



## CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'NİN İKİ KUTUPLU KİŞİLİĞİ VE "GOBLIN MARKET" ŞİİRİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S DIVIDED PSYCHE AND ITS REFLECTION IN  
HER POETRY: "GOBLIN MARKET"

### Begüm Sude MIZRAK

Lisans Öğrencisi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı  
Anabilim Dalı, İstanbul Aydın  
Üniversitesi,  
İstanbul/Türkiye.  
Undergraduate, Department of English  
Language and Literature, Istanbul Aydın  
University,  
Istanbul/Türkiye.  
begumsm@icloud.com  
**ORCID ID:** 0009-0001-5520-5041

### Tülay DAĞOĞLU

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı  
Anabilim Dalı, İstanbul Aydın  
Üniversitesi,  
İstanbul/Türkiye.  
Assist. Prof. Dr., Department of  
English Language and Literature,  
Istanbul Aydın University,  
Istanbul/Türkiye.  
tulaydagoglu@aydin.edu.tr  
**ORCID ID:** 0000-0003-0865-1740

### Makale bilgisi | Article Information

**DOI:** 10.47994/usbad.1335773

**Makale Türü / Article Type:** Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

**Geliş Tarihi / Date Received:** 01.08.2023

**Kabul Tarihi / Date Accepted:** 30.11.2023

**Yayın Tarihi / Date Published:** 20.12.2023

**Yayın Sezonu / Pub Date Season:** Aralık / December

**Bu Makaleye Atıf İçin / To Cite This Article:** Mızrak, B. S., & Dağoğlu,  
T. (2023). Christina Rossetti'nin İki Kutuplu Kişiliği ve "Goblin Market"  
Şiirindeki Yansımaları. *USBAD Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Akademi Dergisi*  
5(13), 683-701.

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**Abstract:** Christina Rossetti's entire life is all about her struggle against the tension between contrasting identities: literary and religious. Thus, her work is a reflection of her endeavour to balance both the societal and religious dichotomies, generated by the contradictions and complexities of the Victorian era. The role of religious reading in Rossetti's life and its impact on her poetry is undeniable, highlighting her speculative critique of restrictive gender roles and ideals of purity coerced by Christianity. Furthermore, societal expectations of Victorian womanhood and their influence on Rossetti's self reflect the multitudinous complexities of the female identity in her work. Such is the inconclusive Christianity in her soul's quest behind duality and vacillation in her work, stemming from and leading to a divided psyche. The study aims to investigate Rossetti's divided psyche oscillating between rebellious and compliant through the contrasting characters of Laura and Lizzie in "Goblin Market" to explore her ambivalent imagination of the female agency and the conventional gender roles that are underpinned by the Christian theology in her poetic exploration of the Victorian woman.

**Key Words:** Victorian poetry, divided psyche, "Goblin Market", Christina Rossetti

**Öz:** Christina Rossetti'nin tüm hayatı, edebi ve dinsel kimlikler arasındaki zıtlığa karşı verdiği mücadeleyle ilgilidir. Bu nedenle çalışmaları, Viktorya döneminin gelişmeleri ve karmaşıklıklarının yarattığı toplumsal, dini ikilemleri dengeleme çabasının bir yansımasıdır. Rossetti'nin hayatındaki dini okumaların rolü ve şiirleri üzerindeki etkisi yadsınamaz; bu, onun Hıristiyanlığın zorladığı kısıtlayıcı cinsiyet rollerine ve saflık ideallerine yönelik spekülasyon eleştirisini vurgulamaktadır. Dahası, Viktorya dönemi kadınlığına ilişkin toplumsal beklentiler ve bunların Rossetti'nin benliği üzerindeki etkisi, onun çalışmalarındaki kadın kimliğinin çok derin karmaşıklığını yansıtır. Bölünmüş bir ruhtan kaynaklanan ve bölünmüş bir ruha sürükleyen ikilik ve kararsızlığın ardındaki özün arayışında sonuçlandırılmamış bir inanç söz konusudur. Bu çalışma, Rossetti'nin Viktorya dönemi kadınına dair şiirsel keşfinde, asi ve itaatkar arasında gidip gelen bölünmüş ruhunu, "Goblin Market"ndeki Laura ve Lizzie'nin zıt karakterleri aracılığıyla analiz etmeyi, onun kadın konseptine ilişkin kararsızlığını ve Hristiyan teolojisinin desteklediği geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Viktorya Dönemi Şiiri, Bölünmüş Ruh, "Goblin Market", Christina Rossetti

## Introduction

As a Victorian bohemian, Christina Georgina Rossetti made a name through her affiliation with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood founded by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, along with other idealistic artists, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt. Her association with the Brotherhood allowed her to immerse herself in a vibrant artistic circle, where she found inspiration in the detailed visual aesthetics of the movement, resulting in her poetry's rich imagery and attention to natural beauty. The Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on symbolism also deeply influenced her poetic style, which enabled her to convey profound emotions and explore complex themes through the use of vivid symbols and allegorical language in her work. Moreover, Rossetti's poetry is influenced by her predecessor poets like Keats and Tennyson, who explored the themes of love, beauty, and mortality, often infusing her work with vivid imagery and a sense of melancholy, as well as

themes of loss, grief, and the transient nature of life. Her attention to minute detail in nature, corruptibility and mortality, the vanity of earthly pleasures, and the perfection of divine love are also undeniable. However, born in the midst of the contradictions of the Victorian era, Rossetti was deeply affected by the gender discrepancies, thus they unavoidably shaped her personality. The Victorian era was an era full of dichotomies that were deeply felt both in society and religion. While a wide range of people were interrogant about their religion with the disseminating scientific developments, prominent literary figures tried to restore people's belief, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson who was a voice calling for clinging to the spiritual promises of Christianity through his work "In Memoriam" (1850). Likewise, while the idealized view of the Victorian woman was associated with modesty, passivity, and purity; and the notion of family's importance was stressed by the Queen, prostitution was prevalent and overlooked by the law (Lang, 2015: 1). Not just Rossetti but many people in the Victorian era faced these dichotomies as John Fowles stated "... every Victorian had two minds..." (2017: 288), indicating the internal struggle experienced by individuals trying to reconcile conflicting ideas and societal expectations. Because of the contradictory sides of her nature observed in her literary and personal life, an agonizing antagonism between secular and sacred impulses, which is to say between the profane and the divine, renounced love and repressed passion. This haunted her for the rest of her life. There were three influences that shaped her work, her childhood, religious reading, and idealized Victorian womanhood, all of which led her to have a divided psyche, later reflected in her poems, for instance, "Twice," "Life and Death," "He and She," "Sister Maude," "Noble Sisters" and "Goblin Market". By examining her family background, religious upbringing, and the cultural stipulations of the ideal woman, this study will explore how the roots of her ambivalent poetic voice, wherein resides her divided psyche, are personified by two sisters, Laura and Lizzie in "Goblin Market".

### **Influences on Christina Rossetti's Divided Psyche: Family, Religion, Idealized Womanhood**

Rossetti's parents, Gabriele, and Frances were both significant figures in her life and had a lasting impact on her development as a woman and as a writer. Her father Gabriele Rossetti, a poet and scholar of Italian literature, was a passionate and volatile man whose moods could be unpredictable and intense. He was deeply and staunchly committed to his intellectual pursuits and his political ideals, which often brought him into conflict with the conservative English society in which he lived. He also introduced Rossetti to the rich literary and cultural heritage of Italy. Growing up in a household immersed in Italian literature and language, Christina developed a deep appreciation for the arts and inherited a sense of romanticism that would later shape her poetic style. In contrast, her mother Frances Rossetti had a gentle and nurturing presence in her daughter's life, offering her love, support, a sense of stability, and continuity, but more importantly, strong Anglican upbringing, underpinning her religious conviction amid the upheavals of the time

they lived in. Rossetti had a uniquely close bond with her mother among the Rossetti children, who held their mother in high regard. She expressed her deep appreciation and love for her mother by dedicating all of her poetry books to her. Rossetti's siblings also played a significant role in her life and artistic development. Her brothers, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Michael Rossetti, were both prominent figures in the artistic and literary circles of the time. They provided support, inspiration, and critique for their sister's work, influencing and helping her writing style and themes to improve. Yet the two extremes of temperament in the household, embodied by her parents, supposedly planted the seed of a duality in her psyche. Despite their differences, however, both parents shared a deep love of literature and language and instilled that in their children; a passion for the written word that would ultimately shape Rossetti's own creative vision. In many ways, the tension between her parents' contrasting temperaments and cultural backgrounds can be seen as a microcosm of the larger social and political conflicts of the time, as Britain struggled to reconcile its own national identity with the changing realities of a rapidly modernizing world. For Christina Rossetti, this tension between passion and restraint, tradition and innovation, would manifest itself as a recurring motif in her own poetry, as she sought to navigate the complex intersections of faith, love, and identity in a world that was often marked by division and conflict.

The second influence was the religion that imposed roles upon women both in a relationship and in society, promoting submissive and puritanical behaviours. Christianity played a central role in the Victorian society, shaping moral values, social norms, and gender roles. The church had a significant influence on the lives of individuals, dictating their behaviour, expectations, and even their artistic expressions. The Victorian society supported a romanticized image of the ideal woman as pure, submissive, and self-sacrificing, namely the idealization of the archetype of "Angel in the House".<sup>1</sup> This notion was deeply rooted in religious teachings, emphasizing women's domestic roles and their duty to uphold moral values within the family unit. Such an intelligent, talented, and passionate woman as Rossetti seemed to be doubtful about those rules as advocated by Roe:

She both agrees and disagrees about women's inferior position by redefining what it means to be weak. Women and men, she seems to suggest, are strong in different ways, whereby the strengths of one complement the weakness of the other so that together, they can 'stay' one another (2014: 111).

That she believed so explains why she was not able to fulfil her womanhood by remaining single for her whole life and to finalize her poems by constantly revising them. She rejected three marriage proposals, two of which were for religious reasons: the first one was from James Collinson whom she was engaged to but later broke the engagement because Collinson was a Roman Catholic whereas

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase "Angel in the House" comes from a highly well-known poem by Coventry Patmore, in which he depicts his angel-wife as a role model for all women.

Rossetti was devoted to the High Church of England. The second was from Charles Bagot Cayley, but he was a no match for Christina because he was a sceptic, and as put by William Michael Rossetti "...she must no doubt have probed his faith and found it either strictly wrong or woefully defective" (Rossetti, 1920: iii).

For Rossetti, this tension between her faith and identity as a woman was a constant source of conflict, as she struggled to reconcile her own desires and ambitions with the expectations of her family, religion, and society. Her decision to remain celibate and devote herself to religious contemplation was a (causative) reflection of this tension, as she tried to find a sense of purpose and meaning within the constraints of her gender and her faith. At the same time, however, Rossetti was also deeply critical of the puritanical and repressive aspects of her religion, which she saw as a source of oppression and constraint. In her poetry, she often challenged the narrow and restrictive gender roles imposed by the church and sought to create a vision of female spirituality that was more expansive, inclusive, and empowering.

Rossetti's divided self was also shaped by the societal expectations of womanhood that existed in Victorian England. During this time, women were expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct that emphasized modesty, piety, and submission to male authority. They were expected to be selfless and nurturing, prioritizing the needs of their families over their own ambitions and desires. Rossetti searched for the "Blessed Damozel"<sup>2</sup> in herself, an idealized, ethereal being, adorned with symbols of purity and spirituality. This inner search reflected her longing to embody the virtues and qualities valued by society, while also struggling with her own individuality and desires. This can be endorsed well with the depictions of both *femme fatale* and *femme fragile* figures in textual narratives and paintings during the era, playing an important role in reflecting the conventions of womanhood. However, for Rossetti, these expectations were deeply problematic, as they represented a double-edged sword of submission and defiance. On the one hand, she recognized the importance of selflessness and humility in the Christian faith and sought to embody these values in her own life; on the other hand, she recognized the limitations and injustices of a society that expected women to repress their sexuality and deny their own needs and desires in service of others. Thus, in her poetry, she delves into the inner struggles and conflicts faced by women in the Victorian society. Even the portrayal of her characters is dichotomous as she created characters who embody both acquiescent and insubordinate qualities, reflecting her own internal battle between societal expectations and personal desires. Through her poetry, Rossetti grappled with the complexities of female identity, challenging traditional gender roles while also acknowledging the societal pressures that shaped her own sense of self.

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<sup>2</sup> "The Blessed Damozel" is Dante Gabriel Rossetti's one of the best-known poems, as well as the title of its painting which illustrates the subject in the poem. The poem tells of the damozel's unfulfilled wish for their reunion in paradise as she watches her beloved from above.

Characters like Lizzie in "Goblin Market" exemplify her exploration of a strong, resilient woman who goes against the constraints of society while asserting her own agency and challenging prevailing norms. Additionally, Rossetti introduced subservient characters such as the speaker of the poem "Sister Maude" who represents a contrasting figure to Lizzie, exhibiting submissive qualities and conforming to societal expectations. She is portrayed as passive and obedient, ultimately leading to her betrayal and tragedy. The speaker's character serves as a foil to Lizzie, emphasizing the consequences of succumbing to societal pressures and suppressing one's true desires. For example, Lizzie's dominant and assertive but resilient character is reflected in her language in an imperative tone as observed in the lines:

Eat me, drink me, love me;  
Laura, make much of me.  
For your sake I have braved the glen,  
And had to do with goblin merchant men. (Rossetti, 1862: 574-577)

She asserts her sexual agency by offering herself to her sister, inviting Laura to indulge in the same sensual experiences she has encountered. Through this act, Lizzie embodies a desire for sexual freedom, challenging the constraints placed upon women during the Victorian era. This contrasts with the defeated and resigned but infuriated tone of the speaker with the lines, "You might have spared his soul, sister, / Have spared my soul, your own soul too" (Rossetti, 1862: 9-10). This juxtaposition shows Rossetti's exploration of the multifaceted nature of the female identity and the various responses women had to the restrictive societal norms of the Victorian era. Consequently, when there is a betrayal among the sisters, this duality becomes destructive as there is no resolution (Dombrowski, 1976: 72), but when one sister becomes the saviour of the other, the duality in question emerges as constructive symbolizing the importance of sisterhood. Furthermore, Rossetti's rejection of three marriage proposals can be seen as a reflection of this tension between submission and assertion, as she struggled to reconcile her own desires for love and companionship with the societal expectations that surrounded her. Her preference for spiritual love over secular love can also be seen as a reflection of this tension, as she attempted to find a sense of fulfilment and purpose in a world that often-denied women the opportunity to fully express themselves. Also, her frustration about love is read in her poem as she used the motif of sisters to characterize the dichotomy between ideal and real: the idea of division between body and soul, and also the polar opposites: desire and duty, death and life, evil and good, love and isolation.

### **Her Divided Psyche in "Goblin Market"**

Rossetti began her poetic career by publishing her early works under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyn, invented by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in the Pre-Raphaelite journal called "The Germ" established by the Brotherhood. However, it was her renowned poem "Goblin Market" that truly marked a turning

point for Rossetti, embodying her distinctive blend of enchanting storytelling, rich symbolism, and exploration of complex themes such as desire, temptation, and female agency, securing her place as a prominent figure in Victorian poetry. Her poem "Goblin Market" is a poetic exploration of the dual identity, embodied through the two central characters of the poem, Laura and Lizzie. Through the representation of the two sisters, Rossetti explored the internal conflict of the individual, torn between opposing desires and values. Laura is depicted as a rebellious and passionate character, embodying Rossetti's more impulsive and sensuous side, while Lizzie is portrayed as a prudent and restrained character, representing Rossetti's more religious and conservative values: "Laura bowed her head to hear/ Lizzie veiled her blushes" (Rossetti, 1862: 72-73). The contrast between the two sisters not only highlights the internal struggle of the individual but also reflects the societal expectations of Victorian England, where women were expected to be pure and chaste, obedient, and submissive. Amidst the goblin men's luring, Lizzie expresses her concern for Laura, warning her against peeping at them: "Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura, / You should not peep at goblin men" (Rossetti, 1862: 343-344). As Lizzie expresses concern over Laura's curiosity and warns her against looking at the goblin men, her repetition of Laura's name reflects her growing anxiety, highlighting the imminent conflict between the sisters' differing reactions to temptation. These descriptions remind us of William Michael Rossetti's observation of his sisters, Christina and Maria: "Some believers, perceiving themselves to be undoubted Christians in faith, become serenely or perhaps exuberantly happy in their inner selves: it may be said that Maria Rossetti was of these, for . . . she felt the firmest confidence of salvation" (Rossetti, 1920: liv). Whereas for Christina he stated that "she always distrusted herself, and her relation to that standard of Christian duty which she constantly acknowledged and professed" (Ibid.). It is clear that just like Lizzie and Laura, Maria and Christina had differences in their attitudes even though they shared a common belief. However, it would be rather appropriate to say that these differences are epitomized by Christina herself, being the embodiment of two conflicting characters.

Rossetti's exploration of these conflicting values through the characters of Laura and Lizzie highlights the complex nature of the female identity, and how it is often shaped by the societal norms and expectations imposed upon it. In the poem, goblins do not want money to sell fruits. Instead, they ask for Laura's golden lock of hair. This exchange serves as a metaphor, highlighting the goblin fruit as a symbol of sexuality. The fruit can be acquired and savoured not through the tangible means of money, but through a unique cost that involves a specific part of her body. As Elisabeth Gitter notes in "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," during the Victorian era, golden hair symbolized innocence that was vulnerable to corruption and was associated with commerce due to its colour (1984: 943). Consequently, Laura pays it with a part of her body leading to her damnation as she succumbs to temptation and her chastity of soul is

damaged. After eating the fruit, she is in a catatonic state, slowly withering as the fruit is now consuming her. The first sign of Laura's physical deterioration after consuming the enchanted fruit is evident when her once-lustrous golden hair starts to lose its colour and thin out, signifying the loss of her purity and desirability for marriage (Gitter, 1984: 946). On the other hand, when Laura starts neglecting her daily conduct, her sister Lizzie goes out to buy another fruit so she can heal her sister. Lizzie offers to pay it with money, but goblins reject and start attacking her, forcing her to eat the fruit. Lizzie suffers so that her sister can recover. She is compared to a lily standing tall in a flood, a solid rock amidst crashing waves, a beacon shining brightly, and a fruit-laden orange tree besieged by insects (Rossetti, 1862: 408-421). The imagery highlights Lizzie's unwavering determination and commitment to her mission, even in the midst of overwhelming opposition. Even though the chastity of her body is tarnished, the chastity of her soul is still pure, making her a proper Victorian woman.

Rossetti's use of vivid and sensual language in "Goblin Market" is a striking element of the poem as her strong religious belief was closely intertwined with an erotic temperament (Bloom, 2004: 10). In the opening lines, the repetition of "Come buy, come buy" emphasizes the seductive nature of goblins' offer. The extensive list of fruits showcases abundance and variety, suggesting a world of indulgence and pleasure. The sensuality of the goblin fruits is depicted in exquisite detail, with the description of their ripe juiciness and sweet aroma:

Figs to fill your mouth,  
Citrons from the South,  
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;  
Come buy, come buy. (Rossetti, 1862: 29-32)

The goblin men themselves are described in alluring terms, with their fruit-piled wicker trays and lustrous faces that tempted and allured the sisters. Also, the mention of "clasping arms" (38) and "tingling cheeks and fingertips" (39) hints at the sisters' physical and emotional response to the goblins' temptation, foreshadowing the conflict to come. Even the act of eating the fruit is described in sensual terms, with Laura's longing for a kiss on the fruit and her quivering as she eats it. These descriptions, along with the overall atmosphere of temptation and seduction, create a palpable sense of eroticism in the poem.

However, this eroticism is not simply a celebration of sensual pleasure. Instead, it is always tempered by a sense of repression and denial which reflects the prevailing Victorian belief that taking pleasure in sex was seen as a masculine act as Seidman argued:

... the Victorians denied that women possess sexual feelings; they sought to purge sex of its sensual aspects and restrict its role to a procreative one; Victorian marriage was, finally, described as characteristically cold as the relations between husband and wife were emotionally distant and formal (1990:47).



Thus, they admonished women for not having sex for pleasure but for procreation. In the Victorian society, women were expected to be chaste and modest, while men had more freedom to satisfy their desires. People believed that women were not driven by physical desires as much as men were. Instead, women were believed to be motivated by their desire for love and to be loved in return. Consequently, women's main focus was on finding a husband, creating an untroubled home, and raising a family. The middle-class Victorians generally had a positive view of sex, considering it a natural aspect of life. They believed that when approached in a proper and responsible manner, sexual desires could bring good health, mental energy, ambition, and creativity, and contribute to social progress. However, it was widely believed that sex should only take place within the boundaries of marriage (Seidman, 1990: 47-51), thereby condemning extramarital sex. Furthermore, the way Victorians saw sensual desires can be compared to a chain reaction: when these desires are awakened, they become unstoppable. People were unknowingly steered by their intense passions, as explained by Blackwell (1990: 39) which leads to a decline in morals, unimaginable suffering, and personal destruction. Ultimately, it results in self-ruin, chaos in society, and a downfall as we see with Laura and Jeanie. In addition to these views on sex, Foucault provides us with another perspective further underpinning the notion of duality characterizing the period. Foucault critiqued the idea that sexuality was highly repressed during the Victorian era. What he argues is that this widely held notion known as the "repressive hypothesis" (Foucault, 1978: 10) is false and offers evidence to contradict it by looking at how sex was addressed and spoken about. He emphasizes that it was not suppressed but rather organized and freely discussed by numerous institutions (Ibid: 17). This observation testifies to the fact that the notion of sex and suppressed sexuality serve both as a causative factor and resultant frustration in Foucault's contention regarding the "repressive hypothesis" that is adhered to the Victorian society's paradox-laden attitudes towards the aforementioned notions.

Rossetti's portrayal of temptation and desire in the poem reflects this conflict between societal expectations and our natural inclination for pleasure. In addition, the punishment for indulging in the fruit is the loss of chastity and purity, which were highly valued virtues in the Victorian society. This reinforces the idea that repression of desire is necessary for maintaining one's moral integrity. Furthermore, the fact that the sisters are never able to fully indulge in their desires emphasizes the idea of a patriarchal society that restricts women's sexuality. In this way, the eroticism in "Goblin Market" becomes a metaphor for the repressed desires of women in the Victorian society and the dangers of overindulging in sensual pleasures.

In contrast to eroticism, the imagery in the poem is heavily filled with strong religious colour, as Rossetti was a devout Christian. Thereby, the poem tackles the themes of temptation and redemption as Laura becomes tempted by goblin fruit, and Lizzie - like Christ - offers redemption through sacrifice. In the poem,

Laura's temptation and subsequent fall are parallel to the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Laura's eating of the goblin fruit represents the eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, and her loss of innocence is akin to the fall of humanity. The goblin fruit can be interpreted as a metaphor for forbidden desires or worldly pleasures that entice and corrupt individuals. By succumbing to the allure of the goblin fruit, Laura symbolically represents humanity's susceptibility to temptation and the consequences that follow:

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. (Rossetti, 1862: 331-334)

The imagery of the "fruit globes fair or red" (Rossetti, 1862: 333) and their irresistible sweetness alludes to the allure and seductive nature of forbidden desires. The comparison of the fruit's sweetness to "honey from the rock" (Rossetti, 1862: 334) further emphasizes the indulgence and immediate gratification that Laura experiences, akin to the immediate gratification that Adam and Eve sought in consuming the forbidden fruit. The act of eating the goblin fruit represents not only physical consumption but also a metaphorical surrender to worldly desires.

On the other hand, Lizzie's sacrifice to save her sister is a representation of the sacrificial and divine act of Jesus Christ on the cross. Just as Christ endured physical suffering and persecution on the cross for the salvation of humanity, Lizzie faces a brutal assault from the goblins in her courageous attempt to rescue her sister:

Though the goblins cuff'd and caught her,  
Coax'd and fought her,  
Bullied and besought her,  
Scratch'd her, pinch'd her black as ink,  
Kick'd and knock'd her,  
Maul'd and mock'd her. (Rossetti, 1862: 424-429)

Lizzie's willingness to endure suffering and persevere in her selfless act of redemption is symbolized by her ordeal at the hands of the goblins, much like Christ endured beatings, mockery, and physical torment on the cross. Her unwavering love for her sister and determination to protect her from the destructive influence of the goblin fruit are exemplified by this ordeal, serving as a testament. Therefore, Lizzie, similar to Rossetti, adapts the significance to serve her own intentions, assuming a role resembling that of Christ. According to D'Amico, this interaction represents an "affirmation of the spiritual over the sensual" (1999: 78). Lizzie takes on the burden of Laura's transgression, symbolized by the fruit, yet she manages to avoid succumbing to its potentially damaging consequences. Thus, the contrasting paths taken by Laura and Lizzie in

the poem symbolize the eternal struggle between temptation and salvation, highlighting Rossetti's exploration of moral choices and their consequences.

The feminist interpretation of Christianity in "Goblin Market" can be further explored in the context of the Victorian society in duality. During the 19th century, women were often seen as inferior to men and were expected to fulfil domestic duties while remaining obedient to their husbands. Describing Rossetti as a feminist may be inaccurate and misleading, in view of the fact that her strong belief in Christianity that women's place was second to that of men's, says Terry L. Spaise (1997: 2). Just like the Keatsian belief of women are being held responsible for their damnation reflected in his poem "Isabella, or Pot of Basil" (1820), it is likely that Rossetti believed in the same and showed that with Laura. While she acknowledged the potential dangers of sexual love, she did not condemn it outright in a puritanical manner. At the end of the poem, both Laura and Lizzie are depicted as happily married women with their own children, passing down the old tale to them. Through this conventional happy ending, Rossetti suggests that the fruit and the goblin men themselves are not inherently harmful, despite their roles as the agents of temptation in the poem. Rather, it is the concept of guilt associated with sin and the evil intentions of man that give them a dangerous and deluder nature. In essence, man is the one who brings about their own destruction (Packer, 1958: 378). In reality, she primarily concentrated on the spiritual salvation of women rather than championing their social and political liberation.

Rossetti showed little enthusiasm towards the suffragette movement and generally remained disengaged from active involvement in political affairs, except through her poetry (Roe, 2014: 113). As a poetess, she challenged this patriarchal view by portraying the two sisters as strong and capable individuals who do not rely on male intervention to save one another. This can be elucidated with Helene Cixous's theory of patriarchal binary thought. According to Cixous, the binary oppositions reflect a world where men hold a dominant role. She proposes that the polar opposites in the language: culture/nature, male/female, head/heart, active/passive, hard/soft, young/old, subject/object, self/other, mind/body, hero/villain uphold binary thinking and patriarchy, and that among most of the oppositional word couples, the superior terms are linked to the male gender and masculinity (Catherine and Cixous, 1996: 64). Because of the binary phallogocentric worldview inherent in patriarchy, every word pair attempts to describe and organize the universe from the perspective that there is a natural oppositional relationship. Based upon this patriarchal binary thought a person is *masculine* or *feminine*, not *masculine* and *feminine*, and a person is a *perpetrator* or a *victim*, not a *perpetrator* and a *victim* (Cixous, 65). Thereby, people must be positioned as either the superior or the inferior, naturally bringing about a flux in which people move around, attempting to occupy the superordinate position whenever possible. Cixous's critique of patriarchal binary thought can be linked with Rossetti's subversion of the concept of male saviour, which is embodied in sisters' standing for each other, suggesting the concept of a female saviour. The depiction

of erotic love is another relevant example wherein resides the poet's challenge to the patriarchal binary thought. Erotic love is typically seen as the realm of women, portrayed as Eve figure and bearer of children, whereas men are associated with higher spiritual love, depicted as Christ figure. Yet, in the poem, Rossetti disrupts these gender norms by portraying a realm where women embody both the conventionally ascribed male qualities and the traditionally assigned female attributes (Casey, 1991: 4).

This subversion of gender roles in the poem highlights the complexity of women's identities and breaks the binary thought imposed by patriarchy. In fact, the poem can be seen as a celebration of female agency and empowerment, as Lizzie's selfless act of saving her sister is ultimately what leads to Laura's redemption. Besides, Janet G. Casey argues in her article "The Potential of Sisterhood: Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'" that as Lizzie serves the role of saviour of her sister Laura, Laura takes up the role of saviour as well (1991: 6). Laura's earlier fall into temptation, therefore, becomes a fortunate event because it indirectly allows her to become Lizzie's redeemer. Lizzie, who was initially cautious and prudent, learns that sometimes bold action is necessary, and that physical love is a beautiful and integral part of being human. On the other hand, Laura realizes that daring should be balanced with prudence and that emotional commitment is essential for fulfilling love. She realizes that when love is approached with the right intentions, including a spiritual connection, it can be a positive and fulfilling experience. Lizzie's actions show that sexual love alone leads to emptiness, but when it is infused with a spiritual dimension, it becomes healing and meaningful. Thus, we can see that even this duality is interconnected and juxtaposed as now both of the sisters serve as saviours of one another, further emphasizing sisterhood which is quite a significant notion to Rossetti. With her poem, Rossetti shows that everyone, regardless of gender, can take on separate roles. Through the characters Lizzie and Laura, she demonstrates that both men and women can be heroes and victims, caregivers and care seekers, lovers and beloved ones (Casey, 1991: 65). She imagines a world where people are not limited by traditional gender roles. Instead, she paints a picture of a world where everyone is free to embrace all aspects of themselves and experience true wholeness by breaking free from the limitations of male and female stereotypes.

Additionally, the poem can be interpreted as a critique of the male gaze, as the goblins' desire for Laura's physical beauty and sexual purity can be seen as a reflection of the way in which women were objectified and commodified by men during this era. This is well endorsed by the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey who describes how women are reduced to objects for the gaze of the male viewer:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their

appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. The woman displayed as a sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to, and signifies male desire (1999: 837).

Rossetti challenges the notion of women being reduced to mere objects of desire as she presents the goblins as predatory figures who exploit Laura's innocence for their own pleasure. Through this critique, Rossetti exposes the damaging effects of the male gaze, highlighting the ways in which women were devalued and reduced to their physical attributes. Rossetti confronts the pervasive objectification of women in the Victorian society by emphasizing the goblins' greedy craving for Laura's beauty and purity. She challenges the societal norms and expectations that reduced women to mere objects of male desire by exploring the theme of the male gaze in her poem. In addition, the story of Jeanie further emphasizes the dangers of the male gaze, serving as a moral lesson. The consequences of her encounter are evident in the lack of grass on her grave, symbolizing her tainted state. Her growing sick and passing is her punishment and the lines "She thought of Jeanie in her grave, /Who should have been a bride" (Rossetti, 1862: 312-313) reflect her inability to fulfil societal expectations as a wife and mother because she was tempted in the first place. She lacked the patience to await the anticipated pleasures symbolized by the phrase "joys brides hope to have," explicitly implying a reference to sexual desires. Consequently, she succumbed to the temptation of consuming the goblin fruit, ultimately meeting her demise "in her gay prime" (Rossetti, 1862: 316). Jeanie's story both warns others, like Laura, about the risks of getting involved with the goblin men and also foreshadows what could have happened to Laura if Lizzie had not intervened.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Rossetti's poetry, particularly exemplified in her renowned work "Goblin Market," vividly reflects the contradictions and complexities of the Victorian era. Living in a time of societal and religious upheaval, Rossetti grappled with the internal struggle of reconciling conflicting ideas and expectations. This conflict, stemming from her upbringing, religious upbringing and reading, and the idealized Victorian womanhood, shaped her poetic voice and the themes she explored. Rossetti's childhood experiences, influenced by her passionate and volatile father Gabriele, and her gentle, nurturing, and devout mother Frances, fostered a duality within her personality. The tension between their contrasting temperaments and cultural backgrounds mirrored the larger conflicts of the era, serving as a microcosm of the struggles faced by individuals, more precisely women, in the Victorian society. Religion played a leading role in Rossetti's life and the Victorian society as a whole, dictating moral values and gender roles. She coped with the expectations imposed by Christianity, the idealization of the submissive woman, and the repression of her own desires. Throughout her life, she struggled "to re-direct passion to where she thought it belonged (with God

and heaven)... she chooses to do this through poetry..." (Roe, 2014: 42) She reflected her inconclusive Christianity in her work while also seeking to find a sense of purpose and meaning within its constraints. Moreover, Rossetti's poetry delves into the societal expectations of womanhood in Victorian England. Women were expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct, emphasizing modesty, piety, and submission to male authority. The poetess explored the complexities of the female identity, challenging traditional gender roles while acknowledging the societal pressures that shaped her sense of self. Through her characters in "Goblin Market," she depicted the contrasting qualities of Laura and Lizzie, reflecting her own internal battles and the multifaceted nature of female identity. In "Goblin Market," Rossetti masterfully wove together themes of temptation, desire, and repression, using vivid and sensual language to create an atmosphere of seduction. She explored the eroticism inherent in human nature, especially women, while also acknowledging the societal constraints and expectations that limited women's expression of their desires. In the end, the question arises: Could she find a balance to this duality, this bifurcated self she suffered from? Unfortunately, she never managed to find that elusive balance. After her death, her letters to her beloved were discovered by her brother, William Michael Rossetti, revealing the depth of her love and longing for him. However, because of her principles and unwavering devotion to Christianity, she made the painful decision to give up her love and never married him. Despite the courage portrayed in her poems, where she often wrote about characters like Laura, the reality of her life was vastly different as Brandt stated:

Rossetti's verses may appear autobiographical or confessional, but first person narrative is almost a genre requirement in devotional poetry, and her poems probably reveal less of the person she was than of the many personae she created (2006: 15).

The discrepancy between her poetic expressions and the reality of her life further supports the argument that Rossetti struggled to reconcile the duality within herself, ultimately failing to achieve the elusive balance she sought.

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT:** This study examines the life and poetry of Victorian bohemian Christina Georgina Rossetti, who is closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an idealistic group of artists that includes her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and William Holman Hunt, and other artists, critics, and sculptures. Influenced by the Brotherhood's emphasis on symbolism, Rossetti's poetry exhibits rich natural detail, vivid symbolism, and medieval themes, allowing her to convey profound emotions and explore complex subjects through allegorical language. Her work often delves into themes of love, beauty, mortality, loss, grief, and the transient nature of life. Living in the Victorian era, Rossetti struggled with the contradictions and complexities prevalent in society and religion at that time. This period witnessed dichotomies between religious beliefs and scientific advancements, the oppression of women under the notion of pure womanhood, and the emphasis on family importance despite issues like prostitution. These contradictions profoundly influenced Rossetti's work, leading to an agonizing antagonism between secular and sacred impulses and feelings of renounced love and repressed passion. Her divided psyche is evident in her poetry, seen in titles such as "Twice," "Life and Death," and "He and She," as well as the characters she created in poems like "Sister Maude," "Noble Sisters," and "Goblin Market." Her poem "Goblin Market" specifically portrays her divided psyche through the characters of Laura and Lizzie. In this study, Rossetti's family background, religious upbringing and reading, and the cultural influences of her time are explored, providing valuable insights into the roots of her poetic voice. Rossetti's parents, Gabriele and Frances, play significant roles in her life and literary career. Gabriele, a passionate poet and Italian literature scholar, introduced Christina to a world of rich literary and cultural heritage, while Frances offered love, support, stability, and

strong Anglican principles during tumultuous times. Christina's close bond with her mother deeply influenced her and it is evident in her dedication of all her poetry books to her. Religion, particularly Christianity, had a profound impact on Victorian society, shaping moral values, social norms, and gender roles. Rossetti seemed to have accepted these rules but also experienced a conflict as she sought to reconcile her desires and ambitions with the expectations of her family, religion, and society. This tension between faith and identity as a woman is evident in her decision to remain celibate and devote herself to religious contemplation while criticizing certain restrictive aspects of her faith. Victorian England enforced strict codes of conduct on women, emphasizing modesty, piety, and submission to male authority. Thus, Rossetti's poetry reflects her inner struggle to embody societal virtues while navigating her own individuality and desires; challenging traditional gender roles while acknowledging the pressures that shaped her sense of self. Characters like Lizzie in "Goblin Market" exemplify Rossetti's exploration of strong, resilient women defying societal constraints, while submissive characters like the speaker in "Sister Maude" highlight the consequences of conforming to societal norms. Rossetti's rejection of marriage proposals and her preference for spiritual love further reflects the tension between submission and assertion. Throughout her poetry, she delves into dichotomies, including ideal versus real, body versus soul, desire versus duty, and love versus isolation, symbolizing the complexities of the female identity in a society marked by division and societal expectations. The poem "Goblin Market" marked a significant turning point in Rossetti's poetic career, skilfully weaving enchanting storytelling, vivid symbolism, and exploration of complex themes like desire, temptation, and female agency. Through the characters of Laura and Lizzie, Rossetti delves into the internal conflict of individuals torn between opposing personal desires and cultural values. The goblin fruit symbolizes forbidden desires, tempting and corrupting those who indulge in it, while Laura's consumption of the fruit represents her loss of innocence, mirroring the biblical story of Adam and Eve's fall. Lizzie's selfless act of sacrificing herself to save her sister represents a Christ-like redemption. The poem also shows Rossetti's strong religious beliefs intertwined with her erotic temperament, creating an atmosphere of temptation and seduction while tempering it with a sense of repression in line with Victorian expectations regarding women's sexuality. Additionally, "Goblin Market" can be seen as a critique of the male gaze, exposing the objectification of women in Victorian society and challenging the devaluation of women based on their physical attributes. The story of Jeanie serves as a moral lesson about the dangers of succumbing to temptation, warning others about the potential consequences of involvement with the goblin men. As a result, Christina Georgina Rossetti's life and poetry reveal a complex struggle with the duality within herself. Despite the courage displayed in her poems, where she wrote about strong and assertive characters, her personal life was quite different. Letters discovered after her death indicate the depth of her love and longing for her beloved, but her strong principles and unwavering devotion to Christianity led her to make the painful decision to give up on her love and remain unmarried. This highlights the conflict between her desires and her sense of duty, reflecting the internal battle she faced in trying to find a balance between her personal longings and her religious convictions. The discrepancy between her poetic expressions and the reality of her life adds to the evidence that she struggled with her divided self and psyche, ultimately leading her to sacrifice personal happiness in favour of her faith.

**GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET:** Bu çalışma, erkek kardeşi Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, ve William Holman Hunt'ın da dahil olduğu idealist bir sanatçı grubu olan Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood ile yakından ilişkili olan Viktorya dönemi bohem Christina Georgina



Rossetti'nin hayatını ve şiirini incelemektedir. Brotherhood'un sembolizme yaptığı vurgudan etkilenen Rossetti'nin şiirleri, zengin doğal ayrıntılar, canlı sembolizm ve orta çağ temaları sergileyerek, derin duyguları aktarmasına ve karmaşık konuları alegorik dil aracılığıyla keşfetmesine olanak tanımaktadır. Rossetti'nin eserleri genellikle aşk, güzellik, ölümlülük, kayıp, keder ve hayatın geçici doğası temalarını konu almaktadır. Viktorya döneminde yaşayan Rossetti, o dönemde toplumda ve dinde yaygın olan çelişkiler ve karmaşıklıklarla mücadele etmiştir. Bu dönem, dini inançlar ve bilimsel gelişmeler arasındaki ikilemlere, saf kadınlık kavramı altında kadınların baskı altına alınmasına ve fuhuş gibi sorunlara rağmen aile kurumunun önemine vurgu yapılmasına tanık olmuştur. Bu çelişkiler Rossetti'nin çalışmalarını derinden etkileyerek seküler ve kutsal dürtüler ile vazgeçilen aşk ve bastırılmış tutku duyguları arasında ıstırap verici bir karşıtlığa yol açmıştır. Rossetti'nin bölünmüş benliği, "Twice", "Life and Death" ve "He and She" gibi şiirlerinin isimlerinde; "Sister Maude", "Noble Sisters" ve "Goblin Market" gibi şiirlerinde ise yarattığı karakterlerde belirgindir. Özellikle "Goblin Market" adlı şiiri, onun ikili kimliğini Laura ve Lizzie karakterleri aracılığıyla tasvir etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Rossetti'nin aile geçmişi, dini eğitimi ve zamanının kültürel etkileri araştırılarak, şiirsel sesinin psikolojik köklerine dair değerli içgörüler sağlanması amaçlanmıştır. Ebeveynleri Gabriele ve Frances, Rossetti'nin hayatında ve yazma gelişiminde önemli roller oynamışlardır. Tutkulu bir şair ve İtalyan edebiyat bilgini olan Gabriele, Christina'yı zengin edebi ve kültürel mirasa sahip bir dünyayla tanıştırmışken, Frances çalkantılı zamanlarda sevgi, destek ve istikrar sunmuştur. Rossetti'nin annesiyle olan yakın bağı onu derinden etkilemiş ve tüm şiir kitaplarını ona ithaf etmesine yol açmıştır. Din, özellikle Hıristiyanlık, ahlaki değerleri, sosyal normları ve cinsiyet rollerini şekillendirerek Viktorya toplumu üzerinde derin bir etkiye sahipti. Rossetti bu kuralları kabul etmiş ama aynı zamanda kendi arzu ve hırslarını ailesinin, dininin ve toplumun beklentileriyle uzlaştırmaya çalışırken çatışma yaşamıştır. Bir kadın olarak inanç ve kimlik arasındaki bu gerilim, bekar kalma ve inancının belirli kısıtlayıcı yönlerini eleştirirken kendini dini tefekküre adama kararında belirgin olmuştur. Viktorya dönemi İngiltere'si, alçakgönüllülüğü, dindarlığı ve erkek otoritesine boyun eğmeyi vurgulayarak kadınlara katı davranış kuralları uygulamıştır. Bu nedenle Rossetti'nin şiiri, kendi bireyselliği ve arzuları arasında gezinirken toplumsal erdemleri somutlaştırmaya yönelik içsel mücadelesini yansıtmış, benlik algısını şekillendiren baskıları kabul ederken geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine meydan okumuştur. "Goblin Market" şiirinde Lizzie gibi karakterler, Rossetti'nin toplumsal kısıtlamalara meydan okuyan güçlü, dayanıklı kadınları keşfetmesine örnek teşkil ederken, "Sister Maude" şiirindeki konuşmacı gibi itaatkar karakterler toplumsal normlara uymanın sonuçlarını gözler önüne sermektedir. Rossetti'nin evlilik tekliflerini reddetmesi ve ruhsal aşkı tercih etmesi, boyun eğme ile kendini ifade etme arasındaki gerilimi yansıtmaktadır. Şiirleri boyunca, hayaliye karşı gerçek, bedene karşı ruh, arzuya karşı görev ve aşka karşı yalnızlık dahil olmak üzere ikilemleri konu almış; bölünme ve toplumsal beklentilerle damgalanmış bir cemiyette kadın kimliğinin karmaşıklığını sembolize etmiştir. "Goblin Market" şiiri, Rossetti'nin şiirsel kariyerinde önemli bir dönüm noktası olmuştur; büyüleyici hikaye anlatımını, canlı sembolizmi, arzu, ayartma ve kadın failiği gibi karmaşık temaları ustalıkla işlemiştir. Rossetti, Laura ve Lizzie karakterleri aracılığıyla, karşıt arzular ve değerler arasında bölünmüş bireylerin iç çatışmasını tasvir etmiştir. Bu bağlamda Goblin meyvesi yasak arzuları sembolize etmekte, ona düşkün olanları cezbetmekte ve yozlaştırmaktadır. Laura'nın meyveyi tüketmesi ise onun masumiyet kaybını temsil etmekte ve İncil'deki Adem ve Havva'nın düşüş hikayesini yansıtmaktadır. Lizzie'nin kız kardeşini kurtarmak için özverili bir şekilde kendini feda etmesi, İsa'nın ilahi fedakarlığına benzer bir tutumu temsil

etmektedir. Şiir aynı zamanda Rossetti'nin güçlü dini inançlarının erotik eğilimiyle iç içe geçtiğini göstermektedir. Bu, baştan çıkarma ve cezbetme atmosferi yaratırken, Viktorya dönemi beklentilerine uygun bir şekilde kadın cinselliği konusundaki baskıyı da dengelemektedir. Ek olarak, "Goblin Market", Viktorya toplumunda kadınların nesneleştirilmesini açığa çıkartan ve kadınların fiziksel özelliklerine göre değersizleştirilmesine meydan okuyarak erkek bakış açısının bir eleştirisi olarak görülebilir. Bu bağlamda, Jeanie'nin hikayesi, baştan çıkmaya boyun eğmenin tehlikeleri hakkında bir ahlaki ders niteliği taşımakta ve diğerlerini goblin adamlarla ilişkiye girmenin olası sonuçları konusunda uyarmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Christina Georgina Rossetti'nin hayatı ve şiiri, kendi içindeki ikilemlerle karmaşık bir mücadeleyi gözler önüne sermektedir. Güçlü ve iddialı karakterleriyle yazdığı şiirlerinde sergilediği cesarete rağmen, özel hayatı oldukça farklıydı. Ölümünden sonra keşfedilen mektuplar, sevgilisine olan sevgisinin ve özleminin derinliğini göstermekteydi, ancak güçlü ilkeleri ve Hıristiyanlığa sarsılmaz bağlılığı, onu aşkından vazgeçmek ve bekar kalmak gibi acı verici bir karar vermeye yöneltmişti. Bu, kişisel özelemleri ile dini inançları arasında bir denge bulmaya çalışırken karşılaştığı iç savaşı yansıtan arzuları ve görev duygusu arasındaki çatışmayı vurgulamaktaydı. Şiirsel ifadeleri ile hayatının gerçekliği arasındaki tutarsızlık, bölünmüş benliğiyle mücadele ettiğine dair kanıtlara katkıda bulunmakta ve sonunda onu inancı uğruna kişisel mutluluğunu feda etmeye yöneltmektedir.