident from the title of the book, "The Psychology of the Creative Process". The author's name is not mentioned in the title, but it is mentioned in the preface. The preface is written in a very simple and direct style. The author is not afraid to state his own opinions and to admit his own limitations. The book is written for a general audience and is not intended to be a technical treatise. The author's style is clear and concise, and the book is well organized and easy to read.

The author's definition of the creative process is very broad and includes a wide range of activities. He states that the creative process is not limited to the arts and sciences, but that it is a part of the human experience in all areas of life. He also states that the creative process is not a single act, but a continuous process that involves the use of the imagination and the ability to see things in a new way. The author's definition of the creative process is very helpful and provides a good starting point for further exploration of the topic.

The Creative Process
by [Author's Name]

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tance. It must not allow itself to be too easily taken. It must demand of the reader more than casual perusal. When the victory is accomplished, when the total, or as nearly total as possible, meaning has been wrested, it will have been a good fight. Resistance does not have to disguise itself with false rhetoric, or of pseudo-statements to mislead the reader. Resistance is the spiritual temper of a poem "that lever cannot pry."

Emily's poetry could never be called wishy-washy. Her metaphors are the kind you have to break your neck to jump over. But it is worth it. Yet there is nothing obscure about

He put the belt around my life--
I heard the buckle snap.

It might be said that Emily appeals to eccentricity, to the immodest use of a word. Just as Dr. Johnson blamed the vices of metaphysical style upon a "voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange, Emily might be blamed. Her work is full of deviation. But it is deviation which pulls her work out of a poetic rut.

It may be that Christina is safer. Her penitential lyrics, though poor in structure, may be more pleasing to God than Emily's brazen-ness. But humility can be carried to an inartistic extreme. A poem must have some kind of peg on which to hang. It should have at least a minimum of pride. It should not be a perpetual apology. Christina dilutes

the value of her work by her personal negation. She precludes almost every poem with "I am so sorry about this." If the reader does not watch out, he is sorry for Christina because she is so sorry and sorry because she wrote such a sorry poem. This kind of sympathy is poetically unethical.

Do any of Christina's poems have a backbone? Only a few. Or does a certain type of religion insist on spinelessness and an abject crawling-to-God? There is something indecent about such horizontalism.

Surely the experience of being on one's knees has some hardness to it. Christina gives only putty. Hard ecclesiastical boards would have given a concreteness to her poems. She could have built as emotional a structure as she pleased on top.

Christina's devil is never made actual. Not that Christina should have given him a pitch fork. But it would be good to feel his "terribleness". Christina tells us with no heightening of tone or change of color about either the temptation or the rejection. The struggle is nowhere made climactic. Somehow good wins. But even Christina seems only half-convinced. She is too easily led. The battle is never real blood-and-thunder.

This serious genuflection in her poems, followed by an atrophied reality, ruined her poetic possibilities. Emily could make the context richer with

The saints shall meet
Our bashful feet.

The rest of the poem is not hampered by the bashful feet. With Christina, the attitude, even when unstated, permeates the whole. You become ashamed because she is ashamed, or you feel that there is something too private, too personal. You should have the grace to leave. Peeking through key holes has nothing to do with art.

Christina seldom rewrote; nor did she attempt self-criticism. William Michael states, "Christina's habit of composing was eminently of the spontaneous kind." Too often Christina sacrificed meaning to an ease of sound. This is a result of her unfortunate conception of poetry. Succinct directness and closeness to the thought is lost to her. The essential difference between the styles of the two women can be seen in two passages:

What would I give for a heart of flesh to warm me
through
Instead of this heart of stone ice-cold ...

Christina's lines are no more than weak prose.

For just my marble feet
Could keep a chancel cool.

The thought in Christina's and Emily's lines approach each other. In neither case is it unique. Emily's lines, however, escape triteness by the force of the image. The image is remarkably concrete. Yet the meaning is not bound to it. The "just" allows for other interpretations. The possibilities

of the lines are not exhausted by the denotative.

Christina does not have an Epicurean taste for words. She uses common words. This could be a virtue if they were made uncommon by their use. Christina does not seem to be aware of the sound-values of words, except in a monotonous liquidation.

Emily likes words that crunch and crackle. She likes words that could give goose pimples. Her words are Halloween words. They ride broom-sticks and say "Boo!" They pop out from behind a dark corner. Something is sure to happen. And it does! Emily sees to that.

Sometimes there is an accident. Colonel Higginson, the critic of the Atlantic Monthly who tried to advise her about her rhymes, says "She almost always grasped whatever she sought but with some fracture of grammar and dictionary on the way." Grammar helps the mind over stubborn nouns and verbs. It is a kind of program note or deus ex machina. Emily was servant to no gerund or cognate. She made words serve her.

Furthermore, there is artistic deliberation and choice behind Emily's "grammatical blunders." Her deviations from the accepted form stem from the idiosyncrasy of her personal idiom, never from a faulty understanding of syntax or inflection. A grammatical error in Whitman is much more serious. His speech is quite often careless and grandiose.

of the lines are not extended by the derivative.
 Upright, one and have an Egyptian castle for
 one such as mine. The case of a virtue it may be
 each member by their use. Upright does not seem to be
 aware of the sound-variant of words, except in a
 situation.
 Upright like with /w/ and /r/ and /l/. The /r/ and /l/ are
 words that could give some trouble. For words are
 words. The /r/ and /l/ are not "real". They are not
 from behind a dark corner. Sometimes it is hard to
 find the /r/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 Sometimes there is a /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 Upright of the /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 for /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 sought out with good reasons of grammar and history on
 the /w/ and /l/. Upright /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 verbs. It is a kind of program note or case for verbs.
 Upright was relevant to be found on verbs. The /w/ and /l/ words
 were /w/ and /l/.
 Furthermore, there is a /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 Upright /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 the /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 Upright /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.
 Upright /w/ and /l/ are /w/ and /l/ in the /w/ and /l/.

But the "soul of America" is being a little cheap when it tries to show off with a French word, and uses it ridiculously.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,
I admire death and test proportions.
How plenteous! how spiritual! how résumé!

Immediacy of word and thought in contrast to a hazy remoteness is another way of presenting the differences between the two poets. When Christina wished to be spiritual, and surely this was her main intention, she only succeeded in being apathetic. Incisiveness is rarely felt in her work. When Shelley is bad is when he becomes the "chameleon who lives on air alone." To be ephemeral is not a sign of profundity. Practicality from the standpoint of efficiency and expediency in the use of language is not alien to poetry. Legitimate construction is as necessary to a poem as it is to a house. Mr. T.S. Eliot has written, apropos of this, "There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts. People who do not appreciate poetry always find it difficult to distinguish between order and chaos in the arrangement of images." Of course, the difficulty is even more extreme when there are no images to arrange.

Emily's work is often startling because of immediacy given to that which is usually unrelated. Her mind's ear was so keen that it found immediate relation between sounds and colors of sounds. Emily was anticipating the surrealist. But Emily was a surrealist without strain, without pretense.

But the "soul of America" is being a little ahead than it
tries to show off with a French word, and uses it awkwardly.

Now I speak in English and French,
I am the best and best prepared,
You gentlemen! how spiritual! how formal!

Intensity of word and thought in contrast to a busy

consciousness is another way of presenting the difference

between the two poets. When Christian claims to be

spiritual, and rarely fails to say so, the only

success in being spiritual. Intensity is rarely felt

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"Christian who lives on his knees." To be spiritual is not

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Miller's work is often startling because of intensity

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and colors of words. Miller was anticipating the surrealists.

But Miller was a surrealist all out and in, without reservation.

This juxtaposition of the natural with the supposed unnatural gives the strange flavor to her verse. But it gives something more, a prescience, a delicious nibble at eternity.

Though Emily's references to nature or reality are basic, she is never guilty of naturalism. She never erred into documentation. Dr. Johnson says we should "neglect the minuter discriminations" and "not number the streaks of the tulip." When Emily does number the streaks, it is with a specific purpose. It is not because she is being faithful to the report of the eye, being an accurate copyist; it is because she has found a symbolic use for the streaks or she wishes to convert them into a striking metaphor.

She charges the static medium of a scene with her own "anthracite." The common tree or flower is thus made terribly distinct from its fellows. Its roots are torn up, and it is thrust into a foreground of meaning. A particular is endowed with more particularity, with an extra significance.

This particularity makes her work foreign. Her poetic geography might well be termed barbaric. Barbaric is correct for two reasons. The outposts are dangerous, and because "God is the frontier." The consequential meaning of her work lies always in the unknown. There is always a "further sea." Emily gives us the cryptic verge; the "further" is to intuited. Just as she observed that

As lightning on

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 faithful to the report of the eye, being an accurate
 copyist; it is because she has found a symbol and for the
 speaker or the reader to convert that into a feeling
 metaphor.

She changes the static medium of a scene into her own
 "living life." The common eye or flower is thus made
 curiously distinct from the object. It is never the same
 and it is thrust into a foreground of reality. A garden
 is endowed with more particularity, with an extra significance.
 This particularity comes from work done. Her
 poetic geography might well be termed symbolic. Because in
 context for the reader. The objects are dangerous, and
 because "God is the front of it." The conventional meaning
 of her work lies always in the shadow. There is always
 a "hidden" use. Emily gives us the cryptic verse; the
 "hidden" is so hidden, that as she observed that
 is standing on

a landscape
 exhibits sheets of place
 not yet suspected but
 for flash and bolt and suddenness

her meaning comes from shock. Her "sheets of place" are seen through a shudder of light that is almost blinding.

Emily's poetry might be called electrical. With her inventive genius, she jerks the reader with a sudden phrase like "Jehovah's watch is wrong." Each word in a poem tends toward a critical point at which the thought and the image meet in an unexpected synthesis. This synthesis is usually of two opposites, an abstract and a concrete. Emily would have changed Whitman's "I sing the body electric" to "I sing the word electric." Separate poetic poles are being constantly attracted and repulsed. It is no wonder that in many of her poems a faint explosion can be heard. Even final integration in her poetry is provisional. For this reason her poetry seems difficult. No static level of meaning is kept. Equilibrium is only momentary.

Her poems are ecstatic adjustments between positives and negatives. There was only one thing that could not be adjusted.

All but Death can be
 Adjusted.

Yet Emily was always trying to adjust it.

Her poetry cannot help being nervous.

in landscape
white sheets of glass
not yet numbered but
for flash and bolt and tightness

her meaning comes from speech. Her "sheets of glass" are
seen through a shudder of light that is almost blinding.

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and negatives. There was only one thing that could not be
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All but Death can be
adjusted.

Yet Emily was always trying to adjust it.
Her poetry cannot help being nervous.

I knew not but the next
 Would be my final inch,--
 This gave me that precarious gait
 Some call experience.

The "precarious gait" makes for the uncertainty in many poems; it is not uncertainty of understanding so much as uncertainty in the face of too much understanding.

The death motif in the two poets would naturally be handled differently.

Ah! Changed and cold, how changed and very cold!
 With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm eyes ...

The idea is already sick with emotionalism. To read on is an invitation to weep. Swinburne records, "The only thing Christina makes me want to do is cry ... " Swinburne is notoriously poor as a critic. The value of a cry cannot be questioned. But what is its relation to a poem? A tear is not always "an intellectual thing."

Emily can treat death as coolly and impersonally as any subject. "For technicality of Death--" is impersonal as a comma in a lease. To reduce death to a mere usage is to arrive at a savage kind of objectivity and irony.

At other times Emily's treatment of death is in the manner of an epigrammatic sermon. Her text is appalling as any in Moby Dick. "So in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half-known life. God help thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!" The best

I know not what the next
would be my final theme --
This gave me that prehistoric gift
Some call experience.

The "prehistoric gift" makes for the uncertainty in every poem;
it is not uncertainty of understanding as much as uncertainty
in the face of too much understanding.

The death wish in the two poems would naturally be

handled differently.

And changed and cold, the change and very cold
with a cold that makes life and cold eyes ...

The idea is already sick with existentialism. To read on is
an invitation to weep. Swinburne records, "The only thing
Christina makes me want to do is cry ... " Swinburne is
necessarily poor as a critic. The value of a cry cannot be
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a comma in a lesson. To know death is to have been to
arrive at a savage kind of objectivity and irony.

At this time Swinburne's treatment of death is in the
manner of an epigrammatic woman. Her text is revealing:
"In the love of man there lies one
tragic thing, that of love and joy, but accompanied by
all the horrors of the half-drawn line. God has made
not off from that life, there cannot never return!" The best

of Emily's work is that in which the issue is as tremendous and glorious as the White Whale.

While Christina would flutter about excitedly with

It is time to arise,
To race for the promised prize;
The sun flies, the wind flies,
We are strong, we are free,
And home lies beyond the stars and the sea.

Emily could say with cruel neatness,

Took up her simple wardrobe
And started for the sun.

Emily's image hurts with its mixture of naiveté and boldness. Christina's enthusiasm is tiresome. It amounts to missionary redundancy.

It is difficult to understand Swinburne's praise.

He says of Christina's poetry, "It was touched as with the fire and bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords and cadences of refluent sea of music beyond reach of harp and organ, large echoes of the serene and sonorous tides of heaven." Swinburne is an excellent example of a bad critic.

Emily's poetry is full of the "prickly." It is significant that Emily uses the adjective more than once. "Prickly" has to do with the sense of touch. It is a word that is also absolutely Dickinsonian. With Emily, the word could be applied to ideas as well as things. Also, her test of poetry was its prickliness.

of his work is that in which the issue is an important
and glorious one the White Hall.

White Hall is a fine building, especially with

its fine facade,
a face for the people, white
the sun like, the wind like,
is and strong, as the trees,
and now lies beyond the stars and the sea.

It is a fine and great building.

It is a fine and great building
and stands for the people.

It is a fine and great building, especially with its
facade, the sun like, the wind like, is and strong, as the trees,
and now lies beyond the stars and the sea.

It is a fine and great building.

It is a fine and great building, especially with its

facade, the sun like, the wind like, is and strong, as the trees,
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and now lies beyond the stars and the sea.

Her poetry possesses tactile values. The images she employs are magnified from sense experiences. Emily herself speaks of the very "press of imagery". Her choice of the word "press" reveals her sensitivity to the impact of phenomena. That she relished this impact cannot be doubted. She said that she saw "New Englandly" but this does not mean that she deprived her senses of their naturally expected rights. She could see with a most unpuritan abandon even though she asked only for a view "not so great to suffocate the eye." Had she not been aware of the sensual world, her poetry would be merely dictionary exercises. F. O. Matthiessen discerns that "what gives Emily Dickinson's articulation its peculiar vitality is her exact balance between abstraction and sensation." It is this delicate poise which Allen Tate calls "metaphysical." Emily's terminology had a metaphysical twist. But this does not mean that she omits from her work the healthy contours of reality. Rather Emily gets both a physical and metaphysical pleasure out of reality. Thus, with true New England economy, she does not waste anything. She finds a use for even the husks of an emotion. Nothing is thrown away. Emily could derive sustenance all the rest of her life from a single episode. One stimulus is enough for her. She would not have understood the modern desire to realize all stimuli, ending usually in distaste, exhaustion, and boredom. There was never any Waste Land for Emily. She

could be excited by the change of season, or a sudden shower, or a casual word. She never was frustrated like Prufrock, with his timorous, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" Emily was always disturbing the universe. She is still disturbing it, and giving it a freshness which it has lost.

Emily cannot be cajoled into any poetic school. She might belong to the imagists because of her brittleness, and a certain immediacy; she might belong because her descriptions are cut out carefully with scissors. She might belong to the symbolists because of the overtones of meaning, the implied, not because of her music unless Ravel's sevenths are in mind. Emily's orchestration is based on dissonance. She enjoyed cacophony. The incongruity of sounds fascinated her as much as the incongruous placement of words. She would make neighbors of words that were natural enemies. The relationship between words, therefore, is extremely tense. Murder is in the air. For Emily this was a kind of joke. And Emily might belong to the modernists by her use of industrial figures,

Within my garden rides a bird
Upon a single wheel,
Whose spokes a dizzy music make.

and because of her own laws of relativity. Her science is Emily. What makes her poetry seem out of kilter is that it belongs to no other system, Ptolemaic, Copernican or otherwise. She does not bother with gravity; she scoffs at time

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Within my garden rides a bird
 Upon a single wheel,
 These spokes a dizzy train make.

and because of her own laws of relativity. Her science is
 Emily. That makes her poetry seem out of kilter as that is
 belongs to no other system, Platonic, Copernican or other-
 wise. She does not bother with gravity; she scolds at time

and space and matter. She squeezes a prairie into a clover or confronts eternity with a sneeze with absolute indifference. She reverses gear with "Absence is condensed presence."

Emily never really missed people. She had a suspicion about them.

"How do most people live without thoughts?" she exclaims. There are so many people in the world, you must have noticed them in the streets -- how do they live? How do they get strength to put on their clothes in the morning? ... Besides, they talk of hallowed things, aloud, and embarrass my dog.

Carle's sensitivity cannot be minimized. Nor could Emily stand the usual bustle of gossip. Henry James says of the age, "It is all a feminine, a nervous, a hysterical, chattering canting age; an age of hollow phrases, false delicacy and exaggerated solitudes and coddled sensibilities." Just as Ambrose Bierce revolted against the sham intellectualism, just as Herman Melville was forced to say, "I feel I am an exile here", so Emily found that the shores of her own being were enough. She made the discovery which is voiced in the Upanishads: the infinite is the Self.

"Child," Emily confided to a niece, "no one would ever punish a Dickinson by shutting her up alone." Emily enjoyed solitude. To her it meant being free. To lock a door was her way of achieving liberty. "It's just a turn -- and freedom!" This kind of freedom was essential to her. Her privacy was her kingdom. Here she could create her Brazilian Pampas or her Ethiopia or perish with delight on her

and space and matter. She expresses a desire to be a clever
or content with a sense with absolute indifference.

She reverses her with "Absence is permanent presence."
Emily never really missed people. She had a suspicion

about them.

"How do most people live without thoughts?" she exclaims.
There are so many people in the world, you
must have noticed them in the streets --
how do they live? How do they get strength
to put on their clothes in the morning? ...
Besides, they talk of national things,
and emphasize my God.

Carle's sensitivity cannot be minimized. Her world Emily
stands the usual pulse of George. Henry James says of the age,
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Unshakable: the infinite is the Self.

"Child," Emily confided to a niece, "no one would
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door was her way of achieving liberty. "It's just a form --
and freedom!" This kind of freedom was essential to her.
Her privacy was her kingdom. Here she could create her
Gardian papers or her fables or perhaps with delight on her

"blue peninsula."

That her poetry is personal cannot be disputed, nor need be. How the personal has been converted into an objective substance is the miracle that will make her name live.

This is my letter to the world
Which never wrote to me.

For this reason her poems should not be considered separately, as so many single pieces. They are intended as an essential story, or history, or confession, using the word with scholastic purity, unfolding one from the other in organic development.

All of her experience is related to a "single continent": herself. Though the prose content is extremely subjective, it has been objectified through her neutral self. She was a solipsist no more than all men are destined to be. F. H.

Bradley in Appearance and Reality points out that,

My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts and feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it.

Emily did not mind that the circle was closed on the outside.

Suffice us, for a crowd, Ourselves.

To say that her scope is necessarily narrow is unjust. To have widened her horizon might have given her poetry a little more breadth. On the other hand, it might have given her too much. Because Whitman needed more space to keep his

"plus contrast."

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Soothe us, for a crowd, ourselves.

To say that her scope is necessarily narrow is unjust.

To have witnessed her behavior might have given her poetry a little more breadth. On the other hand, it might have given her too much. Because Whitman needed more space to keep his

ideas from bumping does not mean that Emily did. Emily was writing about an "ecstatic nation" of which the population is One. Whitman was writing about the bigness of America. Of course his Democratic Vistas needed more elbow room. If Emily's style is sometimes cramped, Whitman's is too loose. Expansion can do more evil than condensation.

Area -- no test of depth.

Of the women of 1870, Whitman has a charge: "We need a new literature to achieve the redemption of woman out of webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion, and thus insuring to the States a strong and sweet Female Race." Emily certainly cannot be accused of silliness, millinery or any kind of dyspeptic depletion. But Emily was an exception to the stereotyped women of her day.

In contrast to Christina's serial-verse, in which the poetic film is unending, and in contrast to Whitman's mileage, Emily uses absolute compression, or what Cocteau called, "l'esthétique du minimum." Her fierce economy with words makes each word an ultimatum. Awe and finality are packed into each syllable. To read Emily is not simply a pleasant occupation. It is to run up against the thorns and even the spikes of a being who did not find it "too difficult a grace to justify the dream."

She dealt her pretty
Words like blades;
As glittering they shone,
And every one unbared
A nerve
Or wantoned with a bone.

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In contrast to Christian's serial-verse, in which the
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Emily uses absolute compression, or what Goethe called
 "l'esthétique du minimum." Her terse economy with words makes
 each word an institution. Love and fidelity are packed into each
 syllable. To read Emily is not simply a pleasant occupation,
 it is to turn up against the throne and even the spikes of a
 being who did not find it "too difficult a grace to justify
 the dress."

She dealt her poetry
 words like blades;
 as glittering tiny stars,
 and every one understood
 A nerve
 Or wrenched with a pain.

Elinor Wylie also dealt her pretty words like blades. The two poets never believed in half-way writing, even if it hurt less. They would never swerve "From the iron line of strict veracity." unless it was to tell an occult fib, or a transcendental joke. Elinor Wylie says,

I love words opalescent, cool, and pearly,
Like midsummer moths, and honeyed words like bees,
Gilded and sticky, with a little sting.

It is this sting which makes their poetry so different. It gives a kind of "prickly pain." Their verse seems to have in it a certain delicate cruelty. Élie Faure has found this same quality in poetry: "Cruelty of the poet is only the carrying over into the spiritual plane of the cruelty of love in the sentimental plane." Christina's expression of love never quite left the sentimental plane. Even when there is no "Ah" in front of the poem, you feel it is there. The "Ah" school of poetry can seldom be trusted.

Although Emily's style is direct to the point of flinching, at the same time it has a curious habit of circumlocution, not in the sense of redundancy, but in the sense of keeping her victim at bay, of surrounding her subject with a light screen of whimsy, while holding him on a needle-point of anxiety. Sometimes she steps just a little too far into a childish pertness.

While simple hearted neighbors
Chat of the 'early dead',
We, prone to periphrasis,
Remark that birds have fled!

At the same time, this is a formidable type of roundaboutness, for the most innocent phrase may have in it the dagger's tooth, or a "bliss like murder" or "the Instead-- the pinching fear." There is a touch of the macabre in the gayest lines, and a touch of bravado. There is imminence in nearly every word. It is as though she is keeping her fingers crossed.

Good, without alarm,
Is a too serene possession--
Danger deepens suns.

And danger deepens her work.

Emily's style is poorest when she takes anthropomorphism too seriously.

The day undressed herself --
Her garter was of gold,
Her petticoat of purple,
etc.

Emily worried the poor metaphor to death. Her age probably found the verb a trife dangerous; the rest of the poem is a blatant example of feeble device. A sunset likened to a lady's garments might be interesting, if subtlety and feminine psychology were used; but Emily, who tried to be slightly improper, if the act of undressing is improper, did not succeed in being improper enough. The mechanics of the poem stand out too crudely. This is one type of failure in her poetry. The same fault is evident in such a line as

Some Ruby trousers hurried on.

This time it is a sunrise and the sex is changed. But the

At the same time, this is a far-reaching type of romanticism, for the most important phrase now have in the singer's mouth, or a "Miss like mother" or "the harvest-- the pinning feat." There is a touch of the sacred in the gesture lines, and a touch of prayer. There is a language in nearly every word. It is as though she is keeping her fingers crossed.

Good, without strain,
is a too serene possession--
Larger because more.

And danger begins her work.
Emily's style is perfect when she takes anthropomorphism too seriously.

The day understood herself --
her greater way of going,
her greatest of words,
etc.

Emily worked the poem carefully to death. Not only probably found the very best words; she tried the poem in a distant example of poetic devices. A stanza likened to a lady's comment might be interesting, if subtlety and technical psychology were used; but Emily, who tried to be slightly larger, in the act of unlearning in danger, did not succeed in being larger enough. The mechanics of the poem stand out too vividly. This is one type of failure in her poetry. The same fault is evident in such a line as
Some shy transients hurried on.
This time it is a simile and the sex is changed. At the

obviousness of method intrudes on the sensibilities. Her poem comes very close to being vulgar.

Personification was too easy for her. When using it, she was likely to lose herself in the charm of the figure she summoned, as

Oh, housewife in the evening west,
Come back and dust the pond!

This is too facile. Even with her "many-coloured brooms" this sunset seems poetically wrong.

It may be that Emily also went too far with her ecclesiastical jokes.

We apologize to Thee
For thine own Duplicity.

However, the question is not whether God minds having His beard pulled. And it is not a question of whether it is to do so. The question is whether a poem can stand it. John Donne managed both wit and piety. John Bunyan could not have, even if he had tried. What is proper to the one is not proper to the other.

It was proper for Emily to be improper. Emily liked to make a virtue appear dangerously immoral. The words of Maritain fit Emily --

Far from remaining primarily decorous the artist must be ready if necessary to make a scandal of his art in the same way that the Saint must be ready to make a scandal of his devotion.

Emily's poetry is delightfully scandalous; Christina's is painfully correct. Like Chateaubriand's René, who was vir-

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Personification was too easy for her. When using it she was likely to lose herself in the charm of the figure she summoned, as

Dr. Housewife in the evening went,
Came back and dust the pond!

This is too facile. Even with her "silly-colored poems" this sunset seems poetically wrong.

It may be that Emily also went too far with her ecclesiastical jokes.

We apologize to thee
For thine own insularity.

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Emily's poetry is delightfully scandalous; William's is painfully correct. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, who was vir-

tuous without pleasure, Christina's verses are not happy in their goodness.

Max Beerbohm has Dante Gabriel say to his sister, "What is the use, Christina, of having a heart like a singing bird and a water-shoot and all the rest of it, if you insist on getting yourself dressed up like a pew-opener?" Almost all her poems are dressed like pew-openers.

Emily, however, would have flirted with God if it occurred to her. She speaks of Him with an intimacy that is incorrigible. At another moment she finds herself an outlaw from His Kingdom which she finds so dull on

"Bright Wednesday afternoons."

In a childish mood, she speaks of Him as her "curious Friend." At a more drastic moment, Emily is pardoning God!

Could Christina, forever so "despised and rejected" have acquired for a while this topsy-turviness, her poetry would have gained in stature.

Christina would say:

Dear Lord, let me recount to Thee
Some of the great things Thou hast done
for me, even me...

She exaggerated her deficiencies until the effect is disturbing. "The sorriest sheep Christ shepherds with his crook." An intellectual love of God would have given strength to her poetry. William Michael says of her, "Religion was for her more a thing of the heart than of the mind. She clung to and loved the Christian creed because she loved Jesus Christ."

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Had this emotion been intellectualized, Christina might have realized her ambition of writing real religious poetry.

That Christina never crystallized in her own mind the nature and function of poetry has already been stated. This was a serious fault. In the same way the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had no real aim except their mutual enthusiasms. Their first code is unusual; "to have genuine ideas to express." This is understood as the very tissue of all art. And what did they mean by genuine? When the Germ appeared, here too was the same vagueness, "Thoughts toward Nature." This does not say anything. Ruskin excuses his position with "Thank God they are young!" The Brotherhood did not help Christina except in providing her with further vagueness. Then too, Christina could not help but try her hand at something creative; the family occupation was verse-making and drawing. With Christina, verse-making remained a game, a serious game, yes; it never developed into conscious craftsmanship. Her best work seems to be the result of accident.

To paraphrase Christina's verse is revealing. After the prose meaning is drawn off, there is seldom anything left over. The residuum should be poetry.

Beautiful, tender, wasting away for sorrow;
 Thus today; and how shall it with thee tomorrow?
 Beautiful, tender -- what else?
 A hope tells.

Beautiful, tender, keeping the jubilee
 In the land of home together, past death and sea;
 No more change or death, no more
 Salt sea-shore.

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left over. The reactions should be poetry.

Beautiful, tender, waiting away far away;
Thus today; and not shall it with these tomorrow?
Beautiful, tender -- what else?
A hope follows.

Beautiful, tender, keeping the jubilee
in the land of home together, past death and sea;
No more change or death, no more
Self sea-shore.

The whole texture of the poem is pathetic. The repetition of "beautiful, tender" only makes the poem more vaporous. "A hope tells" sounds like a secret and should probably be read with a divine hush. But it is unnecessary. The whole poem is already floating away toward heaven. It is best not to try to anchor it.

Paraphrase would never exhaust Emily. There is always something remaining which cannot be said. That is the éclat of the idea or the image, the unpredictability, or to use Emily's own expression, "the over-take-less-ness."

Given a few lines of Christina, a guess can usually compass the rest. The formula is always the same. Evil + Repentance + Humility = Forgiveness + Heaven. Vanity of Vanities + The World + Flesh = Devil. And always there is a narrowed Christology.

What is the poet's business according to Emily? "It is that distills amazing sense from ordinary meanings..." Her use of the relative that makes the poet exterior to gender. Though the emotions from which she derives her poetic material are a woman's, as a poet Emily transcends her woman-ness. She becomes a neutral force or intellectual energy. It is possible to say that Emily built her poems upon abstract emotion. That an original had occurred in time, is, perhaps not to be doubted. It gave, perhaps, the initial momentum. But it is to be suspected that a great deal of her work is so far removed from its actuating

The whole texture of the poem is pathetic. The repetition of "beautiful, tender" only makes the poem more pathetic. "A hope tells" sounds like a secret and should probably be read with a divine hush. But it is unnecessary. The whole poem is already floating away toward heaven. It is best not to try to anchor it.

Paraphrase would never exhaust Emily. There is always something remaining which cannot be said. That is the secret of the idea or the image, the unpredictability, or to use Emily's own expression, "the ever-take-less-ness." Given a few lines of Christian, a Greek can usually surpass the rest. The formula is always the same. Evil + Repentance + Humility = Forgiveness + Heaven. Vanity of Vanities + The World + Flesh + Devil. And always there is a narrowed Christianity.

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factor, that it is almost not related to it at all. The mere reproduction of an emotion is not a valid sign of art. Romanticism fails when it is only a quivering mass of jelly, or feeling. That the mind can feel as well as the heart has too often been overlooked. And the mind is usually a little more neat. Emily's reputation as a poet rests on no flimsy tissues or quicksands of emotionalism. Her poetry was born, like Athene, from the chambers of the brain.

It was within the purpose of poetry, according to Emily, to change the "familiar species", or at least to quicken the familiar with a sudden slant of light. Emily's slant is sometimes difficult to follow, but so is any unexpected slant. It becomes a perpendicular. When thought is so focussed there is something ruthless about it. Emily is never condescendingly lyric. Even love becomes for her a science, not the usual pathological reproduction. She could discriminate between love and the idea of love. She gave each its manifold worth, but with the metaphysical poets she understood that an idea was as important an event as an actual happening. With her, ideas act upon one another rather than persons.

I dwell in Possibility
A fairer house than prose,
More numerous of windows,
Superior of doors.

It is because Emily had more windows, and was "superior of doors" that she is greater than Christina. Emily had more avenues of perceptions.

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 tual happening. With her, ideas out upon one another rather
 than persons.

I dwell in possibility
 A fainter house than grace,
 More numerous of windows,
 Superior of doors.

It is because Emily had more windows, and was "superior

of doors" that she is greater than Christina. Emily had

more avenues of perception.

Emily also had the perception which looks at truth sideways and backwards and upside down and still keeps the center. And she dared to present herself to God "without certificate." She relied on her "columnar self."

Emily used what she called "compound vision" and in this way she became "convex and concave witness" to the world. In contrast to usual naive perception, Emily's ability to see both ways at once seems a distortion. Even in a segment Emily could see the whole. Her work is full of presage. It is almost as if Emily's way of seeing were God's way. Surely God sees convexly and concavely. Emily saw, not simply optically with things in their relative positions and sizes; she saw as Blake saw. It is not only a juggler's trick of metaphor when she says,

A furrow our Cordillera,
Our Apennines a knoll.

The Alpine requirements" of her mind are sometimes too steep. But they are worth the climb, for, at the top, she gives you the "Finite furnished with the Infinite."

Emily and Christina draw closer together in their whimsical love of animals. Christina's matter-of-factness is again evident, but it is a childlike matter-of-factness.

As a mouse
keeping house
in the fork of a tree,
with nuts in a crevice,
or an acorn or two.

This is not Peter Pan or Tytyl but it is a wholesome contrast

Emily also had the perception which looks at things
always and backward and upside down and still keeps the
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way. Surely God sees convexly and concavely. Emily saw

not simply optically with things in their relative positions
and sizes; she saw as Blake saw. It is not only a juggler's
trick of metaphor when she says,

A narrow ear Godfills,
Our ignorance a knoll.

The Alpine representation of her mind are sometimes too steep,
but they are worth the climb for, at the top, she gives you
the "finite furnished with the infinite."

Emily and Christina draw closer together in their
whimsical love of animals. Christina's latter-of-foresaken
is again evident, but it is a childish matter-of-factness.

At a mouse
feeling loose
in the fork of a tree,
with nuts in a crvice,
or an acorn or two.

This is not Peter Pan or Topsy but it is a whimsical contrast

to all of Christina's other work.

As a mole grubbing underground;
When it comes to the light
It grubs its way back again,
Feeling no bias of fur
To hamper it in its stir...

The Wind in the Willows would quite approve of this. The fourth line is astonishingly like Emily's. "Bias" is the kind of word Emily likes. In the description of goblin merchantmen, Christina is gay with

One had a cat's face
One whisked a tail,
One tramped a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry-scurry.

Christina seems at home here. Again there is the specific word chosen with sheer exactness in

One lugs a golden dish.

Goblin Market and parts of Prince's Progress retrieve Christina from an absolute poetic death. These pieces are minor but they at least have an artistically childlike poise. They do not attempt anything else. The sky is clear in them.

In letters to her brother William Michael, Christina often sent "news of the lizard, armadillos, wombats, porcupine, and pumas of the gardens." Dante Gabriel and Christina were both enchanted by the zoological. Mr. Cayley is reported to have sent Christina on her birthday a sea-mouse in a jar of wine. Dante Gabriel records his sister's "affectionate regard for caterpillars."

At the same time, the wind is blowing

As a male grabbing underneath;
When it comes to the light
It grabs its way back again,
Feeling no pain at all
To hangar in the air...

The Wind in the Willows would quite approve of this. The fourth line is astonishingly like Tilly's "Glas" as the kind of word Tilly likes. In the description of gelatin next character, Christian is gay with

One had a cow's face
One whistled a call,
One jumped a rat's back,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a worst abuse and fury,
One like a metal tumbled mucky-sucky.

Christian seems at home here. Again there is the specific word chosen with sheer exactness in One like a gelatin dish.

Gelatin Market and parts of France. "Process retrieve

Christian tries an absolute poetic death. These pieces are a minor but they at least have an artistically childlike pulse. They do not attempt anything else. The sky is clear in them. In letters to her brother William Michael, Christian often sent "news of the lizard, armadillo, weasels, parrot pine, and grass of the garden." Dame Gabriel and Christian were both enchanted by the ecological. Mr. Gayley is reported to have sent Christian on her birthday a sea-saw in a jar of wine. Dame Gabriel records his sister's "affectionate regard for ecological."

Emily speaks of "a narrow fellow in the grass" who makes her feel a "zero at the bone." And Emily notes,

The rat is the consistest tenant.
He pays no rent.

Emily is fond of the caterpillar too, aptly calling him "a fuzzy fellow without feet." She drinks ale with the bee and, drunk, inquires, "Do we beat our wife?" Again Emily's personal idiom and her inventive originality distinguish her from Christina. Emily meets with dimity-courage her own

Dragons in the crease.

Nearly all of Christina's religious verse is bad. She wrote too vehemently for the Union to Further Christian Knowledge. Her devotional pieces have the tiresome ring of

Where mansions are ready for every guest
And world-weary pilgrims, at last, may rest.

or

We read in the sacred tradition of yore
Of the beautiful gate on the ever green shore.

Christina did wave, wave the Gospel Banner and sing hopefully, "Will there be a Robe for me?" and in her more sombre moods it was "Rescue the perishing."

Though her reading included Thomas à Kempis, St. Augustine, Dante, and the Revelations plus a mixture of Gothic romances and a little Plato, Christina's preparation is desultory. Her verses in general have little more utility than a recitation-book for Young Ladies Societies for Uplift. For evangelism and missionary zeal, Christina is a handy-text. This hardly establishes her as a poet. But this is

Baily speaks of "a narrow fellow in the grass" who
makes her feel a "new at the bone." And Baily notes,
The rat is the coarsest beast.
He pays no rent.

Baily is fond of the caterpillar too, aptly calling him "a
fussy fellow without feet." She drinks ale with the bee and
dances, inquires, "Do we beat our wife?" Again Baily's per-
sonal ideas and her inventive originality distinguish her
from Christina. Baily meets with daily-courage her own
urgency in the grass.

Hearty all at Christina's religious verse is had.
The words are vehemently for the union to further Christian
knowledge. Her devotional pieces have the firmness ring of
these epigrams are ready for every guest
and well-worn epigrams, at least, my best.

or

We read in the sacred tradition of yore
Of the beautiful gate on the ever green shore.
Christina did wave, wave the royal banner and side nobly;
"Will there be a robe for me?" and in her core some words
it was "leaves the peeling."
Though her reading included Thomas à Kempis, St. Au-
gustine, Dante, and the Revelations plus a mixture of both
to romance and a little fate, Christina's preparation is
desultory. Her verse in general have little core utility
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For evangelism and missionary zeal, Christina is a handy-
text. This hardly established her as a poet. But this is

the worst that can be said.

Christina is morbidly aware of Christ's physical suffering. Her poetry is damp with His blood and her tears. It has already been pointed out that her verses lack hardness or the firmness of masonry. Her work is also faulty due to this quality of extreme wetness. Her verses are so faint that smelling salts must always be close at hand. To be sure Christ's wounds are not pleasing. Much of "religious" art and poetry is so naturalistic that the symbolism is lost. Empiricism of the Cross is usually a bad job from the standpoint of theological value. It seems fair to say that the intention of a religious picture is to give some kind of religious feeling. Disgust and horror cannot be called religious unless they are converted into something more; Christianity has often failed to understand catharsis. The artist must be sure not to stop at the literal. If his work is to have deeper roots, it must transcend actuality. It must at least suggest the liberation of the unknown.

The two poets represent two different schools of suffering.

Mirth is the mail of anguish
 In which it caution arm,
 Lest anybody spy the blood
 And 'You're hurt' exclaim!

Emily made sure that no one would cry "You're hurt!"

To have showed it would be

A vulgar grimace in the
 The flesh.

the worst that can be said.

Christina is worthily aware of Christ's physical suffering. Her poetry is deep with the blood and her suffering. It has already been pointed out that her verses lack harshness or the firmness of reason. Her work is also faintly due to this quality of extreme weakness. Her verses are so faint that swelling aside must always be close at hand. To be sure Christ's wounds are not pleasing. Much of "religious" art and poetry is so naturalistic that the symbolism is lost. Symbolism of the Cross is usually a bad job from the standpoint of theological value. It seems fair to say that the intention of a religious picture is to give some kind of religious feeling. Disgust and horror cannot be called religious unless they are converted into something more. Christ's death has often failed to understand enthusiasm. The artist must be sure not to stop at the literal. If his work is to have deeper roots, it must transcend actuality. It must at least suggest the liberation of the unknown. The two poets represent two different domains of suffering.

Birth is the will of anguish
in which it enters sin,
but anybody can be dead
and 'You're hurt' exclaim!

Early again with that no one would say "You're hurt!"

To have showed it would be

A vulgar glance to see

The flesh.

Christina asks for pity. Emily never does. Emily even twists the knife in herself.

We will not drop the dirk
Because we love the wound,

Emily would like to continue the "omnipotent, acute."

Or she can look upon suffering from an opposite side.

Our Lord thought no extravagance
To pay -- a Cross!

Christina's mind turned to the obedience learned through suffering. In Annus Domini she has this prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst learn
obedience by things suffered, teach us,
I pray Thee, through suffering, the
lesson of unquestioning obedience. By
Thy pang of sorrow when Thy friends
forsook Thee and fled, support us under
loneliness; by Thy stripes and mocking,
nerve us to endure insult and provocation;
by Thy thirst upon the Cross, give us
patience in any extremity of bodily anguish.
... Amen.

Here is the conventional attitude toward Christ's suffering and the suffering of man. In Emily there is another reversal. It is a reversal not only in sentence structure, but also in life structure. Few people could say

Gay was Gethsemane

and mean it. The "Empress of Calvary" could say it and mean it.

In Christina's use of religious symbols, such as the harp and crown, the lily and the rose, the dove, the lamb, and streets of gold, she never quickens them with an inner

Christina asks for pity. Daily never does. Daily even

twists the knife in herself.

We will not draw the disk
Because we love the wound.

Daily would like to continue the "ambiguous, acute."

Or she can look upon suffering from an opposite side.

Our lord thought no extravagance
To say -- a Cross!

Christina's mind turned to the sentence learned through

suffering. In Anna's Journal she has this prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst learn
patience by being suffered, teach us,
I pray Thee, through suffering, the
lesson of unquenching patience. By
thy pang of sorrow when thy friends
forsook Thee and fled, support us under
loneliness; by thy stripes and sweating,
nerve us to endure affliction and provocation;
by thy thirst when the Cross, give us
patience in any extremity of bodily anguish.
... Amen.

Here is the conventional attitude toward Christ's suffering

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reversal. It is a reversal not only in sentence structure,

but also in its structure. The people could say

Gay was determined

and mean to. The "Baptist" of Ulysses would say so and

mean to.

is Christina's use of religious symbols, such as the

hair and crown, the lily and the rose, the dove, the lamb,

and circles of gold, the never patients were with an iron

burning of her own. Christina had no church of her own. She had The Church. Any originality she had was lost in her Anglicanism. She could not help being orthodox. Her writing is also orthodox. It is too bad that it is not more often good orthodoxy.

Christina's real merit rests in a few individual poems. Uphill, The Paling of the Stars, A Song for All the Maries, and Passing Away are particular examples. Here directness and a real simplicity are balanced with the theme. The refrain in Passing Away,

Then I answered: Yea.

is well chosen. The lyricism in these poems is much more poignant than usual. The reader is more likely to stumble on something like

"A heavy heart, if ever heart was heavy,
I offer Thee this heavy heart of me ...

He cannot quite believe it, when he finds something as fine as Uphill. Christina can occasionally produce a finished piece which will still keep its artlessness. Most of her work, however, should have been thrown away.

Emily's work is in most cases consistently Emily-calibre. Her work is also self-consistent. In this way it is measuring up to Fuseli's test of art, "I hold that no work of art can be tried otherwise than by laws deduced from itself; whether or not it be consistent with itself is the question." The fine spirit of choice and delicate instinct of omission,

writing of her own. Christina had no chance of her own. She had the Church. Any originality she had was lost in her Anglicanism. She could not help being orthodox. Her writing is also orthodox. It is too bad that it is not more often good orthodox.

Christina's real merit rests in a few individual poems. Umbilic, The Ladder of the Stars, A Song for All the Maries, and Passing Away are particular examples. Here directness and a real simplicity are balanced with the theme. The refrain in Passing Away:

Then I answered: Yes.

is well chosen. The lyrical in these poems is much more poignant than usual. The reader is more likely to stumble on something like

"A heavy heart, if ever heart was heavy,
I offer thee this heavy heart of me ..."

He cannot quite believe it, when he finds something as fine as Umbilic. Christina can occasionally produce a finished piece which will still keep the attention. Most of her work, however, should have been thrown away.

Christina's work is in most cases consistently half-calibre. Her work is also self-constant. In this way it is ascending up to Russell's test of it, "I held that no work of art can be tried otherwise than by laws deduced from itself; whether or not it be consistent with itself is the question." The fine spirit of choice and delicate instinct of execution,

which gives to her work some of its perfection, is drawn from her high standards of creation. Seldom does she even swerve from her own laws of prosody to produce the classic rhyme. And sometimes, when she did conform, it was with her tongue in her cheek, She dared posterity with "dog" and "gig."

Could it be that she could not always "match" her rhymes?

I felt a clearing in my mind
As if my brain had split,
I tried to match it, seam by seam,
But could not make them fit.

Some of Emily's poetry must have been written when her brain was splitting. The significance of the irregular rhymes is in part Emily's whimsicality, and in part an artistic perversity. To defeat the ear, rather than to always please it, is Emily's teasing art.

Though Emily broke many rules of poesy, she is a formalist at the core. Her formalism is the only legitimate kind. It creates its own laws, and then scrupulously keeps them. It is never a traitor. And it is always fair. There is no cheating for the sake of a pretty phrase. Emily is an uncompromising draftsman. Whereas Christina is too willing to forget sense for the convenience of sound, Emily remembers the "joint force." She keeps the total composition and intention in mind. She is always on her honor.

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 and "gig."

Could it be that she could not always "match" her

rhymes?

I felt a glancing in my mind
 As if my brain had split
 I tried to match it, vainly so,
 But could not make them fit.

Some of Emily's poetry must have been written when her brain
 was splitting. The significance of the irregular rhyme is in
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 To defeat the ear, rather than to always please it, is Emily's
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Though Emily broke every rule of poetry, she is a formalist
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 promising formalist. Whereas Christina is too willing to
 forget sense for the convenience of sound, Emily remembers
 the "joint laws." She keeps the verbal composition and inven-
 tion in mind. She is always on her honor.

Tap Emily and find Emily. Sub-soil, bed-rock, and down to the source of being itself, there is Emily, an Emily who could say with the strictest truth,

Alter? When the hills do.

Another Emily, who belonged to the bleak moors, had this same sense of the absolute of life and death and of love which binds them together. At Haworth lived an Emily as proud and fierce as the Emily "behind the hedges."

Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one.
When sense from spirits files away,
And subterfuge is done;

When that which is and that which was
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front
And mists are carved away,--
Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay!

Could not this be Cathy speaking of Heathcliff? There is as much passion in those words as in any lines of Wuthering Heights.

... If all else perished, and he remained,
I should still continue to be; and if all
remained, and he were annihilated, the
universe would turn to a mighty stranger:
I should not seem a part of it. My love
for Linton is like the foliage in the woods:
time will change it, I'm well aware, as
winter changes the trees. My love for
Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks
beneath ...

Tap Emily and find Emily. Sub-see, bed-rock, and down to
the source of being itself, there is Emily, an Emily who
could say with the strictest truth,

Alfred "When the hills do

Another Emily, who belonged to the best years, had this same
sense of the absolute of life and death and of love which
binds them together. At Harcourt lived an Emily as proud
and fierce as the Emily "behind the hedge."

Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one.
When sense from spirit flies away,
And substance is done;

When that which is and that which was
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is acted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front
And mist are carved away;--
Behold the atom I gathered
To all the lists of clay!

Could not this be Carlyle speaking of Hawthorne? There is
as much passion in those words as in any lines of metaphysics

Heights.

... If all of us perishes, and is retained,
I should still continue to be; and if all
remained, and he were annihilated, the
universe would turn to a mighty nothing:
I should not seem a part of it. I have
for instance in the language in the words:
"I will change it, I will away, a
winter changes the trees. I have for
Hawthorne resembles the eternal rocks
beneath ...

If Donne's poetry stands, in the relation of Baroque to that of Renaissance painting, Emily's poetry has a similar relationship to nineteenth century painting. Her work bears definite contrast to either Turner or Constable. Their dull brown and green landscapes with thick surfaces are nothing like the brilliant staccato tones of Emily's canvas. Her work has all the clarity of a Vermeer along with the intensity of an El Greco. There is a mingling of brittle reality and hard passion. There is no voluptuous softness to her work.

But more than anything else Emily is a chiaroscurist. Her arrangement of bright and dark words so that the pattern of sound strengthens the pattern of meaning is apocalyptic.

Like trains of cars on tracks of plush
I hear the level bee ...

Color and sound are mixed in

Bees are black with gold surcingles,
Buccaneers of buzz ...

Emily's work stands as singularly apart in the history of poetry as the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. The mould of their thought is so distinctive as to seem queer. And neither of them are derivative poets at all. Their dynamics of poetic invention are as revolutionary as Arthur Rimbaud's hallucinatory verses. Work of this type has a tingling property which makes it experimental. Each word is a new experience. It has in it the nature of incantation, or as

if Donne's poetry stands in the relation of balance to that of Renaissance painting, Keats's poetry has a similar relationship to nineteenth century painting. Her work bears definite contrast to either Turner or Constable. Their soft brown and green landscapes with thick surfaces are nothing like the brilliant staccato tones of Keats's canvas. Her work has all the clarity of a Vermeer along with the intensity of an El Greco. There is a mingling of brittle reality and hard passion. There is no voluptuous softness to her work.

But more than anything else Keats is a chiaroscuroist. Her arrangement of bright and dark words so that the pattern of sound strengthens the pattern of meaning is a special plea. Like trains of cars on tracks of glass I hear the level sea ...

Color and sound are mixed in

Keats are dark with gold highlights,
Roseships of dawn ...

Keats's work stands as a singularly quiet in the history of poetry as the work of Robert Henryson. The results of their thought is so distinctive as to seem queer. And neither of them are derivative poets of any. Their dynamics of poetic invention are as revolutionary as Arthur Rimbaud's hallucinatory verses. Work of this type has a striking property which makes it experimental. Each word is a new experience. It has in it the nature of incantation, or as

Mallarmé, leader of the symbolist movement in France, puts it, "... un mot total, neuf, étranger à la langue et comme incantatoire ...". He calls it also, "L'Alchimie du Verbe."

Emerson, in *Merlin*, gives this account of the bard's activity:

He shall not his brain encumber
 With the coil of rhythm and number;
 But, leaving rule and pale forethought,
 He shall aye climb
 For his rhyme.
 "Pass in, pass in," the angels say,
 In to the upper doors,
 Nor count compartments of the floors,
 But mount to paradise
 By the stairway of surprise.

The "stairway of surprise" is Emily's favourite way.

The Jesuit and the "New England Nun" have proximity also in their all-engulfing intuition of God.

"God's utterance of Himself in Himself is God the Word, outside Himself is this world. This world then is word, expression, news, of God." Only in the outer cloak of style does Emily differ.

The only news I know
 Is bulletins all day
 From Immortality.

The work of both poets falls into Ezra Pound's third class of poetry: "logopoeia, or poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of intelligence among words and ideas and modifications of ideas and characters."

Emily informs us,

I cannot dance upon my toes,
 No man instructed me

Mallarmé, leader of the symbolist movement in France, puts it, "... un mot total, new, étranger à la langue et comme incertaine..." He calls it also, "L'Alchimie du Verbe." Baudelaire, in Merleau, gives this account of the poet's activity:

He shall not his brain enumber
With the coil of rhyme and number;
But, leaving rule and pale forethought,
He shall eye climb
For his rhyme.
"Pass in, pass in," the angels say,
In to the upper story;
Not count themselves of the choir,
Not count the candles
By the stairway of surprise.

The "stairway of surprise" is Mallarmé's favorite way. The Jesuit and the "New England Man" have probably also in their all-organizing intention of God.

"God's utterance of himself in himself is God the Word, outside himself is this world. This world then is word, expression, new, of God." Only in the outer class of style does Mallarmé differ.

The only news I know
Is culled from all day
From immortality.

The work of both poets falls into Mallarmé's third class of poetry: "lyricism, or poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of intelligence among words and ideas and modifications of ideas and characters."

Mallarmé writes us,

I cannot dance upon my toes,
We can instruct me

But often times among my mind
 A glee possesseth me
 That had I ballet knowledge
 Would put itself abroad
 In pirouette to blanch a troupe
 Or lay a Prima mad!

Father Hopkins and Emily were God's ballet dancers. They were articulate Nijinskis.

Emily occasionally reminds one of Crashaw because of her succinct terminology and her "curiosa felicitas." Such phrases from Crashaw as "a darkness made of too much day," "Thou East of West," or "frugal negative light" have a Dickinsonian secret elasticity.

Emerson and Emily are alike in their understanding of the importance of self-reliance and realization. But this is only a superficial likeness. Emily's flight is absolutely "of the alone to the Alone." Whereas Emerson leans a little on the laws of Buddha and Plato, Emily depends on no one. Her poetry does not have the ear-marks of any sect. Her work is as true as a bird cutting the air with precise wings, and knowing no elected prejudice of ether.

Emily's only prejudice was for death. Her predilection for death was not an unduly morbid strain, nor the illusive Freudian escapism, nor a concomitant to a denial of life. Emily was drawn to the mystery as is every artist. Only a consciousness of "Death's tremendous nearness" makes a man use his brush or pen. He has something he must say before he dies. He begins to measure events with the grave's yard-stick.

But often times among my kind
A like passage as
That had I had knowledge
Would not itself spread
in private to blind a crowd
Or lay a crime dead!

But often times among my kind
A like passage as
That had I had knowledge
Would not itself spread
in private to blind a crowd
Or lay a crime dead!

But often times among my kind
A like passage as
That had I had knowledge
Would not itself spread
in private to blind a crowd
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But often times among my kind
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Or lay a crime dead!

But often times among my kind
A like passage as
That had I had knowledge
Would not itself spread
in private to blind a crowd
Or lay a crime dead!

When "Death's large democratic fingers" are felt,
there is a true democracy of the spirit. Emily knew that,

Color, Caste, Denomination--
These are Time's affair,
Death's division classifying
Does not know they are.

Thus her work is truly democratic. In her work is the
"kingdom on earth."

In most of Emily's poetry there is a feeling of death
just around the corner. How quick she was to realize that
"the doomed regard the sunrise with different delight."
Emily was one of the doomed; she thrilled to it. For this
reason her poetry is made up of delicious apprehension.
Suspense is infused. Behind many poems, an implied story
is felt in which Emily is the Iphigenia or Electra.
Emily leaves out the details of the bright drama. She gives
us only the climax, the highest pitch. Many poems are
nevertheless plays in miniature.

"The reaffirmation of the will to live in the face of
death" might well be a description of Emily's spirit, and,
"the joy of its inexhaustibility when so reaffirmed" might
well refer to her poetry. What is her poetry but reaffirma-
tions of the creative will? Is it not

Annihilation plated fresh
With Immortality" ?

And is she not the "Empress of Calvary"?

When "Death's large democratic fingers" are felt,
there is a fine democracy at the spirit. Emily knew that

Color, Gaste, Demonstration--
These are fine's affairs,
Death's division classifying
Does not know they are.

Thus her work is truly democratic. In her work is the
"kingdom on earth."

In most of Emily's poetry there is a feeling of death
just around the corner. How quick she was to realize that
"the doomed regard the sunbeams with bitter delight."
Emily was one of the doomed; she thrilled to it. For this
reason her poetry is made up of delicate suggestions.
Sorrow is implied. Behind many poems, an implied story
is felt in which Emily is the protagonist or heroine.
Emily leaves out the details of the bright drama. She gives
us only the climax, the highest pitch. Many poems are
nevertheless plays in miniature.

"The realization of the will to live in the face of
death" might well be a description of Emily's spirit, and
"the joy of its indefiniteness when he realized" might
well refer to her poetry. What is her poetry but to illus-

trude of the creative will? Is it not
"An illusion placed there
With immortality?"

And is she not the "Empress of Solway"?

Both Christina and Emily had to enter by the narrow gate. "Efforcez-vous d'entrer par la porte etroite." Anglicanism and Transcendental Puritanism were their cassocks. Christina appears more humble.

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

Emily appears saucy. Quite often she is a terribly spoiled child who needs to be spanked.

Why do they shut me
Out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?

Emily did not really care if she sang too loud. Her precocious nursery-self could come back with the rude

Of course I prayed,
And did God care?

Yet both women were religious poets. One wrote for the Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge. The other wrote for Eternity. That made all the difference.

Both Christina and Emily had to enter by the narrow
 gate. "Effort-vous d'entree par la porte étroite."
 Anglicanism and Unitarianism were their associates.
 Christina appears more humble.

Give me the lowest place; not that I desire
 Ask for that lowest place, but that I may
 That I might live and share
 The glory by thy side.

Emily appears haughty. Quite often she is a terribly spoiled
 child who needs to be spanked.

Why do they shut me
 Out of heaven?
 Did I sin too lately?

Emily did not really care if she sang too loud. Her predecessors
 nursery-sister could have done with the same

Of course I prayed,
 And did God care?

Yet both women were religious years. One wrote for the Society
 of Promoting Christian Knowledge. The other wrote for
 sterminity. That adds all the difference.

A
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Billy Dickerson

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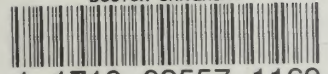
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