



# CRITICISM

VOLUME

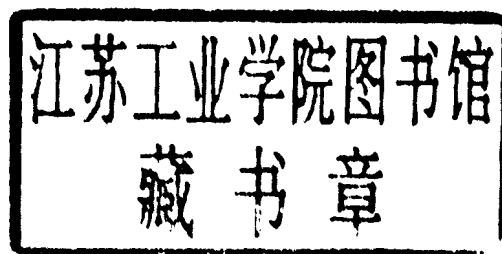
84

# Poetry Criticism

*Excerpts from Criticism of the Works  
of the Most Significant and Widely  
Studied Poets of World Literature*

## Volume 84

*Michelle Lee*  
Project Editor



GALE  
CENGAGE Learning

Detroit • New York • San Francisco • New Haven, Conn • Waterville, Maine • London

**Poetry Criticism, Vol. 84**

Project Editor: Michelle Lee

Editorial: Dana Barnes, Thomas Burns,  
Elizabeth Cranston, Kathy D. Darrow,  
Kristen Dorsch, Jeffrey W. Hunter,  
Jelena O. Krstović, Thomas J.  
Schoenberg, Noah Schusterbauer,  
Lawrence J. Trudeau, Russel Whitaker

Data Capture: Frances Monroe, Gwen  
Tucker

Indexing Services: Factiva, Inc.

Rights and Acquisitions: Scott Bragg,  
Jocelyn Green, and Jacqueline Key

Composition and Electronic Capture: Gary  
Oudersluys

Manufacturing: Rhonda Dover

Associate Product Manager: Marc Cormier

© 2008 Gale, Cengage Learning

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

For product information and technology assistance, contact us at  
**Gale Customer Support, 1-800-877-4253.**

For permission to use material from this text or product,  
submit all requests online at [www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions).

Further permissions questions can be emailed to  
[permissionrequest@cengage.com](mailto:permissionrequest@cengage.com)

While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

*Gale*  
27500 Drake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 91-118494

ISBN-13: 978-0-7876-9881-2

ISBN-10: 0-7876-9881-4

ISSN 1052-4851

## Preface

*Poetry Criticism (PC)* presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC)*, and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC)*, *PC* offers more focused attention on poetry than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries on writers in these Gale series. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the generous excerpts and supplementary material provided by *PC* supply them with the vital information needed to write a term paper on poetic technique, to examine a poet's most prominent themes, or to lead a poetry discussion group.

### Scope of the Series

*PC* is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, *PC* is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research. Each author entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *PC* volume.

### Organization of the Book

Each *PC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by the title of the work and its date of publication.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections and book-length poems. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. For foreign authors, the editors have provided original foreign-language publication information and have selected what are considered the best and most complete English-language editions of their works.
- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems and poetry collections by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.

- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *PC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *PC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *PC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order all individual poems, book-length poems, and collection titles contained in the *PC* series. Titles of poetry collections and separately published poems are printed in italics, while titles of individual poems are printed in roman type with quotation marks. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

## Citing Poetry Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Linkin, Harriet Kramer. "The Language of Speakers in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." *Romanticism Past and Present* 10, no. 2 (summer 1986): 5-24. Reprinted in *Poetry Criticism*. Vol. 63, edited by Michelle Lee, 79-88. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.

Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." In *Interpreting Blake*, edited by Michael Phillips, 32-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Reprinted in *Poetry Criticism*. Vol. 63, edited by Michelle Lee, 34-51. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.

## Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Associate Product Manager:

Associate Product Manager, Literary Criticism Series  
Gale  
27500 Drake Road  
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535  
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)  
Fax: 248-699-8054

## Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *PC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

### **COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *PC*, VOLUME 84, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:**

*Comparative Literature*, v. 54, spring 2002 for “‘To Find a Face where all Distress is Stell’d’: *Enargeia*, *Ekphrasis*, and Mourning in *The Rape of Lucrece* and the *Aeneid*” by Marion A. Wells. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Critical Survey*, v. 17, 2005. Copyright © by CS, 2005. Republished with permission of *Critical Survey*, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.—*ELH*, v. 71, summer 2004. Copyright © 2004 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—*English Studies*, v. 64, February 1983. Copyright © 1983 by Swets & Zeitlinger B. V., Lisse. Reproduced by permission.—*Explicator*, v. 50, 1992; v. 55, 1997. Copyright © 1992, 1997 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Both reproduced with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—*John Donne Journal*, v. 24, 2005. Copyright © 2006 by *John Donne Journal*. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—*Lancet*, v. 356, December 23-30, 2000. Reprinted with permission from Elsevier.—*Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, v. 29, summer 1999. Republished with permission of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.—*Shakespeare Quarterly*, v. 52, autumn 2001; v. 57, spring 2006. Copyright © 2001, 2006 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Both reproduced by permission.—*Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, v. 39, winter 1999. Copyright © 1999 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—*Victorian Poetry*, v. 35, fall 1997. Copyright © 1997 by West Virginia University. Reproduced by permission.

### **COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *PC*, VOLUME 84, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:**

Benet, Diana Treviño. From “Crashaw, Teresa, and the Word,” in *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw*. Edited by John R. Roberts. Copyright © 1990 by the Curators of the University of Missouri. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University of Missouri Press.—Bertonasco, Marc F. *Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies: Essays on Richard Crashaw*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1979. Copyright © 1979 by Robert M. Cooper. Reproduced by permission.—Colley, Ann C. From *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*. Ashgate, 2004. Copyright © by Ann C. Colley, 2004. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Cooper, Robert M. From *Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies: An Essay on the Art of Richard Crashaw*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982. Copyright © 1979 by Robert M. Cooper. Reproduced by permission.—Cunnar, Eugene R. From “Crashaw’s ‘Sancta Maria Dolorum’: Controversy and Coherence,” in *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw*. Edited by John R. Roberts. Copyright © 1990 by the Curators of the University of Missouri. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University of Missouri Press.—Dubrow, Heather. From “‘This blemish’d fort’: The Rape of the Hearth in Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*,” in *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honor of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski*. Edited by Amy Boesky and Mary Thomas Crane. University of Delaware Press, 2000. Copyright © 2000 by Associated University Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Freer, Coburn. *Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies: Essays on Richard Crashaw*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1979. Copyright © 1979 by Robert M. Cooper. Reproduced by permission.—Hall, Michael. From “Lewd but Familiar Eyes: The Narrative Tradition of Rape and Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*,” in *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003. Copyright © 2003 by the Arizona Board of Regents for the Arizona State University. Reproduced by permission.—Healy, Thomas F. From *Richard Crashaw*. E. J. Brill, 1986. Copyright © 1986 by Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands. All rights reserved. Courtesy of Brill Academic Publishers. Reproduced by permission.—Huntington, John. From *Ambition, Rank, and Poetry in 1590s England*. University of Illinois Press, 2001. Copyright © 2001 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the University of Illinois Press.—Hyland, Peter. From *An*

*Introduction to Shakespeare's Poems*. Palgrave, 2003. Copyright © Peter Hyland, 2003. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Lewis, Roger C. From the Introduction to *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Edited by Roger C. Lewis. Edinburgh University Press, 2003. Copyright © by Roger C. Lewis, 2003. Reproduced by permission. www.eup.ed.ac.uk.—Parrish, Paul A. From *Richard Crashaw*. Twayne, 1980. Copyright © 1980 by G. K. Hall & Co. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the author.—Parrish, Paul A. From “Richard Crashaw, Mary Collet, and the ‘Arminian Nunnery’ of Little Gidding,” in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*. Edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. Copyright © 1997 by the Curators of the University of Missouri. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University of Missouri Press.—Phillis, Randy. From “The Stained Blood of Rape: Elizabethan Medical Thought and Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*,” in *Shakespeare’s Theories of Blood, Character, and Class: A Festschrift in Honor of David Shelley Berkeley*. Edited by Peter C. Rollins and Alan Smith. Peter Lang, 2001. Copyright © 2001 by Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Rickey, Mary Ellen. From *Rhyme and Meaning in Richard Crashaw*. University of Kentucky Press, 1961. Copyright © 1961 by the University Press of Kentucky. Copyright renewed 1989 by May Ellen Rickey. Reproduced by permission of the University Press of Kentucky.—Roberts, John R. From “Richard Crashaw: The Neglected Poet,” in *Approaches to Teaching the Metaphysical Poets*. Edited by Sidney Gottlieb. The Modern Language Association of America, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by the Modern Language Association of America. Reprinted by permission of the Modern Language Association of America.—Roberts, Lorraine. From “The ‘Truewit’ of Crashaw’s Poetry,” in *The Wit of Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. Edited by Claude J. Summers & Ted-Larry Pebworth. Copyright © 1995 by the Curators of the University of Missouri. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University of Missouri Press.

# Gale Literature Product Advisory Board

The members of the Gale Literature Product Advisory Board—reference librarians from public and academic library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

**Barbara M. Bibel**

Librarian  
Oakland Public Library  
Oakland, California

**Dr. Toby Burrows**

Principal Librarian  
The Scholars' Centre  
University of Western Australia Library  
Nedlands, Western Australia

**Celia C. Daniel**

Associate Reference Librarian  
Howard University Libraries  
Washington, D.C.

**David M. Durant**

Reference Librarian  
Joyner Library  
East Carolina University  
Greenville, North Carolina

**Nancy T. Guidry**

Librarian  
Bakersfield Community College  
Bakersfield, California

**Heather Martin**

Arts & Humanities Librarian  
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Sterne Library  
Birmingham, Alabama

**Susan Mikula**

Librarian  
Indiana Free Library  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

**Thomas Nixon**

Humanities Reference Librarian  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Davis  
Library  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**Mark Schumacher**

Jackson Library  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Greensboro, North Carolina

**Gwen Scott-Miller**

Assistant Director  
Sno-Isle Regional Library System  
Marysville, Washington

# Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments ix

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xi

<b>Richard Crashaw 1612?-1649</b> .....	1
<i>English poet and translator</i>	
<b><i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> 1594</b> .....	183
<i>English narrative poem</i>	
<b>Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894</b> .....	296
<i>Scottish poet, novelist, short story writer, playwright, and essayist</i>	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 359

PC Cumulative Nationality Index 471

PC-84 Title Index 475

# Richard Crashaw

## 1612?-1649

English poet and translator.

### INTRODUCTION

Crashaw, a distinguished scholar, was literate in several languages, among them French, Italian, and Spanish, in addition to classical Latin and Greek. He produced a great number of poems, both sacred and secular, in Latin, Greek, and English.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Crashaw was born in London, probably in 1612, although scholars have expressed some uncertainty about the date. His father was William Crashaw, a Puritan minister and author, and his mother, whose name is unknown, died while Crashaw was still an infant. His father remarried, but his stepmother, Elizabeth, died in 1620, when Crashaw was eight years old. Crashaw was educated at Charter House School, which he began attending in 1629, and two years later he was admitted to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, to study Greek. He received a bachelor's degree in 1634 and published his first volume of poetry, *Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber*, that same year. In 1635 he was ordained as an Anglican priest and was granted a fellowship at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, where he earned a Master of Arts degree in 1638. In 1643 Crashaw, along with sixty-four other Cambridge Fellows, was expelled from the university by Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian forces. Shortly thereafter, he rejected the religion of his birth, converted to Catholicism, and emigrated to France, although some historians believe he spent some time at Oxford before leaving the country. Two years later, living in Paris in abject poverty, he was discovered by the poet Abraham Cowley and introduced to the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria, who recommended him for a position in the home of Cardinal Palotta in Rome. He was appointed curate at the Shrine of Our Lady of Loretto, but died shortly after his arrival in 1649.

### MAJOR WORKS

Crashaw's first volume of verse, *Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber*, written in Latin, was published anonymously in 1634. It contains exclusively religious poetry,

based on the New Testament Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and mainly deals with the birth and death of Christ and the miracles attributed to Christ during his lifetime. *Steps to the Temple* appeared in 1646; it contains a combination of sacred and secular poems, some of which were written in Latin and some in English. A revised edition was published two years later, consisting of revisions of earlier poems, but introducing new ones as well, among them "Charitas Nimia," "The Office of the Holy Crosse," "The Flaming Heart," and "A Song" (the latter two devoted to St. Theresa). In 1652, *Carmen Deo Nostro*, a selection of previously published religious poetry written in English, was published posthumously and included one new poem, "To the Noblest and Best of Ladyes, the Countesse of Denbigh," which was reprinted separately in pamphlet form in 1653. *Poemata et Epigrammata* did not appear until 1670, twenty-one years after the poet's death.

Crashaw's most famous individual poem is "The Weeper," noted for excessive, stylized, lush imagery, and a general lack of unity. Several critics point out, however, that "The Weeper" is hardly representative of Crashaw's body of work as a whole and that it is unfortunate that the poet should be remembered for such an unusual piece, which appeared originally in the 1646 edition of *Steps to the Temple*, and was revised for the 1648 edition.

### CRITICAL RECEPTION

Crashaw's Latin and Greek poetry was not as well received as his English verse, according to Thomas Foy (see Further Reading), who contends that the poet "derives no lasting title to poetic fame from his Latin *Epigrammata*, nor does he derive any such claim from his Greek poems which were generally translations of selected parts of the *Epigrammata*, and are regarded as inferior to the Latin originals." His mature work, however, was written in English, yet was heavily influenced by the style of the continental Counter Reformation commonly known as baroque. George Walton Williams (see Further Reading) recalls that T. S. Eliot called Crashaw the leading English baroque poet, and Williams himself considers him "the most un-English of all the English poets" since the baroque style "is fundamentally foreign to the spirit of English poetry."

Crashaw is typically classified as a metaphysical poet and he has often been unfavorably compared with his contemporaries in the genre, particularly John Donne and George Herbert. Many critics of the early twentieth century considered Crashaw's work "devoid of intellectual control and psychological introspection, excessively emotional and embarrassingly sensuous," according to John R. Roberts. Eugene R. Cunnar concurs, claiming that Crashaw's work is "perceived as exhibiting sensuous baroque imagery and feminine qualities at the expense of coherent thought or rational structures." However, Roberts reports, in his own time, Crashaw was judged the equal and sometimes the superior of John Donne and George Herbert, and was even ranked "among the best wits of England" along with William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. George Gilfillan, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, considers Crashaw a "true and transcendent genius." Gilfillan's contemporary, William B. Turnbull, also praises Crashaw, claiming that "as a poet, his works have ever been appreciated by those most qualified to decide upon their sterling beauties, and have suggested to others (too frequently without acknowledgment) some of their finest imageries."

Crashaw's work is rich in imagery and symbolism, according to Williams, who has studied the wide range of symbols employed in the sacred poetry—from animals and fire to containers and instruments of both love and hate. Marc F. Bertonasco (see Further Reading) has also studied Crashaw's use of emblems and symbols and believes that of all the symbols employed by the poet, "the richest in application is the Phoenix," with its obvious parallels to the resurrection of Christ. Bertonasco asserts that although specific emblems did not necessarily inspire specific poems by Crashaw, "it was the emblematic mode of expression more than individual emblem plates that affected his poetic utterance."

Some recent critics have been offended by the incongruity of the language in poems in which Crashaw mingled common, even vulgar, language within spiritual subject matter. However, Bertonasco points out that this was a common practice prior to the eighteenth century. "The juxtaposition of the sacred and profane, of the celestial and the lowly is familiar to the reader of medieval religious works," Bertonasco notes. Nonetheless, according to Ryan Netzley (see Further Reading), most modern criticism of Crashaw's work addresses the poet's "tasteless yoking of sensuous imagery to devotional subjects"; the critic cites Crashaw's preoccupation with orifices, particularly the mouth, as especially disturbing: "Explanations for this peculiarly intriguing deployment of bodily passageways, as well as Crashaw's other grotesqueries, abound in every strain of Crashavian criticism: his infatuation with orifices is baroque, un-English, Catholic, 'feminine,' just to name a few." Richard Rambuss also refers to the number of

critics who have considered Crashaw's poetry "a benchmark of bad taste and indecorum." He compares Crashaw's more controversial poems to the work of modern photographer Andres Serrano—whose representations of bodily fluids in conjunction with sacred icons have offended, even outraged, many viewers—and that of the modern artist Chris Ofili, whose collage painting *The Holy Virgin Mary* "provoked such indignation in certain quarters" when it was shown at the Brooklyn Museum.

The controversial poem "The Weeper," long vilified for its excesses and lack of a central unifying principle, has been defended in recent years by a number of critics, among them Paul A. Parrish and Robert M. Cooper. Parrish contends that "[t]he arrangement of the poem is not, however, so capricious as some have suggested. It does not move through a systematic or logical development but through clusters of images, through an associative, rather than logical and intellectual progression." Cooper goes even further in his defense of "The Weeper," claiming that the poem is "Crashaw's masterpiece in the purposeful use of hieroglyphic imagery designed to affirm the reality of the Christian vision." Rambuss notes that "The Weeper" has been both the most derided and, at the same time, the most anthologized of Crashaw's poems.

---

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

### Poetry

*Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber* 1634

*Steps to the Temple. Sacred Poems With Other Delights of the Muses* 1646; revised edition, 1648

*Carmen Deo Nostro* 1652

*Richardi Crashawi Poemata et Epigrammata* 1670

*The Poems, English, Latin, and Greek of Richard Crashaw* 1927; revised edition, 1957

*The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* 1970

---

## CRITICISM

### George Gilfillan (essay date 1857)

SOURCE: Gilfillan, George. "The Life and Poetry of Richard Crashaw." In *The Poetical Works of Richard Crashaw and Quarles's Emblems*, pp. v-xviii. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1857.

[In the following excerpt, Gilfillan summarizes what is known of Crashaw's life and discusses his poetry, concluding that Crashaw was an "exquisite" poet.]

Concerning the life of this true and transcendent genius very little is known. He was born in London, in circumstances highly favourable to the development of his intellectual powers; for his father, although his works brought him no profit, was an able author, as well as an eminent preacher in the Temple, and on terms of intimacy with such men as Sir Randolph Crew and Sir Henry Yelverton, the latter one of the judges of King's Bench. Through their influence, young Richard was placed on the foundation of Charter House School, where Brook a celebrated master of the day, greatly contributed to his improvement. Our poet wrote afterwards a glowing panegyric on him in the shape of an epigram. On the 26th day of March 1632, Crashaw was elected a scholar of Pembroke Hall. He had probably visited that college before, for we find him lamenting the early death of one William Herry, of Pembroke, which had occurred in October 1631. Herry was a youth connected with a respectable family in Essex, and distinguished by the sweetness of his temper. Crashaw mourned his loss in five epitaphs, one of them written in Latin. It is a good sign of a student when he praises his teachers; and certainly Crashaw, on this theory, must have been one of the best of scholars, since he has liberally commended almost all his tutors—not only Brook, his early master, but Benjamin Laney, the master of Pembroke Hall, and Mr Tournay, the tutor in the same college. In 1633 he took his Bachelor's degree, and in 1634 he published, without his name, a volume, entitled, *Epigrammata Sacra*, dedicating it to Laney.

About this time, his strong tendency to mysticism began to develop itself. He prefixed, in 1635, a copy of verses to Shelford's "Five Pious and Learned Discourses"—a book which Archbishop Usher denounced as a disgrace to the Cambridge press, and as deeply infected with the corruption of Popery. He was wont, too, to pass some hours every day alone in St Mary's Church. "In the temple of God, under His wing, he led his life in St Mary's Church, near St Peter's College, under Tertulian's roof of angels; there he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow, near the house of God; where, like a primitive saint, he offered more prayers in the night than others usually offer in the day." On the 20th of November 1636, he removed to Peterhouse—became a fellow the next year—and in 1638 took the degree of Master of Arts. In 1641, according to Wood, he also took degrees at Oxford. He entered—but in what year is uncertain—on holy orders, and became an ardent and powerful preacher.

In 1644, under the domination of the Puritans, who were angry at the sympathy shewn by Cambridge and her children with the king, Crashaw and some others were expelled from their fellowships. Leaving his University, our poet seems at the same time to have forsaken Protestantism. At heart he had been long a Ro-

man Catholic. He is accused of having left the Protestant Church partly from a desire of lucre, and partly to conciliate some Court ladies, such as the Countess of Denbigh, who had become a Papist. The real reason, however, of his perversion lay in the peculiar cast of his imagination, which seemed, as if by a "pre-established harmony," assimilated to the Popish theory of things.

Crashaw did not long continue in England after his expulsion from Cambridge. He repaired to France, where, in 1646, Cowley, at that time secretary to Lord Jermyn, met him, and aided him in his deep poverty. Cowley had been a friend of Crashaw's at Cambridge; and he is said, by some, to have introduced our poet to Henrietta, queen of Charles I., but this act of kindness is by others ascribed to Dr Gough and Mr Car. At all events, the queen gave him letters of recommendation to Italy, and there he became secretary to one of the Roman cardinals. The cardinal's name was Palotta, and Crashaw is said to have loved and commended him, but to have complained bitterly of the "wickedness of his retinue." His complaint of these creatures of the cardinal reached their master's ear, and the result was that he dismissed Crashaw from his service, and, it is said, procured him some "small employ" at the Lady of Loretto's, where he went on a pilgrimage in the summer-time, and, overheating himself, took a fever, and died. A report, very much wanting confirmation, says that he was poisoned! The date of his death, like that of his birth, is uncertain. That he was dead ere 1652 is manifest from the fact that his friend Thomas Car, to whom his manuscripts had been confided, published a selection from them in that year.

If Crashaw was not generally popular, and if his detractors malignantly defamed him as a "small poet," a "slip of the times," and as a "peevish, silly seeker, who glided away from his principles in a poetical vein of fancy and an impertinent curiosity," he enjoyed, on the other hand, the praise of some applauded men, and a general "sweet savour" of renown in his day and generation. He is said to have been a universal scholar—versed in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, and Italian languages—to have made the Grecian and Roman poets his study—and to have possessed, besides, the accomplishments of music, drawing, engraving, and painting. In his habits, too, he was temperate to severity; indeed, had he not been so, his poetry would have sunk from a panegyric on God into a bitter, unintentional satire on himself.

Wilmott, Cowley, and others, have deplored Crashaw's secession from the Protestant Church. So do we; but less for the sake of that Church than for the sake of Crashaw himself. In deploring his secession, we are in fact only mourning the supra-superstitious tendencies of his nature. We yield to none in opposing and denouncing that grand caricature of Christianity called Popery,

in its bigotry, intolerance, affectation of purity, catholicity, and of age—in its gigantic smallness, elaborate accommodation to the worst passions of human nature—its attempted amalgam of principles which cannot meet, except for mutual destruction, and the false and frail unity produced thereby; but we are none the less convinced that there have been noble spirits, which, if not in Popery, yet in Roman Catholicism, felt themselves at home, or at least formed for themselves an ideal and a happy abode. So did Abelard; so did Bernard; so did Fenelon; and so did Crashaw.

From the beginning of his being, Crashaw was a Catholic; and in saying so, we deem that we have stated at once the source of his poetic weakness and strength, as well as that of all men of genius similarly situated. Roman Catholicism, in our judgment, is not Christianity; but, by dwelling in its neighbourhood, and trying to mimic its marvellous results, it has imbibed a portion of its spirit, and bears nearly that relation to it which Judaism would have done, had it been contemporaneous with, instead of prior to the Christian scheme. Besides, the admixture of fiction, the amount of ceremony, the quantity to be *supposed*, to be implicitly believed, to be loved without reason, and admitted without proof,—all this renders Popery favourable to the exercise of the poetic imagination; while, on the other hand, the false and useless mystery, the tame subjection it requires of soul and heart and intellect, its “proud limitary spirit,” the routine of idle monotonous rite,—stamp a certain vulgarity upon it, against which the wings of lofty genius have to struggle, and often to struggle in vain. In Crashaw, the struggle is generally successful. He looks at Popery, not as Dryden does, through the cold medium of the intellect, but through the burning haze of the imagination. His spirit is generally that of a true Christian poet, although considerably perverted by a false and bad form of the religion. In soaring imagination, in gorgeous language, in ardent enthusiasm, and in ecstasy of lyrical movement, Crashaw very much resembles Shelley, and may be called indeed the Christian Shelley.

His raptures are,  
All air and fire.

His verse is pervaded everywhere by that fine madness, characteristic of the higher order of bards.

There can, we think, be little doubt that a great deal of Popish, and not a little of Protestant piety, is animalism inverted and transfigured. The saying of Pope about lust, “through certain strainers well-refined,” becoming “gentle love,” admits of another application. Desire, thrown into a new channel, becomes devotion—devotion sincere and strong, although assuming a spurious and exaggerated form. Hence in some writers, the same epithets are applied to the Saviour and to God, which in

others are used to the objects of earthly tenderness, and we are disgusted with a profusion of “sweet Saviour,” “dear lovely Jesus,” &c. In the writings of the mystics, in the poems for instance of Madame Guion, you see a temperament of the warmest kind turned into the channel of a high-soaring and rather superstitious piety. Conceive of Anacreon converted, and beginning to sing of celestial love, in the same numbers with which he had previously chanted the praises of women and wine! Nay, we need not make any such supposition. Moore—the modern Anacreon—has written Hebrew melodies, in which you find something of the same lusciousness of tone as in Tom Little’s poems; the *nature* coming out irresistibly in both. We are far from questioning the sincerity of these writers, and far from denying that they are better employed when singing of Divine things, than when fanning the flames of earthly passion; but we should ever be ready, while reading their strains, to *subtract* a good deal on account of their temperament. Such writers too frequently become mawkish, and loathsomely sweet, and thus at once repel the tasteful and gratify the profane. Croly says, somewhere, “our religion is a *manly* religion,” but we would not refer those who wished a proof of this to the love-sick and sentimental class in question, who seem to prefer Solomon’s Song to every other book of the Bible, and without the excuse of oriental day, discover all the languor and voluptuousness of the oriental bosom. There is, too, considerable danger of a reaction on their part—that the fire, after turning up its crest for a season toward heaven, should sink into its old furnace again, and that then their “last state should be worse than the first.”

These remarks apply in some measure to Crashaw, although the strength of his genius in a measure counteracts the impression. Yet, often you hear the language of earthly instead of celestial love, and discover a certain swooning, languishing voluptuousness of feeling, as when in his lines on Teresa, he says:—

Oh, what delight when she shall stand,  
And teach *thy lips* Heaven with her hand,  
On which thou now may’st to thy wishes  
Heap up thy *consecrated kisses*.  
What joy shall seize thy soul when she,  
Bending her blessed eyes on thee,  
Those second smiles of Heaven, shall dart  
Her mild rays through thy *melting* heart.

More offensive are the following lines on “**The Wounds of our Crucified Lord**”—

O thou, that on this foot hast laid,  
Many a kiss, and many a tear,  
Now thou shalt have all repaid,  
Whatsoe’er thy charges were.

This foot hath got a mouth and lips,  
 To pay the *sweet sum of thy kisses*;  
 To pay thy tears, an eye that weeps,  
 Instead of tears, such gems as this is.

We may remark, in passing, how different and how far superior is Milton's language in reference to women to that of the Crashaw school! How respectful, dignified, admiring, yet modest and delicate, all Milton's allusions to female beauty! How different from the tone of languishment, the everlasting talk about "sighs," and "kisses," and "bosoms," found in some parts of our poet! Milton seems as much struck with woman's resemblance to, as with her difference from man, and regards her as a fainter stamp of the same Divine image—fainter but more exquisitely finished: her smile that of man, dying away in a dimple of loveliness, the lovelier for the dissolution; her eye his, less, but seeming sometimes larger from the tenderness with which it is filled; her brow his, in miniature, cut out too in alabaster, and bathed in the moonlight of a more spiritual radiance; her lips his, but tinged with a softer crimson, and capable of a finer play of meanings; her voice his, but hushed as if in the felt presence of a sanctuary, and trembling as in the conscious audience of an unearthly ear; her cheek his, but with a more delicate and diviner hue resting on it, like an infant-blush, ever ready to overspread her countenance with that glorious glow which arises only as a witness at the marriage of Modesty and Beauty; her hair his, but dipped in a softer brown, or suffused with a richer darkness, or yellowed over with a purer gold; and above all, her soul his, but more meekly informing its tenement of clay, breathing more fitfully, though sweetly, through its fairer chamber, and communicating more directly with its Maker and God.

——Both

Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;  
 For contemplation he, and valour form'd;  
 For softness she, and sweet attractive grace:  
 He for God only, she for God in him.  
 His fair large front and eye sublime declared  
 Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks,  
 Round from his parted forelock, manly hung,  
 Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad;  
 She, as a veil, down to the slender waist  
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore,  
 Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets waved,  
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied  
 Subjection, but required with gentle sway,  
 And by her yielded, by him best received,  
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,  
 And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.

Crashaw has written, and written beautifully, on general subjects, but is always most at home in the field of sacred poetry. His Muse is never fully herself, till she hears the organs of the Roman Catholic Church

Blow their tempests of sweet sound.

To this music, and to those splendid litanies which swell up upon it, like strong eagles riding on mighty winds, Crashaw seems to write; and we question if ever man better appreciated the poetical elements which abound in the Roman Catholic faith. Every wise Protestant will admit that these are many. The supposed antiquity and pretended universality of that proud religion—the triple apex into which it towers—its centre in the Eternal City, where, amidst the crumbling fanes of Paganism, and the general decay of empire, the Vatican still lifts its unabashed and unaltered front—the long line of martyrs and confessors whose blood seems to blush on every painted window, and change every church into a shrine—its ceremonies, often indeed overdone, gaudy, and unmeaning, but often, too, sublime and imposing—its music, with its varied enchantment—its paintings, so numerous, so exquisite, and so identified with this religion, that one of its votaries might almost dream that Italian genius and Italian day were two witnesses, testifying in its behalf, and proclaiming its glory—the large classes of men and women devoted to its service by vows of sternest severity—its monastic piles, buried in woods, or towering on mountain cliffs:

Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains  
 Repentant sighs and voluntary pains;  
 Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;  
 Ye grotts and caverns, shagg'd with horrid thorn!  
 Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins keep,  
 And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep—

its awful practice (only inferior to the old Roman custom of burying the erring vestal alive) of consigning young and beautiful females to the premature grave of the cloister—its cathedrals, with their immemorial grandeur and their frowning and gorgeous architecture—the dim-lit and far-stretching dungeons of its Inquisition, with a tale of horror or mystery inscribed on every door; and, above all, the glimpses it professes to give, and the power it pretends to exert in the unseen world, where, high above a purgatory, crowded with myriads of sufferers, whom the Church, and the Church alone, can redeem from penal fire, and above tiers of angels, and above the Son himself, and on a level with the throne of God, it shews you a woman's face, of ravishing beauty and sweetness—forming precisely such a climax to the universe as human nature would desire, and shedding a mild steadfast moonlight on the whole picture and scheme of things;—all this, and much more than all this, to be found in Roman Catholicism, is calculated to please the fancy or delight the taste, or to rouse and rivet the imagination. All this Milton, as well as Crashaw, understood and felt; but he had the intellectual strength and moral hardihood to resist their fascination. He entered the splendid Catholic temple, and he did not refuse his admiration, he bathed his brow in the "dim religious light," he praised the pictures, he was ravished with the music, but he did not remain to worship; he turned away in sorrow and in

anger, saying, "It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting: your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." Crashaw, on the other hand, seems, without a struggle, to have yielded to the soft seductions of the system, and was soon sighingly but luxuriously lost.

He is a strong man, but no Milton—nay, rather a strong man unnerved by perfumes and lulled with unhealthy opiates—who writes the following lines "in a prayer-book:"—

Am'rous languishments, luminous trances,  
Sights which are not seen with eyes,  
Spiritual and soul-piercing glances,  
Whose pure and subtle lightning flies  
Home to the heart, and sets the house on fire,  
And melts it down in sweet desire,  
Yet doth not stay  
To ask the windows' leave to pass that way.

Delicious deaths, soft exhalations  
Of soul! dear, and divine annihilations!  
A thousand unknown rites  
Of joys, and rarefied delights;

An hundred thousand loves and graces,  
And many a mystic thing,  
Which the divine embraces  
Of th' dear spouse of spirits with them will bring.

If our readers will turn to Shelley, and read his "Lines addressed to the noble and unfortunate Lady Emilia V——," they will find extremes meeting, and that the sceptical Shelley, and the Roman Catholic Crashaw, write, the one of earthly, nay, illicit love, and the other of spiritual communion, in language marvellously similar both in beauty and extravagance. These two poets resembled each other in the weakness that was bound up with their strength. Their fault was an excess of the emotional—a morbid excitability and enthusiasm, which in Shelley, and probably in Crashaw too, sprung from a scrofulous habit and a consumptive tendency. Shelley's conception of love, however, is in general purer and more ideal than that of the other poet.

Crashaw's volume is a small one, and yet small as it is, it contains a good deal of that quaint and tricky conceit, which Johnson has called, by a signal misnomer, "metaphysic." Crashaw, at least, has never mingled metaphysics with his poetry, although here and there he is as fantastic as Donne or Cowley, or any of the class. For instance, he writes thus on the text—"And he answered them nothing:"—

O mighty Nothing! unto thee,  
Nothing, we owe all things that be;  
God spake once when he all things made,  
He saved all when he nothing said.  
The world was made by Nothing then;  
'Tis made by Nothing now again.

Johnson valued himself on his brief but vigorous account of the "Metaphysical Poets," in his Life of Cowley. We think, however, with all deference to his high critical authority, that not only has he used the word "metaphysical" in an arbitrary and inapposite sense, but that he has besides confounded wit with perverted ingenuity, and very much under-rated the genius of the men. He calls them, after Dryden, "wits, not poets," but if wit is almost always held to signify a *sudden perception of analogies more or less recondite*, along with a *TENDENCY to the ludicrous*, then these writers have very little of the quality indeed. They see and shew remote analogies, but the analogies are too remote or too grave to excite any laughable emotion. Coming from far—coming as captives—and coming violently chained together in pairs, they produce rather wonder, tintured with melancholy, than that vivid delight which creates smiles, if it does not explode into laughter. Sometimes, indeed, the conceits produce a ridiculous effect, but this arises rather from their absurdity than their wit. Who can laugh, however, at such lines as these describing God harmonising the chaos?—

Water and air he for the *Tenor* chose,  
Earth made the *Base*—the *Treble* flame arose.

But apart from their perverted ingenuity, their straining after effect, their profusion of small and often crooked points, and their desire to shew their learning, these writers had undoubtedly high imagination. Cowley, in his poetry and in his prose, has given undeniable evidences of a genius at once versatile, elegant, and powerful—nay, we venture to uphold the great poetical merit of some of the lines Johnson quotes from him to condemn—of the following for example:—

His bloody eyes he *hurls* round; his sharp paws  
Tear up the ground—then runs he wild about,  
Lashing his angry tail, and roaring out;  
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there.  
Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake for fear;  
Silence and horror fill the place around,  
*Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound.*

These are bold metaphors, but they are not conceits. We feel them to rise naturally out of, and exactly to measure the majesty of the theme, not like conceits, to be *arbitrarily embossed* upon the shield of a subject, without any regard to its size, proportions, or general effect. We are happy to find De Quincy coinciding in part with our opinion of Johnson's criticism. Let us hear him speaking with a special reference to Donne: "Dr Johnson inconsiderately calls him and Cowley, &c., metaphysical poets, but rhetorical would have been a more accurate designation. In saying that, however, we revert to the original use of the word rhetoric, as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style. Few writers have shewn a more extraordinary

compass of powers than Donne, for he combined the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty. Many diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Eschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliance is strewn over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose. No criticism was ever more unhappy than that of Dr Johnson, which denounces all this artificial display as so much perversion of taste. There cannot be a falser thought than this, for upon that principle a whole class of compositions might be vicious by conforming to its own ideal. The artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degree as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other—that the pleasure is of an inferior order can no more attain the idea or model of the composition, than it can impeach the excellence of an epigram that it is not a tragedy. Every species of composition is to be tried by its own laws.”

Here it will be noticed that De Quincy takes somewhat different ground from what we would take in reply to Johnson. He seems to think that Johnson principally objected to the *manner* of these writers, and he argues, very justly, that as professed rhetoricians they had a right to use the artifices of rhetoric, and none the less that they wrote in metre; and he might have maintained, besides, that finding a peculiar mode of writing in fashion, they were quite as justifiable in using it, if they did not caricature it, as in wearing the bag, sword, and ruffles of their day. But Johnson, besides, denied that these men were poets; he objected to the *matter* as well as the manner of their song; and here we join issue with him, nay, are ready to admit that they were often rhetorically faulty, even by their own standard, if it be granted that they possessed a real and sublime poetic genius. That De Quincy agrees with us in this belief, we are certain, but it was his part to defend them upon another and a lower basis of assault. The most powerful passage in Johnson’s account of the Metaphysical Poets is that in which he denies their claims to sublimity. He says with great eloquence—“The sublime was not within their reach—they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of mind, which at once filled the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken, in its metaphorical meaning, for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments, and could no more

represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer’s noon.”

In these remarks there is much truth as well as splendour; but Dr Johnson seems to forget that with all the elaborate pettiness of much in their writings—Cowley in portions of his “Davideis;” Donne in his “Metempsychosis;” Crashaw in his “*Sospetto d’Herode*”; Quarles in a few of his “Emblems;” and Herbert in certain parts of his “Temple,” have, perhaps *in spite* of their own system, attained a rare grandeur of thought and language. He might have remembered, too, that in prose Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, who both sinned in over-subtlety and subdivision of thinking, and were “Metaphysical Prose Poets,” have both produced passages surpassed by nothing, even in Milton, for sublimity of imagination. He says “Great things cannot have escaped former observation;” but surely, although all men in all ages have seen the sun, the ocean, the earth, and the stars, new aspects of them are often presenting themselves to the poetic eye: all men in all ages have seen the sun, but did all men from the beginning see him eclipsed at noonday in May 1836? all men have seen the stars, but have all looked through a Russian telescope at the Moon, Mars, or Saturn? The truth is, Dr Johnson had great sympathy with the broad—the materially sublime and the colossally great; but, from a defect in eyesight and in mind, had little or none with either the beautiful or the subtle, and did not perceive the exquisite effects which a minute use of the knowledge of both these often produces. Of the great passages of Milton he had much admiration, but could not understand such lines as—

Many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,—

as what a poet calls it—“a charming embodiment of thin air and sound in something palpable, tangible, malleable;” nor that other wondrous line of “imaginative incarnation”—

Rose like a steam of rich, distill’d perfumes;

nor would he have, we fear, admired Crashaw’s “**Music’s Duel**,” which, altogether, we think, is not only his finest effort, but accomplishes with magical ease one of the most difficult of poetic tasks, and seems almost higher than nature. Like an Arabian sorcerer, the soul of the poet leaps back and forward, from the musician to the bird, entering into the very heart, and living in the very voice of each. Let our readers read the whole, and they will agree with us that they have read the most deliciously-true and incredibly-sustained piece of poetry in probably the whole compass of the language.

Just think of this; could Shakespeare have surpassed it?—

Her supple breast thrills out  
 Sharp airs, and *staggers in a warbling doubt*  
 Of dallying sweetness, hovers o'er her skill,  
 And *folds in wav'd notes with a trembling bill*  
 The *pliant series of her slipp'ry song*;  
 Then starts she suddenly into a throng  
 Of short, thick sobs," &c.

We may close by strongly recommending to our readers the "**Sospetto d'Herode**," that fine transfusion of Crashaw's—a poem from which Milton, in his "Hymn on the Nativity," has derived a good deal; and by expressing the peculiar satisfaction with which we present the public with a handsome edition of the too little known productions of this exquisite poet.

### William B. Turnbull (essay date 1858)

SOURCE: Turnbull, William B. "Preliminary Observations." In *The Complete Works of Richard Crashaw*, edited by William B. Turnbull, pp. vii-xvii. London: John Russell Smith, 1858.

[In the following essay, Turnbull offers a brief overview of Crashaw's life and work.]

Of Richard Crashaw . . . little is known; and for that little we are mainly beholden to the industry of Wood, upon whose curt notice in the *Fasti Oxonienses* was founded the more elaborate memoir by Hayley in Kippis' edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, which served as the sole unvaried authority until the subject was treated by the Rev. Robert Aris Willmott in the first series of *Lives of the English Sacred Poets*. Both in the records of those educational establishments where, in his youth, he was trained, and of that holy retreat in which he closed his maturer years, have searches been fruitlessly made, in the hope that some additional fact, however minute, might be discovered. I am, therefore, obliged to recapitulate in few words what is already familiar to every one; referring the reader to the elegant and more copious sketch by Mr. Willmott.

According to the scanty sources of information, Crashaw was the son of William Crashaw, B. D., a divine of some eminence in his time,<sup>1</sup> and preacher at the Temple. The date of his birth has not been ascertained, but it may have been about 1616; since, the first steps of his education having been taken at the Charterhouse, on the foundation of which he was placed by Sir Randolph Crew and Sir Henry Yelverton, he was elected a scholar of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, March 26, 1632, and became a Fellow of Peterhouse in the same University, in 1637; having removed to that College on the 20th of March previous. His Bachelor's degree was taken in 1633. In 1641 he is recorded by Wood as one of the persons incorporated that year at Oxford; but to

what degree admitted is not stated, as his name does not appear in the public register, and Wood's authority was "the private observation of a certain Master of Arts, that was, this year, living in the University." Wood, however, adds:—"Afterwards, he was Master of Arts, in which degree it is probable he was incorporated." Beyond these features of his academical career, we are certain of nothing save of its termination; which happened during the Great Rebellion in 1644, when the Earl of Manchester, under the authority of Parliament, "reformed" (as they were pleased to style it) the University, by expelling such members as refused to subscribe the Covenant. On this occasion Crashaw was one of the sixty-five Fellows ejected. After the loss of his fellowship, having embraced the Catholic religion, he repaired to Paris: and in this city he was found by Cowley in a state of destitution, about 1646. To the friendship of this amiable brother-poet he was indebted for sympathy and relief, and an introduction to the exiled queen, Henrietta Maria, from whom he also received what small aid her own limited finances would allow, with recommendatory letters to persons of influence at Rome. There he is said to have become secretary to Cardinal Palotta, and soon thereafter to have been appointed one of the Canons of the Church of Loretto. This preferment he only held for a very short space; dying and being interred at Loretto about 1650. Such is the faint outline of his life.

Among the patrons of Crashaw, in his altered circumstances, the Countess of Denbigh appears to have been prominent. His gratitude is expressed by his dedication to her of the *Carmen Deo Nostro*, "in hearty acknowledgement of his immortal obligation to her goodness and charity," and by his efforts to bring her within the pale of the Catholic Church. Whether they were successful or not I cannot ascertain. This lady was Elizabeth, daughter and coheir of Edward Bouchier, Earl of Bath, and third of the four wives of Basil, second Earl of Denbigh, whom she predeceased in 1670. I had hoped to have found some traces of Crashaw among the archives at Newnham Paddox; but Viscount Fielding, having kindly directed a search to be made, informs me that no document relating to him exists there.

Our ideas of the personal character of Crashaw must be formed from his writings, the enthusiastic affection of Cowley, and the friendship of Selden. To the former of such sources the editor of the edition of 1649 justly points, while referring to the last line of his verses on Bishop Andrews' portrait:—

Look on the following leaves, and see him breathe.

The qualities which recommended him to the esteem of two such men as those now named, can have been of no common order, and make the absence of materials for his biography the more truly to be deplored.