



Discovering Poetry

Elizabeth A. Drew

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An introduction to the nature of poetry and the poetic experience.

The whole of this book is an effort to try and discover in what poetic genius consists, and in what ways we may best train ourselves to recognize and to enjoy it. But in any such enquiry, we are immediately challenged at the outset by a pertinent and disquieting question. Why write *about* poetry, when the poets themselves are there to speak? Everything they have to say, they can very well say for themselves: do we not 'murder to dissect'? For there is much truth in what Sir Walter Raleigh said when he set out to lecture about Christina Rossetti. 'The worst of it is you cannot lecture on really pure poetry any more than you can talk about the ingredients of really pure water?it is adulterated, methylated, sanded poetry that makes the best lectures. The only thing that Christina makes me want to do, is cry, not lecture.' And it is true that when we criticize poetry, when we analyze form and rhythm and metre and imagery and words, and as much of the whole technical mystery of transforming experiences into language as we can, at the end we are sometimes reminded of the comment of Mutt to Jeff on hearing that water was to two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen: 'Good heavens, ain't there no *water* in it?'

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