CONSUMER POWER AND THE UTOPIA OF DESIRE: CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S "GOBLIN MARKET"

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The language of Christina Rossetti's best-known poem, "Goblin Market," is remarkably mercantile. "Come buy, come buy," the iterated cry of the "merchant men" that punctuates the poem, has few parallels in English poetry in the nineteenth century. While buying and selling, markets and merchants and their customers, are a staple of nursery rhymes—"To market, to market, jiggety jig"—most literary Victorian poetry, like the little pig, resolutely stays home from commercial encounters. "Goblin Market" not only adopts the forms of the nursery rhyme but also carries the mercantile preoccupations of Mother Goose into a volume of serious poetry.[1] Much of the criticism of "Goblin Market" treats its story of buying and selling, like its rhymes and goblins, as the figurative dress for a narrative of spiritual temptation, fall, and redemption.[2] But what happens if instead we read the figure as the subject: buying and selling, or more specifically, the relation of women to those markets of the nursery tales?

Rossetti's merchants are goblin men; their customers are maidens. When Lizzie and Laura step from home into the male marketplace of Rossetti's poem, they cross a fictive but strongly invested boundary separating not only serious poetry from nursery rhymes but also moral from economic space, private from public, "natural" creativity from the alienated labor of capitalist production, and—underwriting and sustaining these distinctions—female from male.[3] Victorian culture acknowledges only one figure who transgresses this boundary—the prostitute. The threat she inevitably poses to the security of these distinctions is contained when she is cast out from the company of moral women. Rossetti's poem is haunted by that shadowy figure. As in so many Victorian narratives of the fallen woman, Laura purchases pleasure only to discover that her own body is ultimately consumed. But Laura is not a prostitute; she is never excluded from the company of moral women by Lizzie or by her author. Rossetti avoids what might be thought the bolder move: she does not take the prostitute as a defining instance of all

women's relation to buying and selling, thus negating the fiction of separate spheres. The poem stops short of identifying Laura with the prostitute, for reasons to which I shall return, but its fiction that Laura buys fruit (however magical), not sex, may make the same point more effectively. Rossetti's poem makes visible the contradictory assumptions that render women's relation to the most ordinary forms of consumption, in both the Victorian marketplace and texts about that marketplace, unique and peculiarly risky—both to themselves and to the fragile fictions that legitimize some activities as properly economic while refusing to recognize others. In "Goblin Market" and a related group of Rossetti's poems, the domestic desires of women are examined as dramas of competitive buying and selling in which women are always at risk as objects to be purchased, yet also implicated as agents of consumption. Rossetti's poems do not acknowledge the fiction of separate spheres; the mercantile language of "Goblin Market" is one sign of her persistent inclination to consider tales of female love and desire as caught up in the operations of a contemporary economics that extends to sex and marriage. A Victorian ideology of separate spheres returns (but with quite a different figuration) only as the utopian fiction that concludes "Goblin Market."

"Goblin Market," then, is a transgressive poem that denies (or at least defers) a series of linked distinctions constructed on the fiction of moral woman's difference from economic man, a fiction that much Victorian writing and thinking posited as normal and natural. The story of Lizzie and Laura represents a specifically female experience of Victorian political economy—one which is often occluded or erased from imaginative and analytic accounts of that economy's operations in the service of maintaining gendered distinctions. Rossetti's economics of sex and marriage is primarily an economics of consumption. A very brief look at some other texts on consumption may suggest how conceptions of gender difference have paradoxically erased women's different experience of consumption, even in the most critical accounts of capitalist relations.

At first glance women are far from absent from such accounts. A surprising number of texts, from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, specify that the consumer is female or feminized. For example, both novels in England and rococo art in France were condemned in the eighteenth century for encouraging a love of luxury and idleness by associating them with women.[4] Yet the real targets of these critiques of consumption were all those, from the

working classes to the aristocracy, who did not share bourgeois values of hard work and careful saving. The taste for luxury and idleness attributed to women stood for similar tastes in the socially useless aristocrat or the lazy domestic servant. By attributing such dangerous consumption to women's appetites and influence, these criticisms acknowledged a power they intended to contain. Both then and later, the association of luxurious tastes with women outran the facts—women need not be the primary or exclusive buyers, authors, or patrons of novels or rococo art in order to activate denunciations of a consumption with which they were identified.[5]

The grounds for the strong associations between women and consumption probably lie in the fact that in eighteenth and nineteenth-century monied society women were themselves a sign of luxury, indicating in their persons the power of their fathers, husbands, or lovers to consume. Where this power was feared, female consumption was criticized; where it was applauded, women were expected to buy and display the ornaments of a luxury and leisure that they also represented. In the rococo world of eighteenth-century France but also, much later, in the bourgeois world of mid-Victorian England, women displayed the conspicuous consumption that conferred social status on men. Their role as luxury objects of consumption, in other words, influenced their characterization as agents of consumption, enabling them to stand for—and sometimes, deflect criticism from—those whose consuming passions they represented. The speaker of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" only half grasps the evasions that shape his meditations on the prostitute who *is* the pleasure men consume while (he imagines) she herself shares—and can therefore embody—that morally suspect but consuming passion.[6]

Marx carefully points out the contradiction between the bourgeois asceticism expressed in critiques of consumption and capitalism's own dependence on consumers. But his argument, in the "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" of 1844, employs the same associations between consumption and the feminine, this time to portray both capitalists and the consumers they dupe as emasculated or feminized. The capitalist is an "industrial eunuch" who puts himself at the service of the consumer's most depraved fancies, plays the pimp between him and his need, excites in him morbid appetites, lies in wait for each of his weaknesses—all so that he can then demand the cash for this service of love. The capitalist-pimp seeks to compensate with money for his lack of (masculine)

power by preying on the "weaknesses," the longings for "potency," of the consumer-other.[7] Like Christina Rossetti a few years later, Marx uses the buying and selling of sexual pleasure to stand for all markets. But in his version of the exchange of money for sex there is no place for women as either buyers or sellers. Like money, women represent a power properly belonging to masculinity and are the objects, not the agents, of the exchange.

Returning to the same subject a century later, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno bring their condemnation of mass culture to a climax by repeating Marx's charge: the consumer under late capitalism is a man wrongly placed in the feminine position, deprived of economic subjecthood and hence of the dignity of the father, like a boy perpetually subjected to the symbolic castration of an initiation rite:

> The possibility of becoming a subject in the economy, an entrepreneur or a proprietor, has been completely liquidated. Right down to the humblest shop, the independent enterprise, on the management and inheritance of which the bourgeois family and the position of its head had rested, became hopelessly dependent. Everybody became an employee; and in this civilization of employees the dignity of the father (questionable anyhow) vanishes. . . . The attitude into which everybody is forced in order to give repeated proof of his moral suitability for this society reminds one of the boys who, during tribal initiation, go round in a circle with a stereotyped smile on their faces while the priest strikes them. Life in the late capitalist era is a constant initiation rite. . . . The eunuch-like voice of the crooner on the radio, the heiress's smooth suitor, who falls into the swimming pool in his dinner jacket, are models for those who must become whatever the system wants.[8]

Where the female consumer of eighteenth-century critiques of capitalism represented a threatening male power, from above or below, that critics were eager to contain, the feminized consumer of these Marxist accounts represents a male subject shamefully deprived of power. But some things do not change: not only can the feminine never represent a legitimate possessor of power, it can never represent itself. None of these accounts considers how or why the sexes may be differently related to consumption. Indeed, in most of them, women disappear. One could continue this history and argue, as Tania Modleski has recently, that when postmodernist writers like Jean Baudrillard or the novelist Manuel Puig appear to place a higher value on consumption (as against political activism, for ex-

ample) and thereby to imply that such consumption is feminist, they are only reinscribing a time-honored association between consumption and the feminine. The suppression of real gender differences in the power relations of the marketplace, Modleski concludes, can offer very little to a feminist politics.[9]

Against this history of texts in which women appear only to figure male power or powerlessness, Christina Rossetti's fable of female consumption stands out as an exception. Like many other Victorian writers, Rossetti is deeply suspicious of a world of unrestricted buying and selling associated primarily with men; unlike her contemporaries, however, she assumes that women are already implicated as both agents and objects in an economics of consumption—but differently from men.[10] In the utopian conclusion of her poem, the female protagonists undo the erasure with which a male market, like male texts on the market, threatens their existence. The poem becomes a fantasy of consumer power, where the empowered consumer is a woman.

Yet Lizzie and Laura triumph over the market only to withdraw from it. At the point when women seem most empowered, the poem reaches the limits of its ability to conceive their relations to the market. Rossetti's women must consume and be consumed, or declare an impossible independence of all economic relations. An analysis that looked more closely at women's relations to production (as Rossetti, for reasons I will suggest below, hesitates to do) might argue that women in the marketplace are also producers of the product with which they are identified—that femininity and female sexuality, like books, are cultural artifacts in the construction of which women participate, "the masquerade of femininity."[11] In this analysis the prostitute who produces herself for sale would figure not only all women's risky relation to consumption but also a (hidden) relation to production. The prostitute so understood threatens any distinction between public, male, spheres of labor shaped by market relations and private, female spheres where work remains unpaid and thus "natural." It is not surprising that the prostitute should be a figure of scandal—nor that women who wrote for a market, like Rossetti, should especially fear an association with prostitutes, whose trangressive appearance in the market place was not so different from their own.[12] "Goblin Market" acknowledges no relation to production for Lizzie and Laura except one that is naturalized by its apparent independence from all markets—like butter-making (represented without refer-

ence to sale or exchange) or mothering. I will return to the question of the poem's ideological limits, but I want first to recover its critical potential as an account of Victorian women's relation to consumption.

I

Though the poems of a reclusive Victorian woman may seem an unlikely place to look for such an account, two aspects of Rossetti's biography may suggest why she has a particular interest in the gendering of market relations. First, as a number of critics have noted, she was a lay "Sister" at a home for fallen women in the late 1850s and 60s.[13] Charitable institutions like St. Mary Magdalene's Penitentiary, Highgate, run by the Diocese of London, were intended to redeem through spiritual reformation women who had strayed into a moral abyss. But they were also a means of keeping women off the market until they had something to sell other than their bodies—until they could return as domestic servants or needlewomen, not as prostitutes. Rossetti joined the "self-devoted ladies" whose influence and instruction was to bring about a moral and economic reformation.[14] Though she did not, as an Associate, live at St. Mary's, she evidently stayed there for occasional periods of several days or weeks over a decade, until ill health curtailed her activities in 1870. Her duties while in residence probably included reading aloud to the penitents while they worked at sewing. Her association may not have permitted much detailed knowledge of the lives of these women (they were enjoined to silence about their past, partly to protect the Sisters and partly, one suspects, as part of the process of remaking their identities). It did, however, keep vividly before Rossetti's eyes the consequences of a market in which women participated at great risk.

Rossetti also had complicated relations with another market where gender seemed to make a difference. Her interest in art sales and literary publication was elicited by both her own and her brothers' productions. Rossetti's attitudes suggest a combination of ambivalence and ironic awareness of her status as woman with respect to the aesthetic market. On the one hand, she allowed her writing to be produced, if not authored, almost entirely through the mediation of the male members of her family, particularly Dante Gabriel. Between 1847 and 1850, she wrote and published a number of poems, but her only volume was privately printed by her grandfather, and six of eight published poems appeared in *The Germ*, the

Pre-Raphaelite journal organized by her brothers, under a pseudonym chosen for her by Dante Gabriel. He was active again in 1852–54 in soliciting (mostly unsuccessfully) publication on her behalf, and it was he who finally arranged in 1861 with Macmillan for her first published volume, whose title poem—"Goblin Market"—he had named.[15] He also designed the book's cover and that of the second edition, in 1865, which appeared with his frontispiece and title page designs—as did her second volume, *The Prince's Progress*, in 1866. With respect to that project she wrote him, "I foresee you will charitably do the business-details."[16] Dante Gabriel not only arranged terms, invented titles and pseudonyms, and designed covers and title pages, he also suggested revisions and made selections and arrangements of the poems themselves. Rossetti sent her manuscript to Macmillan by way of Dante Gabriel for his final advice, and he had Macmillan send separate proof sets to him and to her. But though Christina was apparently willing to concede her brother most of the responsibility for the participation of her work in the public literary market, she could on occasion firmly resist his revisions and intervene when he tried to alter her arrangement with Macmillan in a way she did not approve. "So please wash your hands of the vexatious business; I will settle it now myself with him," she wrote her brother in 1865.[17] In fact, by 1861 she was corresponding directly with Macmillan, despite her willingness to employ Dante Gabriel as a go-between—or at least, to let him believe that he handled her business matters for her.

This combination of apparent reluctance to enter the literary market except under her brother's auspices with a retention of some degree of control over the marketing of her product may have more than one explanation. Certainly Rossetti was not indifferent to the value of her writing as property which might be sold for money; she never resists her brother's efforts to publish her poems and joins gleefully in speculations about earning money from literary production. But her eagerness for publication and its profits is tempered in part by her own scruples against close dealing, reinforced by a not unrealistic estimate of the small commercial value of her work, and in part by a sense that writing is sullied by commercial exchange (a sense she shared with her brother, as well as with many other Victorian artists). Dante Gabriel, for example, drew a sharp distinction between the paintings by which he made his living and the poems which remained until 1870 largely unpublished. The former he often spoke of derogatorily as a prostitution of his talents;

the latter, he wrote to a friend in 1860, he had a special regard for as "depend[ing] mainly on their having no trade associations, and being still a thing of one's own."[18] Christina catches her brother's tone when she distinguishes between the poems she published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, for which she was directly paid in return for the copyright—her "potboilers"—and those she saved for her volumes, in which she would have a share in any profits, but did not exchange her property rights for direct cash payments.[19]

But this not uncommon ambivalence toward the commercial market for art is exaggerated by her awareness, often expressed obliquely and ironically, that women's products are undervalued, while they incur particular risks in a public market as agents of exchanges. In a letter to her brother William in 1853, she imagines a comic scenario in which she will reverse a decline in the family fortunes through the publication of her short story "Nick." In the letter, the story is accepted because it is accompanied by her portrait, which appears to be the reason why the "man of business," who is also "a susceptible individual of great discernment," "risks the loss of his situation by immediately forwarding me a cheque for £20."[20] Christina leaves it quite ambiguous whether this is a portrait *of* her (Dante Gabriel had painted her more than once) or *by* her, since she had been trying her hand at portraits that year. If read as a portrait of her, the fantasy suggests it is not her literary talents but her brother's artistic ones (and the lure of a female face) that will sell her work. If she is the artist, her estimate of her talents is more assertively made—though there may still be some ironic note taken of her greater commercial success as a face than as an author or artist. The letter would seem to put all these meanings deliberately into play.

Rossetti had plenty of opportunities to observe that the commercial value of women's faces might be at odds with their ability to get what they wanted in a world structured by an exchange economy. Just a few months before this letter, itself a fantasy partly generated by her failure to sell anything for publication, Dante Gabriel succeeded in selling his painting, *Ecce Ancilla Domina!* (1850), an annunciation for which Christina had been the model for the Virgin (as she had been for the first painting he sold, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* [1849]). Perhaps more disturbing, Rossetti was also witness to the fate of her brother's favorite model, Elizabeth Siddal, who by 1853 was herself writing poems and painting pictures (with no commercial success), suffering chronic ill health, and waiting—as she

would until 1860—for Rossetti to redeem his promise to marry her. Christina's poem "In an Artist's Studio" (dated December, 1856) is usually understood to represent her brother's tortuous relations with Lizzie. "One face looks out from all his canvases," it begins, "We found her hidden just behind those screens." The painted face is lovely: "Fair as the moon and joyful as the light"—not, like the real woman, "wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim." The dim, silent, hidden woman has been drained of all vitality by what the poem depicts as the artist's act of consumption: "He feeds upon her face by day and night." The woman who perhaps aspired to be an agent of exchange, to negotiate money or love or marriage for the use of her face—even, like Lizzie (and Christina), to author her own exchangeable objects of beauty—has been herself reduced to that object, and consumed.

This memento mori (in 1862, Lizzie was in fact to die), like the silenced, fallen women she observed at St. Mary's, underlines the hazards of exchange economies for women and points to the conclusion Rossetti entertains in her 1853 letter to William—women can more easily sell themselves than what they can produce—and to its consequence: if they enter the marketplace, they risk being literally consumed. Rossetti's preoccupation with consumption (to the virtual exclusion of any consideration of women as producers) is evidently strongly shaped by market relations that she perceives as substituting women's bodies for women's productions. Well before Lizzie's death, Rossetti had begun to explore women's precarious relation to production and consumption in a group of poems that considerably extend these speculations on what she could observe in her brother's studio or at St. Mary's, Highgate. Though I shall focus on "Goblin Market" (dated April, 1859), I would like to look first at several lesser-known poems written between October 1856 (the year St. Mary's opened) and the mid-1860s.

II

The poems I shall be considering allude to but revise two different traditions of poetry about sex and marriage current in the mid-nineteenth century. They can be viewed as responses to the prose idylls made popular in the 1820s and 30s by Mary Russell Mitford and mined as material for poetry by Tennyson, several of whose "English Idyls" from the 1830s and 40s draw on stories by Mitford. These were sketches of rural English life, short narratives of domestic romance intended for a middle-class reading audience.[21]

Both Mitford's tales and Tennyson's poems depict courtships leading to marriage, not seductions and betrayals. Their women are successful at what many Victorians saw as an exchange situation parallel to that of the market in sex: female love and beauty exchanged for the security of a home and family offered by men. Mitford's tales usually end with the achievement of such security, though not always marriage, for the woman, while Tennyson's adaptations of her stories conclude with marriage or, failing that, happy return to a patriarchal family. Mitford's stories reveal a great deal of anxiety about economic security, a subject generally displaced or suppressed in Tennyson's versions, but both portray sentiment as the key to domestic content. For example, in Mitford's "The Queen of the Meadow," a gentleman farmer falls in love with Katy, the miller's daughter.[22] Though Katy fears that her lover has abandoned her for her beautiful, educated cousin from the city, it turns out that lover and cousin are simply conspiring to bring about his marriage to Katy. In Tennyson's version of this story, "The Miller's Daughter," class barriers themselves play the role dramatized by the "cousin": the neighboring squire falls in love and marries despite the social distance that divides them. The poem is a retrospective account of this idyllic, cross-class rural romance by the husband, after years of "wedded bliss."[23]

Rossetti's poems, however, view the marriage of the rural idyll from the perspective of women who fail to achieve emotional or economic security. Seduced and abandoned women contemplate their married rivals as successful competitors in a market they have belatedly learned to recognize. In what might be read as her version of the Mitford-Tennyson story, "Cousin Kate" (dated November, 1859, a few months after "Goblin Market"), a "cottage maiden" laments her abandonment by "a great lord" who has seduced her and then left her for her cousin, who "grew more fair than I." Kate gets the wedding ring, the gold, and the land; the speaker is left with a child and very little else. In Rossetti's version of the story, to succeed in this market is to consume, while to fail is to be consumed (the speaker loses her beauty).

Where the sentimental middle-class rural romance excludes the exchange of sexual beauty for money from its account of how marriages are achieved, ballad stories and their remnants in nursery song readily adopt the language of the market. In its franker treatment of money and sex (there are no illegitimate children in Mitford or Tennyson), "Cousin Kate," like Rossetti's other rural idylls,

has much in common with ballad narratives of seduction.[24] But the pragmatic acceptance of economic and gender inequalities that often underlies the ballad stories is missing from Rossetti's. In the popular song "Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" (published in a number of versions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), for example, the dialogue between milkmaid and gentleman reveals no illusions on either side: seduction is a possibility, but not marriage.

> What if I do lay you down on the ground,
> With your white face and your yellow hair?
>
> I will rise up again, sweet Sir, she said,
> For strawberry leaves make maidens fair.
>
> What if I do bring you with child
> With your white face and your yellow hair?
>
> I will bear it, sweet Sir, she said,
> For strawberry leaves make maidens fair.[25]

Another popular version of the ballad makes the economic and class terms of the transaction equally explicit:

> What is your father, my pretty maid?
> My father's a farmer, sir, she said.
>
> What is your fortune, my pretty maid?
> My face is my fortune, sir, she said.
>
> Then I can't marry you, my pretty maid.
> Nobody asked you, sir, she said.[26]

The song implies that the attempted seduction is legitimate because the girl accepts the bargain she's offered (pleasure, but no prospect of marriage)—though her confidence that nature will always renew the face that is her fortune may be quite unrealistic.

Rossetti's cottage maiden is, by contrast, quite innocent of the need to bargain with her beauty:

> I was a cottage maiden
> Hardened by sun and air,
> Contented with my cottage mates,
> Not mindful I was fair.
> Why did a great lord find me out,
> And praise my flaxen hair?
>
> (1–8)

Unlike Cousin Kate, she does not know that her beauty is a commodity, to be guarded until it can be exchanged advantageously. The speaker of "An Apple-Gathering," who plucked her apple blossoms to wear for her lover only to find herself without lover or fruit at apple-gathering time, is similarly unable to estimate values or obey the economic law (save now to buy later) of courtship:

> Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
> Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
> I counted rosiest apples on the earth
> Of far less worth than love.
>
> (17–20)

Rossetti's naive speakers begin with the expectations of the heroines of Mitford's and Tennyson's idylls, and learn—too late—to perceive courtship as an economic transaction, a matter of "value" and "worth." But although the poems may seem to endorse the more realistic views of Cousin Kate and "plump Gertrude" (who wins Willie), the questions of the naive speakers linger: "Was my love less worth?" Or as the speaker asks Cousin Kate: "Now which of us has tenderer heart? / You had the stronger wing" (31–32).

In fact the poems use each woman's position to criticize the other: the speakers for their sentimental naivete (and for their misplaced resentments of their rivals, a point to which I shall return), Kate and Gertrude for their too-ready acceptance of gender relations as competitive bargaining, sex for money (or beauty and pleasure for marriage and children). The implied criticism of Kate and Gertrude, made strong and plump and complacent by their success, is not simply or perhaps not even primarily moral. The poems attempt to unravel the economic logic by which Kate's and Gertrude's actions are justified by showing, not that it is morally repugnant, but that it is faulty. Bargaining for the security of marriage, women become the objects as well as the agents of exchange.

Rossetti's point may be clearer if we contrast her stories with a classic ballad narrative. Both versions of "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" quoted above appear in collections of nursery songs and are probably fragments. In the longer ballad to which they are related, "The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter," the seduced maiden runs to the king, protests that she's been robbed of her maidenhead, and is promised the body of her seducer—as a corpse,

if he is married, as a husband, if he is not. Rejecting offers of money, she holds out for a fair exchange, his body for hers, and manages—thanks to the king—to turn the tables on her seducer and redeem her loss with marriage:

> "O I'le have none of your gold," she said,
> "Nor I'le have none of your fee;
> But I must have your fair body
> The king hath given me."[27]

Most other popular ballads of seduction, like "The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter," conclude by mitigating what first looks like a very unequal transaction by allowing a persistent woman (provided she is neither wanton nor a child murderer) the recompense of revenge or marriage.[28] Such conclusions disguise but do not deny the facts of class and gender inequality that structure the exchange of sex and marriage. The shepherdess who wins the king's support turns out to be herself a king's daughter. While this revelation explains her apparent power, the ballad's final lines reinscribe her within the patriarchal hierarchy of the family. The Knight comes out quite well in the exchange, after all: "He had both purse and person too, / And all at his command."

In Rossetti's several versions of the rural seduction story ("Light Love" as well as "Cousin Kate" and "An Apple-Gathering") woman's disadvantage in these transactions is exposed but not overcome. Even the apparent successes of Kate or Gertrude are necessarily called into question. Kate and Gertrude seem to illustrate how women can participate in such bargaining and win—even without the hidden capital held by the pseudo-shepherdess—by recognizing and obeying economic laws. They prudently withhold their bodies and their beauty until they can exchange them for the security of marriage. But the poems suggest there are at least three things wrong with such advice, quite apart from any moral objections to an economic model for love relationships. Management of commodified sex and beauty depends upon an economy of scarcity that the poems belie. There is always another maid in the cottage for the great lord; the apple orchard is full of maidens (Lilian and Lilias as well as Gertrude). Moreover, as Rossetti's imagery of blossoms and fruit and seasonal change constantly stresses, beauty is a highly perishable commodity (a fact the maid of "Where are you going" has overlooked). The speaker of "Cousin Kate" finds the

great lord "changed me like a glove" when Kate "grew more fair than I." The male speaker in the dialogue poem "Light Love" taunts the mistress he is abandoning with her powerlessness in a world where new beauties are abundantly available:

> For nigh at hand there blooms a bride,
> My bride before the morn;
> Ripe-blooming she, as thou forlorn.
>
> (43–45)

Though it may appear that brides are safe from abandonment, the mistress's reply reminds us that all women who bargain for marriage risk being reduced from consumer to consumed. Trading with their beauty, they become wholly identified with it, and hence subject to the inevitable natural process of decay. Wives can also be abandoned when their beauty withers:

> Change new again for new;
> Pluck up, enjoy—yea, trample too.
>
> Alas for her, poor faded rose,
> Alas for her, like me,
> Cast down and trampled in the snows.
>
> (59–63)

The lover's reply suggests that permanent success in the market depends not on prudent bargains for beauty but on some prior security: "Like thee? nay, not like thee: / She leans, but from a guarded tree" (64–65). The speaker of "An Apple-Gathering" associates the cheerful confidence of Lilian and Lilias with the fact that "their mother's home was near" (12). Milly Brandon, who loves her cousin but has lost him to a cottage maiden, "has no mother," while her successful rival Nelly "dwells at home beneath her mother's eyes" ("Brandons Both," 25, 22). Without protection, Rossetti's stories imply, women cannot participate on equal terms in courtships structured by economic laws of exchange. Unlike the pseudo-shepherdess, they have no independent power as consumers; at best they can manipulate male consumption to avoid becoming consumed themselves. Those who are "guarded"—for Rossetti, significantly, by a mother's watchfulness, not a father's wealth or authority—have a far better chance of succeeding at even this limited venture. Rossetti's poems show her under no illusions that the markets of sex and marriage can be either avoided or made safe for women.[29]

By pairing abandoned with safely coupled women, Rossetti calls into question both the account of cross-class courtship presented in the sentimental rural tale and that of cross-class seduction found in the ballads. She also draws attention to the way participation in these economic and sexual exchanges affects relations between women. In nearly every one of Rossetti's tales the woman who has failed to find and hold a mate talks about, and often directly addresses, a woman successful in love and marriage ("Cousin Kate," "An Apple-Gathering," "Maude Clare," "The Lowest Room," "Brandons Both"). In a related group of poems ("Noble Sisters," "Sister Maude"), one sister blocks the marriage or elopement of another, in the name of family honor. In all of these poems, sisters, cousins, and female friends are the objects of jealousy and barely suppressed resentments that complicate our attitudes toward the otherwise sympathetically presented speakers. Indeed, one might argue that Rossetti's critical focus on the problem of male and class supremacy is at least partially displaced in her poems by that of female competition for a limited supply of male love. Or as Rossetti herself might see it, a second economy of exchange and competition is generated by the first. The lingering questions of "An Apple-Gathering" and "Cousin Kate"—"was my love less worth?" "which of us has the tenderer heart?"—may move us as the pathos of a wronged speaker, but they are also presented as ungenerous attempts to devalue a rival.

"Maude Clare," Rossetti's reworking of a well-known ballad ("Lord Thomas and Lady Ellinor" in the English version, "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet" in the Scottish) makes this point quite clearly.[30] In the original ballad, Lord Thomas loves Fair Ellinor/Annet but takes the advice of his mother (father, brother) and marries a "nut-browne bride" who has the lands and gold his love does not. Ellinor/Annet, resplendently dressed, confronts the two at the wedding; Lord Thomas places a rose in her lap, and his bride stabs her. The wronged heroine has class on her side, however, and romance, an aristocratic possession, has its revenge on nut-brown brides and their money when Lord Thomas draws his sword and kills first his bride and then himself. Rossetti wrote three progressively more concise versions of the ballad, each focusing on the confrontation at the wedding between Lord Thomas, Maude Clare ("like a queen") and Nell ("like a village maid").[31] As in the ballad, Maude Clare, especially in the first version, is clearly the suffering wronged woman whose love and romantic, aristocratic beauty have

been valued less than the lands and gold of the rural middle-class heroine of domesticity (bride and bridegroom are imagistically linked to mated pigeons). But where the bride of the ballad taunts and then stabs Ellinor/Annet, in all three versions of Rossetti's poem Maude Clare taunts both Lord Thomas and Nell. (In the first version she explicitly tells Nell he's married her for her gold.) Nell's reply is neither a verbal nor a physical stab but a spirited defense against Maude Clare's accusations. In this poem, Nell has the last words:

> "And what you leave," said Nell, "I'll take,
> And what you spurn, I'll wear;
> For he's my lord for better and worse,
> And him I love, Maude Clare.
>
> Yea, tho' you're taller by the head,
> More wise, and much more fair;
> I'll love him till he loves me best,
> Me best of all, Maude Clare."
>
> (41–48)

The traditional ballad turns the gendered marketplace of marriage into a reaffirmation of aristocratic values; Rossetti, however, lets Lord Thomas keep his middle-class bride. The tale's transformation seems to replicate a literary history in which aristocratic romance gives way to the middle-class rural idyll, where the squire does marry the miller's daughter. But in the poem's final version, Rossetti eliminates Maude Clare's scornful reference to the bride's material assets. Though she thus uncharacteristically suppresses the economic bargain which underlies the marriage—as Tennyson and Mitford do in "The Miller's Daughter" and "The Queen of the Meadow"—the omission helps refocus the poem away from the differences of class and toward the ties of gender, toward what the two women have in common. "Cousin Kate" or "An Apple-Gathering" suggest that the rural idyll misrepresents courtship as an affair of sentiment only, and thus fails to depict women's dangerously disadvantaged situation where they must use themselves as currency to purchase security. "Maude Clare" also emphasizes the insidious effects on female relationships of women's powerlessness in the competitive marriage market. Neither Maude Clare nor Nell is allowed moral authority in Rossetti's version of their confrontation, even though Nell has profited from Lord Thomas's faithlessness, and Maude Clare may be a compromised woman (she has

exchanged love tokens and waded barefoot in the beck with Lord Thomas). Rossetti refuses to place exclusive value on either purity or wronged beauty. Rather, both women are implicated in the morally dubious enterprise of devaluing each other, the more subtle but equally destructive consequence of their participation in a market of sex and marriage. Though Rossetti's poems implicitly criticize a male-dominated economy in which women are consumed, they can also be read as an account of competition between women as would-be consumers of men. Both these dangers, as Rossetti sees them, are circumvented in her utopian fable of female consumer power. "Goblin Market" is fantasy not because its men are goblins and its consumer goods magical ("Men sell not such in any town" [101]), but because, for once, sisterhood intervenes so that women can successfully buy in markets run by merchant men.

III

Like "Cousin Kate," "An Apple-Gathering," or "Maude Clare," Rossetti's "Goblin Market" responds to a literary representation as well as to its author's own observations of sexual and economic exchange. In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's dramatic monologue, to which Christina's poem alludes, a young student addresses a sleeping prostitute, meditating on the dissimilar fates of two initially like women, the prostitute Jenny and his cousin Nell.[32] The poem's epigraph identifies the eponymous Jenny as a character borrowed from Shakespeare ("Vengeance of Jenny's case! Fie on her! Never name her, child!"). Despite Mrs. Quickly's admonition, Dante Gabriel's speaker ponders over both Jenny and her "case" for all of one long night. The heroines of Christina Rossetti's poem cannot forget her either:

> She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
> Who should have been a bride;
> But who for joys brides hope to have
> Fell sick and died.
>
> (312–15)

Jenny lives out her fate as whore as she circulates through these authors' texts. She is the shadow figure of the prostitute that haunts "Goblin Market" and its initially innocent female consumers, Laura and Lizzie. We should not be surprised to find her unexamined presence in another contemporary discussion of consumption, Marx's 1844 manuscript "On Money."

Marx too has Shakespeare in mind, and in two passages apostrophizing money in *Timon of Athens* he finds concisely expressed the double nature of money as "Thou common whore of mankind" and "Thou *visible God*!" Money is a "visible God" because it is, in Marx's words, "the alienated *ability of mankind*," the "*truly creative* power" that can transform "essential powers which are really impotent, which exist only in the imagination of the individual—into *real powers* and *faculties*"; god also because it is an *un*creative power that can change real human abilities into "tormenting chimeras." Money is a common whore because it circulates between men, and because it has no intrinsic value—it is a means to an end, not an end in itself. In fact the whore, like the god, is a power whose source is ultimately man; money as whore is a bearer of power or meaning alienated from man that he must constantly struggle to repossess. In Marx's text gender difference appears only to disappear; god, whores, and money alike reduce to one, and that one is man. Yet Marx cannot leave the fascinating scene of prostitution. "Money's properties are my properties and essential powers—the properties and powers of its possessor. . . . I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most *beautiful* of women. Therefore I am not *ugly*." Woman as woman has constantly to be reduced to "the properties and powers of its possessor," to be appropriated as money in the text and yet still to be purchased with money in the world again and again.[33] Marx's text points to money as an objectified human power which in turn threatens him and must be constantly reclaimed as his own. But it also suggests unwittingly that for women the dangers of the marketplace are rather different. What women have to fear is not (or not just) the alienated power of money, but the efforts of men to reappropriate that power by buying women. Male consumption, in other words, takes place through feminized figures. The female consumer, no less than the prostitute, risks being reduced from the agent who consumes to an object to be consumed in a chain of substitutions by which an alienated power is reappropriated by more powerful consumers, usually men. Money is a whore is a woman. Male texts on the marketplace, like Marx's own, repeat this process of substitution, appropriating the power of an alienating representation, money, by refiguring it: money is a woman who can be possessed. "Goblin Market" sets out to undo this double consumption or erasure of woman, textual and sexual or economic.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem acts out the scenario suggested by Marx's words; it is the text which Christina Rossetti's poem most directly rewrites. As an allusion to Shakespeare's Jenny, the woman in Dante Gabriel's poem is already doubly in circulation, as whore and as a literary property. The poet, however, must exercise countless strategies to deprive her once again of difference. He makes her unconscious throughout the poem; then he articulates her thoughts for her; finally he constantly figures her as money, itself of course both the bearer of and the power for the satisfaction of his own desires.[34] Thus at one point the speaker himself notes that

> Jenny, looking long at you,
> The woman almost fades from view.
> A cipher of man's changeless sum
> Of lust, past, present, and to come,
> Is left.
>
> (276–80)

But even a thoroughly silenced Jenny is not simply the figure of man's lust, another number in a "changeless sum," and so as the poem ends the speaker must both buy her and replace her with his money yet again:

> I lay among your golden hair
> Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
> These golden coins . . .
> . . . . . .
> I think I see you when you wake,
> And rub your eyes for me, and shake
> My gold, in rising, from your hair,
> A Danaë for a moment there.
>
> (340–42, 376–79)

As Zeus descending in a shower of gold, the speaker achieves in imagination the sexual climax that pointedly has not occurred in Jenny's room that night. But he also attempts another kind of victory over Jenny; laying the coins in Jenny's golden hair, he signifies that Jenny is for him the gold he claims she dreams of. Money is a whore, and a whore is money.

When the heroine of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" is "mindful of Jeanie" (364), she is thinking not just of Jenny's sexual fall but of her failure to take her place in the market as a consumer. Laura and Lizzie, the poem's sister protagonists, live in a state of pastoral maidenhood like that enjoyed by Lilian and Lilias in "An

Apple-Gathering," or by the speaker and her cottage mates, before the great lord came along, in "Cousin Kate." They sleep at night "Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest" (184–85), united in an image of domestic, even conjugal unity (as the image implied in "Maude Clare") that is guarded by nature: the moon, the stars, the wind, and some solicitous owls. At cock crow, "neat like bees, as sweet and busy" (201) they

> Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
> Aired and set to rights the house,
> Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
> Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
> Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
> Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
> Talked as modest maidens should.
>
> (203–9)

But "goblin men" have set up their market even in this place of pastoral childhood and "natural" domestic production. (Christina Rossetti is never under any illusions about the chances of innocence remaining so in the countryside more than in the city.) The luscious fruits these merchants sell are reputed to be harmful to maidens, and Lizzie, mindful of Jeanie's case, refuses to look or listen to the goblin men with their cries of "Come buy, come buy!" But "curious Laura" takes her chances, succumbing to the peculiar dangers that beset women in the marketplace. At the goblin men's suggestion, Laura pays for her purchase with a golden curl of her hair, and in so doing she becomes both the buyer and the bought, the agent and the object of exchange. She uses her body as money—and money, of course, is a whore.

Rossetti's account of Laura's fall is markedly different from the usual (male) Victorian version, however. Unlike Dante Gabriel's Jenny, Laura suffers no instant loss of purity. She is not transformed from maiden to fallen woman.[35] Her mind does not become an open sewer ("Jenny" [164–66]). She goes home to the domestic nest and sleeps the sleep of innocence, rises and cheerfully performs her pastoral chores. But having placed her body in circulation, she cannot reenter the market as consumer or as object of exchange. She can no longer see or hear the goblin men to buy their fruit, but must suffer the debilitating effects of her unsatisfied desires. She begins to pine and wither away. Like Jeanie, it appears that she will die a maiden, without tasting "joys brides hope to have." The fairy tale form of the poem suggests that this may be a fable of the passage

from childhood to adulthood, where participation in the marketplace of sex and marriage is the task whose successful accomplishment marks the transition. Laura, however, has failed; she will not grow up. Attempting to exercise the power of the consumer, she has been consumed.

Her sister Lizzie succeeds where Laura has failed. But her success (and her "redemption" of Laura, as her act is usually read) is not, I think, simply a function of her greater moral strength to resist temptation. Lizzie goes to market doubly armed. Unlike Laura, Lizzie has money in her pocket, and she knows how to use it. She has learned from the examples of Jeanie and Laura enough to know that she must not "pay too dear." She does not offer herself as money. With a penny in her purse, "for the first time in her life" she begins "to listen and to look." The goblin men are not to be put off easily. They don't want her to participate in the market on her terms. They insist that she not only buy the fruit that her sister wants, but eat it herself. Lizzie emerges unscathed with her purchase not only because she has money but also because she does not bring her desire—the intellectual or sexual hunger signified by Laura's curiosity—to market with her. She buys for her sister, not herself. The goblin men cannot force her to eat what she has purchased. Lizzie is allowed to triumph all around: the disgusted goblin men throw her back her penny, and its jingle in her purse is "music to her ear" as she runs home, covered with the juices of the fruit that will prove a bitter but successful antidote to the poisonous desire that is destroying Laura.

Lizzie is the heroine of this poem because she gets what she wants without giving in to the pressure that a male marketplace, like male texts about the marketplace, exerts on women—to become that which is exchanged, to become money. She retains the power of the consumer, but to do so she must limit the meaning of consumption. For Lizzie, consuming is understood in its strictest (and etymologically originating) sense as buying (Latin *consumere*, from the root verb *emere*, to buy). She refuses the ordinary metaphorical extensions of the word: to take wholly, to use, burn, or devour. A linguistic purist, Lizzie resists male pressures to make economic acts express desire. She will not say "I want," even if resistance means she cannot speak at all:

> The goblins cuffed and caught her,
> . . . . . .
> Lizzie uttered not a word;

Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in.

(424, 430–32)

The danger she avoids is of course exemplified by Jeanie's fate. For Jeanie and Laura, purchase becomes inseparable from desire. Laura's consumption—her purchase of the luscious fruits from the goblin men—is rendered primarily as a scene of pleasure in eating.

She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more . . .

(126–34)

To consume in this extended sense, however, is to expose oneself to the same uses—not only to risk becoming the object rather than the subject of exchange, but also to risk becoming the devoured rather than the devourer. So both Jeanie and Laura waste away, self-consumed by their own desire, the desire that is fed by participation in the marketplace:

But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

(276–80)

Lizzie arrests the horrifying, or "soul-consuming" (512), progress of desire by reestablishing a necessary separation between acts of economic exchange and the expression of desire. She buys but does not consume; Laura is then allowed to consume what she has not bought but been given. The second scene of Laura's eating is fully as passionate as the first, as many readers have noticed, sometimes with embarrassment:

She clung about her sister
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
. . . . . .
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

(485–86, 492)

But this is the first scene played in reverse: as the kiss replaces her voracious sucking, so the luscious juice becomes "wormwood to her tongue" (494); "She gorged on bitterness without a name" (510). Wasted Laura is purged and restored to health. The desire to consume which made her long to buy again became a smouldering fire consuming her, but in this scene it is overcome by a stronger fire:

> Swift fire spread thro' her veins, knocked at her heart,
> Met the fire smouldering there
> And overbore its lesser flame.
>
> (507–9)

What is this stronger fire? As the poem would have it, love between women. Love, that is, as mutual care and support, surviving and defeating the competitive ethos of the market. The play of desire has been re-privatized, divorced from the play of money, and hence no longer, according to the logic of the poem, an issue of consuming or being consumed.

The poem has its happy fairy tale ending. Lizzie and Laura, having learned to operate successfully in the marketplace of sex and marriage, both grow up. Their reciprocal aid—Lizzie learns from Laura and uses what she learns to help her—enables them to get all the rewards of participating in both the money and the sexual economies, without succumbing fatally to their dangers. Unlike the Jennys of the world, they live to know "the joys brides hope to have," though significantly, the joys of marriage are in this poem the joys of motherhood. This conflation of terms is significant because heterosexual desire is banished from the poem. Lizzie can get her money back because she does not want to enjoy the fruits of merchant men. To achieve power as a consumer, she leaves desire at home, not, for Rossetti, a place of heterosexual desire.

In "Goblin Market" home is a place for love between women. The startling passion with which Laura receives from Lizzie the antidote to goblin fruit suggests that such love may be sexual, though consumption, in the literal as well as the economic sense, is to be interdicted after this moment (the luscious juice turns to wormwood in Laura's mouth). The narrative seems to assure us that this scene of sexual passion is the first and last in the sisters' lives, serving to guarantee their passage into marriage and maternity. But Rossetti may be insisting on a different conception of desire altogether: desire not expressed in special acts of passionate, literal

consumption, but in the daily sensuous relationships of nurturance that mark the pastoral childhood of the sisters ("Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest / Folded in each other's wings") and their adult experience of maternity ("Their lives bound up in tender lives"). This world of sisters and mothers without fathers (conspicuously absent in the poem) is utopian—as is the "distant place" of the Christian afterlife (the "home" of "From House to Home") to which woman's desire is displaced in much of Rossetti's poetry, when that desire is not, as in her other fairy tale "The Prince's Progress," perpetually deferred.[36] Whether displaced to another world or located in a wholly feminized domestic space, women's desire is withdrawn from sexual and money economies dominated by merchant men.

"Goblin Market" is a tale of women's survival in a world where "the market offers itself to women and girls as a stage for the production of themselves as public beings, [but] on particularly unfavorable terms."[37] However qualified its happy ending may turn out to be, on closer examination, it depicts with considerable acuteness the terms on which girls succeed or fail to reach adulthood. To become adults they must enter a marketplace in which they are always at risk. As the texts of Shakespeare, Marx, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti all suggest, women in the marketplace have not only to reclaim the power of money as their own, but also to resist the tendency of men to exercise their mastery of money through women. The key to this resistance is the separation of economic acts from consuming desires. What makes it possible is the mutual support of women for women. Christina Rossetti reads Jenny's silence as death: reduced to money, the maiden dies. Her death also marks the suppression of gender in the marketplace. The story of survival offered in "Goblin Market"—consumer power achieved by withholding female desire—culminates in the production of its heroines as "public beings" who can publish female difference. Laura lives not only to marry and have children, but to tell her story:

> Days, weeks, months, years
> Afterwards, when both were wives
> With children of their own;
> . . . . . .
> Laura would call the little ones
> And tell them of her early prime,
> . . . . . .
> Would talk about the haunted glen,
> The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,

. . . . . .
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
. . . . . .
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister . . ."

(543–45, 548–49, 552–53, 557–58, 561–62)

The access to adulthood is also an access to speech—for Laura, to speech within the family, the extent of her sphere, but for her author, Christina Rossetti, to the published speech of literature. Like Lizzie and Laura, Rossetti avoided Jenny's fate in the market of sex and marriage. She did not allow her body to circulate as the currency of exchange between men. The story of "Goblin Market" is in this respect its author's story as well. Nor did she engage in the competitive consumption with other women that was, for Rossetti, the equal or greater danger posed by a heterosexual exchange economy. The poem was dedicated to Christina's sister Maria, who was later to become a Sister in an Anglican religious order, and thus, like Christina through the lay Sisterhood at St. Mary Magdalene's, to affirm the mutual ties of women to women, both inside and outside the family, as a refuge from the double threat of an exchange economy.[38] Laura's concluding celebration of a sister's act, telling the tale to others, mimics her author's efforts to save sisters from the consuming passions of the marketplace.

As my reading of "Goblin Market" should make clear, Rossetti herself is finally less interested in exposing the fictions of separate spheres through the transgressive figure of the female consumer (and her shadow sister, the prostitute), than in rescuing the possibility of a utopian place for women outside the marketplace. The fantasy of consumer power and the retreat to a utopia of desire is, however, powerfully attractive to feminist readers. I want to urge that we resist this attraction in order to retain the critical power of the poem. The resistance might begin with a critique like this.

"Goblin Market" 's conclusion may be altogether too self-congratulating—for feminist critics as much as for Christina Rossetti. The triumphant jingle of Lizzie's coin, like the reiteration of Jeanie's name, jars on the ears, suggesting as it does that Lizzie, her author, and her author's critics embrace the laws of exchange and use that whore, money, as long as we do not become it. The apparent displacement of desire from the marketplace to no-place or

utopia perhaps conceals a greater investment in a political economy, both sexual and literary, than this interpretation of the poem's ending admits. Rossetti's heroines, one might argue, are never really outside the economies from which they appear to triumphantly withdraw, because they are always participants in production that presumes exchange. The butter, milk, and honey of their pastoral childhood, the babies of their adult lives, and, in a different sense, even the femininity or female sexuality that they bring to the goblin market, all belie the possibility of women's work or a woman's sphere untouched by the political economy of the dominant, "male" world. Rossetti herself was, of course, an economic agent, whose books, as well as her face, were for sale—however mediated and disguised her relations with the literary market. The shadowy figure of the prostitute, so named because she shows herself in the public market rather than staying home (*prostituere*, to place before, expose publicly, offer for sale), may after all be an inescapable meaning of the feminine as it is constructed in a market economy.

The withdrawal from the marketplace that "Goblin Market" recommends, even were it possible, would have the unwanted consequence of silencing women as totally as Jenny is silenced: Lizzie, refusing to open her lips to consume the goblins' fruit, cannot utter a word. But neither Rossetti nor her heroines mean to swallow their words permanently. Perhaps the fantasy of withdrawal from exchange relations played out in "Goblin Market" conceals the desire, not to give and nurture, but to hoard—goods, words, sex, children, and even money (Lizzie's jingling coin). This hoarding becomes itself a kind of power, but only in the context of the exchange relations that women might—a teasing possibility—choose at moments to reenter. Consumer power is then dependent on the power to produce, and ultimately, of course, on the intertwined systems of production and exchange that Rossetti would keep separate for women. Although Rossetti's fable imagines that women who successfully exercise consumer power can then leave the marketplace for the privacy of sisterhood or marriage and motherhood, that withdrawal hardly describes her own activity as author, and it does not describe ours. We would be deluding ourselves if we confused the utopia constructed by Rossetti's strategy for survival, the withholding of desire (which, on closer inspection, turns out to be the reinvestment of desire in hoarding what we have produced) with any real retreat from the public marketplace. Not only is Jenny's case always potentially ours. We also remain invested in the political

economies of production and exchange that make utopian desire both necessary—and utopian.

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NOTES

My special thanks to Lauren Berlant, an acute critic of many versions of this essay.

[1] Though Rossetti later insisted "Goblin Market" was only a nursery tale, she published it as the title poem in a volume of serious verse (1862). Among the 550 rhymes collected by Iona and Peter Opie in *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951)—taken from late 18th and 19th century published collections—almost a fifth concern buying and selling. One continuing favorite in Mother Goose collections goes: "To market, to market, to buy a fat pig, / Home again, home again, jiggety-jig; / To market, to market, to buy a fat hog, / Home again, home again, jiggety-jog." Browning describes the purchase of the Old Yellow Book at a street market in Florence in detail in the first book of *The Ring and the Book*. That poem, like Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" (see discussion below), is also concerned with the figurative prostitution of the artist for money and its relation to women's participation in such exchanges. Other poems by Browning and Rossetti explore related themes; see Browning's "Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Filippo Lippi," for example, and (more obliquely), the introductory poem "The Sonnet," to Rossetti's *House of Life* (where the poem is a coin). Elsewhere in Victorian literary poetry, however, markets, whether of sex or other commodities, are rare.

[2] Thus Jerome McGann, opening his discussion of the poem, can state: "Everyone agrees that the poem contains the story of temptation, fall, and redemption, and some go so far as to say that the work is fundamentally a Christian allegory" ("Christina Rossetti's Poems: A New Edition and a Revaluation," *Victorian Studies* 23 [Winter 1980]: 247). A variant of this common reading interprets the temptation in terms of Rossetti's internal spiritual history or psychodrama; thus Dorothy Mermin begins her discussion: "*Goblin Market* is usually read as an allegory of the poet's self-division that shows, in Lionel Stevenson's representative summary, the conflict between 'the two sides of Christina's own character, the sensuous and the ascetic,' and demonstrates 'the evil of self-indulgence, the fraudulence of sensuous beauty, and the supreme duty of renunciation' " ("Heroic Sisterhood in *Goblin Market*," *Victorian Poetry* 21 [Summer 1983]: 107; the Stevenson quotation is from his *The Pre-Raphaelite Poets* [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972], 105). Many critics also recognize that the spiritual narrative has a social referent in the Victorian fallen woman, perhaps specifically those Christina encountered in her association with the Diocesan Penitentiary, St. Mary Magdalene's, Highgate, a home for fallen women. A recent example that argues that the poem may have been actually read aloud at the home is D. M. R. Bentley's "The Meretricious and the Meritorious in *Goblin Market*: A Conjecture and an Analysis," in *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti*, ed. David A. Kent (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), 57–81.

[3] Market relations in nursery rhymes are not especially gendered: neither the little piggy who went to market ("This little piggy went to market / This little piggy stayed home . . .") nor the fat pig who was sold there ("To market, to market, to buy a fat pig") is assigned a gender. Little old women feature as often as merchant men among the sellers in nursery lore (as they surely did at village markets). The ideology of separate spheres apparently is not reflected in Mother Goose—whose origins, after all, are neither Victorian nor middle class. On the historicity of the distinction between public and private, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). The critical literature on the gendering of public and private

spheres in Victorian discourses is extensive; for an excellent recent discussion, see Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).

[4] For English attacks on novel reading as a feminine vice, see Terry Lovell, *Consuming Fiction* (London: Verso, 1987), especially 8–11; also John Tinnon Taylor, *Early Opposition to the English Novel* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1943). For the attacks on women as the patrons and consumers of rococo art in France, see Erica Rand, "Boucher, David, and the French Revolution: Politics and Gender in Eighteenth-Century French History Painting" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1988), especially chapters 2 and 3.

[5] See Lovell (note 4), 9 and 36–44; and Rand (note 4). Lovell points out not only that the novel was far from an exclusively feminine province, but that perceptions of women readers as "leisured" or "idle" have also been strongly challenged by recent scholarship. For a similarly debunking account of women's relation to rococo art, see, besides Rand, Danielle Rice, "Women and the Visual Arts," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1985), 242–55.

[6] For analyses of how women's desires are employed in contemporary advertising and popular culture, see Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978) and *Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986); and Rosalind Coward, *Female Desires: How They Are Sought, Bought and Packaged* (New York: Grove Press, 1985).

[7] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 93–94.

[8] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1987), 153.

[9] Tania Modleski, "Femininity as Mas[s]querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture," in *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. Colin MacCabe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 37–52.

[10] Catherine Gallagher has pointed out the way Henry Mayhew rejects a whole political economy embodied in the figure of the Victorian costermonger; one might argue that "Goblin Market" starts from a similar point, but Mayhew's costermongers (female as well as male) have become Rossetti's goblin *men*. See Gallagher, "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," *Representations* 14 (Spring 1986), especially 98–106.

[11] This is the argument made by Joan Riviere in "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986).

[12] Mary Poovey and Catherine Gallagher have written illuminatingly on the place of authorship within a Victorian ideology of separate spheres; Gallagher discusses the association between production for a market economy and prostitution as a special danger for women authors. See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments* (note 3), especially chap. 4; and Catherine Gallagher, "George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question," *Sex, Politics and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, ed. Ruth Bernard Yeazell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), 39–62.

[13] William Michael Rossetti is the source for this information; see Mackenzie Bell, *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Boston: Roberts, 1898), 60; *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Macmillan, 1904), 485; and *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (1908; reprint, New York: Haskell House, 1969), 26. The most recent discussions of Rossetti's association with St. Mary's are

D. M. R. Bentley's (note 3) and Diane D'Amico, "Christina Rossetti and Highgate Penitentiary: Working Among Fallen Women" (Paper delivered at the Victorians Institute Conference, Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 17 October 1987). I have drawn especially on the latter.

[14] The phrase is quoted by D'Amico from Thomas Carter, *A Memoir of John Armstrong* (London: John Henry and James Parker, 1859), 199. Armstrong and Carter were both central figures in the movement to establish penitentiaries for fallen women. On the reforming role of the penitentiary, see John B. Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987) and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

[15] Christina had originally called it "A Peep at the Goblins"; Dante Gabriel, she later recorded, "substituted the greatly improved title as it now stands." See her note in an 1893 copy of the volume (Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines), which concludes, "And here I like to acknowledge the general indebtedness of my first and second volumes to his suggestive wit and revising hand." (Note quoted by Rebecca Crump in the textual notes to her edition, *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, 3 vols. [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1979, 1986], 1:234.) Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Christina Rossetti's poems will be taken from this edition; line numbers will be given in the text.

[16] Letter to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 3 March 1865, *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters*, ed. Lona Mosk Packer (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), 44 note 1. The Macmillan correspondence provides much of the information I have drawn on in this paragraph. For pre-1860 publication, see also William Michael Rossetti, ed., *Family Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 2 vols. (London: Ellis & Elvey, 1895), and *The Family Letters of Christina Georgina Rossetti* (note 13).

[17] Letter to Dante Gabriel, April-May 1865, *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters* (note 16), 51.

[18] Letter to William Allingham, September-October 1860, in *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1:377.

[19] For the reference to her "pot-boilers," see *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters* (note 16), 46n1. For Christina's decided wish to retain copyright for her published volumes, see especially her letter to Alexander Macmillan, 20 April 1881 (*The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters*, 133–34). One could argue that Christina's insistence on retaining copyright to her volumes came as much from shrewd business sense as from distaste for selling poems. No doubt both motives were at work.

[20] Quoted by Antony H. Harrison, "Eighteen Early Letters by Christina Rossetti," in *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti* (note 2), 198.

[21] See A. Dwight Culler's discussion of prose and poetic idylls in the early nineteenth century, in *The Poetry of Tennyson* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 114–16.

[22] Collected in Volume 3 of Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* (1828); cited here from *Our Village*, 2 vols. (1828; reprint, London: Bell & Daldy, 1865), 2:70–84.

[23] First published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830). That it was influenced by Mitford's story is generally acknowledged. See *The Poems of Tennyson*, 2nd ed., ed. Christopher Ricks, 3 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987), 1:406–17.

[24] Her choice of form suggests as much. Most of her rural poems use ballad stanza or more complex combinations of alternately rhymed tetrameter and trimeter lines, together with frequent repetitions, a good deal of dialogue or direct speech, and concise, minimal narration. All the Rossettis seem to have been very interested in ballads, from the 1840s. Dante Gabriel, who avidly read Bishop Percy's *Reliques*, experimented with ballad stories and ballad forms throughout his poetic career. Christina did so too.

[25] Opie, *Oxford Companion* (note 1), 282.

[26] Opie, 282.

[27] Quoted from Francis James Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (1882–98; reprint, New York: Dover, 1965), 2:460. This, the English version of the ballad, was published in Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3 vols. (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), 3:75. Closely related Scottish versions appeared in several late eighteenth and nineteenth-century publications (see Child, 2:457–59). As Child notes, the ballad has many parallels with tales in Gower and Chaucer ("The Wife of Bath's Tale"). The ballad version seems to have been popular in Elizabeth I's time; a stanza was quoted in Fletcher's comedy, *The Pilgrim*.

[28] See, for example, "Fair Annie" and "Child Waters" (in Child (note 27), 2:63, 83). "Mary Hamilton" gets nothing, but she is both wanton and a child murderer (Child, 3:379).

[29] Rossetti's conviction that women are always at a disadvantage in dealing with men seems to be one consequence she drew from the Biblical injunction (that woman is the helpmeet to man) that she accepted. In her prose work, *The Face of the Deep* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892), she concluded: "Society may be personified as a human figure whose right hand is man, whose left woman; in one sense equal, in another sense unequal. The right hand is labourer, acquirer, achiever: the left hand helps, but has little independence, and is more apt at carrying than at executing. The right hand runs the risks, fights the battles; the left hand abides in comparative quiet and safety; except (a material exception) that in the *mutual* relationship of the twain it is in some ways far more liable to undergo than to inflict hurt, to be cut (for instance) than to cut" (410; quoted by Diane D'Amico, "Eve, Mary, and Mary Magdalene: Christina Rossetti's Feminine Triptych," in *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti* [note 2], 181).

[30] Both versions were published in Percy's *Reliques* (note 27). Christina Rossetti appears to have followed the English version (which has the explicit comparison of the scorned woman to a queen, as does her poem); this would also have been available in several other late eighteenth and nineteenth-century published collections. See Child (note 27), 2:179–99. To my knowledge, no one has noted that "Maude Clare" is based on an existing popular ballad.

[31] Antony H. Harrison discusses the differences between the three versions in his *Christina Rossetti in Context* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 4–8. See Crump (note 15), 244–47 for the manuscript and first published versions.

[32] First published in Rossetti's *Poems* of 1870, but begun more than twenty years earlier. Rossetti worked on it in the late 1850s, when Christina was composing her poem.

[33] Karl Marx, "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society," from "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (note 7), 102–5.

[34] Of the many recent critical essays on Rossetti's "Jenny," only one to my knowledge discusses the mutual figuring of woman as money and money as woman in the text. See Daniel A. Harris's suggestive piece, "D. G. Rossetti's 'Jenny': Sex, Money, and the Interior Monologue," *Victorian Poetry* 22 (Summer 1984), 197–215. Harris, however, reads the poem as a much more radical statement than I do.

[35] This assertion of the initial innocence of female desire is maintained by Rossetti in her interpretations of the fall of Eve. As Diane D'Amico has pointed out, not only is Eve presented sympathetically in Rossetti's poetry; her commentary on the scriptural event in *Letter and Spirit* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1883) insists: "It is in no degree at variance with the Sacred Record to picture to ourselves Eve, that first and typical woman, as indulging quite innocently sundry refined tastes and aspirations, a castle-building spirit (if so it may be called), a feminine boldness and directness of aim combined with a no less feminine guessiness as to means. Her very virtues may have opened the door to temptation" (17–

18). Eve's desire is "prideful, not lustful," as D'Amico puts it. Sexual desire is her punishment, not her sin: "Eve, the representative woman, received as part of her sentence 'desire': the assigned object of her desire being such that satisfaction must depend not on herself but on one stronger than she, who might grant or deny," Rossetti wrote in another of her prose works, *The Face of the Deep* (1892). See D'Amico's "Eve, Mary, and Mary Magdalene," which quotes these passages, especially 175–80. The sequence of sexually innocent desire, disobedience, and punishment through desire is exactly followed in Laura's story.

[36] Dorothy Mermin, in a particularly sensible essay, argues that "Goblin Market" is a utopian fantasy of "female potency and exclusively female happiness"—disputing Gilbert and Gubar's influential reading of it as conveying "bitter repressive wisdom." See Mermin, "Heroic Sisterhood in *Goblin Market*" (note 2), 116; and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 573. "From House to Home" (composed November, 1858) is a good example of a poem about the need to relocate desire to "a distant place," not in this world but the next.

[37] Erica Carter, "Alice in the Consumer Wonderland: West German case studies in gender and consumer culture," in *Gender and Generation*, ed. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 198.

[38] For the dedication, deleted in the published version, see Crump (note 15), 1:234.