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A Punishment Required: Pleasure of Pain in Christina Rossetti's “Goblin Market”¹

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懲罰の必然性：

クリスティナ・ロゼッティ作

「ゴブリン・マーケット」における苦からの喜び

I

Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" illustrates her religious belief as well as her feminist resistance against Victorian society in the 1850s and 1860s.² Like other Victorian poets who write on the subject of woman, Rossetti portrays women's pain and pleasure and punishes them when they leave their "caged" conditions, but the poet's conclusion is much more optimistic and didactic than, say, male poets', because the poem is a reflection of the female poet's real experience at Anglican Sisterhoods, where she met so-called Victorian fallen women, or prostitutes, who were mentally and physically abused and rehabilitating with mixed feelings of hope and desperation. In the poem, the poet first uses the dichotomy of action and inaction of characters and nature to demonstrate the traditional masculine activity and feminine passivity and, then, applies the masculine principle to female characters, letting them leave their tradi-

tional roles. The result is that, when a woman takes an action and crosses the boundary of a passive, domestic sphere, the action is almost synonymous with punishment.

For Rossetti, however, the punishment is a necessary evil, or a form of initiation, which the poet believed would eventually help the woman liberate, strengthen, and prepare herself for survival in the patriarchal society. Rossetti's categorical presentation of three women, which is strongly implicated with Florence Nightingale's idea in *Cassandra*, is to demonstrate three ways of women's lives: Jeanie represents history of an improper woman, Laura the on-going condition of the woman, and Lizzie the poet's statement of an ideal woman.

Though Jeanie is already punished and dead in the poem, she represents a typical victim of Victorian punishment for an improper woman, similar to other victims described in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" and Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess." Laura, though she also receives the punishment, survives because of her sister's sororal love, which Rossetti, calling it "sisterhood," believed to be a key for women in order to enable them not to "stoop" to the oppressive patriarchy and its believers. Laura's story is a poetic Bildungsroman in which the fallen woman rises and learns the significance of the sisterhood.³ The heroic Lizzie, a female Christ figure, represents a Victorian feminist Bildungsroman, in which a passive maiden learns to take action in order to save other women and establish her potential outside the domestic sphere. While these three women are realistically represented, Goblin men are presented rather supernaturally, both real and imaginative, because they are an embodiment of every evil force of temptation and persecution, along with their fruits, that exist visibly and invisibly in society to confine woman and break out of their sphere. Because of their evil for these women, their actions are necessarily masculine as well as

sexual. Featuring three women and goblins, Christina Rossetti presents her perception of society, her belief in Christianity, and her positive attitude toward woman's future.

In the 1850s and 1860s, the women's emancipation movement became more of a social issue involving both women and men as the split of the British double standard of real and ideal womanhood became difficult to ignore. Wives, idealized as "an angel in the house," were becoming more aware of their basic human rights, especially their property rights and right to divorce. The streets of London were filled with "the fallen women," many of whom were suffering from sexually transmitted disease and were ill-treated by the law. In 1850 John Stuart Mill singled out women's rights as "the most important" of "all practical subjects"; and in 1871 he called the condition of women a "still more fundamental question."⁴ As Kathleen Hickok remarks about the period in her *Representation of Women*:

The public debate over women's appropriate role and status was extremely heated in the 1850s and 1860s as proposed changes in law and custom began to receive serious consideration. In the same year "The Emancipation of Women" appeared (1851), Coventry Patmore published a lengthy, conservative assessment of "The Social Position of Women" in the *North British Review*, in which he persisted in defining woman as a being always relative to men. (18)

Politically, various laws concerning women were being passed and altered in the 1850s and 1860s for the first time since the Marriage Act of 1753; to name a few, Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), abolition of death penalty for sodomy (1861), and Contagious Disease Acts (1864, 1866, and 1869). Despite the feminists' continuous effort, the laws were far

from ushering in any salvation of women, and, I believe, the disappointment with the British legal system strengthened the women's belief in "sisterhood" beyond classes.

Since the early 1850s, feminists campaigned to allow wives to own property. In 1854, Barbara Leigh Smith, one of the Langham Place circle of early feminists, published her pamphlet attacking the legal position of married women, who did not have any property rights and were given little chance to divorce even incorrigible husbands. By 1856, a petition bearing 3000 signatures and demanding a change in the law affecting married women's property was presented to both Houses of Parliament simultaneously with the organization of public meetings on the topic staged up and down the country.⁵ These feminist lobbyings finally helped the passing of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857. By this new Act, both husbands and wives were allowed to receive child custody and petition for divorce. But these changes did not satisfy feminists, not only because the wives' right to divorce was far limited compared to the husbands' but also because the property right, the wives' as well as feminists' major concern, was not legally admitted. The government and the great majority of both Houses were afraid that, once wives were legally allowed to be economically independent, "it was likely to lead to separation of economic interests in a single household and thus to 'a corruption of morals'" (Stone 377). Sir Erskin Perry's proposal of the Married Women's Property Bill also consequently died. For the feminists who believed that wives' economic independence was the key to liberating them from the subjugation to their husbands, their emancipation movement was still at the starting point. Their tentative success came in 1870 when The Married Women's Property Acts finally passed, but the Acts were not sufficient and kept altering until as recently as 1969.

The feminists' concern was directed to not only the middle-class wives, but also to the fallen women, especially those who earned a living by prostitution. As Philippa Levine mentions, "In the urban context, far more anxiety was voiced over a perceived increase in the incidence of prostitution and, as its corollary, of venereal disease" (145). In London alone, for example, the number of prostitutes in 1850s and 1860s was estimated, depending on the research, as being somewhere between 5,500 and 220,000.⁶ Though it was originally the British armed forces that drew attention to the widely spreading disease, the Contagious Disease Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 were targeted to exclude the fallen women from society.⁷ While men were treated medically as patients, the prostitutes were treated as criminals by these acts:

[Any] such woman was required to attend upon a genital medical examination to ascertain whether she was, in fact, infectious. Where examination proved positive, she could be detained for a period of up to three months to effect a treatment. A woman's refusal to co-operate with what was effectively a suspension of *habeas corpus* could lead to a prison sentence of one month, doubling in duration for any subsequent recalcitrance. (Levine 145)

The feminist response to the Contagious Disease Acts was immediate. In order to repeal the acts that criminalized only women without punishing men, an organized opposition to the acts was gaining ground, and, by the end of 1869, a Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Disease Acts (LNA) had been founded.⁸

Against such legal discriminations against women, men joined the ranks of the emancipation movement. For example, along with Harriet Taylor, who wrote an article "The Enfranchisement of Women" in *Westminster Review* in 1851, and Caroline Norton, who published *English*

Laws for Women (1854), John Stuart Mill completed *The Subjection of Women* (published in 1869) in 1861. And among the women's rights advocates, John Singleton Copley, the 84 year-old ex-Lord Lyndhurst and a friend of Caroline Norton, sarcastically remarked of the period, "men make the laws and women are the victims."⁹

It was during this period that the idea of a "sisterhood" of mutual help was born connecting women of different classes, and the discontent and disillusionment against the slow and hostile political movement for women led them to a more practical and religious movement. Founded in 1843, Christ Church, Albany Street, was one of the leading churches in the movement, and "Dr. Pusey seems to have been the guiding force for the formation of this Sisterhood" (Carpenter 420). Both Christ Church and the Sisterhood moved vigorously with new plans for ministering to the poor. Pusey also founded St. Mary Magdalene in 1849 and All Saints Church in 1850. As Diane D'Amico notes, "[The] Church Penitentiary Movement saw as central to its success the involvement of unfallen Victorian women who were to devote their time to saving the souls of their fallen sisters" (77).

In 1853, Florence Nightingale became the superintendent of the Institute for the Care of Sick Gentlewomen in Distressed Circumstances. Nightingale "played an integral role in establishing the popular nineteenth-century notion of 'sisterhood': ... her explicit reference to a 'female Christ' reflects her belief that the traditional female role of nurture may take on heroic proportions" (Casey 64). In 1854, Christ Church became a center of the "outbreak of patriotic enthusiasm which kindled the nation at the beginning of the Crimean War," as Florence Nightingale "was placed in charge of a combined corps of nurses which in addition to nuns (both of Christ Church and the Devonport Sisterhood,

which later absorbed the earlier community) the applicants were carefully screened, to be selected for service at the front was considered a great honor" (Packer 92). In 1856, Upton Richard founded an organization called the All Saints Confraternity for Girls and Young Women. Carpenter explains the organization:

According to the 1866 Manual, the association was intended for the "mutual help and encouragement of Girls and Young Women wishing to lead a Christian life amidst the difficulties and temptations of the world." The Objects of the Confraternity further specified that the organization was to help "carefully brought up" and pious girls retain their beliefs and good behavior after they were sent out into the world to earn a living. (424)

These objectives, as Carpenter continues, "obviously suggest another possibility for an intended audience for *Goblin Market*, which certainly can be read as a cautionary tale for girls and young women wishing to lead a Christian life amidst the temptations of the 'world,' for which read the streets of London" (424). Though the correlation between the 1866 Manual and the 1862 poem is difficult to define, it is clear that the 1850s and 1860s were the period of "sisterhood" and that the feminists and women were most likely convinced that "there is no friend like a sister."

Christina Rossetti was also involved with these political as well as religious movements of "sisterhood." Though she had published only a few poems and her social role was very limited during the period, her experiences at Anglican Churches were to fuel her poetic career.

II

During the 1850s and 1860s, Christina Rossetti confirmed her religious faith, witnessed and experienced the facts of fallen women, and met

Florence Nightingale. All these incidents became a source for "Goblin Market." Published in 1862, the poem was the product of her experience at the Anglican Sisterhoods.

Christina Rossetti, known as a devout Anglican, attended Christ Church, Albany Street, in the 1850s and assisted at the St. Magdalene Home in the 1860s. Her religious faith was so strong that two episodes about breaking off an engagement to two different men are enough to illustrate her religious devotion.¹⁰ In the fall of 1848, Christina at seventeen became engaged to a young painter James Collinson, but, when he converted to the Roman Catholic faith, she broke off the engagement despite her strong love for him. At some time in the 1860s, she was again sought in marriage, this time, by Charles Cayley, a distinguished linguist. Yet she refused him because he was not a Christian. The relationship, however, remained friendly. Because of her strong religious faith, Christina lived unmarried.

Meanwhile, during the 1850s and 1860s, Christina Rossetti was participating in social works called Sisterhoods founded at the Anglican churches she attended with her family. Different from the generally acknowledged spirit of the Oxford Movement which converted many Victorians to Catholicism and separated them from society, the work at the Anglican Sisterhoods "proved to be inseparable from the 'work' of 'fallen women,' producing an unprecedented mingling of 'pure' and 'tainted' women. Moreover,... the Anglican Sisterhoods empowered women, validating their works and values" (Carpenter 418). The Rossettis began attending Christ Church in 1843, and Christina participated in its social work and reform efforts by 1854. Since its foundation in 1837, Carpenter explains:

Christ Church was characterized by "zeal" for social reform from its beginning... Doubtless more important were the fact

that the first Anglican Sisterhood since reformation was founded there. (419-20)

Among the Rossettis, Christina and her aunt were especially deeply engaged in rescuing fallen women in the red light district of London. Early in 1859, she volunteered to join the residential team at the London diocesan penitentiary for fallen women, the St. Mary Magdalene Home located at Park House in the village of Highgate, some three or four steep miles from her own home near Regents Park.¹¹ The penitentiary was founded in 1855 for "the reception and reformation of fallen women with a view to their ultimate employment in some respectable calling" (Marsh 239).

During this period, Rossetti learned about Florence Nightingale as well as the story of three penitents. As Rossetti was composing "Goblin Market" since early 1859, I believe that the penitents' story was the most direct descriptive inspiration and Nightingale the most subjective in the process of her representation of fallen women and their future.

In 1854 when Rossetti was serving at Christ Church, she met Florence Nightingale, who was recruiting volunteers to join her corps in the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale, who produced "the major text of English Feminism, a link between Wollstonecraft and Woolf" (Gilbert and Gubar "Florence Nightingale" 803), was Rossetti's immediate female hero figure. Being a twenty-four-year-old enthusiast, Christina Rossetti also applied for the group with her aunt Eliza Polidori, but Nightingale rejected Rossetti's application because she was too young, while accepting her aunt.¹² Rossetti's deep respect for Nightingale appears to have derived from not only her heroic actions but also from her feminist ideology. It is feasible that Rossetti had numerous opportunities to listen directly to her hero's comments on the condition of women and solutions

to these problems while they were working together at the Sisterhood circle, and it is most probable that Rossetti either had already read or had been, directly or indirectly, referred to Nightingale's *Cassandra*.

Cassandra, titled after the virgin-priestess of Apollo, although not publicly available until 1928, had been completed by 1852.¹³ Therefore, it is probable that, by the time Rossetti met Nightingale in 1854, the story of the book, or at least the ideas mentioned in the book, were available in her circle. *Cassandra* was written when "Nightingale was struggling with the issue of her own self-definition" (Gilbert "Florence Nightingale" 803), and the composition eventually helped her to recover from depression. Her personal view of life, however, projected a social condition of women. Nightingale's personal realization that the "suffocation of family life, boredom, and patriarchal protectivism gradually destroys women's capacity to dream, to work, or to act" (Showalter 64) established her career as one of the leading feminists in the mid-Victorian period. In *Cassandra*, Nightingale points out a reversed view of sufferings and argues that the suffering that women experience as a result of their actions is an inevitable path to reach the better world:

Give us back our suffering, we cry to Heaven in our hearts--suffering rather than indifferentism; for out of nothing comes nothing. But out of suffering may come the cure. Better have pain than paralysis! A hundred struggle and drown in the breakers. One discovers the new world. But rather, ten times rather, die in the surf, heralding the way to that new world, than stand idly on the shore. (208)

This passage is primarily an outcry against the restricted life imposed on women "for their own protection," but it is also consonant with Nightingale's call to women not to hold back from involvement in social issues for fear of getting hurt. In this passage, Nightingale presents her belief

in sisterhood and directs it to both those who need to be cured and those who need to cure. On the one hand, the comment is directed to those who are afraid of suffering for taking actions and stay detached from various issues surrounding them. On the other hand, she also blames the "indifferentism" of those people who also ignore the sufferings of the weak and avoid involvement. Nightingale insists on the importance of mutual help and rouses bystanders to take action for the weak and for themselves. Moreover, for those people to take action more reasonably, she reverses a traditional viewpoint toward "suffering," by saying that suffering is not a punishment but a necessary process to cure further pain. By finding pleasure in pain, she believes that a possibility for women to "discover the new world" would be born. Nightingale understands that the discovery is not easy at all: "A hundred struggle and drown in the breakers." However, she insists on women's action and accuses those who pretend ignorance and choose not to act, saying "rather, ten times rather, die in the surf."

Nightingale's personal realization of her role as a nurturer saved her from depression and made her one of the most distinct feminists of the period. The feminist ideas in *Cassandra*, which were transmitted by the author's actions and teachings because the novel was not publicly available until this century, also served to promote women's position and role in Victorian society. In fact, Nightingale's optimistic view for suffering strikingly parallels the main theme of "sisterhood" in Rossetti's "Goblin Market."

The descriptive inspiration of the poem derives from an episode that a Warden used to tell to the visitors of the Penitentiary at the St. Mary's Magdalene Home.¹⁴ At the end of the tour, the Warden told three tales, "which served as keynote 'case studies' to convey the moral reclamation

achieved by the Penitentiary.” The date of the incidents of the story is not known, but one of the tourists noted the story in an article in the *English Women’s Journal* in 1857. The story of three penitentiary girls, or what the Warden called “the tales of three apples,” was told by Rev. Mr. Oliver as his routine to conclude the tour, and it was also recorded in the Penitentiary Annual Report, “A House of Mercy.”

Rossetti may not have known the story in 1857 because she was still working at Christ Church. However, she may well have known the story by the time she started working as a volunteer at the Penitentiary in early 1859. Though it is generally understood that “Goblin Market” was completed on April 27, 1859, D.M.R. Bentley points out that the date is rather Rossetti’s poetic device to reflect the “spiritual significance” of the day and finds that Rossetti was still revising the poem between March 21, 1859, and December 31, 1860.¹⁵ Rossetti could have directly heard the story from the Warden or read it in the annual reports, and it must have been an inspirational source for Rossetti who was transcribing “Goblin Market” in 1859 and 1860.

The story is about three penitents who responded differently to his interrogation about stolen apples that grew in the Penitentiary. The first girl, asked by the Warden if she had stolen the apples, simply “turned very red and drew forth an apple.” The second girl, when the warden reproached a group of girls under his interrogation, suddenly burst out crying: “Oh, Warden! I did it! I did it! oh, why did I disobey for a nasty apple? I don’t know why I took it; I did not really care for it. Oh, forgive me!” As Marsh continues, “she was so upset by her transgression that she lost her appetite and fell so ill from ‘distress of mind’ that the doctor was called. It was a fortnight before she recovered or could be persuaded to receive Communion.”

The third story, which Marsh calls the “full meaning of remorse and

redemption as prompted by the Penitentiary," is about a girl "of most violent temper who had been jailed three times for assaulting the police and seemed 'at times fairly possessed of a devil.'" When asked by the Warden, the girl confessed and said, "The nasty apple! I have not had moment's peace since I took it!" The upset Warden told her that there would be no need to remain in the Penitentiary if she did not regret. While he escorted her to the gate, he told her, "You go to your destruction, but may God still have mercy upon you." At the gate, a striking incident happened:

The door stood wide open and the street was before her. The most agonizing cry burst from her as if it would rend her frame; such a cry as that I had never heard before; a cry that was unearthly, it seemed stifled in her throat, yet as if it burst forth through every pore of her skin. She threw herself from before the door against the adjoining fence, clutched at her clothes, buried her face in them, and stood convulsed from head to foot... She has since then been very quiet. (Marsh 242, "A House of Mercy" 19-20)

The Warden's story is twofold, telling of the successful rehabilitations in the Penitentiary and the Biblical teaching of "honesty" by using the apples as a symbol of temptation. However, as Marsh remarks, "The links between the Rev. Mr. Oliver's apple parable and *Goblin Market* are striking and suggestive" (243). The girls are a reminder of Jeanie and Laura in the poem, and it seems reasonable to say that Rossetti received, if not a direct inspiration, at least, a descriptive inspiration of her heroines when she was serving at the Penitentiary. The sufferings of Jeanie and Laura after they eat the Goblin fruits are similar to the second girl's "distress of mind." Moreover, the third girl's "moment of crisis at the gate is described in terms reminiscent of Laura's crisis of remorse and

redemption" (Marsh 242).

Florence Nightingale and the story of three penitents are not the only sources that Rossetti had in mind. For example, Marsh points out Robert Southey's *Traditions, Legends, Superstitions and Sketches of Devonshire on the Borders of the Tamar and Tavy* (1838) for its reference to "pixies," *The Fairy Mythology* (1850), compiled by Thomas Keightley, as the inspiration or at least the idea of the poem's fantasy setting, Mrs. Bray's *A Peep at the Pixies, or Legends of the West* (1854) for its story line as well as the title's similarity to "A Peep at the Goblins" (the original title of "Goblin Market"), and Archibald Maclaren's *The Fairy Family: Ballads and Metrical Tales Illustrating Fairy Faith of Europe* (1857) for its presentation of punishment where tiny creatures "punish the intemperate, the selfish and the slothful; and to assist and reward the abstemious, the self-denying and the industrious" (237). David F. Morrill finds a source in *The Vampire* (1819) by John Polidori, Christina's uncle, for her adoption of the vampire myth of Gothicism such as Laura's "enervation" as well as "the sensual possibilities of an evil, seductive brotherhood of goblins" (1).

Rossetti may have actually been influenced or inspired by these sources to the extent that each critic claims its legitimacy. However, when critical attention is directed to the representation of the Victorian women's condition, Florence Nightingale's philosophy and the story of three penitents seem to deserve more attention. "Goblin Market" is a representation of not only the real women Rossetti saw, helped, and heard about when she was devoting herself to rehabilitate the fallen women in the penitentiaries, but also the feminist movement of the 1850s and 1860s that influenced her whole poetic career.

In the poem, as Florence Nightingale suggested in *Cassandra*, Rossetti uses pain as a source to attain further pleasure by punishing all three

heroines and illustrating in Laura and Lizzie the most ideal picture of sisterhood. During this process, Rossetti employs a story of three penitents to portray the agony of pain and eventual pleasure after eating the fruits of temptation.

III

"Goblin Market," a nineteenth-century feminist representation of women, rouses women to the importance of "sisterhood" and "action" by which sufferings, in the process of achieving the "new world," could be replaced with pleasure after all. Illustrating three types of women, Rossetti not only demonstrates the reality of women but also dramatizes Nightingale's feminist ideology. In its fairy tale setting, Rossetti adapts "the fall from innocence into experience, a 'natural' process which leads to the 'unnatural' and purely human growth into self-consciousness and freely chosen participation in communal life" (Rosenblum 71).

However, despite its conventional Bildungsroman presentation, "Goblin Market" received mixed reviews among contemporary critics when it was finally published in March, 1862, by Macmillan. Out of eleven reviews written until 1869, most of them are not favorable.¹⁶ An anonymous critic in *Ecclesiastic and Theologian* (XXXIV September 1862) said that the poem is found to be carelessly composed and very inferior. Another anonymous critic in *Saturday Review* (XIII 24 May, 1862) also pointed out that the poem is "a story of too flimsy and [in] substantial character to justify or to bear the elaborate detail with which it is worked out." The form and the message of the poem were obviously perplexing the critics, and her political message was not understood. In fact, "of the one thousand copies printed, 450 remained unsold in 1870" (Groot 210).

Caroline Norton, one of only a few admirers of the poem, said:

[The poem is] incomparably the best of her compositions...,
[presenting] vivid and wonderful power by which things unreal
and mystic are made to blend and link themselves with the
everyday images and events of common life.¹⁷

The women's rights activist seems to understand the woman poet's message. The poem is filled with visualizations of fruits and scenes, as well as characters. And the poet's "vivid and wonderful power" of visualization is also used for the description of goblins in an "unreal and mystic" way and is mixed with the sisters' everyday life so that the poet can symbolically demonstrate the women's potential and sororal power. The poem is not a simple fairy tale, which many might have considered when basing their criticism on traditional appreciation of theme and form. Therefore, as William Rossetti says:

I have more than once heard Christina say that she did not mean anything profound by this fairy tale--it is not a moral apologue consistently carried out in detail. Still, the incidents are such as to be at any rate suggestive, and different minds may be likely to read different messages into them.¹⁸

When we consider her experiences, it is hard to deny that she did not have either political or social thoughts in mind when she was writing. It is probable, therefore, that Christina Rossetti's insistence of the poem as a "fairy tale" is another of her poetic devices, like the date of the poem's composition, to make it more mysterious and suggestive.

"Goblin Market" opens with reference to the twilight hours of dusk and dawn, suggesting not only the poem's mysterious setting but also sexual dichotomy of action and inaction:

Morning and evening

Maids heard the goblin cry:

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy: ..." (1-4)

Twilight is the most active time of natural transition from day to night and from night to day. This natural phenomenon of the day between the paternal sun and maternal moon symbolically suggests not only the poet's interest in a Gothic setting but also a symbolic presentation of the fusion of both masculine and feminine values. In other words, the presentation suggests the ambiguity, or the collision, of traditional gender roles as was the issue during the period. Therefore, twilight is a dangerous time for maidens (virginal, unmarried girls), because their traditional female moral judgment would be symbolically jeopardized by the invasion of masculine values. Inexperienced maidens, even if they live safely in the domestic sphere, become more fragile to the outside world.

As the goblin men pass, maidens hear their voices. Though most women are still passive and determined to stay in their territory, the goblin men's tempting voices are audible and urge women to take action and cross the boundary, repeatedly saying "Come buy, come buy."

They sell both domestic and foreign fruits, about thirty different kinds. On the one hand, Rossetti's list indicates Britain as a central marketplace of the world where British colonialism dominated, but, on the other hand, it is a poetic image of temptation as the "descriptions of their fruit are the Biblical resonances of such words and phrases as 'Apples' (the first-mentioned of the goblin fruits), 'free-born' (Paul's words on Acts 22: 28), 'Fair eves that fly' and, later, 'brookside rushes' that intimate subtly of other temptations and battles in the Old and New Testaments" (Bentley 66). Listing the Biblical "Apples" first, Rossetti was well aware of her religious intention as well as the story of apples told at the Penitentiary. Apple is a Biblical symbol of temptation and knowledge, as, for those penitentiary girls, it was a "nasty" fruit of

temptation. Being owned by the goblins as their merchandise, as Terrence Holt mentions referring to the fruits, “The fruit is not only the goblins’ property, it is the prop of their power within exchange, the sign of their construction as male, putative possessors of both the phallus and power” (59).

Rossetti’s fruit basket, therefore, does not have to provide separate symbolism to each fruit, though the poet’s seemingly randomized list appears to be one of the reasons that many reviewers have criticized the poem for its inferior poetic form. One of the well-known contemporary critiques on Rossetti’s form is by John Ruskin. When Dante Gabriel Rossetti showed the poem to Ruskin for publication in 1861, Ruskin responded in a letter:

[Christina Rossetti’s poems] are full of beauty and power. But no publisher--I am deeply grieved to know this--would take them, so full are they of quaintness and other offenses. Irregular measure (introduced to my great regret in its chief willfulness by Coleridge) is the calamity of modern poetry... Your sister should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public likes. Then she puts in her observation and passion all will become precious. But she must have the Form first...¹⁹

However, as Bernard Richards describes, “The subtle effects of Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* deserve to be better known. Sainstbury called the form ‘dedoggerelised Skeltonic.’ There are trochaic, iambic, dactylic, and anapaestic feet, although the basic form is iambic” (70). Despite the poem’s lack of form in the traditional poetic sense, however, the poem’s irregular form is not due to the poet’s ignorance: it is her poetic device where the “shortness and shifting irregularity of the poem’s lines produce a breathless tempo” (Blake 8). Using this technique, Rossetti demon-

strated "abundance" of temptation with hypnotic purpose:

It is used to suggest abundance by means of this excess. The result is that the goblin fruit does not seem to invite moral or symbolic reading at all; by their sheer number, the fruits overload the senses and tend to impair the observers' ability to see beyond the physical. Thus, the reader, Lizzie, and Laura are faced with the challenge of reading and interpreting a morally ambiguous and hypnotically sensuous world. (Arseneau 85)

With the rhythmic count of various fruits and repetition of "come buy," the women become hypnotized and tempted to go and buy, as Goblin men demonstrate the masculine power with temptation and sexuality.

Three women, Jeanie, Laura, and Lizzie, are presented in the poem and demonstrate the poet's belief in activism that is probably inspired by Nightingale's "out of nothing comes nothing." The first two women, tempted by the goblin fruits, leave their domestic sphere and fall victims as they receive pleasure from the sensuous fruits. However, Laura survives, owing to her sister Lizzie, who acts heroically. Laura's fall and rise make her story a Bildungsroman. Lizzie is also saved by Jeanie and Laura, because she discovers the new world of sisterhood. At the beginning of the poem, Lizzie is a traditional woman of passivity and domesticity and believes that Jeanie's death is the punishment she should learn from to maintain domestic safety. However, as she witnesses Laura's suffering, she takes an action: she learns that she can gain the further pleasure through the goblins' torture: pain is required in order to gain pleasure of stronger sisterhood. Lizzie's learning, or bildungsroman from passivism to activism, is Rossetti's teaching, which she learned from Florence Nightingale.

Jeanie has received the least attention among the critics, but her life is exemplary of the Victorian fallen woman who is executed by her unmaidenly behavior. The correlation between Jeanie and the goblins (and their fruits) remains as a lesson to be remembered by living women who appreciate traditional feminine roles and values. The goblin men's fruits are symbols of temptation and persecution, to test a woman's propriety as a domestic being. Therefore, when a woman comes to them drawn by the goblins' hypnotic cry and mysterious fruits, she receives a punishment for her impropriety in exchange for a temporary pleasure and her struggles eventually lead to death.

This execution process is well demonstrated in the story of Jeanie and remembered by two sisters Laura and Lizzie:

Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the moonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew gray;
Then fell with first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low;
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow. (147-161)

Jeanie is, in Nightingale's terms, one of a "hundred [who] struggle and drown in the breakers." As Nightingale was aware, the struggle to reach

the new world would bring many deaths as it has in the past; Jeanie was not able to survive when she deserted her feminine territory and stooped to the goblins' temptation. After she enjoyed goblins' fruits and their flowers one summer night, the punishment for her unchastity started. She first suffered from enervation, just as did the second girl at the Penitentiary, who "lost appetite and fell ill from distress of mind" because of the guilt she felt for stealing an apple. In this penitent's case, she was saved by a doctor as well as the people at the Penitentiary. Jeanie died without any mercy, as her hair grew gray, in winter.

As indicated in the poem, Jeanie's death is a solitary one. Lizzie was concerned about Jeanie's decaying condition, but Lizzie pretended "indifferentism" as did others and did not take action to help her. All Lizzie remembers is that Jeanie died "in her prime" without any man who would save her from suffering. Rossetti's flower symbolism also indicates that Jeanie died in the most improper way as an unmarried woman, as "daisies," which symbolize "innocence," never grow on her grave.²⁰ Therefore, the pleasure Jeanie received from the goblin fruits is already indicated here as something sexual. Women's happiness, which is generally summed up as marrying as a virgin by many Victorians, would not have come to the unchaste Jeanie in any way:

She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died

In her gay prime, (312-16)

For premarital sexual "joys," Jeanie received punishment, lost her appetite, and died, without marriage. Jeanie's death is remembered by Lizzie, as a lesson in proper behavior as a modest maiden: do not take action, stay at home, do the household tasks every day, and do not listen to the

(symbolic) goblins' cry. Premarital sex and death before marriage is suggested as most undesired and regrettable. The lines also indicate, in life of fragile Jeanie, Victorian values of chastity and marriage as woman's happiness.

Lizzie's interpretation of Jeanie's death changes later when Laura falls victim of the goblin fruits, but her present learning is, contrary to Nightingale's, traditionally feminine; "Better have paralysis than pain!" In the story of Jeanie, Rossetti not only presents the Victorian moral values but also uses it as a prelude to the sisters' reactions to the goblins' temptation and persecution.

Laura's story is a dramatization of Jeanie's episodic fall, but the ending is different because she is the one who, in Nightingale's words, "discovers the new world." Laura's survival, distinct from Jeanie's solitary death, is due to the sororal love that protects her from the ultimate punishment for her action. Rossetti adapts the biblical motif of Eve's fall, but the poet offers Laura a greater paradise instead of banishment. Laura's suffering becomes, therefore, a fortunate fall in order to confirm her sisterhood with Lizzie as well as an initiation into new learning as a woman. Laura's story is a Bildungsroman that will be passed on to the next generations.

The goblins' temptation is already in effect when Laura is first introduced; "Laura bowed her head to hear." Though Laura is a little cautious and asks Lizzie to "Lie close," her curiosity about the outside world increases from simple hearing of the goblin men's cry to peeping at appearances. While Lizzie retreats, Laura stays "Among the brookside rushes," and the "poem becomes a parable not only about gender relations, but about power relations as well. *Goblin Market* attempts to imagine a position for women outside systems of power" (Holt 51). As

the goblin men hypnotize Laura's senses by using the temptation of fruits, they behave like animals: they had "cat's face," "whisked a tail," "tramped at a rat's pace," "crawled like a snail," and looked like "a wombat" and "a ratel." What is common to these animalized goblin men is not simply their grotesque behaviors, but also their masculine "activism" contrasted with the female passivity of Laura and Lizzie who simply hear and peep. With sexual implications of fruits, therefore, Laura is tempted to join them to experience unknown masculine activism. When they approach, Laura, though she is still passive, does not reject the temptation of sexual exchange.

"Come buy, come buy" was still their cry.

Laura stared but did not stir,

Longed but had no money. (104-6)

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste

"Good folk, I have no coin;

To take were to purloin:

I have no copper in my purse,

I have no silver either,

And all my gold is on the furze (115-20)

Laura agrees to buy the goblin fruits with her "golden curl." The capitalist exchange of Laura's long blond hair and the goblins' fruits is a symbolic ritual of losing virginity (symbolized by her hair) for sexual pleasure.²¹

She clipped a precious golden lock,

She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,

Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red. (126-28)

She sucked and sucked and sucked the more

Fruits which that unknown orchard bore

She sucked until her lips were sore; (134-36)

Dropping her tear which is “more rare than *pearl*,” Laura also loses her *innocence* (Italics mine). Immediately, she becomes obsessed with the fruits, or sexual pleasure. The heterosexual pleasure appears to be a fair trade for Laura, but, when she returns home alone, the home is no longer where she belongs, because she is an improper woman without chastity. Lizzie’s “wise upbraidings” that “Twilight is not good for maidens” is too late and meaningless: “I ate and ate my fill,/Yet my mouth waters still:/To-morrow night I will/Buy more.”

The maiden Laura falls, because of the forbidden sexual pleasure, and the goblins’ punishment starts, the punishment for Laura’s improper action. Next morning, Laura does the household chores with Lizzie, but her mind is “an absent dream” and Lizzie’s “an open heart”: Laura loses all interest in the domestic role. At night, Laura, the experienced, takes Lizzie out to buy and share the pleasure with the inexperienced, saying, “Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.” However, Laura cannot see or hear the goblins: “Laura turned cold as stone.” Laura plants a kernel-stone of the goblin fruit in vain, but she cannot forget the pleasure of the fruits, and imagines being able to taste them another time. As Dorothy Mermin mentions, “The sexualized imaginative world is infinitely attractive but sterile and destructive, and those who commit themselves to longing for it waste away in gloom and frustration, cut off from natural human life” (108). Like Jeanie, the improperly experienced Laura looks unnaturally old with “thin and gray” hair and, just as the second penitent girl did, starts suffering from enervation. Like Jeanie, who died with no possible remedy, Laura is “knocking at Death’s door.” As Elizabeth K. Helsinger says, “Laura purchases pleasure only to discover that her own body is ultimately consumed” (903).

Rossetti believes that suffering is a positive process that leads to a higher level of happiness if the effort is made by her sororal love. In fact, when Lizzie comes back with goblin fruits, Lizzie's awakening starts. Laura realizes her sister's selfless love and discovers "the new world" of sisterhood. Laura is a fallen woman, but her suffering is a fortunate fall: she finds pleasure in pain as she is reborn by Lizzie's sororal exorcism.

Asked if she missed her sister, Laura realizes Lizzie's love and self sacrifice: "Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted/For my sake the fruit forbidden?" The sororal love becomes mutual as Laura worries about Lizzie's fall and appreciates her selfless effort: "She clung about her sister,/Kissed and kissed and kissed her." Laura's sororal expression of love to Lizzie is distinct from her heterosexual one to the goblins. While she "sucked" goblin fruits as if she had been an animal of carnal desire, she "kissed" Lizzie with a humane love. Laura's rise, or her rebirth, from carnality to humanity is proceeded by Lizzie's exorcism. Laura receives Lizzie's juice, but it is not the same juice Laura tasted at the goblin market, because both goblins and their tasty fruits exist only to tempt maidens in order to punish them afterwards. In fact, since she lost her virginity, she has lost contact with them and started suffering. When Laura tastes the juice that Lizzie has brought, it is miraculously transmuted to an antidote that tastes like "wormwood to her tongue." However, drinking the antidote is Laura's redemption for her carnal love and her process of rebirth into the newly established world of sisterhood:

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,

.....

She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life? (493-523)

As Mermin explains, "Laura's reaction is excessive, but the excess here as in her gluttonous sucking at the fruit is part of the evil as well as its cure. She falls into a highly stylized, rather Biblical frenzy that is like a ritual of exorcism" (113). Therefore, in order for the poet to communicate her belief, Laura's last struggle is described as realistically and dramatically as possible by referring to the actual incident at the St. Mary Magdalene Home.²² Laura's struggle "[w]rithing as one possessed" is just like the third penitentiary girl who acted as a "fairly possessed of a devil" and was eventually saved by the nursing of the people at the Penitentiary. As the penitent "threw herself from before the door against the adjoining fence," Laura also "leaped." As Marsh says, "[the third penitent's] moment of crisis at the gate is described in terms reminiscent of Laura's crisis of remorse and redemption" (242). Finally, as the penitent became quiet, Laura also becomes quiet and sleeps.

Laura recovers gradually as Lizzie stays by her as the penitent was saved by the Sisters. Janet Galligani Casey says, "Suffering and metaphorical death are integral to Laura's redemption and rebirth" (70). Laura regains "Life out of death."

Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;

Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of gray, (537-40)

Laura's paradise is regained, but on a higher level. Though she smiles "in the innocent old way," she is born to "the new world" where sisterhood stands high. As Mermin says, "'Pleasure and anguish past'--the

mixture of pleasure and pain, poison and delight characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite formulations of alluring, evil love

--she falls senseless, almost dies, and is reborn at dawn" (113). Suffering makes her grow and realize that sisterhood is the strongest tie in the world, and Laura learns her role to pass on to the next generation. Laura actively, along with Lizzie, teaches her learning to their children:

"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen while one stands." (562-67)

This lesson is not only directed to their children, but it could also be intended to the fallen women Rossetti was working with. St. Mary Magdalene Home, where Rossetti worked as a volunteer, was filled with the fallen women who had been degraded in society. With the Sisters' help, the penitents were able to learn moral standards. As Marsh mentions, though the Penitentiary had a small library (which was established for moral training in 1856 with a donation of ten pounds), "much may be done by the Penitents' own reading as well as by the quiet teaching of the Sisters" (Marsh 240). Having written poems, the religious Rossetti must have thought of her social role as a poet who could give religious, as well as moral lessons to the penitents. Rossetti's lesson "there is no friend like a sister" is doubtless referring to the Sisters who were willing to sacrifice themselves to help fallen women.

Laura's innocence, fall, suffering, awakening, and rise are a typical story line of the Bildungsroman. Laura gains the wisdom of "sisterhood" as she finds pleasure of the sororal love in her painful experience. Though her initial action to meet the goblins initially seemed to be the

cause of her fall, it eventually helped her to attain a higher realization. Laura's Bildungsroman is Rossetti's dramatization of Nightingale's comment: "out of suffering may come the cure."

Lizzie's Bildungsroman is Rossetti's presentation of Victorian feminist ideal womanhood. While Laura's story demonstrates the improper woman's fall and rise, suggesting a positive outcome of the fallen woman, Lizzie's story is intended to present the social role of woman. In the period when many women were struggling for survival fighting against an oppressive society where patriarchal politics were victimizing more women, Rossetti wanted other women, especially those who were comfortably caging themselves at home, to realize their potential, cooperate with each other, and help the weak, in order to lead women to the new world of freedom. For this purpose, presenting Lizzie first as an ideal representative of Victorian maidenhood, Rossetti dramatizes Lizzie's initiation process to become a woman who acts to help fallen woman and find greater pleasure in "sisterhood." In the poem, Lizzie's "power depends on the sameness of inaction, of erotic stasis that characterize the course of her girlhood" (Michie 415). Therefore, Lizzie's early maidenhood-protective deafness, blindness, and the homebound retreat--are the metaphoric illustration of the senselessness of Victorian moral values and of the absence of sisterhood, or what Nightingale contemptuously calls "indifferentism."

At the beginning of the poem, however, Lizzie appears to be as much tempted by the goblin fruits as Laura. Hearing the goblins' voices, she goes out to see them with Laura. But, while the curious "Laura bowed her head to hear" the goblins' voices, the cautious "Lizzie veiled her blushes." Lizzie is extremely alert because of the lesson she learned from Jeanie's death, and, because of the Victorian moral code that prevents her

from taking self-assertive action, her cautionary attitudes are controlled by the self-restrictive admonitions "No," "must not," and "should not." As a result, despite her desire, she is determined to be blind to the outside world and remains protective: "Lizzie covered up her eyes,/Covered close lest they should look." Lizzie's innocent learning is, in other words, a learning of deafness and homeward retreat. As she senses danger nearing or feels being tempted, "She thrust a dimpled finger/In each ear, shut her eyes and ran." Having witnessed Jeanie die without any remedy and leaving Laura alone in front of the goblins, she insensitively runs away home.

Even when Laura finally comes back home, Lizzie is least concerned about her sister's health. Instead, Lizzie's greeting at the gate is, along with Jeanie's story, filled with her conventional "wise upbraidings:"

"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen

You should not loiter so." (143-62 underlining mine)

Laura is typical of the Victorian proper woman, who behaves appropriately against the tempting goblins and gives a "wise" lesson of "indifferentism" to Lizzie (though she gives the lessons when it is already too late). During the conversation with her sister when the topic comes to the goblin fruits, Lizzie's self-protective deafness functions: while Laura excitedly talks about the goblin juice and tells Lizzie that she will bring "plums" for her next day, she turns deaf and does not listen or respond at all.

However, that night, despite the different natures of the two sisters, they sleep almost identically with "Golden head by golden head/Like golden pigeons in one nest." And, because of the way Rossetti describes the sisters, one may easily be tempted to imagine homosexual relations (in

such expressions as “two wands of ivory,” and “Cheek to cheek and breast to breast”), or incest. On the contrary, however, this appears to be the poet’s presentation of an ideal sisterhood between the fallen woman and her potential nurturer. The scene is the illustration of not only the actual “common Victorian practice” (Bentley 71) that sisters slept together sharing one bed, but also the poet’s ideal presentation of “togetherness” of women. As Rossetti joined the team at the Penitentiary, she saw the Sisters and the fallen women live together, eat together, and sleep together. Their circumstances are different, but they are fundamentally still the same women, “Like two blossoms on one stem.” As Packer mentions in *Christina Rossetti*, “[Rossetti] did not consider the gap between herself and the Highgate penitents so wide as to appear incomprehensible” (154). This is why Rossetti describes the virtuous Lizzie and the falling Laura identical to each other and allows them to sleep together by sharing the bed. By doing so, Rossetti intimates Lizzie’s potential as a nurturer.

Next morning, at home, Lizzie presents herself as potentially an active woman: the externally inactive Lizzie becomes active in the domestic sphere. Though Laura shows the sign of her change by losing interest in the household tasks, Lizzie is unchanged and looks more lively than the day before at the goblin market. She is willing to take action and manages her household duties. She knows her role and pursues it “as modest maidens should.” In this conventional women’s place, she is not alert, protective, or restrictive but, rather, active, happy, and willing:

Lizzie with an open heart,
 Laura in an absent dream,
 One content, one sick in part;
 One warbling for mere bright day’s delight,
 One longing for the night. (210-214)

Lizzie's character, though she may be concerned about Laura's change, is not yet developed enough to be her guardian. When she goes out with Laura to the brook for water and hears the goblins' cry, her alertness and protectivism returns: "I dare not look." Therefore, even when Laura's suffering worsens, Lizzie is simply concerned and does not take action to search for any remedy. Remembering Jeanie, Lizzie is bounded by fear of action and, as a result, simply waits for her sister's death.

Gradually, in her mind, the conflict between being a passive bystander and active nurturer develops, and she probably comes to realize that taking no action but worrying is no more than pretending indifference. It is when Laura is dying and "knocking at Death's door" that Lizzie finally realizes that out of worrying comes nothing and that she needs to take action and meet the goblins. She foresees that the meeting will be painful, but she is determined to take action to save her fallen sister:

Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;

And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look. (322-33, 327-28)

The first two lines of Lizzie's awakening is strikingly suggestive of Nightingale's belief in *Cassandra*: "suffering rather than indifferentism; out of nothing comes nothing. But out of suffering may come the cure" (804). As to the last two lines, as Sturrock says, "[they] imply a negative judgement of Lizzie's original determined conventional deafness and blindness; they certainly mark a conscious decision to move on from innocence" (102). Lizzie is now ready to suffer from the goblins' torture and, though she is not sure whether her action will be rewarded or not, hopes to gain the cure for Laura and achieve happiness after the suffering.

Lizzie's determination of self-sacrifice is Rossetti's response to Nightingale. In *Cassandra*, Nightingale rhetorically and sarcastically asks if any woman is ready to become a female Christ who can act for women:

The next Christ will perhaps be a female Christ. But do we see one woman who looks like a female Christ? (230)

Transforming Lizzie from a conventional passive woman to an active nurturer of self-sacrifice, Rossetti presents her version of a female Christ. It is as if Lizzie heard the voice of Nightingale who urges women to take action at the end of *Cassandra*: "the time is come when women must do something more than the 'domestic' hearth" (229).

Lizzie leaves her familiar feminine territory and meets the goblins, with a silver penny in her purse. The goblins welcome her with laughter and demonstrate their masculine activism as they did to Laura. Sexually tempting Lizzie with their fruits, they "hugged her and kissed her:/ Squeezed and caressed her." But, she does not stoop, because she has come to the goblin market "to buy the goblin fruit out of the most sincere selflessness" (Arseneau 89), not out of her desire. She "Tossed them her money." The money, a modern symbol of a fair trade, not only enables Lizzie in a different manner from Laura and Jeanie, who passionately exchanged sexual pleasure for the fruits, but also represents her objectiveness, independence, and competitiveness. In order to take the fruits home, Lizzie attempts to do business (objective trade, not a sexual exchange), asking the goblins to give her as "much and many" as the silver penny can buy. A woman entering the world of business, which traditionally belongs to the men, is not, of course, acceptable for the goblins, who represents masculine power. The Goblins, or masculinity, want to dominate women and keep them penniless and economically dependent on men as well, because allowing women to be economically independent may lead to "a corruption of morals."²³ Money enables

woman to equal man and, therefore, to be competitive. Without sexual desire but with money, as Helsinger explains Lizzie's heroic action:

Lizzie goes to market doubly armed. Unlike Laura, Lizzie has money in her pocket, and she knows how to use it... She does not offer herself as money... The goblin men are not to be put off easily. They don't want her to participate in the market on her terms. They insist that she not only buy the fruit that her sister wants, but eat it herself... (923).

The goblins are "No longer wagging, purring,/But visibly demurring,/Grunting and snarling." They realize that Lizzie has come to challenge them, a challenge not as a maiden to stoop to their temptation but as a manly woman to make a business deal for their fruits. Lizzie says, "So without further parleying,/If you will not sell me any/Of your fruits though much and many,/Give me back my silver penny/I tossed you for a fee." The woman with money is antisocial and unfeminine from the Victorian patriarchal moral standard, so the goblins call her "proud,/Cross-grained, uncivil."

The goblins begin to torture Lizzie, to teach her that she needs to know that she is behaving improperly and should be more like their perception of a woman. However, different from Laura's erotic pleasure, Lizzie stands still as heroic and pure as a female Christ can be: "White and golden Lizzie stood, Like a lily in a flood." Despite their attempt to ruin the "royal virgin town";

Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in;
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face, (430-44)

The more she receives physical pain, the more she gains pleasure. The

pleasure is not sexual, but of the triumph of feminist resistance against the goblins' dominance against women: she "Laughed in heart." Lizzie is not what she used to be. She is willing to suffer in order to save Laura and probably the soul of Jeanie. Finally, Lizzie, who ran and retreated at the beginning of the poem, now makes the goblins retreat: "the evil people,/Worn out by her resistance" "writhed," "dived," "scudded," and "vanished." They leave the penny back for Lizzie, as if they do not still admit her power to enter the man's business world and become competitive. However, the emotional goblins do not know that the returned penny remains as permission for Lizzie to re-enter their world.

Lizzie's initiation is over. She returns home, in "smart, ache, [and] tingle.": "Lizzie went her way" and "She ran and ran" with "inward laughter" of victory. Her heroic action will be rewarded if she can find that her sororal love is mutual:

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,

Did you miss me?

Come and kiss me.

Never mind my bruises,

Hug me, drink me, suck my juice

Eat me, drink me, love me;

Laura, make much of me; (464-473)

Lizzie's change is obvious; instead of giving the "wise upbraidings" to value her [im]propriety from the Victorian moral standard, she asks Laura to confirm her sororal love. However, she cannot wait to hear the answer, because Lizzie is more concerned about saving Laura.

As a nurturer, Lizzie presents herself as a sacrament of redemption and becomes a female Christ with spirit of self-sacrifice and redemption for women. Lizzie's ritualistic presentation of her body parallels that of

Christ. As Kathleen Jones comments, "Jesus Christ in the Gospel according to St. John says that 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life' and this has become Christian sacrament. So Lizzie, by inviting her sister to eat her flesh and 'suck my juice' promises Laura new life" (97-98). The female Christ does not bring the goblin fruits, but, she says, "suck my juice" (underlining mine), which was left on her body when the goblins squeezed them on her. Probably mixed with her [divine] blood and sweat of self-sacrifice (Remember, she was bruised and "ran and ran"), the juice is transmuted to "the fairy antidote."²⁴ Though the juice is "wormwood," Laura is finally "saved by Lizzie's painful resistance to the temptation of passion symbolized by the fruit" (Harrison *Christina Rossetti in Context*, 114). While Laura is sleeping, Lizzie serves like a medically qualified nurse:

That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves. (525-29)

In this scene where Lizzie is described last, Rossetti suggests that Lizzie's heroism is not temporal but continues also in the domestic scene: Lizzie is heroic in both public and private spheres. This seems to be an appropriate goal for the female Christ in whom Nightingale believed "that the traditional female role of nurturer may take on heroic proportions" (Casey 64).

Lizzie's Bildungsroman is the reflection of the poet's feminist ideology, and the poem incites the female audience to take action to help other women. Laura concludes the poem, by summarizing Lizzie's heroism and introducing a lesson that both sisters intend to tell to their future children:

“For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen while one stands.” (562-67)

For Laura, Motherhood is to teach sisterhood. Writing simply what to tell to their children, Rossetti suggests that she has another intended audience; i.e. mothers who, despite their potential to be great nurturers, stay comfortably at home and are reluctant to help others. Lizzie's feminist Bildungsroman illustrates such an “angel in the house” to be a female Christ. In *Cassandra*, Nightingale also rouses her readers to act for their children:

Oh! Mothers, who talk about this hearth, how much do you know of your son's real life, how much of your daughter's imaginary one? Awake, ye women, all ye that sleep, awake! If this domestic life were so very good, would your young men wander away from it, your maidens think of something else? (229)

As Nightingale urges mothers to take action and see the world outside the domestic sphere to find out their children's reality and concerns, Rossetti dramatizes its process by Lizzie's heroic action and presents a lesson mothers should pass on to the next generations. This is why the ending of the poem is overtly didactic, so that mothers can easily tell their children and make themselves understood. By transforming pain of suffering to pleasure of sisterhood, both Nightingale and Rossetti hope that more female Christs will be born from the domestic spheres.

Suffering is required when one takes an action to reach a new world, and the pain is transformed to pleasure. In this poem, the pain of Laura

and Lizzie is rewarded by learning sisterhood. As June Sturrock says, "The lesson in the closing of the poem is "not about retreat from danger but about sisterhood, strength and above all mutual support" (104).

The goblins appear vicious, but, ironically, they give Laura and Lizzie an opportunity to develop their sisterhood. As Sylvia Shurbutt says, "The goblin men are purveyors not only of sexual liberation and bacchanal pleasures but of creative liberation as well" (Shurbutt 410). In the same way, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that the goblins are "the Miltonic imagery" of the Satanic serpent by which Eve eventually reaches her goal of "intellectual divinity, equality with or superiority to Adam (and God), and pure self-assertion" (568). Transforming the goblins from the unwanted evil to the necessary evil, Rossetti develops her unique perception of evil.

IV

In "Goblin Market," Christina Rossetti presents three stories of women: women of past, present, and future. Serving her 1850s and 1860s at the Anglican Sisterhood, the poet's religious faith developed not only to further believe in God but also to realize women's role in society. As many historians describe the 1850s and 1860s as the period of "sisterhood," Rossetti was well aware of the reality and the potential of woman. In Jeanie's story, Rossetti describes the tragedy of the fallen women who dies isolated from society. Laura could be another Jeanie, but she survives because of the poet's hope that sisterhood will save the fallen woman and give real fallen women hope to live in the patriarchal society. Having already been a devoted Christian, Rossetti was able to accept Nightingale's Christian feminism of self-sacrifice and develop her own ideology. As Shurbutt explains:

Rossetti's conscious attempt [is] to revise traditional Christian myth in order to produce an alternative, 'feminist' reading to the most fundamental stories in Christian lore--the fall of humankind from grace and our redemption through the blood of Christ. It is pointedly significant that this devoutly religious poet has her female Christ figure say in the redemptive climax of the poem: "Eat me, drink me, love me." (41)

Lizzie's story is not only to present her female-Christ figure, but also to urge ordinary women to participate in the women's emancipation movement.

Because of its suggestiveness, "Goblin Market" has elicited varied interpretations from scholars of different critical schools. For example, among Freudian critics, some argue the destructive sexual energy of woman²⁵, while others analyze the poem as presentation of the poet's divided self.²⁶ Others also discuss the poem's history as a children's book, adult's fantasy book, and academic text.²⁷ However, when critical attention is directed to Christina Rossetti's own life, concerns, religion, and society, the poem appears to be more consistent with the representation of mid-Victorian women and the ideology pertinent to their lives.

A punishment is required, and both Rossetti and Nightingale agree that the punishment will lead woman to the new world of sisterhood. Unlike other more ordinary writers who separate pain from pleasure and describe pain as simply a means of punishment, Nightingale philosophizes the pain as the source of the cure. As a poet, Rossetti dramatizes her mentor's philosophy, with the aid of the realism of the Penitentiary girls, as a philosophy of "pleasure of pain" and represents the 1850s and 1860s as the period of sisterhood.

Notes

- 1 This essay is a revision of the chapter 5 of the author's *Sex, Drugs, and Madness in Poetry from William Blake to Christina Rossetti* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen UP, 1996).
- 2 Christina Rossetti, "Goblin Market," *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange (Boston: Houghton, 1968) 602. All citations are from this edition.
- 3 "Bildungsroman," which can be translated as "the novel of adolescence" or "the novel of initiation," is of German origin, especially Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796). This work was translated into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824, and, since then, the Bildungsroman has been adopted by various writers. My focus of discussion, however, is not whether or not Rossetti had known the literary device and adapted it to her poem (though it seems feasible at least chronologically). I use the term loosely simply to discuss the content of the poem and the process of the character's psychological growth from an innocent maiden to a woman of wisdom.
- 4 Wendell Robert Carr, "Introduction" *The Subjection of Women* (Cambridge: M.I. T.P, 1970) xii.
- 5 Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminist: 1850-1900* (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1987) 134-136.
- 6 Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 76-78. Mason, while calling a French observer, who estimated 220,000, chauvinistic, also presents the police total, which fluctuates between 5500 and 9500 in the 1860s.
- 7 Levine explains that the acts "were prompted by the high incidence of venereal disease in the British armed forces; 29 per cent of all army men admitted to hospital in 1862 and 12.5 per cent of naval hospital admissions in the same year were for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases" (145).
- 8 Levine 145.
- 9 Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 374-375.
- 10 The following episodes concerning her engagements are from H.B. Groot's "Christina Rossetti" *Dictionary of Literary Biography* Vol. 35, ed. William E. Fredeman and Ira B. Nadel (Detroit: Gale, 1985) 205-12.
- 11 Jan Marsh, "Christina Rossetti's Vocation: The Importance of *Goblin Market*" *Victorian Poetry* (32: 3-4, 1994) 238-40.
- 12 Packer *Christina Rossetti* 92-93.

- 13 Mary Poovey "Introduction" *Florence Nightingale: Cassandra and other selections from Suggestions for Thought* (New York: New York UP, 1993) vii-viii. Poovey mentions that the *Suggestions for Thought* (which included *Cassandra*) was probably composed between 1850 and 1852, as "the reference to the work appears in a letter to her father composed on her thirty-second birthday (12 May, 1852). Poovey also suggests that Nightingale sought reviews for the work, and, in 1860 when she privately printed the work, "she sent copies to six readers including, most notably, the philosopher John Stuart Mill and Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, Benjamin Jowett" (viii).
- 14 The following episode and its source is from Marsh 240-242.
- 15 D.M.R. Bentley argues the date of the poem's composition. Generally recognized as April 27, 1859, on the authority of William Michael Rossetti, Bentley questions if six-hundred line poem was really completed in a day symbolically on her mother's birthday as well as the feast day of Saint Zita and was waiting for publication untouched for nearly three years until early 1962. Bentley concludes:

Lona Mosk Packer provides some support for such speculations with the information that *Goblin Market* was transcribed, more or less in its final form, into the Dennis Notebooks over a period of more than nine months between March 21, 1859 and December 31, 1860, and further evidence is provided by Rossetti herself in her 1893 note: "'Goblin Market' ... was written (subject of course to subsequent revision) as long as April 27, 1859..." In view of this information, it is worth wondering whether the date April 27, 1859, was not chosen by Rossetti as much for its spiritual significance as for its accuracy. (59)

Bentley's quotation is from Packer's *Christina Rossetti*, in which she mentions, referring to the Dennis Notebook:

And of all her long poems *Goblin Market* strikes the reader as the one most likely to have been produce in the mood of direct inspiration. I take it that she wrote the poem out as a whole first, and later made whatever revisions and alterations she deemed necessary. It would not have been impossible for a poet with her working habits to have turned out the approximately 550 lines within a week or so... It is of course impossible to know whether the poem was written out first and then copied or whether Christina wrote it exactly as it appears in the Dennis Book (March 21, 1859 to Dec. 31, 1860, pp. 3-38). (421)

William Michael Rossetti's date, April 27, 1859, therefore, appears to be more of

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a poetic device. Marsh's research points out that "Christina's work [at the St. Mary Magdalene Home] began at the latest sometime earlier in 1859, perhaps in late spring" (239).

Rossetti started the composition in March 21, 1859, and ended in December 31, 1860. If the exact month of her move to the Penitentiary, which Marsh says "early spring," had been late April or early May, 1859, Rossetti could have had about twenty months to complete the poem while she was working there, witnessing and experiencing the life of the fallen women.

16 The following two contemporary reviews are from R.W. Crump's *Christina Rossetti: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1976) 1-3.

17 Crump 3.

18 William M. Rossetti, "Notes" *The Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), or the footnote to the poem in Walter F. Houghton and G. Robert Stange's *Victorian Poetry and Poetics* 602.

19 Lona Mosk Packer, ed., *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1963) 5-6. The quotation is from William Michael Rossetti, ed., *John Ruskin: Rossetti: Pre-Raphaelitism* (1899) 258-259.

20 Arseneau 88. Referring to Gisela Hönnighausen's "Emblematic Tendencies in the Works of Christina Rossetti" (*Victorian Poetry* 10 [1972]) 1-15, Arseneau explains further:

Gisela Hönnighausen convincingly demonstrates that Rossetti was familiar with the language of flowers. Furthermore, we know that Rossetti acknowledged the daisy's traditional meaning because she refers to "innocent bright-eyed daisies" in her *Sing-Song* collection (*Complete Poems* 2: 32). (93)

21 Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (London: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1984) 233. de Vries explains that a woman's "long hair" symbolizes "virginity" as well as "bride" in a Christian sense.

22 Marsh 242. The following quotations on the penitent's behavior are also from this page.

23 Stone 377. The quotation is from the comment of the government and the majority of both Houses, which rejected the inclusion of wife's property rights in the 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act. It is not clear whether Lizzie's "silver penny" is a direct reference to this Act, but, in both Act and the poem, "money" symbolically indicates the gender dichotomy and draws a line between man as a public figure and woman as a domestic figure.

24 The "transmuting" may not be a realistic explanation, but this seems to be a most

reasonable explanation for the female Christ Lizzie's miracle, since Jesus Christ is also known for his many miracles.

- 25 Leila Silvana May, "Eat me, drink me, love me': Orality, Sexuality, and the Fruits of Sororal Desire in 'Gob(b)lin(g) Market' and *Beloved*" *The Significance of Sibling Relationships in Literature* ed. Mink JoAnna and Ward Janet Doubler (Bowling Green, OH: Popular, 1992) 133. May mentions, "Behind the dense facade of the nineteenth-century familial structure was a hidden locus of repressed feminine desire. Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' cuts a fantastic passage through the stone walls of the Victorian home and reveals its inner chamber; in so doing it exposes the forces which lead to the subversion, and eventual dissolution, of the mechanisms of personal identity within that same edifice which had been constructed to protect and maintain them. "Goblin Market" gives us a vision of sisterhood and of those edicts and to adumbrate a radically alternative figuration of sisterhood and of feminine desire."
- 26 Mermin argues that *Goblin Market* is usually read as an allegory of the poet's self-division that shows, in Lionel Stevenson's representative summary, the conflict between 'two sides of Christina's own character, the sensuous and the ascetic,' and demonstrates 'the evil of self-indulgence, the fraudulence of sensuous beauty, and the supreme duty of renunciation' (107).
- 27 Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, "Modern Markets for *Goblin Market*" *Victorian Poetry* (32: 3-4 [1994]) 249. Pointing out three audiences of the poem, Kooistra argues, "These reproductions of Rossetti's text have significant effects on the poem's reception. Twentieth-century publishers, illustrators, and critics have entered the goblin market of cultural exchange to sell the poem to three distinct audiences. Children, adult fantasies, and scholars have each tempted ... by producers of juvenile, pornographic, and academic publications."

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