From House to Home': The Structure of a Soul Journey in Christina Rossetti’s Devotional Writing

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Abstract:
This thesis examines how Christina Rossetti uses a specific narrative structure I term the soul journey, to help her readers navigate the chaos of an ever-changing social and religious culture of Victorian England. Foundational to my analysis of her writing is the literary influence of Dante Alighieri, John Bunyan, and Alfred Lord Tennyson; specifically how their writing demonstrates the spiral structure of the soul journey. Also vital to this study is Rossetti’s devotion to Anglo-Catholic liturgical practices deriving from the Oxford Movement of the 1830s and 1840s in England. The leaders of the Oxford Movement, or Tractarians, sought reform of the Church of England. As part of their mandate for reform, they called for a renewed emphasis on the Sacraments, including the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Rossetti, who regularly attended Christ Church, a parish at the centre of the Oxford Movement, was exposed early in her life to the teachings of the Tractarians; thus, her own writing shares elements of Tractarian thought. This thesis will establish that patterns of worship in the Anglo-Catholic liturgy, including the Communion service and liturgical calendar, mirror the spiral structure of the soul journey. First, this narrative structure is used to examine overall patterns in Rossetti’s devotional writing and then applied to the narrative poem, “From House to Home.” Second, the soul journey structure is used to explore the themes of hope and hospitality in Rossetti’s writing. Details of Anglo-Catholic liturgy, with a focus on the sacrament of the Eucharist and Rossetti’s own devotional practices, will be applied to a close reading of “Goblin Market” and “A Better Resurrection.” I conclude with an indepth study of Rossetti’s devotional prose work Time Flies and I reveal how Rossetti reworks the repetitive and mechanized conventions of industrial time to navigate the soul journey through liturgical time as preparation for the afterlife.

Description:
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Christina Rossetti’s Remember follows this same pattern: the narrator encourages the unseen reader to remember her after her death, and it is only near the end of the poem that the narrator changes her mind (one can assume that the narrator is Rossetti herself) and allows him to forget her. Remember Breakdown Analysis. This poem is written in the style of a Petrarchan sonnet. Petrarch was an Italian poet in the sixteenth century who wrote of courtly ideals, with the themes of noble, chaste love; it is not surprising that Christina Rossetti chose this for her poem, as her father was Gabriele Rossetti, a prominent Italian scholar, poet, and political exile who taught Italian and Dante to students in England. Historical Background.