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## “COME BUY”: THE CROSSING OF SEXUAL AND CONSUMER DESIRE IN CHRISTINA ROSSETTI’S *GOBLIN MARKET*

BY VICTOR ROMAN MENDOZA

Almost a century and a half after its 1862 publication, Christina Rossetti’s canonical poem *Goblin Market* continues to captivate with its critical yet ambivalent assessment of the overlapping spheres of Victorian economics and sexual politics despite its deceptively simple form. As is evident even in the earliest critical responses, the poem has been traditionally received as a facile children’s story or didactic fable with a fairly transparent moral component, yet the poem also offers a nuanced evaluation of ascendant, mid-nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. Indeed, the seemingly straightforward plot can only proceed by way of an unseen process of textual exchange—an economy that, in commerce with consumer capitalism, remains partially hidden by the poem’s fantastic veneer. I attempt to track these hidden forms of exchange proper to the goblin market and their relation to the production of desire—the desire of the characters, of the text, and of the text’s projected audience.

I argue that the poem’s language of economics as well as its economics of language rehearse a form of desire and a mode of enjoyment based on self-negation. The paper is divided into five sections, each offering close-readings of the poem inflected rather intimately, if not somewhat idiosyncratically, by Marxist and psychoanalytic theoretical work. In the first, I track briefly the tradition of treating the poem as an allegory, arguing that while *Goblin Market* does in fact correlate to various Victorian social symptoms or conditions, the often hasty recourse to an allegorical reading threatens to reify the poem as allegory, thereby ignoring the process of fetishism that the text identifies and at times criticizes. In the second section, I show how that process of fetishism is intimately related to the body of the audience, both the reader of the text and, to a lesser extent, the consuming Victorian public. The third studies the poem’s uses of gold, which Karl Marx, a contemporary of Rossetti, esteems as the material, albeit tenuous, “expression” of the values of commodities. Though not always in the ways Marx theorizes, gold does indeed play an important part in the

poem's dialectics of value—use, exchange, surplus, aesthetic, and moral value—especially *vis-à-vis* the goblin men. The fourth attempts to get at what has been called the “central mystery of the poem,” Lizzie’s silver penny, which she “tosse[s]” to the goblins “for a fee.”<sup>1</sup> If Lizzie’s coin seems to afford her both the ability to fend off the goblins’ violence as well as consumer power in the face of those merchant men’s mysterious terms of purchase, then the manner of how it does so is at the heart of the larger questions of economic and sexual agency. Finally, in the last section, I return to several passages discussed earlier in the body of the paper in order to underscore the production of models of consumption, desire, and enjoyment committed to the very denial of pleasure, to the practice of asceticism. Following the argument made by Christina’s brother, William, that her poetry was “replete with the spirit of self-postponement,” we might locate the speaker’s moments of *jouissance* (crudely, enjoyment born out of displeasure) not at the happy—that is, normative and normalizing—ending of the poem but within the very processes of the mystification of language and the very moments of self-denial during the erotic exchanges at market.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, if Rossetti intended that the poem be read as a critical renunciation of capitalist commerce and sexuality, as critics have suggested, then we must consider that it is that very act of renunciation that allows for the text’s own production—and enjoyment—in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

## I.

There is a tradition of reading *Goblin Market* as an allegory of various Victorian symptoms. By “allegory” I mean a form of narrative that has a primary, seemingly arbitrary sense that correlates to a secondary, larger narrative, perhaps an actual event, series of events, or cultural condition outside of the text. And by “symptom” I mean an intransigent inconsistency or anomaly that belies the supposed coherence of a structure or system—in this case, the supposedly universal practicability of the mid-nineteenth-century free market. The poem itself has been read, then, as registering increasing public concerns during the Victorian era over female sexuality or purity, drug addiction, and uneven and oppressive division of labor, all of which seem to be resolved neatly by the end of the poem. In the conclusion, Laura reclaims her sexual probity and kicks her drug habit, ostensibly via the brave deed of her sister Lizzie in the face of the goblins’ insidious business, and the two sisters are thus able to resume the heteronor-

mative course of marriage and childbearing.<sup>4</sup> Lizzie's heroic act—she “had to do with goblin merchant men” (474)—staves off the threats of deviant sexual behavior and hostile consumer traffic introduced by the goblins, allowing for the easy introduction of the moral of the allegory at the end of the poem.

This tradition of allegoresis, which has a didactic value proper to bourgeois sensibility, seems to have started during the poem's earliest reception. Caroline Norton, in her 1863 review for *Macmillan's Magazine* of the newly printed *Goblin Market*, pointed to this dual nature of the text:

Is it a fable—or a mere fairy story—or an allegory against the pleasures of sinful love—or what is it? Let us not too rigorously inquire, but accept it in all its quaint and pleasant mystery, and quick and musical rhythm—a ballad which children will con with delight. And which riper minds may ponder over, as we do with poems written in a foreign language which we only half understand.<sup>5</sup>

More recent critics have speculated as to whether or not the poem had an actual didactic, moralizing function for the “sisters” at the Highgate-based penitentiary for “fallen women,” St. Mary Magdalene Home, where Rossetti was working as early as 1859, the year of the poem's composition.<sup>6</sup> Lorraine Kooistra, moreover, traces briefly how the allegorical nature of the poem led to its 1887 reprint in M. A. Wood's *A Second School Poetry Book*, which was “used as a recitation piece in the Middle Forms of High School for girls.”<sup>7</sup> Recent critics, then, seem to have inherited the presumption of the poem's function as allegory; surely, they say, inheriting Norton's transference, Rossetti meant for this simple poem to stand for *something*.

The critical tendency to treat the poem as almost entirely allegorical, however, leaves any internal contradictions and narrative aporias of the text unattended.<sup>8</sup> The plot has its own symptoms, in other words, its own points of internal negation or breakdown. Paradoxically, as with all symptoms in relation to the structure or system in which they manifest, these points of negation prove indispensable for the narrative to function seamlessly. Yet Norton's appeal that we “accept [the poem] in all its quaint and pleasant mystery” seems to have been taken up uncritically by subsequent readers. Rather than completely exploring the poem on a crude narrative level—that is, on the level of plot—readers have been satisfied with a mere “half understand[ing]” of the narrative, more inclined instead to conjecture or “ponder over” hastily what it means *vis-à-vis* history. As I will demonstrate below,

however, the mutually-inflecting wirings of commercial and erotic exchange within the poem prove far more tangled than such readings can brook and are often routed into a kind of short-circuitry. Purely logistical questions of plot and motivation remain unanswerable: What kind of market is the goblin market—that is, what are its means of production and what are its terms of exchange? How is Lizzie, unlike her less fortunate sisters Jeannie and Laura, able to resist the alluring advertisements and the assault of the goblin merchants? Why do the goblins refuse the coin of Lizzie at the moment of purchase? Does she acquire some kind of consumer agency, as indicated by that very resistance? If so, what are its terms? And what really saves Laura? If such questions remain unexplored, the recourse to an allegorical reading seems an increasingly questionable hermeneutic practice that threatens to reify or hypostatize the poem as allegory. At stake, then, is a failure to see the very processes of fetishism, as I will describe later, that the poem works to reveal.

Rossetti herself seems to have emphasized reading the fairy tale on its own terms, insisting that “the poem was not an allegory,” that the poem was only a story, utterly without “any profound or ulterior meaning.”<sup>9</sup> I don’t mean to suggest, along with Rossetti, that *Goblin Market* can remain an unproblematically autotelic text. Quite the contrary: it remains necessary to consider seriously the hidden labor of the poem, to scrutinize the text as one might a commodity. Ultimately, we might be able to glimpse not how the poem phantasmatically translates the bourgeois liberal market and its symptoms into some self-sufficient metanarrative but rather how the poem itself operates by way of and circulates within that very system.

In the 1990s literary critics began to look more attentively at the various economies—political, sexual, and intertextual—staged and exposed by *Goblin Market*. Perhaps in response to Terrence Holt, who charges that critics all too often discuss “the goblins . . . and the issues of sexuality and gender they seem to represent” without regard to “the market,” several critics have pointed to the complicated ways in which the poem’s “issues of sexuality and gender” are always intimately intertwined with those of Victorian business.<sup>10</sup> Yet even in the attempt to situate the poem’s various exchanges within larger narratives of Victorian culture, politics, and market events, readers have generally continued to treat the plot as more or less coherent. Nowhere do I find this critical “half understand[ing]” of the poem’s story more conspicuous than in the discussions concerning the conditions of Lizzie’s resistance to the violent advances of the goblin men.

More specifically, readers have neglected to discuss in strictly economic terms the mysterious nature of Lizzie's coin, the "silver penny" (324) she "tosses" the goblins "for a fee" (389).<sup>11</sup>

Lizzie's "having to do" with the goblin men consists of each party's attempt to set the terms of exchange. To save her sister Laura from her inexplicable wasting away, Lizzie ventures "by the brook" at "twilight" (326) with the intent of buying and carrying away from the goblin men the fruits she thinks will alleviate her sister's fatal condition. Though the goblins instead refuse her terms of transaction and try to force her to "[s]it down and feast" (380) with them on their hitherto irresistible fruits, she remains able to endure the merchant men's violently hard sell. Yet the text does not account for Lizzie's ability to refuse—it only makes explicit what we've already guessed, that those "evil people" would soon grow "Worn out by her resistance" (437–38). The text does, however, offer some hint: by having "put a silver penny in her purse" (324) before her entry into the market, Lizzie somehow arms herself from the goblins' pushy advances. So what is the secret behind Lizzie's silver penny?

In order to get at the nature of Lizzie's consumer agency by way of her coin, we might first investigate the terms of exchange of the goblin market before Lizzie tosses her coin into the fray. After the poem begins by suggesting that the market is always open—"Morning and evening / Maids heard the goblins cry" (1–2)—it quickly begins to list, via the unison cry of the goblins, the market's wares: "Apples and quinces / Lemons and oranges, / Plump unpecked cherries, / Melons and raspberries, / Bloom-down-cheeked peaches, / Swart-headed mulberries" (5–10). It is precisely in the form of the list that we see how the goblin market proceeds by way of fetishism. At the moment the goblins' fruits are introduced into circulation, at the moment they are put into contact with each other both in the market and in the syntax, they "take on the form of a social relation between the products of labour."<sup>12</sup> In the first volume of *Capital*, first published just five years after *Goblin Market*, Marx famously narrates that the imagined—indeed, fantastic—social relation between the products of labor, that is, commodities, arises as a substitute for and a symptom of laborers' alienation from both their labor and each other. Laborers are not only alienated from their work, which, as guaranteed by a liberal market, has assumed a social form, but also from the things produced by their work. Marx argues that capitalism compensates for this three-fold alienation—between laborer and laborer, between laborer and her labor, between the laborer and the product of her

labor—by providing the illusion that the worker’s products, at least, have some social relation, some “life of their own” (C, 165) *vis-à-vis* other products. This compensatory illusion is legitimated precisely by the promise that the labor that produced the social objects itself had a “peculiar social character” in the first place (C, 165). The products of their labor, therefore, are fetishized as they acquire on top of their supposed use-value an imagined social occupation.

It is in this way that the Marxian fetish remains formally homologous to the Freudian fetish: the perverse subject of psychoanalysis, like the alienated subject of capitalism, is doomed to misrecognize the function of some thing as independent of that subject’s own relation to it. In his reading of Marx’s text, Slavoj Žižek describes this “fundamental homology”: “[T]he essential feature of commodity fetishism does not consist of the famous replacement of men with things (‘a relation between men assumes the form of the relation between things’); rather, it consists of a certain misrecognition which concerns the relation between a structured network and one of its elements: what is really a structural effect, an effect of the network of relations between elements, appears as an immediate property of one of the elements, as if this property also belongs to it outside its relation with other elements.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, as a perverse subject of psychoanalysis might misrecognize a foot, hair, or a shoe as the female’s absent phallus, so do subjects of capital misrecognize commodities as social beings all on their own.<sup>14</sup> Both subjects insist on perceiving the “structural effect” of their alienation—the fetishized thing—as self-evident, as if its properties—sociality or the phallus—existed outside of their own dialectical relationship with the thing.

The goblin’s paratactic list serves as the site of the fetishism of the fruits, as the site of their abstraction from their own physical properties and origins of production. In order for the fruits to be made exchangeable, their particularities must first be abstracted so that their value—and, later, their price—might be determined. The goblins’ opening catalogue, as Richard Menke points out, imbricates “twenty-nine kinds of fruit in twenty-nine lines” (“P,” 110), and the effect of this rhetorical piling-up of merchandise is, in the words of Marx, the “guardian of the commodities . . . lend[ing] them his tongue” (C, 189). Put differently, upon coming into representation at market, the fruits become “produce.”<sup>15</sup> Twice in the text the sisters indicate their anxiety of the fruits’ surplus-value, which, for nineteenth-century English economist David Ricardo (and, later, Marx) results from the capitalist’s exploitation of hidden, abstracted labor-power: “Who

knows upon what soil they fed / Their hungry thirsty roots?" (44–45), and "She sucked and sucked and sucked the more / Fruits which that unknown orchard bore" (134–35). While fruits were of course not products of industrial labor as such, both economists and agriculturists observed the increasingly direct relation between manufacture and agriculture in mid-century England. As contemporary economist Léonce de Lavergne, with an eye on market development, then put it: "[T]he distinction between agriculture and manufactures is false: to bring the land into cultivation is also a manufacture, and the transport, the sale, and the purchase of agricultural produce is also a trade."<sup>16</sup> Marx makes the relation more explicit. Turning the statistics of de Lavergne's own uncritical account of agricultural labor practices in England against him—Marx in fact snubs him as "a blind admirer of England" and of capitalism—Marx argues that "the surplus labour of the English agricultural labourer is related to his necessary labour in the ratio of 3:1, which gives a rate of exploitation of 300 per cent" (C, 670 n. 2).<sup>17</sup> Like the sisters, then, who question the location of the fruits' home "soil," one might also be left to conjecture what the labor conditions of the fruitpickers, packers, and preservers were and what form their ghostly labor-power has assumed.<sup>18</sup> Laura also begins to guess—indeed romanticize—the conditions of those origins: "How fair the vine must grow / Whose grapes are so luscious; / How warm the wind must blow / Thro' those fruit bushes" (60–63).<sup>19</sup> And later, after having tasted the fruit, she offers some further speculation on their organic origins—"Pellucid grapes without one seed: / Odorous indeed must be the mead / Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink / With lilies on the brink, / And sugar-sweet their sap" (179–83)—though the poem earlier admits that the "roots" and "orchard" from which the goblins' goods come remain yet "unknown" (135).

The very treatment of *Goblin Market* as an allegory, then, threatens to rehearse the process of fetishism. Like the fruits, the poem seems to "cloy with length of use" (134)—in this case, one "use" might be its didactic function, its function as allegory. But such a use-value might be better seen as a "structural effect," the result of a particular hermeneutic practice, rather than an "immediate property" of the poem, "as if this property also belongs to it outside its relation" with the reading subject. Menke proceeds with his criticism of allegoresis from a slightly different angle. Drawing from Marx, he suggests that the goblins' fruits, with their "unknown roots," "stand revealed as pure exchange value, pure commodity" ("P," 126). Menke then argues that by having revealed the very process of obscuration of the fruits' origins,

the poem indicates a self-reflexivity on its own mystical nature, as both commodity and allegory. More specifically, *Goblin Market* “incisively locates the play of surface and secret in the commodity and suggests the perils presented by its inarguable allure. As the poem obscures the roots of the goblin fruit, frustrates attempts to pin down its own allegory, and demonstrates the curious attraction of such obscurity and frustration, it seems implicitly to recognize the mystified character of the commodity, and the way in which it simultaneously acquiesces to . . . and thwarts vision” (“P,” 126). Thus the language of the poem self-consciously—and, indeed, with a “life of [its] own”—alludes to its own work of mystification and to itself as an object of mystification. Its content reveals its form: by showing, in its content, how commodities are fetishized, it leaves exposed how it operates, in form, by similar processes of fetishism. Put another way, the text bares its own act of veiling, of the labor-power expressed by the fruit-commodity, on a micro-level, as well as of some historical correlative or parallel to its primary sense, on a macro-level. Like the taunting speaker of Rossetti’s “Winter: My Secret,” which points to its own function as “a shawl, / A veil, a cloak, and other wraps,” the text thus *reveals* that it withholds secrets.<sup>20</sup>

## II.

Laura’s fetishistic romanticization or aestheticization of the fruit’s provenance results not only from the very form of the list but also from the way in which the list is recited. The poem’s own confusion of sexual and consumer exchange repeats itself in the frequent rehearsal of the goblins’ phrase “Come buy,” in which payment for the merchants’ goods promises erotic climax. The goblins’ cataloguing of the various commodities—a “spectacle de la marchandise,” to be sure—both guarantees and provides synesthetic pleasure. Let us listen in on the goblins:

“Come buy our orchard fruits,  
 Come buy, come buy:  
 Apples and quinces,  
 Lemons and oranges,  
 Plump unpecked cherries,  
 Melons and raspberries,  
 Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,  
 .....  
 All ripe together  
 In summer weather,—

.....  
 Come buy, come buy:  
 Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
 Pomegranates full and fine,  
 .....  
 Taste them and try:  
 Currants and gooseberries,  
 Bright-fire-like barberries,  
 Figs to fill your mouth,  
 Citrons from the South,  
 Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;  
 Come buy, come buy.”  
 (3–9, 15–16, 19–21, 25–31)

The listing of the various fruits promises *and* provides pleasure, then, as the list is both framed with the phrase assuring consumer enjoyment (again, “Come buy”) and is *itself* visually alluring and poetically seductive. The text incites one to consume conspicuously, to abide by the appeal to one’s senses uncritically.<sup>21</sup> The very arrangement of the list mimics a masculinist erotic cadence, as it scans as an impressive blitz of spondees and trochees, establishing the aggressive dynamics of this speaker/interlocutor erogenous exchange: “Rare pears and greengages, / Damsons and bilberries, / Taste them and try” (23–25). It’s not incidental, therefore, that the pivotal phrase “Come buy” is itself very close to a true spondee. The beat of the merchant clamor rouses a type of consumer delirium through the virtually incessant stressing of each long syllable; anyone who comes into contact with the “cry” (2) is meant to fall hysterically into the snare of the commercial and erotic transaction. So while the goblins claim that the fruits themselves are both delicious and beautiful, the advertisement itself similarly proves “Sweet to tongue and sound to eye.” Moreover, the “sugar-baited” (234) announcement of the fruits not only initiates the movement of exchange in the goblin market, it might also make the goods unnaturally sweeter. In an uncannily pertinent metaphor, Marx locates this dulcineaic effect at the very beginning of the circulation of labor-products: “Commodities first enter into the process of exchange unglided and unsweetened, retaining their original home-grown shape” (C, 199).

The goblins demonstrate an uncanny prescience in providing something like postmodernist hype, or, at least, in the production of fervent mass-consumer desire through the performance of advertising. It is not just the taste of the fruits that Laura pines for but also the taste of the very text sweetening them:

Listening ever but not catching  
The customary cry,  
“Come buy, come buy,”  
With its iterated jingle  
Of sugar-baited words:

.....  
Laura turned cold as stone  
To find that her sister heard that cry  
alone,  
That goblin cry,  
“Come buy our fruits, come buy.”

.....  
Day after day, night after night,  
Laura kept watch in vain  
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.  
She never caught again the goblin cry:  
“Come buy, Come buy;”—

(230–34, 253–56, 269–73)

Part of the pleasure from the goods within this goblin market remains in the reception of the sales pitch, part of the sweetness in the “jingle,” the “sugar-baited words.” It should be noted here that while the term “jingle” did not circulate as a genre of product advertisement until 1937, the goblins (and Rossetti) display a keen understanding of how hype produces desire in an increasingly consumer capitalist economy.<sup>22</sup> Syntactically, Laura does not only fail to “come by” her inability to eat the goblin fruits but also by her inability to hear the goblin’s advertisement. After a whole day of anticipating erotic fulfillment in the marketplace, after “bow[ing] her head to hear” (34) the customer-satisfying “customary cry,” she can only “Trudge . . . home, her pitcher dripping all the way” (263).

The goblin’s commercial text begs its own performance—its very articulation promises to be as gratifying as the fruits themselves. The act of reading then is intimately related to the act of eating. An oral recital of the single line “Plump unpecked cherries” might, for example, mimic the movement of the mouth in taking a bite into a large, plump fruit: the two mouth-widening, mouth-filling “uh” vowels, framed by the close-lipped “p” and “mp” consonants, are followed by a phrase (“. . . ecked cherries”) whose diction and vowel sounds might simulate a chewing motion. The very act of speaking the line compels us to eat it: the progress of the articulation of consonants travels from our lips to the back of our teeth and tongue. Indeed, in this performance of eating—or goblin’—the poem, we might recall that the very form of

the “spondee” itself has its origins in the Greek ritual of consumption: it is supposed to have been traditionally “‘used at a libation,’ i.e., poured to the accompaniment of the two long notes.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, similar to the way that the goblins later coerce Lizzie to “open lip from lip” so that they may “cram a mouthful in” (431, 432), the text in this catalogue entices you “to fill your mouth,” though far less violently, with its own recitation. Like the children who might “con” the poem “with delight,” as Norton predicts, we are tempted to consume the text at the risk of growing chemically dependent on the pleasure it provides. This pleasure out of recitation might have been especially bittersweet for Rossetti’s contemporary audiences, since, as Menke points out, 1859 proved a particularly low-yield year for fruit harvesting in England, and so “fresh fruit would indeed have been largely the stuff of fantasy” (“P,” 109). Thus all the fruit that the audience might be left with was that found in the poem *qua* commodity, which approaches what Jean Baudrillard terms the “hyperreal,” the fruit “more real than real,” the final form of the fetish.<sup>24</sup>

### III.

Laura gains in her transactions with the goblins not only desire (if one can really call the engendering of desire contingent upon lack a “gain”) but concomitant knowledge: knowledge of sexual pleasure—that is, what it means to “Come” by “buying”—as well as knowledge of her power as consumer. Because she already bears a form of exchange in her body—her golden curls—she (mis)recognizes her infinite ability to purchase her sexual pleasure. But why does gold seem to afford this power?

Marx describes gold as the expressed condensation of the value of commodities, as the tangible, universal equivalent to and embodiment of their otherwise abstract value: “The first main function of gold is to supply commodities with the material for the expression of their values, or to represent their values as magnitudes of the same denomination. . . . It thus acts as a universal measure of value, and only through performing this function does gold, the specific equivalent commodity, become money” (C, 188). It would seem, then, that for Marx there is something about gold that makes it a natural substance functioning as the embodiment of abstract value, “as if this property also belongs to it outside its relation with other elements.” Hence the “currency principle,” implemented in the Bank Charter Act of 1844, which insisted that the amount of currency in circulation always cor-

respond to the quantity of gold in the country, also known as the gold content. But later Marx qualifies this seemingly inherent capacity for gold to serve as an expression of value by identifying it as a fetish, as a “structural effect” of the market. This misrecognition occurs in the dialectic between commodities and gold. As Marx puts it, gold

is the absolutely alienable commodity, because it is all other commodities divested of their shape, the product of their universal alienation. It reads all prices backwards, and thus as it were *mirrors itself in the bodies* of all other commodities, which provide the material through which it can come into being as a commodity. (C, 205, my emphasis)

In something of a paradox, Marx suggests that the very function or use-value of gold-money as a commodity embodying value arises out of its imaginary social relation—its exchange-value—with other commodities. Gold achieves its identity as the positive condensation of value by “mirroring itself in the bodies of all other commodities,” by facing negative expressions, “commodities divested of their shape.” Its very function, then, as the embodiment of value—its use-value—originates out of a fundamental *méconnaissance*—a misrecognition of its relation with other things. Thus, Marx describes here, “as it were,” the tenuous dialectic of what Jacques Lacan might call gold’s mirror stage.<sup>25</sup>

Yet *vis-à-vis* the fruits hawked in the goblin market, gold does not already carry its identity as the expression of collective, abstracted value, as described by Marx. In fact, gold does not appear in the poem as money-form—at least in its conventional sense, that is, as payment in a transaction—at all. Rather, it appears primarily as a use-value. On one hand, gold—the physical thing—is used in the shape of a serving dish for the goblin merchants’ wares: “One hauls of a basket / One hauls a plate, / One lugs a golden dish / Of many pounds weight” (56–59). This vulgar use of gold is later recalled by Laura, who dreams of “melons icy-cold / Piled on a dish of gold” (175–76). The goblin’s use for gold, then, is not “to supply [the fruits] with the material for the expression of their values” but rather to supply the fruits a literal material on which their abstract values might later be determined. On the other hand, gold also wields a use-value in the poem in a very different way: the text uses it as a referent in comparison, as a material that lends its color and affective qualities to other objects by virtue of naming. The sisters are repeatedly described as having “golden heads” (41, 123, 126, 184, 191, 409, 540); the only gold that Laura thinks she has is “on the furze / That shakes in windy weather / Above the rusty heather” (120–22); during her gathering work, “Lizzie plucked purple

and rich golden flags” (220); the gold on Lizzie’s head appreciates by the simile used during her trial by the merchant men: “Like a beacon left alone / In a hoary roaring sea, / Sending up a golden fire” (412–14); Laura’s redemption is marked by a new day, at the dawn of which “early reapers plodded to the place / Of golden sheaves” (531–32). In these passages, the use of gold arises out of its citation: it is material first—an immanent thing with physical properties and practical functions—and then found commonly outside in nature and in the poem.

Indeed, gold grows naturally in the idyllic landscape, usually in the form of uncultivated flora: on the furze, a prickly, evergreen shrub growing wild throughout England and the continent; in the “flags,” plants with sword-shaped leaves, by the “reedy brook” (216); in the wheat, which is then reaped and bundled into “golden sheaves”; and, in turn, on the very heads of the sisters, who themselves grow, alongside the golden vegetation, in the wild. Thus, instead of signaling gold as already the “specific equivalent commodity,” the text uses it to stamp value onto the idealized idyllic nature of the sisters’ landscape. *Goblin Market* threatens to stage, then, via use-value, an improbable obverse of the crude formula of supply and demand: it is not that gold comes to be universally desired because of its *rarity*, but rather it is because of its weed-like ubiquity that it becomes fetishized.

Yet within the text’s economics of language, gold does have other “values,” which seem to be established over against its “length of use”: its functions lead one to its aesthetic and moral value. The sisters’ hair typifies purity, as implied by the fact that Laura’s golden locks are among the first things to symptomatize the violent, polluting effects of the fruit: “Her hair grew thin and gray” (277); the grain, in the sisters’ ostensibly pre-market lifestyle, projects their fantastic self-sufficiency, their independence from surplus-value; the coupling of purple and “rich golden” flags hearkens royal pageantry; the emergence of the “golden fire” (414) in the face of the “hoary roaring sea” (413) redoubles the *jouissance* of Lizzie’s inviolable sanctity. The values of the text, in turn, remain intertwined with the value of gold—so when the goblins attack Lizzie, “Mad to tug her standard down” (421), they are assaulting, in part, the poem’s internal gold “standard.”

But why would aesthetic and moral value emerge in the form of gold? Why, in the sisters’ ostensibly capital-free, self-sufficient way of life, would gold seem to embody value after all? Precisely because the poem rehearses the impossibility of the coming-to-value of gold: it is not so much that gold provides the material expression of value by its uses in the text but rather that the text cites these images of nature

as “golden” to lend them its value along with its character, since gold already announces value by virtue of being gold. The fetishism of gold is primordial. It is by reference to the substance of gold, then, that the sisters’ heads, the flowers on the furze, the flags Lizzie picks, and the weather-proof beacon acquire their market value and, perhaps more importantly, their aesthetic and moral value within the economy of the poem. Indeed, during her transaction with the goblins, Laura nominates gold as one of the forms of payment she lacks (see 120)—corroborating the text’s recounting earlier that “Laura stared but did not stir, / Longed but had no money” (105–6)—which suggests that even though the sisters are entirely green when it comes to money-based commercial exchange, they still act as if guided by a fetishistic illusion.

The gold found throughout the poem, therefore, exceeds the poem’s dialectics of value and values. The poem seems to establish a clear disparity between the sisters’ self-sufficient, non-exploitative, pre-market space—where the sisters enact “on an economic level the hermeticism of their domestic scene”—and the goblins’ profit-making, violently capitalist, mobile fair.<sup>26</sup> Yet the text’s uses of gold, with its presumption of *a priori* value, vex this temporal division by dramatizing a fetishism of gold before the advent of capitalism or what amounts to the same thing, the proleptic naturalization of the gold standard. As we found in the goblin’s serving ware, gold turns up not just in nature but also within the bodies of produced objects. On the night of Laura’s fall, the two sisters fall asleep in each other’s arms:

Golden head by golden head,  
 Like two pigeons in one nest  
 Folded in each other’s wings,  
 They lay down in the curtained bed:  
 Like two blossoms on one stem,  
 Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow,  
 Like two wands of ivory  
 Tipped with gold for awful kings.  
 (184–91)

The text here assumes the form of the “curtained bed” by tucking the two sisters in among similes garnered from nature, thereby privatizing their sleep by the same poetic devices. The very curtaining or screening of their slumber—a process of mystification to be sure—has two immediate effects. First, the submersion in simile suspends the animation of the scene, an almost ekphrastic arrest of movement made stark against the second effect, the incessant motion of time driven by the “Like”-s. Time itself is curtained here. The similes conjured move us not only

from spring to winter in a matter of two lines, but also immediately to some obscured, archaic, “awful” scene. The art-objects Laura and Lizzie are metonymically likened to here—the ivory wands tipped with gold for “awful kings”—foreclose on the possibility of identifying the poem’s historical location, thereby intensifying the fantastic, ambiguous nature of the sister’s world. This feeling of historical defamiliarization is intensified when the terms of production pointed to by the text are accounted for. The seemingly use-valueless apparatuses forged for the obscure “awful kings” (who recall Shelley’s “Ozymandias”) call to mind a system of production still bound to a fetishistic master/slave—or “awful” king/artisan—dialectic. The point here is that even the work done for the awful kings—completed out of commission, tribute, or enslavement—presumes the aesthetic value of gold. Gold is therefore shown to be fetishized even *before* the emergence of surplus-value proper to capitalism, before, that is, the “de-fetishization in the ‘relations between men’ was paid for by the emergence of fetishism in the ‘relations between things’—by commodity fetishism” (S, 26).<sup>27</sup>

Still, one also finds in *Goblin Market* another exchange by which things golden come to serve as the positive embodiment of value. As seen earlier, Marx suggests that this “first main function” of gold emerges at the moment when gold “reads all prices backwards, and thus as it were mirrors itself in the bodies of all other commodities.” In *Goblin Market*, Rossetti foregrounds this spectacle as well, *avant la lettre*, though in something of a more literal manner: if held to a mirror—that is, if “read backwards”—the “body” of the word “golden” might be seen as the imperfect reversal of “goblin.” To “read backwards” in this way does not seem like such a leap considering that the very trope for vision in the poem—“peep” (49)—is itself a palindrome, a fact all the more significant considering that until Dante Gabriel, Christina’s brother, suggested “Goblin Market,” the poem went by Christina’s original title, *A Peep at the Goblins*.<sup>28</sup> Treating “golden” and “goblin” as a kind of antimetabole, as a material reversal of vision, helps uncover ways in which the goblin brothers and maiden sisters relate not so much as abstract doubles but as the very material terms in the poem’s economics of language. Moreover, the poem’s language of values—moral and aesthetic—work to mystify and reveal a language of economics on loan or even “purloined” from a properly Victorian commercial lexicon. Yet that very work of mystification—of “curtaining” the scene—remains itself undraped. The text’s self-conscious acts of mystification—its veiling of productive origins and meaning, its paratactic mode of marketing, its occlusion of plot—confess its

ambivalent collusion with and participation in the market it might at other moments seem to criticize.

IV.

If, as suggested earlier, gold exceeds the poem's system of value and values, then what place does Lizzie's silver penny occupy? How does it function in this economy? And where—or, rather, when—did it come from? Even more than do the ivory wands tipped with gold for awful kings, Lizzie's silver penny vexes the poem's temporal location—the penny itself seems to be both ancient and modern. Menke esteems Lizzie's acquisition of the coin as “the central mystery of the poem,” fancying that this acquisition is accomplished “by a sort of primitive accumulation beyond the purview of *Goblin Market*, with its determined separation of the domestic and commercial economies” (“P,” 127). He qualifies this conjecture in a gloss: “Marx claims that the mysterious ‘so-called primitive accumulation . . . plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology’” (“P,” 146 n. 63). As already seen, however, despite whatever “determin[ation]” the poem might have in separating the domestic and commercial economies, such a distinction proves unstable. Lizzie's silver penny symptomatizes the impossibility of sustaining this division; to tease out an analogy made earlier, the silver penny comes to hold the place of the broken or shorted circuit. Menke's suggestion that Lizzie gets hold of it “by a sort of primitive accumulation” merely begs the question; his choice of words—“mystery” and “sort”—repeat the very *form* of the symptom that the silver coin determines. (And this repetition of form is precisely why Menke is right.) Yet why might the symptom take the form of the silver penny?

The conjectural readings offered below are not provided to suggest that the poem's complex performance of intertextual economic play, which the silver penny best embodies, can be fully accounted for. Rather, they are meant to underscore the indeterminacy of the source of Lizzie's and the poem's money—a condition, perhaps, resulting from the process of exchange proper to capitalism itself: “Since every commodity disappears when it becomes money, it is impossible to tell from the money itself how it got into the hands of its possessor, or what article has been changed into it. *Non olet* [‘It (money) has no smell’], from whatever source it may come” (C, 205, Marx's translation). And it is in this way that Lizzie's silver penny—and, in fact, all money—eludes historicization.

The trope of the silver penny bears its own moral, economic, and religious values outside of the text and seems to be trafficked into *Goblin Market* for them. In Christ's "Parable of the Lost Coin," the silver coin stands in as the found or redeemed sinner: "[W]hat woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."<sup>29</sup> We might esteem Lizzie's own penny, then, as both the silver coin lost and found by the "woman" in the parable and, by something of a reverse metonymy, the parable itself, the transparent and cautionary tale circulating as portable property in a Christian ethos.<sup>30</sup> What Lizzie arms herself with, then, may in fact be the knowledge of and, more importantly, the faith in the redemption that the parable exemplifies and therefore supplies. The correspondence—indeed, the complicated system of exchange—between the parable and *Goblin Market* remains beyond the focus of this paper, though the critical differences should be highlighted. Whereas Luke's parable makes transparent the moral of the tale, Rossetti's poem, as suggested earlier, self-consciously frustrates vision itself. Relatedly, while the "woman" can "rejoice" for finding her lost coin, Lizzie seems never to have to look for it in the first place, and is therefore barred by the text from her own rejoicing, her own *jouissance*.

The history of the silver penny in England—only a crude sketch of which can be offered here—further imbricates the already confounded provenance of Lizzie's coin.<sup>31</sup> First introduced in the eighth century, the silver penny's value—and desirability—coincided with the precious metal it was made of, and, for this reason, it became one of the most esteemed—and most hoarded—denomination coins in circulation. By 1797, however, during the reign of George III, the silver material was replaced with copper—not insignificantly, the body of the new penny had to be doubled in weight so that the supposedly inferior metal would comply with the promised value imprinted on its face.<sup>32</sup> The minting of silver pennies, however, continued in the form of "Maundy coins," coins ceremoniously tossed out by a monarch to the chosen poor during a procession on the Thursday before Easter. Originally, this Maundy observance (which is the subject of one of Rossetti's later devotional pieces) consisted of the hand-washing of the feet of those poor by prominent dignitaries and ecclesiastics, in ritualistic imitation of Christ's own humble act of ablution during the Last Supper. By the

fifteenth century, however, this performance of *noblesse oblige* was replaced almost entirely by the distribution of Maundy money.<sup>33</sup> Here then might be seen the convergence of one type of fetishism—the relation between master and slave—with another—the “relations between things.” That is, a fundamental fetishistic misrecognition that conceals “real” social relations has merely shifted, from a relationship of unquestioned patronage and servitude to one where the products of labor seem engaged in their own social relations.

If read as Maundy money, then, Lizzie’s penny offers her a form of resistance based not so much upon faith in the promise of redemption, which the coin-*qua*-parable might provide, but rather upon faith in a more secular symbolic authority. The silver penny, as a commodity, participates in an imagined network of social relations. Unlike the fruits, however, the silver must undergo further abstraction in capitalism: money can only function as the condensation of exchange if, first, its social character is abstracted from the metal it is made of and, second, it is abstracted into a “universally equivalent form.”<sup>34</sup> The stamping of the penny’s value onto the body of the coin guarantees this second abstraction—the very condition of the physical body of the coin, thus, comes to bear no consequence on the coin’s value.<sup>35</sup> Yet the Maundy ceremony, which borrows from capitalism the already abstracted silver penny, abstracts it yet again: since the silver penny is now only minted specifically for the ritual, it no longer functions as standard currency in normative capitalist exchange. Instead, it functions to sustain symbolically the contract that Christ initiates and that the monarch is thereafter obliged formally to repeat. The fetishism of the silver penny, therefore, is altogether distinct from that of ordinary money: not only does it conceal real social relations between persons—as does the copper penny in normative capitalist exchange—but it also conceals *another scene of fetishism*, the mystical reciprocal bond between patrons and their subjects.

Regardless of whether or not Lizzie does introduce a Maundy silver penny, however, her act bespeaks her as the character with the most faith in capitalism—indeed, her very agency emerges from veiled, nonequivalent modes of exchange and the affected social relations practiced therein. As Laura’s condition has her “knocking at Death’s door” (321), Lizzie “weigh[s] no more / Better and worse” (322–23), “put[s] a silver penny in her purse” (324), and heads for the brook, where the goblin meet her excitedly, “hobbling, / Flying, running, leaping, / Puffing and blowing, / Chuckling, clapping, crowing, / Clucking and gobbling, / Mopping and mowing” (331–36). “Full of airs and graces, /

Pulling wry faces, / Demure grimaces” (337–39), the merchant men assault her, not only with their customary cries and tantalizing wares, but, first, with a retailer’s obsequious, affected affection: “Hugged her and kissed her, / Squeezed and caressed her: / Stretched up their dishes, / Panniers, and plates” (348–51). Establishing a cozy retailer/consumer relation, they then reiterate their “sugar-baited” jingle, to which Lizzie’s sisters have earlier surrendered. “Mindful” of Laura and Jeanie’s impulse buys, however, Lizzie arrives with a plan to purchase (having “for the first time in her life / . . . listen[ed] and look[ed]” [327–28]), and therefore returns the merchants’ sly “civil[ity]” (395) by assuming the part of customer. Yet Lizzie here also dons the role of monarch, if only provisionally, as she rehearses the ceremonious pomp of a sovereign during Maundy day:

“Good folk,” said Lizzie,  
 Mindful of Jeanie:  
 “Give me much and many:”—  
 Held out her apron,  
 Tossed them her penny.  
 (363–67)

Herself now “Full of airs and graces,” Lizzie does not only take up this character by “toss[ing] her penny” to the goblins but also by demanding that her new allegiant subjects—the “Good folk”—fulfill the terms of the dialectic she sets into motion. Her injunction (“Give me much and many”) obliges them to act in accordance with the reciprocity constituting such a relation, reinforced by her having “Held out her apron” to catch their provisions. Thus the silver penny Lizzie tosses need not be an actual Maundy coin after all, as the Maundy ritual itself, like the Parable of the Lost Coin, circulates freely as a text with abstracted value. In other words, it matters less that she tosses an actual Maundy penny than that she cites the Maundy ceremony through the performative gesture of the toss. So although they deny the demand of their new sovereign, the goblins nonetheless respond appropriately to the dialectic she establishes: “‘Nay take a seat with us, / Honour and eat with us,’ / They answered grinning: / ‘Our feast is but beginning. . . . Sit down and feast with us’” (368–71, 380). As Lizzie shifts the terms of the relation, then, from one between customer and retailer to one between sovereign and subject, a curious thing happens: the goblins for the first time articulate a collective subjectivity not directly invested in commerce. Instead, in this collective imaginary self, they act more interested in carrying out hospitality fit for royalty. Lizzie’s coin helps

sanction their interpellation by lending her its symbolic authority. If, as seen earlier, the Maundy silver penny, as fetishized commodity, veils both the social relations between persons as well as another form of fetishism—the “maundatory” relation between ruler and subject—then Lizzie, “Mindful,” here, “of Jeanie,” uses the silver penny to veil the very terms of the erotic, commercial relation determined earlier between the goblins and her sisters. Lizzie acquires a sense of agency in the goblin market, therefore, by provisionally displacing one form of fetishism with another.

The goblins act, almost pathologically, as if the dialectical relation instated by Lizzie, one that conjures up some *ancien régime*, were an “immediate property” of their exchange rather than a “structural effect.” When the good folks withhold their much and many from Lizzie, their justification of this denial of her rightful produce hinges on the fruits’ extraordinary rate of bodily decay, on their rather literal “Half”-life. As the goblins put it:

“Such fruits as these  
No man can carry;  
Half their bloom would fly,  
Half their dew would dry,  
Half their flavour would pass by.  
Sit down and feast with us,  
Be welcome guest with us,  
Cheer you and rest with us.”

(375–82)

However incomparably pleasurable, addictive, and desired their fruits might be within the marketplace, they decompose, according to the merchant men, after they are exported from the scene of exchange. Whether or not the goblins’ disclaimer here is reliable, it is telling that they admit the possibility of the fruits’ corporeal corruption—and, thus, depreciation—*vis-à-vis* Lizzie’s affected sovereignty—a phantasmatic sovereignty, as suggested earlier, braced by the silver penny. For if the goblins index the value of a commodity alongside the condition—or, more precisely, the corruptibility—of its material body, then the fruits they push cannot possibly equal the value of Lizzie’s silver penny.<sup>36</sup> Owing to the abstractions that make it money in the first place, the coin seems to bear some “body within its body,” to have been issued not merely out of silver but out of some “*sublime* material,” “exempted from the effects of wear and tear” (*S*, 18). Žižek describes this structural effect of money in his discussion of its “material character”—not “the empirical, material stuff that money is made of,” but rather “that

other ‘indestructible and immutable’ body which persists beyond the corruption of the body physical.” “This immaterial corporality of the ‘body within the body,’” he continues, “gives us a precise definition of the sublime object” (S, 18). While the goblins may not in fact recognize this abstract “body within the body” of the coin, they nonetheless *behave* as if they do. By admitting and complying with the fetishistic, phantasmatic relation established by Lizzie and supported by the toss of her coin, they are perhaps acting as if the tossed coin were a “sublime object.” By confessing the fruits’ susceptibility to depreciation resulting from their “wear and tear,” they seem to reveal their terror of the unassailable value of the silver penny, as if it indeed consists “of an immutable substance, a substance over which time has no power, and which stands in antithetic contrast to any matter found in nature.”<sup>37</sup>

Lizzie’s fetishizing tactics, however, may have worked too well. Indeed, the goblins seem no longer able to recognize a relationality outside of the affected sovereign/“Good folk” dialectic, to detect a reality not supported by Lizzie’s projected fantasy. Such persistence in their misrecognition, indeed, marks the “pathology” of the goblins’ behavior cited earlier. After the civil goblin folk invite Lizzie to join them and share their feast of fruits, she politely declines (“Thank you” [383]), attempts to bring the talk to a close (“So without further parleying” [385]), and, “mindful” (364) now of Laura (“one waits / At home for me” [383–84]), resumes the language of commerce: “If you will not sell me any / Of your fruits tho’ much and many, / Give me back my silver penny / I tossed you for a fee” (386–89). Turning the discussion back to the business she came for, the purchase of fruits, Lizzie attempts, then, to “de-fetishize” the relation she introduces in the first place—to return to the Marxian fetish, the “social relation between things.” Yet the goblins do not resume this capitalist relation, and, after calling her “proud, / Cross-grained, uncivil” (394–95), proceed to attack her with the unrelenting mob violence of gang rape: “They trod and hustled her, / Elbowed and jostled her, / Clawed with their nails. . . . cuffed and caught her, / Coaxed and fought her, / Bullied and besought her, / Scratched her, pinched her black as ink, / Kicked and knocked her, / Mauled and mocked her” (399–401, 424–29). Such violence can only ever amount to an impotent acting-out, to be sure: impotent not only because, as we see later, Lizzie is able to escape and “[go] her way” (448) to Laura with only “a smart, ache, tingle” (447), but, more importantly, because the goblins’ assault, marked by such insipid verbs, seems the most aesthetically uninspired, unimaginative way of confronting the unbearable sublime object.<sup>38</sup> It’s not surprising,

therefore, that their impulsive recourse to aggression is marked by their own poetic silencing in the text: the acts marking their assault, piled on top of each other like the fruits they bring to market, are mere specters of the language they “charm” (65) with earlier.

Lizzie’s resistance is mediated by money as well as by an economic use of language. Whatever agency the coin affords her allows Lizzie not only to resist as consumer but also to fend off violent sexual assault. Yet Lizzie does not just wield money—she *is* money. Or, more precisely, she is, as the text asserts twice, “tender” (299, 405). Before Lizzie “put a silver penny in her purse,” the text cites her as “Tender Lizzie” (299), characterizing her, on one hand, as “kind, loving, gentle, mild, affectionate”—the traits of a normatively proper Victorian woman—which is precisely why she “cannot bear / To watch her sister’s cankerous care” (299–300).<sup>39</sup> Similarly, she could be described here according to another, more obsolete definition as “one who tends, or waits upon, another; an attendant, nurse, ministrant.” But, on the other hand, the poem also cites her here as “money,” “as currency prescribed by law as that in which payment may be made”—that is, as “legal tender.” The poem therefore abstracts Lizzie in two distinct, and distinctly bourgeois, ways: she becomes both feminine ideality and the very material of capitalist exchange.

*Goblin Market’s* uses of this term “tender” illustrate how economically efficient—indeed, how miserly—the text’s own work of partial veiling itself can be. Lizzie’s very agency in the face of the goblin’s assault, moreover, might very well be the profit from such efficiency, as still another meaning of “tender” is precisely that which arrives to fend off the goblin merchants. The very phrase “merchant man” (70) is purloined from a properly Victorian lexicon, the textual economy no longer simply outside the phantasmatic space of the poem. “Merchant man” not only describes the occupation of the goblins, as in a conventional usage of the phrase, but it also cites, as Menke points out, the figure of the goblin as a ship of commerce, as “a vessel employed in conveying freight or passengers, as distinguished from a national vessel, and from vessels in the revenue service, coast survey, etc’; a private commercial ship involved in the movement of people or goods; that is, a trading ship” (“P,” 116).<sup>40</sup> Menke then speculates on the mystified origins of the goblins *qua* trading ships—treating them, rightly, as fetishized commodities themselves, he suggests that “it seems more than coincidental that the homelands of the exotic animals [“wombat,” “ratel,” “parrot” (75, 76, 112)] associated with the goblin men describe the Southern hemisphere in general and Britain’s colonies there in particular” (“P,” 117–18).

This understanding of the “merchant man” as a commercial ship, foreign or not, ought to be read, I would suggest, in conjunction with the poem’s characterization of the goblin men as foot-soldiers of the market.<sup>41</sup> As suggested earlier, the masculinist, spondaic cadence of the goblin’s customary “jingle” induces a kind of customer hysteria. Such a reaction from advertising is hardly accidental, especially for the mid-Victorian female shopper, which Laura seems to be, at least in part, modeled after. As Rachel Bowlby stresses, “[T]he existence of such supposedly natural, irrational urges in customers was actually the result of a rigorously rational entrepreneurial scheme.”<sup>42</sup> It’s no wonder, then, that the “penny . . . / Bouncing in [Lizzie’s] purse / . . . was music to her ear” (452–54), since its “jingle” (452) may have served as a means of warding off the goblins’ own. The poem underscores early on the aggressiveness of the merchant capitalist by characterizing, notably in trochees, the goblin movements as martial in nature: “up the mossy glen / Turned and trooped the goblin men”; “When they reached where Laura was / They stood stock still upon the moss, / Leering at each other / Brother with queer brother; / Signalling each other” (87–88, 91–95). The poem resumes this soldierly tenor, as we see later, in the description of Lizzie’s fortitude in the face of goblin violence: “Like a royal virgin town . . . Close beleaguered by a fleet / Mad to tug her standard down” (418, 420–21).

If the goblin “merchant men,” thus, might be seen as both a capitalist and a military company, then it is with the arrival of “Tender Lizzie,” or Lizzie as “Tender,” that they are fended off. A third meaning of “tender,” also trafficked into the poem’s textual exchange from a properly mid-nineteenth-century lexicon, is that of a maritime craft, “a small vessel used to attend on large vessels, as in supplying provisions, landing passengers mails; . . . a dispatch boat.”<sup>43</sup> Though in maritime speak “tender” traditionally referred to a “vessel commissioned to attend men-of-war, chiefly for supplying provisions and munitions of war, also for conveying intelligence, dispatches, etc.,” by the mid-nineteenth century, it had come to signify, under the authority of the British Royal Navy, a “vessel commissioned to act (in any capacity) under the orders of another vessel.”<sup>44</sup> It is as something of a dispatch boat, then, that Lizzie is deployed to the rescue of Laura in the face of the goblins’ “fleet” of “merchant men,” which is precisely why the goblins, in their impuissance, “[s]tamp” (405) on Lizzie’s “tender feet” (405), and so on her poetic measure or “standard.” Finally, the poem acts miserly in that it partially hoards these other senses of “tender” like stashed cash, in some reserve tucked away behind the narrative

surface. Such saving seems all the more worthwhile since “tender” itself not only serves as a material condensation of exchange but simultaneously supplies provisions and conveys intelligence—all, perhaps, in a “kind, loving, gentle, mild, affectionate” manner. Thus, it is through this very circulation within the poem that money or tender possesses, in not an altogether different way, a “body within a body.”

Is Lizzie’s coin, then, the sublime object in the economy of the poem? The assault of the goblins “At last” (437) finishes when the “evil people” (437), “Worn out by her resistance” (438), finally heed Lizzie’s demand and “fl[i]ng back her penny” (439). Yet the penny hardly has the effect of the “sublime” in the text. As discussed earlier, its sudden appearance in the poem—“Lizzie weighed no more / Better and worse / But put a silver penny in her purse”—does not bring about Lizzie’s *jouissance*, as it does, for example, for the woman who “rejoices” in the Parable of the Lost Coin. (Indeed, there seems more possibility for *jouissance* in the anxious moments *before* Lizzie turns to the penny, in the “weigh[ing]” of “Better and worse.”) In the same way, the silver penny does not incite the unbearable feeling of simultaneous pleasure and terror in the text itself, as indicated by that very sudden—yet entirely casual—appearance.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the inversion might be true: precisely because the language detailing the appearance of the silver penny is so *blasé*—precisely because the language here neither struggles with pleasure and displeasure nor laments its own limitation as a mode of representation—the text forecloses on the possibility of the coin being the sublime object.

So what are the goblins terrified of? While Lizzie’s silver penny has appeared a viable candidate, there seems to be a still more “sublime object” in and of this exchange, another thing whose body is made of an “immutable substance,” “exempted from the effects of wear and tear”—Tender Lizzie herself. When Žižek describes the “immaterial corporeality” of money, the “other ‘indestructible and immutable’ body” which exceeds and outlives the physical body it inhabits, he uses an apposite simile to illustrate this sublime material, to “give us a precise definition of the sublime object”: “[T]his other body of money is like the corpse of the Sadeian victim which endures all torments and survives with its beauty immaculate” (S, 18). Žižek here helps us see how Lizzie might stand in as the sublime object of the poem. On one hand, Lizzie can indeed be read as bearing the “other body” of a Sadeian victim/subject: while the goblins “trod and hustled her, / Elbowed and jostled her,” while they in fact tear what she wears (“Tore her gown and soiled her stocking, / Twitched her hair out by the roots” [403–4]),

she nevertheless “endures all torments and survives with [her] beauty immaculate.” In this sense, Lizzie still occupies the two bodies of the sovereign—one mortal, one eternal—thereby unwittingly acknowledging the fetishistic relation maintained by the goblins.

On the other hand, the very form of Žižek’s own correlation of the sublime object with the Sadeian body demonstrates how that object of the sublime cannot, by “definition,” be defined—how its content eludes immediate representation. In this particular case, the “precise definition” of the sublime object can in fact only be approximated, announced in the form of something else it is “like.” Žižek’s simile form is rehearsed at the sadistic scene at market:

White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—  
Like a rock of blue—veined stone  
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—  
Like a beacon left alone  
In a hoary roaring sea,  
Sending up a golden fire,—  
Like a fruit—crowned orange—tree  
White with blossoms honey—sweet  
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.  
(408–21)

Lizzie’s noble and fearless show of fortitude in the face of the goblin violence is itself associated with other unruly, terrifying, “awful” scenes—scenes that even in and of themselves might be experienced as “sublime” or, more precisely, read as representative approximations of the object of the sublime.

Tender Lizzie, then, might be seen as “sublime” not just in the stanza’s form but also in its content. The very images invoked by the similes wax more complicated in social organization as the stanza proceeds. Starting with the relatively simple life-form of a lily in a flood, through the orange-tree fearing invasion “by wasp and bee,” and ending with the proto-metropolitan colonial space of a “royal virgin town” threatened by a naval mob, the stanza performs something of an accelerated Darwinian drama of progress, where not only the “good” agent gets an organizational upgrade but so does its antagonist. The hyphens after each image mark both the end of each evolutionary stage as well as its immediate contiguity with the next, while the

increasing number of lines it takes to convey each phase underscores this developmental outline. Yet in the face of this meta-narrative Lizzie remains still as a statue: “White and golden Lizzie stood.” The similes she is likened to, therefore, exceed her physical action. And they exceed her material body in its temporal specificity as well. Lizzie comes to occupy a temporal space both everywhere and nowhere, a radically non-historical space opened up, retroactively, by the very acts of historicization and symbolization the stanza rehearses. The stanza recasts Lizzie in sublime material. The materialization of the “impossible *jouissance*” (S, 71) of the scene—its “sublime object”—is not, then, Lizzie, exactly, but the “Lizzie within Lizzie,” the “immaterial corporality” of “*Tender Lizzie*.”

V.

The material content of the passage rehearsing Lizzie’s fortitude over against the violent advances of the goblin men produces still another sublime object—one born out of the act of reading itself. While the images conjured by the “Like”-s might make one breathless if encountered in nature, a recitation of the text, whose punctuation allows little time for caesura, might also leave one, as Lizzie is later, “windy-paced” (461), “quite out of breath with haste” (462). Whereas “Lizzie [would] utter . . . not a word; / Would not open lip from lip” (430–31), the poem incites one to do so—to read, and therefore eat, the stanza—now wormwood to the tongue—beyond the pleasure principle. The text, then, in its very struggle to represent and symbolize the object of the sublime, recasts a reciter herself into a “sublime object”: it affords her a Sadeian body. A recital of the text might, with its asphyxiating tempo, leave one gasping—might “[l]ash” at the lungs “obstreperously”—but the reader nonetheless survives with a body immaculate.<sup>46</sup> Lizzie, then, might not be the only one to “laugh . . . in heart to feel the drip / Of juice that syruded all over her face” (433, 434). For in this other scene of erotic, textual exchange—that between the poem and its reader—the “sublime object,” the Lizzie within Lizzie, may in fact be realized in the reader’s own effected *jouissance* after all.

Indeed, if the text of *Goblin Market* might be said to “desire” anything, then the paradoxical object and cause of that desire is the *jouissance* of the reader. Whether such readerly enjoyment is plucked out of the goblin merchants’ paratactic list of fruits as compensation for a low-yielding harvest, “con[ne]d] with delight” from the symptoms of a

not-fully-coherent plot, or purloined from a textual economy behind the poem's two dialectically divergent, though equally fantastic, productive spheres through the act of critical interpretation—this enjoyment gives rise to other desires and new forms of bittersweet gratification.

To conclude, I would like to return briefly to a passage discussed earlier, one that predicts formally the representation of Tender Lizzie's act of endurance as the sublime object: Lizzie and Laura's retiring. I will offer here two readings, one of the passage itself and one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's own rendering of it. As suggested earlier, the bed scene is openly "curtained" by images the sisters are likened to: "Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest / . . . They lay down in their curtained bed / Like two blossoms on one stem, / Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow." It is precisely this act of curtaining with similes that brings about two instances of the paradoxical enjoyment procured out of displeasure, the properly Lacanian definition of *jouissance*. On one hand, the images conjured by the simile form partially obscure a potentially erotic—and, to a reader, erotically gratifying—scene, in which Lizzie and Laura lie "Cheek to cheek and breast to breast / Locked together in one nest."<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, as in the scene representing Lizzie's fortitude, a recitation of this passage, with its considerable scarcity of punctuation, might stimulate the reader to breathless anticipation. Yet as the passage does not, in fact, represent a consummated erotic exchange between the two sisters—indeed its explicit sisterly intimacy forecloses on the erotic—it rouses about an enjoyment born out of unfulfilled "passionate yearning," in which a reader might very well, like Laura, symptomatically "gnash. . . her teeth for baulked desire" (266, 267).

This *jouissance* is disavowed, however, on the frontispiece for *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, where Christina's brother Dante provides an illustration of this scene (see figure 1).<sup>48</sup> In Dante's drawing, where we can only "peep" at the sisters from above the waist, the two lie with their eyes closed, held fast in one another's arms. Though one seems to have climbed on top of the other as one seeking solace in the other's consoling arms and cheek, the sisters remain indistinguishable from each other: they have very similar hair, as Laura's golden locks seem not yet to have "dwindled" (278), and look equally content in their slumber. And as one critic suggests, "The faces of the girls, turned towards each other, revealing opposite sides, seem nearly identical, as if two halves of the same physiognomy."<sup>49</sup>

While Dante's depiction of the sisters' actual embrace might not deviate largely, on a narrative level, from Christina's passage, the framing



Figure 1. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

of this impression offers some telling interpretation on his part. The “curtain” enveloping their bed shares a pattern of a single, repeated flower of indistinct variety with what looks to be their blanket, which remains tucked just below their arms. Yet we also find a very similar flower, in fuller detail, on the other “curtain” of the tableau: the border framing the illustration. As this border resembles a window, with the flowers etched on the corners of its pane, we can, like the moon and stars, “gaze in at” (192) the sisters. Thus, what is an openly curtained scene in Christina’s text—a scene self-consciously covered up, that is, by simile—is rendered here as a scene whose curtain is opened entirely. Dante’s text, in its act of drawing a curtain drawn back, makes public—in the poem’s commodity-form no less—an otherwise distinctly private act. The illustration attempts to relieve Christina’s own text of any ambiguity concerning the prospect of Laura and Lizzie’s erotic

interests, as if what Christina might have in mind—and so might be thinly curtaining by the queer obviousness of presumably non-erotic sororal love—either Dante “cannot think” (173) of or remains otherwise too “awful” for him to bear. Not unlike a goblin, then, Dante stamps impotently on the text’s ambiguously tender scene.

Dante’s illustrated reading of this passage, however, produces another ambiguity, from which we might swindle, as Laura does at the end of the poem, a little “Life out of Death” (524). Interrupting the drawing’s impulse towards Pre-Raphaelite realism, a small, circular, inset image hovers, like a comic strip thought-bubble, by the heads of the two sleeping sisters. This anomalous picture might be read, in Freudian terms, as the “manifest content” of a dream whose latent, unconscious meaning remains yet to be discerned through interpretation.<sup>50</sup> Bearing the image of the goblins carrying their fruits downhill—and ostensibly in the direction of the sleeping girls—the image might be then revealing what the sisters (or at least one of the sisters) really and secretly desire: that the goblins bring the fruit to them. Yet such a reading is hardly interpretive, the desire supposedly unveiled far from unconscious—indeed we’ve known that this kind of merchant service is exactly what Laura has sought and listened for all day long. So is this inset image in fact a dream? Or is it some other window through which the goblin merchants might also “gaze in at them”? Or might it be a *coin*, whose face, in juxtaposition with the sisters’ own circular-shaped repose, adds even more significance to the reversible, antimetabolic caption “Golden head by golden head”?

As the very form of the image seems to remain out of reach, especially *vis-à-vis* the rest of the illustration, the meaning of the image remains undecidable. But it is precisely from this moment of indeterminacy—of the withholding of meaning—that one can purloin a little interpretive *jouissance*.<sup>51</sup> And it is from this paradoxical arrival of pleasure out of displeasure in the act of interpreting Dante’s text that we see that the inset illustration has in fact been making manifest the sisters’ “unconscious” desire all along. If we consider the inset image the text of a dream, what the sisters might dream of, what they might unconsciously desire, is the *form* of gratification out of dissatisfaction—the form of *jouissance*. For reading the drawing alongside its correlative passage in Christina’s poem, we find that what the sisters dream of here is not in fact the goblins’ delivery of fruits to them but the goblins’ withholding of their wares: “*Backwards* up the mossy glen / Turned and trooped the goblin men” (87–88, my emphasis). If we consider it a coin, we might recall Marx’s image that gold “mirrors

itself in the bodies of other commodities”—the commodities in this case being the illustrated “sisters” that Gabriel, as their “guardian,” “lends his tongue” to. And the coin does indeed “read backwards” the desire of the sisters: as the goblins actually climb “[b]ackwards up the mossy glen,” and therefore away from the sister’s heads, they are redeployed—turned or troped—against the promise of pleasure itself, both the sisters’ pleasure as consumers and the goblins’ own as purveyors.

In *Goblin Market*, then, we find that Christina Rossetti’s distinct “aesthetics of renunciation” has its roots not only in her strict devotional observances but also in her practices at market.<sup>52</sup> Indeed Christina, like Lizzie, might very well participate in capitalist exchange precisely because of its appropriation of the ethic of religious self-denial. While these two lineages may seem unrelated, for Marx and Max Weber the practice of Puritanical asceticism, the economic denial of the sins of the flesh, remains in fact integral to the spirit of capitalism motivating industry and circulation. The “unconscious” desire we see in Rossetti’s passage, here, brought upstage by Gabriel’s illustration—that is, the desire to withdraw oneself from the object of pleasure or to have the object of pleasure withdrawn from the self—belies a fundamental contradiction, if not symptom, in the practice and science of capitalism. On one hand, to deny oneself pleasure via exchange, through the consumption of commodities by spending, freezes the very terms of the circulation of goods. Withholding one’s own material of exchange from the market threatens to immobilize it. Yet, on the other hand, according to Marx, such a withdrawal from pleasure, especially from pleasure drawn from commodities and from spending on commodities, constitutes the “cardinal doctrine” of political economy, of the religion of capitalism. “Political economy, this science of wealth,” traces Marx, “is . . . simultaneously the science of denial, of want, of *thrift*, of *saving*.”<sup>53</sup> The saver, the ascetic non-consumer, therefore, is the “true ideal” of political economy, of “this science of marvelous industry.”<sup>54</sup> Weber works this idea out further, suggesting that one’s “pleasure in cultural goods” can only prove “tolerable” if it heeds one basic condition: “[T]hey must not cost him anything.”<sup>55</sup> Precisely as a result of this asceticism, then, does political economy become, “despite its worldly appearance,” “a true moral science, the most moral of all the sciences,” as Marx cynically and ironically admits.<sup>56</sup> To deny the body pleasure—to save—is the ethical thing to do, even at the risk of the market, for such a renunciation disciplines the working body.

As we have seen throughout, this adherence to asceticism remains akin to the structure of *Goblin Market's* overall ambivalence toward consumer capitalism. Such a practice of denial is indeed why Lizzie saves what might very well be the coin lost and found by the woman in Christ's tale—she “must,” to borrow from Weber's apposite simile, “like the servant in the parable, give an account of every penny entrusted to [her], and it is at least hazardous to spend any of it for a purpose which does not serve the glory of God but only one's own enjoyment.”<sup>57</sup> The poem, like Lizzie, does not “come by” buying but by saving. The text's own expenditure, therefore, of its hoarded “Tender” is tolerated precisely because it is performed *against* the pleasure principle inherent in the act of consumption we have seen elicited by the goblin market. Thus, if the trait of asceticism marks the “true ideal” disciple of political economy, as Marx argues, then the poem's various exercises of denial perhaps make Christina Rossetti a rather exceptional, and altogether not unwitting, study.

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#### NOTES

I am indebted to Sharon Marcus for her keen critical responses to this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*, in *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti: With Memoir and Notes* &c. (1904; repr., London: Macmillan and Co., 1906), lines 367, 389. Hereafter cited parenthetically by line number. All citations of Rossetti's poetry are to this edition. The claim that the fourth episode comprises the “central mystery” of the poem was made by Richard Menke, “The Political Economy of Fruit: *Goblin Market*,” in *The Culture of Christina Rossetti: Female Poetics and Victorian Contexts*, ed. Mary Arseneau, Antony Harrison, and Lorraine Kooistra (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1999), 104–36. Hereafter abbreviated “P” and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>2</sup> William Michael Rossetti, “Memoir,” in *Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, lxvii.

<sup>3</sup> This performance of self-negation might be a tactic demanded by exigencies the Victorian literary market often placed on women writers. See Sharon Marcus, “The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and *Jane Eyre*,” *PMLA* 110 (1995): 206–19.

<sup>4</sup> Regrettably, I cannot here provide a more thorough reading of the poem's reflection on—and direct involvement in—female prostitution. See Jan Marsh, “Christina Rossetti's Vocation: The Importance of *Goblin Market*,” *Victorian Poetry* 32 (1994): 232–47.

<sup>5</sup> Caroline Norton, quoted in Kooistra, “Modern Markets for *Goblin Market*,” *Victorian Poetry* 32 (1994): 250.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Marsh, “Rossetti's Vocation,” and *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 229.

<sup>7</sup> Kooistra, 252.

<sup>8</sup> David Bentley, for example, suggests that the reception of the poem as allegorical results from Rossetti's didactic intentions: “In whatever context it was or is heard or

read, *Goblin Market* serves the Christian-humanist function of testing and strengthening, not merely an audience's reading skills, but also their moral and spiritual awareness. If it was not read at the St. Mary Magdalene Home, one cannot help but think that it should have been" (Bentley, quoted in Marsh, "Rossetti's Vocation," 244). Marsh herself then goes on to "confirm" Bentley's "critical intuition": "My conjecture . . . is that *Goblin Market* was not written explicitly for the girls or Sisters at Highgate, but was prompted by the prospect or challenge of working there, and was perhaps composed, or at least begun, during the period between Christina's initial approach and formal induction" (244).

<sup>9</sup> Rossetti, quoted in Marsh, *A Literary Biography*, 229.

<sup>10</sup> Terrence Holt, "Men Sell Not Such in Any Town": Exchange in *Goblin Market*," *Victorian Poetry* 28 (1990): 51. For other readings of the poem's economics, see Elizabeth Campbell, "Of Mothers and Merchants: Female Economics in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market,'" *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990): 393–410; Mary Wilson Carpenter, "Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me': The Consumable Female Body in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*," *Victorian Poetry* 29 (1991): 415–34; Elizabeth Helsinger, "Consumer Power and the Utopia of Desire: Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market,'" *ELH* 58 (1991): 903–33; Kooistra; and Menke.

<sup>11</sup> Campbell, for example, calls Lizzie's penny "simply a medium of exchange used to gain something of real value, power" (407).

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes (1867; repr., London: Pelican, 1976), 164. Hereafter abbreviated *C* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>13</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1999), 23–24. Hereafter abbreviated *S* and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>14</sup> Žižek presents an inversion of this formal homology: "[I]n Marxism a fetish conceals the positive network of social relations, whereas in Freud a fetish conceals the lack ('castration') around which the symbolic network is realized" (49).

<sup>15</sup> Note that the *OED* registers a more frequent use of the word "produce" as "[a]gricultural and natural products collectively, as distinguished from manufactured goods" (*OED*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Produce," 4) in the mid-nineteenth century, and especially after the European revolutions of 1848, during what Eric Hobsbawm has called "the age of capital" (*The Age of Capital, 1848–1875* [1975; repr., New York: Vintage, 1996]).

<sup>16</sup> Léonce de Lavergne, *The Rural Economy of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1855), 152.

<sup>17</sup> Marx's criticism of de Lavergne is perhaps rooted in the latter's flattery of the capitalistic "gentlemen farmers," who comprise a bourgeoisie characterized by leisure (see de Lavergne, 86–87).

<sup>18</sup> For an account of the various forms of labor involved in the transport of fruits from the orchard to the plate, see Patrick Berry, *The Fruit Garden: A treatise intended to explain and illustrate the physiology of fruit trees, the theory and practice of all operations connected with the propagation, transplanting, pruning and training of orchard and garden trees . . . the laying out and arranging different kinds of orchards and gardens* (New York: C. M. and Saxton Company, 1857).

<sup>19</sup> On the mixing of domestic and foreign fruits, see Menke, 116–17.

<sup>20</sup> Rossetti, "Winter: My Secret," in *Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, 336.

<sup>21</sup> As Arseneau puts it, the piling of fruits serves to "overload the senses and . . . impair the observer's ability to see beyond the physical" ("Incarnation and Interpretation: Christina Rossetti, the Oxford Movement, and *Goblin Market*," *Victorian Poetry* 31 [1993]: 84).

<sup>22</sup> See *OED*, s.v. “Jingle,” 3b. For more on the production of consumer desire by way of the advertisement, see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990). *Goblin Market* indeed predicts the force of the advertisement in the latter part of the age of capital: “In the late nineteenth century there were few areas of social life that remained untouched by the massive extension of commodity culture, and advertised spectacle was certainly in the vanguard of this extension every step of the way. For a series of floating moments capitalist representation saturated social space with a world of self-referential signs” (Richards, 15). Also see Herbert Tucker, “Rossetti’s Goblin Marketing: Sweet to Tongue and Sound to Eye,” *Representations* 82 (Spring 2003): 117–33.

<sup>23</sup> *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), s.v. “Spondee.”

<sup>24</sup> “[M]ore real than real” is Jean Baudrillard’s phrase (*Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser [Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994], 81). Guy Debord puts this idea another way: “Here we have the principle of commodity fetishism, the domination of society by things whose qualities are ‘at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.’ This principle is absolutely fulfilled in the spectacle, where the perceptible world is replaced by a set of images that are superior to that world yet at the same time impose themselves as *eminently* perceptible” (*The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith [New York: Zone Books, 1994], 26).

<sup>25</sup> Marx’s own formulation is, *vis-à-vis* a Lacanian terminology, rather uncanny: “In its function as measure of value, money therefore serves only in an *imaginary* or ideal capacity” (*Capital*, 190, my emphasis).

<sup>26</sup> Holt, 53.

<sup>27</sup> On the magical and aesthetic appeal of gold to early cultures, see Andrei Anikin, *Gold: The Yellow Devil* (New York: International Publishers, 1983), 122–43.

<sup>28</sup> This imperfect reflection of bodies, in which a mirror might return to something “golden” the dreaded image of a “goblin,” may be related to Rossetti’s own poor body-image. As Marsh reports, Rossetti was “[f]illed with apprehension” about her own reflection around the time of her thirtieth birthday in 1860, two years before the publication of *Goblin Market*: “[S]he was ‘relieved and exhilarated’ when she gazed into the looking glass and found no visible change, as she confessed to William thirty years later. . . . But prospects were definitely diminishing. . . . Poor Christina: though the mirror might show no grey, the spectre of ageing spinsterhood loomed” (*A Literary Biography*, 255).

<sup>29</sup> Luke 15:8–10 (KJV). This parable, found in the Anglican Bible, is preceded by another, often cited as the “Parable of Lost Sheep,” and followed, finally, by the parable of the Prodigal Son.

<sup>30</sup> For more on intertextuality in Rossetti’s corpus, see Antony Harrison, *Christina Rossetti in Context* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> I borrow here from Nicholas Mayhew, *Sterling: The Rise and Fall of a Currency* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Rossetti herself may have been privy to contemporary discourse on the material of the penny. In 1860, the substance of the penny was changed from copper to bronze.

<sup>33</sup> We might recall here more of William Michael Rossetti’s description of his sister: “She was replete with the spirit of self-postponement, which passed into self-sacrifice whenever that quality was in demand. Such a spirit is, in fact, the spirit of chivalry, and *noblesse oblige* might have been her motto” (lxvii).

<sup>34</sup> As Marx puts it, “[M]oney functions as a means of circulation only because in it the value possessed by commodities has taken on an independent shape. Hence its movement, as the medium of circulation, is in fact merely the movement undergone by commodities while changing their form” (*Capital*, 212).

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Sohn-Rethel narrates this nicely: “A coin has it stamped upon its body that it is to serve as a means of exchange and not as an object of use. Its weight and metallic purity are guaranteed by the issuing authority so that, if by the wear and tear of circulation it has lost in weight, full replacement is provided. Its physical matter has visibly become a mere carrier of its social function” (*Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology* [London: Macmillan, 1978], 59; quoted in Žižek, 19).

<sup>36</sup> The penny, then, can be seen as a symptom within the poem in another way. In something of a paradox, the penny’s universal value, which relies on the fantasy of equivalent exchange, discloses the very impossibility of such a practice.

<sup>37</sup> Sohn-Rethel, quoted in Žižek, 18.

<sup>38</sup> In this sense, we might regard George W. Bush, with his rhetoric in the face of “global terrorism,” as the impotent goblin *du jour*.

<sup>39</sup> *OED*, s.v. “Tender,” 8a. I derive most definitions of “tender” in the following sentences, including its meanings of “attendant” and “currency,” from the *OED* entries for this word.

<sup>40</sup> Menke quotes here *A Naval Encyclopædia* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hammersely, 1881), 493.

<sup>41</sup> I would like to pursue this colonial tack in another essay, particularly in terms of my argument that the goblins undergo a subjectivation at the moment of their exchange with Lizzie, a kind of “education of desire,” to borrow a phrase from Ann Stoler (*Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995]). See, in the meanwhile, Carpenter, who finishes her discussion of *Goblin Market* with a reading of “In the Round Tower at Jhansi, June 8, 1857,” which follows *Goblin Market* in *Goblin Market and Other Poems*.

<sup>42</sup> Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Encyclopedia of Nautical Knowledge*, ed. W. H. McEwen and A. H. Lewis (Cambridge: Cornell Maritime Press, 1993), s.v. “Tender.”

<sup>44</sup> *OED*, s.v. “Tender,” 3a.

<sup>45</sup> Žižek’s account of an object which induces the feeling of the sublime accounts for these seemingly contradictory responses: “[A]n object evoking in us the feeling of Sublimity gives us simultaneous pleasure and displeasure: it gives us displeasure because of its inadequacy to the Thing-idea, but precisely through this inadequacy it gives us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of the Thing, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience” (203).

<sup>46</sup> We also see this masochistic disciplinarity via poetic text in Gerard Manley Hopkins and Rossetti’s Pre-Raphaelite fellow Algernon Swinburne. See Julia Saville, *A Queer Chivalry* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 2000); and Yopie Prins, “Swinburne’s Sapphic Sublime,” in *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 112–73.

<sup>47</sup> The sisters’ very sameness and contiguity might be seen, following Luce Irigaray, as repeating the form of the *copula*, the “kiss” embodying feminine pleasure. See Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985). For more on these lines “as an erotic invocation of sameness,” in the face

of the goblins' performance of "sexual difference," see Helena Michie, "'There is no friend like a sister': Sisterhood as Sexual Difference," *ELH* 56 (1989): 401–21.

<sup>48</sup> Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1862). For another reading of Dante Gabriel's frontispiece illustration, as well as subsequent illustrated renderings of *Goblin Market*, see Kooistra. See also Gail Lynn Goldberg, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Revising Hand': His Illustrations for Christina Rossetti's Poems," *Victorian Poetry* 20 (1982): 145–59.

<sup>49</sup> Goldberg, 147.

<sup>50</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965).

<sup>51</sup> As Jacques-Alain Miller points out, one can have one's *jouissance* in "small quantities": "Lacan calls them *lichettes*, little bits of *jouissance*" ("Paradigms of *Jouissance*," *Lacanian Ink* 17 [2000]: 33).

<sup>52</sup> The phrase comes from Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influential *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 574.

<sup>53</sup> Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 95.

<sup>54</sup> Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 95.

<sup>55</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1930; repr., London: Routledge Classics, 2001), 114.

<sup>56</sup> Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 95.

<sup>57</sup> Weber, 114.