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Angels and Demons: Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market as a Social Critique of the Victorian Ideal of the "Angel in the House" and the Pre-Raphaelites' Response to that Ideal

"It is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (Gilbert 2029).

Introduction

The majority of the critical scholarship on Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market has focused on the religious and erotic aspects of the poem. While these readings have been fruitful in their illumination of the subconscious sexual imagery in, as well as the connection between Rossetti's religious beliefs and the poem, there remain other perspectives which could prove equally beneficial. A historical reading of the Goblin Market that takes into consideration the suggestive parallels between the poem and Rossetti's cultural, social, and familial life offers greater depth for understanding the importance of this text for both the author and Victorian society.

Rossetti wrote Goblin Market during the Victorian era, which was dominated by images of the idealized woman¹ stemming from a cult of domesticity. This cult of domesticity was best represented by Coventry Patmore's idea of the "Angel in the House." As Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock summarize: "The Victorian feminine ideal of angelic virtue, used originally by Coventry Patmore in his domestic epic The Angel in the House (1845-62), embodied sexual purity and a strong sense of Christian morality, placing women in a secondary role to men" (1). Additionally, Pre-Raphaelites, including Christina's brother Dante, created paintings and poetry during this time that also internalized and responded to this idealized woman through doubling. Through their art, Pre-Raphaelites intensified Patmore's concept of the ideal woman, the angel, by depicting the ultimate pure, asexual, and passive woman. Additionally, through the Pre-

Raphaelites' internalization of the concept of the angel, they also represented the antithetical image, the Demon, which was already inherently present but not explicit in Patmore's poem. Freud defines the psychological term doubling as "an insurance against the destruction of the ego" (940). It "has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of a genital symbol" (Freud 940). This idea of doubling as a way of preserving the life of the ego originates "from the soil of unbounded self-love, from a primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man" (Freud 940).

When the subject overcomes this particular stage of development the "double" alters its meaning. Instead of offering "an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (Freud 940). In the case of Patmore and the Pre-Raphaelites this doubling is present in the creation of the images of the Angel and Demon Woman. The Angel woman is a projection of the man's ego and his power. She represents the man's will, desire and strength by conveying male dominance. Yet this image also reminds the man of the death of his power, specifically in the Angel's purity. As a projection of the phallus, the Angel's purity, which is closer to asexuality, calls to mind man's impotence and the loss of power, which then provokes the man to create another projection of his ego or phallus: the Demon Woman. In trying to preserve the man's ego or phallus the Pre-Raphaelites create the image of an aggressive, sexually potent, powerful woman, the Demon Woman. This image gives life to the man and his sexuality and simultaneously brings death to the man through the very attributes which bring life. As a representation of the phallus, the Demon Woman conveys castration anxiety and emasculation through the threat of her power and sexual potency.

I will analyze Rossetti's poem, Goblin Market, in relation to Patmore's poem and several of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, including *The Annunciation*, *Ophelia*, *Lady Lilith*, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, and *Sibylla Palmifera* and Dante Gabriele Rossetti's poems "Soul's Beauty" and "Body's Beauty." My analysis will examine ways in which the poem, Goblin Market, presents a counter-image that breaks down the socially constructed dichotomy of Angel versus Demon represented through these paintings and poems. I will additionally explore how Goblin Market draws attention to the real life mutability that existed in Victorian women, such as the capability of being simultaneously powerful, sexual, and moral. To adequately explore Rossetti's poem as a subversive response to the ideal "Angel in the House" and the Pre-Raphaelite doubling of that ideal, I intend to establish the concept of the idealized woman, and its pervasiveness, by analyzing Victorian conduct manuals and Patmore's poem Angel in the House.

During the Victorian era a distinct definition of femininity was subconsciously, and consciously, established by the pervading culture. Today this Victorian image of femininity is referred to as the "Angel in the House." Virginia Woolf gave new meaning to the phrase in her 1931 speech, "Professions for Women." In this speech she identified and named the "phantom," who was holding her back as a writer, for "the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House" (Woolf, pars. 3). Woolf describes the "Angel in the House" as "intensely sympathetic," "immensely charming," "utterly unselfish," "sacrifice[ing]," and "[a]bove all [...] pure" (pars. 3). Woolf states that the phantom would do her very best to prevent any woman from writing the "truth about human relations, morality, [and] sex" (pars. 3). According to Woolf, Patmore's ideal woman, the "Angel in the House," and the cultural ideology that the term represents, continued to

limit women as they did when they were first conceived. This cultural ideology, like any ideology, expresses (through the use of value, symbols or concepts) how certain groups in society retain power and “conceal the reality of class struggle” (Leitch 762). Louis Althusser argues that ideology is the illusion of reality that must “be ‘interpreted’ to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world” (1498). Ideology has the potential to incapacitate a person if he or she does not conform to that which is labeled normal and natural. From a feminist perspective, the reality of the class struggle, that women struggle to be equal to men, is hidden behind the illusion that men are “naturally” superior. As Woolf identifies it, the ideology of the “Angel in the House” operates in this way, invalidating women who do not fit the ideal image as abnormal, unnatural and unfeminine and creating the illusion that truly good and feminine women are pure, submissive, and passive. This disguises the reality that women who are not pure, submissive, or passive are equally as natural.

Additionally, the “normal” image of a pure, submissive, and passive woman is one that disempowers women by reinforcing their dependence on men. The cult of true womanhood, the American term for the “Angel in the House,” also emphasized piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Lavender, pars. 4-18). During the late 1800’s, these elements were essential for a middle or upper class woman to be considered feminine (Lavender, pars. 1-4). The “Angel in the House,” the Victorian image of the ideal woman, “was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all—pure” (Melani, pars. 1). These attributes were reiterated in conduct manuals, literature, and other media of the time which caused the collective society to embrace them as a definition of true femininity. As Woolf rightfully

identifies, these attributes that came to define Victorian femininity, were, and potentially still are, highly destructive to women. By defining femininity as possessing these characteristics, society confines women in a particular role, which effectively disempowers any woman who fails to conform to this definition of womanhood by categorizing these women as abnormal, defective and unnatural. Additionally, these particular attributes—purity, submissiveness, and passivity—are in themselves potentially destructive to women, leading to sexual repression, servility and enforced passivity.

In addition to this cultural ideal of women, there also developed a more intense version of Patmore's feminine ideal as well as her double, the Demon Woman. Rossetti was exposed to these concepts, which are depicted in some of the art and literary works of the Pre-Raphaelites. On one hand, this ideal is depicted in the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings in extreme terms as pale, slim, ethereal women, often dead or dying, embracing all of the characteristics established by the cult of true womanhood or the "Angel in the House." On the other hand, the Pre-Raphaelites depicted another image of the ideal woman, one that is psychologically inseparable from the Angel yet oppositional in its attributes. This image is commonly associated with the term "femme fatale" or "Demon Woman."

In Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body, Susan Bordo, by using the examples of certain 'female diseases,' such as agoraphobia, anorexia, and hysteria, explains how the media reiterate socially constructed ideals and cause diseases. The physical qualities associated with these languid and ethereal women portrayed in some of the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings, *The Annunciation* and *Ophelia* for example,

suggest the internal qualities of the “Angel in the House.” The powerlessness, passivity, and angelic purity of the women are visually represented by their otherworldly and sick or dead appearance. These Pre-Raphaelite paintings operated as the media of their day, reiterating social ideals. Yet they actually took it a step further by depicting not only the social ideal of the “Angel in the House,” but also the consequence of becoming the ideal—illness or death. This projected image encourages women to emulate what is depicted and present themselves as society dictates, and either reinforces the social image to the extreme (the sick, dying, or dead Angel) or contrasts it in an equally debilitating fashion (the Demon Woman).

Using writings by Dante Rossetti, particularly the poems “Soul’s Beauty” and “Body’s Beauty,” and scholarly analyzes of the Pre-Raphaelites’ paintings, such as *The Annunciation*, *Ophelia*, *Lady Lilith*, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, and *Sibylla Palmifera*, I hope to analyze in detail their representations of the cultural ideal of the Angel as well as the doubling that simultaneously creates the Demon Woman. The Pre-Raphaelites, like all Victorians, were subject to Patmore’s ideology; they internalized it and consequently created art that is largely influenced by that ideology. Their artwork presents a neurotic, yet logical, response to the “Angel in the House.” Pre-Raphaelite paintings depict the death of the ego hidden in the “Angel in the House” ideology by showing the impotence inherent in the ideal woman and the castration anxiety that underlies her double, the Demon Woman. Many works, such as *The Annunciation* and *Ophelia*, seem to recreate the same ideal female image that Patmore describes, but in these cases the ideal is taken to the extreme. Instead of presenting Patmore’s asexual, pure, submissive, powerless ideal woman, the Pre-Raphaelites present women who are

the exaggerations of these attributes—a dead or sickly woman. These paintings represent the fear of the man's ego's powerlessness or death and they also show the insidiousness of this ideological perspective. In addition to the many works that present the dying Angel, many other works depict women as powerful, sexual, and evil—the Demon Woman. In an attempt to rectify the death of the ego, the impotence, present in the image of the “Angel in the House” the Pre-Raphaelites construct an alternative image that embodies the man's ego, or phallus, and sexual potency. Paintings, such as *Lady Lilith* and *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, depict beautiful voluptuous women in threateningly powerful positions. These women, representing a reversal of the ideal “Angel in the House,” are sexual, powerful, and active. Instead of appearing like their sister paintings as sick, dying, or dead women they instead pose a threat of physical, spiritual or sexual death to the male viewer.

After establishing the cultural extent of these feminine ideals, I will then look more specifically at Christina Rossetti's writing to discover to what degree she absorbed this ideology. Specific ideologies, as doctrines that regulate society, by nature are absorbed by each member of society. Each member, in turn, conforms to the doctrine, unconsciously challenges it through their actions or words, or in some cases, both conforms and challenges it. Being brought up in this culture, Rossetti learned about the ideal woman and arguably conformed to that ideal. Yet, by appearing to operate from within the boundaries of the proper female role, Rossetti was able to use her writing to challenge the confining role prescribed for women. As a woman inside the ideology who followed the norms established by society, Rossetti was nonetheless able to use her writing to subvert the very norms she appeared to accept and follow. By behaving as an

“Angel in the House,” society took Rossetti’s writing seriously, which allowed her to critique the ideology she appeared to embrace. Rossetti’s literary works were heavily influenced by both of the Pre-Raphaelite’s depictions of the sickly Angel and the Demon woman, and the feminine ideal of the “Angel in the House.” Dante Rossetti’s writings and the Pre-Raphaelite’s paintings helped to shape her literary writings. Though Rossetti did not simply reiterate either of these cultural ideals, her writing demonstrated her cultural awareness of these ideals as well as her subversive feelings regarding them. By first analyzing each of these images of women, and then by presenting a close reading of the Goblin Market, I will show how Rossetti represents and comments on the ideal woman of the “Angel in the House” and the ideal woman created in Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

Part I—What exactly is the “Angel in the House”

While Patmore described the Victorian feminine ideal in his poem the Angel in the House, he did not invent the ideal nor was he the only author to write about it. Conduct manuals of the period through their instructions to women display the same ideology, which extolled women who were (and chastised any woman who was not) pure, submissive, passive, and self-sacrificing. Routledge’s Manual of Etiquette published in 1875 instructs a man courting a young lady “to observe the conduct of the young lady in her own family” (“Courtship,” par. 6). The suitor is to see:

if she be attentive to her duties; respectful and affectionate to her parents; kind and forbearing to her brothers and sisters; not easily ruffled in temper; if her mind be prone to cheerfulness and to hopeful aspiration, instead of to the display of a morbid anxiety and dread of coming evil; if her pleasures and enjoyments be those which chiefly centre in home; if her

words be characterised by benevolence, goodwill, and charity. (Routledge, “Courtship,” par. 6)

If the above characteristics are observed, then the man is encouraged to “not hesitate” in marrying her (Routledge, “Courtship,” par. 6). Like Patmore’s ideal wife, the ideal wife prescribed by this manual has a mild temperament, is kind, forgiving, submissive to authority (her parents or husband), and happy with a life centered in the home. The submissive role of the woman is further explored in this manual through a passage teaching the engaged man to correct any faults he finds in the future wife before they get married: “[T]he fair and loving creature is disposed like pliant wax in his hands to mould herself to his reasonable wishes in all things” (Routledge, “Engagement,” par. 5). This statement illustrates the child-like nature that was associated with women. The ideal woman must be taught or manipulated into what the man desires, similarly to the way parents are thought to mold children into responsible adults. Any education, including parental, operates as ideology and distorts the individual.

This ideal woman was primarily a part of middle-class culture, but over time this gradually infiltrated all strata of society. It developed partly due to the shift of middle-class women as workers to housewives. Due to industrial and economic improvements, men were now able to support their wives, giving them the luxury, which the lower classes could not previously afford, of not having to work. According to Simkin, this new luxury developed into the norms expected by society: “In the 19th century upper class and middle class women were not expected to earn their own living. Women rarely had careers and most professions refused entry to women” (par. 1). Another reason why the “Angel in the House” developed in the middle-classes first, is because of the societal view of the lower classes in general: “Social ideology inscribed the lower classes as

inherently less moral, less delicate, more physical, and more capable of strenuous labor” (Langland 295). These qualities associated with the lower classes were directly at odds with those of the “Angel in the House.” If a lower class woman was “less moral, less delicate, more physical, and more capable of strenuous labor,” then she could not be the ideal woman, who was moral, delicate, and weak (Langland 295).

One factor encouraging the spread of this ideology was Queen Victoria’s decision to emphasize the words “Honour and Obey” in her marriage ceremony to Prince Albert, “thereby manifesting that though a Queen in station, yet in her wedded and private life she sought no exemption from this obligation” (Routledge, “Wedding,” par. 17). The devotion the Queen showed to her husband and to domestic life gave social weight to the ideology of the “Angel in the House” (Melani, par. 4). The Queen, politically the most powerful and important woman in England, demonstrated that despite her title she, as a woman, was still inferior to her husband. No woman could rationally argue not to honor and obey her husband without appearing pretentious. Additionally, society, to be fashionable often modeled their appearance and decorum after that of the monarchy.

While he is not the creator of the ideology of the ideal Victorian woman, Coventry Patmore is responsible for inventing the phrase that describes that ideology, the “Angel in the House.” He “was valued for [his] sound morals and homely wisdom, and preeminently for portraying the ideal of Victorian womanhood” (Weinig 75). The Angel in the House, later became synonymous with the view of Victorian femininity as submissive, passive, pure and self-sacrificing. The main character of this poem, Honoria, was inspired by Patmore’s first of three wives, Emily Augusta Andrews (Weinig 21). Patmore “always revered her [Emily] as a saint, and observed the anniversary of her

death as a day of prayer and recollection” (Weinig 22). While Patmore did idealize his wife as a saint or angel, the “Angel” in the title of the poem was “never meant [to be] the wife, but rather the spirit of love in Christian marriage” (Weinig 67). Eventually, this “Angel” became synonymous with the perfect wife and the ideal woman. This aspect of the poem shows that the characteristics of the ideal woman are disembodied—the Angel is a set of characteristics without a body. An extreme representation of this bodiless Angel can be seen in his second wife, Mary Anne or Mariane Byles. She fully “intended to become a nun” and made a vow of virginity before marrying Patmore (Weinig 22). Throughout her marriage to Patmore, Mary Anne continued this vow and therefore raised his previous wife’s children while never having any of her own (Weinig 22). Perhaps in her attempts to become the Angel that Patmore praised his first wife Emily for being, Mary Anne fully repressed her sexuality, her body.

While Patmore’s second and third wives, Mary Anne and Harriet respectively, each possessed Angelic qualities in varying degrees and also seemed to be as saintly as Emily, neither could supplant the importance of Emily, as evident in the poem. Honoria, the wife in the Angel in the House, fully encompassed the qualities Patmore recognized in Emily, “gentleness, compassion, integrity, love” (Weinig 21). Patmore further described this ideal throughout the poem as “[s]o meek” (228), “so gentle and so good” (318), “void of guile” (346), “fair” (386), “artless” (578), “simply, subtly sweet” (267), “all mildness” (505), and with “modesty” (569), “humility and dignity” (163). This ideal woman was also compared to a child—naïve, innocent and needing to be educated by the husband. She was to be “chaste and noble” (980) and all her wisdom came from loving her husband “for being wise” (Patmore 2998). While these attributes ascribed to Honoria

are not in themselves negative or destructive, the act of creating a woman, who becomes the ideal and the measure of all others, who is so unattainable, is ultimately destructive. By comparison no woman could naturally be like Honoria, a saint. In an attempt to approximate Honoria, women repressed any part of their nature that did not correspond to the ideal.

Patmore portrays the wife as being a pious Christian who embodies “both heaven and the way” (3202). The following section from the Angel in the House clearly displays the wife as an Angel, or holy being, who converts “faithless” sinners into believing Christians:

Her disposition is devout,
 Her countenance angelical;
 The best things that the best believe
 Are in her face so kindly writ
 The faithless, seeing her, conceive
 Not only heaven, but hope of it;

 Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
 Nor spotted thought its taint disclose
 Under the protest of a cheek
 Outbragging Nature’s boast the rose. (Patmore 555-60, 573-6)

This passage directly equates the perfect wife with having an angelic appearance, being a conduit to heaven, and having a holy purity that frightens sin into quiet submission. The Angelic woman, just by being naturally herself—pure and devout—prevents potential sinners from sinning. While this initially seems to give power to women, ultimately this view is destructive. By positioning the woman as the controller of the sin around her, any wrong done will consequently be blamed on her whether or not she is the actual perpetrator. The belief that, if a woman is truly devout “[w]rong dares not in her presence speak” doesn’t really give women power; instead, it results in a situation that

puts the responsibility for others' sins onto women (Patmore 573). When a wrong is spoken in her presence instead of holding the speaker accountable for the sin, the woman could be chastised for not being truly devout or pious.

Other problems of the Angel in the House ideology can be seen through the lens of the feminist critic, Susan Bordo. Bordo argues that "female diseases," like agoraphobia, anorexia, and hysteria are by-products of society's expectations of the ideal female body and mind. In Bordo's analysis of anorexia she describes how historic conduct literature was the primary mode of educating women. Essentially, Victorian conduct manuals, literature, and art functioned as the media of the day, which today have been supplanted by television, film, and magazines. She writes: "Femininity itself has come to be largely a matter of constructing, in the manner described by Erving Goffman, the appropriate surface presentation of the self" (Bordo 2366). Women struggle to attain this media-dictated ideal. In their attempts and sometimes achievement of this ideal, many women develop disorders. We may think of conduct manuals, Patmore's poem, and Pre-Raphaelite paintings as Victorian media, reproducing the ideology of the "Angel in the House" by their depictions and descriptions of how women should look, act, and think. When a particular image is repeatedly presented to society, that image is internalized, either fully or partially, as the truth.

In the case of the "Angel in the House," society internalized the definition of the feminine as pure, asexual, submissive, passive, and as able to keep others from sinning by being a moral compass. This image then became the only true representation of a woman. The connection between the diseased female body and the "Angel in the House" is evident when comparing the qualities of Patmore's "Angel in the House" and the

common 19th Century female disease, hysteria. Bordo writes, “[t]he nineteenth-century ‘lady’ was idealized in terms of delicacy and dreaminess, sexual passivity, and a charmingly labile and capricious emotionality” (2366). These attributes are synonymous with those associated with the “Angel in the House.” The “labile and capricious” emotions are displayed through the woman’s fragility and weakness via fainting, sensitivity, and delicate constitution. As Bordo further explains by quoting Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s Disorderly Conduct:

[d]octors described what came to be known as the hysterical personality as “impressionable, suggestible, and narcissistic; highly labile, their moods changing suddenly, dramatically, and seemingly for inconsequential reasons...egocentric in the extreme...essentially asexual and not uncommonly frigid”—all characteristics normative of femininity in this era. (2366)

Hysteria and the ideal became almost interchangeable (Bordo 2366). As a woman attempted to be like the ideal as defined by the “Angel in the House,” she became closer to being labeled hysterical. If she attained the ideal, she ran the risk of being considered diseased and if she tried too hard to attain the ideal and took any of the qualities to the extreme, she would become diseased.

Bordo creates her argument about these diseases from Foucault’s concepts of the “intelligible body” and the “useful body.” It is the socially projected “intelligible body” that encourages women to look and present themselves as society dictates. It either reinforces this image to the extreme or contrasts it in an equally debilitating fashion. For example, Bordo draws on the desired hourglass shape of the nineteenth century, which was obtained by constricting garments and minimal eating. This ideal shape is the “intelligible body” which then renders “the female body unfit to perform activities outside its designated sphere” (Bordo 2374). This resulting unfit body is what Bordo

calls the “useful body” or “practical body.” It is called the “useful body” because the resulting body is no longer effectual for the woman while becoming useful for men. It serves men’s needs versus her own. A clear example can be seen through the anorexic’s body. An anorexic’s body becomes weak and is therefore neither useful nor practical for the woman, who is struggling to stay alive. The anorexic is useful for men for the beauty of her body, as well as, her “other oriented emotional economy” that’s at the root of anorexia (2367-8). The anorexic’s body symbolizes a construction of femininity that mandates that women feed or nurture others while denying any “self-feeding” or “self-nurturance” (2367). The “useful body” or “practical body” serves its purpose by rendering the woman physically and mentally capable of doing only what the “intelligible body” initially dictated.

As women began trying to obtain the “intelligible body” associated with a tiny hourglass waist and a personality of the “Angel in the House” they developed hysteria. A “cult of female invalidism” developed as a consequence (Gilbert 2031). This “cult” which developed in England and America was referred to in 1895 by Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi. Dr. Jacobi wrote that it was: “natural and almost laudable to break down under all conceivable varieties of strain” (qtd. in Gilbert 2031).² Illness, fragility, and sensitive nerves became additional desired traits of the ideal woman. Women recognized the desirability that came from being classified as a hysteric and naturally began to perform the ideal woman to obtain this new “intelligible body.” This ideal hysterical woman is directly connected to the social construct of the “Angel in the House” as well as Patmore’s poem. Hysteria was diagnosed by the symptoms of delicacy, sexual passivity or asexuality, and being impressionable and suggestible to the influence of others (Bordo

2366). When the ideal woman is described in almost identical terms—pure, submissive, passive, powerless, self-sacrificing, meek, charming, and graceful—it is easy to see how the disease hysteria is a by-product of the ideology of the “Angel in the House.”

Regardless of the specific terms used, women with these characteristics are simultaneously conforming to the “intelligible body,” the cultural ideal, while also embodying the “practical body,” the diseased body, of the hysterical woman.

In The Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss how ideology “literally makes women sick, both physically and mentally” (2029). Like Bordo, Gilbert and Gubar specifically address the issues of how ideology causes diseases such as hysteria, anorexia, and agoraphobia. These disorders “carry patriarchal definitions of ‘femininity’ to absurd extremes, and thus function as essential or at least inescapable parodies of social prescriptions” (Gilbert 2031). Regarding Victorian women, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that instead of hysteria being an effect of their social training, it was actually the goal of their training (2031).

Bordo, Gubar and Gilbert demonstrate the ways in which the image of the ideal woman in the Angel in the House became a disabling ideology. Whenever society constructs an image of ideal feminine traits, whether women conform to this image or not, they are all subjected to and confined by the constructed image. The irony that an ideal Victorian woman’s qualities are ultimately what limit her is present in Patmore’s poem. Patmore writes:

Whene’er I come where ladies are,
 How sad soever I was before,

 Then is my sadness banish’d far. (297-8; 307)

This passage defines “ladies” as beings who banish sadness from the narrator’s presence. Interpreted in one way, Patmore is stating that a woman has the ability to eliminate sadness from any person in her midst. Yet, it follows that, if a woman does not get rid of a person’s, or specifically a man’s, sadness simply through her presence, she is not a proper ideal lady. What is even more disturbing is that whether a man is made happy by a woman’s presence is only marginally in the woman’s control, yet she is being held completely responsible for it. Based on this passage, ultimately, a woman’s worth is being determined on the emotional status of the man in her presence.

A paradox exists in Patmore’s poem in which the woman exudes moral authority and power, but only if this morality and power are “natural” not intentional. This can be seen in the following passage:

The lack of lovely pride, in her
 Who strives to please, my pleasure numbs,
 And still the maid I most prefer
 Whose care to please with pleasing comes. (325-8)

This passage demonstrates the fine line between being an ideal woman and being an aberrant woman. A man is not pleased with a woman who “strives” to please, but only a woman who “care[s]” to please him. The subtle difference between “strives” and “care[s]” and the large difference between men’s interpretation of these terms creates a paradox of being in control but only if that control comes passively and naturally. If a woman actively seeks and tries to please a man she fails, but if she only passively desires and contemplates pleasing a man, then and only then will she succeed. The implication is that striving to please is an act, while caring to please comes naturally to a woman. The ideal woman naturally and passively pleases, but in reality this desired ideal alters the natural behavior of a woman. What is conveyed here is that the ideal woman who is

most pleasing to men is natural, not constructed or modified. Yet, what is ironic is that this natural woman is in fact ideologically imposed. Socially enforcing behavior results in a situation where the natural is suppressed in an effort to conform to the prescribed behavior. An “Angel in the House,” an ideal woman, naturally banishes sadness from men and naturally cares to please men. A woman who does not naturally do these things, according to Patmore and Victorian cultural logic, is aberrant and unfeminine.

In addition to enforced passivity and sexual repression, Patmore’s poem also conveys the ideology that women are morally responsible for those around them. In a way this responsibility is a distorted echo from the Christian tradition of holding Eve, the first woman, accountable for the fall of Adam and all of mankind. The Biblical story is often interpreted in a way which absolves Adam of any responsibility for his own sin and holds Eve accountable for both her own and Adam’s sin. In the Christian story it is because of her sinful nature that a woman is responsible for the subsequent sins of others, and in the “Angel in the House” it is because of her purity and piety that a woman is responsible for the sins of others. An “Angel in the House” should spend her time “ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of her husband and children” (Harrison “Christina Rossetti and the Sage Discourse” 90). The following lines from Patmore’s poem convey this view: “His merits in her presence grow, / To match the promise in her eyes,” (Patmore 409-10). These lines state how the male narrator improves because of the woman he is with. Once again, this ability to improve the quality of a man is depicted as something that comes naturally to a woman; she does no specific action to cause this change. Another example of the moral responsibility given to women can be seen in the following passage:

She was all mildness; yet 'twas writ
 In all her grace, most legibly,
 'He that's for heaven itself unfit,
 Let him not hope to merit me.'
 And such a challenge, quite apart
 From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus
 To sweet repentance moved my heart,
 And made me more magnanimous,
 And led me to review my life,
 Inquiring where in aught the least,
 If question were of her for wife,
 Ill might be mended, hope increas'd. (Patmore 505-16)

Here Patmore establishes the moral superiority of women and the way men's morality rests on women. The "challenge" of making himself worthy of the woman he loves, drives the narrator to repent and to "review" his life to see what needs to be improved. Initially, this doesn't seem destructive, but if this belief is seen as a part of the ideology of the ideal woman then the detrimental effects become apparent because inevitably the morality of the man will fall short in some way and the woman will be blamed for his shortcomings. Patmore writes: "Wrong dares not ...speak" in the ideal woman's presence (573). If it is believed that women are naturally morally superior to men and wrongs are not spoken in her presence, it logically follows that men who act immorally either lack a woman's presence and influence or that the woman influencing them is corrupt or damaged in some way. More often than not, the man will have a woman's influence and presence via a mother, sister, or wife, and this woman will be deemed morally or spiritually inferior simply because a man close to her has erred or sinned in some fashion. Therefore, when a man sins or is morally corrupt it most often becomes the woman's fault, her morality is then questioned, and likewise her femininity. If she is not moral in the narrow sense defined by Patmore, she is not a good or ideal woman.

Part II—Pre-Raphaelite Angels and Demons

From 1847 to 1862 Patmore's "associates [...] [were] the Pre-Raphaelites, whom he sincerely admired in an elder-brotherly sort of way" (Weinig 20). Though they did not agree on all issues, these men shared their artistic inspirations and ideologies, which helped to shape the visions depicted in Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Like the "Angel in the House," the Pre-Raphaelites' ideal woman was also one that limited and debilitated women. These Pre-Raphaelite paintings functioned as media which has altered and then restated the social ideals of the "Angel in the House." They depicted not only the social ideal but also the defects that becoming the ideal could lead to—illness and death. Additionally, the Pre-Raphaelites depicted the opposite to the social ideal—the Demon Woman. Both images encouraged women to present themselves in a certain manner, and either reinforced the social ideal to the extreme (as the sick or dead woman) or contrasted it in an equally debilitating fashion (as the Demon Woman). Jonathan Freedman conveys this analogy in his book Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture. Freedman writes:

the pallor, the haggardness, the slimness, the angularity, the dark robes, even (especially) the red hair are all the characteristic attributes of the Pre-Raphaelite woman as depicted by Millais, Burne-Jones, and most crucially, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Moreover, [...] that she is slowly, beautifully dying—is also thoroughly in the vein of the Pre-Raphaelite woman, who is often either dead (as is the case of Millais's *Ophelia*; Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*; and the anonymous subject of Rossetti's poem/painting, *The Portrait*, almost certainly his own wife, [Elizabeth Siddal]) or so ethereal as to be consigned to a state indistinguishable from death. (qtd. in Casteras)

Here, Freedman captures the Pre-Raphaelites' neurotic response to beautiful women or Stunners, "the Rossettian word for any beautiful woman and a term quickly adopted by all the Pre-Raphaelites" (Hawksley 4). The neurotic response developed through the

internalization of the ideology of the “Angel in the House,” the Pre-Raphaelites’ represented the ideal as a fragile and insubstantial physical appearance that indicated poor health or death. This fascination with dying, dead, or ghost-like women was an extreme response to the ideology of the Angel and presents the most sexually passive and submissive women. Part of the intrigue lies in the fact that only death can ensure the preservation of the purity and passivity of the woman. A living woman always presents the potential for transgression³ which could cause her to lose her purity, submissiveness or passivity. Contemporary Walter Pater described William Morris’s work as “pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life; this is contrasted with the bloom of the world and gives new seduction to it; the sense of death and the desire of beauty; the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death” (qtd. in Harrison, “Art is Enough,” 157). This review of Morris captures one side of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal. Because a beautiful woman who is dead, or in the state of dying, will remain beautiful for only a short time, she heightens man’s desire of her, which then implies that the ideal, most desired, woman is dead or dying. A woman, who attempts to become the feminine ideal by looking pallid, haggard, and overly slim, could possibly develop serious health problems.

The art of the Pre-Raphaelites intensified and highlighted the phenomenon of the male gaze. According to the theory of the male gaze, women are looked at by men as objects which leads to women looking at themselves as objects as well (Kooistra 139). Casteras connects the concept of the male gaze to Victorian art: “Like the countless vignettes of solitary, pretty women with flowers or Victorian artists, the portrayals of aberrant or exceptional, even extraterrestrial, women were made to be looked at—if not stared at—and subjected to a male gaze that would both judge and ultimately offer either

acceptance or approbation” (Casteras 144). This gaze clearly highlights what it means for a society to construct an ideal woman. Visually men determine to what degree a woman fits the ideal mold and then, based on the results, she is either accepted or rejected. Those women who are socially accepted are Angels and those rejected become the binary opposite, Demons. Demons may be embraced and valued by men for their sensual attractiveness, but as mothers, wives, or suitable members of society they are rejected. For the Pre-Raphaelites, the ideal beautiful woman, the Stunner, is usually depicted in these binary images, as either an ideal Angel or a Demon. According to Freud’s concept of “doubling” these binary images are byproducts of the ideology of the “Angel in the House.” The Angel, which is seen in paintings such as *The Annunciation* and *Ophelia*, is an extreme version of the Patmore “Angel in the House.” On the other hand, the Demon Woman, depicted in *Lady Lilith* and *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, presents the opposite image—a beautiful, voluptuous, highly sexualized and powerful woman most often involved in magic.

The attributes of the “Angel in the House”—passive, pure, submissive—are physically evident in the paintings, *The Annunciation* and *Ophelia*. Both paintings depict women in the state of perfect powerlessness, passivity, and purity. This is partially due to the otherworldly and borderline deathly appearances of the women. *The Annunciation* also known as *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* by Dante Rossetti depicts the young Virgin Mary being miraculously impregnated with the child of God. This painting, while not unique in its subject matter, presents a fresh interpretation of this subject. Christina Rossetti modeled for this painting of the Virgin Mary as well as the earlier painting *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary*. In *The Annunciation*, Mary is extremely pale, with dark circles under

her eyes. The expression on her face appears to be a mixture of fear, revulsion and illness. This revulsion and horror do suggest that Dante painted a subversive reinterpretation of Mary, since previous Annunciation paintings tend to feature Mary as rapt and fulfilled at her new found pregnancy. While Dante does subvert the traditional role of the Virgin Mary, he continues to perpetuate the ideal of the “Angel in the House,” and even intensify that ideal, perhaps unintentionally. Dante accomplishes this through the very attributes which render his Mary unique and potentially subversive—her fear, revulsion, body position, and facial expressions. While Mary’s expression of horror and revulsion can be viewed as potentially subversive, it also suggests weakness and powerlessness. It may be bold for Mary to express her feelings as Dante depicts, but that fear and revulsion are derived from her subordinate position to God. Even Dante’s title, *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, points towards Mary’s subordination, translated roughly as *Lo, the maidservant of the Lord*. Her body pose, seated lower than the Angel and cowering in fear, reiterates the powerlessness of the Angel ideology. Her passivity and submissiveness are shown through her downcast eyes and her body shrinking into the wall behind her. The pale and sickly facial expression gives her a deathlike or otherworld quality. It is this quality that demonstrates Foucault’s and Bordo’s “practical body.” In the case of Mary, it is her submissiveness to God’s will that actually causes her to be ill, through morning sickness or shock. As a representation of the ideal woman, Mary conveys submissiveness, passivity, and powerlessness through her body’s physical failure—fainting, collapsing, or nausea.

John Everett Millais’ *Ophelia* is another Pre-Raphaelite painting that supports and heightens the attributes of the “Angel in the House” ideal. Here the feminine ideal

attributes (passivity, purity, and weakness) are taken to the extreme—death. The painting's subject matter is Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet floating in the stream after her suicide. Ophelia is pale with dull lifeless eyes. Her mouth hangs open in shock. Her white dress suggests purity and her delicate, open hands suggest submission and sacrifice, all qualities of the "Angel in the House." In addition to her body conveying the physical attributes of the Angel and the extreme result of those attributes, death, the flowers and scenery around her also convey the attributes (femininity, innocence, and weakness) through their symbolism. The red poppy to Ophelia's right symbolizes death, the roses symbolize femininity, and the daisies symbolize innocence and purity (Riggs, par. 6). The chain of violets around her neck represents "faithfulness, chastity or death of the young" (Riggs, par. 10). Additionally, the frame for the painting is decorated with Ivy, commonly "used to symbolise the notion of gendered spheres for men and women in the Victorian period, where the ivy (woman) needs the sturdy oak (man) for support" (Virag, par. 23). This symbol of ivy (woman) needing a sturdy oak (man) for support accentuates the Angel attributes of delicacy, weakness, and submissiveness. Millais' *Ophelia* projects the ideal "Angel in the House" and the potential consequences women face for embodying the ideal—perfect angelic beauty and innocence captured in the woman's death.

While Dante Gabriel Rossetti created many paintings that show women as ideal Angels, such as *The Blessed Damozel* or *The Annunciation*, he more "frequently dealt with subjects concerning the heinous deeds and necromantic potential of women" (Casteras 145). One early example from 1849, *The Laboratory* (Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery) depicts a jilted woman who is dabbling in alchemy in hopes of

revenge (Casteras 145). Two other examples of dangerous women are his 1860 *Lucretia Borgia* (Tate Gallery) and 1868 *Lady Lilith* (Delaware Art Museum). One of the Pre-Raphaelites, F.G. Stephens, described Dante Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* as having the face of a witch, saying "she has passion without love, and languour without satiety—energy without heart, and beauty without tenderness or sympathy for others" (qtd. in Casteras 145-6). This interpretation of *Lady Lilith* shows how the witch or Demon is a double of the ideal woman. The Demon, in this case *Lady Lilith*, is a stunner with an intense beauty; she is voluptuous, passionate, and active. She appears physically beautiful and feminine similar to the Angel ideal but is void of the internal qualities prized most in women: love, compassion, and gentleness. These Demon-Women paintings often contain objects suggestive of femininity such as mirrors, flowers, hair brushes which are also surrounded by objects suggestive of the demonic such as votive candles, censers, strangling hair, and a claustrophobic environment. The mix of benign and demonic objects creates an image that is both feminine and masculine, which is also "quite aggressive, menacing, and virile [masculine and forceful]" (Casteras 147). Lilith, the character Dante painted, is considered by legend to be the first wife of Adam who later left the garden of Eden and became the mother of all demons. Specifically, Lilith is considered the mother of all incubi and succubi, male and female demons who take the form of extremely attractive men or women in order to seduce a member of the opposite sex. During sex these demons extract energy or life from the victim often to the point of death. Lilith is the perfect subject to show the neurotic obsession and fear that men have towards a sexual woman. When women can't be contained as asexual Angels, they are feared as potential threats to men. Like a succubus, a woman not contained in the role of

an Angel could conceivably destroy the man by causing him to sin, and therefore causing spiritual death, or to feel emasculated through her surpassing sexuality.

John William Waterhouse's painting *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (Oldham Art Gallery) parallels Dante Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*. Both paintings also contain the same feminine and demonic symbols mentioned above. While Circe has a pale complexion like Ophelia or the Virgin Mary, unlike these two angelic women she has full red lips and a healthy blush on her cheeks, showing a sexual vitality. The vibrant colors on her face and the transparent gown she wears all suggest impurity and sexuality. Circe sits on her throne with her head tilted up, eyes gazing downward on both Ulysses (reflected in the mirror) and the viewer of the painting. Her outstretched arms wield in one hand, the cup, and in the other, her wand. Her physical body is in a position of strength; she is not passive, submissive, or weak. Like Lilith, Circe is also a phallic double, representing both sexual potency and castration anxiety. The paintings of these women encompass man's fear of emasculation by a sexually powerful woman. Circe, the mythological sorceress, turns unsuspecting sailors into pigs and then eats them. Her beauty entraps men causing their physical death, a perfect representation of a woman castrating men. This also implicitly represents the "Angel in the House" ideology that women are responsible for the morality of men. As the ideology suggests, a woman must maintain purity in order to keep the man from sinning. Circe demonstrates what happens if a woman doesn't maintain that purity. This beautiful, tempting woman causes men to turn into figurative animals, engaging in sinful or immoral behavior, which then results in (spiritual) death.

An analysis of Dante Rossetti's painting *Sibylla Palmifera* (Lady Lever Art Gallery) and two of his poems, "Soul's Beauty" and "Body's Beauty," clearly reveal the binary of Angel and Demon. *Sibylla Palmifera* contains elements of both highlighting the instability of a woman and the fear that instability generates. The upper most corners of the painting are divided in half, the left side depicts Angelic qualities and the right Demonic. Painted on the left is a circle of roses, a blind cupid, and an illuminating flaming lamp. On the right are poppies, a skull, and a censer. Roses symbolize femininity, love, and the Virgin Mary, while the poppies represent death and eternal sleep (McGann The Complete Writings). The circle, also a symbol of eternity, emphasizes that femininity, love, and purity are eternal. This creates a balance of eternal love and life on one side and eternal death on the other—an artistic way to indicate heaven and hell. To further depict this theme, Rossetti uses a cupid paired against a skull, love versus death, and a lamp paired against a censer, Christianity versus witchcraft. The lamp operates as a symbol of truth and Christ, who is often Biblically referred to as the light of the world, thus connecting the lamp to truth, Christ and heaven. The censer, producing smoky rings, is a symbol of deception or disguise. Additionally, the smoke of the censer is generally directed towards the person or object that is being blessed or honored. In this painting the smoke is rising specifically towards the skull or death. The butterflies, representations of the soul, are directly above Sibyll's shoulder, subtly showing the possibility for the woman's soul to become either good or evil. If you closely examine these butterflies, you will notice that one butterfly, the brighter one, looks to be flying towards the left side of the painting, the side of love, femininity and purity. Yet, the other butterfly, slightly more muted than the other, is flying towards the skull and the

poppies. “Swinburne...offers the following account of the painting in his review of the 1868 Royal Academy Exhibition: “Behind this figure of the ideal and inaccessible beauty, an inlaid wall of alternate alabaster and black marble bears inwrought on its upper part the rival twin emblems of love [cupid] and death [skull]”” (McGann The Complete Writings). Within this one painting, *Sibylla Palmifera*, the binaries of Angel and Demon are explicitly portrayed, showing the fear of a woman’s instability. Unlike Goblin Market, which portrays women moving back and forth between Angel and Demon, this painting depicts a woman hanging in the threshold between these two extremes.

The poems “Soul’s Beauty” and “Body’s Beauty” by Dante Rossetti were each written to correspond to the paintings *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Lady Lilith*, respectively. By comparing these two poems, the same extreme version of the “Angel in the House” and the opposing image of the Demon that many of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings depict becomes evident. Like the painting *Sibylla Palmifera*, “Soul’s Beauty” contains attributes of both the Angel and Demon. Rossetti writes: “Under the arch of Life, where love and death, / Terror and mystery, guard her shine, I saw / Beauty enthroned” (1-3). This verbal description makes clear the intent of the image in the painting—the opposition between love and death. Fear of this woman and of beauty itself is apparent in the language Rossetti uses. He writes that “her gaze struck / awe” and that when praising her, the speaker’s “voice and hand shake still” (Rossetti, Dante 3, 9-10). Awe is a term that expresses both admiration and fear. Also, a shaking voice and hand indicate this same trepidation or fear. “Body’s Beauty” reiterates the same message the painting *Lady Lilith* expresses. She is “[t]he witch he [Adam] loved before the gift of Eve” who

precedes the snake in deceiving Adam (Rossetti, Dante 2-3). She “weave[s]” a “bright web” that entraps man’s “heart and body and life” (Rossetti, Dante 7-8). She is associated with the “rose and poppy” and causes man’s “straight neck” to bend (9, 13). Lilith bending Adam’s neck is a metaphor of women forcing men to submit. “[A]round his heart one strangling golden hair” connects to the wild hair of the Demon paintings (14). “Soul’s Beauty” describes the ideal feminine image of the “Angel in the House” and, like the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, takes the ideal to the extreme by showing the fear and death that ideal produces. “Body’s Beauty” describes the Demonic woman, the woman that physically, spiritually, and sexually threatens men’s sexuality and identity, which is a neurotic response, doubling, of the “Angel in the House” ideology.

Rossetti’s poem “Sister Helen,” William Morris’ poem “Medea,” Valentine Cameron Prinsep’s painting *Medea the Sorceress*, William Holman Hunt’s painting *Lady of Shalott*, and John W. Waterhouse’s painting *The Magic Circle* are more examples depicting the Demon Woman. This last painting by Waterhouse contains images of necromancy—snakes, long wild hair, and a witch’s staff. As these multiple examples suggest, the Pre-Raphaelites were equally fascinated with the Demon as they were with the Angel. The question that begs to be asked is, why? Why the obsession with witchcraft and with demonic women? Susan Casteras presents an insightful explanation:

[T]he cultural construct of the aberrant feminine personality represented by these viragoes must have projected its own fascination. These women in many respects—by dint of what they wear as well as what they do—seem not entirely human, or at least soulless and often bestial. They are willful exiles and daughters of Lilith: sinister, isolated, romantic outcasts whose roles as anti-heroines are highly seditious in the context of normative Victorian womanhood. Defiant, unorthodox, and often ferocious as well as sexually active, they combine other unwomanly characteristics such as aggression and the infliction of pain with often beguiling beauty. (169)

Here Casteras reveals what seems like the most logical reason for the obsession—they were intrigued with the aberrant demonic woman because she was sexual, powerful, aggressive, and potentially dangerous. To complicate her analysis, Casteras also suggests that this view possibly presents a liberating alternative to the “Angel in the House” ideology. She writes:

A woman’s rebellion against her traditional role was often considered pathological, indeed clinically mad, by many Victorian, for whom female hysteria was one symptom of madness. In this respect, sorcery and madness might be considered creative and liberating escapes from everyday reality, a chance for Victorian woman’s transformation from passive martyr or “Angel in the House” to actively striving, dynamic controller of herself and of men (Casteras 169-70).

While rebelling against the Victorian norms could be interpreted as an act of liberation, that this act is labeled by the society as madness or sorcery negates the liberating act and places the woman firmly back into a contained ideological stance. A woman truly liberated from the “Angel in the House” ideology would be one seen as active, powerful, sane, and good. These Pre-Raphaelite paintings do not successfully subvert the “Angel in the House” ideology because they simply depict the implied foil of the Angel already inherently present in that ideology. If the paintings depicted sexual, powerful and aggressive women without aligning them with Demons and witches, then the Pre-Raphaelites might have truly subverted the Angel ideology.

Part III—Challenging the Ideals: Rossetti’s Goblin Market

Rossetti’s Goblin Market describes women who could easily be associated with the Pre-Raphaelite or the Victorian “Angel in the House.” Initially, both Laura and Lizzie are seen as meek, passive, and pure. Yet as the poem continues, it becomes clear

that Rossetti is employing the ideals of her time to subvert their meaning and power. Many modern scholars have established that Rossetti “actively and consciously used the male-authored texts that came before hers in order to shape her materials, but she altered those texts in ways that empowered her female characters (and perhaps her female readers, as well)” (Cummins 80). Just as she reshapes the male-authored texts, she also reshapes the underlying male-authored ideologies.

Goblin Market overflows with references to one particular male-authored text, the Bible. Rossetti rewrites Bible stories making them more favorable towards women. While some may argue that the Bible is authored by God and therefore not male-authored, Paul Sawyer explains that all divine language has been categorized as masculine since the early Judeo-Christian religion developed (129). Sawyer writes: “the Hebrew prophets marked all sacred human speech as masculine by virtue of their roles as oracles of a patriarchal deity, a gender distinction repeated through the centuries by male clergy who have preached the law” (129). Therefore, the Bible as divine writing is male-authored even if it is considered written by God.

In Goblin Market, Rossetti’s revision of the Biblical fall of mankind subverts Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite ideologies. Angela Leighton, utilizing Gilbert and Gubar, describes Rossetti’s revision as: “a moral allegory of feminised temptation and fall, in which one sister plays the role of ‘a female Saviour’” (135). Yet, Goblin Market also “constantly swerves away from religious meanings in imagery drawn from the tricks of the nursery of the exchanges of the market” (Leighton 135). Leighton’s statement indicates how Rossetti’s use of subject matter, tone, and style subtly draw the reader away from religious meanings. By depicting children at a market and employing a

rhythmical, sing-song childlike style in the poem, Rossetti diverts attention from anyone suspecting her of subverting Christian theology. Leighton's analysis captures the complexity of Rossetti's position as a Victorian female writer and the type of transformation she gives to male texts and ideologies. As a woman being held up to the standard of both the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite ideals, Rossetti has to present any subversions to this ideology subtly. Through her poetry, Rossetti reveals thoughts she may have held but as a Victorian woman could never overtly express to the public. Thus, Rossetti uses a well-established religious text and masculine ideals in Goblin Market, but subtly presents them in a way that empowers women and critiques the more traditional religious interpretations.

The fall in Goblin Market does not take place in the Garden, but instead in a marketplace. Unlike the Biblical story, the sisters are not saved "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 137). While Laura is saved through her sister's sacrifice, which parallels Christ dying on the cross, it is the same juice of sin that cures her that initially caused her illness. It is female ingenuity and sisterly love that redeems Laura not repentance. Leighton points out that "[a]s soon as the sisters enter that market, as sisters rather than as vulnerable single women like Jeanie, they can counter the goblin's rule of sin and suffering" (138). Jeanie dies because, unlike Laura, she didn't have a sister with her to bring back the goblin juice to cure her. It isn't avoiding the market or not eating the fruit that is being advocated, it is sisterhood, and tricking the goblin men out of their juices.

This revision of the fall subverts both the Victorian and the Pre-Raphaelite ideologies. For women, the message normally ascribed to the fall is to completely repress sexuality (since the fall is often seen as sex). Traditionally this Biblical story is also used to teach women to avoid “masculine” traits associated with Eve’s actions—aggression, leadership, and strength. The messages from this story are repeated in the “Angel in the House” by emphasizing women’s purity, innocence, modesty, submission, weakness and many other “Angelic” qualities. Rossetti’s revision does not reiterate these same messages. First, she “indicates that the self-sacrificing love Victorian women were to embody should not be seen as angelic but as Christ-like; in other words, she indicates that women were capable of a higher level of spiritual existence and action than that of ministering angels in the home” (D’Amico 82-3). Instead of the stereotypical image of the angel, the reader sees the heroic Christ-like woman, Lizzie, acting aggressively and with strength when faced by the goblin men. By portraying “a female Christ [she] demolish[es] the gender exclusivity of the sacred” that pervaded Victorian culture (Palazzo 25). Even though women were socially compared to angels, religious communities denied women any real power. Women were being told they were spiritually superior to men and responsible for man’s moral well-being, yet they were forbidden from holding positions of leadership within the church. Lynda Palazzo states that: “[t]he ninetieth century channeled this potential threat to the religious supremacy of the male into either a passionless submissive angel of the house, or, [...] into [a] virginal nun” (16). Palazzo interprets the spiritual elevation of woman to “Angel in the House” as a way to undermine the potential sexual threat of women. This potential sexual threat or fear was expressed in the cultural projection of the Demon woman. Therefore,

comparing women to angels becomes less about creating a space where men and women are seen as spiritually equals, than it is about confining women.

To further subvert the image of the “Angel in the House,” Lizzie is not depicted as wholly pure or innocent throughout the poem. She enters the prohibited market and tries to buy the forbidden fruit. While never ingesting it, Lizzie wears, uses, and owns the pulp and juice, which is the essence of the fruit. During the goblin men’s attack and subsequent abuse, Lizzie laughs in her heart when she “feel[s] the drip / [o]f juice that syruped all her face” (Rossetti 433-4). The syrup lodges in her dimples and runs down her quaking neck. Her internal laugh is barely suppressed causing her neck to shake like curd. At some level Lizzie seems to enjoy this sacrificial act and subsequent abuse, challenging her purity with sexuality and perversity. While Lizzie is the more modest of the two women, she does not follow the actions of the ideal angelic woman. Likewise, Laura, the Eve of the story, is not solely sinful or demonic. Both sisters dance between the two extremes that society offers as the only options for women, and this movement is how Rossetti subverts the social ideals and empowers women.

At the start of the poem, both Laura and Lizzie are depicted as meek, passive, and pure. After hearing the goblin men calling, “Laura bowed her head to hear, / Lizzie veiled her blushes,” signifying submissiveness, purity and meekness, traits associated with the “Angel in the House” (Rossetti 34-5). The lowering of their heads and covering up of blushes are actions commonly viewed as indicators of humility and innocence. Lizzie covers up her eyes and warns Laura to do the same, but Laura disregards this proper behavior (Rossetti 48-52). Instead, Laura remains with the goblin men, acting outside of the acceptable roles of femininity. The reader knows that Laura is not the ideal

woman based on Lizzie's reaction to Laura's behavior and the narrative tone Rossetti employs to describe both women. Lizzie embodies the feminine norms while Laura, through her defiance of femininity, is aligned with masculinity. Thais E Morgan summarizes Lori Hope Lefkowitz's theory that there is a literary precedent established of depicting two sisters, one feminine and one masculine, where the author elevates the masculine sister over the feminine sister:

Considering novels by Austen, Eliot, and Alcott, Lefkowitz finds a recurrent pairing of an ideally "feminine" sister with a deviantly "masculine" sister, the former portrayed as docile and marriageable, the latter as intellectually aggressive and "wise." According to Lefkowitz, the male-identified or "phallic" heroine is celebrated by each female sage author as a fantasy version of her nineteenth-century norms of femininity. (Morgan 14)

The theory is that female authors create sisters who foil each other, one feminine and the other masculine, to highlight and value the deviant, masculine sister. This tradition allows the author, and readers, to fantasize about breaking out of the norms of femininity their particular culture imposes. Lizzie is depicted as more feminine than her sister, especially at the start of the poem, and she does whatever she can to continue being considered feminine. To make absolutely sure of her safety and of her femininity, Lizzie "thrust a dimpled finger / In each ear, shut eyes and ran" (Rossetti 68-9). Additionally, by upbraiding Laura for staying up "so late" because "twilight is not good for maidens," Lizzie highlights herself as a virtuous maid and therefore Laura as her antithesis (143-4). Staying up late is an example of Laura's independence and dabbling with sexuality, which in this society are decidedly masculine traits.

But is Lizzie truly and completely virtuous? When Lizzie is trying to get her sister to turn away from the goblin men, she says, "no, no, no; / Their offers should not

charm us” (Rossetti 64-5). Lizzie says the goblin men’s offers *should* not charm them, suggesting that their offers do charm both sisters. Lizzie runs away not because she is innately virtuous and pure, like the Victorian ideal suggests, but because she is not virtuous and knows that she too desires the goblin fruit. Lizzie represses her impurity attempting to comply with the Angel ideology, but repression of impurity does not equal purity. That she even desires the fruit taints her as an “Angel in the House,” because it shows that she is not pure or chaste in her heart. Her purity is only superficial and manufactured. Despite this moment where Lizzie reveals her true desires, a more superficial or casual look at the poem presents the reader with Laura as the fallen woman, or perhaps fallen Angel in this case, while Lizzie appears to remain virginal. This dichotomy then leads to Lizzie’s self-sacrifice, another quality of the ideal woman, to save her sister from sin. Lizzie sacrifices her sexual purity to the goblin men in order to bring juices back for her dying sister to drink and eat. When Lizzie goes to buy fruit from the goblin men to carry back for her sister, the goblin men attack her for not eating the fruit in their company. They call her “proud / Cross-grained, uncivil;” (Rossetti 394-5) and then:

They trod and hustled her,
 Elbowed and jostled her,
 Clawed with their nails,
 Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
 Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
 Twitched her hair out by the roots,
 Stamped upon her tender feet,
 Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
 Against her mouth to make her eat. (Rossetti 399-407)

The goblin men rape and attack Lizzie’s identity as an ideal woman, as an “Angel in the House,” by calling her proud, cross-grained and uncivil.

The self-sacrificial quality of the “Angel in the House” is used in this instance by Rossetti to subvert the original quality. Instead of sacrificing herself to save a man from sin as an ideal woman would, Lizzie sacrifices herself for another woman, nor is the act depicted as weak or submissive, qualities normally associated with female sacrifice. While this may seem to simply reproduce the same problem of female sacrifice, by having Lizzie save her sister Laura and not the Goblin men, Rossetti suggests that women are more worthy of a sacrifice than men. This ultimately subverts the Angelic quality of sacrifice into something that elevates women over men, giving them a strength not normally associated with women. This is especially poignant when considering how little importance society gave to saving fallen women. While some reform did exist for women, in general once a woman sexually fell she was ostracized (Palazzo 15). Her status as a sinful woman would be permanent. This view prevented society from seeing women as worthy of redemptive sacrifice.

Being a sexualized woman in Victorian society was to be outside of the social order. According to Palazzo: “While society frequently turned a blind eye to a man who frequented a prostitute or seduced a young girl, the moment a woman had any kind of sexual experience outside of marriage she was transformed into an object of loathing” (15). A desire existed “to contain [sexuality] within marriage and to draw a clear line between respectable and disreputable women” (Sutphin 512). The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 presented even more concern regarding sexual women. These Acts, established to safeguard soldiers and sailors from sexually transmitted diseases, instituted the “compulsory examinations” of prostitutes (Sutphin 515). A diseased woman was confined to a hospital until cured, and if a woman refused to be

tested, “she could be imprisoned for one to three months” (515). Further apprehensions about women’s sexuality developed from this new social law. Sutphin argues that: “The attempts to arrive at a definition” of who is or is not a prostitute, “revealed the difficulty of defining and so contributed to anxieties about the inability to distinguish between prostitutes and respectable women” (516). Certain styles of dress, mannerism, walking around alone, and other traits were associated with prostitution. Yet these traits could be altered to create prostitutes who appeared to be respectable women and vice versa thus creating social anxiety. By calling Lizzie uncivil, the goblin men question the passivity and powerlessness that was associated with ideal women. Being civil is about controlling oneself and letting oneself be managed by society’s rules. In this self-sacrificing scene, Lizzie is not passive or powerless. As a female Christ figure, she takes control of her situation to seek help for her sister—she actively chooses to risk her body and soul to bring back fruit to Laura. Rossetti’s portrayal of Lizzie and Laura’s mutability undermines society’s attempt to further contain women. Women, even in fiction of the day, were generally not able to sexually sin and then reform in society’s eyes, which is exactly what Laura does. By the end of the poem, Laura becomes a mother, an image associated with virtue and respectability. Therefore, she is not solely demonic or angelic. To be considered solely demonic by society, a woman could not be associated with the virtuous role of motherhood, and to be considered solely angelic a woman could not have been sexualized. Similar to Laura, Lizzie disturbs her Angelic qualities through sexual exposure to save her sister and is equally mutable.

This fear and anxiety generated the need for strict categories and dichotomies. Asexual and pure women were good, while the sexual and corrupt were seen as whores

and prostitutes. This view separates the two sisters—Laura is the corrupt, sexual, fallen woman while Lizzie is the pure, asexual, ideal woman. Antony Harrison argues that while “Rossetti refused to condemn the victims of men’s sexual energies...she denied the value of their reentry into the world of social relations” (“In the Shadow” 111). Harrison makes a good point in the first half of this statement, but the second half does not match the plot of Goblin Market. The fallen women in Goblin Market do successfully reenter society by becoming mothers, showing that a woman is not just good or evil, Angel or Demon, but multiple combinations of both good and evil. While Laura does indeed fall into sexual sin via eating the goblin fruit, Rossetti does not leave her there. The last stanza indicates that the fallen Laura becomes a wife and mother, images of socially sanctioned sexuality. While returning to the socially sanctioned image may appear to reinstate the established ideology, what Rossetti does goes against it. The role of wife and mother are indeed sanctioned but only if the woman who becomes that wife and mother has remained ideal. Rossetti circumvents the ideological trap by taking a woman, markedly unacceptable and non-ideal, and allowing her to have a social role previously only approved for ideal women. A wife and mother were the epitome of the “Angel in the House.” Shannon Bell contends that:

modern discourse on prostitution was part of a broader discursive production of female sexuality which separated the female body into the reproductive [nonsexual, respectable] body and the un(re)productive [sexual disreputable] body. (41)

With this perspective in mind, Rossetti’s creation of Laura as a wife and mother suggests that Laura is surmounting her fallen sexual identity to become an ideal woman once again, something society would not allow. Additionally, in many of Rossetti’s writings, motherhood is glorified but without any acknowledgement that men are a part of creating

this state (Harrison, Victorian Poets 143-4). Goblin Market follows this model by depicting the two girls' futures as mothers, but not mentioning their husbands at all. In fact, there are no men in this poem, except for the goblin men, perhaps further suggesting that men are too hard to redeem⁴ (Harrison, Victorian Poets 149). Harrison writes: "Most often in her work, Rossetti elides any discussion of husbands and marriage as a necessary institution prelude to the production of children. But her radicalism also results from a literal acceptance of the basic premise of the domestic ideology: that men are inevitably seduced and sullied by involvement with "the world"" (Christina Rossetti and the Sage Discourse 103). The ideology of the "Angel in the House" encouraged the idea that women were of heaven (pure) while men were of the earth (sinful). Therefore, seeing men as so much of the world that they are irredeemable is a logical progression from this ideology, but it would have been seen as radical and subversive.

Rossetti also takes the ideal woman, Lizzie, and links her to sexuality in a way that directly contrasts the purity of the "Angel in the House." After returning from the goblin market, Lizzie says,

'Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me,
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much over me: (Rossetti 465-72)

Here Rossetti further sexualizes Lizzie through the use of suggestive language—"hug," "kiss," "suck," "squeezed." This becomes more apparent in the next stanza when Laura "kissed and kissed her [Lizzie] with a hungry mouth" (Rossetti 492). The scene progresses to an eruptive "earthquake" and "foam-topped waterspout" that implies an

orgasm which finishes with Laura falling down past pleasure and anguish (515, 519). This sexual encounter between Lizzie and Laura results in the revitalization of Laura, complicating any reading that parallels goblin fruit with sex and sex with sin. Sex with goblin men causes Laura to become sick, but sex, taken from the goblin men, with a woman (Lizzie) brings her new life. This sexual fulfillment through another woman combined with Rossetti's previously discussed belief in man's sinfulness, presents the reader with a particularly un-Victorian view that favors any relationship with women, including sexual relationships, over relationships with men. Harrison clarifies this point through the following statement:

Through its use of transparent allegorical devices the poem unabashedly privileges the value of women over men, espouses "sisterhood" as a social dynamic, reviles men, and denounces the sexual pleasures of marriage (in its repeated allusions to the dead Jeanie, "Who should have been a bride" but instead became a victim of the goblin fruits, here equated with "joys brides hope to have"). (Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture 13)

If viewed in this way, Goblin Market becomes an attack on the patriarchal values of love and marriage. Rossetti literally attacks the "Victorian marriage market" (Harrison, "the Sage Discourse" 97).⁵

Harrison argues that the goblin market is the marriage market which "insisted that a middle-class woman, as a leisured "Angel in the House," occupy herself by ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of her husband and children while undertaking tasks (embroidering, arranging flowers, playing music) that were largely ornamental" ("the Sage Discourse" 90).⁶ For Rossetti, marriage and the "ornamental" tasks of the world reduced a woman's spirituality. Harrison states: "Christ was the only lover whose "threshold" it was worthy to be carried over; becoming his bride the only rejuvenating alternative to the stereotypical roles of prostitute, wife, and lovelorn spinster, and it is one

she advocates repeatedly in her poems and devotional works, sometimes with extraordinary passion” (Victorian Poets 137). Perhaps here is where the religious allegory of Lizzie as Christ becomes most important. By interpreting Lizzie’s sexualized encounter with Laura as both a sister and a savior, Rossetti advocates against marriage and against (goblin) men and for both sisterhood and a partnership with Christ. With either interpretation, Rossetti is taking a stance against the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite ideology projecting women as either Angels or Demons.

Interpreting Goblin Market in this way suggests that the poem counters the narrow view of women in Victorian society. The text seems to intimate that like Lizzie and Laura, women can exist outside of the confining ideals presented by the image of the “Angel in the House” or the counter image of the Demon woman. Some of Rossetti’s other poetry also speaks to this same issue or concern. According to U.C. Knoepflmacher, Rossetti, in her poem “In an Artist’s Studio,” “renders a male artist’s appropriation of an idealized female Other” (299). Knoepflmacher argues that this poem “clearly constitutes an acerbic commentary on the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics” and allows her “to call into question the female forms personified by” the male imagination (300). He argues that Rossetti, through her writing, resists idealization of women and “resists deformation into a type” (300). Through her poem, “In an Artist’s Studio,” Rossetti expressed a dislike for the Pre-Raphaelite tendency to “freeze mutability into permanence” which she also expressed through the fluidity of Lizzie’s and Laura’s status as pure women in Goblin Market (Knoepflmacher 301). Rossetti’s heroines in Goblin Market change from scene to scene opposing the fixed idea of the woman as either pure or fallen. Additionally, it could be argued that Lizzie and Laura are actually two facets of

the same female character further illustrating the mutability of a woman. Both women are blonde and relatively indistinguishable from each other. In fact only their actions and reactions to the goblin men differentiate between them:

Golden head by golden head,
 Like two pigeons in one nest
 Folded in each other's wings,
 They lay down in their curtained bed:
 Like two blossoms on one stem,
 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
 Like two wands of ivory
 Tipped with gold for awful kings.

 Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
 Locked together in one nest. (Rossetti 184-90, 197-98)

These lines emphasize the similarity between the two girls, and imply a oneness between them. Barr argues that: “Laura and Lizzie can be seen as two sides of a single individual (or bifurcated humanity), the fallible, human, corrupt and the chaste, resisting, sacrificing, they are appropriately surrounded in the poem by images that reflect this division” (273). The sisters are both pale skinned, they both have blonde hair, and they are both, at least initially, pure as “new-fall'n snow” (Rossetti 188). Specifically, the line “Like two blossoms on one stem” suggests that Lizzie and Laura are in fact two halves of one person. The possibility that they are one woman suggests that both what is considered good (Lizzie) and evil (Laura) can be facets of one person—women are not one or the other, but perhaps both simultaneously, therefore symbolically representing one woman who is neither good nor evil but something in-between.

Not only does Goblin Market counter the Victorian ideal of womanhood, but it also whittles away at the Pre-Raphaelite model of woman. The stereotypical Pre-Raphaelite ideal woman is sometimes described as pale, thin, red or blonde haired, sick,

dying or dead, and always fixed as a paradigm of perfection. Christina Rossetti plays with this stereotype in Goblin Market, recreating images of a beautiful woman wasting away similar to Millias' *Ophelia*, Dante Rossetti's Mary in *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (*The Annunciation*), and the unnamed woman in *Found*. Rossetti's dying beauty, Laura, is described as follows:

But when the moon 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.

 While with sunk eyes and faded mouth. (276-80; 288)

This passage depicts Laura slowly wasting away after eating the goblin fruit. Laura is "listless" and "knocking at Death's door" before Lizzie takes action to save her (Rossetti 297; 321). That Lizzie saves Laura is the key difference between the Pre-Raphaelite slowly dying beautiful woman and Rossetti's woman. She doesn't leave Laura dying; she revives her through Lizzie's sisterly act of love and shows her to be mutable. She became sexually impure yet by the end she is a wife and mother, symbols of purity and the ideal woman. Lizzie became something society didn't allow, a sexually tainted wife and mother.

The other Pre-Raphaelite model of womanhood, the Demon Woman, depicted in the paintings *Lucretia Borgia*, *Sibylla Palmifera*, and *Lady Lilith*, is also challenged by Goblin Market. Lynda Palazzo takes the previously discussed topics of male gaze and prostitution and ties them to the Pre-Raphaelites' Demon Woman. She writes:

Through the deception of the goblins, she has been tricked into surrendering control of her womanhood, becoming a re-interpretation of herself in the male mind as she greedily sucks the fruit; as a consequence, she becomes the erotic creature of the later Pre-Raphaelite painting,⁷

Dante Gabriel's 'Jenny,' the plaything of the male imagination: 'not as she is but as she fills his dream.'⁸ (Palazzo 27)

Palazzo sees a "fall into prostitution" as accepting the Victorian man's value judgment of women—as accepting the social binary of being either an "angel or devil" (27). Rossetti uses Goblin Market to make this connection and illustrate that women do not have to conform to these two extremes. She shows that gray areas in between this black and white do exist. Rossetti does this by rewriting the fall of Eve and "more than hint[ing] that male gender oppression be interpreted as original sin" (Palazzo 27). This is evident through the contradictory effects of the goblin fruit. When the goblins give it to Laura she becomes ill, but through her sister, through another woman, the goblin fruit gives life. Laura now is no longer a Demon but is not an Angel either. Rossetti creates a new space for realistic women to exist within the confining ideologies of her time.

The poem describes men's oppression of women as being the real sin. Laura and Lizzie are described as "[l]ike two wands of ivory / [t]ipped with gold for awful kings" (190-1). "Awful" here conveys two meanings. While meaning impressive, reverential, or inspiring, the word also communicates fear and danger. The two sisters are compared to staffs that kings, the ultimate representation of a man in power, fearfully and dangerously wield. This is a perfect example of the male sin of oppressing and abusing women. It is also interesting to notice that "[n]owhere in the poem is blame attached to pleasure of any kind" (Palazzo 26). The only "[s]uggestions of sin and evil lie exclusively in the goblins" (26). The girls are warned that the goblin fruit would be harmful, but not sinful, and in fact it isn't the fruit itself that is harmful but the lack of fruit. Jeanie dies because she had no one to get more fruit for her, but Laura lives because Lizzie tricks the goblins into giving their fruit again to the same girl.

Another example of Pre-Raphaelite fascination with a simplistic one dimensional ideal woman is in Dante Rossetti's translation of a poem by Giacomo Pugliesi. The poem literally translates as:

My lady, who holds your face in his power?
 or your understanding, where is it?
 and your noble heart that so captured me,
 oh my lady?
 where is my lady and her wise instruction,
 her beauty, and her knowledge? (qtd. in McGann, "Medieval," 110)

Yet Dante Rossetti's translation of this passage eliminates all knowledge and instruction from the poem and focuses instead solely on the physical beauty of Mary. Instead of presenting a translation that honors the content of the original poem, Dante attempts to offer an "aesthetic translation" (McGann, "Medieval," 104). In other words, "[o]ne Good poem deserves another" and in the process of providing a good poem, Dante sacrifices content over artistic beauty (McGann, "Medieval," 104).

This superficial presentation of woman is essentially a continuation of the idea of the male gaze. Painting itself embodies this idea in that it is a visual representation of something that is far more complex. Additionally, a painting transforms the person painted into an object to be perpetually gazed at. Women are doubly made into objects to be gazed at. Rossetti's Goblin Market counters this pattern. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra states: "Rossetti's poem contests the traditional paradigm" of the "active/male" and the "passive/female with her recuperation and celebration of not only the female spectator, but also the redemptive function of woman as spectacle" (139). "Goblin Market, originally titled "A Peep at the Goblins," privileges the female rather than the male gaze as the maidens learn about looking, its rewards and dangers" (Maxwell 94). That the original title of Goblin Market was "A Peep at the Goblins" challenges and plays on the

nature of the male gaze. In this title it is the girls, Lizzie and Laura, who are active, looking, peeping at the male goblins. Writing the poem from the girls' view-point and allowing them to be visual participants, destabilizes the normal positions of men and women. "While at first blush the word "peep" may evoke ... innocent playfulness ... in the context of the narrative itself "peep" becomes overlaid with the connotations furtive looking, stolen glances at the forbidden, clandestine curiosity" (Kooistra 140).

Kooistra takes this analysis of the original title and applies it to the lines:

'Oh,' cried Lizzie, 'Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.'
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look; (Rossetti 48-51)

Kooistra interprets these lines as establishing "[b]oth the feminine desire to look at the world and the prohibitions against it in [these] opening speeches" (Kooistra 140). The goblins do gaze at Laura and Lizzie, but these women are not confined to being objects of male desire. "Goblin Market is a work of immense visual power, employing a figural language both richly evocative and suggestively vague" (Kooistra 137). Rossetti verbally paints a vivid picture complicated with multiple shadows. What seems to be represented ends up being subverted and that which seems to be hidden is brought into light. Laura gazing at the goblins, the men, renders them objects, "sensuous emblems of her desire" (Kooistra 140). Later when Lizzie attempts to purchase fruit for her ailing sister, she, too, peeps at the goblins, while they in turn gaze at her. For Kooistra, the end result is that both women learn "that a woman cannot live in the world without looking and being looked at" and that "while these activities are paradoxically both destructive and redemptive, they are also essential to life, to love, to creativity" (141). Rossetti takes the male gaze and shows the possible power women can take from it.

Dante Rossetti, and other Pre-Raphaelites, were obsessed with trying to “achieve some ideal perfection” in all their artwork (McGann 104). This ideal, this perfection, is also what seems to drive the Victorian social concept of the “Angel in the House.” It is this fixation with perfection that makes it so “debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters” (Gilbert and Gubar 2029). Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market responds to both the ideal of the “Angel in the House” and the Pre-Raphaelites’ reinterpretation and response to that ideal. By emphasizing the mutability of women, Rossetti punctures the philosophy of the ideal woman. Goblin Market shows that a woman is not either an angel or a monster, but that women can fluidly move back and forth between those poles. Rossetti not only opposes the Victorian image of woman as “passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all—pure” (Melani), but also the Pre-Raphaelite extreme of that ideal, the pale, gaunt, sick and dying beauty, and their response to that ideal, the Demon Woman (Casteras 142-70). Laura is not the fallen, sinful, sexualized woman who, wasting away, remains a beauty, and Lizzie is not the pure, asexual, “Angel in the House.” Both characters cross over their initial binary realms demonstrating the reality of being female. Real women are not simply angels or monsters—real women are enigmas.

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¹ Throughout this paper, the term woman or women refers to a person of the female sex, the term female or females refers to social gender assignment and anatomical sex, and the term feminine or femininity refers to socially constructed attributes assigned to women, specifically those attributes constructed during the Victorian era.

² Taken from Ehrenreich and English, Complaints and Disorders 19.

³ For the purposes of this paper, transgression is defined as "the action of going beyond or overstepping some boundary or limit" (The American Heritage Dictionary).

⁴ Harrison's view is also expressed in "Christina Rossetti and the Age Discourse of Feminist High Anglicanism." Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power, on page 104.

⁵ Also found in Harrison, Antony. Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology, on page 127-8, 136.

⁶ Also found in Harrison, Antony. Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology, in page 129.

⁷ The connection here appears to be to Dante Rossetti's unfinished painting *Found*. The poem "Jenny" was a precursor to both this painting and the corresponding poem "Found." Both poems appear to refer to the same character Jenny who also is the central figure in the painting.

⁸ "In the Artist's Studio" Christina Rossetti