Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

THE USE OF FANTASY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL REALITY IN CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S WORKS

Merve Sarı

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2009

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BİLDİRİM

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Merve Sarı

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ÖZET

SARI, Merve. *Christina Rossetti'nin Eserlerinde Fantezinin Kullanımı ve Sosyal Gerçeklerin Betimlenmesi*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2009.

Fantezinin kökeni sözlü ve yazılı edebiyatın başlangıcına dayanır. Özellikle toplumun sorunlarını eleştirmek için kullanılan fantezinin ondokuzuncu yüzyılda yeniden canlanmasının başlıca nedeni dönemin tarihsel, siyasal, dini, ekonomik ve toplumsal olaylarına bağlıdır. Endüstri Devrimi sonrası Britanya'sında, Viktorya Çağı'nın sorunlarından uzak; özellikle de sanayileşmenin, sömürgeciliğin ve materyalizmin neden olduğu olumsuz etkilerden arınmış yeni ve alternatif bir dünya ortaya koyan fanteziye yönelik artan bir ilgi vardı. Ancak, ironik bir şekilde bu alternatif dünya da gerçek dünyanın izlerini taşır.

Fantezi sınıflar ve cinsiyetler arasındaki haksızlıkları ve eşitsizlikleri eleştirmek için kadın yazarlar tarafından da sıklıkla kullanılmıştır. Bu yazarlar arasında, Christina Rossetti fanteziyi toplumu ve değerlerini eleştirmek için hem bir edebi tür hem de bir yazım biçimi olarak şiir ve düzyazılarında kullanır. Peri masalı türünün sağladığı ifade rahatlığıyla Christina Rossetti eserlerinde toplumun çeşitli grupları arasındaki farklılıkları bu kavramların ne kadar göreceli olduğunu göstererek üstü kapalı bir şekilde eleştirir. Christina Rossetti fantastik eserlerinde öncelikle Viktorya Dönemi'ni düzenleyen kuralları sorgular ve böylece fantezinin bir kaçış edebiyatı değil aksine yeniden betimlediği çağla yakından ilgili olduğunu ortaya koyar. Rossetti'nin *Goblin Market* (1862), *The Prince's Progress* (1866) ve *Sing-Song* adlı başlıca peri masalı şiirleri çok katmanlı yapılarıyla çağın sosyal gerçeklerini yansıtmaları açısından önemlidir. Viktorya Dönemi'nin dini, sosyal, cinsel ve materyalist sorunları ile psikoanalitik gelişmeleri gibi başlıca olayları açısından incelenen bu eserlerin yanısıra Rossetti'nin *Speaking Likenesses* (1874), "Hero" (1870) ve "Nick" (1870) gibi kısa hikayeleri de yalın yüzeyleri altında yatan derin bir sosyal duyarlılığı ortaya koyar.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl şairi olan Christina Rossetti fanteziyi Viktorya Çağı'nın problemlerini gözardı etmek için değil aksine bunları yeniden betimlemek ve eleştirmek için kullanır. Genel görüşlerin aksine, Rossetti fantezi yoluyla dönemin sosyal, dini, ekonomik ve cinsel sorunlarını ortaya koyar. Yaratığı bu fantastik dünyada Rossetti, çağının sosyal gerçeklerini sansüre uğrama korkusu olmadan yansıtır. Fantezi yoluyla, Christina Rossetti herkesçe bilinen

ve görülenleri yeniden betimleyerek çağın beklentilerini yıkarken, aynı zamanda da Viktorya toplumunun gerçek dünyadan izler taşıyan bir başka portresini çizer.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Christina Rossetti, fantezi, peri masalları, *Goblin Market*, *The Prince's Progress*, *Sing-Song*, *Speaking Likenesses*, "Hero," "Nick," sosyal eleştiri, hiciv.

ABSTRACT

SARI, Merve. *The Use of Fantasy and The Representation of Social Reality in Christina Rossetti's Works*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2009.

The origins of fantasy date back to the beginning of oral and written literature. Used primarily as a means to criticize the problems of the society, the main reason behind its revival during the nineteenth century is related to the historical, political, religious, economic and social issues. During the post-industrial Britain, there was a growing interest in fantasy as it offered a new and an alternative world that seemed to be far removed from the troubles of the Victorian age; particularly from the negative consequences of industrialism, colonialism and materialism. However, it is ironic to notice that this alternative world also bears the traces of the real one.

Fantasy was widely used by Victorian female authors as well in order to criticize the injustices and inequalities between the classes and sexes. Among these writers, Christina Rossetti uses fantasy both as a genre and as a mode in her verse and prose to satirize the society and its values. Hiding beneath the safety of the fairy-tale genre, Christina Rossetti in her works covertly criticizes the disparities between various groups in the society illustrating how arbitrary these concepts are. In her fantastic works, Christina Rossetti mainly questions the rules that regulate the Victorian period and thus she puts forward the idea that fantasy is not an escapist genre but closely connected to the age it re-presents. Rossetti's major fairy-tale poems such as *Goblin Market* (1862), *The Prince's Progress* (1866) and *Sing-Song* are significant in terms of their multi-layered structure so as to expose the social realities of the age. Evaluated in relation to the major incidents of the Victorian period, such as religious, social, sexual and material strifes as well as psychoanalytical advancements, these works, in addition to Rossetti's short stories such as *Speaking Likenesses* (1874), "Hero" (1870) and "Nick" (1870), reveal a deep social sensitivity behind their simplistic surfaces.

As a nineteenth-century poetess, Christina Rossetti uses fantasy not as a means to avoid the troubles of the Victorian Age but in order to re-present and criticize its problems behind the veil of fantasy. Contrary to common assumptions, through fantasy Rossetti unveils the social, religious, economic and sexual problems of her period. In the fantastic realm of her works, she

presents the social realities of her age without the fear of censorship. Through her representations, Christina Rossetti subverts the expectations of the age and draws a different picture of the Victorian society that carries elements of the genuine one through fantasy.

Key Words

Christina Rossetti, fantasy, fairy tales, *Goblin Market*, *The Prince's Progress*, *Sing-Song*, *Speaking Likenesses*, "Hero," "Nick," social criticism, satire.

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KABUL VE ONAY

Merve Sarı tarafından hazırlanan "The Use of Fantasy and The Representation of Social Reality in Christina Rossetti's Works" başlıklı bu çalışma, 12 Haziran 2009 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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INTRODUCTION

> Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, and Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done [. . .]. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden. (Sidney 25)

> If we could go backwards in time, the fairy-story might be found to change in details, or to give way to other tales. But there would always be a "fairy-tale" as long as there was any Thórr. When the fairy-tale ceased, there would be just thunder, which no human ear had yet heard. (Tolkien 136)

Throughout ages it has always been the aim of literature to take the readers into a world of fiction which is far removed from the one that is familiar to them. This alternative fictive world, besides appealing to the readers in terms of its boundlessness, catches the attention of the readers due to the mystery and the unknown it contains. As a natural result of this attractive quality, numerous writers have created a secondary alternative world in their works to represent the truth enfolding their primary world in a distinct way, thus enabling the readers to see the everyday realities of their world in a different light. It is only within the borders of such a fantastic realm that the known and familiar things turn into vague and unknown ones. This representation is highly complicated and at times disturbing, yet ironically enough projects truth and represents reality in a plainer and clearer way than any other representation.

Keeping this in mind, it can be argued that poets, as well as writers, who thus bring forth "a golden" world with the magic of their words, all contributed to the process of introducing a mystified reality to their readers so that they could comprehend things far better through this fresher perspective. As is noted, Sir Philip Sidney, during the Elizabethan Age, paid great tribute to the function of poetry in renewing the readers' perception of things that exist in nature, which according to him unfortunately became familiar and dull in the meantime. In a broader sense, this definition can be applied to literature in general and fantasy in particular. Because what Sidney defines here as the source of poetry is vital for fantasy's very existence. Likewise, J. R. R. Tolkien, working on a definition of the *faerie*, stresses this distinctive quality of fantasy, which for him, necessitates the full participation of all the creative forces

put into the production of a work of art so as to refresh the readers' sense of understanding (165).

Reminding noticeably of defamiliarization which was developed in the mid-twentieth century by Viktor Shklovsky, making strange is an indispensable element of fantasy (Armitt 65). According to Shklovsky, the "purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself" (720). As a result, defamiliarization, which is a process of making strange, revitalizes the perception of the objects so that the aim of art becomes "chang[ing] the form without changing its nature," hence presenting things in a new, unfamiliar light, by way of formal manipulation (Shklovsky 721).

Despite the fact that it was the Formalists who coined the term defamiliarization, the idea of representing reality by making it strange and original has always been a part of literature and has been perceived synonymous with poetic creativity and imagination notably among the Romantic poets. Among these writers, who celebrated this quality as an indispensable aspect of literature, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) can be counted who himself made use of fantastic elements frequently in his works, such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), "Kubla Khan" (1797) and *Christabel* (1797-1800). In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge defines the primary function of literature as: "To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar [. . .]. [T]his is the character and privilege of genius" (202). Another Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), in his *A Defence of Poetry* (1820-1821) defines poetry as "the expression of Imagination" (480) and in a similar manner suggests: "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar [. . .] reproduc[ing] all that it represents" (487).

However, while comparing these two concepts, it is important to keep in mind that there is one major difference between them. What distinguishes Formalist defamiliarization from the Romantic poets' concept of representation is that the former is concerned more with the formal qualities of a work of art, whereas the latter is mostly concerned with the thematic ones. Selden observes this as follows:

> It must be stressed that the Formalists unlike the Romantic poets, were not so much interested in the perceptions themselves as in the nature of the devices which produce the effect of 'defamiliarization'. The purpose of a work of art is to change our mode of perception from the automatic and practical to the artistic. (33)

Tolkien's remarks, therefore, can best clarify this distinction as he talks about a similar process of defamiliarization, and then refamiliarization which in a way recalls the Romantic idea of representation. Calling this process as "arresting strangeness" (156), Tolkien suggests that the main function of literature is to find an "other" description of things that exist in nature:

> We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness. [. . .] Creative fantasy, because it is mainly trying to do something else (make something new), may open your hoard and let all the locked things fly away like cage-birds. (165-6)

What is possessed is the things that the readers have locked in their minds. Once attaining it, the readers borrow from these set images whenever they have any need of them. However, Tolkien makes it clear that this results in a tasteless and narrow-minded opinion of things since what has been told is unable to get away from the mundane without the participation of imagination. Calling this process as "recovery," Tolkien coins the other two as "escape and consolation" (154). Recovery, which is basically defined as "arresting strangeness" by Tolkien, is a renewal process and is placed at the heart of *faerie* as an indispensable element of creative fantasy. As for escape, it is primarily described as the flight from the ugliness of the "Robot Age," into a world of nature and then from "death" which Tolkien identifies as "the great escape"(174). Lastly, consolation is "the consolation of happy-ending" which he terms as "eucatastrophe" in opposition to Aristotlean tragic catastrophe (175).

Specifically fantasy's use of recovery has always been under attack due to its so-called radical departures from reality. Defined as: "A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" by Colin N. Manlove, fantasy in its very essence carries the potential for arresting strangeness (*Modern* 1). However, the artistic license that is supposed to give the writer every right to represent is continuously being questioned when the aim to represent, or create, comes to the foreground. In this sense, fantasy becomes vulnerable to several attacks for misrepresenting the truth, and is marginalized since the creation of the "other" has always been regarded as a threat.

At the core of these accusations lies the belief that fantasy does not represent reality, and that all it tells is lies as it is removed away from reality thrice. Having its basis in Plato's arguments mentioned in the second, third and tenth books of the *Rebuplic*, literature has been attacked by these charges as an idle work of no use removing people from truth and reason. In the second book, Plato, making a distinction between two types of stories, fact and fiction, condemns poetry as unsuitable for the cultivation of feeble minds on several grounds (71). For him, a work of fiction is considered as "ugly" if it misrepresents the true nature of gods (73). He develops his ideas fully in the following book where he suggests that "falsehood" must be avoided in fiction, as is amongst gods and, instead, "truthfulness" must be continuously praised (80, 85). Summing this up as the production of good-natured role models only, Plato is against what he believes to be a representation of a lie. In his view, gods and heroes are perfect, and they should be represented as such. Yet another reason for poetry's dismissal from his ideal republic is its tendency to "assimilate" the gods' and heroes' "manner of speech" in order to represent them (92).

In the tenth book as well, poetry is charged with bringing evil and giving harm to the order of the state through the lies it tells and the pleasure and pain it inflicts upon people. First, Plato accuses "the art of representation" for being "a long way removed from truth" and having "little grasp of anything" (364). Then, he dismisses it from his ideal state, because: "The dramatic poet produces a similarly bad state of affairs in the mind of the individual, by encouraging the unreasoning part of it, which cannot distinguish greater and less but thinks the same things are now and large and now small, and by creating images far removed from the truth" (373-74). However, the gravest charge against poetry still remains, which is its "terrible power to corrupt even the best characters, with very few exceptions" (374). Clearly, fantasy falls into Plato's category of false literature, since the characters involved in fantasy works do not represent role models only, but include antagonistic gods or heroes in them. Moreover, by representing the so-called realism itself, fantasy works remove the readers away from the truth for the forth time. Yet, it is quite ironic that in spite of all the charges he makes against literature, and, as a natural consequence, against fantasy, Plato is counted as the pioneer of utopian fiction today which is, not surprisingly, a subgenre of fantasy (Kumar 19).

During the Middle Ages, too, fantasy was dismissed for its lack of authenticity and didacticism which did not accord with the teachings of the Church. The classical works likewise experienced a similar neglect, while medieval clerics promoted the doctrines of the Christian

Church solely in order to establish a strong faith in religion (Tierney 30-31). Accordingly, for Tierney, the Church discouraged the production of secular literature while at the same time using the classical texts for its own ends (31). When all genres of literature were banned fantasy was no exception and "with the gradual rise of the Christian Church, which began to exploit magic and miraculus stories and to codify what would be acceptable for its own interests, that wonder tales and fairy tales were declared sacrilegious, heretical, dangerous, and untruthful" (Zipes "Cross" 850). Nonetheless, fantasy can display itself in many guises and this was certainly the case during the Middle Ages. For instance, although "Hugh Rhodes in his *Boke of Nurture* warned the parents to keep their children from the reading of feigned fables or vain fantasies," during the Middle Ages, fantasy revealed itself in the mysterious and miraculous narratives of the Church which were used for moral and didactic ends, most popularly under the guise of allegory (Egoff 23).

Thus, the Church, unable to prevent fantasy works from circulating, could either "stigmatize, censure, or criticize them" or create its own "'fairy tale' tradition of miraculous stories in which people were to believe and still believe" (Zipes "Cross" 850). In fact, while trying to convert people into Christianity, medieval clerics made use of all the supernatural stories told in the Bible; acting these out to the illiterate audiences, thus helping them to grasp the transcendental meaning through a physical performance (Goodman 51). In a similar but much more complicated manner, medieval authors filled their writings with symbolic settings, rendering their messages through unlikely representations. Paradoxically, as Vernon Hyles in his "The Poetry of the Fantastic" suggests, "religion" is another construct along with "myth, epic, surrealism, the grotesque, the absurd, allegory and symbolism [. . .] by which the fantastic, the improbable, and the impossible are rationalized" (1). This fact is highlighted by critics who defended fantasy against the accusations that have been made so far, illustrating once again that the depiction of a "golden world" is the most celebrated aspect of literature. Because "magic," against which critics have declared war, "is nothing else but the realization of the divine creative powers one possesses within oneself" (Zipes *Victorian* xxv).

Therefore, although Dennis M. Kratz suggests that "fantasy forms the mainstream of Western Literature until the Renaissance," every century had its fair share of fantasy (qtd. in Matthews 2). Accordingly, whereas sixteenth century fantasy revealed itself in various Renaissance plays mostly, the following century witnessed its use chiefly in John Bunyan's dream allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) (Egoff 25). Even though the age was marked by the newly emerging

Puritan ideals, which were almost as firm as medieval dogmas in terms of prohibition and control, seventeenth century England, thus, reflected elements of fantasy in various disguises. Especially during the eighteenth century, the fairy tales were suppressed by the Puritans in England. While the age, known as "the age of reason" gave special emphasis to reason, rationality and didacticism, fairy tales were banished from reading material as well as from households. Nevertheless, fairy tales continued to be a fundamental part of the culture in several other ways. Because being the written form of the oral folk-tale, fairy stories were to be transmitted to the next generation through the servants as a result of which the seventeenth century educationalist John Locke (1632-1704) warned the parents of "the depraving influence of servants [. . .] [who] did not distinguish satisfactorily between truth and falsehood" (70-1). Lüthi suggests that for centuries, men of letters have despised fairy tales as stories "properly belonging in the nursery and the servants' quarters; yet great writers have repeatedly drawn inspiration from them. Great literature of all ages has borrowed from fairy-tale motifs and often exhibited an imaginativeness not unlike that of the fairy tale" (21).

Despite Locke's warning, the use of fantasy was fully supported by various other educated men. Particularly, Joseph Addison who greatly appreciates the worth of "the Fairy way of Writing" suggests that

> [t]here is a kind of writing, wherein the Poet quite loses sight of nature, and entertains his Reader's Imagination with the characters and actions of such persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits. This Mr Dryden calls the Fairy way of Writing, which is indeed, more difficult than any other that depends on the Poet's Fancy because he has no Pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own Invention. (213)

Approved by Addison for its appeal to the readers' imagination, even during the nineteenth century when it gained considerable credit, negative criticisms concerning fantasy was common. Similarly, Zipes observes that "[r]ational judgment and distrust of imagination were to be the guiding principles of the new enlightened guardians of Puritan culture and utilitarianism for the next two centuries" (*When* 112). This is evidently the case, as can be understood from Hailes's comment which reads:

> Works of fancy highly wrought, such as the Tales of the Genii, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, and the like, we would not put into the hands of young people till their religious principles are fixed, and their judgment sufficiently strong to restrain

> the imagination within due bounds, whilst it is led to expatiate in the regions of fiction and romance. (qtd. in Smith 52)

In the same way, in his essay, "Biography" (1832), Carlyle sets up two categories of writing. These are reality, which is made up of facts of history or personal lives, and fiction, which is insufficient

> because it produces a tension between imagination and understanding, the imagination urging one to accept as true what the understanding warns him is false: namely, either the supernatural, which he cannot believe at all, or, if that is banished, […] the made-up story which he can only believe momentarily and must dismiss, the instant he finishes reading, as fictitious because it never really happened. (qtd. in Houghton 130-31)

Like Plato, Carlyle dismisses fiction as "false" literature and ironically he is also a teller of these false tales. Obviously, then, Carlyle fails to recognize, "the symbolic character of creative literature which can make it at its best a more profound revelation of truth then either biography or history" (Houghton 131). In total opposition to such opinions, a different attitude appeared during the nineteenth century that affirmed the important role fantasy and imagination play in the education of minds. Carlyle's contemporary, John Stuart Mill, contrary to Carlyle, argues:

> Once upon a time […] the "old romances, whether of chivalry or of faery" had "filled the youthful imagination with pictures of heroic men, and of what are at least as much wanted, heroic women," and so helped to make the noblest minds noble and common minds responsive to nobility. "And this is education." But now the old books have been banished in favor of "catalogues of physical facts and theological dogmas," and the popular novels of the day "teach nothing but (what is already too soon learnt from actual life) lessons of worldliness […]. (qtd. in Houghton 316)

Mill's remarks stress the fact that fantasy is not at all unsatisfactory, and rather than creating a tension between reality and imagination, it stimulates imagination, thus playing an important role in the development of the intellectual and creative mind. Likewise, centuries later, Einstein is to claim that the "fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement is as good as dead" (qtd. in Egoff 20). Although the fantastic appears to be in conflict with the scientific way of thinking, the unknown gives inspiration and through the questions it directs, opens the mind to new inventions as well as creations. Thus, Einstein's remark in relation to fantasy gives a prestigious place to fantasy,

similar to Coleridge's, Keats's and Mill's acknowledgment of it as an essential component of a questioning mind.

Another celebrated aspect of fantasy is that it brings into light the dark side of the human mind. With regard to this argument, Coleridge places "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" at the heart of the "poetic faith" which prepares the reader for the entrance to the unreal, giving shape to the "shadows of imagination" (314). For him, fantasy requires the presence of the supernatural which helps "to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth" (Coleridge 314). Ursula K. Le Guin, referring to the shadows Coleridge mentioned, suggests that fantasy is "the language of the night" bringing what is left in the dark within the human mind into the light (5). Le Guin interprets the function of fantasy as a language driving upon the psychoanalytical literary theory that is founded by Sigmund Freud and developed by Carl Gustav Jung. According to Le Guin: "A fantasy is a journey. It is a journey into the subconscious mind" (80) "speak[ing] *from* the unconscious *to* the unconscious, in the *language* of the unconscious – symbol and archetype" (51). Egoff, likewise, observes that

> [t]he writer of fantasy goes beyond realism to disclose that we do not live entirely in a world of the perceived senses, that we also inhabit an inner world of the mind and spirit where the creative imagination is permanently struggling to expand vision and perception. (19)

Occupying the inner world of the imagination rather than the physical world, fantasy is disdained by critics as escaping reality. However, as Tolkien points out, the arguments that have been directed against fantasy concerning reality versus fantasy conflict is a meaningless act, since

> [f]antasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make. [. . .] [F]or creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it. (162-63)

So, it can be deduced that no borders should necessarily be expected to be drawn between reality and fantasy, because fantasy does not aim to distort reality but rather intends to expand reality by a myriad of alternatives it offers. Therefore, fantasy presents reality in a different manner and aims to provide the reader with a new sense of the familiar. Consequently, the

reader's perception is kept alive even if the nuclear story is being told for the hundredth time, covering it under new guises each time, as Campbell asserts:

> Whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture thin translations from the sonnets of the mystic Cao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale: *it will always be the one, shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story* that we find, together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be expected than will ever be known or told. (1 italics mine)

Contrary to the general assumption, fantasy can evidently be taken as "an instrument for exploring reality," rather than being accused of escaping it (Clark 13). Throughout ages it is used as a device to comment on contemporary issues, though mostly indirectly. According to Sheaila Egoff, fantasy has been used "as a vehicle by writers to express their dissatisfaction with the society, to comment on human nature, or to bridge the gap between the visible and invisible worlds" (1). This definition underlines the primary function of fantasy which is to criticize and comment on the way of the world by evoking curiosity in the readers. Rosemary Jackson, likewise, suggests that fantasy "as its etymology suggests aims 'to make visible or manifest'" rather than escaping into a world of ignorance (13). For her, fantasies are "never ideologically 'innocent' texts" (Jackson 122). Similarly, Tolkien argues:

> Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the escape of the prisoner with the flight of the deserter. (168)

Thus, differentiating between "the escape of the prisoner" and "the flight of the deserter," Tolkien once more gives a rather effective answer to the accusations directed at fantasy. No matter how radical an alternative world is created in fantasy, it always carries glimpses of the primary world, yet doing it mostly in an implicit way. Likewise, C. S. Lewis suggests "we do not retreat from reality, we rediscover it" (qtd. in Sammons 138).

Clearly, fantasy as a mode has always been an indispensable part of literature. However, as fantasy came out as a genre during the Victorian period, discussions concerning a firm definition of fantasy became inevitable. Yet, adopted as a mode in various genres for centuries, fantasy's recognition as an individual genre has been quite problematic, as a result

of which a firm definition of it was not made until the early twentieth century when J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) theorized it. In an attempt to identify the *faerie*, Tolkien, in his article "On Fairy Stories" (1938-9), views the fantast as the sub-creator of "a Secondary World," which is an other world standing in contrast to primary existence (146). Inside this Secondary World, what the author relates is true, and it inspires Secondary Belief in the reader (146). For Tolkien it is not the creation but fundamentally the plausibility of this alternative cosmos that counts, which he believes can be provided with the inclusion of specific detail.

Contrary to Tolkien, Tzvetan Todorov, a twentieth century formalist, in his *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970) introduces a "structural" study of fantasy as a genre. For Todorov, *fantastique* "seems to be located on the frontier of two genres, the marvelous and the uncanny" (41). In the case of the uncanny, the supernatural is "explained" whereas in the marvelous it is "accepted" (Todorov 41, 42). Todorov bases his theories primarily upon the reader and the hesitation experienced by the reader at the time of reading. He believes that the *fantastique* either brings the reader closer to the territory of the 'uncanny,' which is mysterious but rational, or the 'marvellous,' which is totally supernatural. Todorov claims that the hesitation the reader feels between "the illusion of the senses, of a product of imagination, and laws of the world" is what defines the *fantastique*, as the "fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty" (25).

Unlike Tolkien and Todorov, Ursula K. Le Guin bases her arguments upon Jungian theories of psychoanalysis and claims that a fantasy, like poetry, speaks through archetypal symbols and images (5). This definition is similar to Lüthi's description of fairy tales which are "experienced by their hearers and readers, not as realistic, but as symbolic poetry" (66). Moreover, both for Le Guin and Lüthi, fantasy offers both the author and the reader something unattainable elsewhere in mimetic literature which is "to produce a whole, integrated human being" whose inner journey is successfully completed (Le Guin 10). For Lüthi, similarly, the experiences that are gained through reading fantasy are "processes within the mind; processes of development and maturation" (139). In the end, these processes lead the reader to a complete self-realization and spiritual perfection. Lüthi further observes that "[m]an experiences animals as friend or foe, and both have symbolic significance. When Schiller speaks of the battle with the dragon, he means ultimately the internal struggle with one's own drives and feelings" (80).

In this light, "the dragon" and "the helping animal" are both representations of what dwells in the individual unconscious. Correspondingly, Bruno Bettelheim suggests that "fairy tales carry important messages to conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious mind" speaking to the reader's unconscious anxieties "without this ever coming to conscious awareness" (6, 15). In fairy tales, this is achieved through the peaceful union of the light and the dark sides of the soul which occurs at the end of a symbolic quest. As Campbell asserts, "the incidents are fantastic and "unreal" [since] they represent psychological, not physical, triumphs" (29). Madonna Kolbenschlag, too, supports this theory in her *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye*: "Fairy tales are the bedtime stories of the collective unconsciousness. They persist in the cultural memory because they interpret crises of the human condition that are common to all of us. They are shared wishfulfillments, abstract dreams that resolve conflicts and give meaning to experience (3)" (qtd. in Ralph 30). Subsequently, Ralph argues that

> fairy tales portray in symbolic form the development of the human psyche, and do so in such a way as to appeal to people of all ages and of any time or place. Their widespread survival testifies to their universality, and supports the claims of their meeting deep human needs […]. (Ralph 39)

In opposition to the evaluation of fantasy as a genre, Rosemary Jackson studies fantasy as a mode. In her, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), Jackson argues that "otherness in fantasies betray the ideological assumptions of the author and of the culture in which they originate" so that the ideology of the writers comes aloft according to what they include and/or exclude in their writing (53). In other words, the construction of other worlds in fact reveals a lack about the periods in which the works have originated, and accordingly prepares the grounds for its subversive function. Adopting a Marxist and Freudian approach, Jackson observes that "[t]he fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of the culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" as a result of which it attempts "to make visible the invisible and to discover absence" (4). Jackson's view repeats Tolkien's idea of the reactionary aspect of fantasy who states that the escapist "might rouse men to pull down the street-lamps. Escapism has another and even wickeder face: Reaction" (169).

Sheila Egoff touches upon the subversive side of the fairy tales as well presuming that the "fairy tales had an anarchistic element – the lowly could rise, and the poor peasant could outwit the king" as is the case with most of the fairy tales (31). Lynette Hunter, too, suggests that the "fantasist's power is to free people from the domination of observed fact," thus bringing into light what has been so far veiled by darkness (72). Brian Attebery, likewise, in

his article "The Politics (If Any) of Fantasy," brings forth three strategies to do so. These strategies can best be summarized as the use of folklore, anachronisms/escapisms and deliberate violation of consensus reality (Attebery "Politics" 3, 2). Attebery describes the use of folklore as borrowing motifs and story structures from the folk tradition; the second one as placing fantasy stories in temporal settings other than the present day and the final one as an act of departure from the norms which respectively offer ways of showing the truth in an indirect way ("Politics" 3, 2).

Jack Zipes emphasizes fantasy's potential to subvert the dominant ideology, as he suggests that fairy tales "go beyond the limits set by the society" (*Victorian* xxv). Moreover, the idea of fairy tale as "a symbolic act" which is in return infused by the ideological viewpoint of an individual author (*Fairy* 3) resembles to Le Guin's view of fantasy which she believes to provide one with "'a view in' to the psyche" (16). For Le Guin, "[t]he witch, the dragon, the hero; the night journey, the helpful animal, the hidden treasure [. . .] we all know them, we recognize them (because, if Jung is right, they represent profound and essential modes of thought). Modern fantasy attempts to translate them into modern words" (5-6). Fantasy in this sense works as a language which communicates with people through the symbolic images it adopts. Lüthi, in the same way, declares that: "Wish dreams and wishful thinking play a part in fairy tales, just as they do in all human matters, and social tensions and yearnings also are reflected in them" (138).

Besides its recognition as "the language of the night," fantasy is outside the norms as "a non-mimetic fiction" as well (Clark 2). Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* distinguishes between mimetic and mythic tendencies in literature. These respectively stand for a desire to report actual events with verisimilitude and a tendency to reflect improbable occurrences with plausibility (Frye 51). Including fantasy within the second category, Brian Attebery suggests that

> [f]antasy is a sophisticated mode of story-telling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought. [. . .] [I]t draws upon contemporary ideas about sign systems and the indeterminacy of meaning and at the same time recaptures the vitality and freedom of nonmimetic traditional forms such as epic, folktale, romance, and myth. (*Strategies* 1)

The issue of mimesis, has always been a problematic one. Western literature has always favoured imitation which has been believed to represent reality over deliberate departures

from reality. Starting with Plato and Aristotle who are taken to be the "originators of western critical theory," critics have assumed "mimetic representation to be the essential relationship between text and the real world" which is, according to Hume, "a hole in Western consciousness" (5). Hume considers this association as "a blind spot," since the so-called truth and reality that are claimed to be represented at their best through mimesis is no truth or reality at all (6). What is produced through mimesis is, as Samuel Johnson claims, not expected to be real, but only need to seem so (2732). Hence, what mimesis does is to produce something like life, not life itself. Therefore, Robert Scholes's claim in relation to the nature of literary impulses is quite true when he suggests that "[w]e do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poiesis. No recording, only constructing" (qtd. in Hume 24).

Hume asserts that "literature is the product of two impulses *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate to describe events, people, situations, and objects [. . .] with verisimilitude [. . .] and *fantasy*, the desire to change the givens and alter reality – out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images" (20). Hence, instead of their usual recognition as direct opposites, fantasy and mimesis should be defined in relation to each other as two different modes working on the same side of the axis. Both fantastic and mimetic fictions borrow elements from each other, more than ever nowadays when post-modernism is at its peak enabling the readers "to see reason and reality as arbitrary, shifting constructs" rather than unshakable constants (Francis 49).

In the light of all of these viewpoints, it is not surprising that fantasy has always had a prestigious place in literary history, as in the case of the first written literary work in the world, that is *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 2000 B.C.E)[1] (Mathews xv). Having its initial examples in ancient mythology and anonymous tales of oral tradition, fantasy as a mode found its reflections in Homer's works, *The Odyssey* (ca. 750 B.C.E.) and *The Iliad* (ca. 750 B.C.E.), and has been extensively used during the Classical Period in miscellaneous genres, such as the plays of Aristophanes and Aeschylus and *Aesop's Fables* (ca. 620-560) (Mathews xv). Following the Ancient Greek tradition, the Romans too used fantasy at length as is evident in Virgil's *Aeneid* (19 B.C.E.) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (17 B.C.E.) (Mathews xv).

[1] For a full list of works that bear fantastic qualities see Richard Mathews' *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination.* xv-xx.

However, it is certainly Dante Alighieri who with his *Divine Comedy* (ca. 1320) drew more attention than his predecessors (Mathews xv).

Thus, H. P. Lovecraft remarks in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature* that "it is in poetry that we first encounter permanent entry of the weird into standard literature" (qtd. in Hyles 2). In English literature, the use of fantasy as a mode is recurrently practised in popular literary forms of the Old English and Medieval periods and can be seen in epics, such as *Beowulf* (ca. 725), in ballads, like *Robin Hood* (ca. 1228), in romances like the Pearl-poet's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1370), in dream vision poems, such as those of Chaucer's, and in allegorical works, as in the case of William Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (ca. 1377). As Hyles explains:

> Because English has Teutonic, Celtic, Scandinavian origins as well as its French and Latinate heritage, our earliest poetry reflects that base. Also, our most primitive tribes were immersed in magic and the supernatural: everything seemed imbued with the marvelous, magical, and the transcendental. Thus there are poetic precursors such as early Irish with its emphasis on supernatural mood, Germanic verse with its monstrous fire dragons, giants, and ogres, and the Old Norse eddas and sagas full of horrible shapes and shapeless horrors. All of these early traces of fantastic poetry culminate in *Beowulf*, in the Arthurian romances, and in a handful of Chaucer's tales that contain supernatural occurrences. Our earliest literature is perhaps best remembered, though, for its ballads. Like their Celtic and Scandinavian models, English ballads were ideal for the supernatural. (2)

As can be deduced from, fantasy as a mode was widely used as an indispensable aspect of the major literary trends during the Middle Ages in various forms and it continued to carry its effect onto the following centuries as well through the works of such renowned poets as Edmund Spenser and his *The Faerie Queene* (1590), various plays such as William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96) and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1604) during the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) reflected fantastic elements besides including features of Biblical mythology. Although the use of fantasy was less prevalent than the previous centuries, eighteenth century too had its share of fantasy, principally in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1717) which were both written with satirical intentions. Nevertheless, none of the periods mentioned above celebrated it as lively and truly as the Victorians, when fantasy came, not only as a mode, but also as an individual genre, into its full bloom. Interesting though it may sound, Victorian Age witnessed the rise of quite a number of fantastic works, despite the fact that the age is generally known for its realism. With translations made from the continental Europe, native

authors developed a growing interest in fairy tales. Also, due to Medieval revival that came as a result of German and then English Romanticism, fairy tales once again received attention from writers as well as readers.

According to Manlove, nineteenth century fantasy "sprang from two main sources: revived interest in the traditional folk and fairy tales and the German Romantic fairy tales of Novalis, Hoffmann, Tieck and de la Motte Fouqué, the latter written mostly around the period 1795-1820" ("Victorian" 9). Also translations from the works of Charles Perrault (1628-1703), and Jakob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) as well as Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) can clearly be added to the latter group of fairy tale authors whose translations into English aroused great interest among native authors. Subsequently, the heightened sense of fascination with fantasy is followed by the European and then the native Medieval revival. This native Medieval revival was particularly practised by Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats as an interest in a distant past which was usually used as a means to avoid the problems of the age they lived in (Flowers 165-66). Egoff refers to the popularity of the fairy tales during the Victorian Age as follows:

> Fairy tales were gradually becoming respectable. Aside from their hold on children through chapbooks, other influences were working on their behalf. All the great writers of this long period, ranging from Shakespeare and Spenser through Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson (and his Boswell), Addison, Steele, Charles Lamb, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dickens, showed a knowledge of fairy tales and in many cases remarked on their love of them as children. (32)

In this respect, Dickens's remark concerning the influence of the fairy tales in his early childhood is important. Author of a fairy tale himself, *A Christmas Carol* (1843), Dickens suggests that "[e]veryone who has considered the subject knows full well that a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun" (qtd. in Zipes *When* 122). The Victorian society had a notion of fantasy through the easily available cheap chap books. This, evidently, had a major affect upon the eminent literary figures of the period, as well as the periods to follow, since "[m]ost of these writers discovered the fairy tale in chapbook form" (Egoff 32). As Egoff states, chapbooks

> were printed as early as the sixteenth century along with broadsides, ballads, and newssheets. [. . .] [T]hese miniature paper booklets that were sold for a penny became the reading matter of the common people. Their contents consisted chiefly of old tales and medieval romances cut to a minimum and sometimes enlivened by crude woodcuts. (28)

Most of the nineteenth century literary figures, particularly the poets, were inspired by the chapbooks and translations from the German and French fairy tales as well as from the *Arabian Nights* (Zipes "Cross" 863). Consequently, various Victorian poets employed fantasy as a mode in their own works during this period whether they be poets of the mainstream, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning whom Hyles refers to as "the staid Victorians [who are] strayed into the shadowy realm of the supernatural," or of miscellaneous groups such as the Pre-Raphaelites, of which the leading figure was Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Aesthetes, who were headed by Oscar Wilde, or the Orientalists, among whom Edward Fitzgerald was best known (5). Arata suggests that the "1880s and 1890s marked the culmination of a century-long resurgence of interest in parabolic forms of narrative," as not only the recovery of old forms but also the creation of new ones were a common practice among the "*fin-de-siécle* writers" (52). Including the utopian fictions of William Morris and the gothic tales of Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker as well as the science fiction of H. G. Wells into this category, Arata further argues that even the traditionally realistic modes, "such as Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Rudyard Kipling's Anglo-Indian stories, and Joseph Conrad's sea tales – often possess the feel of modern parables or myths" (52).

Therefore, it can be said that the poets and authors who made use of fantasy, besides borrowing from the already existing forms also searched through the British folk tale origins, consequently bringing forth such native folk figures that had been long doomed to be forgotten, as the brownies which were

> traditional, British country fairy-types. They made themselves responsible for the farms or houses in which they lived by carrying out a variety of domestic tasks. In return, they had a right to a bowl of cream or the best milk, and a bannock was set out for them in the evening. They were easily driven away, and if sighted, they would turn to mischief, eventually becoming malicious boggarts. (Egoff 64)

Perhaps, remembered best as Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca. 1595-6), the brownies re-entered literature through the works of Dinah Marie Mulock's *The Adventures of a Brownie* (1872) and Mrs. Juliana Horatia Ewing's *The Brownies and Other Tales* (1872) during the nineteenth century (Egoff 64).

Taking into consideration the fact that fantasy had always been a part of literature but did not come aloft until the Victorian Age, it would not be wrong to assume that it was a natural

outcome of the Age that prepared the grounds for its full bloom. Hence, a close examination of the social, political and economic developments of the Victorian Age provides the necessary background to study the rise and development of fantasy. More than anything else, the thing that triggered widespread use of fantasy both as a genre and as a mode enabling the writers who felt imprisoned a way out during the Victorian Age was that England had gone through a radical change. In terms of socio-political developments and economics, the aim of fantasy authors became representing "another world and another age far away from [this world's] cares" (Houghton 332). Colin Matthew summarizing the condition of the age states that "[p]ower and success oozed from Victorian Britain: a dominant economy, a worldwide empire and banking system, an unassailed fleet and most of the world's merchant shipping, a 'race' transplanted across the globe, a political and social system whose stability astonished Europeans" (1).

The Industrial Revolution resulted in the birth of a powerful British Empire. Martin Daunton suggests that "[t]he world was opened up to trade and industry with British iron, railways, ships, capital, and expertise in the fore" (53). With the technological and scientific advancements, the British Empire experienced a fast-paced expansion, and leadership in commerce and industry as demonstrated by the Great Exhibition that took place in the Crystal Palace in 1851. Hill argues that these were "the days when Britain justly laid claim to the title 'workshop of the world.' The great industrial and transport developments were the basis of a swiftly-growing export trade, which carried British-made goods all over the globe" (104). As a natural result of rapid industrialism, Britain searched through the world for natural sources. On account of the need for raw material and as a result of the geographical discoveries that had been made, the Empire gradually obtained new markets all around the globe which inevitably gave way to colonization (Hughes 45). Together with its powerful naval force, and technological and industrial strength, the Empire, Powell notes, became a world-wide power whose possession of such great territories

> brought burdens and responsibilities, but it also carried with it considerable benefits. The tangible benefits were mostly economic. Although most trade was throughout the nineteenth century was with countries outside the formal empire, the empire nonetheless made a significant contribution to British economic growth. It accounted for up to a third of all British trade and provided access to valuable supplies of raw materials, markets for manufactured goods and outlets for investment. (95-6)

In spite of the progresses in technology and increase in wealth, the Victorian Age was yet, an age of conflicts. Replacement of manual power with technology, increasing interest in material gains, the conflict between science and religion, which came as a result of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), and Huxley's studies, and several religious groups and movements such as the Oxford Movement (Tractarians) and countergroups like the Utiliarians, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, unemployment, harsh working conditions, huge amounts of immigration from country to towns, insufficient accommodation facilities in the towns, child-workers as well as a sense of loss of the traditional values, alienation and lack of communication all constituted the major conflicts of the era. Thus, the Industrial Revolution meant more than pure profit; it meant

> very long hours of work in very bad conditions; it meant child labour, it meant slum, bad housing and overcrowding. None of these things was new [. . .]. But there were two differences. First, the new factories meant a new discipline. The worker could no longer 'knock-off' when he liked and then work very long spells in order to make up the time; he spent long hours at his machine, under harsh regulations imposed by his employer. Second, the bad conditions were far more obvious in the new industrial towns than they had been in the countryside, simply because the towns were so big. (Hill 25)

The result of such a rapid social transformation obviously reflected itself in a decay in nature, loss of values and rise in materialism. This either gave way to a search for something transcendental to hold onto or an attack on the symbolic order in a quest for meaning. As Houghton argues: "By definition an age of transition in which change is revolutionary has a dual aspect: destruction and reconstruction. As the old order of doctrines and institutions is being attacked or modified or discarded, at one point and then another, a new order is being proposed or inaugurated. Both tendencies were apparent by 1830s" (3).

Actually, this is exactly why many groups were formed and a number of laws passed during the Victorian Age. Some measures were taken for the betterment of the social conditions but as Houghton argues they were not sufficient enough to solve the problems, rather they made the situation worse, for "[n]ew solutions raised new controversies, which raised new questions" (11). There was obviously the tension between whether to follow the rational mind with its negative effects on religious faith or to believe blindly in religion, disregarding the scientific verifications that have earned, and simultaneously cost, too much for the society (Houghton 106). As Schama affirms, "the great sheltering dome of faith [. . .] had been shattered by Darwin's vision of a morally indifferent, self-evolving universe," (183) as a

consequence of which Victorian society was torn between a strong belief in science or a firm one in religion. Moreover, the hope for a bright future to come was also destroyed by the plight of the underprivileged which showed no signs of getting any better, whereas the rich got richer. Smith, contrasting the condition of the two dominant spheres of the period, observes that an "increasingly sophisticated and growing middle class was able to adopt some of the style of living previously enjoyed by only the wealthy as an assumed part of their own existence. Improvements for the poor moved at a much slower rate" (96).

One of the crucial results of the Industrial Revolution was the rise of an economically and politically powerful middle class. As the embodiment of Samuel Smile's idea of the "self-made man," the highly individualistic middle-class gentleman derived his "power from wealth rather than from aristocratic birth" (Sussman 247-48). Thus, the ages-old system, on top of which had been the aristocrats, was shattered by the new one as a consequence of which the rising bourgeoisie started to move upward on the social ladder. With better economic conditions, the middle class started to buy education and learn manners on their way to be counted as equals with the aristocrats. However, their rise on the social ladder correspondingly meant the equally new working class' conditions to get worse. As a result, while Britain of the early 1850s was economically more integrated,

> in other aspects it was much less unified. Improved communications and the advance of industrialization might be breaking down some divisions, but they were putting others in their place. One consequence of the Industrial Revolution was to sharpen and generalize distinctions of social class. Disraeli, in his literary, Young England, phase in the 1940s, famously dramatized the difference between classes in his novel *Sybil* (1844) as a division between 'Two Nations – the Rich and the Poor'. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), wrote of the ever widening gulf between bourgeoisie and proletariat which, they predicted, must lead inevitably to revolution. (Powell 38-9)

Briefly, the division between the classes, rather than being reduced, unfortunately widened and also showed itself in a division of the country into, "in Gaskell's terms, an industrial north and an agricultural south" as well (Sussman 252). As Powell states:

> In the 1830s and 1840s, however, Disraelian class divisions were arguably less important than the division – part geographical, part economic, part psychological – summed up in the title of Mrs Gaskell's novel, *North and South* (1855). The novel explored the differences between the rural south of England and the industrial north, acknowledging that there were conflicts within industrial society (notably between masters and men) while reflecting the reality that there was an even more profound divide between the industrial and the non-industrial parts of the country. (39)

The rise of a powerful middle class and a weak working class were plain indicators of the results of the Darwinian theory as applied to the industrial Victorian society. Identified by Herbert as social Darwinism, the idea encouraged "competition and survival" as the proper means for ideal ends (qtd. in Hughes 43). Thus, natural selection, which was based on the idea of the survival of the fittest, resulted in a society that was governed by self-interest only:

> Men and classes were no longer integral parts of a Christian-feudal organism where everyone had his recognized place and function and was united to Church and State by established rights and duties. In the new liberal theory all men were free, politically and economically, owing no one any service beyond the fufillment of legal constructs; and society was simply a collection of individuals, each motivated – naturally and rightly – by self interest. (Houghton 77)

Because of all of these, Sussman rightfully states that "[m]agic and fantasy provided the only rhetoric" of the age, when the age itself was full of magic with all the technological and social developments coming to life that would not be dreamed of earlier (252). In a way, during the Victorian Age when everything seemed possible, fantastic works proved to be the only believable ones. As Lüthi puts forward: "In the fairy tale, all things are possible, not just in the sense that all sorts of miracle occur, but in the sense [. . .] [that]: the lowest can rise to the highest position and those in the highest position [. . .] can fall and be destroyed" (138).

Another reason for the popularity of fantasy during the Victorian Age was due to the fact that the fairy tales of the period appealed to the taste of the newly emerged middle class men who won their rights by hard work, self-scheming acts and might just like popular fairy-tale heroes. Thus, the tales portraying either "the victory of the humble over the mighty" (Lüthi 98) or "the limits of an individual hero in an unheroic age" came to represent the spirit of the age (Poston 11). According to Houghton, in an age of radical transition when men are caught in between various clashing ideas, they search for a saviour with supernatural powers (310). He further suggests that the "problems to be solved are so vast and difficult that he [the hero] must be more than an ordinary mortal; and the need for guidance is so imperative that he will not simply be applauded and respected, he will be looked up to with profound gratitude and reverence" (Houghton 310).

As is illustrated, the problems faced by the Victorian society were not restricted to politics or economics only, they involved moral, religious, aesthetic issues, as well as issues related to gender, all of which definitely contributed to the subject matter for fantasy, since fantasy's

power lies in its ability to include anything and everything in it (Harrison "1848" 25). During the Victorian era, fantasy offered "the anxious Victorians, weighed down by the commercial meanness and the intellectual difficulties of the time, the two things they most desired: inspiration and escape" (Houghton 332). Houghton asserts that:

> In no other age were men so often told to take "the great ones of the earth" as models for imitation, or provided with so many books with titles like *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, *Lectures on Great Men*, *A Book of Golden Deeds*, *The Red Book of Heroes*. Heroic myth was as popular as heroic biography. Tales of medieval knights and legendary heroes, Greek and Roman, Celtic and Norse, were widely read – in new editions of Malory and Froissart, in the poetry of Tennyson, Arnold, and the Pre-Raphaelites. (305)

The popularity of fantasy occurred initially among the male authors of the period. In order to criticize the problems of the age which came as a natural result of the advancements that were made in science and technology, various authors such as Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), George MacDonald (1824-1905), William Morris (1834-1896) and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) used fantasy. Populated with the works of George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858) and *The Princess and The Goblin* (1872), Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), Lewis Carroll's (1898-1963) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872) and William Morris's *The Well at the World's End* (1896), the Victorian Age developed children's fairy tales into socially reflective tales which included criticism of the Victorian Age in them. As a result, Victorian fairy tales were known either for their strictly critical and satirical tone, moral and didactic nature, or extremely playful and nonsensical manner, as was the case with Lewis Carroll.

Starting with Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby*, Victorian fairy tales drew attention to social injustices. The protagonist of the tale, Tom the chimney sweep, accordingly drew the attention of authorities to the miserable condition of the working class children who, instead of getting a proper education and enjoying their childhood like their more lucky peers, had to work under harsh conditions either at coal mines or chimneys. Indeed, it was due to Kingsley's fantasy novel that the "Chimney-Sweep Act" was revisioned "the year after the book's publication" as it represented reality partially; feeding upon it, making a commentary and a critique upon it and at last offering a remedy for it (Egoff 45). Likewise, it was the heartbreaking story of Hans Christian Andersen's "Little Match Girl" that drew attention to the plight of "the teenage match girls who [. . .] had participated in a

mass demonstration at Victoria Park in 1871 against Gladstone's government's proposal to impose a tax on matches" (Schama 188).

Through the similarly critical works of John Ruskin (*The King of the Golden River* 1841), William Makepeace Thackeray (*The Rose and the Ring, or the History of Prince Giglio and Prince Bulbo* 1854), George MacDonald and William Morris, satire of Victorian society was transmitted. Francis suggests that

> for Morris and many other politically committed writers of this period, fantasy had an enormous potential for not just criticism, but also subversion. [. . .] [T]hey need to scrutinise the category of the real, to see reason and reality as arbitrary, shifting constructs – only then they could be free to formulate alternatives, to challenge institutions and practices they found irresponsible and morally reprehensible. (49)

Likewise, Jack Zipes in relation to the "industrial revolution" and its ultimate result the "condition of England debate," which concerned many writers during the Victorian Age, points to the fact that:

> [T]he literary fairy tale conceived its own unique and aesthetic modes and themes to relate to this debate. Writers like Charles Dickens, Thomas Hood, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Thackeray were among the first to criticize the deterious effects of the industrial revolution. Interestingly they all employed the fairy tale at one point to question the injustice and inequalities engendered by the social upheaval in England. (*When* 114-5)

However, the radical break in fantasy came with Charles Lutwidge Dodgson or as he is generally known as Lewis Carroll, who was a professor in mathematics (Knoepflmacher xv). Carroll crowded his *Alice* books with puns, semantic plays and vocabulary games all of which, going against the physical laws, turn the reader's notion of the world upside down. Little indicates that "Carroll plays with the intellectual norms of the primary world" which was at the time a reform in fantasy (48). Jackson, likewise considers Carroll's works as the most obviously fantastic in their emphasis upon problems of signification that presents "a confused, topsy-turvy world which lays no claim to re-present absolute meaning or 'reality'" (141). Jackson further observes:

> When Alice falls down the rabbit hole and walks through the mirror in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), she enters a realm of non-signification, of non-sense. She is faced with semiotic chaos, and her acquired language systems cease to be of any help. Things slip away from words – a baby becomes a pig, a grin becomes a cat – and words assume lives of their own […].

> (141) [T]he text multiplies incertitude, no definite position can be taken, no definitive meaning is established. A sign can mean anything. (143)

Little, considering the topsy-turvydom of the Wonderland suggests that the "weirdness of Wonderland consists not in the wholesale invention of unfamiliar things, but in the re-ordering of a familiar universe, so that things exist in strange relationship to one another" (43). Thus, unlike the conventionalist fantasy authors, Carroll adopted a totally non-sensical – at the same time extremely rational – form of fantasy which was noteworthy for both its thematic and formal plays. According to Nelson, Carroll based the *Alice* books on "an undermining of the nursery regimen. The antididacticism of the *Alice* books, suggested a contemporary reviewer, was the secret of their popularity. And the idea that there is pleasure to be found in identifying with the child who subverts conventional domesticity" (74-5)

For centuries, fairy tales and women are associated due to the secondary place attributed to them within the society. Their relation dates back to the Middle Ages, when, failing to prevent fantasy works from circulating, the Church continued its negative propaganda either by stigmatizing these or by feminizing them. According to Zipes, "[i]f women were regarded as the originators and disseminators of these tales, then the texts themselves had to be suspicious, for they might reflect the fickle, duplicitous, wild, and erotic character of women, who were not to be trusted. Thus their stories were not to be trusted" ("Cross" 850). Contrary to the Church's assumptions however, "for girls and women, in particular, the fairy tale's magic has assumed the contradictory form of being both a spiritual enclave supported by old wives' wisdom and an exquisitely glittery feminine kingdom" progressively (Bacchilega 5). In this sense, fairy tales and fantasy literature in general supplied women with something unattainable in other genres. Fantasy offered women the freedom and immunity they have been seeking for since they are both "outside the culturally defined norm; both are Other" (Attebery *Strategies* ix).

On account of the fact that the genres associated with fantasy, such as nursery rhyme, fairy tale and folk tale, do not necessitate proper classical learning but observational skills combined with daily experiences, women have been allowed to dominate these genres for centuries and within the boundaries of fantasy they gave freedom to their imagination. However, this changed dramatically during the nineteenth century when the "male writer's sentimental return to a myth of matriarchal origins was for the woman writer a colonization of one of the few literary spheres she was allowed to consider her own" (Auerbach and

Knoepflmacher 7). Due to the popularity of fairy tales, men started to invade this feminine territory which was soon followed by women's reclamation of it. Women writers' interest in fantasy had established one of the few legalized areas where women had been allowed to rule freely and they were not to surrender it to men's power easily.

Specifically, Victorian fantasy works produced by women writers projected this recovery as the female writers attributed different functions to the fantasy works of the period. Spivack points to this fact as follows: "One of the main currents in nineteenth-century literature is the desire to escape from the limitations of actuality and to forsake, at least imaginatively, the mundanity of the commonplace. Hence the popularity of the Gothic novel in this era, especially among women writers" (57). Taking the woman question which emerged during the Victorian Age into consideration, it is noteworthy that Jackson's idea of fantasy as subversion, as an attack upon the male symbolic order, has much to offer to the Victorian women writers who thus made use of fantasy and grotesque in their works (103).

As Mathews suggests fantasy is "a literature of liberation and subversion. Its target may be politics, economics, religion, psychology, or sexuality. It seeks to liberate the feminine, the unconscious, the repressed, the past, the present, the future" (xxi). In a society divided into gender-based spheres, women had no power and were continuously pushed to the margins on account of this. They had nothing but their imaginations to hold onto which is mainly the kingdom of fantasy. Accordingly, while the male authors, like the Pre-Raphaelites, escaped into a bohemian life-style and the Aesthetes into a world of art, women writers, who were left face-to-face with the problems of the age with nothing to hold onto, turned to their inner selves and sought the help of their imaginative faculties as the source for poetic inspiration:

> The "hidden world below"[2] may be read as simply the inner life, because women were denied active involvement in the outer world. Indeed many nineteenth-century women poets did write simply and directly about their unfulfilled desires, their empty lives, their awareness of loss and deprivation. But the hidden world below is more than a store of repressed desires for unavailable activity. It is also that very world that produced the great poetic fantasies of the past. It is the world of the unconscious, with its fanciful images, its dream content, its mythic symbols, a world not affected by confinement and construction. (Spivack 54)

[2] The term is borrowed by Charlotte Spivack from a poem of Letitia Elizabeth Landon's, titled "Felicia Hemans".

The "hidden world below" is the well from which they have drawn their images endlessly. Although as its consequence these "women have thus suffered from double bias, against women and against fantasy," they certainly found fantasy as a safe harbour where they had the authority; a place where they were not forced to have any pseudonyms or carry the fear of lack of autonomy (Spivack 63). In such a world, they had absolute authority to be the author of their texts.

Fantasy, hence offered a way out for the nineteenth-century women who, confined to their domestic spheres, were not allowed to play any other role than the "angel in the house,"[3] – to borrow Virginia Woolf's words – within the Victorian society (2215). Howarth describes the role of the Victorian angel in the house as follows: "Much that lay within a wife's province affected the family's social standing, including transactions with the neighbours and the local community and the practicalities of maintaining an appropriate lifestyle: the management of servants and the physical environment of the home, the deportment of children, keeping up appearances" (169). Perhaps, the key-word here is "keeping up appearances" which clearly defines women's place in the society: an object of admiration who is at the same time useful for running insignificant errands only in her limited sphere, that is, the house. It is therefore quite ironic that working class women had more freedom and authority than their upper and middle-class counterparts since it was common to see working-class women carrying out the family business in "textile" and "cottage" industry during the nineteenth century (Howarth 169-71). Two other professions that were frequently seen among women were being "governesses" and working as "prostitutes," neither of which won the respect of the patriarchal society (Leighton "Victorian" 14). It is possibly due to such degrading and depriving ascriptions that many women sided with the "anti-slavery movement that began in the 1780s, protest[ing] against the physical abuse of women slaves" showing mankind that "women [. . .] sympathize with women" (Howarth 175).

In spite of the obstacles they faced in social life, women still had the chance to exercise authorial power during the Victorian Age. Indeed the Victorian Age had a number of quite accomplished women poets and writers, who, besides imitating the conventional modes of writing, also introduced the old-established systems new aspects, as was the case with Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Bronte. Female authors also wrote fantastic poems and

[3] "The Angel in the House" (1854-62); a poem written by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896), gradually turned into a term referring to the typical (passive, silent and dutiful) Victorian women.

narratives, such as Christina Rossetti, Jean Ingelow (1820-1897) and Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841-1885), who, unable "to participate actively in the political and economic life of their time and unable to communicate directly with anyone about their hidden dreams and desires, […] expressed their subjective experience of reality in the literary language of fantasy" (Spivack 63).

In her various verse and prose works ranging from *Goblin Market*, *Sing-Song*, *The Prince's Progress*, *Speaking Likenesses*, to "Nick" and "Hero," Christina Rossetti, to borrow Spivack's words, like "many other nineteenth-century women poets, [. . .] thrived in the world of the imagination, to some extent in compensation for the limited experiences available to her in real life" (62). But the fundamental reason behind Christina Rossetti's use of fantasy in these works is to comment on the socio-political and economic conditions of the age that inspired these. As Garlick indicates "Rossetti uses the framework of fantasy to comment on its hierarchical impulse and to foreground her perception of the way in which it implicitly underpins bourgeois ideologies of the separate spheres" (133). The spheres that are referred to once again, are the two concepts that are introduced by Benjamin Disraeli during the Victorian Age: the haves and have nots, that is, the rich and the poor respectively. It is quite evident that Rossetti makes a critique of the age she lives in through the comfort and safety fantasy offers. Within the domains of her fantasy worlds, she projects the injustices she has observed such as the inequality between men and women, rich and poor, poet and poetess. Behind the simplistic surfaces of her works, serious social issues are discussed and satire heavily falls.

Barbara Garlick acknowledges that a close look at Christina Rossetti's poems which depend on the fantastic mode – "folk and fairytales, nursery rhymes, dream stories – all have the same suggestion of the unpleasant realities beneath the fantastic" (145). As a consequence, Christina Rossetti's works require serious consideration in terms of their highly satirical socio-political commentary which is placed within the framework of fantasy. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to analyze Christina Rossetti's poems, *Goblin Market*, *Sing Song*, *The Prince's Progress* and her short stories, mainly *Speaking Likenesses*, "Nick" and "Hero," as well as some of her minor and shorter poems that use fantastic elements so as to give a picture of the Victorian period and its changing social values.

CHAPTER I

UNLIKELY HEROES AND THE PROJECTION OF SOCIAL REALITY

Born into a family of artists and referred to in relation to another, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Christina Georgiana Rossetti (1830-1894) was the youngest child of Gabriele and Frances Lavinia Rossetti. Her siblings being Maria Francesca, Gabriel Charles Dante (1828-1882) and William Michael Rossetti, Rossetti's father was an Italian poet and a political refugee who immigrated from Naples to London (Bell 5). Drawing her poetic faculties apparently from her father and her strong religious faith from her mother, Christina Rossetti grew up in an artistic environment with their house crowded by the well-known Italian and English artists of the time (Bell 2). Although throughout her literary career she was to be associated with her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's bohemian art society of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Christina Rossetti stands unique in her artistic creativity as well as productivity.

Defined predominantly as a modest, melancholic and even suicidal poet who is often obsessed with religious themes and wrote simple poetry, other epithets attributed to Christina Rossetti are "simplicity, modesty, delicacy, good taste, good manners, shy reserve, tenderness, truthfulness, limited pretensions, touching sincerity, [and] ladylikeness" (Armstrong "Christina" 122). Contrary to her discreet character, however, the themes of her poetry show considerable range. In this respect, her minor poems will also be studied for a better appreciation of her fantasy poems in terms of the themes and the forms they employ. Generally critics are familiar with Rossetti's poetry in terms of its "reputation for its beauty, for its purity, for its morbidity, for its suppressions and repressions – all qualities of refinement and poise, won by her in her wrestling with the beast, real or imagined, spiritual or physical, tempting her, taunting her, threatening her from without or within" (Barfoot 15). What can be marked as Rossetti's dual nature, which she frequently uses in her works, can best be illustrated in her "The Convent Threshold":

> There's blood between us, love, my love,
> There's father's blood, there's brother's blood;
> And blood's a bar I cannot pass:
> I choose the stairs that mount above,

(I 1-4)[4]

. . . . . .

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up

(I 17)

. . . . . .

The time is short and yet you stay:

(I 46)

. . . . . .

You sinned with me a pleasant sin:
Repent with me, for I repent.

(I 51-2)

Rossetti's personas tend to be caught in dilemmas, whether it is in between divine love and material love or life and death. All of these themes are central to her poetry, with Rossetti herself acting as her own worst enemy. Whenever she gets carried away with her emotions, it is again her very self that suppresses her own feelings, which in the end results in an enigmatic situation, as in "Winter: My Secret":

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not today; it froze, and blows, and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine and I won't tell.

(I 1-6)

The point that "Winter: My Secret" draws attention to is that Rossetti's poetry is a poetry of repressed feelings. Hers is a "direct colloquial expression of distinct emotional states" (Greer 363) dominated by "a particular strain" (Barfoot 8). In order to emphasize this strenuous aspect of Christina Rossetti's art, Leighton uses the image of "a fountain sealed" and believes that the whole bulk of her poetry becomes a battlefield as she tries to maintain her emotions under such strain of control that the tension remains tremendous (*Victorian* 122). Accordingly, these conflicting forces torment her in her poems as a result of which Tennyson observes that her poetry becomes

> the cry of an anguished heart. So many of the poems turn on loss, disappointment, sorrow, unworthiness, and above all death, and so many are cast in the first person or employ the feminine third-person pronoun to refer to their subjects that a biographical equation seems called for: the "I" and the "she" must be Christina Rossetti herself. (346)

[4] The references to Christina Rossetti's poems are all from R. W. Crump's anthology of *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*. The initial number refers to the volume and it is followed by the line numbers.

Despite the fact that it would be wrong to equate her character directly with her personas, still it cannot be ignored that Rossetti's speakers reflect much of her own personal traits. As most of her works – the most remarkable one of which is *Maude* – reveal, for Rossetti, it is hard to come to a decision when a troubled mind is concerned. The duality between what the heart yearns for and what the mind idealizes tortures Rossetti's personas and Rossetti herself.

When the formal qualities of her poetry are concerned, due to the fact that it is easy to categorize much of her poetry into groups, it can be said that her poetry "reveals striking thematic similarities from poem to poem, as if Rossetti were improvising variations on a small range of themes" (Rosenblum "Poetic" 132). Rossetti's poetic style, the images she uses, her themes and approach to various topics show objective qualities in this sense. McGann, too, calls her poetry as objective and adds that

> the extreme conventionality of her imagery and sytlistic devices gives a peculiarly objective quality to even her first-person poems, as if they dealt with typical events in the life of the soul rather than with personal events from the life of Rossetti. As a consequence, the field in which a Rossetti poem gets played out is objective rather than subjective [. . .]. ("Introduction" 8)

Tennyson observes that on the whole lyric prevails in much of her poetry (350-51). In addition, Rossetti also made use of narrative, dramatic and symbolic forms in poetry and non-fiction and short story in prose, as well as devotional writings and fantasy. Apart from these, she also wrote nursery rhymes and *bouts-rimés*, along with sonnets and dialogues. Among these Rosenblum finds Rossetti's lyric poems, which dominate most of the Rossetti canon, especially important. For, according to Rosenblum, in these poems Rossetti re-writes a traditionally masculine literary canon from the viewpoint of the female. She further suggests that

> [t]his thematic and formal repetitiveness, when viewed in the context of sequencing, suggests that Rossetti is concerned less with poetic originality than with poetic inexhaustibility. She exploits an already exhausted mode and proves that for herself, as a woman poet, it is inexhaustible in the sense that the whole literary canon needs to be rewritten from the female point of view, even if in the same words, word for word. (Rosenblum "Poetic" 134)

Called as the poetry of "conciseness" by Harrison (*Christina* 42), of "renunciation" by Gilbert and Gubar (564), "of loss" by McGann ("Introduction" 8) and "poems of intense emotional distress" by Barfoot (8), Christina Rossetti's poetry is characterized by her distinct style in dealing with these genres and themes which express her loneliness and yearnings. Rossetti in

her poems and prose works recurrently uses the themes of duality, religion, death-wish, phantom visitors, doubleness, problems of love and marriage, fallen women, illegitimacy, exclusion, socio-political realism, love of animals and finally subversion in relation to these.

The theme of duality that Rossetti expresses in much of her poetry is the result of her strong faith in Anglicanism. While her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti was enjoying the isolation that his literary group had provided for him, which remained secluded from the social issues of the day, Christina Rossetti became a strict Anglican. Her strong attachment to her faith is closely connected with her being an eye-witness to the social discriminations and injustices that were surrounding her. At a time when the whole Victorian society was going through a transformation by the scientific and technological developments of the day, influenced by her highly religious mother Frances Polidori and sister Maria Francesca Rossetti, Christina Rossetti clung to her faith for strength and "came under the influence of the Oxford Movement as early as 1840" (Grass 360). She saw religion as a consolation and obsessed with religion, she took shelter in a devotional life. Her faith, which constitutes the basis of much of her religious works, had both imprisoning and liberating aspects in this respect. Its restrictive side lies in the fact that as the obedient believer she had to keep silent, which contradicted with the Pre-Raphaelite motto of art for art's sake that her brother was associated with:

> Rossetti, artist though she was, saw the source of immortality not in art, but in obedience. She accepted the notion that women were inherently inferior artists, and she attempted to live up to the highest Victorian ideals of what it meant to be a devout Christian. Rossetti's poetry embodies the conflict between artistic creativity and the ideal of obedience which, for women, included the injunction to "keep silent." Rossetti does not, therefore, fit the aesthetic model of the artist producing art for art's sake only. (Flowers 159)

Clearly, the idea of strict obedience is also in accordance with the Victorian ideology of sexual differences. Unlike, Harrison, who sees the role attributed to the middle class women pre-eminently as a source of material, rather than spiritual, well-being, ("Shadow" 126) for Flowers the idea of obedience parallels the domestic angelic role the middle class women had to obey. According to Flowers, to be a dedicated Christian meant

> to sacrifice the self, to give oneself in service to the others. The Victorian ideal woman exactly matched the Victorian ideal of the obedient Christian – dutiful, self-sacrificing, always attuned to the needs and wishes of others. To fail to be a good woman was to fail to be a good Christian, and so the failure was all that much more to be avoided. (163)

Subjected to the demands imposed upon them by others, women suffered at the hands of their oppressors during the Victorian Age. Flowers further argues that "Rossetti was echoing the Christian assumption that females made inferior artists and, conversely, that a woman who pursued art would damage her femininity" (161). It is evident that women during the Victorian Age had no available position in the society other than taking care of home and family. Christina Rossetti questions these gender distinctions in her poem "The Lowest Room" where the persona compares herself to Homer and restlessly cries: "A shame it is, our aimless life" (I 81):

> By them a slave was worshipped more
> Than is by us a wife."
> (I 63-4)
> . . . . . .
> "I rather would be one of us
> Than wife, or slave, or both."
> (I 67-8)
> . . . . . .
> Why should not you, why should not I
> Attain heroic strength?
>
> "Our life is given us a blank;
> Ourselves must make it blest or curst:
> Who dooms me I shall only be
> The second, not the first?["]
> (I 115-20)

It is through "The Lowest Room" that Rossetti explores the constructed nature of subject and object positions that men and women occupy within the society. She questions the grounds upon which the social prejudices are founded and rejects their imposition upon women. However, her rebellion, which sounds too modest, is quite self-contradictory as a poetess who is also the writer of these lines:

> Give me the lowest place: or if for me
> That lowest place too high, make one more low
> Where I may sit and see
> My God and love Thee so.
> ("The Lowest Place" I 5-8)

It could be deduced from these two contrasting poems that although Rossetti finds women equals of men within the society, she does not dare consider it so when it comes to her faith. Before God, she accepts things as they are, satisfied with the lowest place. Ironically enough, for the female poet, religion also has a liberating aspect besides its restrictive side. Because as

a poetess the female poet is given the voice, as well as the word, to praise God's numerous virtues through poetry. Flowers accordingly suggests:

> It could be argued that the conventions of Rossetti's religion contributed to what many have seen as defects in her poetry: limited subject matter, conventional forms, as ascetic turning away from this world. But while her religious ideals as a Victorian woman may have narrowed the possibilities of artistic life, it was her religion that enabled her to break free enough of the conventions of Victorian womanhood to write at all. While her religious faith created a barrier between herself and the wider world that her agnostic brothers inhabited, it also enabled her to establish a position outside the Victorian conventions in subtle but effective ways. (165)

Given the permission to voice the traditionally masculine *word*, Rossetti, being the obedient servant of God who is content with her appointed place on earth, does not refrain from praising Him in her own feminine way. Her poetic career is founded within a Christian framework mostly, producing secular poetry as well as religious verse, but always with the religious impact dominating the secular in the end (Cantalupo 274-75). Because, Shaw suggests, Rossetti is aware that "if God is to be merciful to her, she may have to create him in her own image;" with her very own words (49). Hence, contrary to the expectations, Rossetti does not remain silent. Though the opposite has been claimed with regards to her works, in her writings she is always in touch with the society for which she is writing seldom behind the protective veil of religion and mostly through the safety of fantasy.

However, at this point it is important to emphasize the fact that Rossetti was not a social reformer but "a spiritual absolist" (McGann "Introduction" 3). For McGann, "[n]otorious for her reactionary views on most social questions, she observed the capitalist and the reformer with a similar scepticism. To her mind, both were literally on the wrong path, for each had his foot in worldly ways and eyes on worldly goals" ("Introduction" 3-4). Rossetti's view seems a natural result of her strong faith. Tennyson similarly observes that "religion was Rossetti's life [. . .] in something of the way that nature was Wordsworth's life" (351). Consequently, the elements she chooses for her poetry are always "tempered by, and finally expressive of a clear moral vision" (Mayberry 105). However, this results in a conflict between the worldly and spiritual sides of Rossetti which constitutes so many of her poems. The theme of duality agonizes Rossetti, as Greer, too, notes: "Wilfully, she set out to waste her life, ostensibly in order to enjoy eternal life, but eternal life appeared to her only fitfully in visions that increased her torment" (366):

Life is not sweet. One day it will be sweet
To shut our eyes and die:
(I 1-2)
. . . . . .
Life is not good. One day it will be good
To die, then live again;
To sleep meanwhile: so not to feel the wane
(I 10-12)
. . . . . .
Asleep from risk, asleep from pain.
("Life and Death" I 18)

The way that she desires to be dead so as to avoid the temptations of the world which torment her, and her looking forward to gain her reward in eternal life are also the results of the battle between her body and soul. Another theme that populates much of Rossetti's poetry is her death wish which also reflects her inclination towards escapism. For Rossetti, death is a release from the unbearable pain of living. It is "rest from both striving and self-control" that is the necessary step before she reaches eternal joy (Rosenblum "Inward" 90). Her poems such as "Fata Morgana," "Dead Before Death" and "Rest" demonstrate Rossetti's death-wish and her particular interest in the escapism these poems allow. Contrary to Tolkien who believes that the most ancient and profound desire of humanity, "the great escape," is the escape from death, Rossetti shows a conscious longing for it (174). In this sense, her desire to be dead bears a similarity to Todorov's idea of the uncanny in which the aim is to disturb the reader's sense of reality rather than to create a make-believe (44).

Another feature that dominates Rossetti's poetry is doubleness. For Rosenblum, Rossetti's themes in general are "presence and absence, fulfilment and loss, joy and sorrow, time and eternity, life and death. There is no progression, no mediate condition, only radical shifts from one state to another in poem after poem" ("Inward" 82). Rossetti tends to show doubleness in terms of her division of the personal virtues and vices in between two or more individual characters mirroring each other. One's lack is the other one's gain and often victory comes through the harmonious union of these divided virtues and vices. That is why her poetry reveals several split personalities whose inner integrity is not possible until an external union takes place. In a number of her poems, Rossetti makes use of the theme of doubleness often in relation to the issue of women and marriage, since women often suffer the consequences of their failure to reach such a union. McGann argues that for Rossetti love is problematical in a highly material age bringing forth various difficulties

> when marriage reveals its problematical aspects. [. . .] The spectacle of the Victorian marriage market appalled her. [. . .] [Therefore] her heroines characteristically choose to stand alone [. . .]. Those who do not – those who choose either love and marriage or love and romance – almost invariably find either disaster or unhappiness or a relationship marked by a sinister and melancholy ambiguousness. (*Victorian* 101)

Doubleness is exposed through her free spirits and submissive characters at this point. During the Victorian Age, the transmission from father or brother to husband objectified the female body which Rossetti found quite degrading. That is why her single characters, although suffering from loneliness, often enjoy their subjective identities in place of the material exchange which they are subjected to. Their individual choices mark them as independent characters whose physical sacrifice guarantees them spiritual victory, too. D'Amico claims that "[n]ot only did Rossetti consider the consecrated single life spiritually superior to married life, but numerous poems, especially those written during the 1850-1870 period, strongly suggest that she viewed the institution of marriage with a cynical eye" (67). As a consequence of this:

> Relationships between mothers and babies and between women, usually sisters, are central to her [Rossetti's] poems and stories, whereas men are generally peripheral or absent; often the relationship is the darker side of the sisterly coin, competitiveness and envy but even then it is a source of dramatic excitement and energy. Marriage is seldom depicted as wholly desirable. (Mermin 152)

Several of her poems, such as "Noble Sisters," "Maude Clare," "Maggie A Lady," "Maiden-Song," "An Apple-Gathering," "A Triad" and "Cousin Kate" reveal that love and marriage encourage female competition rather than sisterly sorority and accordingly pave the way to masculine dependency at the expense of the loss of feminine identity. McGann further asserts that for Rossetti, "[l]ove is a drama of faithless faith and cruel attachments, of fantastic obsessions or worldly indifference. Remembering or forgetting, being true or being false: in either case one finds one's self either in the slough of the world or the fire of an outcast existence" ("Introduction" 14). Closely associated with this theme, Christina Rossetti also makes social outcasts – the fallen women, the single mother, the orphan or the unmarried women – the subject matter of her poetry in order to criticize the Victorian marriage market and the social prejudices projected through them. As it is also demonstrated in her fantasy works, a study of the theme of love in Rossetti's poems is important in displaying the prevalent problems of the Victorian society.

In this light, Rossetti's "Noble Sisters," is based on the competition between sisters. In the poem two sisters are presented whose sisterly sorority is disturbed by the emergence of the persona's lover. The persona is fed up with her sister who prevents her lover from reaching her all the time. In due course, the sister lies to the persona's lover and sends him away. On account of this, the speaker gets angry with her sister and cries out that she will go and search for him all over the world. However, due to her rebellious attitude, her sister accuses her of humiliating their father's name. During the Victorian Age, a woman's chastity and virtue were defined by her proper moral conduct, which was mostly centred around ON ? indisputable obedience. A pure name was regarded as an indicator of high morality. Besides, as the title also implies, arranged marriages between families of equal fortune were a common occurrence. It was preferable to marry an etiquette or wealth. The poem, in this way illustrates how reputation comes before feelings when the Victorian marriage market is concerned.

The sisterly rivalry presented in "Noble Sisters" leaves its place to a love triangle in "Maude Clare." In the poem, Maude Clare, who is forsaken by her lover Thomas, attends Thomas' wedding. Maude Clare observes that Thomas is "pale with inward strife" (I 13) and stands "like a queen" (I 4) during the ceremony, contrary to Thomas' bride, Nell, who looks "like a village maid" (I 3). After the wedding, a confrontation takes place between the three of them. Maude Clare returns the gifts given to her by Thomas earlier; when they were lovers. However, Nell seems to tolerate what she has just witnessed and declares that she will love Thomas for better or worse now that he is wedded to her. Nell's behaviour represents the qualities of a typical angel in the house, as she chooses to be the silent and obedient wife whose duty is to obey and obey only.

In "Maggie A Lady," the persona, Maggie, is described as a recently wed lady who seems to have won her title through her marriage to a lord. Through her monologue, it is revealed that she once loved her sailor cousin, Philip, whom she thought to have died at sea. Following this incident, she got married to the lord, although his mother said "fie," and his sisters cried "shame" (I 29). Maggie is so beautiful that upon seeing her face the lord's mother and his sisters never uttered a word against her. Although she seems to be happy now with all the luxury surrounding her, she cannot help thinking about Philip and the time they had together. She yearns for those joyful years, as is symbolized by her remembrance of the forget-me-nots blooming where they used to play as children. Clearly, beauty is considered as an equal virtue for the lack of money in the poem. Rossetti, critizing the objectified position that the woman

is reduced to, indicates that marriage works like a bargain on both sides. So long as the Victorian betrothals are concerned, one party plays the role of the dutiful wife, while the other one performs the role of the breadwinner husband.

Apart from these female portrayals, another poem that dwells upon the issue of sisterly rivalry, yet in quite a different manner, is "Maiden-Song". Although the subject of the poem is similar to the poems stated above, its difference lies in the fact that it is presented as a fairy tale. The poem is about three sisters: "tall Meggan," (I 5) "dainty May," (I 6) and "fair Margaret" (I 7). Introducing the setting of the poem as "Long ago and long ago / And long ago still," the poem follows the feature of fairy-tale timelessness wholly, except for the indication that Spring has arrived (I 1-2). Everything seems to be in harmony with animals helping the sisters and the sisters taking care of their surrounding. When strawberries and May-dews start blooming, Meggan decides to pick up strawberries and takes May with her, while "the fairest sat at home, / Margaret like a queen" (I 36-7). Singing as she picks up strawberries, soon Meggan's song attracts a herdsman who offers her, his "scanty goods" (I 91) and "scanty skills" (I 92):

> Then Meggan mused within herself:
> "Better be first with him,
> Than dwell where fairer Margaret sits,
> Who shines my brightness dim,
> For ever second where she sits,
> However fair I be:
> I will be lady of his love,
> And he shall worship me;
> (I 96-103)

So, Meggan accepts the herdsman's proposition and once they abandon the setting, a shepherd shows up in front of May offering her his love. While May loiters him with "maiden coy caprice" (I 119), she at the same time ponders: "Where Margaret shines like the sun / I shine but like a moon; / (I 146-47) [. . .] At cockcrow we were sister-maids, / We may be brides at noon" (I 150-51). May, too, finally reaches a decision and accepts the shepherd's offer.

Worried about her sisters by now, Margaret goes outside and starts singing a song that calls her sisters back home. Here, the poem is interrupted with another character: the "king of all that country" (I 188) who, hearing Margaret's voice, searches for her, and upon finding her:

With his crown upon his head,
His sceptre in his hand,
Down he fell at Margaret's knees
Lord king of all that land,
To her highness bending low.
(I 194-98)

Eventually, the king proposes to Margaret and she accepts. The poem ends with a union where all three sisters are rewarded with their future husbands, the social status of whom are in accordance with the spiritual wealth of each sister. Behind the apparent union of the sisters, the poem also exposes the reasons that result in the disruption of sisterly sorority. May and Meggan's acts are based upon scheming self-interest making it clear that when the Victorian marriage market is concerned, the unity of sisterhood is threatened.

Hitherto, Rossetti's female representations tend to centre around three main characters exclusively: One who is abandoned and resentful on account of this; one who chooses to stand alone and enjoys her independence, ironically in bitter loneliness; and a third one who gets married but is disillusioned in the end. Among her poems that exemplify these characters "A Triad" and "An Apple-Gathering" can be mentioned. "An Apple-Gathering," through apple symbolism, shows how the speaker of the poem after her affair with Willie, turns "empty-handed back" (I 8), while her neighbours mock her as she passes by. In contrast, Lilian and Lilias, with their "heaped-up basket," tease her (I 10) and Gertrude passes by her "with her basket full / A stronger hand than hers" helping it along (I 13-14). Implying that once the speaker's basket was filled with apples too, the poem illustrates what falls the lot of the fallen woman; that is loneliness and emptiness as becomes her social fall.

When the poems discussed so far are taken into consideration, "A Triad" needs special emphasis, for the poem gives a concise picture of Rossetti's female representations that she frequently makes use of in her poetry:

Three sang of love together: [. . .]
(I 1)
. . . . . .
One shamed herself in love; one temperately
Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;
One famished and died for love. Thus two of three
Took death for love and won him after strife;
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:
All on the threshold, yet all short of life.
(I 9-14)

Associating the colours: “crimson” with passionate love (I 2); “snow” with soulless love (I 4); and “blue” with famined love (I 6), Rossetti introduces her typical female characters as, one suffering the results of an affair after getting abandoned by the lover (sometimes with a child); one making a marriage for convenience and suffering the consequences of a loveless marriage; and one who ideally chooses to stand alone, free from all the material bounds, desiring a spiritual union with God or Christ.

Occupying quite a different stand from the other poems, “Cousin Kate” is important in terms of its insights to the issue of illegitimate children. Being a direct critique of what Rossetti sees as faults within the Victorian society, the poem opens with “a cottage maiden” (I 1) who is found by a “great lord” (I 5). Lured into love “[t]o lead a shameless shameful life,” (I 11) the speaker now moans as “an unclean thing,” (I 15) because the lord has chosen the speaker’s cousin Kate over her. The poem’s critique of the hypocrisy concerning the Victorian betrothals, while the speaker addresses her cousin Kate, is revealed as follows:

> Because you were so good and pure
> He bound you with his ring:
> The neighbours call you good and pure,
> Call me an outcast thing.
> Even so I sit and howl in dust,
> You sit in gold and sing:
> Now which of us had tenderer heart?
> You had the stronger wing.
>
> O cousin Kate, my love was true,
> Your love was writ in sand:
> If he had fooled not me but you,
> If you stood where I stand,
> He’d not have won me with his love
> Nor bought me with his land;
> I would have spit into his face
> And not have taken his hand.
>
> (I 25-40)

Rossetti explicitly projects how arbitrary the concepts of being tainted and pure are. Although the persona is an outcast in the eyes of the people, she makes it clear that blame also lies on cousin Kate, as well as upon the lord who has ruined her. Obviously, women’s indifference to other women’s plight is criticized, as Rossetti reflects how women also condemn women by ignoring their ruined counterparts’ situations. The most significant part of the poem is yet to be read in the following lines:

> Yet I've a gift you have not got,
> And seem not like to get:
> For all your clothes and wedding-ring
> I've little doubt you fret.
> My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,
> Cling closer, closer yet:
> Your father would give lands for one
> To wear his coronet.
>
> (I 41-8)

Touching upon the subject of illegitimacy, along with the fallen women's situation, declaring that her son is both her shame and pride, Rossetti portrays the persona as an extraordinarily strong figure who faces social condemnation, both in relation to her affair and her illegitimate child, quite heroically. The most striking aspect of Rossetti's poems on fallen women, who are ignored or blamed by the society, is that she never condemns these women, unlike the strictly conservative Victorian society. In a sense, Rossetti, "saw the fallen woman's story as a complex and layered narrative, one in which the fallen woman was not the only sinner. For Rossetti, the fallen woman is guilty, but her guilt must be shared" (D'Amico 95). So, contrary to expectations, Rossetti offers an insight to both sides of the story rather than blaming these women for their so-called sins. Although her interest seems to be mainly based on religious concerns, her approach is quite heroic in embracing both the sinner and the innocent equally. As D'Amico sums up, in these fallen woman poems, Rossetti suggests that there is

> not much difference between the woman who sells herself for marriage, who thus does not marry for a genuine love, and the woman who has sexual experience before marriage because she is fooled by the promises of romantic love. Both are guilty of placing the things of the earth (whether romantic love or material security) before God. Furthermore, in all these poems, the fallen women remains alive, in other words; Rossetti does not employ the traditional ending by having her die or go mad. (102)

During the Victorian Age, authors sympathized with the idea of ending their poems with the death of the fallen women in order to achieve poetic justice. Working as cautionary and exemplary tales that warned the readers of the consequences of their acts through the examples put forward, these works were believed to prevent man/woman from sinning. So, the writers consistently had the sinners punished. But, as "Cousin Kate" demonstrates, Rossetti does not follow this common tendency. Instead of having her persona die, she rather chooses to illustrate the difficulty of the situation from the eyes of the so-called fallen woman who is expected to pay for the guilt put upon her by a man.

Closely related to Rossetti's "Cousin Kate;" "Light Love," and "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children" are important, too, in their daring insights into the illegitimate children's condition. Placing single mothers among the most powerful figures in her poetry (Mermin 153), Rossetti, in her poem, "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children," puts more emphasis upon the fault of the father than that of the mother (D'Amico 110). Along with "Light Love," "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children" both centre on the issue of an illicit affair and the consequences it brings, which is quite a challenging topic for a highly religious poetess.

"The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children" opens with the cry of the speaker, Margaret, who was born "[u]nder the rose" (I 3), to her "Mother's shame" (I 5). As an abandoned child who was brought up by a nurse, she constantly wonders who might her parents be (I 112). The only clue about her parentage is a golden ring given to her nurse on the day she was born. Soon her nurse dies and after her death, Margaret starts to work as a handmaid to a lady whom later turns out to be her mother. Despite the lady's desperate attempts to hide it, Margaret is aware of the fact due to several clues. For instance, when the lady carefully studied her face: "As if she tried to trace / Features she ought to know, / And half hoped, half feared, to find" (I 243-45). Particularly through the insights to Margaret's mind, Rossetti quite emphatically reveals the girl's feelings towards her mother and her secret shame:

> Now I have eyes and ears
> And just some little wit:
> "Almost my Lady's child;"
> I recollect she smiled,
> Then her story of the ring
> Sounds not improbable,
> She told it me so well
> (I 364-71)
> . . . . . .
> I guess not who he was
> Flawed honour like a glass
> And made my life forlorn,
> But my Mother, Mother, Mother,
> Oh, I know her from all other.
> (I 378-82)
> . . . . . .
> Friend, servant, almost child,
> So be it and nothing more
> (I 421-22)

Harrison argues that with illicit passion and a bastard child in the foreground, "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children" is "daringly un-Victorian" in its uncensored insight to the mother's, as well as to the child's situation (*Christina* 121). Criticizing her mother for giving up her daughter to save her noble name, Margaret reproaches her father even more severely. Unlike the majority of the society who condemn the fallen women as guilty, Rossetti through Margaret shows that if someone is to be blamed, it should be the victimizer, not the victimized. In this sense, men are reproved not only for defiling women but also for their irresponsible behaviours. Besides, if women are guilty of having a weak willpower, just like their ancestor – Eve; men are even more guilty of taking advantage of it:

> I love my dear old Nurse
> Who loved me without gains;
> I love my mistress even,
> Friend, Mother, what you will:
> But I could almost curse
> My father for his pains;
> And sometimes at my prayer
> Kneeling in sight of Heaven
> I almost curse him still;
> Why did he set his snare
> To catch at unaware
> My mother's foolish youth;
> Load me with shame that's hers,
> And her with something worse,
> A lifelong lie for truth?
> (I 515-29)

Upon Dante Gabriel Rossetti's suggestion that she should not write fallen women poems for she has not experienced a similar fate herself, Christina Rossetti defends her poems on the grounds that "as a poet she has every right to represent others' experience, however 'unpleasant' such experience may be" (Burlinson *Christina* 35). According to Burlinson, the poem makes it clear that "the personal and the socio-political cannot be separated: subjective experience is socially conditioned and discourse of gender, religion, class, and national identity all effect Rossetti's portrayal of the illegitimate girl's life" (*Christina* 35). Her recognition of the close connection between the social and personal is also what distinguishes Rossetti from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that she is often associated with. Although Spivack's remark that it is "no coincidence that the women poets best remembered today are those who were closely associated with renowned male poets, with Browning and Rossetti as obvious examples" may sound quite true, it is utterly wrong to see either Elizabeth Barrett Browning's (1806-1861) or Christina Rossetti's talents within this perspective only (63).

Primarily, because it was the success of both of the poetesses that made their male counterparts' names be heard. Bump, too, confirms that "during the crucial first two decades of the group's history, until the publication of Dante Gabriel's poems in 1870, Christina Rossetti was their chief literary figure" (323).

Contrary to the general assumption, Christina Rossetti was definitely not a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which was founded by her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, along with a group of painters and poets. The Brotherhood, having been the pioneers of the art for art's sake movement, took shelter in a bohemian world of art escaping from the problematical consequences of Victorian industrialisation, materialism and capitalism. In spite of the fact that she had close relations with the group, attended several meetings of them, served as a model for his brother's paintings and had him correct her verses, as well as making use of some of the Pre-Raphaelite elements in her poetry, Christina Rossetti was, nevertheless, an outsider. Bump confirms that

> [h]alf of the family was excluded: the two girls, educated and encouraged as "equals," were apparently no longer considered equal. While it may be argued that one of the girls, Maria, was far more involved in religion than art, there is little doubt that Christina was the artistic equal of most, if not all, of the members of the Brotherhood. Moreover, she was not only the sister of two of the members of the group, she was to be wed to another (James Collinson); and, more important, she considered herself a member of the group. Yet simply by choosing the name "Brotherhood" Dante Gabriel Rossetti made it clear that there would be no question of including Christina Rossetti or any other woman, no matter how well qualified she might be. (322-23)

Christina Rosssetti was publicly acknowledged by her brother William Michael Rossetti as the "Queen of the Pre-Raphaelites," described as "the high-priestess of the Pre-Raphaelitism" by Edmund Gosse, and hailed as "the Jael who led their host to victory" by Swinburne (Bump 323-24). However, the barrier of sex was still present amongst the siblings and Rossetti was conscious that the males were favoured, whether as artists or merely as brothers within the family (Flowers 162). Nonetheless, her use of the Pre-Raphaelite elements in her poetry has caught the attention of many of the critics who counted her as one. Therefore, it would be appropriate to describe Rossetti's situation as "both belonging and excluded" (Chapman 83) in relation to the Brotherhood:

> Victorian sisters and Victorian brothers, however, even those with similar interests and close attachments, lived in very different worlds. The Rossetti boys were sent to school, while the girls were taught by their mother at home. The sons became

> religious sceptics, while the daughters shared their mother's devout High Church faith. But the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists and writers in 1848-9 elevated the sexual divisions within the family into the sexual difference of Victorian institutions, and divided the brothers who created art from the sisters who inspired it. (Showalter x-xi)

In spite of the fact that Christina Rossetti was excluded from the artistic Brotherhood, she employed the major principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's manifesto in her poetry. Summed up by Jerome Bump, *The Germ*, the Pre-Raphaelite manifesto, acknowledged four dominant features: An affection towards nature, dwelling mostly upon nature's "richness, bright color, and light; a revolt against simplistic dualisms, especially verbal versus visual and natural versus supernatural, often conveyed in symbolism; deliberate medievalism; and a preference for subjects that, as James Merritt has said, 'have an innate poignancy or morbidity'" (324). Similarly, Christina Rossetti frequently makes nature her subject matter, capturing a visual effect through her words. Her escapist poems which expose strange beings as their protagonists also reveal her tendency to convey her messages in highly disturbing symbolisms. In addition to these features, Rossetti's poetry is extremely musical. Due to her use of auditory and visual details that paint a picture in the mind, her poetry is described by Alice Law as "word music" (qtd. in Harrison *Christina* 28). Antony Harrison further asserts that the "Pre-Raphaelites' attention to picturesque detail, the medievalist atmosphere and settings, the pervasive melancholy of their works, and their awareness of their art's primarily Christian literary and pictorial origins," combined with her "ideal of conciseness," is what regulates Christina Rossetti's poetry (*Christina* 28, 42). In short, Christina Rossetti's employment and rejection of Pre-Raphaelite principles display both her affinity with and distinction from the Brotherhood.

There are several reasons why Rossetti's poetry is not principally considered as a Pre-Raphaelite manifestation of art. Among these, primarily her gender and also her strictly moral and secluded life can be counted. However, the real reason behind this was that Christina Rossetti never turned a blind eye on the negative results of industrialisation, capitalism, materialism, colonialism and imperialism during the Victorian Age. Although she claims the opposite, saying it is "not in me, and therefore it will never come out of me, to turn to politics or philanthropy," both the choice of her topics and her deeds justify her interest in the social issues of her day (qtd. in Mermin 154). During the Crimean War, she volunteered to be a nurse for Florence Nightingale but she was not accepted due to her young age. Moreover, her

practice at Saint Mary Magdalene Penitentiary in Highgate is a further justification of her social concerns, for there, in that representative microcosm, she witnessed several of the problems of Victorian society (McGann "Introduction" 4).

Penitentiaries were established during the Victorian Age on account of the immense rise in the rate of prostitution. These were church organizations that were founded to save the fallen women from selling their bodies (D'Amico 95). Christina Rossetti, as an active member of such an organization, had the opportunity to witness the social conditions of her time which turned the female subject into an object of monetary exchange. She reflected and definitely criticized the plight of the fallen women in her poetry. D'Amico observes that

> by the 1850s, while Rossetti was writing her own variations on fallen woman's story, both prostitution, commonly referred to as the Great Social Evil, and illegitimacy had become major topics of concern for Victorian society in general and for the religious community in particular. By 1859, Rossetti herself, strongly influenced by her faith, had become directly involved in the cause to save fallen women by assisting in the work of the London Diocesan Penitentiary, one of the many houses of mercy established during these years to reclaim the fallen. (95)

Although Antony Harrison claims that on the whole "Rossetti did not write 'political and philanthropic' poems, as Browning did," the topics she chose for her poetry, ranging from religion, social inequalities, sexual double standard, patriarchy, the condition of illegitimate children, child-death and prostitution to animal rights, are clear indicators of her interest in the socio-political issues of her day ("Shadow" 112). In this sense, Rossetti's "A Royal Princess," explicitly criticizes social inequalities through the eyes of the royal princess:

> My father counting up his strength sets down with equal pen
> So many head of cattle, head of horses, head of men;
> These for slaughter, these for labour, with the how and when.
> Some to work on roads, canals; some to man his ships;
> Some to smart in mines beneath sharp overseers' whips;
> Some to trap fur-beasts in lands where utmost winter nips.
> Once it came into my heart and whelmed like a flood,
> That these too are men and women, human flesh and blood;
> Men with hearts and men with souls, tho'trodden down like
> mud.
>
> (I 28-37)

Drawing attention to the fact that ideally all are equal but in reality none is so, the poem continues to demonstrate this injustice:

> A day went by, a week went by. One day I heard it said:
> "Men are clamouring, women, children, clamouring to be
> fed;
> Men like famished dogs are howling in the streets for bread."
>
> So two whispered by my door, not thinking I could hear,
> Vulgar naked truth, ungarnished for a royal ear;
> Fit for cooping in the background, not to stalk so near.
> (I 55-60)
> . . . . . .
> "One I saw, a poor old fool with ashes on his head,
> Whimpering because a girl had snatched his crust of bread:
> Then he dropped; when some one raised him, it turned out
> he was dead."
> (I 73-6)

In the poem the contradictory lives of the two spheres, the haves and have nots, are presented. The contrast between the wealthy and the poor is a prominent aspect of the poem in terms of expressing the major social problems of the Victorian Age. Obviously, the haves and have nots are strictly separated from each other. The ruling class is ignorant of the problems of its citizens, paying no attention to their needs. As a result of the indifference of the royal family, the hungry and angry masses soon rebel against them:

> "Sit and roast there with your meat, sit and bake there with
> your bread,
> You who sat to see us starve," one shrieking woman said:
> "Sit on your throne and roast with your crown upon your
> head."
> (I 93-7)

"The Royal Princess" is a clear example of how Rossetti, internalizing the social issues of her age, finally moulds them into didactic messages. Contrary to Kaplan's remark that Rossetti's poetry seems to be unconcerned with "the contemporary or social," Leighton asserts that

> [w]here Barrett Browing realises political themes as external systems of power, Rossetti internalises them as moral and emotional games, which threaten the very values she seemed, in life, to exemplify. The public facade of that life provided, in some ways, a persuasive screen of domestic devotion and religious fervour, behind which her imagination had plenty of room to play. (*Victorian* 129)

For Rossetti, religion is a veil behind which she conceals her social satire. Placing spirituality before materiality, it is clear that her discomfort with the plight of the poor is practically based on her religious faith:

> With a ransom in my lap, a king's ransom in my hand,
> I will go down to this people, will stand face to face, will stand
> Where they curse king, queen, princess of this cursed
> land.
>
> (I 100-104)
>
> . . . . . .
> Once to speak before the world, rend bare my heart and show
> The lesson I have learned, which is death, is life, to know.
> I, if I perish, perish; in the name of God I go.
>
> (I 106-108)

Contrary to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who explicitly criticizes social inequalities, Christina Rossetti employs covert criticism in her religious and fantasy works behind which lies a deep social sensitivity. In this respect, it is ironic that her fantastic poems, which are criticized for their escapism, are the ones to offer a criticism of the social inequalities of the Victorian Age. Suiting her reserved nature, the use of fantasy allows Rossetti to reflect the social realities of the Victorian Age in safety. Contrary to the assumptions about her disinterest in social matters, in her poems she gives voice to the underprivileged and the oppressed, the ones who had secondary place in the society such as the religiously or socially condemned, the woman or even an animal. Her interest in the mute when combined with the themes she frequently makes use of reveals itself in a much more subversive way through fantasy. Accordingly, a common way of disturbing the givens of the society, often through the use of fantasy, is through the personification of animals. Through this technique, Rossetti defamiliarizes the class-conscious Victorian society and evidently criticizes the superficial worries of the rising middle class in her poems "My Dream," "A Bird's-Eye View" and "Freaks of Fashion." Rossetti finds the petty concerns of the middle class ridiculous:

> Nestlings, guiltless of a feather,
> Learning just to speak,
> Ask – "And how about the fashions?"
> From a cavernous beak.
>
> ("Freaks of Fashion" I 3-6)

While the problems of the working class are centred around more serious issues, such as working hard so as to earn a living, the trouble of the middle class is focused on such trivial difficulties as what to wear. Rossetti criticizes the inequality between the classes in "A Bird's-Eye View" as well:

> They went down, all the crew,
> The silks and spices too,

> The great ones and the small,
> One and all, one and all.
> (II 73-6)

Rossetti once more affirms through the description of a sinking ship seen through the eyes of a raven that all is equal in God's eyes and should be so in the eyes of the society as well. Furthermore, as Burlinson claims, the critics attacking Rossetti's poetry for its escapism miss the point that proposing no "political solutions to social injustice," her treatment of Victorian ideologies, nevertheless "marks her out as a passionate and singular critic of bourgeois culture: Victorian capitalism, materialism, consumerism, and commodity culture are reviled, social inequality is depicted as sinful, the poor and oppressed are vociferously defended, and those who cannot speak publicly are spoken for" (*Christina* 32).

While regarding Rossetti's fantasy works, her fable-like verse and prose works need special emphasis hence, in their revolt against the discriminations and the injustices taking place in a highly materialistic age. In this respect, "Darwin's monumentally influential model of nature as a struggle for survival of the fittest is not easily reconcilable with Rossetti's nurturing impulses or her visions of harmonious ecology" (Burlinson "'Frogs'" 179). In her private life, Rossetti turned to religion which provided her with the spiritual satisfaction of a better future to come and within the literary arena to fantasy, and particularly to fairy tales, to assure that poetic justice is to be granted in the end. She is against favourisms and victimization, and that is why in "private letters and in published texts, Rossetti speaks out against inequality and on behalf of the silent, wronged creatures of the world. Her inclusion of the smallest and weakest living things in her poetic texts is a politically significant gesture" (Burlinson "'Frogs'" 184). Her "concern for the underprivileged is felt particularly in respect of women, especially factory girls, minors, and the sexually abused; [. . .] and [she] wrote scores of poems and stories that revealed profound resistance to patriarchal values and sexual double standards in her defence of the underprivileged" (Burlinson *Christina* 32).

According to Burlinson, "Rossetti's treatment of nonhuman nature provides us with a fuller understanding of the poet's ideological position vis a vis her culture and shows us how committed she was to attending to, and speaking for, the silent" ("'Frogs'" 189). Demonstrating what the weaker ones go through in her works, she shows how society should embrace these people rather than marking them as social outcasts. The use of fantasy, in this sense, aims at the refusal of traditional aesthetic principles and connections: "Rossetti refuses

to conform to a cultural tradition that locates both toad and woman as 'other,' as sexually polluted and polluting" (Burlinson "'Frogs'" 175). Through her fantasy works, Rossetti disrupts the givens of the society, subverting the traditional approach to things. Fantasy projects to the society what it does not want to see in a most peculiar way as "a literary mode that departs from consensual reality in order to throw into relief and critique the social norms from which it springs" (Burlinson *Christina* 36). The real world limits its inhabitants to the known; it is safe, rational and capable of empirical proof. The fantasy world, on the contrary, is a world of infinite possibilities, existent only through the imagination, but taking its life-force from the genuine one all along. Burlinson confirms that "while the tale is set in a fantasized space, it is also inextricably connected to the culture and historical moment from which it emanates and to which it speaks" (*Christina* 38).

Through fantasy, Rossetti provides her readers with both sides to a single story. Whether by speaking in the name of the social outcasts or through its introduction of whimsical figures that turn the notions of familiarity upside-down, she invites the mainstream (reality; man; rich; strong) to examine the unknown area which the periphery (fantasy, woman, poor, weak) occupies. Another advantage of the use of fantasy is its power to generate what is denied in reality (Mayberry 107). Hence, either taken as an opportunity to study the other's position, to criticize, or as an imaginary fulfilment, fantasy provides the writer, as well as the readers, with something unattainable in real life: it opens the way to experience even if it may be a make-believe. That is why, a "world of female potency and exclusively female happiness appears in Rossetti's works only covertly, as fantasy, and in clearly unrealistic modes: ballads, fairy-tales, and legends of saints" similar to other highly improbable themes, such as the victory of the humble over the powerful that frequently takes place in folk and fairy tales (Mermin 153).

Furthermore, the fairy-tale structure offers the Victorian poetess a subversive power which enables her to disturb the impositions of the society. Remarkably, its subversive power is restricted to an area where it does not quite seem to belong, the world of children (Armstrong *Victorian* 367). Fantasy discourages children from accepting the prearranged notions of the society without questioning them. McGann, likewise, regards Rossetti's choice of "children's fairy story" in several of her poems as a "stroke of real genius, for no conceivable model available to her could have represented so well a less 'serious' and 'manly' poetic mode" (*Victorian* 109). Fantasy offers the poetess a comfort zone where she can express her concerns

in the face of the social biases. In this respect, the representative and subversive power of fantasy enables the Victorian writers both "to reshape fantasy narratives and to challenge the limitations imposed upon women's lives and movements" (Burlinson *Christina* 37). Rossetti's use of fantasy is a strategic act, through which she maintained "expressive rights for the unmarried woman in poetry. She claimed, not only the freedom of the unmarried woman to express her sexuality, but also the freedom to be absurd, undignified, if feminine sexuality necessitated this" (Armstrong *Victorian* 344).

Through fantasy, Rossetti is able to subvert the restrictions put upon the female imagination. She "contemplate[s] commonplace things with fresh wonderment and question[s] without annihilating their commonness" (Shaw 40). Therefore, her use of fantasy is not an escape into an idealized past where she would feel safe but a movement towards showing things under a different light. Beyond the familiar surroundings, which is away from the safety of the commonplace, she takes the readers to alternative world orders where discomforting truths are expressed. In the light of this, Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862), *The Prince's Progress* (1866) and *Sing-Song* (1872) are quite significant works in terms of their satirical and subversive intent. These poems contain critiques of the social inequalities, political problems, economic chaos, religious strife and sexual differentiations of the Victorian Age. Hence, in the process of analysis four main topics, religious, economic, sexual and psychoanalytical aspects, will be examined in order to display their reactionary stand as written from the viewpoint of a highly religious woman poet.

Goblin Market is primarily based upon the story of two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, who live together in a fairy-tale atmosphere which includes merchant goblin men selling exotic fruits at the market tempting the sisters to "come buy" (I 3). No matter how hard the sisters try to ignore their enticing cries or steadily warn each other not to peep through their goods in case their unknown roots will lure them, Laura cannot refrain from looking at the goblin men. While Lizzie runs away to avoid a meeting with the goblin brotherhood, Laura lingers there giving a full description of the goblin men's actions as well as their disfigured bestial looks. Gradually, Laura succumbs to temptation and desires to eat the goblin fruits though she has no money to give in return. The goblin men have a solution for that. They suggest that Laura should give a lock of her golden hair instead of money. With tears in her eyes, Laura lets them have a lock of her hair and starts consuming their magical goods hungrily. When she goes home after this feast, she finds Lizzie waiting for her at the gate warning her by telling her the

sad tale of Jeanie who after her encounter with the goblin men and her indulgence in their fruits pined away and died eventually.

Laura, in response, reports to her all that has happened and eagerly talks about how she will bring her sister some of the goblin fruits the next day. After her encounter with the goblins, Laura is restless and she is reluctant to do her daily practices yearning for more goblin fruit to quench her thirst. Once their works are over, Lizzie and Laura go to the brook. There, Laura specifically searches for where the goblins used to be but this time she can neither see them nor hear their voices, whereas her sister Lizzie can. This recognition is painful for Laura who, upon reaching home, starts dwindling day by day. Her hair turns white and her youth wastes away. Anxious about her sister, Lizzie decides to face the goblin men and goes to the market with "a silver penny in her purse" (I 324).

Seeing that she is spying on them, the goblin men start harassing Lizzie, forcing her to eat their fruits. Yet, Lizzie is there for a purpose, which is to save her sister rather than satisfying her own primitive urges. Therefore, she rejects their invitation and offers her penny in return for their fruit. This makes the goblin men furious. Disregarding her offer, they start mocking and bullying her. The stronger Lizzie stands, the wilder their acts become. However, the victor is Lizzie in the end, since, through her resistance, she wears out the goblin attack. The goblins, eventually recognizing that they will not bend Lizzie's will, toss her penny back and start throwing their fruits around. Upon this Lizzie runs home, happy that she has her money back, in addition to the fruit juice smeared all over her. Immediately she calls for Laura inviting her to taste the juices she has taken on herself for her sake. After a very perplexing scene between the two sisters, Laura's youth and joy are restored. At this point, the poem jumps to years later when the two sisters are both married. The sisters are with children of their own, who are apparently all daughters and they warn them of the dangers of the goblin men reckoning that "there is no friend like a sister" (I 562).

In this magical realm, there is Tolkienian plausibility. The fairy tale works according to its inner laws of consistency, for there is no irrelevant occurrence within this fantasy world. Supernatural elements are used, as well as magical aid, though not at its extreme. Besides, the outside world and the alternative world are brought together in an interesting union, since the goblin men are also merchant men. It seems as if the severe reality of Victorian "street pedlars of Christina's childhood," along with all the imported goods coming from the colonies of the

Empire, have moved into this fantasy realm mingling the everyday happenings with the supernatural (Marsh 231). In this neutral space, Rossetti aims to rediscover the rules that regulate the primary world rather than retreating from it into a world of oblivion. There is also Tolkienian recovery in the poem, as Rossetti represents the socio-economic realities of the Victorian Age through the illuminating light of fantasy, and of course, through the unlikely story of two sisters and their sinister antagonists.

Open to many readings, the poem abounds in various implications. Numerous critics have studied *Goblin Market* from plenty of different approaches as a result. D'Amico, summing these readings, states that "this poem of innocent maidens and sinister goblins has been read as a story of temptation and redemption, as an autobiographical narrative revealing repressed sexuality, a critique of Victorian materialism, a rejection of patriarchal amatory values, a celebration of woman's power, a sexual fantasy of incestuous lesbian love, and a literary representation of eating disorder anorexia nervosa" (68-9). In addition to these, psychoanalytic readings of the poem in general, such as those on female literary imagination (Maxwell 84), Rossetti's renunciation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Smulders 33), implied drug addiction (Mayberry 101), Britain's colonial empire (Carpenter 225) and tuberculosis in particular may also be counted (Chapman 132). Among all of these distinctive readings, the thing that is known for sure is that the poem is undeniably a fairy tale.

With its goblins who are neither men nor animals and maidens who are neither children nor adults or orphans, though without parents, *Goblin Market*, in Marsh's words, occupies the grey area between the physical and the supernatural world (238). The alternative world Rossetti creates in her poem is continuously open to risk, because it is the "territory of uncertainty, where things seem what they are not. [. . .] The story thus inhabits a confused, unstable realm, part domestic, part magical, part moral and part evil, part safe and part life-threatening" (Marsh 238). Rossetti's associations are both familiar and unfamiliar. She shows a tendency to include these visibly contrasting elements in harmony. Consequently, the territory the poem occupies is not a genuine alternative realm but one which includes elements from both the fantasy world and the physical world through which Rossetti creates a neutral space for her art that is free from patriarchal control.

Behind this magically webbed surface some critics like D'Amico, Bentley and Packer tend to read a Christian allegory of temptation, fall and redemption, reflexive of Christina Rossetti's

strong faith. These critics base their arguments on how most of Rossetti's poetry is already indulged in religious writings. Taking into consideration the huge number of her religious verse, Rossetti has already been considered as an experienced poet in this area. However, Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is open to religious readings on account of several other reasons. One of them is due to the fruit symbolism in the poem. In such readings the fruit symbolism in the poem signifies the Biblical story of the Fall and is clearly associated with the apple that Adam and Eve ate and their subsequent exile from the garden of Eden following that. Equally associated with disobedience and sexuality the symbol of the forbidden fruit stands mostly for indulgence in sinful physical pleasures.

According to Sammons, who develops a definition of religious fantasy which combines features of fantasy with aspects of Christianity, religious fantasy generally involves an invisible spiritual world, divine magic, the representation of theological issues or moral values, the conflict between good and evil and an inner spiritual quest presented in the language of symbol or archetype (1, 2). The first allusion to the Bible in *Goblin Market* comes along with the long list of fruits that are being sold at the market. After the prohibition concerning the fruits is announced by the sisters, the speculation about the fruits' unknown roots and goblin men's strange descriptions follow. The combination of bestial merchant men with angelic sisters is definitely not a good company. Only after they have a lock of her golden hair, the goblins let Laura taste their fruits. This scene unquestionably signifies Rossetti's intention to depict Laura's craving for the merchants' fruits to be recognized in a sexual sense. It was, after all, customary in the Victorian period to associate childhood with Eden and the loss of innocence which occurred with the eating of the apple as a sexual awakening (Bentley 70). During the Victorian Age the ideal was that women should be silent, obedient and most important of all pure. The fruit, therefore, represents "forbidden sexual experience, especially experience forbidden to Victorian women" (D'Amico 69). Having Rossetti's assistance at the Highgate Penitentiary in mind, it would not be wrong to assume that Rossetti already saw the fallen women's story as one paralleling the fall. During this transaction, Laura is sorry at first, weeping as she cuts her hair, but amongst all the fruits her heart desires gradually her worries evaporate:

> Sweeter than honey from the rock,
> Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
> Clearer than water flowed that juice;
> She never tasted such before,

How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
(I 129-37)

This event marks the beginning of her misery; her fall. After eating the fruits that are forbidden to her, as the auxiliary verb "should" (I 49) already indicates, she is not herself anymore (Bentley 68). Laura should have avoided the fruits, just like her sister Lizzie. D'Amico, having Rossetti's Christian faith in mind, reads these lines as pointing not to "the pleasure to be experienced in satisfying any of the sensual appetites, but rather to the impossibility of ever finding full satisfaction by attempting to satisfy the body" (69). This is once again stressed when Lizzie reminds Laura of what happened to Jeanie. As Packer indicates, Jeanie is a poetic tool that is designed to secure the Biblical fruit symbolism. That there may be "no doubt about what the symbolic fruit is intended to represent, Rossetti describes its effect upon another girl victim:" Jeanie (379). Lizzie reports Jeanie's miserable tale to Laura stating that Jeanie, having eaten the goblin fruits under the moonlight:

[. .] pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.
(I 154-62)

Jeanie's story is a foreshadowing of Laura's fall. Laura's greed makes her vulnerable: "Victorian readers would have understood the physical and spiritual defilement implied in her succumbing to the goblins' temptations, and in most Victorian literature such illicit sensual indulgence would lead inexorably to death" (Burlinson *Christina* 43). Jeanie's story serves as a cautionary tale for the sisters as it ends with Jeanie's death. Once the prohibition is violated, punishment follows in order to assure poetic justice. However, under such circumstances even death is not enough to bring peace and put an end to the bitter consequences of falling for temptation. Jeanie's ruin continues even after her death; she is fallen and wasted. Even daisies will not bloom on her grave. She is deprived of hope not only in life but also in death. In Laura's case, therefore, Jeanie's fall and its consequences are suggestive. While the night of

Laura's encounter with the goblins ends with the sisters' harmonious union with each other – golden head lying by "golden head" (I 184) – the following day shows that their harmony will be threatened soon. Their sameness stressed earlier leaves its place to an emphasis on their difference now to illustrate the destructive nature of temptation:

> Lizzie with an open heart,
> Laura in an absent dream,
> One content, one sick in part;
> One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
> One longing for the night.
> (I 210-14)
> . . . . . .
> Lizzie most placid in her look,
> Laura most like a leaping flame.
> (I 217-18)

In addition to these differences, unlike Lizzie, Laura cannot hear the goblin cry any more. In her "passionate yearning" (I 266) and "baulked desire" (I 267):

> Day after day, night after night,
> Laura kept watch in vain
> In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
> She never caught again the goblin cry:
> "Come buy, come buy;" –
> She never spied the goblin men
> Hawking their fruits along the glen:
> But when the noon waxed bright
> Her hair grew thin and grey;
> She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
> To swift decay and burn
> Her fire away.
> (I 269-80)

This mysterious transformation of Laura is the climax of her fall as she deeply suffers the consequences of succumbing to the forbidden fruit, disregarding her sister's warnings. Regardless of all the clues, such as the goblin men's sinister looks that could be easily associated with the devil's temptation of Eve to commit the original sin and Jeanie's exemplary tale of the fall, her rash act results in Laura's payment of her sin with the decay in her body and soul. In this respect, Laura's physical decline symbolizes her spiritual decay. She is not sick because she ate the forbidden fruit, but because she failed to see the symbolic meaning of it, taking no heed of the warnings of her morally superior sister (D'Amico 72). Therefore, her punishment is primarily a result of her disobedience. Because Laura, placed in

ethical opposition to her sister in a cautionary tale of nonconformity and restriction, fails, where Lizzie, the obedient sister, succeeds (Armstrong *Victorian* 349). Consequently, critics, like Gilbert and Gubar, have associated Laura with Eve and Lizzie with Christ. Because the way that Laura sees the fruit as attractive and disregards the restrictions placed upon her recalls the initial woman who turned away from God: Eve, just as Lizzie's act reminds one of the noble sacrifice made by Christ to provide salvation for all (D'Amico 70).

Pointing to the parallelism between Eve and Laura, as well as Lizzie and Christ, Gilbert and Gubar read the poem in religious and sexual terms. According to them, once Laura falls through the "rape" of a lock of her hair, she experiences a traditional Victorian degeneration (566). They further state that Laura metamorphoses

> into a witchlike old woman. But at this point, just as Christ intervened to save mankind by offering his body and blood as bread and wine for general spiritual consumption, so Laura's 'good' sister Lizzie, like a female Saviour, negotiates with the goblins (as Christ did with Satan) and offers herself to be eaten and drunk in a womanly holy communion. And just as Christ redeemed mankind from Original Sin, restoring at least the possibility of heaven to Eve's erring descendents, so Lizzie rehabilitates Laura, changing her back from a lost witch to a virginal bride and ultimately leading her into a heaven of innocent domesticity. (Gilbert and Gubar 566)

So, giving in to temptation, Laura becomes a slave to the same forces which add up to the biblical allusions that run throughout the poem. Laura's weakness, accordingly, encourages a number of Cardinal Sins ranging from gluttony and envy to sloth (Bentley 71). Lizzie, on the other hand, resists these temptations and in that represents Christ's courage and virtuousness. As the events preceding Laura's fall also imply:

> Tender Lizzie could not bear
> To watch her sister's cankerous care
> Yet not to share.
> (I 299-301)
> . . . . . .
> Till Laura dwindling
> Seemed knocking at Death's door:
> Then Lizzie weighed no more
> Better and worse;
> But put a silver penny in her purse,
> (I 320-24)
> . . . . . .
> And for the first time in her life
> Began to listen and look.
> (I 327-28)

Lizzie is never tempted by the fruit herself. She begins to listen and look for the sake of someone she loves, not to satisfy her own curiosity. "Mindful of Jeanie" (I 364) she resists the goblins' efforts to make her taste the forbidden fruit. In spite of the brutal attacks of the goblins, she does not give in to temptation and in that she shows a moral strength unlike her sister Laura who is devastated by her own frailty, not by the goblin fruit (Packer 378). Likewise, the spiritual importance of the goblin assault on Lizzie corresponds to the attempts meant for the defilement of her soul. D'Amico asserts that "while Rossetti well might have been consciously evoking the image of rape, the lines describing Lizzie's resistance suggest that this assault, one suffered for the sake of another, is a stage in Lizzie's spiritual, not sexual, development" (74). Through the strength of her will power, Lizzie shows that the delights of the earth must be forsaken in order to accomplish divine salvation (Packer 377).

Laura and Lizzie reveal a spiritual contrast throughout the poem relatively representing the duality between flesh and spirit. They stand for "respective propensities to good and evil, or [. . .] their relative strength and weakness of will" (Bentley 67). They may also be regarded as Rossetti's description of divine and profane love (Packer 375). Rossetti is in favour of sacred love implying that physical love is temporary and its results can be devastating. It is for sure that a battle is taking place in Lizzie as well. Caught in between an attraction to evil and a desire for good, in the long run Lizzie not only preserves her power to make right judgements between good and evil but also displays a strength of will which Laura has failed to exhibit (Bentley 68). Having examined the aftermath of Laura's reckless act closely, she resists the goblin attacks by using the goblin men's own strategy to cause their failure. It is true that the goblin men are very persuasive, but Lizzie proves to be even more determined than them. In the face of Lizzie's will power and determination, the goblins are "[w]orn out by her resistance" (I 438) and "vanished in the distance" (I 446). In the end, Lizzie stands like "a royal virgin town" (I 418). With her penny in her purse and fruit juices smeared all over her, she runs home to Laura and offers herself to her sister, parodying the biblical Communion as her words echo Christ's words at the Last Supper (Bentley 76):

> Eat me, drink me, love me;
> Laura, make much of me:
> For your sake I've braved the glen
> And had to do with goblin merchant men.
> (I 471-74)

In response, Laura openly asks Lizzie if she has tasted "the fruit forbidden" (I 479) for her sake. Afterwards, she starts feeding on her sister in a very puzzling scene between the two sisters; a scene which Burlinson considers as "one of the most intensely erotic and sensual invitations in canonical Victorian verse" (*Christina* 44). The scene between the sisters immediately reminds one of the bread and wine ritual that takes place at the Last Supper during which Christ offered bread and wine to his apostles suggesting that the bread represents his body and the wine his blood. Likewise, D'Amico reads this scene as a summons for Laura's soul rather than her body. Assuming it to be motivated by a sisterly concern rather than a desire for the forbidden fruit, she finds the Eucharistic scene between Lizzie and Laura as a confirmation of the authority of the spiritual over the sensual (D'Amico 78). Because it is only through this sacrifice that Lizzie succeeds in transforming the poisonous effect of the forbidden fruit into an antidote; purifying an evil instrument so that it becomes a vehicle for good which is symbolized in the poem as "[l]ife out of death" (I 524) (Bentley 76):

> Laura awoke as if from a dream,
> Laughed in the innocent old way,
> Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
> Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
> Her breath as sweet as May
> And light danced in her eyes.
>
> (I 337-42)

Rossetti's description of Laura's recovery suggests a religious awakening from the soul's sleep which is "a 'waiting time' between death and judgement, a time during which the soul can dream of or catch glimpses of paradise" (McGillis 212). The symbolic usage of the waiting time is suggestive of "a *new* second innocence" according to Armstrong, since Laura's previous corruption, as indicated by the restoration of her health, seems to be forgiven (*Victorian* 351). While Laura experiences the "stages of repentance, remorse, and purgation which the penitent must necessarily endure to achieve through regeneration and salvation," the traditional stages of the biblical fall and salvation are made visible and Laura emerges as the purified sinner whose sins are forgiven through the heroic sacrifice of her sister (Bentley 77).

Critics analyzing the poem from a religious outlook tend to acknowledge Lizzie as the heroine of the poem due to her gallant sacrifice. What Lizzie goes through is a much more painful

experience than her sister's; she must acquire intelligence of evil and still remain untainted (Packer 380). According to D'Amico, however, Rossetti's Christian belief has a subversive element in its association of Christ with Lizzie, since

> the church is traditionally characterized as feminine, but when Rossetti associates Lizzie with Christ, she blurs the sharp gender distinctions of the nineteenth century. For example, a reader who sees Lizzie as mirroring Christ might then either recognize the feminine aspect in Christ's sacrifice of self or see Lizzie's sisterly sacrifice in masculine terms, that is he might see Lizzie as acting not like a heroine but a hero. Second, by employing a female character as a Christ figure, Rossetti challenges those Victorian readers who, in a society that regarded women as inferior creatures, might easily have disregarded woman's spiritual equality with men. (76)

Rossetti shatters the conventions by upsetting the expectations of the readers. Apart from painting the picture of an active female hero, she also illustrates that women can be counted as equivalents of men in terms of religious faith. Burlinson, similarly referring to the Eucharistic scene between the two sisters, agrees with D'Amico in the sense that the scene recalls a spiritual feast. She further claims that Rossetti's match is a subversive one in that

> here we have a female Christ experiencing a physical passion. The overarching narrative of temptation, sacrifice, and redemption differs from conventional Christian allegory, because in *Goblin Market* women are both sinners *and* redeemers, sinned against and redeemed. Female does not bring about the downfall of the world and Lizzie is not just 'good', she is astoundingly strong. (Burlinson *Christina* 45)

Through *Goblin Market*, Rossetti offers a new outlook to the Victorian society. She not only sees women capable of heroic strength but also of a moral one too and in order to discuss this challenging idea, she employs fantasy benefiting from the immunity it allows for her. Typically in Victorian literature and art, women are not presented "as Christ-like saviours who can enter the 'haunted glen,' resist a goblin attack, and 'win the fiery antidote'" (D'Amico 76). However, Rossetti, through Lizzie, reveals that "the self-sacrificing love Victorian women were to embody should not be seen as angelic, but as Christlike; in other words, she indicates that women were capable of a higher level of spiritual existence and action than that of ministering angel in the home" (D'Amico 82-3). So, in *Goblin Market* Christina Rossetti shows that when given the chance women can also act as saviours within the society particularly in the treatment of their sisters' wounds.

Goblin Market's implications should not be limited to religious readings only, because, in addition to the use of language as both religious and sexual referent, Rossetti also "plays the socio-economic register off against the biblical register" (Leighton *Victorian* 135). Blurring the distinctions between religious implications and sexual connotations the poem also engages itself in economics. Interestingly, Rossetti chooses the marketplace as the setting for her fantastic poem, instead of employing a totally neutral space. Rather than creating a completely random independent world, Rossetti incorporates features from the age she lives in into this contextless fairy-tale realm. Her deliberate choice marks *Goblin Market* as a poem which, starting with the commodification of the Victorian manufactures, gradually extends itself to the commodification of the individual. Consequently, as far as the poem is concerned, a sharp but delicate economic critique pervades it (Menke 105). The title at once indicates that this is a poem about the market and economics. Similarly, Holt considers the choice of the setting as the market as significant in the sense that

> *Goblin Market* has been regarded as a nursery tale, as a portrait of a divided self, as a fantasy about sexuality, and, most recently, as a parable about sisterhood. The emphasis in all of these readings has been on the goblins, and the issues of gender and sexuality they seem to represent, while the 'market' of the title has received little attention. (131)

Market economics was a vital part of Victorian culture, because it was during the Victorian period that the growth of industrialism triggered the rise of a class-conscious society which was framed by capitalist concerns (Hughes 37). The all-powerful middle class investor, whose business centred mostly around trade, held the power just like the landowning aristocrats did in the previous centuries. The introduction of factories into Victorian life, likewise introduced the rise of the working class, who was at the bottom of the chain of power. Working and middle classes constituted the utmost important groups of the period. As industrial power gained importance day by day, so did the middle-class bourgeoisie turning everything into commodities, particularly the work power of the working class. Gradually, social Darwinism gave birth to capitalist economics in which individual salvation was valued much more than anything else.

As a result, this competitive environment of buying and selling resulted in two main trends in literature. The literary texts of the period either focused on encouraging hero worship, which represented the middle class gentleman who won his rights rather than inheriting these

privileges or those against it. Those in opposition criticized the luxury the bourgeoisie had wholeheartedly in the face of the difficulties the working class had. The echoes of these trends reflected themselves in the most unlikely places in literature and were recurrently used in folk and fairy tales. The texts encouraging hero worship appealed to the taste of the middle-class gentlemen who believed that the self-made man rightfully won his place upon earth whether through trickery or by right. Earning their rights, they believed that they deserved their privileges more than their noble counterparts. In an age when the scientific developments, geographical discoveries, new inventions and explorations underlined progress and progress only, they were the heroes of history.

On the other hand, in spite of all of these advancements, the condition of the poor who worked hard so as to earn a living in industrial towns did not change. The problems of the period reflected themselves mostly in their life struggles with more problems experienced than before (Sussman 245). Being a part of the wishfulfillment tradition, the fairy tales in this sense helped the underprivileged, too, in hopes of a brighter future to come and also in their sceptical attitude towards the so-called progress of the age. Thus, showing two sides to a single story, these tales helped to represent the condition of the needy and disadvantaged fractions of the society as well as the newly emerged powerful middle class heroes. Especially the middle-class hero, or more properly anti-hero, occupies an important part in Rossetti's *Goblin Market* in his upward movement in the social ladder through trade. In this age of stable instability, Rossetti represents a world of chaotic market economics in which the middle-class gentlemen turn people themselves into commodities; buying and selling their work power in order to transform them from the subjects into the objects of the market. In this respect, the goblins represent the first type of hero, the middle class tradesmen; whereas the sisters symbolize the second type, the deprived groups, suffering from the policies of the ruling classes.

Sympathizing with the condition of the poor, Rossetti in her works sides with those groups despised and neglected by the society. As far as folk and fairy tales are concerned, they are closely connected with the era in which they are written, being the representations of a cultural interest in issues of gender, class, race and national identity mostly. Considering exclusively the period in which *Goblin Market* was composed, Burlinson similarly observes that

> the Crimean War is not long over, the American Civil War is soon to begin, the 'Woman Question' is generating increasing discursive momentum, and one of the effects of British imperialism is the immigration to England of peoples from many colonized parts of the globe. Fears about working-class uprising, Irish immigration, and racial miscegenation all pertain to the representation of the goblins as animalistic and bestial. Rossetti's 'goblins' may signify a class of itinerant workers, perhaps specifically Irish, considered to be unfit sexual partners for bourgeois girls. Or, as Cora Kaplan has argued, *Goblin Market* may be seen to reproduce and compound Victorian fears about black-white miscegenation, changing our understanding of 'White and golden Lizzie stood' (I. 408) from a description of innocent virginity and Christ-like bearing to an image of white supremacy, anxious to retain its claim to privilege and superiority. (*Christina* 47)

Goblin Market reflects both the attraction to and the social prohibitions against union with the "other," whether that label is attributed sexually, socially, racially, religiously, linguistically or ontologically. The historical moment of the poem's production has left numerous influences on its textuality, despite its own attempt to evade history; to refuse any framework beyond the once upon a time of the fairy tale (Burlinson *Christina* 47-8). The poem deals with most of the issues of the age such as the oppositional conflict between foreign and domestic; middle class and working class communities; subject and object positions; masculine and feminine spheres and finally the situation of the poet and the poetess. For Rossetti, salvation can only be achieved through collective accomplishment and people should care for each other regardless of their differences in origin, gender or class.

In an age dominated by personal salvation and material gains, Rossetti employs economic motifs to draw the attention of the ruling class to the plight of the underprivileged. Holt observes that economic language and metaphors, terms of finance and commerce pervade the poem which opens with an extensive call to the market (131). Primarily the references to the poem's context are presented with the infamous list that opens the poem, which through "a familiar patterning of language in children's literature – the list or catalogue" charms Laura (McGillis 217):

> Apples and quinces,
> Lemons and oranges,
> Plump unpecked cherries,
> Melons and raspberries,
> Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
> Swart-headed mulberries
> Wild free-born cranberries,
> Crab-apples, dewberries,
> Pine-apples, blackberries,
> Apricots, strawberries; –

(I 5-14)

. . . . . .

Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and green-gages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South

(I 20-9)

Among this total of twenty-nine kinds of fruit named above, some of them are native to Victorian Britain whereas almost a third of them is foreign (Menke 113). However, these were still a part of Victorian horticulture, since they referred to the fruits growing in the colonized areas of the Empire. They came particularly from the South where the Empire's colonies were mostly situated. The poem in this sense links the fruits of the poem to the fruits of the empire: which are not just common, home-grown English fruits, but also a rich variety of gourmet fruits imported from foreign climates (Carpenter 225). These exotic fruits, with their mystic sources, appealed to the taste of the middle-class gentlemen. On account of the advancements in trade and the sophistication in consumer tastes, they became a special favourite of the middle-class tradesmen, too (Menke 114). Apart from importing these goods from foreign lands, the merchants tried to grow these fruits within the island as well in order to introduce them to the home-grown economy.

Rossetti knew that in an age when the true object of the purchaser was desire, it was possible that everything, even people, would turn into commodities in this manner (Menke 114). Likewise, in her poem, she presents the goblins' notion of the world as a highly materialistic one "as a place of getting and spending, a view that can spring an ontological trap on the unwary, converting not just things but people into commodities" (Bentley 66):

"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.

(I 46-7)

. . . . . .

Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant men.

(I 60-70)

As for the goblin men, they are also merchant men whose powerfully arranged free trade conceals the fact that they arrange the terms of commerce. Their origins remain unknown and such discretion extends to their stock (Menke 116). Similar to the fruits they put on the market, some of the beasts the goblin men look like are conventional whereas others are much more extraordinary which adds to their appeal (Menke 117):

> One had a cat's face,
> One whisked a tail,
> One tramped a rat's pace,
> One crawled like a snail,
> One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
> One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
> (I 71-6)

In her depiction of the goblins, Rossetti, rather than creating totally fantastic creatures of her own, chooses to make use of what she already has in her hand and derives these naughty creatures from the English folk tales, such as the brownies, bestowing them with bestial looks. By way of this description, she aims at both formal disruption – defamiliarization – and thematic familiarity. For, as Menke argues the "homelands of the exotic animals associated with the goblin men describe the Southern hemisphere in general and Britain's colonies there in particular" (118). Formally transformed from the terrifying ogres of old to merchant goblin men, Rossetti's goblins might thematically represent the colonized people's distinct appearance by the white Anglo-Saxon protestant.

Throughout the poem, the goblin men's physical, as well as moral, difference from the sisters is stressed. The goblins represent the "other" in every sense of the word and in visible contrast to the continuously stressed similarity of the sisters. Initially, the antagonism between home and glen is indicated through their physical distance. Their symbolic remoteness is demonstrated by an extensive waste, a steep bank, and a gate. As Holt observes: "The two places belong to different biological (and moral) orders" (133-34). Home can also be taken metaphorically for the home-grown, domestic, goods which is in competition with the foreign products. As the competition gets fiercer, so does the prices. The price of the domestic goods has to be raised so that they can compete with the foreign ones. Meanwhile, during the struggle between the domestic goods and foreign ones, who has the real trouble is the poor working classes since they cannot afford to buy either. According to Carpenter,

> [t]hat Rossetti associated the availability of such luxuries with the capitalistic exploitation of the poor is clearly indicated in her 1892 commentary on the Book of Revelation, *The Face of the Deep*, where she identifies her country with apocalyptic Babylon and assails it with prophetic wrath: 'Alas England full of luxuries and thronged by stinted poor, whose merchants are princes and whose dealings crooked, whose packed storehouses stand amid bare homes, whose gorgeous array has rags for neighbours!' (225)

Also implying the geographical distance between the island and its colonies, in *Goblin Market* Laura and Lizzie lead a self-sufficient life in which they produce their own food for their own consumption. In contrast, goblin merchants sell goods that are not necessarily their own productions. Lizzie's rhetorical question: "Who knows upon what soil they fed / Their hungry thirsty roots?" (I 44-5) points to the ambiguous roots of the goblin fruits. The origins of the goblin wares are twice distanced, an estrangement which makes the sisters' basic sustenance another indicator of their distinction from the commercially motivated goblins (Holt 133). According to Holt, home in *Goblin Market* "seems the opposite of goblins' glen, isolated from the world of commerce. The first scene in the home stresses the sisters' isolation, in implicit contrast to the goblins' prolific trade" (132-33).

By piling fruit upon fruit, exotics upon domestics, the poem at the very beginning introduces the danger of foreign goods upon domestic economics (Menke 117). While the poem gradually unfolds, two contrasting spheres of economics appear. The sisters' home represents household economics whereas the goblins' glen symbolizes foreign economics. According to Holt the "home is inescapably involved in economics– as the word's Greek root, *oikonomia* ('management of a household'), suggests" (134). Domestic economics is as important as foreign economics, since a diet based solely on exotic goods can be dangerous to the development of the home-based economy. Its devastating effects result in the malfunctioning of a society, which is in every sense fit for taking care of itself within its own resources. Pointing to the analogy drawn for the sisters as bees, Holt affirms that "the simile is peculiarly apt: they are bee-like not only in the quite hum of their industry, but especially in their self-sufficiency, producing with their own labour the food that sustains them," not needing any outside help (133):

> Early in the morning
> When the first cock crowed his warning,
> Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
> Laura rose with Lizzie:
> Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
> Aired and set to rights the house,

> Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
> Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
> Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
> Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
> (I 199-208)

Clearly, home is also an active site of productivity, but soon the success of this domestic economy fails, once Laura tastes foreign goods and yearns for more. One may wonder why Laura asks for the goblin fruits in the first place and despite its devastating and evidently addictive effects, a second time. There are several reasons for this. Menke argues that contrary to the sisters, who produce plain country provisions that necessitate some physical toil to generate, the goblins offer wares that assure instantaneous satisfaction but seem to exist only on the market (119). The sisters do not have to work or wait for the satisfaction of their needs anymore. They can buy anything they want from the market. Therefore, it is desire that tempts Laura. Once experiencing it, Laura's previously isolated domestic economy is threatened as she admits to herself: "She never tasted such before," (I 132) / "Fruits which that unknown orchard bore" (I 135). It is the faculty of consuming the unknown that appeals to the sisters; "the epistemological aporia between the product and the knowledge of its production, the gap between perceiving the fruits and imagining their roots" (Menke 117).

Consumer desire is connected to Lacanian desire as well. Lacan defines desire as an attempt to fuse with the impossible maternal Other which is ventured neither by "need – the appetite for satisfaction" or by the "demand for love" (Paccaud-Huguet 285). Paccaud-Huguet considers this as the point where fantasy comes in and a formation of the unconscious "relates the subject to the inaccessible Other through the mediation of an object, placing a protective film on the real" (285). In *Goblin Market*, the consumer-to-be misses the point that to consume is to expose oneself to the same uses, to encounter the risk of becoming the object rather than the subject of exchange; to become the devoured rather than the devourer (Helsinger 210). Rossetti's poem, in this respect, presents a marketplace in which the female appetite is at risk as it can easily change positions from the purchaser to the purchased (Carpenter 213). Helsinger notes that in *Goblin Market*, the domestic desires of the sisters, who are the implied agents of consumption, put women at risk as objects to be purchased in a milieu of competitive buying and selling dominated by men (190). Laura's relationship with the market, in this sense, is "an all-consuming one, both because it may threaten to make the market's subject into its object and because it engenders desires that can by definition never be satisfied" (Menke 126-27).

Desire is also the major factor behind capitalism, for the market creates a tantalizing effect by producing a product but not readily giving it in to the customer. Following the rise of a wealthy middle class, Victorian Age witnessed the appearance of a pompous bourgeoisie society, who loved to display their refined tastes in obvious attempts to imitate the aristocracy. Because men were the bread-winners, it was mostly the duty of women to exhibit the middle-class tastes. As a result of this inclination, the age developed an unnecessary need to decorate every object, including the Victorian women, elaborately. Creating a tantalizing effect by way of producing a commodity, but not readily giving in to people unless it is earned, desire encourages people to purchase in order to consume. Carpenter, in the light of Armstrong's study of Carroll's *Alice* books, draws parallels between the *Alice* books and *Goblin Market* and argues that Alice's dilemma, which seems to begin and end with her mouth just like Laura's, marks "a new moment in the history of desire; a moment when the burgeoning consumer culture based on British imperialism changed the nature of middle-class English femininity" (213). Through capitalist exploitation and the high value given to the satisfaction of fake desires, women, as a result, suffered the consequences of becoming objects themselves in this transaction.

Women turn into the objects of the market – that which is purchased – mostly in relation to their bodies. Therefore, the sexual implications of fruit symbolism are of utmost importance in the financial sense as well. According to Holt, the fact that "the goblins are costermongers, economic creatures as well as sexual ones, suggests that sexual and economic systems of relation may intersect in other ways as well" (132). Women's bodies are interchangeable as money in an economy of male consumption. With regard to home versus glen opposition, it also implies a sexual difference when men and women are specifically concerned, pointing to the idea that exchange is the task of goblins, not of girls (Holt 132). The market is hazardous to maids who belong to their safe home. The male is the wage earner whereas the female is the passive consumer, satisfied with what she is given. Accordingly, Sadun remarks:

> In a society shaped by materialistic values, women are dependent on men, they are socially and economically inferior, and lack the privilege of any materialistic exchange. [. . .] So, the only place safe for a woman is not the market where the values and control are established by men but her safe home with her safe domestic concerns. (108)

When a Victorian woman decides to enter the market, she has nothing but her body to convert to money (Holt 138). Not being acquainted with the market economics of goblin men, Laura

in this manner substitutes herself for the coin which she lacks and "in a gesture which parodies the favourite exchange of Victorian betrothals" gives a golden lock in return (Leighton *Victorian* 136):

> I have no copper in my purse,
> I have no silver either,
> And all my gold is in the furze
> That shakes in windy weather
> Above the rusty heather."
> "You have much gold upon your head,"
> They answered all together:
> "Buy from us with a golden curl."
> She clipped a precious golden lock,
> She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
> Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
> (I 118-29)

Keeping in mind Rossetti's views on marriage and fallen women, it is clear that Rossetti is against the commodification of women's bodies whether in terms of prostitution or of marriage. For Rossetti, beauty, with which women trade is an extremely unvaluable commodity, since it is easily susceptible to decay (Helsinger 202). Nevertheless, women, regarded as the have nots within Victorian commodity culture, have nothing else but their beauty to substitute for what they lack in the marriage market. Severely criticizing this exchange, Rossetti reveals that women can never take equal parts in courtships structured by the economic laws of bargain which always favours the male (Helsinger 203).

Initially Laura was after an object, when suddenly, through the association of her golden hair with money, her own body turned into a form of currency (Maxwell 95). Correspondingly, the hair is also, on a different level, "only a slippery, changing symbol of value – in fact, a coin. Virginity and coins are thus linked as objects which are inherently marketable; parts of a transaction of goblin myth and power" (Leighton *Victorian* 136-37). Helsinger, too, confirms that women bargaining for marriage risk being reduced from consumer to consumed; "[t]rading with their beauty, they become wholly identified with it, and hence subject to the inevitable natural process of decay" (202). Reduced to a commodity, women can only change positions from being regarded as daughter or sister to wife. Defined all the time in relation to a man, within this exchange they have no rights or material power of their own. Therefore, Rossetti considers love and marriage as both illusionary, full of promises, but then simply turning the expectations down just like the goblin fruits.

The symbolic meaning of the golden curl is not only evident in *Goblin Market*, but in another poem of Rossetti's, too. In Rossetti's poem "Johnny: Founded on an Anecdote of the First French Revolution," the golden curl analogy is used in a similar manner. Denoting money once again, the allusion to the golden curl is introduced through a male protagonist this time:

> Johnny had a golden head
> Like a golden mop in blow,
> Right and left his curls would spread
> In glory and a glow,
> And they framed his honest face
> Like stray sunbeams out of place.
> (II 1-6)

Along with its economic significance; blonde hair can also be interpreted as a signifier of virtue in fairy tales. Fairy tale heroes and heroines usually have golden heads which signify their innate goodness whereas dark hair is, except for a few cases, usually associated with the darkness of soul. As Warner argues, blonde hair is a common quality of fairy tales, for fairness is an assurance of good character as the symbolic opposite of the foul (364). Blonde hair represents all that is pure and clean. Warner further suggests that blonde hair is traditionally associated with virgin's hair and innocence, since it implies "pale skin, which in turn entails lack of exposure, again on a doubled level, either to the rays of the sun in outdoor work, or to the gaze of others" (368). Likewise, Johnny is evidently a good character. Similar to all the other good-natured fairy tale heroes or heroines, he, too, has a problem though; he is very poor. Contrary to the gold he carries upon his head, "Johnny did not own a boot / To cover up his muddy foot" (II 17-8):

> Johnny's face was pale and thin,
> Pale with hunger and with crying;
> For his mother lay within,
> Talked and tossed and seemed a-dying,
> While Johnny racked his brains to think
> How to get her help and drink,
>
> Get her physic, get her tea,
> Get her bread and something nice;
> Not a penny piece had he,
> And scarce a shilling might suffice;
> No wonder that his soul was sad,
> When not one penny piece he had.
> (II 19-30)

The implied reason behind Johnny's misfortune, the French Revolution, is slightly touched upon in the subtitle of the poem. Except for that, Rossetti makes no other reference to the Revolution that began with high hopes and expectations but ended up in disillusionment. *Goblin Market* and "Johnny" are analogous in this sense, showing the vulnerability of not only women but also men within the market economy. Through the golden hair imagery, Rossetti presents the social realities of the Victorian Age criticizing the unfortunate people's commodification during economic transactions.

While Johnny is "Wishing much but scarcely hoping / To earn a shilling or a penny" (II 33-4), a kind neighbour passes by him and asks Johnny why he is sad. Once Johnny reveals the truth for his unhappiness, the neighbour suggests that "the widow's son" "[h]ad curls of gold would fetch their price; / Long curls which might be clipped, and sold / For silver, or perhaps for gold" (II 51-4). Upon hearing this, Johnny immediately goes to the shop and has his hair cut. Like Lizzie, whose behaviour is based on saving her sister, Johnny's act, too, is based on an unselfish basis. He sacrifices his hair for the sake of his mother but he is never regretful hearing the "jingling money in his pocket" (II 60). Reminiscent of Lizzie, Johnny, too, returns from the market with his money and dignity intact:

> Precious money – tea and bread,
> Physic, ease, for Mother dear,
> Better than a golden head:
> Yet our hero dropped one tear
> When he spied himself close shorn,
> Barer much than lamb new born.
> (II 61-6)

Like Laura, Johnny, too, weeps. However, his weeping is soon related to an image of a lamb new born. Through this image, Rossetti seems to draw parallels between Johnny and Christ who as God's lamb sacrificed himself for the salvation of mankind. Johnny seems to carry the features of both sisters as well. He is like Laura physically, due to his golden hair, his having it cut and weeping after this incident. He also bears resemblances to Lizzie on account of his noble quest and subsequent victory. His only difference from Lizzie, however, lies in the fact that he returns with his money jingling in his pocket, rather than purse this time.

It is evident that, without any material power, a precious part of the body is the one and only thing that the maidens, or the deprived, in Johnny's case, can turn into money in market

economy. Significantly, it is the goblins' response upon Laura's wish that puts "this essentialist logic into motion, equating her body with her value within a gendered system of exchange" (Holt 136). There lies their trickery. By letting the goblins determine her price within the market, Laura submits to their power. She is deceived in accepting the authority of the goblin men over her body; by letting them name her value within their system (Holt 142). Ultimately, her fascination with the world of commerce, her subsequent weakness in it and the slippery nature of exchange that she accepts suggest that her shortage of a coin in reality stands for a lack of a privileged term of gender (Holt 136). After all, she also produces food, however, what is desired by the goblin men is not her products but her body which is turned into an object of exchange.

Contrary to her sister, Lizzie is a much more capable customer because she is prepared for what awaits her properly. According to Helsinger, in this fantasy of consumer power, it is through Lizzie that Rossetti affirms the power of women as both agents and objects within the market where the authorized customer is woman (193). In opposition to Gilbert and Gubar's observation that Laura, like Lizzie, "has become a true Victorian angel-in-the-house – selfless and smiling" (567) at the end of the poem, Helsinger stresses that the sisters both learn to survive the perils of market, although Lizzie's victory is made rather more explicit (193):

> Till Laura dwindling
> Seemed knocking at Death's door:
> Then Lizzie weighed no more
> Better and worse;
> But put a silver penny in her purse
> (I 320-24)

Lizzie not only has money in her purse but she also leaves her desire at home. However hard the goblin men try, they cannot force Lizzie to eat what she buys. Helsinger reads Lizzie's victory, not in terms of her moral strength to resist temptation but in relation to her going to the market doubly armed (209). To begin with, Lizzie has brought money with her and, unlike Laura, she knows how to use it (Helsinger 209). She is resolute on saving her sister's soul in a selfless and heroic way. Eventually, Lizzie succeeds where her sister has failed. Her confidence relies on the penny and the knowledge she owns; when economics is concerned, money is power and Lizzie is aware of that:

> "Good folk," said Lizzie,
> Mindful of Jeanie:

"Give me much and many:" –
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
(I 363-67)

The sisters' difference in attitude marks their respective failure and success in the market. When the goblins suggest that Laura should give a golden curl in exchange for their fruit, she agrees, letting them set the terms of the bargain. Therefore, Menke considers savvy Lizzie as a far better shopper (127). "Mindful of Jeanie," she insists that the goblins bargain on her own terms (I 364):

"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits tho' much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee." –
(I 383-89)

Upon Lizzie's reaction, the goblins become uneasy since they fail to get what they desire. Their aim seems to reduce the agent into a commodity all along rather than providing her with a product in the first place. The goblins are even more uncomfortable at the thought of participating in the market on Lizzie's terms. They insist that she should not only buy the fruit that her sister wants but should eat it herself. According to Leighton, the most subversive side of the poem lies in the fact that Rossetti takes the power game a step further by never letting Lizzie pay for what she gets (136). Even though she is subjected to the goblins' abuse, she ultimately returns home with her body and also penny intact:

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,
Its bounce was music to her ear.
(I 447-53)

This time, in the bargain between the goblin men and the maidens, the winner is the maidens. Menke observes that Lizzie is a saviour in every sense of the word: "she saves her pennies, she saves herself, she saves her fruit juice, and at last she saves her sister" (128). Moreover,

the poem "brilliantly subverts its own moral as well as social seriousness. The sisters are saved, not by avoiding temptation or by repenting, which would be the logical Christian message, but by tricking the market and beating the goblins at their own games" (Leighton *Victorian* 137). In this manner, trickery, which is the basis of the goblin's acts, is used against the goblins by Lizzie paving her way to victory.

Metaphorically connoting the loss of virginity, the exchange of the golden curl, according to Marsh, stands for a traditionally sexual implication "consciously echoing the amorous conquest in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*" (234). The purse, in this light, is read by Leighton as the "Victorian euphemism [. . .] for vagina" stressing women's vulnerability within the market (*Victorian* 136). Payment with hair also reminds of the golden hair/golden coin dialectic in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" (Bentley 70). Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem, "Jenny," which was published in 1870, though he started on the subject as early as 1848, is about a fallen woman whose fate Christina Rossetti was clearly aware of. Christina Rossetti recalls and repeats Jenny's fate as something of a cautionary tale to Laura and all the other sisters through Lizzie. As far as Jeanie is concerned, Marsh observes that sex is indeed referred to when the sisters recall the story of Jeanie; "poetic sister to her near-namesake in Gabriel's poem, who in accepting goblin gifts tastes the 'joys brides hope to have' and dies – a clear allusion to pre-marital experience" (*Christina* 233). Consequently, Jeanie appears as a traditional symbol for the fallen woman while Lizzie thinks about "Jeanie in her grave" (I 312):

> Who should have been a bride;
> But who for joys brides hope to have
> Fell sick and died
> In her gay prime
>
> (I 313-16)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem, "Jenny" positions Jenny as an object, as a fallen woman, and questions "what thing" she is (79). The persona of the poem is talking to a sleeping Jenny who turns out to be dead by the end of the poem. The speaker seems to be sympathizing with, yet at the same time condemning her, throughout the poem. It is clear that his conflicting ideas arise from his own compassion towards her and the moral restrictions that are inflicted upon him by the society:

> Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?--

But most from the hatefulness of man
Who spares not to end what he began,
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside [. . .]
(82-6)

The persona's criticism seems to be directed not towards the girl but to the society. However, what is also evident is that the persona is also a part of that society. Although he tries desperately to release himself from prejudices, he cannot avoid blaming Jenny for her faults. He is hypocritical in that sense, continually stressing how he is different from all the rest and in the end using her for his own ends as well. Jenny's death by the end of the poem makes this clear. Turning her into the object of the poem, the persona uses her to inspire him to write his poem and when he no more needs her, he kills her. The usage of the verb "use" by the persona stresses Jenny's objectification in the process. The poem proceeds with an emphasis upon Jenny's familiarity with the market:

Jenny, you know the city now.
A child can tell the tale there, how
Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
(135-38)
. . . . . .
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your mirth and woe;
Have seen your lifted silken skirt
Advertize dainties through the dirt;
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue; and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone [. . .]
(143-50)

An interest in the market is a prominent feature of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem, too. Similarities are not only limited to that however. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem includes the words "goblin" (206), "golden coins" (339) and "magic purse" (342) as well, perhaps inspiring his sister to write her side to the story. Dante Gabriel Rossetti sends Jenny to her never-ending sleep in the end, despite the reluctant objections of his persona: "Jenny, wake up . . . Why, there's the dawn!" (303). Unlike her brother's work, in Christina Rossetti's poem, Jeanie is accused not of having an illicit affair but of not being able to take her place in the market successfully. In this sense, Christina Rossetti's Jeanie is used as a representation of the fallen woman who suffers from the consequences of her material depravation and moral fall.

Helsinger asserts that: "When the heroine of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" is 'mindful of Jeanie' (I 364), she is thinking not just of Jenny's sexual fall but of her failure to take her place in the market as a consumer" (208).

The gender-based economy is what makes women suffer, while placing men at an advantaged position. The bizarre position that the Victorian woman occupies reminds one of the prostitute or fallen woman whose sole financial power relies on selling her body, in turning herself into an object of consumption (Maxwell 88). What really condemns Laura as a fallen woman is her carelessness in entering the market, because during the golden curl exchange the means of payment shifts "from the Semiotic Order of the female body to the Symbolic Order of money" which in the end harms women (Leighton *Victorian* 136). In other words, as Carpenter suggests, the hypocrisy of the Victorian consumer culture relies on the fact that it "both produced objects of desire and dictated that little Alices must learn to control their desires, in imagined contrast to women of the 'dark continents' and prostitutes on the dark streets of their own cities" (213). Likewise, Laura and Lizzie epitomize women's double plight in the Victorian sexual economics: One either risks becoming a commodity herself, or never tastes desire at all (Carpenter 226).

Exemplifying how like the "other 'fruits of empire,' women's bodies were vended in the streets surrounding the churches, and zealous churchwomen like Christina Rossetti went out to 'buy' them back," *Goblin Market* gave hope to many lost souls of the period (Carpenter 215). Just as the Penitentiary she worked aimed at rescuing fallen women through spiritual reformation, Rossetti, in her poem, warned women of the dangers of the market awaiting the unwary. Considering the penitentiary as a safe haven which keeps women off the market, she suggests that women should recover there until they have something to sell other than their bodies (Helsinger 194). At the penitentiary, women not only repented but also learned the importance of sisterhood, of trusting someone who knew what it was like to be a woman in a world dominated by men. Carpenter makes it clear that one of the most significant messages of *Goblin Market* is that women are not all alone in their journey:

> Working with the "homeless, destitute and fallen women" gave Rossetti "access to a uniquely feminocentric view of woman's sexuality and simultaneously opened her eyes to its problematic position in Victorian culture. In particular, her immediate experience with the interaction between prostitutes and women's religious communities may have constructed Rossetti's representation of a 'marketplace' in

> which 'appetite' puts a woman at risk, but where her salvation is to be found in not controlling her appetite but in turning to another woman". (215)

Keeping in mind the interest of most of the fairy tales with buying and selling, it is not wrong to consider *Goblin Market* as a political economic one (Menke 128). Leighton asserts that, in this poem "curls and coins, pennies and purses, goblins and men, are figuratively interchangeable in a free market of meaning where one thing constantly shifts into another and where the rules of trickery, fantasy or brute force prevail" (*Victorian* 137). In this market, "everything may be goblinised into something else, while nothing is above being bought" (Leighton *Victorian* 137). *Goblin Market* is hopeful for the future. In the strictly divided world of the haves and have nots, women still find a way to subvert the masculine power at their own game. That is why Helsinger considers the poem as fantasy, not because its men are goblins and its customer wares are magical, but because, for once, a female bondage interferes so as to make women successful in a market run by merchant men (205). Being a fairy tale, in *Goblin Market* women can only magically overcome men in their own games, since in an age run by real merchant men, they have no chance to do so. The poem's magical provision of Lizzie with a penny affirms this fake victory, for in reality Lizzie cannot have any financial power (Holt 139).

Considering the relationship of the market economics to the literary marketplace, critics, like Menke and Maxwell, tend to read *Goblin Market* as a poem that connects the economic marketplace to the literary market. In their opinion, there is undoubtedly a mutual relationship between them. Menke, in this sense, points to the poem's consciousness of its own position as a commodity, as itself something like a type of literary goblin fruit (128). Correspondingly, the arbitrary symbols of power that have been mentioned so far in relation to the issues of gender also parallel the subject of female literary creativity and production in opposition to masculine texts. On the whole, where literary works are circulated for consumption, poetic language was seen as a male property whereas novel writing, which was not considered as valuable as writing poetry, was regarded as a feminine employment (Arata 60).

It is also the reason why in spite of the great bulk of the female novelists, there were few poetesses during the Victorian Age. Deprived of the necessary classical education which constituted the basis for writing poetry, these remarkably few poetesses had difficulties in claiming themselves a place in the literary world of the time. Even Rossetti had a hard time in being recognized as such, since her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti never acclaimed Christina

Rossetti as a member of the group, although he was quite familiar with her artistic faculties. Therefore, critics reading the poem as Rossetti's revolt against women's displacement from the literary arena, refer to *Goblin Market* as "the" poem in which Rossetti criticizes the poetic brotherhoods disregarding women's poetry. McGann further claims that *Goblin Market* is about poetry. For him, behind the symbol of the goblins, lies the particular corruption of the literature of the age (McGann 111). In the same way, for Mermin, the goblins hint at the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the hostile brothers to female productions of art (147).

Accordingly, the glen, represented as an alternative world order which is inhabited solely by men, stands for the territory of male authors. The fact that women are not allowed there marks it as a place for literary production from which women are evidently dismissed. Women were disadvantaged in the literary marketplace, as in the economic one during the Victorian period. They were considered as unqualified for producing serious works. Subsequently, Holt sees the glen as an indicator of the status of women in the literary world. For him, the glen refers to a literary tradition that has used women as sexual scapegoats. He further claims that "[a] woman who enters the glen, especially a woman writer, places herself in a historical context that assigns her a negative value on the literary exchange" immediately (Holt 132). The female poet's position is seen as no different from that of the prostitute in the literary market and she is faced with devaluation at the outset. Therefore, the feature of the poetess' recognition of herself as incompetent within the male literary marketplace was quite a common one. Rossetti presents this idea by way of the exceptional linguistic skills the goblins have. McGillis emphasizes the goblins' use of language in this context and argues that their linguistic competence at the very beginning makes it clear that what the goblins are putting up for sale is language (217).

The goblins are the owners of the majority of the rhetorical beauty of the poem. With their persistent cry, "Come buy, come buy" (I 4), they urge the poetesses-to-be to buy their fruits of imagination which tastes better than the maidens' own productions. In their "parrot-voice" (I 112) crying "Pretty Polly" (I 114), the goblin men mock the female artists' inability to create works of their own. The parrot symbolism is significant in its implication that the poetesses are only capable of imitation, not of creation. Maxwell, however, argues that no matter how incompetent women are at the beginning, the poem gradually betrays that an interaction between the male and female traditions is inevitable (84). However risky it is, the sisters need such an experience in order to develop their minds. Therefore, while exposing themselves to

masculine texts, it is better that the sisters should discover some strategies to do so without being overpowered by them (Maxwell 86). Because even if the goblins are represented as hazardous creatures to be outwitted and avoided, they also give the poem its attractive energy; something to imagine. Maxwell further suggests that Rossetti, in *Goblin Market*, reveals several strategies for the female poet to enter the male-dominated literary world showing them ways to secure themselves while enlarging their horizons without ever falling prey to the male poet (89).

Taking the fruit symbolism as the central symbol of the poem, it is possible to assume that the goblin fruits can also be associated with the fruits of the mind (Gilbert and Gubar 569). According to Mermin, the fruit seems to offer Laura entrance into a heaven of art (147), while, in her "speculative depiction of the faraway land of the fruits' cultivation, Laura displays the artists's ability to envision the unknown or the unseen" (Mayberry 92). Once Laura sees the brilliant fruits of masculine poetic productivity before her, she cannot resist. She drinks deep for poetic inspiration, disregarding the dangers that her reckless act might bring. That is the reason why Mayberry, along with reading the fruits as appealing, also considers them as menacing. For her, in *Goblin Market*, the fruits "represent the fantastic creations of the imagination before the discovery (or imposition) of a unifying order and frame. The infinite suggestiveness of these creations makes them extremely potent and attractive, but also slippery, disruptive and threatening" (Mayberry 95-6). However, "far from allowing Laura to join the twilight brotherhood, the fruits subjugate her to the group's power, ratify its exclusivity and threaten to destroy her relationship with Lizzie" (Smulders 34).

Goblin men achieve their victory through Laura's submission to their power. McGillis argues that in forcing their fruit into her mouth, goblin men have effectively silenced Laura, for in this world men are the owners of the word (212). Through her submission, the poetess turns into a victim once again. She not only falls prey to the arbitrary notions of social prejudices, but also accepts them herself. It is clear that while "Rossetti struggled to envision a female subjectivity encompassing action, desire, knowledge and power, she was also constrained by the conventions of Victorian society, which constructed the feminine as passive, innocent, beautiful and helpless" (Kooistra 142). The opposition between the male and female poet, as well as the double nature of the poetess are reflected in Rossetti's poem. As far as the dichotomy between men and women is concerned, Holt indicates that

> language itself favours the goblins. Throughout the poem, although the sisters are implicated in goblin speech, the goblins appear as the more powerful users of language, able to determine the terms of a bargain or of a discourse of gender. The central element in Laura's enslavement, in fact, is her acceptance of the goblins' use of figural language. Troping the gold she lacks with the gold on her head, the goblins lead her to accept their construction of her within their gendered system of exchange: she bargains on their terms. (142)

In the face of the favouritism of the poet, the poetess has no means to survive other than discovering some strategies to express herself. First she consumes, as consumption can also be a way of suppressing the forerunner, eating his poems, integrating or assimilating them into the body of her own text (Maxwell 89). Then, along with her own creativity she digests and transforms these male texts into works of her own. Maxwell argues that *Goblin Market* encourages stealing and appropriation as positive strategies for the poetesses, whose

> image of daring or dangerous theft may itself be stolen from the male Romantics' Promethanism and revised for feminine purposes. While the male tradition is dangerous in that it can overwhelm an inexperienced woman writer and cut her off from her own creativity, it can provide resources and a valuable energy for the woman who is more secure; in other words, a woman writer who understands her own position and differences in relation to the male tradition, who knows that she can be taken and transformed to suit women's needs, turning her appropriations into new expressive forms for women. (86)

Masculine works require careful digestion by a poetess. Laura severely suffers the consequences of eating the goblin fruit on account of this. She digests them literally without digesting them mentally. Displaying how each new text consumes other texts, *Goblin Market* criticizes Laura's adoption of the fruits that come from some magical realm, ready-handed for her consumption, without combining these with her self-made goods. Disregarding the creation of a possible feminine literary tradition, Laura learns that she has to come to terms with both feminine and masculine traditions after a painful experience and mostly through the help of her poetic sister Lizzie:

> When Laura "subsequently dines on the goblins' fruit, she loses all taste for her home-produced food, and from this we might infer that an exclusive diet of male texts seems to starve the female literary imagination. But Lizzie, like a woman poet who realizes she cannot simply buy into the male tradition is resistant to the blandishments of the goblins, refusing to swallow their sale pitch. [. . .] Following her own intuition she knows that if she takes away the juice *on* rather than *in* her body, she can transform it into something of her own – "my juices" (468). (Maxwell 84)

There is no salvation in rejecting either of the traditions, and redemption can only come through a peaceful unity of the male texts and female imagination. In the end, the patriarchal influence, at first a threat to women's unity, is skilfully adjusted into something that can merely toughen their prolific relationship. Given by the goblin men, the fruit juice works like a poison, but mediated by a loving sister, obtained from a woman's body, it becomes a healing antidote. A diet based solely on masculine texts is harmful to the development of female imagination, restricting it to the confines of it only. Instead, a healthy combination of both male and female texts should take place which gives inspiration to the mind.

Finally, Maxwell resembles Laura's reaction to the female-mediated potion as a scene of poetic inspiration, reminiscent of symbolic impregnation (85). By way of this, the sisters can breed poetic generations of their own. Generally, it is the male writers who use the image of "insemination, pregnancy and child-birth to describe their acts of literary production. The male poet describes himself as either giving birth to his own creations or begetting children on his muse" (Maxwell 86). It seems as if Rossetti playfully revises this tradition, privileging the female gaze. Inspired by her male muses, Laura gradually dominates the whole narrative. Warning her listeners to be careful about their relationships with goblin men she ends the poem as a cautionary tale to the poetesses-to-be. The initial title of the poem also confirms it as the maidens learn about peeping, its rewards and risks while negotiating with men's texts and creating their own images of women.

The sisters can be regarded as the embodiments of the two sides of Rossetti as a poetess. Charles, in this sense, considers Laura as the passionate artist who is fond of experience and Lizzie as the obedient maiden who fears to venture far from the safety of home and religion (130). In this light, Laura represents Rossetti's rebellious side who revolts against the prejudices that restricts a woman poet and Lizzie as the humble poet who is content with the "lowest place". McGann considers Laura as impulsive, but, she further argues, without her reckless act, Laura would have remained forever in the garden of Eden in a condition of childlike innocence (108). Against Lizzie's shyness, which is by no means criticized but clearly presented as restrictive, stands Laura's restlessness and curiosity, which prove helpful in transcending the arbitrary limits that are placed upon women in the end (McGann 108).

Contrary to the religious, sexual and economic readings of the poem, which acknowledge Lizzie as the hero, critics analyzing the poem from a literary approach subsequently suggest

that Laura is the hero concerning her emergence as the poetess of *Goblin Market* at the end of the poem. However, it is also important to note that Lizzie, no matter how submissive she sounds, is the one who inspires Laura to take over the words of *Goblin Market*. Helsinger, in this sense, considers Lizzie as the heroine of the poem as she gets what she wants without surrendering to the demands made upon her by the male marketplace (210). For her, Lizzie rejects becoming the object, that which is exchanged, like the male texts about the marketplace and their authority over women (Helsinger 210).

Holt, on the other hand, believes that Laura not only takes over the goblins' marketing words, but also the words of *Goblin Market* itself. The tale Laura tells is, supposedly, the tale the readers have been reading so far. For Holt, assimilating the text into her tale, Laura brings the whole system of exchange under her control (141). Besides, she is, in Mayberry's words, "a natural poet-figure" who is at first curious (92). Through her interaction with the goblins, according to Smulders, Laura then emerges as the type of artist turning her childhood experience into a children's fiction (40). Her painful experience, Lizzie's sacrifice and the deeds of the mischievous goblin brothers were all necessary for her creation. Inspired by her sister and the goblins in this way, Laura turns the story into a didactic tale of sisterhood (Smulders 40).

Turning the fairy tale convention into an instructive story for the future sisterhoods, Laura and Rossetti herself follow the manner of Victorian fairy tales in which the main aim is to teach rather than to delight. Ultimately, revealing herself as "the" poet of *Goblin Market*, Laura's poetic language proves her artistic bent (Mayberry 92). It is her words that the readers are familiar with. In her demonstration of her artistic talents, Laura reveals an unquenchable hunger which in the end suggests "an aesthetic of pleasure, a sensual art for art's sake, which is, indeed, textually addictive. *Goblin Market* is a feast of appetite" (Leighton *Victorian* 138). Laura cannot get enough of the creative process, the "proliferation of words, rhythms, metaphors, and similes suggest an artist revelling in her creativity, whose love of her craft [. . .] is insatiable" (Mayberry 90).

Rossetti's poem, while making visible how women's relation to the Victorian marketplace and texts about that marketplace can be peculiarly risky, in its alternative myth-making, also stresses the fact that in *Goblin Market*, Laura is neither silenced nor made to die (Burlinson *Christina* 46). Rossetti's act is quite brave when the rest of Victorian poetry, including Dante

Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny," is considered. For the majority of Victorian poetry dealing with the issue of fallen women saw death as the only appropriate ending for the fallen women. The ending of the poem also emphasizes "the need for women to take charge of their own narratives, in defiance of the Penitentiary's code of silence and in support of the wider cultural shift towards women seizing the right to make their stories public" (Burlinson *Christina* 46). Disregarding Penitentiary's code of silence in this way, in Rossetti's poem women are allowed to share their experience with their audience. Moreover, in this world of female reign, Laura is both a mother and a poet. Her poetic faculties, though disciplined to some extent, are still functioning, but not at the cost of motherhood (Mayberry 107). Rossetti shows how productive women can be when their abilities are confined not only to the domestic sphere but also extended to the literary arena.

It is quite significant that Rossetti employs the so-called simpleton fairy-tale form, which is open to various psychoanalytical readings, while dealing with this rather complicated topic. As Mayberry argues, while the subject-matter and connotations of *Goblin Market* are certainly not appropriate for children, there is no doubt that the work is a fairy tale (89). Through an in-depth analysis, however, the focus of attention gradually shifts to the issues more suitable for an adult mind. Emphasized by the critics Ellen Moers and Germaine Greer as such, the poem is considered as highly improper for children. Like Moers, who regards the poem as "fantasies derived from the night side of the Victorian nursery – a world where childish cruelty and childish sexuality come to the fore" (105), Greer, too, finds *Goblin Market* as "a deeply perverse poem" (387). Still, when the significance of fairy tales, in terms of their solving out more complex psychological personal crisis is taken into consideration, its use by Rossetti is quite understandable, for fantasy engages itself directly with the symbolic images which appeal to the psyche. As Armitt, too, claims, "psychoanalysis is, in itself, a fantastic quest" (39).

Through the use of fantasy and the symbolic images they adopt, fairy tales communicate to people, most specifically to the developing minds of the children. As Freud argues "every dream offers vicarious fulfilment of a repressed desire – usually related to infantile sexuality – [and] for Jung, dreams give expression to unconscious fears as well as to wishes," which all needed to be tamed and revealed mostly through the tales transmitted to children in symbolic forms (Charles 134). The tales help them make peace with their inner selves through the successful completion of the identity crisis represented in these tales by way of personal

quests. As a fairy tale, *Goblin Market* includes various folkloric elements as well as miscellaneous features of the quest literature. First of all, the poem has "the unplaced contextlessness of a fairy tale" (Armstrong *Victorian* 347). Neither the whereabouts of the world the sisters and the goblins inhabit nor the timescape to which they belong is given. Moreover, in the fashion of most of the fairy tales, the girls are indicated to be free of parental concern. After the setting is introduced, the characters take their place in this alternative world order. There seems to be two spheres with the goblin men occupying the market and the girls inhabiting the domestic household. Thus, positioned at such oppositional extremes, physically as well as metaphysically, another common feature of the fairy tales is followed, too. Lüthi observes that

> [t]he fairy tale takes its heroes from the remotest branches of society: the prince and the young swine herd, the despised youngest son or the clumsy boy; and the girl who watches the hearth or tends the geese and the princess. The fairy tale is also fond of other extremes and contrasts: dreadful punishments and splendid rewards, giants and dwarfs, mangy skull and golden hair, good and evil, handsome and ugly, black and white. (50)

Despite the fact that goblin brothers meet no dreadful punishments, other characteristics certainly apply to *Goblin Market*. To begin with, it is true that the protagonists and the antagonists are drawn from the two extremes of the society representing respectively the feminine sphere of submission and the masculine sphere of authority. Secondly, the differences are made physical since outward deformity has always been believed to mark inward malice. It is the reason why the sisters are depicted as golden-haired kind-hearted beauties, the goblin men are described as beast-like spiteful beings with vulgar language accompanying their vulgar look. Once all the terms are set, the initiation to quest follows. The issue of quest is a highly problematical topic, since various critics offer miscellaneous steps while trying to explain it. Propp and Campbell's views are worth mentioning within this context. Propp introduces an analysis of the folk-tale patterns in general whereas Campbell establishes an archetypal study of the mythological patterns of different cultures.

Campbell's study begins with a definition of what he calls a monomyth. For him, the "standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (30). Drawing parallels between the adolescence development and the mythological quest, Campbell points to the archetypal nature of all the genres that

came into being just as myths did; genres such as epic, romance and fantasy which reveal their messages in terms of the symbolic imagery they adopt, visible to all the cultures moulded with the same occasions, celebrations and worries relatively (3). The symbolical adventures correspond to different crisis in human life that are necessary for the adult mind's healthy upbringing. Because, Lüthi affirms, the "fairy tale is an epic genre: it portrays external events. But unexpectedly the conflict enters the psychological realm" (121).

According to Campbell, the first stage of his monomyth, separation, begins with the call to adventure which is then followed by refusal of the call and supernatural aid (36). The second stage, initiation, starts with the road of trials, which includes meeting with the goddess, woman as temptress, atonement with the father, apothesis and the ultimate boon (Campbell 36). The final stage, marked as the return by Campbell, is initiated with the refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, the crossing of the return threshold, master of the two worlds, and freedom to live (37). In spite of the fact that Campbell's pattern is drawn in relation to mythological stories rather than fairy tales, still some of the steps are applicable to *Goblin Market* as well. The call to adventure is visible through the goblins' enticing cries. However, when the heroic qualities are concerned these virtues are shared in between the two sisters who together act as *the* hero of *Goblin Market*. In line with this, when the refusal of the call is concerned, it is Lizzie who represents this phase. There is no supernatural aid, but the road of trials is present in the poem with Laura suffering and Lizzie gaining the ultimate boon – the *elixir* theft – for her sister. During the final stage, Laura is at the focus of attention. She cannot recover herself from the soul's sleep and that is why she needs rescue from without, that is, Lizzie's help. Lizzie has escaped the goblin men's wrath through her magic flight with the *elixir*. Presenting the antidote to her sister, she enables Laura to cross the return threshold and earn the freedom to live. Becoming the master of the two worlds is applicable to both sisters, since Lizzie manages to survive the perils of the goblin market and Laura presides over the goblin text.

Propp's outline of a folk tale is much more elaborate than Campbell's examination of monomyth. He refers to a total of thirty distinct elements. According to Propp, a folk tale, first of all, starts with a family member's absentation. This absentation is then followed by the next step which is the addressing of a warning, identified by him as interdiction (26). The third element is violation, which is apparently concerned with the violation of a previously voiced warning (Propp 27). Next comes reconnaissance, in which the villain starts an investigation

on the hero in search for a weak point of his, followed by the fourth step, delivery, where the villain succeeds in getting the information concerning the hero's weakness (Propp 28). At the fifth step there is trickery, the villain tricks the hero of his/her belongings (30). Following this suit, the hero's submission to this trickery is observed, which Propp names complicity (30). Then, villainy comes, obviously causing harm to the hero or a member of his/her family (Propp 30). This is signified by a lack as a result of which, misfortune befalls the hero, or a member of his/her family (Propp 35). As a consequence, the hero is asked to do something to fix this situation, which Propp labels as the connective incident and counteraction begins with the hero's abandonment of his/her home's safety (departure) to face villainy (36-9).

The thirteenth step is the first function of the donor where the hero is tested and in return for his/her success is given a magical agent or helper (Propp 39). The hero's reaction to the future donor pretty much determines the provision or receipt of a magical agent, as a consequence of which the hero is informed about the whereabouts of his/her object of search, in a step entitled guidance (Propp 42-50). After this, at last the hero and the villain fight with each other in a phase called struggle, which ends with the hero's branding by the villain, and the villain's final defeat, called victory (Propp 51-3). In this way the initial lack is paid for in what can be named as the settlement stage. In the end, the hero braves his way back home at the return stage but is pursued in a chase once again (Propp 55-6). He/She is helped for his rescue and his/her unrecognized arrival at home or in another country occurs (Propp 57-60). There, he/she faces the appearance of a false hero whose unfounded claims urge him/her to undergo a difficult task (Propp 60). Propp identifies the last step as solution which comes with the resolution of the events. While the hero is finally recognised (recognition), the false hero is simultaneously exposed (exposure) (Propp 62). The hero is bestowed with a new look in a step called transfiguration and ultimately the villain is punished (punishment) right before the wedding takes place with the hero's ascendance to the throne (Propp 62-3).

Similar to Campbell's features concerning the monomyth, some of the elements of Propp's analysis are applicable to *Goblin Market* as well. Among these absentation, in terms of Laura's visit to goblins without the knowledge of her sister; interdiction, the warning considering the danger surrounding the goblin men; violation, Laura's eating of the goblin fruits; reconnaissance, with regard to the goblin men's bargain with Laura; delivery, in relation to the goblin men's possession of Laura's hair and trickery can be counted, as the goblins trick Laura into playing the game according to their rules. Following that complicity

is observed, as Laura submits to the goblin power. Next villainy is detected with Laura's suffering of her lack which is signified by the fruits she will never have. From now on, Lizzie is marked as the hero. Through the connective incident of Jeanie who died because she had no sister, Lizzie starts counteraction abandoning her home's safety so as to face the goblins. The first function of the donor, the hero's reaction, provision of a magical agent, whereabouts of her object of search or guidance are not witnessed in the sisters' story. Although, Lizzie's good character and her strong faith can be considered as representatives of the donor function, reaction to the donor, receipt of a magical agent and guidance. Ensuing these, in the step called struggle, Lizzie confronts the goblin men. After this, the goblin men's branding through their defeat and the final victory of Lizzie occur. There is no settlement but only the hero's return which is followed by the resolution of all the events. The other steps, such as the chase, rescue, unrecognized arrival, unfounded claims, difficult task, recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment or wedding do not exist in *Goblin Market*.

What is common in both Campbell's and Propp's readings is that the initiation to quest starts with a call for adventure, either because a prohibition is violated or because of a prerequisite taken for the sake of another. Drawing upon this, it can be said that there are two types of heroes; those who act upon their own will and those that turn into heroes out of necessity. Armitt, in relation to Propp's study of the folk tales, categorizes these two types of heroes as seekers and victims in Freudian terms (23). According to her:

> The victimized hero, feminized through being kidnapped or punished in a manner traditionally associated with the fairy-tale heroine, exists as the threatening presence of the castrated male. Lacking the power of the phallus, only by wrenching it back from larger male oppressors can he once again function as fully formed hero. In contrast to this is the seeker, whose role is to fill the lack existing in others. His quest is to find, not only the object which is lacking [. . .], but also the source of the lack itself. (Armitt 23)

When applied to *Goblin Market*'s feminine heroes, it is clear that Laura is the victimized hero whereas Lizzie is the seeker. Obligatory or optional; reluctant or eager, the hero undertakes the quest for these two basic reasons. It is not essential that the hero has heroic qualities and that is why a tale "usually begins with some sort of initial situation. The members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero [. . .] is simply introduced by mention of his name or indication of his status" (Propp 25). Begining in such an oblique way, the hero of the fairy story is directly introduced as the to-be-hero in the first case. In contrast, when the second type of the hero is concerned, he/she gradually develops as the hero within the course of the

story, as in the case of Lizzie. Rossetti's fairy stories in general seem to favour, as well as exemplify, the second type of the unwilling hero who dives deep in his/her originally undiscovered qualities as a way to oppose his/her more experienced adversary.

Folk wisdom is enthusiastic about trickery and shrewdness, as they are tended to be read as the victory of the humble over the mighty. As a part of the wishfulfillment tradition in literature, fairy tales offer satisfaction and hope for the underprivileged. Making clear that it is possible to rise in the social ladder, they defend that in an age when the self-made-man who tricks the set rules around him deserves it on fair grounds. Moreover, the fairy tales guarantee it to be so with their ever "upward development, the overcoming of mortal dangers and seemingly impossible problems" which are all meant to be resolved through the cliché of happy ending (Lüthi 140). *Goblin Market* is an example of these faculties. Exemplifying the second type of hero in it, Rossetti's poetic fairy tale totally goes against the Victorian impositions that are made upon the deprived classes, such as the working class and women, and sometimes both of them, demonstrating the coming of them into power.

In this poem of prohibition, taboo and punishment, Rossetti subverts the expectations of the society, though Holt claims the opposite, saying, in the end the protagonists transform from sisters to wives "as if such were the only natural, the inevitable event" (143). On the contrary, *Goblin Market* promotes the victory of the female in a masculine world. The story of Laura and Lizzie in this respect is a story of female heroism which is not very often witnessed in fairy tales. Lizzie's rescue of Laura is a heroic exploit, as she accomplishes an uncommon heroic deed through trickery just like shrewd folk tale heroines (Mermin 150). She outwits the goblins like a common folktale heroine; gaining the prize without paying the price.

Subjected to the psychoanalytical readings, critics have also observed what is called an ego-split in *Goblin Market* with specific references to Laura and Lizzie. According to Freud, the human psyche is divided into three parts (Surprenant 205). Id represents all the lower bodily desires, whereas superego functions as a censorer of all of these bodily desires seeking for a more ordered universe through the prohibitions it imposes and the ego is the intermediary place a regular human psyche occupies (Surprenant 205). Likewise, Lizzie and Laura can be taken as different sides to the psyche, relatively representing superego and ego, whereas the goblins can be taken as the representatives of the id. Pointing to the description of the sisters' relationship as two blossoms on one stem, Charles suggests that the sisters are the

"*unconscious* representatives of different sides of the self" (129). Armstrong, too, considers the sisters as "doubles of one another" because it is "only through Lizzie's resistance that Laura is able to gain access to the (significantly) expressed fruit. It is only through Laura's longing that Lizzie finds herself resisting the goblins" (*Victorian* 350).

The sisters' is a dependency relationship in many ways. Packer arguing that the poem has no hero adds that "Laura and Lizzie, between them share the narrative interest. Golden-haired, ivory-skinned, 'like two blossoms on one stem,' they seem but different aspects of the same maiden. They may, in fact, be regarded as Christina Rossetti's version of sacred and profane love" (375). Laura and Lizzie, regarded as the representatives of the curious female poet figure and the obedient angel-in-the-house; the fallen woman and the Christ-like hero, are the heroines of the story together. For McGann, none of the sisters saves the other in that they both "enact a drama which displays what moral forces have to be exerted in order, not to be saved from evil, but simply to grow up" (McGann 108). Too much conformity is as dangerous as too much waywardness, but once the ego-split between Lizzie's controlling power and Laura's free will is healed, the result is one of perfect harmony. Kooistra, accordingly, suggests:

> One of the lessons of *Goblin Market* is the visual/spiritual one of learning how to look and interpret correctly – to know that what seems fair may be foul; attractive goblin men betray; delectable fruits poison. [. . .] But Lizzie, too, learns something. She learns that a woman cannot live in the world without looking or being looked at. And she learns that, while these activities are paradoxically both destructive and redemptive, they are also essential to life, to love, to creativity. [. . .] In the course of their goblin encounters, Lizzie and Laura learn to look at themselves and each other in new ways, and to formulate alternate visions of female subjectivity. (141)

As for the goblin brotherhood, they are originally the representatives of id in Rossetti's poem. According to Campbell, the herald or announcer of the adventure is often a dark, terrifying figure judged evil by the world or else it is a beast which is a "representative of the repressed instinctual fecundity within ourselves, or again a veiled mysterious figure – the unknown" (53). Both of these features apply to the goblin merchants who are half human, and half animal. Standing for the creatures of the unconscious, where the psyche stores all of the repressed desires that are locked there due to the superego's censorship, goblins are the animal instincts, the beast-like inner selves that are present in every human being.

Mayberry suggests that, in the goblins, Rossetti has created "a group of totally ambiguous, fantastic creatures – apt representatives of the undisciplined clamorings of the creative imagination" (97). They are the source of inspiration for the female poet, just as the muses are for the male poet. The goblins have been "all along – the desirous little creatures so many women writers have recorded encountering in the haunted glens of their own minds, hurrying scurrying furry ratlike *its* or *ids*, inescapable *incubi*" (Gilbert and Gubar 570). Considering the sisters' ultimate claim to creativity, the goblins are also the fiercest enemy of the female literary imagination, as the sole practitioners of the literary works for centuries. For Gilbert and Gubar, *Goblin Market* makes it clear that "[y]oung ladies like Laura, Maude, and Christina Rossetti should not loiter in the glen of imagination, which is the haunt of goblin men like Keats and Tennyson – or like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his compatriots of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" (573).

Clearly, Freud's and Jung's ideas are highly applicable to *Goblin Market*, since, at the psychological level, the poem illustrates "emotional experience universally valid" (Packer 375). Charles believes that Rossetti should be read as a seriously accomplished psychological poet, who makes a record of universal and eternal human experience in her poetry (137). In its renunciation of the goblins' enticing cries, Lizzie's warning betrays a refusal of the temptations of the id:

> [. . .] "O Laura, come;
> I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
> You should not loiter longer at this brook:
> Come with me home.
> The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
> Each glowworm winks her spark,
> Let us go home before the night grows dark:
> For clouds may gather
> Tho' this is summer weather,
> Put out the lights and drench us thro';
> Then if we lost our way what should we do?"
> (I 242-52)

Jung claims that "mankind has never lacked powerful images to lend magical aid against all the uncanny things that live in the depths of the psyche" and Rossetti can be counted as a transmitter, as well as a translator, of these images which haunt the individual mind through the help of the symbolic language of fantasy (12). In this respect, Gilbert and Gubar's argument is satisfactory in its claims that the "fruit of the *Goblin Market* has fed on the

desirous substrata of the psyche, the childishly self-gratifying fantasies of the imagination. Superegoistic Lizzie, therefore, is the agent of necessity and necessity's 'white and golden' virtue, repression" (573). Accordingly, the fruits are symbolic of the libido, representing a desire for the paradise of imagination which does not exist and therefore can be only craved, never attained (Mermin 146). The libidonal function of the fruits is stressed by Marsh, too, who confirms that the fruit forbidden stands for the self-indulgences and pleasures forbidden; now expressive of sexual desire, then of material and literary equality and then of gender-based revolt. It is the childish hunger for instant fulfilment that adults, like Lizzie, learn to resist. In short, the fruits are all that juvenile libido longs for; delight unrestrained, endless gratification which once obtained they cease to satisfy (Marsh 232-33).

With regard to that, the poem can also be evaluated as an insatiably oral poem which rejoices acts related to lower bodily stratum (Armstrong *Victorian* 348). In Bakhtinian sense, grotesque, appetite and seduction dominate the poem. Burlinson points to this as follows:

> Typical pubescent changes are exaggerated until they become grotesque: the bodies of both girls and goblins are in flux, and so is the language of the poem, for throughout *Goblin Market* there is a close connection between the motility of form and word. Bodies and language are unstable and provocative: the text demonstrates the power of seduction in the sensuality of its opening lines, which whet the reader's appetite and activate the mouths and tongues of any who read it aloud [. . .]. (42)

Resembling Alice's troubles which all start with her mouth, Laura's, too, begin with it. However, the difference is that Laura's is a much more subversive act than Alice's plain childish curiosity. Fascinated by the goblin merchants, Laura speaks impulsively "opening her mouth instead of remaining silent and sealed, as good girls should" (Burlinson 43). Hers is an act against the norms of the Victorian society, since Laura not only opens herself up to experience but also to the ownership of the word. That's why at the end the poem, rather than being commemorated as another victim of the goblin men, she is given authority over the poem. Therefore, although Holt claims that the poem "ultimately, if indirectly, brings us to recognise that utopian fantasies of a separate women's culture are just that: fantasies of an impossible utopia," this is not the case as far as *Goblin Market* is concerned (142). Using the fairy tale genre as a strategic act, Rossetti exposes the perception of the female identity by fairy tales and subverts the demands made upon it by a patriarchal society. As Leighton points out, "[i]n many of the tales females are robbed of their identity and pushed to the edge of

hysteria by male attitudes and male tyranny" which is exactly what Rossetti aims to subvert through the help of fantasy ("Fallen" 215).

It is evident that in the poem, Rossetti speaks in the language of the night making her case clear with the symbolic images she adopts. Through this journey, she explores the arbitrary relations behind the socio-economic regulations. Similar to Jacksonian idea of fantasy, in *Goblin Market* Rossetti manifests how these regulations aim at silencing the other. She depicts a psychological battle as a result of which a view into the hidden world of the psyche is made apparent. Besides that, she also makes use of folk-tale elements and alternative spaces which provide her with a departure from the norms. She violates reality, so as to liberate herself from the restrictions it brings to her as a female poet writing during the morally superior Victorian period. Her targets are social injustices, economic inequalities and gender-based discriminations. For Rossetti, Darwinian theory of self-interest results in socially devastating effects. Hence, she replaces it with an amoral fantasy world in which it is possible that the lowest may rise and the greatest may fall.

In conclusion, several critics have offered miscellaneous readings of *Goblin Market* but none seems to have solved its mystery. Caroline Norton rightfully expresses her worries stating that *Goblin Market* "is one of the works which are said to 'defy criticism'. Is it a fable – or a mere fairy story – or an allegory against the pleasures of sinful love – or what is it?" (qtd. in Burlinson 7). For years now, the poem has preserved its mystery. Leighton in this respect confirms that "*Goblin Market* treads a breathtakingly thin line between nursery rhyme, sexual fantasy, religious allegory and social criticism. But thin lines are Rossetti's favourite places" (*Victorian* 135). Disregarding what it is not, Menke considers what the poem is as follows:

> Artless children's story or sophisticated allegory, unconscious fantasy or carefully crafted fable, *Goblin Market* does in fact possess the texture of a fairy tale, with its singsong repetitions, its mingling of the mundane with the outré, its curious mixture of otherworldliness and acute materiality (105).

Fantasy enables Rossetti to wander between the fantasy world and the actual world at liberty; criticizing without being criticized (Harrison *Christina* 185). So, difficult though it may be to place *Goblin Market* under a certain category, if there is one thing known for sure concerning the poem, it is that without this poem Rossetti "would have been an accomplished poet; with it, she became an exciting one" (Marsh 229). However, Rossetti's subversion is not limited to

Goblin Market only. In *The Prince's Progress* and *Sing-Song*, too, while representing the Victorian women's inner battles, Kaplan suggests, Rossetti replaces anger with fantasy (qtd. in Charles 147). Intending "to deliver a prophetic message to the future – the need for an alternative social order," Rossetti through her anti-quest romance *The Prince's Progress* and her collection of a number of nursery rhymes *Sing-Song* subverts the norms through re-discovering the arbitrary relations lying behind the social regulations (McGann 112).

The Prince's Progress (1866) is a fairy tale of a progressive non-progress. Using the fairy tale form to turn its norms upside down, Rossetti presents an anti-quest narrative wearing out the expectations of the form. The atmosphere has a medieval air rather than a secondary world. However, the tale is told in such fashion that there is a kind of fantastic unworldliness that pervades the poem. The use of enchantment is present as well, besides recovery and plausibility. But what marks the poem as unique is its subversive power through which Rossetti criticizes the romance tradition for compelling women to continual submission and passivity, who wait impatiently for the arrival of their ideal prince throughout the ages.

The Prince's Progress opens with a sleeping princess who is excitedly waiting for her prince to come and claim her hand. However, her prince is reluctant on starting his journey, sitting "[i]n his world-end palace [. . .] / Taking his ease on cushion and mat" (I 13-4). Interrogating his fate rather than starting his journey, the prince, being "Strong of limb if of purpose weak" (I 47), begins his quest at last. Thinking that he will win his bride before nightfall, he is tarried on his way, first by a milkmaid who in return for the milk she has offered wants him to spend a day with him and then by an old man who lives like a shaman in a grave-like cave. This second interruption takes longer than the prince has anticipated, because the old man offers him to earn the secret to eternal life. For the hundredth year now, the man has been feeding the fire of the elixir that will guarantee him immortality. So, the prince accepts the man's offer assuming that he and his bride-to-be will be blessed with life eternally.

When the old man's hundredth year is over, he dies and the potion suddenly flushes as if the "last ingredient is supplied" (I 247). Then the prince fills his phial with the *elixir* and decides to set back on his journey, right where he has left it from, after spending the night there. While the prince rests, his doom is once again announced by the princess' maids, just as they had announced it awhile ago when he loitered with the milkmaid. "Lazy of limb," (I 302) the prince is back on his quest soon. Travelling for a while, before long he faces a water bank.

Fearful for his life, he passes across the bank quite unwillingly. Just as he was about to die, kind hands save him which belong to a moon-faced lady and her company. Leaving himself to the care of these capable hands, the prince is deterred from his journey once again:

> Had he stayed to weigh and to scan,
> He had been more or less than a man:
> He did what a young man can,
> Spoke of toil and an arduous way –
> Toil tomorrow, while golden ran
> The sands of today.
> (I 355-60)

Embracing the idea of seizing the day, the prince rather than acting at once loiters there yet longer. Here the poem observes the condition of the princess who is tired of waiting "the promise promised so long ago" by now (I 381) and the poem introduces a remark upon the quick passage of time:

> Slip past, slip fast,
> Uncounted hours from first to last,
> Many hours till the last is past,
> Many hours dwindling to one–
> One hour whose die is cast,
> One last hour gone.
> (I 361-66)

Then the prince hits the "tedious road" again, swearing to himself that he will reach the palace before night (I 392). However, as if his reluctance is symbolised in the environment surrounding him, this time a steep mountain appears before him. Soon, a palace comes into sight before him fit "for a royal bride" (I 429). There he stands wondering if he should pay the princess a visit or wait a little, in case the hour would be regarded as inappropriate for a meeting. As the prince debates with himself, the palace's gates fling open and a funeral procession carrying a veiled figure with poppies decorating her hair appears. The body is being carried by a group of veiled women, who sing as they pass, the misfortune of the princess that has waited too long for the coming of her wayward prince. The princess has waited for her vagabond prince's arrival for so long that now death has claimed her instead of him.

Since romances are traditionally associated with the accomplishment of a spiritual quest rather than a physical one, it is possible to study *The Prince's Progress* in this light, too (Kay 85). However, Rossetti's romance is quite untraditional:

> Noting the echoes of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, scholars have concluded that Rossetti is offering a reversal of that allegory. Instead of overcoming temptation and reaching the Celestial City, as the good pilgrim does, Rossetti's wayward prince succumbs to every temptation that comes his way and arrives "too late." When he arrives at the promised land of "wine, oil, and bread," his princess, seen by most critics as emblematic of his soul or Heaven itself, is dead. Thus, rather than save his soul, as Bunyan's Christian does, Rossetti's indolent prince loses it. (D'Amico 83)

Hence, Rossetti's prince is emblematic of the sinner who is "distracted from the true spiritual path by false charms and attractions" (Burlinson *Christina* 25). He is guilty of committing various sins. In the beginning, he is depicted as a strong figure with a weak will and this is the reason why he commits sloth several times on his way. Besides, the first time he is deterred from his way, he does so on account of his thirst which can be read as committing gluttony and the third time he loiters with the alchemist he commits greed. While he dreams of an eternal life with his princess, he misses the fact that he has not earned her yet. Finally, he commits lust, not only with the maidens at the river bank but also earlier with the milkmaid in choosing to loiter around them rather than reaching out for his loyal bride. Mary Arsenau notes that the prince is truly guilty of "repeatedly misreading the spiritual significance of his quest" (qtd. in D'Amico 85). Seeing the naked landscape ahead, he cannot understand that this is a test for his soul. Burlinson convincingly puts forward the idea that, *The Prince's Progress* is about "the perils of interpretation: the prince misreads or fails to respond to the symbolic signs around him, with fatal results for his beloved object of desire, who dies before he reaches her bedside" (*Christina* 7). D'Amico, likewise, claims that Rossetti intends the prince's failure to be read

> as a warning about the need to prepare one's soul for the Last Judgment. Indeed, in the 1875 edition, by positioning "The Prince's Progress" immediately after "Goblin Market," Rossetti underscores the prince's spiritual failure. Reading "The Prince's Progress" as a sequel to "Goblin Market," we see the prince as Lizzie's opposite. He is easily led astray by the milkmaid; he continually finds the way "tedious"; and when he is tested by the raging floods, he cannot even keep himself standing, let alone help another. Not surprisingly, when he arrives with what he believes is an elixir of life, he is too late, whereas Lizzie saves Laura from death by bringing her the "fiery antidote" in time. (83-4)

Compared to *Goblin Market*, *The Prince's Progress* fails to give yet another victorious Christian message. An anonymous reviewer comments in the *Athenaeum* in 1866 that *The Prince's Progress*, like *Goblin Market*, is "an allegory, and an allegory, moreover, illustrating a similar idea. In both works the argument is the power of temptation to beguile man from the worthy and earnest work of life. In "Goblin Market" the temptations are resisted and overcome, – in the "The Prince's Progress" they triumph" (qtd. in Harrison *Christina* 113). In a similar manner, Leighton observes that the way to salvation

> is beset by idols and simulacra: 'Was it milk now, or was it cream? / Was she a maid, or an evil dream?' (67-8), but these, like the goblin fruits, are the very stuff of poetry. They represent endless metaphorical shifts of one thing to another, 'a tissue of hugged lies', a teasing fantasy. This is not a prince's but a poet's progress, and consequently its object, like all the other secret references in Rossetti's work, is not where we would expect, in the "'foregone conclusion'" of faith, but rather in the shifts and devices which seem, precisely, to lose faith in their object. At some level, *The Prince's Progress* is about having nowhere very clear to go. (*Victorian* 162)

The prince's continuous failure is what marks the poem as an anti-quest. Frustrating, not only the expectations of the characters involved but also the genre's requirements, *The Prince's Progress* besides undermining "the conventions of the masculine quest" also revises "the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty – one of the nineteenth century's most enduring and popular stories" (Burlinson *Christina* 7). Unlike Sleeping Beauty who is waken up by her prince, Rossetti's princess dies at the end. In fact, what is so striking about Rossetti's princess is that her action is an act of free will, contrary to Sleeping Beauty who has to wait for the masculine hero to wake her into a world clearly dominated by the patriarchal rules. Rossetti, too, admits the poem to be "a reverse of the Sleeping Beauty," as she upsets all of the conventions that constitute the famous fairy tale (D'Amico 85).

Calling the poem as "a drama of missed goals" Leighton illustrates that on the surface everything goes the way Rossetti anticipates them to be (*Victorian* 160). For the "story of a prince's love-quest for a dying princess seems, like much of Rossetti's verse, to reproduce all the courtly arrangements of desire: the man journeys, the woman waits, the man proves himself worthy, the woman is his prize, the man is faithless, the woman dies" (Leighton *Victorian* 160). Through this disruption, Rossetti upsets the expectations and instead of bestowing the prince with authority over a maiden, the text literally floods him making him utterly reliant on others to come to his rescue (Burlinson *Christina* 24). In this way, the prince

is forced to occupy a femininized position which is analogous to that of the passive princess (Burlinson *Christina* 24).

Castrating the masculine power, Rossetti turns the gender-based relations, as well as the genre's necessities upside down. There is neither a happy-ending – therefore no Tolkinean eucatastrophe – nor a hero in due course of the poem. Although the prince seems to be the active party, his activity is like that of a puppet's who acts against his own will on a mission doomed to fail. Burlinson observes that while it is obvious that "the narrative form demands that the Prince ought to fulfil his task, the text seems to take pleasure in resisting literary conventions founded upon heroic action" (*Christina* 23). This resistance is made clear at the very start of the poem where the princess wonders:

> "How long shall I wait, come heat come rime?" –
> "Till the strong Prince comes, who must come in time"
> (Her women say), "there's a mountain to climb,
> A river to ford. Sleep, dream and sleep:
> Sleep" (they say): "we've muffled the chime,
> Better dream than weep."
>
> (I 7-12)

The ironic voice of the poet seems to take pleasure in the prince's failed quest. Knowing that the prince will be tricked by them, Rossetti places a number of obstacles before the prince and enjoys her authorial power to disrupt what has been anticipated as natural:

> Although the handmaidens encourage the belief that the Prince will succeed by repeating the story of Sleeping Beauty, it is noteworthy that an amused ironic narrative voice undercuts the voices of these women by introducing this "strong prince" as "taking his ease on cushion and mat" (I. 95). The reader is thus encouraged from the very beginning of the poem to recognize that the prince will fail and that there will be no happy marriage ending for the princess. (D'Amico 85-6)

Expected to be the ideal hero, the prince through his failure helps his own undoing as well as the princess'. Therefore, he can in no way be considered as a representative of the ideals of the romance tradition. Because, unlike a typical romance hero who is supposed to be loyal, pious, trustworthy and pure, Rossetti's prince is lazy, cowardly and impulsive (Kay 84). As a punishment for his mistakes, he not only loses "his object of desire, his sleeping beauty, but he loses language too; thus again he is emasculated, prevented from assuming the authoritative identity which his gender and class position would ordinarily guarantee" like the victimized hero (Burlinson *Christina* 24-5). Because of his weaknesses, he is despised by the

narrative voice throughout the poem. Harrison, accordingly, suggests that characteristically in quest romances both lovers are idealized but in Rossetti's poem only one of them is admirable and that is the princess (*Christina* 115).

However, the fact that the princess is entirely passive, with her nature supplementing her beauty, marks her as just another lady-in-distress (Harrison *Christina* 115). D'Amico observes that "[o]n one level, the princess appears an admirable character, a woman who fulfils her prescribed role by waiting patiently for her prince. Compared to Lizzie, however, she seems decidedly unheroic, and her passivity becomes problematic" (84). Her passivity is what makes her vulnerable. Still, when the timing of her death, which occurs just before the prince's entrance through the gates, is taken into consideration, the princess' act gains a different dimension. Because, here the princess' death seems like quite a strategic behaviour signifying almost a triumphant act (Leighton *Victorian* 163). Disrupting the expectations of the genre in this way, Rossetti's princess is unconventional in her rebellious attitude towards the regulations surrounding her. Through fantasy, Rossetti bestows women with the power to take control of their own fates, as her maids reproaching the prince for his failure, too, confirm:

> "Ten years ago, five years ago,
> One year ago,
> Even then you had arrived in time,
> Tho' somewhat slow;
> Then you had known her living face
> Which now you cannot know
> (I 491-96)

Expressing both the impossibility of seeing the princess alive and also announcing a prohibition to the prince, the maids, according to Burlinson, "are seen to have more power and authority than the prince, whether this power be manifested as pure or corrupt" (*Christina* 24). Either as temptresses, saviours or helpers women in fact seem to have undertaken more than the prince throughout the poem. Though the temptress figures play a minor role in the poem, it is clear that the female chorus challenges the prince several times in their activity. However, they too have their shortcomings in terms of never urging the princess into action. The essence of their advice to the princess seems to be: "Better dream than weep" and the princess appears to accept it, without ever considering the possibility that the prince might fail (D'Amico 86).

The princess is implied to be spell-bound like Sleeping Beauty. However, what differentiates her from the traditional folk-tale heroine is that the spell that her handmaidens are talking about "does not hold time still" (D'Amico 84). Leighton, affirming that time in *The Prince's Progress* is "an unreliable quantity," asserts that,

> as Kathleen Blake has noted (1983: 7), [the poem is] a play on time. The prince's fitful progress is then beautifully captured in the metrical waywardness of the verse itself where, as Alice Meynell points out, the stress falls 'now upon a syllable and now upon a rest' (*New Review*, N.S., 12 (1895), 204). Christina herself defended the work's 'metric jolt' (W. M. Rossetti, 1903: 77) to Dante Gabriel who, like many reviewers, preferred women's poetry to be (morally as well as metrically) regular. It is evidently Rossetti's intention to, however, to describe, not a fluent progress but one of missed beats and missed steps of the way. (*Victorian* 160)

It is obvious that throughout the poem the prince's tardiness is also reflected through the form Rossetti adopts. At the begining of the poem, it is made clear that "early is already late, desire is already delayed and 'truth' is already a lie" (Leighton *Victorian* 161). Through the end of the poem, the problematic aspect of time is made clear once again:

> Come, gone–gone forever–
> Gone as an unreturning river–
> Gone as to death the merriest liver–
> Gone as the year at the dying fall–
> Tomorrow, today, yesterday, never–
> Gone once for all.
> (I 367-72)

Unfortunately, the prince seems to be ignorant of the passing of time, unlike the poetess. Such a paradox ultimately turns *The Prince's Progress* into "neither a lover's quest nor a pilgrim's progress, but a poem about the infinitely seductive substitutions of poetry– substitutions encountered in Rossetti's favourite twilight region of displaced experience and desire" (Leighton *Victorian* 162). After all, it is the poetess who brings forth the tempting substitutions that the prince runs into during his quest, as when she states:

> "If she watches go bid her sleep;
> Bid her sleep, for the road is steep:
> He can sleep who holdeth her cheap,
> Sleep and wake and sleep again.
> Let him sow, one day he shall reap,
> Let him sow the grain.
> (I 265-70)

In this sense, the poem is also about a princess' progress, who leaves the world just as her prince arrives in quite a resolute manner which is one of the recurrent emotional dramas of Christina Rossetti's works (Leighton *Victorian* 162-63). The beloved chooses the divine lover over the vagabond prince who has proved his delight in physicality several times.

The Prince's Progress is clearly not as controversial as *Goblin Market*. The meanings and implications are much easier to grasp. However, simply by turning the genre's requirements upside down, Rossetti proves that this is not just another fairy tale. Apart from the ultimate fact that the lovers are not united, the unconventional way Rossetti adopts in portraying her characters is the main force behind this. None of her characters are represented as ideal: Neither the worldly, easily distracted, unfaithful prince, nor the totally submissive princess. The prince, introduced as the first type of hero whose fate is predicted long ago, fails to meet the expectations. Therefore, his quest ends in catastrophe on both sides. His acts prove futile, as he is far from representing the ideal in any sense. He cannot even represent the traditional masculine power he is supposed to display. In comparison to him, the princess seems more active, especially in terms of her last gesture.

Unlike this romance-like fairy tale, *Sing-Song* is a compilation of a group of riddle-like children's verses with no connection between them at all. Although at first look the poems that constitute it seem like simple nursery rhymes which are not valuable for critical evaluation, there is more than what meets the eye in them. Initially, the lyrics within the body of the poem seem "so simple as to demand neither thought nor artistic workmanship on the part of the author, and yet spontaneous as they seem, looked at more closely, they reveal considerable thought, and not a little technical workmanship" (Bell 291-92). In fact, when compared to the poems that have been studied so far, it can be said that *Sing-Song* is the most fantastic of all of them, revealing its fantastic power more on the form, rather than the theme.

The world *Sing-Song* creates is not a secondary world. For, the poems are short and independent from one another. Even if Rossetti dwells on the same theme at times, the way that she deals with them shows remarkable differences. There is definitely Tolkienian recovery throughout the poem which is made obvious through the distinguishing approach Rossetti adopts in dealing with her themes. However, the emphasis is mostly on Jacksonian subversion as Rossetti primarily follows the fashion of Carrollian play of language in which the signifier never reaches the originally intended signified. Through this, meaning is

continuously postponed in a game of non-closure which suits the form Rossetti uses very well. Contrary to the preceding poems, *Sing-Song* is "less concerned with allegory or didacticism then it is with intensity of both form and language. Rossetti chooses her forms – fairy tale and nursery rhyme – carefully. These forms foreground play, repetition, song, and language" (McGillis 224).

While Rossetti chooses to make sense through what a thing is not rather than telling what the thing *is*, the matter at hand seems to be hard for the adult mind to grasp at first glance. However, when children are concerned these images are easy to comprehend since they have not settled these images in their minds yet, unlike the adults. In this sense, the adult mind gradually gets keener in seeing these things in a new light. What Rossetti offers is not non-sense but a highly logical explanation of things. While one sees the logic in these poems, he/she can grasp the truth behind them, as these are in fact highly logical poems:

> A city plum is not a plum;
> A dumb-bell is no bell, though dumb,
> A party rat is not a rat;
> A sailor's cat is not a cat;
> A soldier's frog is not a frog;
> A captain's log is not a log.
>
> (II 1-6)

Fantasy subverts normality itself through its disruption of the conventional unities of time, space and character by representing these through various possibilities (Jackson 175). *Sing-Song* "thus opens to the play of semantic alternatives by making sense and nonsense simultaneously" (Burlinson *Christina* 20-1). Jackson asserts that semantic play displays how an "understanding of the subversive function of fantastic emerges from *structuralist* rather than from merely *thematic* readings of texts" (175). She further states that the fantastic can be seen as "an art of estrangement, resisting closure, opening structures which categorize experience in the name of a 'human reality'" (Jackson 175). Hence, even though, this riddle-like play seems confusing at first sight, the fact that a city plum is not *any* plum soon dawns on the reader with a smile on his/her lips:

> The peacock has a score of eyes,
> With which he cannot see;
> The cod-fish has a silent sound,
> However that may be;
>
> No dandelions tell the time,

> Although they turn to clocks;
> Cat's-cradle does not hold the cat,
> Nor foxglove fit the fox.
> (II 1-8)

In such riddles, it is evident that "signifiers are not coincident with signifieds" (Burlinson *Christina* 19). The emphasis is rather more on the "imaginative possibilities of language" since these rhymes are "acutely aware of the verbal world children live in, and they encourage children to enjoy the play of language" (McGillis 218). When children's edification is concerned, it is important that the lessons conveyed should be presented in a way that will catch their attention. Therefore, entertainment is a large part of children's education. Primarily dominated by "reversals and inversions, repetition, arbitrariness, puns and lists" which are "complemented by explorations of the relation between structure and semantics, Rossetti's verses, thus, illustrate "multiple applications of words to things" (Burlinson *Christina* 20, 19):

> A pin has a head, but has no hair;
> A clock has a face, but no mouth there;
> Needles have eyes, but they cannot see;
> A fly has a trunk without lock or key;
> A timepiece may lose, but cannot win;
> A corn-field dimples without a chin;
> A hill has no leg, but has a foot;
> A wine-glass a stem, but not a root;
> A watch has hands, but no thumb or finger;
> A boot has tongue, but is no singer;
> Rivers run, though they have no feet;
> A saw has teeth, but it does not eat;
> Ash-trees have keys, yet never a lock;
> And baby crows, without being a cock.
> (II 1-14)

Taking everything literally, Rossetti makes sense out of this seemingly non-sense. It is as if she aims at giving the proper usage of words to things. In a way,

> [t]he *Sing-Song* poems sustain recognition of the need to establish structures and connections between presupposed objects and words, but while the poems instruct and entertain, they also keep alive a crucial mystery in their exposure of the provisional nature of language and the limitations of normative comprehension. (Burlinson *Christina* 21)

It is difference that marks an object's true meaning and Rossetti is clearly aware of this, as her verses continually demonstrate it: "The city mouse lives in a house; - / The garden mouse

lives in a bower" (II 1-2). Rossetti subverts the Victorian craze of control and order through these poems. That is also why Rossetti is counted among the female writers who carry an attack upon the symbolic order (Jackson 103). For Jackson, "[t]o introduce the fantastic is to replace familiarity, comfort, *das Heimlich*, with estrangement, unease, the uncanny. It is to introduce dark areas, of something completely other and unseen, the spaces outside the limiting frame of the 'human' and 'real,' outside the control of the 'word' and the 'look'" (179). Reduced to its basics, everything is that simple: "The horse of the sea / Rear a foaming crest, / But the horses of the land / Serve us the best" (II 1-4). So long as the differences are concerned, it is possible to describe a word in miscellaneous compositions. Rossetti, in this sense, shatters the limitations and shows "in Saussurian terms how signifiers are not at one with the signifieds; instead, Rossetti's rhyme points out how in poetic discourse metaphor detaches us from the one-dimensional relationship between word and concept. In other words, poetic language need not refer to a direct reality" (McGillis 219).

Moreover, several of her poems in this compilation depict lessons that reveal Rossetti's love of nature and her high esteem of everything that inhabits it. Her poem "Who has seen the wind?" illustrates that her poetry is "playful without being condescending because it has a serious respect for the metaphysical, and certainly epistemological, question[ing] it with such economy and through such ordinary words" (Armstrong "Christina"):

> Who has seen the wind?
> Neither I nor you:
> But when the leaves hang trembling
> The wind is passing thro'.
> (II 1-4)

She reveres both the negative and positive aspects of life, embracing it all: "If all were rain and never sun, / No bow could span the hill; / If all were sun and never rain, / There'd be no rainbow still" (II 1-4). Rossetti, in this way, regards the values that are labelled as opposites as part of a continuum rather than as oppositional extremes. For her, each object that has been categorized as negative has its positive qualities too, although it is the negative ones that has been stressed all along. That's why Rossetti insists on reading different meanings into things.

It is obvious that *Sing-Song* contains many themes: death, mother's love, pastoral delicacy, desire, class divisions, suffering, the importance of family, love and fantasy. There are lessons in arithmetic, time, money and colour. Even in these educational poems, there is play with

closure and its opposite (McGillis 224). To add a few more to her themes, Rossetti also refers to the subjects on the love of animals, behavioural lessons, geographical knowledge and information about dates and months. In terms of child-death and abandonment or loss of a member of the parents, the poem's "tendency to equate sleep with death," adds the "dark side to the pastoral innocence of *Sing-Song*" (McGillis 223, 221):

> Our little baby fell asleep,
> And may not wake again
> For days and days, and weeks and weeks;
> But then he'll wake again,
> And come with his own pretty look,
> And kiss mamma again.
> (II 1-6)

The poem is also aware of class differences. In a number of poems, Rossetti shows sympathy towards the poor: "My clothes are soft and warm, / Fold upon fold, / But I'm so sorry for the poor / Out in the cold." (II 5-8). Her feelings concerning class divisions are also made clear in another poem which reads:

> A diamond or a coal?
> A diamond, if you please:
> Who cares about a clumsy coal
> Beneath the summer trees?
>
> A diamond or a coal?
> A coal, sir, if you please:
> One comes to care about the coal
> What time the waters freeze.
> (II 1-8)

Drawing the line between the haves and have nots, Rossetti illustrates the condition of both spheres and in various cases advises children to behave kindly towards the less fortunate whether these be the poor, the old, animals or plants:

> Hear what the mournful linnets say:
> "We built our nest compact and warm,
> But cruel boys came round our way
> And took our summerhouse by storm.
>
> They crashed the eggs so neatly laid;
> So now we sit with drooping wing,
> And watch the ruin they have made,
> Too late to build, too sad to sing."
> (II 1-8)

Despite the sad picture that these poems project, it is fair to say that joy dominates much of the poems (McGillis 222). It is reflected either as natural joy or fun resulting from Rossetti's unlikely combinations:

> A frisky lamb
> And a frisky child
> Playing their pranks
> In a cowship meadow:
> The sky all blue
> And the air all mild
> And the fields all sun
> And the lanes half shadow.
> (II 1-8)

Rossetti is fond of giving utterances to children's evaluation of the world around themselves. It is a world filled with play, fun and beauty; a world where words refer not to objects but to images which are hard for the juvenile mind to grasp. Therefore, she associates words to things and things to images through her broad imagination. As a result, unlikely combinations are created as she contributes to the field of women's writing. Being a highly capable assessor of children's hopes and emotions, she reflects her thoughts and feelings mostly in an absurd way. Burlinson mentions that:

> [n]ursery rhymes are conventionally constructed around simple or comical rhymes that function mnemonically. As well as being used to entertain, they encourage language acquisition by teaching the pleasures of repetition. They delight in the sound-play provided by duplicated syllables, and their often nonsensical content allows children to focus on the euphonic aspects of language. At the same time, however, the use of fantasy helps to order experience by upsetting conventional structures so that these structures may be more clearly apprehended. (*Christina* 20)

The key-word here is conventional. Rossetti's images are far from being traditional because they aim at being original. Regardless of all of their standard apprehensions, Rossetti still succeeds in surprising her readers with her untraditional approach towards the forms, themes and ideas she employs.

To conclude, fantasy "re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real'" (Jackson 20). It deals with reality, but the reality it offers is not necessarily identical with the reality that has been provided for the readers. Rather, its aim is to represent the constructed nature of these realities. That is the reason why during the Victorian Age, elements of fantasy, whether deliberately or unintentionally, were

politically exploited to some extent (Garlick 134-35). Rossetti is among those who use fantasy as a means to seek a reality different from the popular or ideologically domineering one (Francis 56). In fact, Rossetti's use of fantasy illustrates her awareness of its challenging power of the dominant norms (Garlick 133). In this sense, for Rossetti fantasy was not merely a subject matter but also a language. She adopted fantasy like other Victorian female writers who used fantasy as a way to subvert the impositions made upon them by the patriarchal society. Francis observes that

> [f]eminist writers claim that the non-mimetic nature of fantasy allows them to construct incidents and characters impossible in realist fiction. [. . .] Having scrutinised the category of the 'real' and found it to be a phallocentric construct, they use the fantastic to deconstruct that reality, realign, reform it, and so constitute a critical practice which has unlimited subversive potential. (45)

In this light, Christina Rossetti, in her fantasy works, attempts to demonstrate an alternative reality questioning taboos, bringing forth what is visibly ignored and laying bare the structures and forces that prevail in constructing social, sexual and material prejudices. Although she touches upon some of these issues in her shorter poems, and some of her prose work too, it is only through her fantastic works that she presents a charming picture of the truth hidden behind multiple layers of meaning. Providing the reader with innumerable insights and interpretations to a situation, and being in direct association with the reader's imagination and understanding, fantasy is illuminating also in the sense that it reflects one of the strongest features of Rossetti's poetic art: That is, her ability to subvert the norms whether thematically or formally, but all the time secretly.

CHAPTER II

NARRATIVE FAIRY TALES AND METAMORPHIC SELF-DISCOVERY

Marked as simple children's stories and forced to remain outside the literary canon for a long time, the literary value of Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874), "Hero" (1870) and "Nick" (1870) will be thoroughly studied in this chapter, so as to reveal the highly critical tone lying behind their surface. Although the works are presented as simple fairy tales, they are more thought-provoking and dense than expected. Suitable for an adult mind rather, it will be shown that through these fairy tales Rossetti voices her fears, concerns and desires. Concerning these, Rossetti uses the forms and themes she adopts in a new manner employing metamorphosis as a favourite tool. McGillis, with regard to Rossetti's children's works, argues that the reader who expects plain narratives or pure didacticism will be surprised, for apparently moralistic and edifying, her prose works are also quite unsettling and baffling (229). What seems straightforward in her works, upon consideration, emerges as extremely complicated (McGillis 229). Therefore, Rossetti's fairy tales, which are regarded as simple tales for children, will be studied in terms of their subversive aspect with specific references to their social, economic, religious and psychological stand.

Being Rossetti's longest work for children, *Speaking Likenesses*[4] consists of three stories which are unified by the framing device of an aunt who tells these stories to her nieces, while they sew handkerchiefs, repair socks and draw. Basically, the first story depicts Flora's birthday party and the fantastic dream she has during it. The second one describes Edith's futile efforts to boil a kettle in order to help the party that her parents are arranging and the third one centres upon Maggie's quest which is taken in order to deliver a package to the doctor's house on Christmas Eve. The tales start with the narrator Aunt's summoning of her nieces into a domestic Victorian setting. The nieces are a group of five little girls, namely Ella, Jane, Laura, Maude and Clara, who are expected to sew and darn while they listen to the stories of their aunt. The Aunt tells a total of three stories to her nieces. The first one is about a girl named Flora who is expected to celebrate her eighth birthday that day. Therefore, a birthday party will be held for her which will be crowded with Flora's sister Susan, brother Alfred and her cousins, Anne, Richard and George as well as her friend Emily. Emily also

[4] The references to *Speaking Likenesses* are all from David A. Kent and P. G. Stanwood's edition of *Selected Prose of Christina Rossetti*.

brings a friend named Serena with her, whose name is found “odd” by the nieces (120). Initially there is a lovely atmosphere between the children which is soon disrupted by the queenly manners of Flora and the complaints of the children who will not share their things. As a result of this air of conflict even the delicious food they eat during lunch tastes nasty which is then followed by the children’s showing their “ugly faces” while playing several games such as blindman’s buff and hide-and-seek as if the apple of discord was thrown into the air (121). While everyone is sulking and making faces to each other, Susan takes Anne and Flora to the woods as the boys, accompanied by Emily and Serena, follow them.

On their way to the woods, Susan tells a story about a frog who does not know how to boil a kettle. However, not heeding Susan’s story, gloomy Flora is interested in the environment more. She counts the yew trees which are twenty as usual, but to her surprise, she finds a twenty-first this time. Moreover, there is something unusual about the tree: It has a lamp growing on its highest branch, as well as a door, a bell and a knocker upon which “Ring also” is printed (125). Upon this, Flora reaches out and knocks the door as the knocker shakes hands with her and the bell handle twists round and opens the door. Once inside, she finds herself in a lofty apartment which is furnished elaborately. There she witnesses various transformations as the arm-chairs shift their shapes, sofas, footstools and tables run around from corner to corner freely and tea-trays, plates of cake, jugs of cream, saucers of strawberries come and go through a hole in a wall, behind which presumably lies the kitchen. The most disturbing thing about this chaos is the looking-glasses covering the walls up to the ceiling. At first, Flora finds these mirrors delightful, since she has the opportunity to see herself in full length, however soon she regrets it.

At this point, Aunt the narrator interrupts the story, as she has done several times before, this time warning the girls to carry on with their work and not to involve themselves too much with the story. Continuing with the story, she goes on describing the room which is filled with boys and girls who are enjoying themselves. While everyone takes care of himself/herself, no one offers Flora a chair or something to eat or drink which makes her quite uncomfortable. Suddenly a chair gently presses against her, making her sit upon it and once she does that, it takes Flora’s shape. Flora feels very uncomfortable with all the eyes staring at her, yet none acknowledging her existence. When she finally finds the courage to eat a strawberry without waiting for any invitation, she feels even more nervous as a voice yells out to her saying that Flora is not allowed to eat it, because everything belongs to the owner of the voice. The voice

belongs to a girl who is seated upon a very high armchair wearing a coronet upon her head. At the request of the Birthday Queen – as she repeats "You shan't, they're mine [. . .] it's my birthday, and everything is mine" – Flora refrains from touching anything else, despite the tantalizing effect of the food upon her (127).

Looking more frightening with her appearance multiplying in the mirrors, the Birthday Queen then arranges the shape of the room into a flat space. Children are gathered together in the middle of the room waiting for a game to be played. However, on a second look Flora discovers something strange about the appearances of these boys and girls. Because a boy, named Quills, is bristled with prickly quills like a porcupine; another one, called Angles, has sharp face angles and a third one, named Hooks, is hung around with hooks; as for the girls, a girl named Sticky exuded a sticky fluid, whereas another skinny girl, who is called Slime, slips through the fingers. Quite taken aback by their looks, Flora is approached by Hooks who asks her to tell him a game. In return, Flora suggests a game named *Les Graces* causing much dispute among the children. Interrupting their discussion, the Birthday Queen declares that Hunt the Pincushion is going to be played.

Hunt the Pincushion is a game based on the weakness and strength of the characters, in which the stronger figures having a grasp of the weakest player stick small pins to him/her. Not surprisingly, Flora is chosen as the weakest player and suffers its consequences in the hands of her cruel attackers. The game ends as Flora falls on the floor and the players hunt each other. The next game is Self Help in which no help is tolerated. Everybody has to take care of her/himself. This game, which makes the girls suffer, comes to an end, as the Queen yawns and declares that the game is over. Immediately a supper table is set within the room. Flora's expectations, as she waits for permission to eat her fill, is turned down once again as the Queen takes no heed of her. When everyone, except Flora, is over with his/her supper, the Queen leads the company outside and the children start building houses with bricks; yet with one major difference; they build the houses not from without but from within. While each child builds around himself /herself a house, the Aunt makes it clear that although she calls them bricks they are rather brick-shaped pieces of glass of different colours and fancy shapes.

To Flora's misfortune, she recognizes that she is being built in with the Birthday Queen. Not called in to participate, she is unknowingly imprisoned with the Queen inside the house. Once every child finishes his/her home, the children begin comparing their houses. Inside their

glass houses, the children gain different shapes and colours. When they report each others' looks in this manner, a quarrel breaks, as a subsequence of which the children begin throwing bricks at one another. The winner of this chaotic entertainment is again the Birthday Queen. The Queen begins throwing bricks at Flora, while Flora tries desperately to run away. Trying hard to escape from the Queen, Flora suddenly finds herself facing a familiar sight; her home. She runs towards her home at once and finds all of her family, friends and pets there. Then, George reveals to her that he has found her sleeping under the yew trees yet has not disturbed her. Luckily, when the Nurse is just about to fetch Flora, she returns on her own. Glad that everything was a dream, Flora asks for forgiveness from Anne and enjoys her birthday party at length without causing much trouble over trivial problems.

What follows the story of Flora's is a didactic message given by the Aunt. Afterwards, her nieces force their aunt to go on with the story Susan has been supposedly telling in the woods. Due to this wish, one of the most interesting tales of Rossetti appears. Making sure that the girls are all busy with their charity work, the Aunt relates the story of Edith who fails in boiling a kettle in a tale of apparently no action. The story opens with Edith's mother who decides to prepare a party for her family, friends and relations. While the household is busy with the arrangements, little Edith feels that she can help them. Hearing that the cook has to light a fire first to boil the kettle, she murmurs behind the cook that she can do that which goes unheard by the cook. Accompanied by her pets, she goes out to the woods with "a box of lucifers" and a kettle in her hand, unsuccessfully trying to light a fire (137). Initially, Edith erects a tripod for the kettle with three sticks and a hook then she hangs the kettle there and then strikes one match after another until only two matches remain in the box.

Upon this Edith desperately wishes that "the aborigines of the wood grew bold and gathered round her" in order to help her (139). The aborigines of the wood are the "natives of the wood;" in other words, all the helpful animals of the woods (139). After this wish, the animals gravely gather round Edith. Then they start to speak and do all their best to help Edith. A squirrel, a mole, a pair of pigeons, a toad, two hedgehogs and a frog along with Edith's own cat, dog and bird in their eagerness draw attention to several points in lighting a fire. For instance, the squirrel suggests that once the twigs catch fire he will fan the fire with his tail, the mole upon this offers to re-arrange the twigs, the frog remarks that to boil water, first water should be put into the kettle and the toad, who appears to be the wisest, suggests that the match should be struck inside the heap to catch fire. So, inside the pile the lucifer is

struck. Though the initial try fails, the latter try with the last match succeeds. A small fire starts, while the squirrel and the pigeons try hard to keep it burning.

At that moment all of a sudden a fox appears. He directly goes to the grapes taking no heed of others, except for Edith whom he brushes with his tidy tail as he passes by. His aim is soon understood; he tries several times to reach the grapes growing upon a vine. The fox shakes the vine as hard as possible, but he cannot succeed. After a while the fox accepts his failure and muttering that the grapes "must be sour," he disappears (142). Meanwhile, Edith's animal friends' efforts prove futile, as the fire goes out. While the frog complains that the kettle does not have water in it still, Edith in despair scolds him and tells him to boil it himself. She soon starts crying, upon which the animals retreat one by one, except for Edith's own pets who try to console their mistress as much as possible. While they are busy with that, the Nurse arrives with a box of matches and two-fire wheels in her hands exclaiming that Edith's family has been searching for her everywhere while the cook is wondering about the kettle which she cannot find anywhere.

Ending Edith's absurd story in this way, the Aunt derives her inspiration for her next tale from her nieces as well. Jane and Maude suggest that all the stories that have been told so far have been summer stories, so they ask for a winter tale for a change. Complaining on account of this wish, the Aunt begins her winter tale with the introduction of old Dame Margaret into a Christmas setting. Margaret runs the "village fancy shop" the window of which is gorgeously adorned (143). In fact, the Aunt marks this shop as *the* shop from which Edith's and Flora's gifts and dolls have come. Then, she describes the old lady as a nice, simple and generous lady who helps everyone in need and who is all alone, except for her orphan grand daughter, Maggie. Maggie is also a good child who helps her grandmother with the shop. One day, while they are working, they recognize that the doctor's wife has forgotten her parcel behind. Upon this, Maggie volunteers to take them to the family through a road that lies "through the outskirts of an oak forest" (144). Despite her grandmother's reluctance to send her through the dark and isolated road, Maggie insists so much that her grandmother gives in and sends her on her journey with strict restrictions to make haste.

Though the weather is very cold and it is getting dark, Maggie with her basket under her arm quite determinedly leads the way. Jumping and running on her way, Maggie soon falls as a result of which "marvellous adventures" start for her (145). First of all, she reaches a green

glade where a group of children enjoy themselves freely, playing “Hunt the pincushion” and “Self Help”; the very games played by Flora and the strange boys and girls at the realm of the Birthday Queen (146). Once seeing them, Maggie wants to play with them so as to get warm but eventually she does not succumb to temptation, as she remembers her promise to her grandmother. Thanking the group for their invitation, she sets back on her journey. In a short while, she comes across a pair of wood-pigeons which cannot find anything to eat. Taking pity on them, Maggie is about to give them a little bit of the doctor’s chocolate, when she suddenly hears footsteps behind and a very strange boy appears in front of her.

This “poor starving beggar” accompanied with a fat cat close at his heels which carries her kitten in her mouth, is a totally grotesque figure with no apparent eyes, but a gigantic mouth (147). While he asks for food, Maggie, who is puzzled by his looks, tries to avoid looking at him and denies him the doctor’s goods. In spite of the boy’s insistence and his clear attempts to get hold of the food, Maggie, frightened by his appearance, gives him none. Although the boy claims the opposite, his fat body reveals that in truth he is properly supplied with food. She proves very resolute in her attitude, as a result of which the boy leads to another direction. Maggie is hungry and tired now. Gradually drowsiness comes over her but resolute on her quest she resists it. While she is struggles with sleep she comes upon a dozen of people sleeping around a gipsy fire which makes it harder for her to ignore her own drowsiness. However, remembering her promise to make haste once again, she immediately departs from the place. At last, she arrives at the doctor’s house. Expecting a warm welcome, she is disappointed with the indifferent “thank you” she gets instead (149). Upon this, she sets off at once in order to keep her promise.

On her way back home, she sees no sign of the sleepers where they used to be but a half-dead wood-pigeon whom she brings back to life and takes away with her. Next, at the exact place she has met the mouth-boy, she finds a kitten which she also places in her basket. Finally, she sees a puppy where the children used to play and takes it away with her. She returns to her granny who welcomes Maggie with a warm loving hug with her basket full. At her grandmother’s house, Maggie eventually finds warmth, light, food and comfort. With this lovely portrait of a family re-union, the Aunt ends her whole series of stories.

From a Tolkienian perspective, unlike *Goblin Market*, *Speaking Likenesses* does not include any creation of secondary worlds. The stories, though displaying supernatural accounts and

magical occurrences, never hint at the existence of secondary worlds. Hence, while Flora falls asleep and experiences her journey to the mirror-world through dreaming, Edith is not old enough to distinguish between fact and fancy. Because a child at her age is usually self-centred expecting the animals to talk and guide her (Bettelheim 46). Maggie's fantastic quest similarly starts once she stumbles on her way; again making it highly ambiguous as to the truth of the occurrences that she encounters on her way. In fact all of the stories, but specifically Maggie's, stress the presence of the Victorian setting at the background. There is plausibility, however, as the stories do not demonstrate radical divergences towards fact or fantasy solely, but include elements from both moderately. There is also recovery, as Rossetti employs the fairy tale genre to charm her audience, and consolation, since all ends well. However, there is no Tolkinean escape, for especially the third story reveals the obvious manifestation of the Victorian age at the background.

Fantasy is used instrumentally in these stories so as to explore the arbitrary relations behind the prearranged notions of the Victorian society. There are also violations of reality and inclusions of folktale motifs, but no anachronism. The stories manifest women's fears regarding sexuality and their helplessness and lack of economic means to survive in a world governed by masculine rules. Showing what women lack and their unconscious desires to compensate for this, the stories, as the title too indicates, aim at the treatment of several ego-splits. Aiming to reach self-realization, – the creation of integrated human beings – the stories each explore maturation processes. Through their inner journeys and speaking likenesses, Flora realizes her insensitivity towards other children and Edith sees her incapacity. However, the most successful one among them is Maggie who overcomes the hardest battle. The unconscious forces on her way represent her anxieties and desires at the end of which a harmonious union of the ego-split takes place.

Moreover, when confronted with the first two stories, the third story reveals injustices and inequalities that have been introduced to the Victorian Age by means of the industrial and colonial advancements. Self-interest and social Darwinism prevail the tale of Maggie. Maggie's story, however, also demonstrates how the lowest can rise up and the highest may fall down in the moral scale, although the opposite is true in the material scale. Rossetti's aim in all of the three stories is satire. She criticizes the loss of spiritual values in the process of gaining material wealth. There are didactic messages to be drawn from the tales as well, but the stories stress playfulness and nonsensicality more, for instance, when "bell flowers rang

without clappers" in Flora's tale (123) or Edith gets angry with the cook who is not capable of comprehending what she says properly: "Do you like making tarts?" "I like tarts, but not often." "Cook, you are not attending to what I say." "No, the attendance is just what I should not have liked" (137).

With its highly disturbing images, *Speaking Likenesses* initially aims to show the speaking likenesses of its heroines perpetually. In the characters they run into during their quests, the heroines see the personification and mimicry of themselves, their flaws and deficiencies in an exaggerated sense. The overstatements made in relation to their characters become either frightening, inept or affectionate throughout the stories depending upon their own frailties or qualities. Moreover, the fairy tales all reveal the "basic motifs of human existence [. . .] at the very outset: life and death; good and evil; temptation and intrigue; weakness and innocence; despair, guidance and assistance. In addition to these, there are the spheres of the home and family, and nature – the forest and its animals" (Lüthi 73). Revealed in each of the stories through the characters' unconscious forces, these qualities at times parallel and sometimes contrast one another.

Rossetti acknowledged in a letter to her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, that she intended *Speaking Likenesses* in the main as "a Christmas trifle, [which] would-be in the *Alice* style, with an eye to the market" (Briggs 214). However, Flora's story is by far the closest Rossetti ever comes to imitate Carroll's style in the *Alice* books. There are several instances of it such as Flora's falling asleep, entering into the fantasy world through an inscribed door, finding herself in a parallel world which is crowded with inanimate objects that are animated and distorted characters in an atmosphere of total chaos. Besides, both the introduction of delicious food into the setting and "its withholding recall moments from the *Alice* books" (Briggs 216). For instance, when Flora, intimated by the Queen's previous rebuke, shows resentment at the appearance of food:

> This time Flora would not take so much as a fork without leave: wherefore as the Queen paid not the slightest attention to her, she was reduced to look hungrily on while the rest of the company feasted, and while successive dainties placed themselves before her and retired untasted. [. . .] [I]t may have been quite as well for her that she did not feel at liberty to eat such a mixture: yet it was none the less tantalizing to watch so many good things come and go without taking even one taste, and to see all her companions stuffing without limit. (132-33)

Suspending the laws of the primary world temporarily, Rossetti's works, like Carroll's, illustrate how "during the nineteenth century children's literature did become less and less didactic, more and more imaginative, with the Alice books providing a forceful impetus" (Clark 13). Disregarded by Tolkien due to its use of the dream device to enter into the realm of fantasy (149) and defended by Bettelheim in terms of its expression of disguised wish fulfilments (36), children's literature can easily "enter the realm of non-didactic fantasy, often by means of a mirror-world" (Clark 13). Rossetti employs the dream and mirror imagery as a popular device: "The only uncomfortable point in the room, that is, as to furniture, was that both ceiling and walls were lined throughout with looking-glasses: but at first this did not strike Flora as any disadvantage; indeed she thought it quite delightful, and took a long look at her little self full length" (125). As Briggs notes, mirror imagery has always been a part of Rossetti's poetry but traditionally as a moral-reflective device for self-examination (216). Rossetti's unconventionalism relies on her use of a proper "mirror-world fantasy" this time (Clark 5). According to Clark, a mirror-world fantasy consists of a fantasy, a mirror and a world which relatively re-present a non-realistic outer world, a mirror which is framed by the primary world and a plausible secondary world (5).

In order to underline the distinctions between the authentic world and the fantasy world, the characters within them search for clarification through the regulations of the primary world (Clark 14). Throughout *Speaking Likenesses*, the need to refer to the laws of the primary world is demonstrated both by the enthusiastic nieces and the heroines of the tales themselves. For instance, once the Aunt mentions a quantity of sugar sprinkling itself over the strawberries, Jane immediately asks: "How could it sprinkle itself?" (127) and when Flora herself is busy with perceiving the wonders surrounding her in the mirror-world, some of these details strike her as quite extraordinary "in the first few minutes after her arrival, some came to light as time went on" (125).

The mirror-world is important in another sense, too. Bringing into mind Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, according to Armitt, "the mirror is repeatedly found as a double-sided symbol which, as well as having its conventional, mimetic properties, likewise functions as a metaphorical gateway facilitating entry into another world, realm or stage of development" (46). Thus, the mirror creates an ambiguous space where deformations of the norms become normal (Jackson 44). Through the entrance into the mirror phase, individuals begin to shape their own sense of selves by way of a paradoxical recognition of their

difference from others (Armitt 47). Jackson suggests that through its presentation of images of the self in another place, "the mirror provides versions of self transformed into another, become something or someone else" (87). As a result of this division and re-union, the ego-split is healed and a successful self-realization takes place.

Flora's speaking likeness is the birthday Queen. Imitating Flora's previous words – "It's my birthday" – the birthday Queen cries out "it's my birthday, and everything is mine" (121, 127). In the Queen, Flora's selfish and spiteful nature is embodied at its extreme as suits the exaggerated features of the mirror-world. Briggs notes that "the birthday Queen appropriates everything in sight, and Flora herself is displaced from the centre to the periphery, no longer ruler but her persecuted victim, pursued and tormented by prickly or slimy playmates, and excluded from their feast" (222) Through this shift, the norms are suspended and what has been oppressed within the unconscious comes to the fore. In the even more nightmarish aftermath, Flora finds herself walled up with the Queen inside a glowing house of glass which signifies the vulnerable self (Briggs 223). Flora's entrapment within the glass-house with the Queen directly connects the two characters with each other. In the birthday Queen, Flora sees the embodiment of her least attractive side. Within the mirror-world, where the rules of the primary world are deferred, she turns from the controller to the victim, from subject to object. Being forced to occupy the periphery herself, Flora is able to see the incidents from the eyes of the *other* now. As a result, when she wakes up she is much more tolerant towards the other kids she had previously pushed to the periphery through her caprice.

The other characters occupying the mirror-world are also striking in their unusual looks. They are reflections of Flora's original party companions as well in their constant arguments and vicious acts, but with one major difference; their physical distortion is directly associated with their sexual differences:

> Flora, elbowed and jostled in their midst, noticed points of appearance that quite surprised her. Was it themselves, or was it their clothes? [. . .] One boy bristled with prickly quills like a porcupine, and raised or depressed them at pleasure; but he usually kept them pointed outwards. Another instead of being rounded like most people facetted at very sharp angles. A third caught in everything he came near, for he was hung round with hooks like fishhooks. One girl exuded a sticky fluid and came off on the fingers; another, rather smaller, was slimy and slipped through the ends. (129)

The description of these exceptional children can be associated with Mikhail Bakhtin's explanation of the grotesque which centres fundamentally upon exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness (303). According to Burlinson:

> As well as being identifiable as a work of Victorian fantasy, *Speaking Likenesses*, like *Goblin Market*, draws on the grotesque tradition in its emphasis on carnality, orality and appetite. Mikhail Bakhtin's attention to representations of distorted, outsized or undersized, deformed or obscene human figures is also pertinent to Rossetti's and Hughes's most obviously 'grotesque' depictions of bodies in *Speaking Likenesses*. ("All" 292)

Disrupting the conventional associations, Flora's and later Maggie's stories exemplify the formation of grotesque. In the light of Bakhtinian grotesque, Burlinson maintains that "bottom *becomes* top, as the Fool becomes King; outside *becomes* inside, and ordinary conceptions of physical borders and boundaries are upset" ("All" 292-93). Burlinson further states that the lower bodily stratum replaces the upper topography in order to convey the interchangability of the regulations of materiality, sexuality, obscenity and physicality as the body extends to reach beyond its confinements ("All" 292-93). Bakhtin initially relates the disruption of the bodily hierarchy with the mouth. For him, the "word is localized in the mouth and in the head (thought); from there it is transferred to the abdomen and is pushed out under the [. . .] head. Here once more we have the logic of the opposites, the contact of the upper and the lower level. We have also an exaggeration" (Bakhtin 309). The symbolic replacement of bodily organs as well as the vocabulary used reveal the importance of Bakhtinian grotesque while the children play Hunt the Pincushion:

> The Pincushion was poor little Flora. How she strained and ducked and swerved to this side or that, in the vain effort to escape her tormentors! Quills with every quill erect tilted against her, and needed not a pin: but Angles whose corners almost cut her, Hooks who caught and slit her frock, slime who slid against and passed her, Sticky who rubbed off on her neck and plump bare arms, the scowling Queen, and the whole laughing scolding pushing troop, all wielded longest sharpest pins, and all by turns overtook her. (131)

Defying categories, regulations of the society and body politics, grotesque also reminds one of Julia Kristeva's idea of the abject, which disrupts issues of identity, system and order (Burlinson "All" 293). Abject does not respect limits and laws. It is the in-between state which occupies the territory of the ambiguous. For Burlinson, the concept of the abject is helpful for interpreting Rossetti's fantasy stories as well, since

> the ideological and social resonances of her text are partly generated by the disturbing bodies that appear throughout the work. *Speaking Likenesses* is very concerned with the social order, with what constitutes appropriate behaviour and what signifies moral, ethical and physical transgression. Rossettti's stories attempt to define the limits of proper subjectivities, but that which is abjected persistently threatens the apparent unity of the characters portrayed as 'normal'. ("All" 294)

Through Rossetti's use of metamorphosis, highly uncomfortable images of the grotesque and the abject are represented. Similar to the distorted images of the mirror-world, the grotesque and abject subvert the category of the normal. As a result, the bodily topographies of Flora's birthday companions change in accordance with their gender and instead of their normal appearances, their gendered sexualities are exposed with the emphasis put upon their lower bodily stratum. Representing a topsy turvy world in this sense, the gender-based qualities attributed to the boys and the girls are quite significant. The openly "sexual nature of the monster children in Flora's dream – the prickly little boys (erect Quills, sharp Angles and Hooks), and the slithery girls (Sticky and Slime) – has attracted disproportionate attention" from the critical world (Briggs 213). Especially with regard to the function of the games they play, they expose the "outrageousness of the normal as it represents in a different context contemporary medical, gender-specific practice" (Burlinson "All" 299).

Reminding remarkably of the goblins' harassment of Lizzie in *Goblin Market*, the games these children play also recall the nightmarish atmosphere that permeates the *Alice* books. McGillis argues that in Rossetti's story both of the games that are played reveal "a deep fear of sexual violence and a disturbing disrespect for humanity. The first game treats human beings as objects, things without feeling or dignity; it reverses the fairy tale convention of imagining inanimate objects as human" (227). As a result, Hunt the Pincushion and Self-Help

> expose the male children as hideous miniature oppressors, whose mechanical body parts aid them in their subordination of others. But Rossetti is not simply one-sided in her portrayals. The girls are seen to be repellent too, though in their case it is not as a result of external shows of aggressiveness but simply on account of their female sexuality. Their disturbing, oozing bodies bring the insides to the outside, producing a representation both grotesque and abject. (Burlinson "All" 299)

Rossetti, criticizing the tensions generated by gendered sexualities, illustrates how these policies turn women into victims in a world governed by men. Starting with the "astonishingly violent Hunt the Pincushion (in which Flora *is* the pincushion), male oppression of women's bodies is depicted in a clear manner" (Burlinson "All" 298).

Ultimately, in McGillis' opinion, the hunt turns into not an innocent search for an object but into a blood sport (227-28). The Aunt suggests that the rules of Hunt the Pincushion is

> simple and demands only a moderate amount of skill. Select the smallest and weakest player (if possible let her be fat: a hump is best of all), chase her round and round the room, overtaking her at short intervals, and sticking pins into her here or there as it happens: repeat, till you choose to catch and swing her; which concludes the game. Short cuts, yells, and sudden leaps give spirit to the hunt. (131)

The next game the children play is quite important, not only in its connection with physical gender-based oppression but also in its association with one of the most influential works of the Victorian period. Through this game, Samuel Smiles' identically-named work *Self-Help* (1859) is severely criticized by Rossetti (Burlinson "All" 297). In the tale it is indicated that during the game, Self-Help, "each boy depended on his own resources" so that the "boys were players, and the girls were played (if I may be allowed such a phrase): all except the Queen who, being Queen, looked on, and merely administered a slap or box on the ear now and then to some one coming handy" (131, 132). Meanwhile Hooks attaches a number of captives to his hooks and Angles, as an ironer, is engaged in a conventionally female labour which he uses as a way to maim the girls. Finally, the girls' bodies are written on by Quills, implicating both the power of ideological inscriptions and the possibility of resistance to them (Burlinson "All" 298). Quills' act also confirms the supremacy of masculine authorship and like all the other games played evidently victimizes the girls.

Burlinson indicates that in Self-Help "men help themselves to the less powerful and use them as they wish to. As Pamela K. Gilbert notes, Rossetti makes an explicit analogy between sexual and social victimization of the female" ("All" 297). Siding with social Darwinism, Smiles defends the powerful who tricks, brutalizes and puts all his resources together to attain his goal no matter what damages it costs on the other side. Therefore, in describing this game

> Rossetti satirizes the whole notion of self-help, made popular in the mid-century by Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859). The unpleasant implications for females in Smile's assertion that "energy of will may be defined to be the very central power of character in a man" are uncovered in Rossetti's imagined game. In Flora's dream "self-help" comes to mean a male helping himself at the expense of the female. (McGillis 228)

Evidently, criticizing the social and physical deprivation of the female, Rossetti once more adopts fantasy to make her point clear. She is against the oppression of women as individuals,

housewives or as writers. In short, she is against the captivity of the female bodies and minds. With her all-knowing aunt who fakes to have no notion of her words' implications, Rossetti subverts the rules of the primary world showing that a world reigned by suppression is actually ruled by chaos.

These games reveal the colonial ideology behind them as they are also suggestive of a "concern at the cultural saturation of ideologies hostile to women and other oppressed groups" such as the colonized (Burlinson "All" 297). Rossetti positioning these oppressed groups on identical levels includes a criticism of the imperial ideologies as well:

> Fantasy literature by definition was full of occurrences that violated consensual and factual "perceptions" of reality. Late Victorian fantasy literature was also full of subversive views of British imperialism. While fantasy writers in the first half of Victoria's reign often used fantasy as a vehicle for attacking various aspects of organized Christianity, those in the second half of her reign often used fantasy to attack various aspects of British imperial ideology. (Michalson 167)

Hooks is capable of making captives of the colonized in as much as the enslaved women. Burlinson in relation to this representation argues that the "first image here is an image of slavery, implicating the boys in a much wider field of oppression than the merely childish and local. 'Self-Help' is shown to be an ideology that justifies the colonial and domestic exploitation of any who can be overcome by force and oppression" ("All" 298). Naturally, the powerful party seems to have the right to usurp the authority it has been given by the Queen.

Although most of the readers have found the book "a pale shadow of *Alice*" at the time, there are some undeniable similarities (McGillis 227). The two works definitely share the dreamy atmosphere of a grotesque world, which is occupied with fantastic creatures and animated objects, the rendering of desire and the nudity of fear. What Rossetti adds to this atmosphere is holding up a mirror to Flora's ugly double, her id-like inner self, which constantly seeks for self-admiration. The mirror which does not strike Flora as a disadvantage at first – since she finds it quite delightful taking "a long look at her little self full length" – irritates her in the end, when she is trapped in with her double in a glass-house once again (125). In this sense, the "mirrors multiply only too precisely what the child does not want to see" (Briggs 217) which Burlinson pinpoints as the height of female narcissism ("All" 301).

Rossetti, through the apple of discord symbolism in the actual world and the mirror-imagery in the dream world, satirizes Flora's vanity as well as masculine aggression in general, besides the more serious issues of victimization. The apple of discord symbolism reveals both feminine vanity and a criticism of the imposition of gender-specific positions in life. Through her reference to the tale of Aphrodite, Athena, Hera and Paris which led to the beginning of the Trojan War, the Aunt ironically reflects upon gender relations (Bettelheim 212): "What apple, Aunt? – The Apple of Discord, Clara, which is a famous apple your brothers would know all about, and you may ask them some day" (121). Clearly, the brothers of the nieces are after more serious issues than their idle sisters. Unlike their sisters, who can hear stories only on condition that they carry out some household tasks, the brothers are provided with the necessary education that the girls will eventually lack.

Making gender distinctions clear with her final message, that Flora should know how to be "obliging and good-humoured," the Aunt then continues with her second story, which is apparently forced by the nieces into the narrative frame: "Aunt, do tell us the story of the frog who couldn't boil the kettle" (136). Edith's story "functions as an antithesis to Flora's, ostensibly by taking us inside it: the listening nieces ask for the rest of the story begun by Flora's older sister Susan at her party, of which they have heard no more than an intriguing snatch" (Briggs 224). Presented as a beast-fable, it is different in some aspects, such as its inclusion of people in it and its vague interest in satire or didacticism. Similar to *The Prince's Progress*, Edith is not supposed to fulfil her task which steadily subverts the readers' expectations (Knoepflmacher 374). As a result, the story starting in *medias res* offers no proper action either, and, in that, it presents a story of non-climactic action. Edith's world is a simple one suiting her young age. Edith's tale is properly adorned, for having a very young child as its protagonist, the plot includes a suitably straightforward action at its centre. Edith's story is basically concerned with the provision of food, placed among "the child's earliest and most urgent needs. It is characterized by the child's animistic vision: Edith imagines herself as all-powerful and in untroubled communication with the world around her, whether inhabited by grown-ups or by animals" (Briggs 224).

Edith's quest is doomed to fail from the start. Absorbed in her self-autonomy, she wants to control the world around her. In Edith's assumption that she can light a fire and boil the kettle by herself, Briggs reads an element of Promethean *hubris* (225). The Aunt's words, too, confirm this: "Edith was a little girl who thought herself by no means such a very little girl,

and at any rate as wise as her elder brother, sister, and nurse. I should be afraid to assert that she did not reckon herself as wise as her parents: but we much hope not, for her sake" (136). In that sense, the eager but unhelpful animals of the forest are her own speaking likenesses. She sees her own incapacity in their inability to light a fire, though she is in no proper age to reach this recognition. That is also why she cannot make amends as Flora does. Briggs notes, if "Flora wants to control her little world on the occasion of her birthday, Edith has not yet learned to question her right to do so" (224). The two characters are alike in other aspects, since their stories both reveal childish anger and pride. They are also complementary in terms of the Carrollian worlds they represent. While Flora's dream begins in the safety of her home and ends with the threatening chaos of the mirror world of *Through the Looking-Glass*; Edith's situation – surrounded by animals eager to give her advice – resembles more to the fantastic milieu of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Briggs 222). Similarly, the pool in the second story which "mirrored in its still depths the lights, shadows" corresponds to Flora's mirror world (139).

Throughout Edith's story, Rossetti plays with the fable form, since her fable aims at fun rather than didacticism (McGillis 227). She seems to include no didactic messages into the body of the tale except for the little anecdote about the fox. The fox's utterance "They must be sour" immediately brings into mind Aesop's fable (142). As McGillis confirms, "the allusion is clearly to Aesop. If we look for a moral in this story of Edith and the kettle, Aesop's famous fable provides one. [. . .] [S]ome people blame circumstances when they fail through their own incapacity, while others take disappointment with indifference" (226-27). The anecdote also reveals Edith's and the fox's reaction to failure. Unlike Edith who cries due to her failure, the fox leaves the scene searching for other opportunities. Although Rossetti clearly inverts Aesop's moral within the body of Edith's tale, illustrating such a moral contrast should not be confused with ignoring the story's more visible nonsense (McGillis 227).

The following winter tale, which is again told upon the children's demand in an attempt "to camouflage the schematic development of the inset stories," is quite significant in its oppositional position placed against the tales that have been told so far (Briggs 224). Despite Helsinger's argument that Rossetti's poems do not illustrate the conflict between the separate spheres, Maggie's story is a clear embodiment of this conflict especially with regard to its succession of the first two stories (190):

> In providing a winter story to offset these two summer stories, Rossetti [. . .] found her starting point in an almost Marxist contemplation of the means of distribution and consumption: the final story begins in the toy shop that has supplied the dolls, playthings, and sweetmeats so unreflectively enjoyed by Flora and Edith. The orphan Maggie works here; her nickname is that of Rossetti's older sister Maria, but also suggests a lower class than those of the other girls named so far. This is the first time, of course, that we have seen a child other than at play: Maggie helps her grandmother in the shop, fetching toys for children luckier than herself. (Briggs 225)

Orphan Maggie lacks most of the opportunities her luckier peers have. Flora hopes for "birthday presents without any doubt of receiving some" (118) and is indeed given a doll which "must have cost pounds and pounds" (120) and Edith dresses her doll "in its best clothes" (137). In contrast, Maggie owns neither the animals nor the dolls the girls each have. In fact, the gifs given to Flora and Edith's doll are all acknowledged to have come from the shop that Maggie and her Grandmother are running. Flora and Edith's possessions, as well as the doctor's presents, therefore, stand for the consumer goods that Maggie herself lacks, yet gladly gives out to others (Briggs 225). Through this comparison, the triadic structure of *Speaking Likenesses* is reduced to a binary opposition.

Illustrating how the middle-class children are taken care of by all means while the working-class children are deprived of the necessary protection, Rossetti clearly depicts the contrast between Disraeli's two nations, the haves and have nots, the rich and the poor. As Briggs expresses: "The first two stories of Flora and Edith can be compared at every stage: both are surrounded by loving parents and siblings, nurses, pets, toys, good food, comfortable homes with gardens and private woods at hand; they occupy the kind of middle-class paradise that is felt to be every child's birthright" (217). So, at every stage Flora and Edith's situations are contrasted with Maggie's who is all alone and who has noone but her grandmother. Standing in the cold atmosphere of the Christmastime, she reminds one of Andersen's "Little Match Girl" and shows that if "the working-class child is in danger of exposure, the middle-class child is in danger of being overprotected, of being shut in" (Briggs 217).

Having no notion of a world in which children have to work, Edith and Flora enjoy the comfort and wealth provided for them like the doctor's children. Contrary to them, Maggie is expected to win the provision of her needs. Also, her quest is the only one that is selflessly motivated. According to Knoepflmacher, the stories reveal a spiritual journey as a whole. Starting with the hell of Flora's nightmare and continuing with the purgatory in which Edith repeatedly fails to light a fire, the stories finally reach to the heaven symbolized by Maggie's

acquisition of joy, food and sleep (Briggs 214). However, for Briggs, this interpretation is at odds with the settings Rossetti employs for her stories. Because the first two stories take place in the safe surroundings of garden and woods, while it is the third one which offers a much more appropriate portrayal of a difficult spiritual journey set in the cold wilderness of a forest (Briggs 214). The forest symbolism and winter setting is significant in their revelation of the difficulties Maggie has to overcome so as to deserve her rewards. According to Bettelheim, the forest stands for a test where "inner darkness is confronted and worked through" (93) as a result of which the person "favored by fortune, [. . .] privileged by nature and deprived by a parent" wins in the end (Tatar 58).

Unlike the other heroines, Maggie has to overcome several temptations during her quest. What is so striking about the temptations on her way is that they are also based on the grotesque tradition in their emphasis on the lower bodily stratum. Displayed throughout *Speaking Likenesses*, except for Edith's story, these deformed bodies have been demonstrated earlier as the boys and girls in Flora's dream. Significantly, these disfigured children appear once again as the grasshopper children in Maggie's quest. Tempting Maggie to play with them, these familiar figures are soon followed by another grotesque figure: the mouth-boy:

> A boy: and close at heels marched a tabby cat, carrying in her mouth a tabby kitten. Or was it a real boy? He had indeed arms, legs, a head, like ordinary people: but his face exhibited only one features, and that was a wide mouth. He had no eyes; so how he came to know that Maggie and a basket were standing in his way I cannot say: but he did seem somehow aware of the fact; for the mouth, which could doubtless eat as well as speak, grinned, whined, and accosted her: "Give a morsel to a poor starving beggar." (147)

In addition to that, tempting Maggie to eat the doctor's goods, the mouth-boy corresponds to "what Harpham calls the 'affinity / antagonism' structure of grotesque figures, in so far as he combines elements of normative with abnormal characteristics. He also [. . .] conforms to Mary Russo's view that the identities of male grotesques 'are produced through an association with the feminine as the body marked by difference'" (Burlinson "All" 294).

According to Bakhtin, "the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else" (317). Drawing upon Arthur Hughes' illustrations accompanying Rossetti's work, Burlinson argues that the mouth-boy's hyperbolic mouth is "an image of the *vagina dentata*, surrounded by a mop of thick hair. The cat (or pussy) that accompanies the

boy carries its kitten in its mouth, thus linking top and bottom body as the kitten that originally came out of one end is now seen emerging from the other" (Burlinson "All" 294). Armitt affirms the mouth's importance in the sense that it "forms the literal connection point with those same 'gross' parts" where the results of eating, drinking and sexual interaction take place (69). Bakhtin suggests that the mouth stands next to the bowels and the genital organs which results in defecation or pregnancy (317). Moreover, the cat's "position between the legs of the boy corroborates this sexual and reproductive aspect, while the boy's bloated lower stomach suggest pregnancy as much as simple obesity" (Burlinson "All" 294-95). Being a descendant of the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood," the mouth-boy's oral description marks him as more threatening than the conventionally dangerous animal as a hideous abject (Burlinson "All" 295-96).

His excessive looks as well as his direct association with orality also suggests "a problematical self-control," just like the distorted boys and girls, "whose 'stuffing without limit' is a marker of their immorality" (Burlinson *Christina* 43). Orality is a serious issue in fairy tales associated with the Original Sin and the sins that naturally follow it, such as gluttony, greed and envy, as well as bringing to mind the fear of being eaten. While, the cannibalistic appearance of the boy inspires horror in Maggie it arouses both fear and delight in the listeners (Tatar 191). Slusser, placing the oral impulse amongst the most primitive impulses, suggests that "access to food is access to strength; and those who dare to violate the taboo, time and again, grow strong" (9, 12). However, when women are concerned this is not the case. Because curiosity and disobedience, which are seen as masculine virtues, are considered as sins when women are concerned (Tatar 111).

Metamorphosing from the much more familiar wolf into a defamilarized being (Armitt 65), the mouth-boy encourages Maggie to violate the taboo which "begins with eating an apple in Eden" (Slusser 3). Claiming that "the metaphor of devouring often stands in for sex" in myth and fairy tale, Warner confirms Burlinson's remarks that the boy's appearance carries sexual overtones as well (259). In their association with Eve's vice, women are also denied reaching out to the imaginative capacities of the mind, similar to the deprivation of Laura and Lizzie in *Goblin Market*. Besides, marked by Slusser as a social issue, orality symbolically points to social Darwinism, "eating your way to the top" as an image of "men eating fellow men" which is again considered as a masculine virtue rather than feminine one (14, 16). In the face of such an attractive temptation, Maggie luckily does not give in. She continues with her quest

hoping that the doctor's family will invite her in, serve her something to eat and drink and perhaps let her catch a glimpse of their decoration of the Christmas tree.

Unfortunately, soon her hopes are turned down. She is disappointed in being sent away with a cold thank you, yet she does not disappoint the animals she meets on her way herself. Though she has very little to offer to them, she picks them up, at exactly the same points where she has met her tempting tormentors, and in taking care of the animals' needs, she provides for her own needs. They each correspond to the child's need for a specific thing; respectively the dove stands for "spiritual sustenance, the kitten to her need for food and physical nurture, and the puppy to her need for companionship and play" (Briggs 217-18). Maggie cares for herself by caring for them because the wounded dove, the hungry kitten and the playful puppy, represent her own needs of warmth, food and company. They also repeat the triadic structure of the book in terms of the three temptations Maggie undergoes on her journey, that is, to play, to eat and to fall asleep; each one heralded by her own desire (Briggs 225-26). As Briggs points out:

> This sequence of needs, epitomized in Maggie's journey and her discoveries, also corresponds to the structure of *Speaking Likenesses* as a whole: the first story focuses on children at play and in social relationships, and is briefly recapitulated in the reappearance of the monstrous children who tempt Maggie to play with them. The second focuses on a family feast, and Edith's eagerness to help provide for it, and is recapitulated as Maggie's experience of hunger personified as a boy who is all mouth. The third is Maggie's own story, a story of spiritual needs figured both as the mysterious sleepers and as the heavenly wonder of the Northern Lights. (218)

Maggie's witnessing of the natural wonder of Aurora Borealis at the end of her quest is quite important, since her previous losses are compensated for in this way. Rossetti, criticizing her own discomfort with the materialization of a religious festivity which becomes an opportunity to indulge children with greed by loading children with presents, makes up for Maggie's lack in her witnessing of a natural wonder (Briggs 226). In the form of the Aurora Borealis enlightening nature, Maggie experiences a spiritual illumination: "[I]n one moment the sky before her flashed with glittering gold, and flushed from horizon to zenith with rosy glow; for the northern lights came out, and lit up each cloud as if it helding lightening, and each hill as if it smouldered ready to burst into a volcano" (150). The lights symbolize Maggie's spiritual enlightenment and the award given in return for denying worldly goods to achieve a spiritually higher one. In return for her material deprivation and her subsequent success in

fulfilling her quest she is thus finally bestowed with the warmth, food and comfort she has been denied earlier during her quest.

Evidently, Maggie's speaking likenesses are both the temptations she meets on her way and the animal-rewards she gets in return at the end of her quest. Briggs reads this as a confirmation of the triadic structure of *Speaking Likenesses*, for her

> [t]he binary oppositions of likenesses in the first two stories becomes triadic once more in the third, where Maggie remains independent of both the bad likenesses (or temptations) and the good ones, though we can also see how, in further patterning, Maggie's tempting playmates are identical with the monstrous children of Flora's nightmare, while the abandoned pets she rescues corresponds to Edith's animal friends. (218)

Maggie embodies the plight of the working-class child who is morally ideal, though materially deprived. As a result, the temptations she meets on her way each point to a number of cardinal sins such as greed, envy, gluttony and sloth. Contrary to Flora and Edith, Maggie shows quite a strength of will in overcoming these. In this sense, Flora and Edith appear as foil characters, making Maggie's spiritual victory even clearer. It is obvious that in *Speaking Likenesses*, which has been regarded as "a harsh, judgemental, and moralizing story in tradition of Day's *Sandford and Merton* or Mrs Sherwood's *Fairchild Family*," Rossetti also satirizes

> the new child as exemplified in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), the arbiter in a world of delightful play. She criticizes the middle-class child, encouraged to play in the walled rose garden and protected from any knowledge of the poverty and deprivation beyond. (Briggs 212)

Rossetti's satire is not only hidden behind the veil of fantasy throughout the story. Rossetti's more apparent partner in crime is the Aunt who openly criticizes the actions of her heroines, as well as the deeds of her own nieces. By way of her sermons, the nieces are made aware of their much better position in life compared to the orphaned children who live on the streets or the ones who have to work for their living in mines and factories. Despite Knoepflmacher's remark that the Aunt constantly denies "imaginative control over her own invented stories and demonstrates both hostility and repressiveness towards fantasy itself," in reality, the Aunt is not against fantasy (Burlinson "All" 303). For instance, upon seeing her nieces' surprised faces while she describes the games played in Flora's story, the Aunt proclaims: "Don't look shocked, dear Ella, at my choice of words; but remember that my birthday party is being held

in the Land of Nowhere. Yet who knows whether something not altogether unlike it has not ere now taken place in the Land of Somewhere? Look at home, children" (132). By simultaneously denying the existence of such brutal attacks and injustices in society and accepting their presence, the Aunt, and Rossetti herself, makes it clear that the world of fantasy is always intertwined with the real world.

Maggie's grandmother, Dame Margaret is accordingly depicted as a plain and humble lady who took home her little "orphan granddaughter, when the child was left almost without kith or kin to take care for her" (144). Even Maggie sounds lucky, however, when compared to Victorian child-labourers who work under harsher circumstances (Nelson 71). The Aunt, therefore encourages her nieces to be thankful for the financially and emotionally safe upbringing they have. Moulded by the Victorian virtues and moralities, while setting down to tell a story to her nieces, the Aunt forces them to work in order to help the financially deprived: "Very well Maude, as you like: only no help no story. I have too many poor friends ever to get through my work. However, as I see thimbles coming out, I conclude you choose story and labour" (136). Through this, she brings into the stories she tells questions about what her nieces, like Flora and Edith, have taken for granted. In her emphasis upon work, the Aunt repeats the common discourse of the Victorian Era which was the belief that "man was created to work, that everyone had his appointed calling in which he was to labor for God and men, that idleness was a moral and social sin" (Houghton 189).

Observing that except for the word God, the most popular word in the Victorian vocabulary was perhaps work, Houghton claims that "the full meaning of a life of work was identical in outward action [. . .] with a life of moral earnestness" during the Victorian Age (242-43). The Aunt's commitment to hard work, therefore, represents Victorian tendency to promote moral behaviour, as well as being an indicator of the Victorian sewing circles that are organized to help the poor: "Jane and Laura, don't quite forget the pocket-handkerchiefs you sat down to hem. See how hard Ella works at her fern leaves, and what pains she is taking to paint them nicely. Yes, Maude, that darn will do: now your task is ended, but if I were you I would help Clara with hers" (125). Burlinson affirms that: "This emphasis on labour as well as listening yokes the tradition of oral story-telling (always an activity pursued simultaneously with work) with a specifically Victorian textual context in which such bourgeois feminine labour is perceived as frustrating or tedious" ("All" 301). Traditionally such frame stories often include an older woman addressing a group of young girls.

Brigss suggests that praising moral virtue and setting her stories within the context of those leading harder lives, the Aunt sets right examples for the society (228). In a sense, "her storytelling sessions are a children's version of the 'sewing circles' that Victorian ladies regularly participated in, where someone read aloud or told stories to the rest as they worked at hemming and plain sewing clothes and sheets for the poor" (Briggs 228). However, Rossetti also mocks these sessions through the Aunt. Ironically, she both teaches her nieces the proper feminine conduct, promoting physical restrain and industry, while at the same time betraying "her own hatred of and contempt for conventional Victorian femininity on a number of occasions" (Burlinson "All" 302). In contrast, McGillis associates the Aunt's dislike of gender roles with her own sceptic attitude towards fantasy and considers the narrator's approach to

> storytelling rather strange: she urges her listeners to occupy themselves with sewing, painting, or darning while they listen. When Jane and Laura appear to become engrossed in the fantastic room with animated furniture, the narrator admonishes them not to "*quite* forget the pocket handkerchiefs you sat down to hem". Sitting down to hear a story is apparently too idle an occupation for this aunt. Like many other writers for children in the nineteenth century, Rossetti, through her narrator, expresses a distrust of fantasy, of make-believe, of story for its own sake. (225)

It is not fair to claim that Rossetti reveals a distrust of fantasy. For, even though the Aunt expresses her disbelief several times, Rossetti seems to make fun of her narrator on several occasions. For instance, Rossetti's ironic tone makes fun of the Aunt's superficial attitudes when she interrogates her nieces about the "mysterious whispering" that has been going on:

> "Well then, Jane and Maude, what is it?"
> "We were only saying that both your stories are summer stories, and we want you to tell us a winter story some day. That's all, Aunty dear."
> "Very well, Maudy dear; but don't say 'only,' as if I were finding fault with you. If Jane and you wish for a winter story, my next shall freeze hard. What! now? You really do allow me very little time for invention!"
> "And please, Aunt, be wonderful."
> "Well, Laura, I will try to be wonderful; but I cannot promise first-rate wonders on such extremely short notice. [. . .]" (243)

The Aunt lowers the expectations with these words demanding a rather modest place for herself. Nevertheless, soon she reveals her self-confidence in the brilliancy of her stories. Upon her nieces' question whether the monstrous children occupying Maggie's story are the ones in Flora's dream, the Aunt replies: "Yes, Ella, you really can't expect me not to utilize

such a brilliant idea twice" (146). Though she pretends to claim the opposite at times, ultimately, it is the Aunt who tells fairy stories with remarkably strange characters.

Furthermore, while Rossetti would have sided with the preachings of the Aunt, the text as a whole treats both the spoilt nieces and their irritable Aunt with equal irony (Briggs 228). Therefore, it would be misleading to equate Rossetti herself with the narrator for her concerns are playful. McGillis too makes it clear that: "True, the narrator's 'didactic stance permeates the book', but the children who are her audience manage to undercut her didacticism" (225). The nieces continuously disturb the Aunt's narration. They comment on the oddness of a name or situation continually asking for clarification, or pointing out to the improbability of a statement. Eventually, their cumulative effect points out to the difference between the ill-tempered and arrogant aunt and her curious nieces who are open to fantasy and marvel (McGillis 225). Once the stories are told, the readers are more interested in the stories themselves rather than the Aunt's reaction to these. McGillis confirms that

> [t]he book begins with a call to story, and it ends with the world of story. What matters is story, not the narrator's lessons on acoustics or her warning that one should never put an empty kettle on a fire. The children's interruptions show their interest in and engagement with the stories; they ask for details when their aunt appears insufficiently clear or niggardly with detail. In short, they ask with Laura, "And please, Aunt, be wonderful". (226)

The Aunt is rather a textual device than being a hailer of didacticism or morality. According to Burlinson, *Speaking Likenesses* in various ways reveals Rossetti's reflexive concern with storytellers and their power (*Christina* 11). Recalling Laura's authorship at the end of the *Goblin Market*, *Speaking Likenesses* reflects problems of female sexuality and textuality even more starkly than does the previous work. Burlinson further states that the "cultural resonances are if anything more precise, the negotiation of narrative power is just as complex, while the treatment of the body, appetite and consumption reproduces many of the anxieties that surface in the earlier work" ("All" 292). The Aunt exercises her narrative authority through such scheming means that, eventually, she falls into the trap of committing the same mistakes her characters have done: "Suffice to say that Rossetti is as interested in ways of telling stories as in stories themselves" (Burlinson *Christina* 11).

Exerting literary control over her text, the Aunt denies her nieces such a privilege. Although she is a visible embodiment of feminine literary imagination, she ironically does not find it a

serious pursuit for her nieces. Burlinson considers her disinclination to tell a tale she clearly knows at the suggestion of her nieces as a typical gesture ("All" 302):

> "Aunt, do tell us the story of the frog who couldn't boil the kettle."
> "But I was not there to hear Susan tell the story."
> "Oh, but you know it, Aunt."
> "No, indeed I do not. I can imagine reasons why a frog would not and should not boil a kettle, but I have never heard any such stated."
> "Oh, but try. You know, Aunt, you are always telling *us* to try."
> "Fairly put, Jane, and I will try, on condition that you all help me with my sewing." (136)

Burlinson claims that the Aunt keeps her nieces ignorant on purpose after the traditional opinion that girls should rely on boys for knowledge rather than looking for it themselves ("All" 302). That is why girls should work while they are listening to a story. Unlike their male counterparts who seek more serious pursuits, girls are useful to the society only through their domestic duties. Burlinson, in relation to this, suggests that Rossetti's work underlines the tensions between "a discourse of resistance to female subordination and a discourse of conformity to conventional views of femininity. Disgust at the behaviour of boys is matched by repulsion at the apprehension of female sexuality and self-love" ("All" 303, 301).

In this light, Sircar reads the Aunt as Rossetti herself; "her own 'speaking likeness,' that is her own least attractive aspect or else as the traditional 'mentoria' of children's fiction who might draw moral lessons from all occasions, preside over a framework of inset tales, and prefer rationalism above fairy tales" (Briggs 227). Burlinson too asserts that "reigning over the whole scene is the Birthday Queen, Flora's horrid double (and [. . .] the Aunt's double too), a figure for the monstrous, loathsome and compelling sceptre of female power" ("All" 301). Therefore, the birthday Queen's

> sarcastic comment about the lack of female linguistic creativity narcissistically heightens the special significance of her own tale, while it also crushes (or at best challenges) her young female audience. The Aunt wants it all ways, however, for she subsequently defends her own creative duplication, her own regurgitation, by retorting, "Yes, Ella, you really can't expect me not to utilize such a brilliant idea twice." Her young audience can never approach her position of absolute knowledge and authority: she is the Queen, she is story-teller. (Burlinson "All" 302)

The triadic structure of the story, governed by the Aunt's supreme reign, parallels itself in each of the stories. McGillis, adds that the "narrative frame draws attention to the fact of storytelling – to the notion that details impede linearity of plot, to the fact that the reading

experience involves the interruption of narrative – the stories themselves draw attention to form, to the play of allusion, to impediments of linearity" (226). All of the three stories parallel one another. Knoepflmacher draws a parallel between the Aunt's definition of a tripod – "two would tumble down, and four are not wanted" (139) – and the stories themselves, arguing that Rossetti has introduced a narrative tripod that stands on three stories at minimum (375-76). Brigss, similarly, observes that although the "title Rossetti chose, 'Speaking Likenesses,' implies a dualism, the similarity and/or opposition of self and antiself, the book itself is constructed as a trilogy, figured at its own center, as Knoepflmacher has observed, as the tripod on which Edith's kettle is hung" (215).

One of these echoes is based upon the repetition of the delicious foods. The stories are all concerned with food but the difference is while Maggie earns it, the others are readily supplied with it. Another recurrent pattern is the animal cycle present in each individual story. The animals that generally reappear in each story are dog, cat and bird. They are associated with the child's spiritual, physical and social needs. Once again, Maggie's pets are different from that of Flora and Edith's. Flora and Edith already own these animals with specific names given to their pets indicating their ownership of them. Contrary to Flora's pets which are marginalized from the centre of action, Edith's story is practically based upon human-animal dynamics. Edith's intimate relationship with them is an example of Tatar's observation that "compassion is generally lavished on animals who repay kindness with assistance in carrying out tasks" (42). In Edith's case, the animals are wise and helpful guiding and attempting to rescue the heroine. Also, for Bettelheim, the animals symbolize the untamed id which is not yet subjected to the control of ego or superego (76). Unlike them, Maggie's animals are associated with the prize she gets at the end of her labours. She *earns* them, in contrast to the others. Leading to threefold repetition, while "Edith and Flora can take their pets for granted, Maggie must rescue from the dark and the cold the animals that embody her own needs" and in that they also represent her unconscious wants (Briggs 218).

Considering *Speaking Likenesses* as an obvious example of Victorian fantasy in its didacticism and morality, Burlinson points out that

> Victorian fantasy commonly blends the imaginative and didactic: the title story and the narrative arrangement of the *Speaking Likenesses* collection are exemplary models. The tale of Flora's dream in the first story is firmly encased within a larger moral narrative concerning good manners and feminine restraint. All three stories are told by 'Aunt' to a group of female children who are sternly and persistently

> instructed to pursue their domestic labours while they listen to the stories. The Aunt provides an example: "Now I start my knitting and my story together." ("All" 297)

Briggs, likewise, argues that there "the difficulty of interpreting *Speaking Likenesses* lies, not in any shortage of signification but rather in establishing the order, relation and subordination of its different elements, one to another" (214). As McGillis observes, the "first and the third stories contain frightening and disturbing images and action. This is probably why the *Times Literary Supplement* called *Speaking Likenesses* 'a peculiarly revolting book'" (225). Besides, "as a reviewer for the *Academy* observed, the book induced 'an uncomfortable feeling that a great deal more is meant than appears on the surface, and that every part of it ought to mean something, if only we knew what it was'" (Briggs 214-15). It is both a self-reflexive work, as well as a conventional Victorian fairy tale; a comment on female subordination, as well as being a clear exerciser of it. Burlinson, in this sense, considers *Speaking Likenesses* as "an extraordinary and provocative fantasy text. Its display of intense hatred towards gender iniquity, fierce insistence on regulatory discourses of femininity, hostilities and fears regarding both sexes and all sexualities, render it as important a document of Victorian ideological collision" ("All" 308). Briggs, too, asserts that

> *Speaking Likenesses* should take its place not beside Carroll's *Alice*, whose world of play without learning it criticizes, but rather beside those other central Victorian classics whose fantasies were associated with social conscience: Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) or George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871). (229)

Contrary to *Speaking Likenesses*' worldly resonances, "Hero[5]" opens with a description of the "natural barrier between the two countries"; its eastern shore peopled by graceful fairies and sportive elves, its western by semi-barbarous fishermen (184). Then, Rossetti moves onto a description of the occupation of the sailor men. The sailormen, isolated within their shore, bear fish and many a thing that have strayed from the fairyland to their side to the markets of the Outerworld. The things from the fairyland include precious gems and diamonds which, however, have a gist to their finding. They can only be recognized by "children or innocent young maidens" in the first place (185). The children and pure maidens are so good at treasure-finding that even their fathers, after an unlucky day at sea, will send their children to recover these elven goods to make up for their own failure. Peter Grump, the widower

[5] The references to "Hero" and the following short story, "Nick", are all from *Commonplace, and Other Short Stories*. London: Strangeways and Walden Printers, 1870.

fisherman, her daughter Hero and her lover Forss are introduced to the story, then, while Hero rushes home one day with "a string of sparkling red beads" in her hand (186).

Spotting the gems' beauty, Forss suggests that if he had a sister to discover such beautiful items, he would dare the three months' long journey to the markets of the Outerworld to make his fortune there. Because only then, Forss would be rich enough to own a house and make Hero his wife. Inspired by Forss' remark, Hero asks her father whether it would be allright for him, if she went to make a fortune in Fairyland, rather than having to do with what she stumbles upon now and then upon the shores. To this question her father replies positively, thinking that Hero can never make her way to the "Giftland" (187). However, it turns out that Hero's was an attempt to confirm her father's love for her. Therefore, she misreads her father's words thinking that her father and lover do not love her as much as she loves them. For her, her father and lover's reluctance to stop her is an obvious indicator of their lack of affection towards her. As a result of this, her attitude towards them begins to change. Gradually, their love no longer seems enough and Hero seeks for "other love and other admiration" (187).

Afterwards, she starts to pine away, like Laura in *Goblin Market*. However, the resemblances between the two works are not limited to this. When her father and lover notice that she no longer brings home fairy treasures, they remember with regret that such can be found "only by the innocent" (188). Reminiscent of Laura's fall, one evening restless Hero goes seaward unnoticed, finding her way through the blaze of the fairycoast and thinking to herself that perhaps a wedding or festival is going on among the little people. While she wonders about the reason of this occasion, suddenly the festivity comes to an end and is replaced by a mournful air. Not happy with the turn of events, Hero decides to return home when all of a sudden a wave leaps ashore and leaves a shiny object at Hero's feet. Immediately reaching out for it, Hero discovers a shell decorated with pillows inside, upon which "lay fast asleep a little creature, butterfly-winged and coloured like a rose-leaf" (189). It turns out that the little creature is the Princess Royal of Fairyland, Princess Fay, who in her sleep unconsciously swept away to Man-side causing so much grief among the fairy party.

Waking up, Princess Fay starts bargaining with Hero at once. The Princess suggests that she will grant Hero one wish, if she allows her to go home in peace. Hero remains indecisive for a short while. She is having doubts in between her wish to win back Forss' love and her wish to

become “the supreme object of admiration” (190). Finally, Hero decides to become the supreme object of admiration on account of her pride. Upon this, Princess Fay suggests that Hero should accompany her to her country so as to be bestowed with her wish. Looking for a road to take, Hero is surprised to see a sea-road appear before her as soon as Princess Fay completes her sentence. A raft, formed by three fish, too appears on the sea-road and Hero seats herself on the raft “holding fast her little captive” in her hands (191). Accompanied with various strange creatures, Hero and Princess Fay make their way to the Fairyland.

Once there, Hero is brought to the presence of the Queen instantly, who questions Hero’s wish once again. Hero affirms that she wishes to be the supreme object of admiration wherever she is. Because royalty itself is not exempt from the code of honour, the captor freely sets the terms. So, the Queen accepts Hero’s wish though quite unwillingly. Therefore, before granting Hero her wish, she warns Hero of the possible perils that will accompany such a desire. She moreover adds that together with the members of her court, she has decided upon keeping Hero’s body in the Fairyland for a year, in case Hero changes her mind at the end of the allotted time. Then, Hero will be asked if she wants to go on like that forever and will be granted her wish in line with her final decision. Urging Hero to see the possible results of her demand, the Queen’s decision is wise in that sense.

After this, Hero leaves the Queen’s presence and lies down by a lake, where, lulled into sleep, her travelling soul turns into “a heavy blazing diamond” lying upon the shore on the Man-side (195). Found by an orphan as a gem, Hero’s wish is granted as she “outshone everybody” (195). Even her father and her lover are mesmerized by the diamond, as their sorrow for Hero’s loss is replaced by “greedy admiration” (195). Then, a conflict takes place over the ownership of the enormously valuable gem. During this dispute, Hero changes hands between the strong and the stronger. Finally won by the brutest man around, who kills another man to own the gem, Hero is carried off to the Outerworld hurriedly. Initially displeased with the man who carries her away, at the end of the three months’ journey, Hero finds herself satisfied; “guarded in a booth enthroned on a cushion of black velvet” (196).

She catches everyone’s attention there as a precious object. Jewellers, merchants and royal princes all dispute over her putting all of their resources into purchasing her. Finally, she is bought by the wealth of two empires which are to be united through the marriage of their prince and princess’ so as to assure peace between the two kingdoms. Hero is gifted to

Princess Lily as a wedding present. Princess Lily is one of the most beautiful women Hero has ever seen. She is also depicted as a kind and generous person who knows nothing about envy, except when she sees the diamond that is given as a gift to her for the first time. Hero appears on Princess Lily's coronet on her wedding day. Princess Lily is extremely dazzled by it, waiting for a confirmation of it on the side of her prince, too. However, her worries soon evaporate, as the prince affirms that he is stunned by Princess Lily more. Upon the prince's remark, Hero leaves the "gem for the heart of Lily" (198).

Hero is well taken care of with a number of maids and a hundred mirrors adding up to her brilliance in the secluded palace where the newly-weds reside. When the couple decides to enter into the public life, another public figure, Melice Rapta, departs. Melice Rapta is a famous singer whose magical voice charms every listener. Even the prince, who admires Princess Lily more than the diamond, ignores Princess Lily while listening to Melice Rapta's songs. So, Hero leaves the princess' heart for Melice's voice fulfilling the fairy Queen's earlier prediction. Melice Rapta is a foundling who is the fruit of a secret marriage between her parents. She was raised in negligence but once she becomes famous, she searches for any close relatives not neglecting them herself. Looking for her lineage, she comes upon her maternal uncle, Uncle Treeh, who leads a modest life compared to the wealthier relatives that have offered Melice Rapta their home. Desiring a quite life herself, she chooses her uncle who is an old man interested in "botanical research and culture" above her other relatives (199).

That night Melice Rapta gives her final show. At the end of her performance, the spectators, enchanted by her voice, show their gratitude in such an amazing way that Melice Rapta cries. However, it does not stop her from moving into the country with her uncle the next day. On her way to her uncle's residence, she is stopped several times by people who want to hear her voice one last time as she passes by. When she finally arrives at the cottage, she is welcomed by her uncle. Uncle Treeh is a humble man who has a great love for botanics. Therefore, he presents his best fruits to his niece, which echo some of the fruits mentioned in the *Goblin Market*. A week later, Melice Rapta notices a letter which Uncle Treeh is reading. He leaves the letter for her consideration and goes outside. Reading the letter, Melice Rapta is informed about her uncle's friend who is apparently someone interested in botany as well. In the letter, Uncle Treeh's friend reports how he put his energy into his long-lost niece's happiness who has been recently found. When his niece and her friends ruin his three shoots of a tea rose, Uncle Treeh's friend is devastated. Promising himself that he will never deviate from his

studies once again, the friend sends Uncle Treeh some of the alien seeds he has bought from "a sea-faring man of semi-barbarous aspect" (204).

Once Melice Rapta is over with the letter, Uncle Treeh enters into the cottage with an alien plant in his hands. He is overjoyed and so is his niece, as a consequence of which Hero suddenly metamorphoses into the plant. Hero is kindly taken care of by the old man, as a rare plant, till one day he dies all alone. Melice Rapta has married by now, so Hero has noone to take care of her except for the gardener who keeps an eye on the plants for the sake of his old master. While Hero waits in solitude, a week passes by and change arrives to the cottage with new owners who arrive there with plans to ruin the place. This is initially symbolized by the magnificent costume the lady wears that damages the plants even as she walks by. Likewise, upon the suggestion of the gardener that the plant Hero has been transformed into is a very rare precious specimen, the lady replies that all she adores is "a ruin" (207).

Hearing this, Hero's heart sinks. She suddenly yearns for her old life, thinking to herself "this is death!" (208). Once she utters these words, unexpectedly she hears the voice of the fairies whose unseen hands build a lily-raft for her so as to make sure that Hero reaches from the Fairycoast to the Manside safely, for the trial time is over now. While Hero travels through the open sea, she sees something farther away. When it comes closer, she realizes it to be a boat which somehow looks familiar. While the men on board fling their nets to the water, she recognizes her father and her lover, and wonders if they still love her. However, her worries disappear as she hears the mournful songs they sing for Hero's sake in their turns. Meanwhile, Peter Grump and Forss continue to pull up what initially seems to be a white fish, then a white seaweed and then a white body. Believing that it is a corpse, they are surprised to see Hero materialize before their eyes safe and sound. A happy re-union takes place which is then followed by Hero's own marriage to Forss. While the invisible fairies, which are visible only to Hero's eyes, accompany the marriage party, the final scene reveals a familiar pattern of Rossetti's as Hero relates her experiences in Fairyland to her children. Emphasizing the fact that only home is happy, Hero's speech reminds one of Laura's report on fairies in *Goblin Market*.

Published in *Commonplace and Other Short Stories* in 1870, Rossetti's "Hero" is a fairy tale of granted wishes. Having many structural as well as thematic resemblances with Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, "Hero" is quite radical in terms of the socio-economic issues it raises as well.

Offering its readers recovery, escape and consolation, "Hero" is much more concerned with the traditional rites of passage than any other fantastic tales of Rossetti. Hero's is a tale of self-realization which has many similarities with Campbell's definition of the course of the epic myth as a circle. According to Campbell, the heroic quest:

> begins at the comforts of the hero's home – the top of the circle, and the Call of Adventure. From those safe and familiar surroundings, he sets off, perhaps urged along by a Helper character, and encounters the Threshold of Adventure. There, passing the obstacles of the Guardians that protect the way, he then crosses into the Realms of Power. In that wondrous new land he encounters both more helpers to support him on his journey, and tests and adversaries that seek to deter him from the path. He obtains the great prize – Sacred Marriage, Father Atonement, Apotheosis, or Elixir Theft. Yet, having attained his goal, the hero is only halfway through his true journey. Then comes the flight from the realms of power, the crossing back over the threshold into the mundane world, and the return to home, where he started – only to find that either the home has changed in his absence, or that his absence has changed him. (245)

All of these qualities are applicable to "Hero." Starting with her encounter with Princess Fay, Hero sets off into the fairy realms in order to have her wish granted. There she obtains her heart's desire and finally gives it up on her own accord. Her return marks the changes in her identity as well. Although, she was not ready to settle down beforehand, after her fantastic journey she seems to have made peace with herself. In this sense, Hero has to undertake her quest so as to heal her ego-split. Her desire is what she lacks within the society; a unique place where she is the central object of attention and admiration. Just like the jewellery she finds upon the coasts, initially invisible to everyone, she gains recognition after her metamorphosis but only as an object. A plausible secondary world is present, crowded with folktale motifs, such as the fairies, escapisms and anachronisms which violate reality. There are also examples of wishful thinking but not playfulness. Satire prevails the atmosphere as Rossetti harshly criticizes the socio-economic inequalities of this never-land.

Fairy tale genre, which conventionally raises questions with regards to the issues of power, desire and social mobility, illustrates the steps of Hero's transformation while she turns from an adolescent into a wife and mother, like Laura in *Goblin Market*. So long as the process of maturation is followed, the text itself is engaged in "startling explorations of issues surrounding feminine agency, the social and economic management of female bodies, and women's relation to money and commodity culture" (Burlinson *Christina* 36). Similar to *Goblin Market*, "Hero" deals with the objectification of women's bodies in their search for

adventure and the threats accompanying it. According to Burlinson, contrary to *Goblin Market*, "Hero" evades the problem of the body by leaving it behind (*Christina* 42). However, pubescent bodies are again at the centre of attention, indicated by the exclusively innocent girls' discovery of fairy gifts.

Preoccupied with Victorian consumer culture once again, Rossetti criticizes the commodification of people more violently than before, in fulfilling Hero's vain wish and metamorphosing her into an object of admiration. Beginning her criticism with the ironic voice which both confirms and refutes the existence of fairies simultaneously, in "Hero" Rossetti satirizes the echoes of the fairy craze within the market economics: "If you consult the authentic map of Fairyland (recently published by Messrs. Moon, Shine, and Co.) you will notice that the emerald-green line which indicates its territorial limit, is washed towards the south by a bold expanse of sea, undotted by either rocks or islands" (183). In this sense, Burlinson observes that:

> "Hero" and *Goblin Market* were written in a decade that produced more literary and artistic representations of fairy worlds than had ever previously appeared. The popularity of fairy stories increased following the translation of Grimms', Perrault's and Andersen's tales; Victorian readers responded positively to the characteristic blend of morality and fantasy offered by such texts. By the 1850s there was a veritable fairy 'craze' and stories, paintings, illustrations, and books classifying supernatural beings commanded a sizeable share of the Victorian Market place. (*Christina* 36)

Open to readings as a cautionary tale, "Hero," in the main, has the Victorian middle-class consumer culture as its target (Burlinson *Christina* 37-8). In its ridiculous attempts to locate the territory of the fairyland wherein Rossetti's story is set, "Hero" at once connects fantasy with the socio-economic realities of the Victorian period. At a time when the invisible fairy worlds are mapped, charted and published, Rossetti, by relating her fantasy tale to the culture and historical moment from which it springs, criticizes the futile efforts concerning these. Confirming Tatar's statement that all "printed fairy tales are colored by the facts of the time and place in which they were recorded," Rossetti shows that society and fairy tales are inescapably involved in each other (19).

Besides the invasion of the fairy worlds by the middle-class investors, Rossetti's comment may also be taken as an attempt to criticize the imperial ideologies. For, the charting of other

lands can be easily identified with colonial pursuits. Reaching to its peak during to the mid-century, fairylands can be associated with the colonized lands in this sense:

> As Rossetti's opening sentence suggests, wherever fairies live they do not escape the operations of capitalism and imperialism. Fairy lands are mapped and charted, while fairy products, the diamonds and opals of 'Elf-side,' are gathered and traded by the community of 'semi-barbarous fishermen' who live across the water to the west. The representation of the fishermen erases the distinctions between colonized and colonizer: on the one hand, the men are depicted as uncivilized, but on the other, their barbarity is manifested in economic practises typical of mid-Victorian culture. Exploitative child labour is an integral part of the fishermen's economy, as is the routine stripping of the material wealth of the fairy 'colony'. (Burlinson *Christina* 38)

"Hero" opens with a sharp critique of the materialistic values of the Victorian period in its representation of semi-barbarous sailormen, greedy merchant men and child labourers. At first, Hero is reported to be one of the innocent souls, but soon she loses her innocence in steps identical to the adolescent changes that are necessary for growing up. Hero's encounter with Princess Fay takes place when she is fifteen, which conventionally stands for the age of puberty. Exhibiting the conventional fairy-tale feminine sins of pride, jealousy and vanity, her dissatisfaction, self-consciousness and sensivity can all be attributed to the changes brought about by this: "The motherless child finds no reassurance of her acceptability and normality in the fishermen's culture, but the discovery of Princess Fay, by the water, in a flute-lipped shell propelled by a fish, is an encounter that brings the girl face to face with a supernatural sexual symbol" (Burlinson *Christina* 40). Clearly, Hero's entrance into puberty takes place without being noticed by her father or lover. Hero's

> being pushed out of the home stands for having to become oneself. Self-realization requires leaving the orbit of home, an excruciatingly painful experience fraught with many psychological dangers. This developmental process is inescapable; the pain of it is symbolized by the children's unhappiness about being forced to leave home. The psychological risks in the process, as always in fairy stories, are represented by the dangers the hero encounters on his travels. (Bettelheim 79)

Hero's quest is necessary for her self-integrity. Through the steps she follows on her journey, she reaches a state of self-realization. The risks surrounding her mission are represented through Hero's constant metamorphoses in which she has no influence over anything. Upon saving Princess Fay, Hero wishes that she becomes the "supreme object of admiration" wherever she is (192). It is interesting that she does not choose to be the supreme being of admiration but reduces herself to a lower degree through her wish. Even the Queen herself is dissatisfied with this. Feeling the need to consult her court, the Queen represents a

considerably more sensitive person to the young girl's needs than her father or her lover. Burlinson states that the fairy court recognizes an essential precaution "to protect her virginal body, to safeguard her against her own narcissistic yearning that lays her wide open to the whims or obsessions of masculine fantasy (*Christina* 40). The fairies are bound by their own laws to grant Hero her wish, still the Fairy Queen warns her of the possible consequences of her desire (Burlinson *Christina* 40). Finally, the Queen declares her decision quite reluctantly:

> I grant you, wherever you may appear, to become the supreme object of admiration. In you every man shall find his taste satisfied. In you one shall find recognise his ideal of loveliness, another shall bow before the impersonation of dignity. One shall be thrilled by your voice, another fascinated by your wit and inimitable grace. He who prefers colour shall dwell upon your complexion, hair, eyes; he who worships intellect shall find in you his superior; he who is ambitious shall feel you to be a prize more august than an empire. I cannot ennoble the taste of those who look upon you: I can but cause that in you all desire shall be gratified. If sometimes you chafe under a trivial homage, if sometimes you are admired rather more for what you have than for what you are, accuse your votaries,– accuse, if you will, yourself, but accuse not me. (193-94)

The Queen is wise in her council. Contrary to the selfish nature of the birthday Queen of Flora's story, who does not care for anyone else but herself, the fairy Queen in Hero's story is quite capable of making the right assessments for her judgments. Unfortunately, Hero cannot see what is meant with these words. Excited to become an object, she is unaware that in return for her passion she has to live her subjectivity behind. Ultimately, she is admired by people, who are explicitly introduced as men, not for what she really is but for what she has become. Besides, who is really satisfied through her metamorphoses is not Hero herself but her admirers. Enjoying their subject positions, they choose to admire Hero who, entrapped as an object, cannot act upon her will but others' all the time. Illustrated by her continuous dependency upon others to take care of her, Hero is helpless as an object during her journeys:

> Hero circulates and is subject to exchange, like a currency. Like money, she is not valuable in herself, but her presence signifies the value of that to which she is bound, much as beautiful women can signify the wealth and power of older, less beautiful men. Her desire to be the supreme 'object' of admiration renders her unable to escape associated conditions of powerlessness: throughout her journey she is governed by arbitrary events, functioning as an allegory of the feminine subject-as-victim: passed around, fulfilling fantasies, ultimately dispensable. (Burlinson *Christina* 39)

Following the Queen's orders, Hero first metamorphoses into a diamond, which is "probably modelled on the Koh-i-noor diamond exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851" (Burlinson *Christina* 38). As a diamond, Hero is fought over by the fishermen until the physically

strongest claims her as his own. Social Darwinism, which Rossetti criticizes, is at work here resulting obviously in communal strife. Rossetti even mentions a man who dies during the quarrel carried over the gem. The underprivileged, thus suffers at the hands of the well-to-do at the expense of his life. Despite the unpleasantness of the situation, Hero enjoys her objectification and the high material value that has been attributed to her during the process. According to Burlinson, Hero "likes being placed on velvet, encaged in glass and bid for, she is happy to be a commodity that fetches millions, thrilled to be an object that can be bought and sold" (*Christina* 38-9). Cared all the time by other people, she gets what she wants; continual attention of everyone who does not really care for her, but for the object she has been turned into.

In this light, it can be said that in the relationship between financial value and product, what is really at work is desire, which is also reflected in the *Goblin Market*. Having direct relationships with the social issues of the day, according to Burlinson, Rossetti's work exhibits the desire that is felt towards the material value attributed to the contemporary occurrences of the Victorian society:

> Although the objects into which the heroine transformed vary between animal, vegetable, and mineral, all are united by their commercial and cultural worth. The Koh-i-noor diamond, due to be set into the Crown Jewels, signifies both the wealth of the domestic Royal Family and the Empire that sustains such wealth. The heart of Princess Lily and the voice of the opera singer, Melice Rapta, indicate the high value placed on celebrity bodies who function as repositories for the fantasies of the nation. Even the rare plant cultivated by Uncle Treeh, grown from a seedling exported from the fairy colony, exposes the way in which the Victorian obsession with botany is connected to the wider commodification of the natural world brought about through imperialist commerce. (Burlinson *Christina* 39)

Although, it is true that Uncle Treeh's obsession with botany reflects one of the most important elements of Victorian culture, still the attention Hero gets as a plant makes it clear that it is not as popular as its more valuable adversaries. In a sense, Hero's metamorphosis from a precious diamond, into a princess' heart, then to a public figure's voice and then to a plant follows the steps of a traditional fall and loss of material value. The declaration of the new owner of Uncle Treeh's cottage is significant in this sense. In a world where valueless things deserve a ruin, what matters most is the capital or anything that can replace it in value. That is also why Hero does not enjoy her time at the garden. It is true that she is the supreme object of admiration but only in the eyes of Uncle Treeh. The new owners do not care about

the plant, no matter how rare it is. In the eyes of the middle-class capitalist, she is just a plant with no apparent material value. During her metamorphoses, Hero has lost her value as a powerful form of currency. In showing Hero's so-called fall from her initial position as a priceless object to an allegedly unvaluable one, Rossetti satirizes the excessive material value attributed to objects in the place of living things. The middle-class capitalist adores a ruin and that is what Hero becomes. In a society governed by materialist values, Hero, not having any chance to survive, ultimately passes away just when the fairies claim her back.

Recalling the problematical relationship between the goblins and maidens, "Hero" too, carries economic and sexual implications. However, these are restricted only to Hero's experiences at the palace as Princess Lily's heart. Hero has escaped the conventional feminine fall, only because she has left her physical body behind during her journey. Unlike her precursors, Jeanie and Laura, she evades the traditional feminine fate by never daring the market in her body. To keep her feminine hero pure, away from the dangers of the market, Rossetti incorporates into the story the machinery of splitting the body and soul (Burlinson *Christina* 39). Ultimately, Hero is able to experience a traditionally masculine adventure only by disregarding her body. She is the hero of the poem, rather than the heroine, in that sense. Only by denying her body, she is able to be the centre of action and attention. However, Hero still succeeds in her aim. Like Lizzie, Hero gets the fruit without paying the prize: "She fulfils a set of fantasies that were unrealizable in the ordinary lives of Victorian girls, experiencing fame, fortune, glory, and travel, but (technically) she does not compromise her virginity and suitability for the marriage market" (Burlinson *Christina* 40). So, the Queen's worries prove futile, thanks to her own precautions. In making Hero leave her body behind, she saves Hero from a sexual fall. The closest she comes to a direct sexual encounter as an object is when she spends her days in privacy with her prince as Princess Lily's heart (Burlinson *Christina* 40-1). Not directly affected by it, she is able to return back home pure and safe.

In the end, Hero's journey enables her a momentary escape from her object position and planned future with Forss, whose name sounds like force. According to Burlinson, Hero's adventure

> gives her a chance to learn her own lessons and allows her a degree of independence impossible in the domestic context: instead of becoming an object of exchange

> between father and fiancé, acceding to Forss's desire to have Hero's body in (or as) a 'tight house of his own,' she has an incredible adventure. True to a long history of metamorphic narratives, she discovers in the process a new and more mature identity through splitting away from her ordinary corporeality. (*Christina* 41)

Eventually Hero is provided with the opportunity to understand the world around her herself, rather than depending upon the views of others. She needs such a confrontation with the world for a healthy self-realization, as a result of which hers becomes a story of "coming into sexual maturity, gaining independence and self-realization" (Bettelheim 140). During her quest, her real struggle appears to be for self-realization since the goal of fantasy is "to lead the reader into a keener self-understanding" (Timmermann 536). Her quest luckily provides her with one and once she is back she now seems ready to marry to Forss and settle down as is already anticipated by the society around her. According to Warner, when a feminine protagonist is concerned, shape-shifting also alters the conditions imprisoning the female within the society's expectations or regulations (283). Subsequently, the metamorphosed female "acquires more freedom of movement than as a young woman, and more freedom of choice" (Warner 283). Her metamorphosis changes the problematic relations which impose her to marry the already-chosen-groom and enables the heroine to decide for herself (Warner 354-55). Rossetti, through Hero comments upon the issue of the independence of women, defending that women should be allowed such a space within the Victorian society in order to get a better notion of themselves and the world around them. What is more, Hero becomes a storyteller like Laura herself:

> In Hero's passionate yearning for her old life to return and her subsequent embrace of the role of wife and mother normative ideologies resurface, but though Hero becomes an advocate for the view that home is safest and best, she also becomes a storyteller. Like Laura in *Goblin Market*, the woman who has adventured and transgressed becomes the disseminator of new myths, enchanting her children with tales of her early days. (Burlinson *Christina* 41)

Burlinson considers Rossetti's final act as a subversive one claiming that although Hero assures her children that home is best, the effects of her storytelling subverts the message she relates to the children in that they are interested in the story more than the message itself (*Christina* 41). Bettelheim confirms that the "aim of telling a story ought to be enjoying the tale rather than learning from it" (154). Similar to the nieces' reaction to the Aunt's stories in *Speaking Likenesses*, what matters is the wonder the stories evoke, not the messages they impose.

Like “Hero,” “Nick” (1853), published initially in *National Magazine* in 1857, is a fairy tale of granted wishes. However, this time the wish granted results in some terrible consequences for the unsympathetic protagonist. The story opens with the description of a village nearby the Fairyland. A poor man with no family or friend lives there whom the narrator considers as poor because of this. Since the man, Nick, is not materially, but spiritually poor. Contrary to his material wealth, he has no company. Moreover, all the time unsatisfied with what he has, he always has an eye for what the others have, even if he has more than anyone else. One day looking at his neighbour Giles Hodge’s cherries enviously and wishing that he was a sparrow to eat them, Nick is disturbed by a fairy woman. Upon looking at him scornfully, the fairy woman tells him that whatever form Nick wishes to metamorphose into will come true, but he has to remain in that form for an hour. Then, giving him a slap on the face, the fairy disappears. Upon this, Nick, who is now afraid of making a wish, warns himself to be careful about what passes through his mind, when all of a sudden the sun shines and Giles’ cherries look more appealing than ever. So, an unlucky wish escapes Nick’s lips and he transforms into a sparrow instantly attacking the cherries with a flight of other birds.

Meanwhile, Giles, spotting the flight of birds fetches his revolver and starts aiming at the birds reducing his enemy only to a broken legged and winged sparrow which is in fact Nick. Wounded like this, Nick hides in order to spend the rest of the allotted time. But, soon he is caught up in the rain and just when the sun shines and he is about to dry himself, a cat starts chasing him. Upon this, with vengeance in his mind, Nick wishes if only he were a dog to attack the cat. As soon as he thinks that, he metamorphoses into a frightening dog and tears the cat away with great satisfaction. Once the cat is dead, the owner of the cat, that is the doctor’s wife, appears. Searching for her cat, she unintentionally stumbles upon the angry dog. Subsequently, Nick starts another wild pursuit causing the lady to stumble and fall into a bed of stinging-nettles. While she cries out in pain, a labourer whom Nick did ill in the past shows up with a stick in his hand. Soon, the whole village starts chasing the mad dog, who soon leaves everyone but the man with the stick behind.

Knowing that an hour must be over by now, from Nick’s mind several wishes pass, last one of which is to become the stick the man carries. Once he wishes that he turns into the bludgeon the labourer has been carrying. Though everyone looks for the dog none seems to find a trace of it. The labourer, surprised by this “mysterious disappearance,” wonders how the dog escaped his sight (141). Unable to offer a logical explanation for that, he decides not to tell his

wife about the magical disappearance of the dog and directly goes home. At home, the labourer helps his wife to prepare the meal and in order to make the kettle boil, he throws Nick into the hearth. Nick is dissatisfied with his unintentional part in helping the couple cook their meal, as well as illuminate and warm their place, while he is burning there. Displeased with his contribution to the well-being of his tormentors and hearing how the doctor's wife has rewarded the labourer with five shillings for his pains in finding the mad dog – through which the poor couple will have a glass window – Nick wishes that he turns into a fire.

Once his wish is over, a flame leaps up smoking the couple's ham, and then fastening above, it flashes into a full blaze. While the couple desperately try to extinguish the fire, the labourer's wife sets the beer-tap running as their neighbours rush in for help. Just when Nick is enjoying the rush of people, rushes of water come from all around, soon reducing him to a small flame surrounded by wet ashes. There he observes people's efforts to comfort the couple, telling them that the ham is fit to eat now, there is still some beer left to drink and that the landlord will pay for all the loss. Reflecting upon all the damage he has caused, Nick thinks that if he studies "his own advantage without trying to annoy people" perhaps the fairy woman will be happy (142). Thinking about the richest man of the town, he wishes that he was the rich old man living just beyond the turnpike. Metamorphosing into that old man, he immediately spots the money-chest under his bed and the secret closet on the wall which makes him happy in the end.

Lying in bed, he soon falls asleep and sees a nightmare in which he, as the old man, gets robbed by his disguised servants. Waking up, he recognizes that his worst fear has come true and that the old man is being truly robbed. As soon as he is given a heavy blow by the burglars, the burglars empty all the wealth of the old man and return back to fetch his now-dead body in order to bury him. Nick is conscious all the while, as the burglars carry him out. Making his last wish finally he turns into his true self and gives a fright to his murderers who, are never heard of again. Making his way home, the next morning Nick starts the day by making amends. He gives his neighbour Giles a rare tulip-root with instructions to tend it, sends a Persian cat to the doctor's wife and repairs the labourer's cottage adorning it with a glass window that blazed, as well as a full beer-barrel. Finally, he is among the very few not to utter any nasty comments about the dead old man whose death is found to serve him right by most of the people.

In this short story, too, there is recovery, escape and consolation. Self-realization is achieved at the end of the quest, as the yearnings of the unconscious are overcome. There is also satire and morality. Rossetti, criticizing Nick's over-indulgence in material goods, through the folk-tale motifs, escapisms/anachronisms and violation of reality she employs, illustrates the cure of an ego-split as well as showing processes of maturation. What the protagonist lacks is spiritual wealth which he gains at the end of his journey. By using fantasy, Rossetti examines the condition of the deprived in detail reflecting their material lack and spiritual wealth at the same time. The comic voice prevails in this vastly active story. Nick's metamorphoses that are motivated towards individual goals and at the cost of others' comfort are made fun of.

Written in the manner of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Rossetti's "Nick" replaces Rossetti's heroines dominating her tales so far. As a representative of cruel masculine power in its usurpation of everything, Nick represents the self-centred man. Thinking only about mischief, Nick damages those around him deliberately, which results in his own unhappiness unintentionally:

> Our hero now had leisure for reflection. His situation precluded all hope of doing further mischief; and the disagreeable conviction kept forcing itself upon his mind that, after all, he had caused more injury to himself than to any of his neighbours. Remembering, too, how contemptuously the fairy woman had looked and spoken, he began to wonder how he could ever have expected to enjoy her gift. Then it occurred to him, that if he merely studied his own advantage without trying to annoy other people, perhaps his persecutor might be propitiated [. . .]. (175-76)

Nick's acts are based on self-interest only. He never tries to use his gift for good, but always has his own advantage in mind. The labourer, who has no material expectations but still helps the doctor's wife in giving the mad dog a chase, is presented in opposition to Nick. He has no alter motives and that is why his kindness is rewarded by the lady. Even when his cottage has burned down, he is presented in a better condition than Nick. Because the labourer and his wife are relieved by all the kind-hearted people who have come to their help. Stressing the importance of mutual support and how good deeds pay back unexpectedly, "Nick" demonstrates the solidarity of the financially deprived. Although there is material damage, Nick cannot actually harm them in this sense. Moreover, he serves as a foil to these characters in his helplessness during the brutal attack made upon him by the servants.

Evaluated by Leighton in relation to Rossetti's interest in the idea of being dead, which is here turned into a comic account, the scene "inevitably has its edge of 'fun'" (*Victorian* 158, 159). However, what marks it as quite an important text is the stress it puts upon not handing the reader any tidy morals but providing them with "growth by experience. Since in fantasy we learn not morals but lessons on life's way" (Timmermann 535). As Schiller states: "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life" (qtd. in Bettelheim 5), the protagonist of this tale is called out not to be a hero, but to be human in "a world that matches ours in reality" (Timmermann 535). Emphasizing the poverty of Nick in terms of his lack of any social relationship or spiritual wealth while re-creating him as the human-hero, Rossetti criticizes the envious stingy man who gradually appreciates the value of his material wealth through sharing it with the less fortunate. Through his symbolic death and rebirth, Nick starts appreciating the spiritual value of sharing his goods with others and the importance of companionship and divine retribution that accompany it. Having suffered the consequences of his rash acts severely, Nick is, in a way, re-born from his ashes as a totally new integrated human being.

Fantasy "marks the rise of a non-conformist, pluralistic attitude toward 'reality'" offering a playfully critical distortion of the familiar norms in whatever era it emerges (Fredericks n.p.). Behind these deformed surfaces several truths concerning the problems of any given age lie. Brian Attebery points out that the fantasist creates a world "which is unlike his own and yet intimately connected with it, reflecting its beliefs, wishes and fears" (Clark 3). Fantasy reveals anxieties and desires. In this respect, the fairy tale's "magic fulfils multiple desires. Being literature for children, fairy tales offer symbolically powerful scenarios and options, in which seemingly unpromising heroes succeed in solving some problems" (Bacchilega 5). If they succeed these battles, they achieve a healthy self-realization. The ego-split is healed and an integrated self appears. Lüthi puts forward the idea that the fairy tale is

> an initiation. Man is cast into suffering and want, evidently destined to endure privation, misunderstanding, and malice, and yet summoned to a regal existence. Man is surrounded by hostile and helping forces; but he is not entirely at their mercy: through his own attitude – perseverance, humility, and trust – he can be supported through the help of nature and the enduring, strengthening love of the deceased mother and thus be led to the light. (61)

The fantastic battle is a representation of the inner struggle taking place in the psyche. Therefore the events reported in the fairy tales are symbolic, not physical battles. Individual

lacks are made visible and unconscious desires are liberated and fulfilled. Through the symbolic struggle of the unconscious forces, oppressive forces are subverted. Since, traditionally women are the primeval spinners of these tales, women are especially experienced and successful in adopting fantasy as an instrument to subvert the regulations that are imposed upon them throughout the ages. So, like the "previous generations of female story-tellers [who] had disseminated tales that spoke symbolically of women's lives and predicaments, so Victorian writers continued to reshape fantasy narratives and to challenge the limitations imposed upon women's lives and movements" (Burlinson *Christina* 37).

Rossetti is clearly one of the Victorian women fantasists to realize this influential power of fantasy. Therefore, she uses it in her prose works in order to subvert the norms themselves which try to pin down people into categories. Discovering the power of metamorphosis to be an exploration of new forms of identity, Rossetti uses it as a subversive means in her prose works to shatter the norms of normality themselves. She regards metamorphosis as an alternative, for "alongside those narratives which cite the metamorphic body as the central source of pleasure, empowerment, terror or horror, the fantastic in general takes us into a realm where the static and the finite shift, be it ever so slightly" (Armitt 65). Through her grotesque characters and fantastic quests into the unconscious, she explores the social, economic and sexual dynamics of the Victorian Age. As Armitt argues, in exhibiting the individual body in excess, fantasy explores its "social, collective significance as politically interrogative" and criticizes the impositions, expectations and regulations of the society (67). Rossetti uses metamorphosis as a way to reach beyond the categories in her narrative fairy tales. Through exaggeration, she subverts the firm stand the regulations of the society have and demonstrates how arbitrary these concepts are.

CONCLUSION

Fantasy is widely employed by the women writers as a safety tool by way of which they can attack the very system that has marginalized them. Generally, in fairy tales the roles played by women are reduced to "[m]other, witch, or princess: bad, mad, invisible" and fantasy literature written by women aims to subvert such assumptions by showing the constructed nature of these arbitrary symbols (Armitt 28). Especially during the nineteenth century, female authors used fantasy as a subversive means to criticize the problems of the society. For Egoff, literature "written for the young has always been strongly social" (ix). Reflecting, although in miniature, the dominant tendencies of a given period in society, behind the simplistic surface of the fairy tales women writers found a secure shelter where they freely voiced their worries. Hiding behind the apparently childish façade of the fairy tales, women "attempted to challenge received ideas and raise questions into the minds of their audience [since] protest and fairy tale have long been associated" (Warner 411).

Christina Rossetti is among the female fantasists who felt the need to subvert the conventions of the society. She uses fantasy in both her verse and prose as a means to disrupt the oppressions made upon the marginalized groups within the Victorian society such as the deprived, the illegitimate, the orphaned, the fallen and the poetess, and finally she aims to subvert the attacks on women in general. In her fantasy works, she tends to depict feminine heroines mostly who are shown to be struggling against the oppressions of the society. As a result of this suppression, her heroines rebel and at the end of their quest they reach a self-realization which would not be possible in any other way. Her fairy tales are multi-layered and dense in their various implications. *Goblin Market*, accordingly exemplifies in religious sense what Tatar summarizes as a replaying of

> one biblical masterplot: the Genesis account of the Fall. For several centuries now, standard interpretations have identified Eve as the principal agent of transgression and have infused her act of disobedience with strong sexual overtones. Eve not only "disobeys" commands but also "tempts" and "seduces" Adam. She has become the real serpent in the garden. (96)

Rossetti through her representation attacks the conventional recognition of Eve as the sinner and attempts to re-write the story of the Fall from the viewpoint of the female. Associating one of the sisters with Eve and the other with Christ, she guarantees recovery for all the sisters

through the sisterly bondage. By way of this, rather than blaming the sinner, she shows her a way out. For her, sinning is not the ultimate end and there is always a chance of recovery. Therefore, through fantasy she subverts the traditional role women is forced to occupy and rescues the sisters both indicating that it is possible to reach salvation so long as one repents.

Moreover, through the story of Laura and Lizzie, Rossetti reveals the fate of Victorian women which also abounds in economic, gender-specific, literary and psychoanalytical symbolisms. Rossetti illustrates the vulnerable condition of women within the financial and literary marketplace equating women's condition with that of the fallen women's within the Victorian society. Exhibiting the conditions which turn women into victims of the society, she resists silent acceptance and rejects the norms by questioning them rather than passively enduring them. By providing women with imaginary rights, she also gives them freedom within a fantastic realm. In this light, she demands rights for women without openly suggesting them. Expressing women's plight in a materially-conditioned society, she lets women outwit their antagonists like traditional fairy-tale heroes. She further shows that when given an opportunity, women can also act as saviours within the society. Similarly, the woman writer is able to survive the attacks of the masculine tradition through the help of a sister-writer. First falling a prey to the patriarchal tradition, women gradually secure their place within the literary arena as well, while Laura emerges as the author of the text through the help and guidance of her sister-in-art, Lizzie.

Presenting the sisters initially as the representatives of the two sides of the psyche, the id (Laura) and the superego (Lizzie), Rossetti also leads the sisters to self-realization at the end of their quests. Throughout the poem, the sisters occupy oppositional stances such as the sinner, rebellious, fallen and reckless Laura and the guiltless, humble, pure and superegoistic Lizzie. Gradually displaying the dangers that accompany either of the extremes, the sisters attain an external union in the end. Once they recognize the shortcomings and benefits of each others' individual faculties, they also acquire an internal and external harmony. The impulsive Laura and the controlling Lizzie, thus, emerge as powerful heroines who are at peace with their inner integrities.

Similarly, *The Prince's Progress* illustrates women's plight in a medieval-like atmosphere. Drawing parallels between the morally superior Victorian Age and the dogmatic Middle Ages, the poem demonstrates the restraints forced upon women by their societies. Although,

centuries have passed on the surface, through this comparison Rossetti exhibits that in fact nothing has changed in relation to the repressions inflicted upon women. The religious and sexual implications of the poem, thus disrupt its form. Having at its centre the romance tradition, in this fairy tale, Rossetti plays with the prerequisites of the romance genre. The work seems to take delight in upsetting the genre's requirements by distancing the princess the more the prince comes closer, while Rossetti ultimately presents a prince's non-progress.

Rossetti's *Sing-Song* occupies a different place among Rossetti's fantasy works, since it is most noteworthy for its fantastic games upon language. The *Sing-Song* poems mainly emphasize the "open-endedness of language: the fact that there are always more sentences available [. . .] than there are situations to call for them" (Attebery *Strategies* 6). Through fantasy and nursery rhyme, Rossetti introduces new perspectives into words' recognitions which recalls MacDonald's acknowledgment that words very seldom "carry the exact meaning of any user of them! And if they can be so used as to convey definite meaning, it does not follow that they ought never to carry anything else. Words are like things that may be variously employed to various ends. [. . .] Have they only to describe, never to impress?" (n.p.). Never letting the signifier reach the intended signified, Rossetti playfully turns the linguistic notions upside down, while creating humour and displaying wit at the same time.

Christina Rossetti's re-discovery of norms is particularly apparent in her prose fairy tales. In them, she uses fantasy – specifically metamorphosis – as a means to upset the regulations and comment upon the problems of the society. Through metamorphosis, Rossetti reveals one's disappointment with the rules of the society and his/her attempts to change it. In "Hero" and "Nick," Rossetti employs metamorphosis by means of shape-shifting and exaggeration. Revealing stages of personal development in them, "Hero" and "Nick" involve satisfaction of their characters' desires through fantasy. Mostly displaying psychoanalytical journeys, these poems also display Rossetti's criticism of socio-economic, religious and sexual turmoils of the Victorian society. "Hero" is much more severe in its satire than "Nick" in this sense. In its detailed report of a girl's coming of age story, "Hero" simultaneously illustrates a critique of the high value given to materialism and a woman's helplessness in a world controlled by it. Criticizing materialism in the same way, "Nick" additionally introduces an analysis of the problems arising from lack of spiritual values.

Unlike Hero and Nick who experience a number of adventures through shape-shifting, the heroines of *Speaking Likenesses* face grotesque characters which threaten their existence. Reflecting the desires of their lower bodily stratum, the hyperbolic disfiguration of Flora, Edith and Maggie as abjects expresses a harsher attack upon the symbolic order. Through these tales, Rossetti criticizes the traditional feminine and masculine representations, and aims to re-write these from the standpoint of the female. Holding up a mirror to the injustices of the Victorian society, in these fantasy stories, Rossetti satirizes the condition of the female, the needy and the weak parties in the society through the preachings of the morally superior Aunt and her unmindful nieces. Eventually, she re-discovers the rules that dominate the Victorian society rather than escaping into a world of oblivion.

Being a part of the national memory, the fairy tale contains in itself a genre of protest (Warner 163). Specifically during the Victorian Age, fantasy was widely used in order to comment upon the problems industrialism had introduced into the society. Being the "weapon of the weaponless," fairy tales moreover offer to the readers "a way of putting questions, of testing the structure as well as guaranteeing its safety, of thinking up alternatives as well as living daily reality in an examined way" (Warner 412, 411). Rejecting the constraints imposed upon the less fortunate groups within the society, fantasy authors often defended lost causes and attacked received ideas by denying the rules that regulate the society. In fantasy's potential to show the world in another sense; "of telling an alternative story," (Warner 415), some writers have been so "intimidated by the potential anarchy of the fantastic [. . .] that they retreat to the opposite extreme;" escape (Attebery *Strategies* 9).

Nevertheless, Rossetti's works demonstrate that her aim in using fantasy is to re-dress the facts concerning the Victorian society. She never denies the existence of the authentic world in her works; never escapes from it, but rather creates a safe territory which carries elements of the primary world within it where she can reflect her thoughts without the fear of censorship. Through fantasy, which has been simultaneously criticized and yet widely employed, Christina Rossetti holds up a mirror to the social realities of the Victorian society and creates a much more credible world than is anticipated. Rossetti was aware of fantasy's power which is the reason why she acknowledges it and her sisters-in-art still continue to use it.

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