

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI'S WRITINGS FOR CHILDREN

**"I WEPT FOR MEMORY:"
CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI'S
WRITINGS FOR CHILDREN**

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ABSTRACT

Christina Rossetti's writings for children exist as testimony to her literary genius. The common thread of her most noteworthy works for children--Maude, Sing-Song, Speaking Likenesses, and Goblin Market--is the child's journey. In Maude, Rossetti writes a semi-autobiographical prose work that depicts one Victorian female's introspection and spiritual angst. The more successful nostalgic lyricism of Sing-Song celebrates childhood and a child's intimate relationship with the world. In Speaking Likenesses, Rossetti makes an attempt at parody, and experiments with the creation of a child's fantasy world. Finally, in Goblin Market, a work frequently adapted for children, Rossetti successfully combines a multiplicity of themes: temptation, redemption, sisterly love, and the value of experience. In the last three of these children's works, Rossetti displays an often-unrecognized talent for fantasy writing.

The thesis attempts to analyze Rossetti's writing for children. In particular, the role of memory in relation to the author and her subject is seen as an essential component of adult wholeness. Rossetti frequently incorporates personal reminiscences in her children's poems and prose, utilizing the pathway of memory to console, to reflect, and to find joy. Her major children's works demonstrate a more objective perspective from an author that many believe is overly introspective and self-critical.

This thesis attempts to show that while Rossetti's adult poetry often laments the futility of earthly existence, her children's writings reveal a hidden dimension of objectivity and joyfulness in her craft.

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I wept for memory;
She sang for hope that is so fair;--
My tears were swallowed by the sea;
Her songs died on the air.

(From Maude by Christina Rossetti)

Chapter One: Introduction

The literary domain of Christina Georgina Rossetti is more comprehensive than one might believe at first glance. Certainly, in her adult poetry and prose, Christina Rossetti reveals herself to be a very introspective, self-critical woman, who is preoccupied with devout spirituality, often at the expense of personal happiness. We know Rossetti best by her insistence that our earthly existence means little, and that all our focus should be on serving God. Rossetti's poem of self-denial, "The Lowest Place", chosen by William to appear on her tombstone as best depicting his sister's attitude toward life, is a fitting epitaph to the life of Christina Rossetti:

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
My God and love thee so. (Crump, I, 187)

I, too, shared this limited perception of Christina Rossetti's personal and poetic philosophies until I began to read her children's literature and some pertinent biographical information by friends who had known her well. Mackenzie Bell, who was a faithful family friend, is enthusiastic in his praise of Christina Rossetti as a young Victorian author. Admitting that even he discovered Christina Rossetti to be an enigma, Bell lavishes praise on the good humour and intelligence of this very gifted woman. First, however, Bell admits that it is difficult to define the personality of a woman with the "sweetness and irresistible fascination of such a personality as Christina Rossetti-- a

personality whose unique charm is well-nigh untranslatable into words. Unquestionably, Christina Rossetti will be remembered for her Christian poetry and the heartfelt devotion she expresses, but her children's literature does portray a knowledgeable understanding of the place of the child in Victorian culture and the need for every individual to integrate his own "inner child" into his or her consciousness in order to achieve a wholeness of personality.

It is in her children's writing that Christina Rossetti bares first her soul, and then another dimension of her personality. Rossetti shows, through her children's fantasy writing that she possesses an ability to surrender herself to the world of fantasy, and in the realm of fantasy fiction Rossetti is a very different writer indeed.

Although Maude: A Story for Girls (written in 1850) was one of Christina Rossetti's first literary products, it was not published until 1897, four years after her death. Similarities between the fictional character, Maude, and Rossetti herself are noteworthy, and provide some evidence that this story's heroine was, to some extent, created from a very personal perspective. In this regard, Maude as a subject of discussion on the literary interest of Rossetti is a suitable beginning. Indeed, Maude provides some fascinating insight into some of the concerns of a young female writer in Rossetti's day. In this story, we discover a writer of talent and diverse thematic scope. Many of my preconceived notions regarding Rossetti's personal and literary philosophies have been altered by an examination of her children's poetry and prose, and the discovery of a richly imaginative, sometimes whimsical, Christina Rossetti.

Later, Rossetti writes a beautiful, poetic celebration of childhood by remembering many of her childhood activities and pleasures. Arguably her most joyful collection of poems, Sing-Song (1872) celebrates the fresh and spontaneous way that a

child sees the world. It is in this collection of poems, delightfully illustrated by Arthur Hughes, that Christina Rossetti displays her philosophical alliance with the romantic vision of childhood, as expressed by William Blake and William Wordsworth. Chapter Three will examine the lyrical poetry of Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song nursery rhyme collection of poetry. More specifically, this chapter will consider the sequential pattern of the structure of Sing-Song and its corresponding relationship to the maturation of the child, from infancy to independence.

No single author has contributed more significantly to the romantic vision of the child than the great English poet, William Blake. All authors of children's literature owe a debt of gratitude to Blake, who recognized the importance of the child as occupying a fundamental place in literature. In fact, as Peter Coveney argues, "until the last decades of the eighteenth century the child did not exist as an important and continuous theme in English literature. Childhood as a major theme came with the generation of Blake and Wordsworth" (Coveney 29).

In terms of the historical events of Christina Rossetti's time, the securities of the eighteenth-century were being dissolved by industrialization and scientific discovery, which eroded the previously held belief in the Biblical view of Creation. New scientific theories, such as those held by Charles Darwin and Lyell,² introduced evidence of geological change and evolution as events that altered the shape of both the earth and of man. Correspondingly, the child as a literary theme became increasingly attractive. The child, still capable of negotiating a spontaneous relationship with the world, could intervene as Coveney writes as a "symbol of Imagination and Sensibility, a Symbol of Nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturing humanity" (31). The

child's innocence, naïveté, and fear of the unknown could become the artist's symbol of the fear and insecurity that adults experienced at this time.

For Christina Rossetti, her artistic expression of childhood represents an investigation of her own childhood experience, and of the healing powers that such an investigation unearths when it produces an incorporation of childhood perceptions and pleasures in adult life. Through the rejuvenating powers of a return to childhood, an adult achieves a sense of wholeness, or an attempt to achieve wholeness, that cannot be found without this purposeful "reaching back."

In this very charming collection of poetry, Rossetti introduces what Jung would later describe as the archetypal child of discovery,³ who ventures into the world to discover personally the joys and wonders of nature, and language, and later, of ideas. An examination of this collection of poems demonstrates how Christina Rossetti has arranged the poems in a way that corresponds to the stages of maturation of the child.

No Victorian poetry collection depicting a child's growing up would be complete without introducing the theme of infant illness and death. Sing-Song explores this Victorian problem, and Rossetti offers, as condolence, her own spiritual philosophy that offers an assurance of the soul's immortality. Again, Rossetti's literature alludes strongly to Blake's theme of childhood innocence. Sing-Song's Blakean imagery begins immediately, with the cover illustration of her "frisky lamb," so reminiscent of William Blake's "Little lamb, who made thee?" poem.

Rossetti's complete departure from some of her most pervasive adult themes, such as self-denial, suffering, and Christian piety, makes Sing-Song a revelatory collection that treats readers to the playful wit and frivolity that Rossetti enjoys here. In no other collection of poems does Rossetti display such ability and ease with playful

constructions of word sounds and meanings. However, the collection is not randomly arranged but grouped purposefully to correlate the progress of time on a diurnal, seasonal, and yearly basis with the child's maturation into adulthood. The sequential arrangement of the poems can be divided into three groupings, with each division corresponding to a definite stage in a child's life.

Nature as a medium of instruction for the child's acquisition of knowledge of the world is used by Rossetti to present larger, abstract issues by way of concrete example. Sing-Song explores the child's world of wonder, questioning, and play. Coincidentally, the poems also reveal Christina Rossetti's thoughtful understanding of a child's world, and her aptitude for choosing the right images in order to give a child pleasure.

In the fourth chapter, an examination of Christina Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses (1874) will demonstrate what happens when Rossetti chooses the wrong images in a children's story. Inspired by a desire to imitate Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), Rossetti makes a fateful attempt at parody.

With Speaking Likenesses, Christina Rossetti returns to writing prose for children. Unfortunately, her attempt at a clever imitation of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland fails to capture the magic and humour of his fantasy world. Nevertheless, Rossetti does institute a noteworthy prose construction with her story-within-a-story technique. Speaking Likenesses uses a storyteller in the form of a childless aunt who relates tales to an eager audience of young nieces. Once again, Rossetti focuses her attention on the everyday world of Victorian females. The element of realism which periodically interrupts the story-telling is entertaining and revealing. Curiously, we become quite interested in the nature of the interruptions of the aunt and her nieces. Rossetti's tale-

within-a-tale construction is a means of imparting to the stories the didacticism required of Victorian children's literature.

Critical disapproval of the three-part Speaking Likenesses over the years was most harshly levelled at the first of the three stories, "Flora." This criticism resulted from an aesthetic distaste for the story's inherent sadism. Contemporary criticism, however, has been kinder to this prose effort by Rossetti, because more recent scholars, such as U.C. Knoepfelmacher, find that the three stories demonstrate a progression in the role of the female heroines, so that in the final story, "Maggie," the young girl exhibits behaviour that is both independent and courageous.

A close analysis of Speaking Likenesses does suggest, as Knoepfelmacher believes, that Christina Rossetti's attempt to imitate Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland reveals her personal distaste for some of its themes, not an admiration of Carroll's art. Although the first story in Speaking Likenesses is not pleasurable to read, it can be studied with a fresh appreciation once we recognize the many parodic elements in the tale. In the final tale, there is a return to some Carrollian imitation in Rossetti's "Mouthboy," but the most significant observation to be made about the art in the final tale is that Rossetti finally constructs an independent female character who victoriously combats her male oppressor. This final tale is a revelatory exposition of fairy tale archetypes, such as that of the discovering child. Maggie can be seen as an archetypal child who wanders away from home on an errand and, before returning home again, makes a new and vital discovery.

Chapter Four attempts to uncover Christina Rossetti's purpose in writing Speaking Likenesses. For many years, critics have been confused by what they assumed was an unsuccessful attempt at imitating Lewis Carroll's Wonderland. However, a closer

examination of the scope and progress of all three stories in Speaking Likenesses, and of the relationship between the aunt-narrator and her young listeners, finds that Rossetti's purpose was more complicated than was at first believed. Most significantly, Rossetti appears to criticise the traditional societal roles of submission and docility for Victorian women. Instead, Rossetti appears to be proposing a more independent and active participation in society for women.

Although written after Rossetti's eminently successful Goblin Market, Speaking Likenesses (1874) did not achieve the same level of critical and popular acclaim. It has been suggested that Christina Rossetti is capable of writing praiseworthy children's fantasies, but she only excels when the fantasies are generated by her own imagination. When Rossetti attempts imitative fantasy, the effort is lacklustre by comparison.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of Goblin Market. Although not the last of Rossetti's children's stories in terms of chronological order, Goblin Market (1862) is presented at the end of the thesis because it cleverly incorporates so many of the themes and issues previously discussed. Goblin Market, written relatively early in Christina Rossetti's career, is unquestionably Christina Rossetti's most significant contribution to Victorian literature.

Although presumably written for adults, Goblin Market's appeal crosses generational boundaries and is often included in contemporary anthologies of children's literature. The thesis examines the fairy tale appeal of Goblin Market as well as the sisterhood issue, previously discussed in Maude. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's examination of Goblin Market's appeal to both adults and children is supported by evidence of erotic suggestion in the poem for adults, and fairy tale elements in the poem for children. Because this thesis is an examination of Christina Rossetti's children's literature, I have

studied Goblin Market to find how closely it adheres to classical fairy tale conventions. In doing so, I discovered that Rossetti's fantasy tale shares thematic similarities with other children's fairy tales.

Significantly, the character of Lizzie corresponds to the archetypal child savior as defined by Carl Jung, and, in this regard, Lizzie acts as mentor to her morally weak sister, Laura. The nature of the sisters' relationship is explored, as well as the poetic presentation of the goblin fruit and its irresistible attraction to Laura.

Rossetti adopts the mentor-child literary theme as introduced by Rousseau in his famous novel, Emile (1762). We also find a repetition of the explanation of good and bad aspects of personality, and how the two may be successfully combined in order to achieve a fully integrated individuality. Lizzie and Laura are figuratively represented as two sides of one individual, thereby invoking once more Rossetti's recurrent theme of the two-sided nature of an individual's personality.

This thesis briefly mentions the numerous allegorical representations of the goblin-men and their fruit, but the real purpose here is to avoid such symbolic reductionism, and instead focus on the genre of fairy tale and how it is utilized by Christina Rossetti to great effect for a child audience. Incidentally, the poem's aural appeal will also be examined in an attempt to fully appreciate the art of Christina Rossetti.

This comprehensive examination of the canon of Christina Rossetti's writing for children will, I hope, demonstrate the diversity of her talent, and the pervasiveness of themes through all of her writing which were especially important to Christina Rossetti.

Chapter Two: Maude

Despite the immaturity of Christina Rossetti's poetic talent in Maude (written 1850), this story contains all the major themes that become central in her future poetry and prose. Christina Rossetti's struggle with her religious obligations, with her desire to write, and with her own religiosity is the catalyst for the emotional conflicts inherent in her works.

Reaction to Christina Rossetti's first short story, Maude, is, for the most part, unenthusiastic. Rossetti did not have the story published in her lifetime, but her brother William agreed to its publication several years after her death. For many years, the story was viewed as the lacklustre autobiography of an immature, over-pious young girl. Even Christina's brother, William, cautions readers that

[his] sister's main object in delineating Maude was to exhibit what she regarded as defects in her own character, and in her attitude towards her social circle and her religious obligation. (Crump, Maude by Christina Rossetti, 1976, 79)

Roderick McGillis, in an article in The Achievement of Christina Rossetti (1987), dismisses Christina Rossetti's first effort as "[lacking] the vibrancy of [her] other works for children," and notes that "it has not reached the audience Rossetti had in mind" (209). However, many modern critics recognize that Rossetti's story is more complex than was first believed.

Indeed, modern critics such as Sharon Smulders and Diane D'Amico view Rossetti's story with admiration. Sharon Smulders appreciates Rossetti's story as a clever mix of two genres that "plays her narrator's wittily acid prose against her heroine's often (but not always) morbidly sentimental verse" (Smulders 23). On the successful intermixing of styles, Smulders makes the point that the effective placement of her verses within the narrative does not receive sufficient study. The emotions expressed by the poems within the three-part story relate to the evolution of Maude's spirituality. As with so many of Christina Rossetti's works for children, there is a deeper level of meaning that lies beneath the surface. Here, the deeper meaning lies hidden in the poems and in the exchange of ideas between Agnes and Maude.

Diane D'Amico brings fresh insight into the role of Agnes in her article, "Christina Rossetti's Maude: A Reconsideration." D'Amico sees Agnes as Maude's moral superior, and, in fact, a representation of the mature Maude's moral ideal. The poems composed by Maude chronicle her progression from self-centred teenager to mature young woman.

I suggest that not only does Agnes portray a healthier and more highly-developed form of spirituality, she also exists in the story as a barometer of character-- the example of a successful transition from child to adult. While Christina Rossetti's personal life and view are components of the story, the real accomplishment of Maude as "a story for girls" is its depiction of a young woman's spiritual decline and reclamation.

At first inspection, Maude's fate suggests to the reader that only death will resolve young Maude's spiritual and artistic conflict. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar agree that, for Maude, resolution can only be found in death because "the moral is that the Maude in Christina Rossetti-- the ambitious, competitive, self-absorbed and self-assertive poet--must die, and be replaced by either the wife, the nun, or more likely, the kindly useful spinster"

(Gilbert 552). However, it is Agnes who appears as an alternative to Maude's unhappy fate. Agnes, who has suffered a similar spiritual crisis and self-doubt, has resolved her personal conflicts positively. There is a belief that, should Maude survive her immediate crisis of illness, her altered attitude toward God, His grace and her role as poet could be used to constructive ends.

Written by Christina Rossetti at the age of nineteen, Maude is a kunstlerroman (or novel of the woman artist), with a largely autobiographical source. A prose work that contains several poems, Maude is written in three parts. The first part focuses entirely on the preparation and the celebration of a fifteenth birthday party for Maude Foster's cousin, Mary. Rossetti embellishes Part I with all the beauty and adornment that a description of a young Victorian girls' party requires. In addition to the focus on food, flowers, and round games, Rossetti reproduces the customary greetings and behaviour expected of Victorian party etiquette. Polite greetings and pleasantries are mentioned, but also criticised, and every party-goer is graded on her conversational ease and the required evidence of "correct breeding."

The story focuses most intensely on four girls, two of whom are sisters. The focus on sisters initiates what will become a frequently-used trope in Christina Rossetti's poetry and prose: the dynamics of sisterhood. In her Introduction to a 1993 edition of Maude, Elaine Showalter cites Rebecca Crump's observation that "Rossetti often uses pairs or trios of sisters in her writing to explore aspects of her own personality, the warring factions within [her] divided self" (Showalter, Maude. 1993. New York University Press, xvii).

The dominant "warring factions" that trouble the young Maude are, on the one hand, artistic and, on the other, spiritual. In many ways, the story of Maude presents the

difficult choices that Victorian women had to make. Beginning with the carefree, festive atmosphere of a birthday party in Part I, the story moves forward one year to discover, in Part II, a dramatically different mood. The girls have passed, in one year's time, from the innocence and frivolity of a childhood birthday celebration complete with tarts, strawberries, cream, fancy dresses, and parlour games, to a critical time, when the urgent need to make a vocational choice is dominant. Vocational choices were limited, usually, to marriage or sisterhood (religious and charitable service). The sharp contrast between childhood play and adult responsibility provides a convincing depiction of the early end to childhood in Rossetti's case. Socially-inflicted cessation of playful innocence forces the child to approach adulthood without the necessary emotional maturation, and we observe this lack of preparation in Maude's behaviour.

The first two chapters in Part One of Maude focus on play, fun, good humour, and the social desire to please others. Indeed, the atmosphere of the story is one of pure pleasure and contentment, as "game after game is played at; and [Maude's] fun seemed inexhaustible, for nothing was thought too nonsensical or too noisy for the occasion" (37). The festivities continue to a "late hour," and are commented upon the next day with a comical fascination for gossip and superficiality. Rossetti's story begins with an enjoyable, insightful view of nineteenth-century social behaviour. Agnes, Mary, and Maude contemplate the various mannerisms and dress of their guests, thereby revealing the girls' lively interest in appearance and social graces. Maude, for one, praises the "good fair complexions, eyes, and hair" of Jane and Alice, but refrains from praising their personalities because she finds "they have a wax-dollish air which is quite unpleasant" (39). The conversations of the party celebrants provide an inside view into the preoccupations of young adolescent girls in the Victorian period. Maude's preoccupation

with physical appearances suggests a superficiality that differs from Mary, Agnes, and Magdalen's genuine graciousness and kind natures.

How very different are the concerns of Maude and her cousins in the second part of the story, when the girls must make serious choices about their respective futures. Peter Coveney, in The Image of Childhood (1967), suggests that, "the nineteenth-century artist was, it seems, impelled towards the subjective investigations and involvements which became the *raison*, and in some cases, the strength of his art" (33). This profile of the nineteenth-century artist is certainly characteristic of Christina Rossetti's soul-searching introspection, especially evident in the second part of Maude and in most of her poetry. In Rossetti's case, Maude's personal reflections dramatize the uncertainty of nineteenth-century female adolescence. Coveney suggests that the nineteenth-century artist's subjective anguish is, in fact, a "morbid introversion" (33). In Rossetti's case, Coveney's premise is substantiated by later poetry that certainly carries such obsessive introspection to extremes, finally culminating in what Ralph Bellas calls a "depression of spirit" (52). Christina Rossetti's quest to find some fulfilling purpose in life is continually frustrated, and, by 1865, she merges her "unfulfilled life theme with the more inclusive death-in-life theme" (Bellas 53), which celebrates the onset of death as a place wherein she can finally find peace, believing that, in death, she will

...cease from impotence of zeal
 And cease from hope, and cease from dread,
 And cease from yearning without gain
 And cease from all this world of pain,
 And be at peace among the dead. ("An 'Immurata' Sister,"
 Crump, II, 120).

Carl Jung's view of the child archetype can be seen in many aspects of children's literature. As an archetype, the child is that symbol of innocence which inhabits the

collective unconscious. The redemptive child is a feature of several Victorian novels. In Charles Dickens' Old Curiosity Shop (1840) and Christmas Carol (1844), we have Little Nell and Tiny Tim, and in George Eliot's Silas Marner (1860), we have Eppie as child saviour archetypes. These child characters, symbols of innocence and goodness, guide their disillusioned adult mentors to renewed and happier lives. Alice Byrnes, in The Child: An Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults (1995), illustrates the "recurrent theme of the saintly child who comes into the life of a disgruntled adult, and, as a result of their relationship, the adult experiences a regeneration" (21). In this role, the child is empowered to make positive changes in the lives of needy adults and children.

However, in the second part of Maude, the child is older and not content in the idyllic childhood world of playfulness and innocence. Toward the end of Part I, there are hints that blissful play is being replaced by petty concerns such as social affectation and physical appearances. Maude advises Mary and Agnes that she envies their country life where people "are exactly what [they] appear, and never wish for what [they] don't possess" (41). She admits to her polite and kind cousins that she is "sick of display, and poetry, and acting" (41). Maude's emptiness and dissatisfaction with life at the end of Part I precede her critical emotional collapse in Part II. Bereft of childhood consolations, Maude agonizes over the choices she must make on the threshold of adulthood. In an emotional outpouring to her cousin Agnes, Maude displays, as Christina Rossetti frequently did (see Marsh, 1994, 55-64), an over-wrought exhibition of contempt for herself. To twentieth-century readers, Maude's self-loathing may appear to be irrational and melodramatic. However, according to Jan Marsh, Victorian women often endured intense anguish over social pressure to serve either God or a husband with unquestioning devotion. Marsh, in her biography of Christina Rossetti, notes that "adolescent

breakdown was not uncommon among Victorian girls, as they struggled to tailor their natures to fit the prescribed moulds" (55). The pressures on Maude are further compounded by the fact that she does not know which vocational path to choose. Repeatedly, she feels lacking in some requirement for one of the choices open to women of her era.

Maude turns to the punitive aspect of religion to make amends, in her own view, for her moral deficiencies. In a scene that illustrates the lowest psychological point of her life, Maude informs cousin Agnes that she plans never to receive Communion again:

'I shall not receive tomorrow,' answered Maude;
then hurrying on as if to prevent the other from
remonstrating: 'No: at least I will not profane
Holy things; I will not add this to all the rest. I
have gone over and over again, thinking I should
come right in time and I do not come right. I will
go no more.' (52)

Curiously, Maude equates the public presentation of her writing with sin. The childhood enthusiasm for *bouts-rimés*,² poems and stories is dampened by her over-pious notion that her verses are unChristian. Forsaking the Jungian model of development for a healthy individual who incorporates childhood into adult consciousness to form a healthy merger, Maude abandons her artistic talent, denies herself the right to celebrate her religious rites, and lapses into a severe depression. Despite Agnes' attempts to suggest that Maude's morbidity emanates from fatigue and discouragement, Maude persists in self-recriminations. Maude's self-absorption and despondency are contrasted with Agnes' sense of purpose and rationality. Despite remaining alone, Agnes manages to establish a positive outlook and to engage in socially-responsible endeavours. She represents the Victorian woman, who, remaining single, provides nevertheless a worthwhile humanitarian service. It is Agnes who represents the archetypal child savior, capable of saving Maude

from self-absorbed pity and stagnation. However, Maude is not receptive enough to Agnes' entreaties to benefit from the wisdom of her mentor.

Unlike Maude, who worries that her aspirations are not the same as those of her cousins, Agnes is content to remain unmarried and devoted to volunteer service. The four women are directed toward four distinct vocations and of the four, Maude encounters the greatest ambivalence in her attempt to choose a path in life to which she is best suited. If we choose to see Mary, Magdalen, Agnes, and Maude as representations of four viable choices open to Victorian women, this situation could represent the ancient symbol of four as it represents the four corners of completeness. Throughout history, the symbol "four" is a fundamental representation of equal divisions, or segments, of something that is whole. Such symbols of quaternity are seen in "the four cardinal points of the horizon, the four phases of the moon, the four seasons, the four primary colours, and they form "a natural pattern of order within all of matter " (Jacobi 167). An extension of the phenomenon of four as a symbol of wholeness is Jung's view that "the quaternity is the archetypal foundation of the human psyche" (Jacobi 168). Maude rejects the three options of vocational choice as presented by Mary, Magdalen, and Agnes. Despite her admirable talents, Maude fails to find a satisfying vocational choice for herself.

Maude's conflicts occur over her creativity; she constantly resists, and feels guilty, about her creative talent. Her poetry no longer delights her but, instead, fills her with self-contempt and remorse. Maude's desire to abstain from creative endeavours is self-destructive. This unhealthy preoccupation/obsession prevents Maude from incorporating her "inner child," as Jung would describe it, into her psyche. As Gaston Bachelard so eloquently describes in The Poetics of Reverie (described in Cott xxii), we possess a "kind of nostalgia of nostalgia in which our former being imagines itself alive again" . Jung's

term for this eternal seed of childhood (our inner child) is what Bachelard calls the "nucleus of childhood" and a characteristic which "remains with us as a principle of deep life" (Cott xxii).

In her later poem, Goblin Market, Christina Rossetti does provide an example of how adults carry the memories and experiences of childhood with them in a way that deepens the quality and comprehension of their lives. In Goblin Market, Lizzie and Laura tell their own children about their experiences with the goblin men, and how this childhood journey into a fairy world provides a thread of knowledge that offers both adults a perpetual "child's eye view" of a complicated world. Goblin Market will be discussed in detail at the end of this study, but I mention it here because its sense of childhood nostalgia is the psychological stepping stone that Maude requires. It is another example of Christina Rossetti's fascination with sisterhood. As a "story for girls," Maude is intriguing yet problematic.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted that "the scene of writing is always a source of anxiety to Maude" in Part II (Showalter xvi). The verse-making that resulted in joyous pleasure for the young Maude of Part I fills the older Maude with displeasure and doubt. The young Maude was clearly the most experienced poet of the four girls, and her rhymes were judged to be the best by the others. However, the young Maude, who eagerly proposes the game of bouts-rimés is happy with the art of making rhymes, while the older Maude, labouring at her writing desk, sits with "eyes cast down, [looking] pale, languid, almost in pain" (266). The mature Maude is decidedly serious, no longer pleased by games and festive amusements. She has retained none of the joy that she had displayed in creating rhymes as a child.

In the first part of the story, Maude adds to her private collection of poems with a sonnet that reveals a dissatisfaction with life:

Yes, I too could face death and never shrink:
 But it is harder to bear hated life;
 To strive with hands and knees weary of strife;
 To drag the heavy chains whose every link
 Galls to the bone... . (30)

Her divided nature is evident in Part I. Maude is capable of responding joyfully when interested, yet "it was the amazement of everyone what could make her poetry so broken-hearted as was mostly the case" and "some wondered if she had any secret source of uneasiness" (31). The first poem suggests a world-weariness on Maude's part. She exhibits a dissatisfaction with life, and a sombre obsession with suffering. Maude believes that suffering is preferable to action because it is more enduring. Such aberrant logic is the foundation of Maude's discontent with life and self.

Spiritually, Maude begins to reach beyond her discontent with temporal existence. Subsequent to her accident, Maude's poetry reflects an affirmation of the cyclical nature of life, and a more optimistic belief in a life that follows death. In one of her late poems, she notes that "the green stalks die away into common mould," finally rejecting the importance of an earthly existence. However, Maude concludes the poem on a hopeful note, finding comfort in the fresh promise of a new spring awakening:

Birth follows hard on death,
 Life on withering,
 Hasten, we will come the sooner
 Back to pleasant Spring. (73)

The final sonnet of the story demonstrates Maude's spiritual progression to a Christian view which finds comfort in Christ's love. It appears that Maude has discovered

peace at last, and appears to be answering His call to "arise, My Love, and come away" (75).

Like the young Christina Rossetti and other contemporary female writers, Maude is torn between the role of young writer and a more traditional role such as wife or nun. Sadly, Maude is harshly disdainful toward her creative urges, believing that any public display of her verses is an act of sinful vanity.

Even as she approaches imminent death in Part III, Maude's primary concern is that she ensure Agnes' destruction of any verses that are unacceptable for public view. Moreover, verses that Maude had in a locked booklet will remain that way, buried with her body. For many female Victorian writers, creative works were destined to be forever buried with their authors. Some of Rossetti's own poems are lost forever because they were destroyed in order to prevent publication (Marsh 70). That Agnes is the one person entrusted by Maude to censor her poems after Maude's death reaffirms Agnes' role as Maude's moral mentor. Each time Maude requires advice or remonstrance, she turns to her cousin, Agnes Clifton.

The story's message to young girls lies deeper than Maude's eleventh-hour spiritual epiphany. Certainly, Maude has reclaimed her spirituality in that she willingly submits to her own death, bolstered by a strong faith in God. However, Agnes is always presented as the outward-looking young girl, and she cautions Maude to refrain from an overindulgence in introspection. Agnes is always the person upon whom Maude relies. The gentle Agnes, at one point, criticizes Maude's decision to refuse Holy Communion. Agnes instructs Maude that such self-absorption, which she herself had endured, is "ungrateful to follow [one's] own fancies, instead of at least endeavouring to do God's will" (52). Agnes represents the active ideal to which Rossetti suggests Maude, and other

young girls, could aspire. If Maude had not suffered her untimely death, there is hope that her spiritual evolution would have continued to progress to the point where she, like Agnes, would prefer to be productive, useful, and ultimately happy, in her daily life.

Victorian writer Dinah Mulock Craik shared Agnes' philosophy of life, which advocates a busy, productive existence for unmarried women in the Victorian age. As Craik states in her lengthy essay, A Woman's Thoughts About Women (first publ.1858):

Would that, instead of educating our young girls with the notion that they are to be wives, or nothing--matrons, with an acknowledged position and duties, or with no position and duties at all-- we could instil into them the principle that, above and before all, they are to be women--women, whose character is of their own making, and whose lot lies in their own hands. (214)

In the end, Rossetti's short story does have a didactic purpose, as does most nineteenth-century children's literature. This didacticism, however, is not as obvious as might be assumed at first, and complexity makes the story more intriguing. The apparent heroine of the story is Maude, with all her human faults, but the real heroine, as Diane D'Amico argues, is her cousin, Agnes, who, in thought and in purpose, embodies the fully-integrated female ideal. Consequently, Maude is worth studying as an introduction to Christina Rossetti's style and central themes. Many of the concerns expressed in the prose and the poetry of Maude reappear in Rossetti's later poetry. In addition, Rossetti's interest in the mutual support and guidance of "sister" associations can be appreciated in Maude and will be investigated in this thesis.

Chapter Three: Sing-Song

While Maude turned abruptly away from childhood and all its playfulness, Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song (1872) provides a rich combination of references to childhood innocence, curiosity, and playfulness, contrasted with the more serious realities of adulthood. The poems in the Sing-Song collection are, according to Jan Marsh in Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography, "a conscious return to [Rossetti's] own infancy, structuring her whole sequence of 120 pieces-- written in a single creative impulse during autumn 1869--according to childhood experience" (Marsh 379). Christina Rossetti's sincere effort to re-discover her past childhood experience can be helpfully illuminated by the Jungian notion of the inner child archetype. In Sing-Song, Rossetti has depicted the innocence, dependency, and joyfulness of childhood. These characteristics of childhood help to define the literary notion of the child archetype. Babies are "pretty, sleeping in bed like "curly little lamb[s]" (1) and are "the very thing for kisses" (23). Such idyllic images will recur often throughout the book, like an underlying symphonic theme. In keeping with her title, Sing-Song, Rossetti's often musical collection of poems is arranged in a sequential order that chronicles the maturation of the child from infancy to adulthood.

My analysis of the poems reveals a formally ordered structure that illustrates three major stages in the cognitive development of the child. Running concurrently with this sequential progression of the experience of maturation, however, is the

underlying symphonic theme of childhood playfulness and innocence. The universal appeal of Rossetti's frequent return to the play world of the child lies in the ability of each reader, no matter how old, to recall, with pleasure and nostalgia, the best characteristics of his or her own childhood. Consequently, the arrangement of the poems takes the reader on a forward journey of evolutionary progress, while maintaining a backward glance, and a tenuous hold, on the world of childhood play.

In addition to Rossetti's charming depiction of the innocent beauty and freshness of infancy, she also includes the maternal figure. It is generally a mother figure who provides the selfless devotion, caretaking, and lullabye-singing, rocking, and kissing in Rossetti's presentation of childhood. The text and illustrations of Sing-Song can be illuminated by Jung's concept of the maternal archetype-- nurturer, caregiver, and guide. Fathers are present to a lesser extent in the poems, and appear as "providers", or mates-in-absentia. Rossetti's lullabye poems re-create the gentle embrace of a mother and her infant, as well as mutual, unconditional love. In this lovely poem, Christina Rossetti expresses the vigilant guardianship and heartfelt love that a mother feels for her baby, while acknowledging the unspoken love that the mother obtains from her infant:

Love me,-- I love you,
 Love me, my baby;
 Sing it high, sing it low,
 Sing it as may be.

Mother's arms under you,
 Her eyes above you
 Sing it high, sing it low,
 Love me,-- I love you. (Sing-Song. 1872. George Routledge Publ., 2)

The musical, lullabye rhythms of this and many other poems in the Sing-Song collection illustrate one of the collection's major strengths: its realistic reproduction of the lyrical simplicity of childhood relations. If, as Jan Marsh suggests, this collection evolved from Rossetti's quest to re-experience her own childhood, the sincerity of her efforts certainly contributes to the quality of the poems. The collection systematically evolves from expression of the primary, simple needs of infancy, through the more complicated demands of intellect and language acquisition that dominate the early and middle childhood years, and finally, to adult concerns, such as illness and death.

The poems, arranged in the order that Rossetti placed them, feature simple, lyrical rhymes at the beginning and end of the collection, framing her work with poems about infancy, and, consequently, placing an added emphasis on life's beginning and the potential that each life contains. The central motifs of the middle childhood section focus on country life, children's games and rhymes, and animals. Arthur Hughes' detailed and sensitive drawings mirror Christina's efforts to create a childhood motif that places children in a pastoral setting. In both poems and illustrations the child is the dominant focus in this idyllic world, and is in harmony with it.

Sharon Smulders, in "Sound, Sense and Structure in Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song," argues that Rossetti purposefully arranges the poems in a specific sequence so that the experience of reading the poems demonstrates an "unfolding [of] a narrative from cradle to grave, from winter to fall, from sunrise to sunset, [thereby inviting] readers to understand life as an ordered totality" (Smulders 3). Unquestionably, the collection has a cyclical order that embraces many varieties of human experience. The early poems focus not only on life's beginnings, but also on

the routine daily activities that are common to all of us, especially as viewed through the eyes of a child. The fifth poem signals the breaking of day with the good morning cock crowing "kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!" Then it is time for

Bread and milk for breakfast,
And woolen frocks to wear,
And a crumb for robin redbreast
On the cold days of the year. (8)

The child is securely housed in a loving, nurturing family, where food, clothing and affection are the basic elements of a child's existence. The poet urges the child to be calm and secure in her maternal arms which provide comfort and relief:

Crying, my little one, footsore and weary?
Fall asleep, pretty one, warm on my shoulder:
I must tramp on through the winter night dreary,
While the snow falls on me colder and colder.

You are my one, and I have not another;
Sleep soft, my darling, my trouble and treasure;
Sleep warm and soft in the arms of your Mother,
Dreaming of pretty things, dreaming of pleasure. (19)



Fig. 1

Arthur Hughes' detailed illustration (Fig.1) provides additional support to Rossetti's evocation of maternal comfort. Enduring physical hardships of cold, snow, and fatigue, the mother is the image of comfort and strength. Walking head down into the blowing snow, the mother hoists her weary child-traveller onto her shoulder, while reassuring the child with her lovely "lullabye" poem. At this point in the collection, the winter imagery, in juxtaposition with maternal nurturing, emphasizes the strength and forbearance of motherly love. It also closes the first part of the collection which focuses on the dependent years of infancy, wherein the child's needs are met by a supportive provider. This infant, whom the author implores to begin "dreaming of pleasure" is about to enter a more socially-interactive stage of life, and that new beginning is heralded by the dawn of spring. In the next twenty pages, Rossetti positions the growing child in the season of rapid growth and change. Abruptly, she turns from winter's inhospitable cold, to the warm, verdant growth of spring.

Like the child's accelerated physical and intellectual growth, nature is presented in springtime as a season of rapid change and beauty. One of the first flowers of spring, the daffodil, becomes the gracious "Lady Daffadowndilly," clothed in "golden crown/ and a scant green gown"(20). Busy birds, lambkins, chicks, and ducklings frolic in the pastoral landscapes of early childhood. Blossoming spring and blossoming childhood exist in harmonious accord, with the futures of each full of energy and promise. The cyclical pattern of Christina Rossetti's poems in Sing-Song is established here. Springtime growth and energetic young animals are conflated in the poems to create a sense of vitality, which mirrors the child's energy and curiosity. Trees "burst out in leaf" (21), birds are "building,

perching, pecking, fluttering,/Everywhere!" (22), and "lambkins [are] at their pranks" (27).

Suddenly, the joyful atmosphere of growth and energy is disrupted by a poem that mourns the loss of an infant. The inevitable life-and-death cycle of nature does, by example, show that all beautiful, living things die, and the answer to this painful situation is found in nature's acquiescence in death:

Why did baby die,
 Making Father sigh,
 Mother cry?

Flowers that bloom to die,
 Make no reply
 Of "why?"
 But bow and die. (24)

Attempting to explain death to children is a difficult task for any children's writer, but Rossetti does not shrink from the task. Francelia Butler, in "Death in Children's Literature," notes that, before the seventeenth century, children heard about death through adult literature because they heard the same stories and folk tales as adults. At the end of the seventeenth century, Butler observes, "a separation began to take place between the literature of adults and that of children" and so the "treatment of death became part of a larger problem-- the commercial and psychological exploitation of children through a special literature aimed at them alone" (Butler 104).

Nineteenth-century literature for children contains many examples of stories about death, and authors differ in their method of presenting the subject. For Rossetti, who writes frequently about death in her adult poetry, Sing-Song must face the subject of death if it is to be a true representation of her return to her own childhood memories. In the Victorian era, the incidence of infant mortality was

high, and most families would be familiar with the loss of siblings, friends, or other family members at a young age.

Rossetti's treatment of the subject of childhood death is more realistic than the methods used by some of her contemporaries and near contemporaries. Butler points to G.K. Chesterton's essay, "The Ethics of Elfland" in which Chesterton calls "The Sleeping Beauty" a "terrible allegory." This familiar fairy tale tells about a girl who was "blessed with all birthday gifts, yet cursed with death; and how death also may be softened to a sleep" (108). Rossetti does not suggest that a child's death will be overcome, or that a metamorphosis may occur. She proposes a spiritual belief in the soul's immortality, and stresses that only the baby's body is in the grave. Sadness seems to create a perplexing dichotomy in this collection of nursery rhymes to the extent that some serious poems appear to be more appropriate for adult audiences. However, Rossetti's juxtaposition of human and animal worlds does soften the presentation of the experience of death for her child readers and listeners.

Positioned between two poems of infant love and loss, the sad poem of the baby linnet's smashed eggs, so cruelly demolished by young pranksters, presents an objective and tender view of loss in the animal kingdom. All children are fascinated by the manner in which birds prepare and care for their young, so the image of the "mournful linnets", observing the destruction of their eggs, strikes an emotional chord with children. In this way, loss through death is seen to touch all animal kingdoms. Rossetti ascribes a human voice to the linnet parents so that the reader can equate the emotions of the two sets of grieving parents:

"They crushed the eggs so neatly laid;
 So now we sit with drooping wing,
 And watch the ruin they have made,
 Too late to build, too sad to sing." (14)



Fig. 2

Arthur Hughes' illustration (fig.2) features the evidence of destruction in the foreground, and the grieving birds observing the tragic result. In most of the collection, the animals are free to run, fly, crawl, and play in the fields and pastures, but Rossetti, like a conscientious guardian of nature, inserts in her collection a few examples of the potential for human destruction and stresses that it is our duty to be respectful co-inhabitants of nature.

Birds and their young symbolize the human mother-child bond, and Christina Rossetti witnesses the "white hen" carefully protecting her baby chicks from her adversaries-- the owl, hawk, and bat. However, the mother maintains a vigilant watch and leaves no doubt that "chicks beneath their mother's wing/ Squat safe as safe can be" (83). The theme of caring for the helpless is one frequently treated by Christina Rossetti throughout this work, and I believe that it reflects her Christian wish to love all God's creatures.

Christina Rossetti's fascination with the animal kingdom has strong biographical origins. Her interest in animals throughout these children's poems corresponds directly to her personal quest to re-discover her own childhood. Other poems, prose, and personal letters give evidence of Christina Rossetti's fascination with animals and the significant role they held in her artistic imagination.

Some diary entries by Christina Rossetti offer a glimpse into her world of poetic inspiration, perhaps shedding some light on the genesis of her poetics. In one such revealing diary notation, Rossetti recalls:

The other day I met a splendid frog...He was of a sort of sere yellow spotted with black, and very large. Were you in this country, you could hardly fail to gush poetry, with me the case is altogether different. The trees, the deer, the scenery, and indeed everything here, seems to influence me but little, with two exceptions, the cold, and the frog. ...the frog possesses every claim on my sympathy. He appeared to be leading a calm and secluded life. (Kent 204)

This excerpt from Christina Rossetti's personal writing is amusing and curious, because it reveals the way in which the poetic imagination may be triggered. Also, her anecdote demonstrates the subjective nature of images. The frog in the Sing-Song collection, or the other frog in the Speaking Likenesses story of Edith may well have been inspired by Rossetti's yellow and black frog. In addition, Rossetti notably believes that the life of a frog is "calm and secluded." This is a connection she makes based on personal observation. She encourages children to leave these unjustly-maligned creatures alone, vowing: "Good-bye. We'll let each other alone" (Sing-Song 56).

Rossetti is careful to offer examples of responsible stewardship, too, as shown in the poem about the dead thrush, for whom we must "Weave...a coffin of rush,[and]/ Dig...a grave where the soft mosses grow" (10). Later, the poet rescues "a motherless soft lambkin" and vows to "care for him and feed him/ Until he's strong and bold" (61). The lamb is awarded a special role in Rossetti's poetry because he is akin to the innocent babe. The "frisky lamb" (77) frolics with a playful child, and the newborn "pretty babe" is a "curly little lamb" in the collection's opening poem.

Furthermore, the lamb is a powerful literary symbol, alluding first to the Blakean symbol of innocence which, in turn, is a Christian allusion to Christ who called Himself a lamb. Considering Christina Rossetti's devoutly Christian perspective, her predilection for using the image of the lamb throughout a child's poetry book is both personal and allusory. Northrop Frye considers the distinguishing characteristic of poetry to be the poet's use of "images and objects and sensations much more than abstract ideas" (Frye 8).

Rossetti uses images from nature to educate the young about abstract concepts. Undoubtedly, there is a considerable amount of pedagogical purpose in Sing-Song, but the teaching is done in a very enjoyable way. The heaviness of sea-sand is like the weight of sorrow; youth is as "frail" as "spring-blossoms;" truth is deep, like the ocean. In the neatly-rhymed couplets, a child will easily remember these axioms, and, like Rossetti, share the view that life, like nature, is constantly changing, and we must savour the happy moments, however brief. She tells us that sorrow is as much a part of life as joy:

What are heavy? sea-sand and sorrow:
 What are brief? to-day and tomorrow:
 What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth:
 What are deep? the ocean and truth. (34)

Some poems are unsettling in their sad representation of a parent's grief, and some critics have wondered at their inclusion in a poetry collection intended for children. Many critics find the inclusion of themes such as infant death, parentless children, and grief too harsh for a child's poetry book. However, as mentioned earlier, early childhood death was a fact of life in Rossetti's day, so her poetry is likely a way of helping the surviving siblings--and the parents-- to cope with their loss. These poems are sad, but generally provide a "balm" of comfort in the form of faith.

Rossetti's preoccupation with the paradisaal world might account for the seemingly paradoxical blending of infant death and a willing, almost joyous, acceptance of it. Diane D'Amico, in an article which examines the devotional poetry of Christina Rossetti, notes that we often hear, in Rossetti's prose work, "the voice of the soul happily anticipating the paradise to come " (D'Amico, Victorian Newsletter 72, 40). Although the topic of this study is Christina Rossetti's contribution to the world of children's literature, it is impossible to examine any aspect of her poetic canon without, at least, acknowledging the contribution of her religious philosophy. Rossetti's focus is always on the prize, and that prize is the arrival in Paradise. She dreams of that day when mankind's eyes will see God in a place:

Where no darkness more shall hide him from our sight,
Where we shall be love with love, and light with light,
Worshipping our God together face to face.
("Antipas", II, 283)

Recognizing Rossetti's attitude toward eternity helps to explain the morbid representation of dead children in Sing-Song. Undoubtedly, Rossetti would find complete solace in God's promise of a paradisaal reward.

Rossetti's faith in God and the presence of His caregivers on earth, in the form of angels, are recurrent themes in her poems of loss. Orphaned children are not endangered in Rossetti's world, but are watched by their guardian angels:

Three little children
 On the wide, wide earth,
 Motherless children--
 Cared for from their birth
 By tender angels.

Three little children
 On the wide, wide sea,
 Motherless children--
 Safe as safe can be
 With guardian angels. (80)

Faith in the guardianship of children by God or His caregivers is a theme expressed earlier in William Blake's Songs of Innocence (1789). Certainly, Rossetti was influenced by Blake's work, because we see the same message in Rossetti as in Blake's "Little Boy Found", in which Blake tells of the lost little boy who "began to cry", and "God, ever nigh,/ Appear'd like his father in white" (The English Romantics 31). Rossetti's Sing-Song rhymes, for the most part, do provide comfort in their message of God's steadfast love and care. However, on closer inspection, Rossetti does occasionally hint at a fatalistic view of mortality that is more skeptical. The "crown of wind-flowers" is fashioned to give the wearer a chance to "fly away/ To hear the singers at their song, and players at their play." However, the final stanza is not fanciful but harshly realistic. Rossetti reminds the listener that the crown "can never make you fly." She points out that, although she will "twist them in a crown to-day,/ [And] to-night they die" (Sing-Song 38). In effect, this Rossetti poem incorporates two Blakean themes in a single work. Stanzas 1 and 2 celebrate the power of the imagination to transcend reality, and to transport the speaker to

other worlds. In stanza 1, the lyricist begs the listener to fashion her a "crown of wind-flowers," which will empower her with the ability "To hear the singers at their song,/ And players at their play." Here, Rossetti shares in Blake's idea of innocence. Once the crown is worn, the wearer wishes to travel "beyond the surging of the sea/ And the storms that blow"(38). In a child's world of fantasy, a flight to distant lands is a common theme, but in Christina Rossetti's fantasy world, the spell must be broken. The third and final stanza returns the dreamer abruptly to reality, or to the Blakean idea of "experience", and the fantasy is shattered when the harsh truth is told:

Alas! your crown of wind-flowers
 Can never make you fly:
 I twist them in a crown to-day,
 And to-night they die. (Sing-Song 38)

Christina Rossetti's children's poems celebrate the wonders of a real world--in nature, in language, and in relationships. In her children's poems, the people and animals are more real than in Mother Goose or Edward Lear's "nonsense" poems. Admittedly, the Lear and Mother Goose poems have a more prominent status in the realm of children's literature --perhaps because these poems do revel in silliness and whimsy. However, Christina Rossetti does exhibit a sense of humour and a passion for a child's world of wonder. Often, Rossetti takes delight in the comical realities of everyday objects and words, particularly in the connotative absurdities of language.

Lessons and language constitute the major themes of the second section, in which the poetic object matures along with the growing child. In the first poem of this section, Rossetti bids her audience's attention, commanding: "Learn the lesson, little folk" (40). Capitalizing on the pre-school child's fascination with rhyme, words,

and meaning, Christina Rossetti begins a sequence of lessons involving colours, numbers, riddles, time, animal sounds, and months of the year. These poems require increased mental focus, and the older child will take delight in Rossetti's word-play, featuring common objects such as:

A hill has no leg, but has a foot;
 A wine-glass a stem, but not a root;
 A watch has hands, but no thumb or finger;
 A boot has a tongue but is no singer;
 Rivers run, though they have no feet;
 A saw has teeth, but it does not eat;
 Ash-trees have keys, yet never a lock;
 And baby crows, without being a cock. (55)

In this extended riddle, Rossetti plays with the varied connotations of words. The rhymed couplets pair sets of riddles together, adding some end-rhyme fun to the perplexing images. Rossetti excels at children's poetry when she toys with the world of language.

Other connotative paradoxes are revealed in the poem, "A city plum is not a plum" (12) in which Christina Rossetti vividly demonstrates an awareness of the child's world of words. If a dumb-bell doesn't ring, or a captain's log book is not a portion of a tree, then how do such words evolve? These poems are delightful in their clear recognition of how children question language. Obviously, the young children to whom this book would appeal most are at an age when they are beginning to embrace an ever-increasing vocabulary and are likely questioning the rationale behind the purpose or use of many words. The rhyming couplets of this poem invite further word play, should the child desire it:

A city plum is not a plum;
 A dumb-bell is no bell, though dumb;
 A party rat is not a rat;
 A sailor's cat is not a cat;
 A soldier's frog is not a frog;
 A captain's log is not a log. (12)

Theories of language acquisition can be used to explain the childhood appeal of Rossetti's Sing-Song rhymes. The playful words and familiar images that Rossetti uses in her poems permit the child some flexibility in using words to fit his own view of the world. As Jean Piaget explains in Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood(1969):

The child interprets words in terms of his own personal system of meanings, and the child's meaning is not necessarily the same as the adult's. Although the culture provides the child with language, the latter does not immediately socialize the child's thought. In other words, language does not completely impose on the child the culturally desirable ways of thinking. Instead, the child distorts the language to fit his own mental structure. (Piaget 63)

Recognizing the universality of a child's favourite stories, Rossetti uses words and images that echo well-known nursery rhymes. Knowing that these poems are likely to be read aloud, Rossetti increases the value of the aural experience by imitating the rhymes of some children's nursery rhyme favourites. The "cock-a-doodle-do" of a rooster is heard in the "kookooroo" of the crowing cock. Another example of the poetic manipulation of sound is observed in the contrasting tempos of "A frisky lamb." Note how "A frisky" in the first two lines forces the reader to read swiftly, while the assonance and the well-orchestrated 'slowing down' in the later three lines

change the tone in this half of the poem to one of peace and calm. Especially helpful in slowing the pace is the difficult pronunciation of the slow 'l' sounds in the words "all blue" and "all mild." This is an example of a children's poem that is obviously written to be read aloud:

A frisky lamb
 And a frisky child
 Playing their pranks
 In a cowslip meadow:
 The sky all blue
 And the air all mild
 And the fields all sun
 And the lanes half shadow. (77)

The juxtaposition of playful, carefree child and an idyllic pastoral setting suggests that the busily happy youngster is oblivious to the beauty in nature that surrounds her. This poem provides a helpful analogy to the nature of Christina Rossetti's poetry for children. Like the child who does not appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds her, we, as readers of the poems, can easily miss the underlying message of some of the poems.

Rossetti invites us to pay close attention to everything. Sometimes there will be a lesson within the poem, and at other times the verse form will be so simple that it demands nothing more than an appreciation of the words. Her poems demonstrate Ruskin's notion of poetry as "the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions" (Houghton 879). Ruskin believed that imagination has the power to reveal hidden truths, and Rossetti's literary efforts certainly demonstrate that she shared this belief.

Nevertheless, in the second section of the poetry collection, Christina Rossetti is less focused on hidden truths and underlying morals. It is in this section,

encompassing pages 20 to 79, that she savours the sublimity of childhood innocence and exuberance. Undoubtedly recalling the pleasures of her own childhood, Rossetti seldom refers to serious themes in this section. Here, lizards "wear umbrellas", and a pig "wears a wig." Physical and mental play become the focus of the child's daily activities. No longer content to stay at home by the fireside like the baby in the early sequence of poems, the child is now seeking out new playmates and learning experiences.

Sharon Smulders suggests that the three sections of the poems encompass rather lengthy time periods. Smulders argues in "Sound, Sense and Structure in Sing-Song," that "Rossetti uses clock and calendar to posit progress within circularity"(3). I concur with Smulders' contention that the collection is intentionally arranged in sequential order in order to emphasize progress and circularity, but I do not agree that the three divisions represent a sequence of three, four, and five decade time spans. Instead, I see Christina Rossetti's sequential progression as stages in the evolution of a child's cognitive growth. Also, I believe that these poems are a re-creation of her own childhood. Jan Marsh believes that Rossetti "was writing to and for herself in a conscious return to her own infancy" (Marsh 379). The re-construction of childhood experiences must necessarily be sporadic, as the poet endeavours to recall the experiences from the recesses of subconscious thought.

Notwithstanding this limitation, Sharon Smulders' emphasis on Rossetti's sequential patterning finds strong support within the collection. Earlier, I stated that all the poems in the first section re-create the daily routines in an infant's life. From the cock's crow to the baby's morning "physic", followed by mail delivery, breakfast, and getting dressed, the poet celebrates the need-driven world of infancy. Life and

death, joy and pain, and motherly devotion are the themes that surround and sustain the young baby's early life. Smulders does emphasize the external framework of the entire collection, which is encompassed by the "occupied" cribs of the first and last poems in the book. A new life begins at the end of the collection, and the circularity of life is re-asserted. With this motif framing Rossetti's work, the entire sequence of poems suggests the universality of the experiences contained within the book.

Rossetti's depiction of childhood does correspond to Jung's concept of the child archetype. Embodying innocence, joy, and inquisitiveness, Rossetti's child also adheres to the archetypal characteristic of being abandoned. A necessary prerequisite to successful maturation, the child must be independent in order to mature. As Alice Byrnes clearly states in her study of The Child: an Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults, "the distinguishing characteristics of Jung's archetypal child include abandonment, wholeness, mutual transformation of the protégé and mentor, as well as unity of time" (33). Interestingly, the second section of Rossetti's Sing-Song collection establishes the initial separation of the child from its parents and, in particular, from its mother. The child's separation from parental supervision prepares him or her for evolution towards independence, and Rossetti's poems demonstrate this transformation. Some of literature's beloved child archetypes-- notably, Huckleberry Finn, Jane Eyre, Anne of Green Gables, and Heidi (to name a few) feature the story of the orphaned child. Some of Rossetti's child figures in Sing-Song are orphaned, motherless, or separated from siblings, yet they do continue to mature and to evolve, forming a confident sense of self along the way. Christina Rossetti's perspective in regard to "motherless children" embodies her spiritual philosophy of heavenly guardianship. Rossetti comforts these orphans, knowing they are "Safe as safe can be/ With guardian angels" (80).

Abandonment or separation, of course, does not encompass only parental death. The simple act of the child venturing independently from his home to encounter new experiences, new people, and new occupations constitutes an evolution toward independence and adulthood. In the final section of the book, the themes of the poems become more adult, and require a more advanced intellect to be understood. Having progressed through the collection from infancy to early childhood, the growing child may now answer more difficult questions. Rossetti's longer poem about gem-stones, for example, invites the child to consider the relationship between value and need. The aesthetic value of diamonds, emeralds, and opals is obvious, but Rossetti suggests that when an individual's basic needs (such as warmth) are not being met, value becomes a relative matter:

A diamond or a coal?
 A coal, sir, if you please:
 One comes to care about the coal
 What times the waters freeze. (96)

Sing-Song's final section requires the child, in many poems, to exercise some form of reasoning. The pastoral environment continues to frame these poems with their more mature themes, but the meaning of the poems here surpasses a purely sensory appreciation of nature. The "skylark" and "wind" poems, which face each other in the collection share both a physical proximity and a thematic purpose. In both poems, the object of poetic scrutiny (the bird, the wind) is the impetus which allows the poet to transcend the earthly/ pastoral experience, now confident in the presence of a heavenly world. The ambiguity of the poet's belief in the first of these two poems supports the contention that some of Rossetti's poems in this collection do satisfy an adult reading. The morning skylark's song reassures the poet of the existence of a separate heaven and earth, but the song of the nightingale, "In the

moonlit summer even" has such a transcendental force that the poet is certain, "Only that heaven is heaven." There is some suggestion, however, that the poet is less certain about earth's geographic limits. Such heavenly beauty on earth (as in the song of the nightingale) causes her to wonder if aspects of heaven are present in our world.

Nature is the vehicle which transports the poet, and vicariously, the reader to more mature themes and interests. In the first section of the book, the poems focus on new life, springtime, and the awakening of curiosity. The book's middle sequence of poems layers intellectual maturation upon seasonal change with the focus on summer and its corresponding images of ripening fruitfulness. The final section of poems presents a further seasonal, diurnal, and intellectual advance. Here, the poems appeal to the older child, who possesses an intellectual maturity and an aptitude for more abstract concepts. Consequently, the book's final section deals with human virtues, the endurance of a true friendship, and a contemplation of worlds beyond our own.

It is significant that, in section three, the child begins to look heavenward-- to the stars and the moon-- instead of viewing nature only within earth's domain. The child's outward, heavenly gaze corresponds to her cognitive growth. The moon and stars have an inexplicable, spiritual quality that is intriguing to the child's growing sense of wonder about the world. The wind, too, is incorporated here as a natural element that invites contemplation. Christina Rossetti presents the paradox of the wind's obvious power and virtual invisibility to the child's burgeoning inquisitiveness. This poem, arguably Rossetti's most famous children's poem, is an appropriate companion piece to the previous lyric of the skylark. Exalted by the skylark's heaven-borne song, the poet now observes the grandeur of the wind's power and,

though she cannot see the wind itself, she is impressed by the consequences of its force.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by. (II, 42)

In the final section, eight poems focus thematically on the sun, moon, stars, or rainbows. Christina Rossetti aligns intellectual and spiritual maturity. Nature's mysteries inspire both poet and reader to suspect the existence of a spiritual domain in our lives, and the majestic beauty of nature elevates this intuition of spirituality to a more certain faith. The moon assumes a feminine persona in all the poems, and remains simultaneously mysterious and whimsical, like an elusive toy. Rossetti magically combines celestial spirituality and fantastical playfulness in how she observes the moon:

If the moon came from heaven,
Talking all the way,
What could she have to tell us,
And what would she say?

"I've seen a hundred pretty things,
And seen a hundred gay;
But only think: I peep by night
And do not peep by day!" (122)

The relationship between perceiver and perceived becomes more relevant in this final section, because the observing child begins to wonder about the purpose and

meaning behind the objects that he or she sees. Moon, stars, wind, and clouds are subjected to a more intense scrutiny now, not only in respect to their inherent beauty, but also for the concealed knowledge they might contain. In Rossetti's view of astronomy, the sun holds secrets ("If the sun could tell us half/ That he hears and sees" (121)), and each "star [is] lit to shine and set,/ And do its Maker's will" (124).

Notwithstanding the more philosophical tone of the last sequence of poems, Rossetti does not abandon the recurrent "symphonic theme" of her more musical lyrics. Inserted regularly among the "thinking" poems are the playful lyrics that sustain the underlying theme of childhood play. There is a game of shaking the "house of cards," and a humorous interchange between a "wee wee husband" and "wee wee wifie" who asks him to

Give me some money,
I have no comfits
And I have no honey. (103)

Because the more serious, contemplative poems also contain elements of play, Rossetti's arrangement of whimsical lyrics and pedagogical poems is successfully rendered. The genesis of poetry, John L. Huzinga observes, is found in play, and this fact may account for the successful merger of the thematically disparate poems.

The significance of play to the development of Eastern and Western cultures is explored by John Huizinga in Homo Ludens (1938). Of particular interest to readers of poetry is Huizinga's assertion that "the function of the poet still remains fixed in the play-sphere where it was born, [in] the playground of the mind" (Huizinga 119). Poetic inspiration can be derived from the world of play, where objects of observation evoke the unrestrained and gleeful sensations normally confined to childhood. The sensual and immediate pleasure of finding delight in the

simplest of objects (Rossetti's caterpillars, frogs, lizards, stars, and dolls) is comparable to the child's-eye view of observing an object of interest for the first time. In this collection of poems, Rossetti reverts to the child's playground and, in effect, to what Huizinga calls the "original culture-making capacity [of poetry], which is born in and as play" (Huizinga 122). Perhaps in acknowledging the significance of play to the craft of poetry, we may begin to explain the bipartite appeal of this small nursery rhyme collection. Christina Rossetti's poems appeal to the child in all of us, and to that sense of wonder which we, as adults, often try to re-capture but can only rarely re-experience.

In such brief, but magical poems as "A pin has a head..." , Christina Rossetti instills in child and adult alike the wonder-filled ability to imagine. The middle sequence of poems, for example, focuses on the way a child can "play" with language. Verbal conundrums and clever images become the "play-things" of the poet, who delights in the many and varied forms of expression through language. Because we, as adults, derive such pleasure from those crystallized moments when we recall, with clarity, some significant moment from our early childhood, we too find pleasure in the universality of Rossetti's poems which capture the innocence, playfulness, and inquisitiveness of the child.

A respect for writers of children's poems is eloquently asserted by Rachel Carson in her essay, "The Sense of Wonder," in Cameron's The Green and Burning Tree:

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful,
full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune
that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true
instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is
dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood.
If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed

to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupations with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength. (Cameron 233)

The final three poems in the Sing-Song collection return to the realm of infancy, and to all the potential that this new life contains. Rossetti has circled back to the point where her collection began, and to the musical lullaby motif that introduced the first sequence of poems. In Sing-Song, Christina Rossetti's deceptively simple rhymes elevate child and adult to an often unappreciated world of childlike wonder and fascination. Rossetti's well-constructed arrangement of poems, though subtly done, guides both reader and listener on a journey that corresponds to his or her present development or to the reminiscence of those days long-forgotten.

Chapter Four: Speaking Likenesses

Clearly the most didactic of all Christina Rossetti's children's writings, Speaking Likenesses (1874) illustrates Rossetti's talent in the genre of fantasy literature, or fairy tales. Another prose effort of Rossetti's that was possibly intended for children, Vanna's Twins, (1870), will not be discussed in this paper because its subject matter of early childhood death and the method of its presentation really does, in my opinion, exclude this work from the realm of children's literature. On the other hand, Speaking Likenesses does contain intriguing elements of fantasy as well as some novel methods of incorporating the requisite Victorian moral within the story. Published after Sing-Song, Speaking Likenesses received mostly unfavourable criticism for its frightening images of harmful and grotesque creatures in the land of "Nowhere" and for its heavy-handed didacticism. Nevertheless, Rossetti's use of an adult narrator and a three-part story structure is a method of writing for children that merits examination and comparison with similar techniques in other famous children's stories.

In the first story, Flora's trip to "Nowhere" partakes of the Victorian literary convention of the isolated/orphaned child leaving home and family to enter a make-believe, fantasy world. The narrator of the "Flora" story is an unmarried, childless aunt, a combination of gifted raconteur of tales and stern taskmaster. This aunt

relates the tale of Flora, the eight-year-old birthday girl, to her five nieces. Implicit in the storytelling is the aunt's didactic message: gratitude and good humour are admirable traits, and self-absorbed petulance is not. The absurd characters of Flora's fantasyland are anthropomorphic manifestations of Flora and her party guests' negative attributes.

Rossetti first relates the accelerating disharmony of mood at Flora's birthday party. As often happens in children's competitive games, an atmosphere of mean-spiritedness and poor co-operation erupts when the young children engage in a game of blind man's bluff in Flora's garden:

Sad to say, what followed was a wrangle. An hour after dinner blindman's buff in the garden began well and promised well: why could it not go on well? Ah, why indeed? for surely before now in that game toes have been trodden on, hair pulled, and small children overthrown. Flora fell down and accused Alfred of tripping her up, Richard bawled out that George broke away when fairly caught, Anne when held tight muttered that Susan could see in spite of bandaged eyes. Susan let go, Alfred picked up his little sister, George volunteered to play blindman in Susan's stead: but still pouting and grumbling showed their ugly faces, and tossed the apple of discord to and fro as if it had been a pretty plaything.

(Speaking Likenesses, 1874 edition, 9)

Indeed, play is repeatedly abused so that the final result is not merriment but disharmony and bad feelings. The aunt's story is interrupted by Clara's question regarding the definition of "the apple of discord," but the aunt does not elaborate. Her story must continue without digression, and she steadfastly insists that the children adhere to the immediate topic and task at hand. The aunt bargains with the young female listeners, who, she insists, will be entertained with a tale only if they are occupied with industrious handiwork such as darning, painting, and sewing. The

aunt's commanding instructions to the girls as she prefaces her story suggest that her tale requires concentrated attention, and that a lesson will be derived from it. The aunt implores the girls to " 'Come sit around me, my dears. Now I start knitting and my story together' " (2).

Certainly, "Flora," the first of Rossetti's three stories in Speaking Likenesses, is a curious mixture of fantasy and didacticism. Flora's venture into the world of fantasy is replete with characters and objects that are the byproduct of a vivid imagination. Mimicking the shape-altering objects and eccentric characters of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865), Christina Rossetti creates a land of limitless possibility and mutability. Rossetti uses mirror-lined walls, telescopic moving tables, and shape-altering, mobile furniture and china pieces. Flora's descent into the land of "Nowhere" is rapid and miraculous. Removed from the others while playing, Flora ventures down a lengthy corridor of yew-trees. At the last tree, she notices a lamp growing "on its topmost branch" (16). The environment has suddenly changed, because "never before [either] had the yew walk led to a door: but now at its further end stood a door with bell and knocker, and 'Ring also' printed in black letters on a brass plate" (16). Similar beckonings to fantasy worlds beyond reality have enticed the child characters of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865), Frank L. Baum's The Wizard of Oz (1900), and J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan (1904). Peter beckons the Darling children to a world of eternal childhood by teaching them to fly, while Alice begins her journey into Wonderland by falling down a concealed rabbit-hole in the garden. Dorothy sets out for the Emerald City by placing her faith in the reputation of the Wizard of Oz, as told to her by the Munchkins and the Good Witch. All these children leave parents, home and security behind for the adventures of an unknown place.

Flora's descent into the fictional land of "Nowhere" allows Rossetti to play with an imaginary world in which Lewis Carroll's "Wonderland" will be imitated to some extent. Although Christina Rossetti begins with the charming description of a magical room filled with changeable and accommodating objects, the child characters who engage in a "game" with Flora readily assume a frightening and sadistic presence. This is the point where opinions diverge. Is Christina Rossetti parodying the Carrollian world of Wonderland, or is she merely inspired by Alice's success to create a similar imaginary world?

Some of the aunt's guiding comments suggest that Rossetti's first story in this fantasy triptych is no mere flattering imitation of Lewis Carroll's "Wonderland" creations. Hook, Quills, Angles, Slime, and Sticky are the boys and girls who wield armour and weaponry that correspond to their names. In the game of Self-Help, "every natural advantage, as a quill or fishhook, might be utilized to the utmost" (36). In response to Ella's shocked reaction, the aunt reminds her that "the boys were players, the girls were played" (36). Rossetti establishes a masculine advantage in the games, making poor Flora a vulnerable target for mockery and injury. The masculine aggressors in Flora's story resemble the frightening goblin-men of Rossetti's previously -published Goblin Market (1862). All three games in the story of "Flora" express cruelty and physical violation to such an extent that John Ruskin called Rossetti's story "the worst" of a collection of Christmas publications for children. He expressed outrage, wondering: "How could she or Arthur Hughes sink so low after their pretty nursery rhymes?". Gillian Avery finds that the story possesses a "repellant intensity" and "cruel ingenuity" (Knoepfmacher 320).

Admittedly, the birthday games, such as "Self-Help" and "Hunt the Pincushion" depict a revolting assembly of unpleasant characters and, as an imitation

of Wonderland's nonsensical characters, they lack any of the humour and nonsense of the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit, or the Dormouse. If, then, Rossetti's effort is such a distasteful and poor imitation of Carroll's tale, why is it written in this way?

There are several clues within the tale that suggest that Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses is worthy of closer examination and, in fact, some praise. U.C. Knoepfmacher believes that Christina Rossetti's story is, in fact, an attempt to dissociate herself from Carroll's Alice and Through the Looking Glass (1871). Of Speaking Likenesses, Knoepfmacher notes that , "her emphasis on dissociation or unlikeness continued to be misread as an expression of kinship or likeness" (302). However, several biographical details demonstrate Christina Rossetti's wariness of Lewis Carroll's fascination with vulnerable, pre-adolescent girls. Notably, Christina Rossetti herself was socially reclusive and often resisted social interaction. Knoepfmacher shows documentary evidence that suggests, perhaps, that Rossetti did not completely admire Lewis Carroll's popular fantasy tale. In a letter addressed to Rev. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), Rossetti offers limited praise on his gift to her of a copy of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. As noted here, she briefly acknowledges her admiration of several of his characters, wariness of others, then quickly refers to matters of a business nature:

My dear Mr. Dodgson,

A thousand and one thanks--surely an appropriate number-- for the funny pretty book you have so very kindly sent me. My Mother and Sister as well as myself have made ourselves quite at home yesterday in Wonderland: and (if I am not shamefully old for such an avowal) I confess it would give me sincere pleasure to fall in with that conversational rabbit, that endearing puppy, that very sparkling dormouse. Of the hatter's acquaintance I am not ambitious, and the March hare may fairly remain an open question. The woodcuts are charming. Have you seen the few words of strong praise already awarded to your volume by the *Reader*?

To descend to very prosy prose. Please do not forget that

we are still in your debt for the last vignettes of my Sister: 9 copies, I think. Two or three months ago her carte was taken at Harrogate and turned out an admirable likeness.

My Mother and Sister unite in cordial remembrances. Pray believe me very truly yours,

Christina G. Rossetti

Admittedly, there is insufficient evidence here to suggest that Christina Rossetti actively disliked Lewis Carroll's story of Alice in Wonderland, but the above letter, however polite in tone, does not express effusive praise.

Christina Rossetti had never written a children's prose fantasy before the publication of Speaking Likenesses, nor did she write another. It seems probable that Christina Rossetti was simultaneously imitating, and satirizing, Carroll's Wonderland. One advantage of fairy-tale, or fantasy, writing is that the writer is able to create whatever version of "unreality" he or she might wish. In Speaking Likenesses, the world that Flora falls into at the end of the yew-alley is a world that purposefully mimics the bad behaviours of Flora and her birthday guests at their own party. The dream world exaggerates, and satirizes, the real world. As Helen Haines notes in What's in a Novel this is the beauty of fantasy writing:

...fantasy is a medium that reflects reality through unreality, that interprets life through illusion and plays with shimmering implications urgencies over human experience and human character...It deals in prophecy; through satire, burlesque, and make-believe it assays human qualities; through poetic mirage it penetrates to the realities of the human heart...Its values are the values of imagination: as a means of conveying emotional or intellectual perception of truths not openly presented; as a detonator of the high explosive of ideas; as a weapon of mockery for attack or defense; as a stimulus to

the sense of beauty and the sense of humor; and
 as release of the spirit of wonder and frolic that
 belongs to the eternal child within us. (Georgiou 241)

The bad behaviour of Richard, George, Alfred, Serena, Emily, and Flora is mocked by the merciless cruelty of their "Nowhere" counterparts. Quills, Hooks, and Angles poke, cajole, and irritate-- just as they did at Flora's party. The fluid secreted by Sticky and Slime corresponds to the insincerity of "smooth Serena" (8) and the haughty Emily with her "smile of superiority" (7). The Queen echoes Flora's spoiled and selfish behaviour when, surrounded by birthday treats, she admonishes Flora not to take any strawberries. In a cross, grumbling voice, the Queen says: "'You shan't, they're mine..It's my birthday, and everything is mine' "(25). By parodying the impolite behaviours of Flora and her guests, the aunt utilizes the realm of fantasy to teach her nieces about etiquette and gratitude. Of course, the Queen of "Nowhere" is an allusion to the birthday Queen of "Wonderland." Flora is an exemplum-- her return to reality from the dream world is accompanied by a valuable lesson and an apology. The final paragraph of the story about Flora ends with an omniscient narrator. This narrator equates the Flora of reality with the Flora of fantasy, and confirms that Flora will behave with improved humour and graciousness on her next birthday.

Accompanying the didactic message of Speaking Likenesses is an intriguing presentation of a child's view of the world. In the interchange between children and adult, Rossetti exposes the chasm that separates the world of the adult from the world of the child. Even while the story is located in a fantasy world, digressions in the form of children's questions or adult explanations elucidate the distinctly different concerns of children and adults.

The child listeners exhibit an unchecked enthusiasm for learning and for stories. Clearly, the children are enthralled with the story of "Flora" from the very beginning. Ella interrupts her aunt to ask if, in reality, the birthday dishes were all wrong. The aunt does, in fact, leave room for doubt:

Was it fact? Was it fancy? Each dish in turn was only fit to be found fault with. Meat underdone, potatoes overdone, beans splashy, jam tart not sweet enough, fruit all stone; covers clattering, glasses reeling, a fork or two dropping on the floor. Were these things really so? or would even finest strawberries and richest cream have been found fault with, thanks to the children's mood that day? (8)

The eagerness of the children to know precise story details and the empathy they feel for their fictional counterparts demonstrates how easily and completely a child can enter the realm of fantasy. The children readily accept this fantasy world in which fixtures and delicacies move about and instruments play without musicians. Maude wonders how bell-flowers could "[ring] without clappers" (14). It is clear that the children are receptive to any possibility, but are at an age when they can exercise their faculties of reasoning, too. Nevertheless, they readily accept any explanation the aunt offers.

Representing the adult world of seriousness and purpose is the girls' aunt. She exhibits a double nature in that, on the one hand, she is a strict disciplinarian. On the other hand, she possesses a tremendous faculty for story-telling and whimsy. In the beginning, the aunt insists that her nieces commit to their handiwork while listening to her story and, during the story, she continues to demand that the girls remain busily occupied. Aunt interrupts telling about Flora's appearance in the room of mirrors to scold Jane and Laura: " 'Don't quite forget the pocket-handkerchiefs

you sat down to hem' " (21). The aunt represents the adult world of occupation and responsibility and, throughout the story, she maintains a tone of detachment and civility. Interruptions by her young nieces afford Aunt the opportunity to instruct, especially to offer morality lessons. When Ella denounces "Hunt the Pincushion" as a "horrid game" (33), Aunt counters that, although there exists no such game in reality, "yet I have seen before now very rough cruel play, if it can be termed play" (33). As the games of choice change to the equally repugnant "Self Help", Ella's sensibilities are again offended. Ella's aunt reminds her: " 'don't look shocked..at my choice of words, but remember that my birthday party is being held in the Land of Nowhere' "(334). The aunt's narrative asides, incorporating an affiliation between real world and fantasy tale, show that this fantasy is founded on real world occurrences.

To reiterate Helen Haines' observation, fantasy writing "is a medium that reflects reality through unreality" (Georgiou 241). Much of our revulsion toward the violent games in Speaking Likenesses emanates from the realization that people are capable of inflicting harm and injury on one another. Nevertheless, the trio of stories ends on a positive note in the heroine's courageous act of self-assertion in the final story, "Maggie." As in Sing-Song, structure becomes an important component in Rossetti's three-part story, and it is essential to observe that the final story ends on a positive, happy note.

The tripartite structure of Speaking Likenesses is explained, symbolically, in the middle story, "Edith." Frequently glanced over as a banal non-story by critics, Knoepfmacher notices that a "seemingly insignificant" narrative detail in the second story also substantiates the purpose of this inconsequential "nonstory" in the middle of the three tales. In response to her niece's question, " 'What's a tripod, Aunt?' "

(57) the narrator replies: " 'three sticks, Maude, are the fewest that can stand up firmly by themselves: two would tumble down, and four are not wanted' "(57). The story of Edith, then, provides some support to the other two stories. The middle tale supports the other two, longer tales by mocking the social mores of Victorian society. It is the fulcrum upon which the two end tales are balanced.

The unsatisfactory conclusion of Aunt's short middle story is problematic but realistic. Compared with the fantastical, frightening exploits of Flora in the first story, the simple tale of Edith, setting out in the woods to boil a kettle, is rather uneventful and uninteresting. However, the aunt's futile efforts to unearth some satisfactory resolution to a tale she must compose spontaneously, realistically depicts the anticlimactic conclusions that parents often fabricate when they tell a new, unrehearsed bedtime story. The aunt must be awarded fair praise for the effort, because she is undoubtedly pressed into telling a story she does not know. The nieces, recalling the aunt's first tale, ask their aunt to tell the story of "the frog who couldn't boil the kettle" (49). After admitting that she doesn't know the story, the children continue to press the aunt into telling it. Again, the children's eagerness to be entertained by the aunt's storytelling is evident. Jane succeeds in acquiring the aunt's agreement to tell the story of the frog but, once again, the aunt procures a promise of duty in return for pleasure. Storytelling for its own sake is clearly too self-indulgent a pastime to appease the aunt's insistence on productivity, yet the juxtaposition of youthful exuberance and adult authoritarianism is once again emphasized.

The middle tale is a refreshing change from the grotesque fantasy of the first tale. The story of Edith and her animal friends is similar to Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit (1903) or Kenneth Grahame's Wind in the Willows (1908). For this story,

fantasy is firmly planted in the real world of nature, with the only imaginary realm of the tale being derived from the human qualities of the secondary characters. Edith is a real girl without supernatural powers. The task that she undertakes is an ordinary one, and she, like many ordinary children, is unable to perform the simple task of boiling the kettle over an open fire.

The woodland animals of Edith's story are sympathetic to the plight of the little girl, and use their "natural advantages" to help her start the fire. The squirrel offers to fan the flames with his tail, while the mole rearranges the sticks "in a loose heap full of hollows and tunnels for admitting currents of air" (63). An atmosphere of good-natured camaraderie and compassion for Edith's frustration establishes an atmosphere of idyllic pastoral cooperation. The fantasy convention of a magical "other" place distinguishes Edith's secluded grove as a place of unlimited possibility. Rossetti's description of Edith's spirited trek to the beech-wood subtly captures the transformative powers of Nature to instill magic in everyday objects. Edith's beech wood is her "special place"-- that secret domain where children believe in the power of magic.

In Edith's fantasy wood, however, we witness the potential for magic in the ordinary, everyday world. Christina Rossetti begins to cast the spell, attempting to elevate Edith from her routine task to something out of the ordinary. Again, we witness the archetypal child, isolated from her secure world, and journeying out to accomplish something on her own.

Rossetti bathes Edith's intentions, her animal companions, and her surroundings in a radiant, idyllic glow:

So Edith found a box of lucifers, and sallied
forth kettle in hand. Striking on the burnished
copper, the sun's rays transformed that also into

a resplendent portable sun of dazzling aspect. The beautiful sunshine bathed garden, orchard, field, lane, and wood; bathed flower, bush, and tree; bathed bird, beast, and butterfly. Frisk, the Newfoundland dog, and Cosy, the Persian cat, meeting their young mistress, turned round, to give her their company. Crest, the cockatoo, taking a constitutional on the lawn, fluttered up to her shoulder and perched there. The four went on together, Frisk carrying the kettle in his mouth, and Crest pecking at the match-box. (55)

Edith's three domestic companions accompany her, but do not speak. It is only in the beech-grove that the magic of fantasy figures in Edith's task. Nevertheless, she remains unsuccessful until her nurse arrives "with a box of lucifers in one hand, two fire-wheels in the other, and half a dozen newspapers" (69) to start the fire. The subtle didacticism of the story stems from Edith's inability to complete the task. As in Flora's story, it is the adults who, ultimately, have the power-- not the children. In the aunt's preface, perhaps, lies a clue to the direction of the second story. Aunt establishes that Edith had reached an age at which she "thought herself by no means such a very little girl, and at any rate as wise as her elder brother, sister and nurse" (51). Edith's failure to complete this simple task may be a means of diminishing her self-confidence, and, by way of example, of teaching her that adults may be more adept at problem-solving.

One curious problem that is presented in Edith's story is the introduction of the fox. Rossetti inverts the well-known Aesopian fable by having the fox enter, survey the grapes that are suspended above the dormant kettle, give them a shake, and shruggingly mutter "they must be sour". Christina Rossetti's purpose in having the fox enter the scene to play a noncontributory role is somewhat perplexing. However, he does impart a humorous digression to a static situation. The fox's fastidious nature, observed in the way he pulls out a brush to clean Edith's "dusty

frock" is a comical, non-consequential diversion. In addition, the fox's benign acceptance of a disappointing situation may be a lesson to Edith to accept what she cannot change. The child's impotence in this situation, however, must not necessarily apply in all situations when the child attempts a task of independence. In the final story, Maggie's steadfast self-assertiveness and tenacity in the face of obstacles and abusive confrontation guarantees her success.

Framing the simple, pastoral middle story are the first and third stories, both of which imitate Lewis Carroll's techniques or his characters. The final story, "Maggie", is unmistakably a return to the fantasy world of Lewis Carroll in the grotesque and obnoxious personage of the "Mouth-Boy." As in Sing-Song, Christina Rossetti's arrangement of the narrative sequence is purposeful. While "Flora" criticises the vulnerability and submissiveness of young Victorian females, "Maggie" confirms that the existing social constraints are changeable. Some of the literary techniques that are used in the first story are mirrored in the final story to emphasize the mimetic effect of the problems while proposing a societal change in how to deal with them. To illustrate these structural similarities, Rossetti introduces a trio of frightening masculine assaults on the young Flora. It is the three male characters, equipped with threatening appendages, that gleefully attack an undefended Flora. The other two female players, "Slime," and "Sticky," are equipped for defensive protection only, not to engage in an offensive role. It seems more plausible to assume that Christina Rossetti's use of such reprehensible characters as these does not suggest a stylistic admiration, but obviously, a shallowly-concealed effort to satirize Carroll's position on the vulnerability of young Victorian women. In the final story, Maggie's temptations will appear before her

three times, and these three situations will correspond directly to the trio of basket contents which she will carry safely home.

The final story, "Maggie", does present a proactive alternative to the established Victorian code of female submissiveness and vulnerability. If we see Rossetti's trio of stories as an evolutionary sequence, presenting first the problem, then an attempt to alter the problem, and, finally a solution to the heroine's established role of vulnerability, the final story offers a very positive, heroic perspective. Although this final tale does deliver a didactic message, too, it is a comforting tale, full of delightfully playful passages to charm any child. Curiously, however, it does exhibit many parallels in structure to the first story. While the grotesque, repugnant characters of "Flora" are 'speaking likenesses' of the badly-behaved real children of Flora's party, the three animals that Maggie takes home in her basket are likenesses of the temptations that Maggie resolutely resists on her errand of good will.

Christina Rossetti purposefully aligns the twin pressures of desire and temptation so that her child listeners and readers will fully appreciate the magnitude of Maggie's resistance. Maggie sets out from her grandmother's store on a frosty winter night to deliver several forgotten items to a doctor's family some distance away. A hybrid mixture of the always-polite "Alice" of Carroll's "Wonderland" and Grimm's "Red Riding Hood" on a goodwill mission to granny, Maggie sets out eagerly into the cold twilight air that "nipped her fingers and ears, and little pug-nose" (75). Once again, Rossetti incorporates the fantasy convention of a suddenly-altered level of consciousness. Having sustained a fall on the ice, there is an unexplained cause and effect relationship between Maggie's fall and "the thwack" she receives which "fill(s) the atmosphere around her with sparks, flames and flashes of

lightning; and... from this identical point of time commenced her marvelous adventures" (76). In keeping with the parallel structuring of the first and third stories, Rossetti returns the reader to another Wonderland. This time, however, the heroine has the power to control her own fate in the fantasy world.

Desire and temptation are resisted three times by Maggie as she approaches her destination. Initially, nature appears to be at play all around, and Maggie quickly feels an urge to engage in some game or sport. Magically, a "green glade" appears before her, populated with children who are gleefully at play. Temptation has presented itself. Resistance is difficult, because the children invite her to join them. However, Maggie does recall the promise she has made to her grandmother "to make haste" (81) and, speaking "resolutely though sadly" (82), she informs the children that she "mustn't stop to play" (82). Unlike Flora, Maggie has the power of free will, and therefore can make choices for herself. The ever-present tension between desire and resistance is a dynamic that Christina Rossetti displays here and continues to express in much of her adult poetry.

Maggie's second brush with temptation finds her face-to-face with yet another parodied Wonderland character. The "Mouth-Boy," who appears so suddenly and rudely before her to demand food from her basket, is an exaggeration and imitation of Lewis Carroll's "Tweedledum." Appearing just after Maggie witnesses two hungrily-searching wood pigeons, the "Mouth-Boy" tests Maggie's ability to think rationally, independently, and to act assertively. Not only does Maggie refuse the boy's forceful demands for food, she responds with indignation to his rudeness, and chastizes his behaviour by calling him a thief. By matching Maggie's even temperament and sense of fairness with an incorrigible boor, Rossetti tests the Victorian moral code. No longer must women necessarily remain docile and

restrained, but they should exercise their power to be morally right. Maggie counteracts the horrible indignity that Flora endured in her story by issuing an emphatic "no."

As Maggie's mission continues, nature presents itself as the antithesis of playful exuberance that it seemed to be at the start of her journey. Now, "the sky had turned leaden," and "the wind blew bleaker" (87). Correspondingly, Maggie herself is groggy and sleepy, and she plods along arduously. This time, Maggie battles an overwhelming desire to sleep and, for the final time, temptation follows desire. The final magical vision appears before her. A dozen sleepy, yawning, and snoring gypsies lie before an open fire, as if to magically entice Maggie to yield to her desire to sleep. For the final time, Maggie's fortitude and sense of purpose overcome temptation. Overcoming all difficulty, Maggie finishes her errand, gaining little gratitude and no reward at her destination.

However, on the return journey home, Maggie finds a creature in need of comfort at each of the three sites of temptation. The trio of creatures, a suffering wood pigeon, mewling kitten, and loving puppy, commemorate the victories Maggie has achieved over temptation. There is an instantly gratifying mutual quality to the relationship between Maggie and the creatures she adopts. Although extremely exhausted and disappointed, Maggie notices that the pigeon, nestling in the bosom of her dress, "seemed to draw anger and discontent out of her heart: and soon she left off grumbling to herself, and stepped forward with renewed energy" (92). Although Maggie's exemplary behaviour imparts a moral lesson to the story, this time there is a delightfully comforting quality to the tale, which celebrates caring, devotion, and perseverance.

The final story in Christina Rossetti's triad of tales is the most uplifting, hopeful, and positive of her three stories. In three distinctively different types of story, the young listeners have been entertained and instructed in a way that capitalizes on the power of the imagination. Recognizing the Victorian appetite for didacticism and the child's love of fantasy, Rossetti attempts here to celebrate the many variations of fantasy writing. Fantasy permits Rossetti extensive artistic licence to create, mock, parody, and satirize in any way that she chooses to construct her fantasy world. Consequently, Christina Rossetti is able to satirize many aspects of Victorian attitudes and behaviour. In "Flora," Rossetti's grotesque caricatures parody the bad behaviour of the young birthday guests. Once she enters the fantasy world, however, the satire broadens, and Rossetti ostensibly condemns the social behaviour of young Victorian males toward vulnerable, submissive females. The middle story finds Edith attempting to resist the established Victorian code of girlish docility and restraint, but frustrated by a society that denies her any expression. The final story is an under-appreciated accomplishment of story-writing craftsmanship and thematic success. Maggie resists three temptations, each symbolizing a mortal sin, in order to return home, victorious in her independent ability to resist temptation and retain her self-respect. Maggie's fantasy escapades, closely synonymous with real world temptations, complete the moral lesson that the aunt set out to teach.

Christina Rossetti utilizes the adult aunt as moral compass and guide for the children. Ultimately, the stories we read are the products of stories told to a group of children. These children occupy the periphery of the story and constantly remind the reader of the character of Christina Rossetti's Victorian audience. By regularly revealing their presence, Rossetti writes in both modes of children's writing concurrently: realism and fantasy. To have the aunt's tale expressed merely as a

dialogue between adult and child would tediously emphasize the lecture and the realism, and, effectively, extinguish the story's romantic charm. Instead, the young nieces are introduced to a fantasy world where anything is possible.

Fantasy becomes the genre with the greatest potential for fulfilling all the author's needs. In the essay, "Three Ways of Writing for Children" from Sheila Egoff's Only Connect, C. S. Lewis comments that one may write a children's story "because [it] is the best art-form for something you have to say" (208). In the first story, Rossetti seems to have misjudged her public's sensibility toward aggression and violence, and this unfortunate error resulted in widespread condemnation of the book. However, seen as a whole, the trio of tales do evolve from the seemingly gratuitous sadism of the first story to the quiet moral victory of the last.

Unmistakably, Christina Rossetti subscribes to the time-honoured fairy tale tradition. Maggie as a fairy tale character is analogous to Red Riding Hood, Gretel, or Snow White. These fairy tale heroines demonstrate admirable human virtues. Maggie bears the strongest resemblance to Red Riding Hood. Both girls carry a basket of goodies through a wood to deliver the contents to someone who needs them, and both face the forces of evil during the course of their respective errands of good will. The triumph of good over evil is the most common fairy tale theme. In Speaking Likenesses, however, Maggie's triumph over sin demonstrates a secondary achievement: Maggie gains a wholeness of personality that emphasizes her independence in thought and deed. Compared to the defenceless Flora, or the impotent Edith, Maggie discovers that she as an individual has the power to conquer her own fears.

Essentially, Speaking Likenesses is a projection of Rossetti's personal doubts, and the story-writing may, for Rossetti, be a cathartic purging of her

childhood fears. In Sing-Song, Christina Rossetti re-traces the path of her own childhood, remembering the rhymes of her father, her daily activities, and the word games that so pleased her. However, Speaking Likenesses is not a nostalgic celebration. Instead, Rossetti fabricates and re-creates characters and situations that imitate her greatest fears and her failure to conquer them. On a personal and social level, Speaking Likenesses depicts children's frustrations in an adult world that frequently belittles or takes advantage of a child's vulnerability. Maggie's victorious rejections of sin and her assertive independence suggest that she is the embodiment of the wholly integrated archetypal child.

As a child archetype, Maggie meets all the criteria as identified by Jung. Maggie is orphaned, and detached, at least temporarily, from her origins. In her courageous journey, Maggie attempts to evolve toward a state of independence. In addition, she represents the complex nature of the archetypal child in literature. Alice Byrnes recognizes that "as a symbol of wholeness the archetypal child is a composite of opposite qualities. Not only is the child vulnerable and invincible, but young and old. Enmeshed in the tension of opposites, the archetypal child is able to reconcile contrary forces and grow from immaturity to maturity" (36).

The maturation factor is one feature of Speaking Likenesses that is often overlooked, but as a children's fairy tale, the progression of Rossetti's trio of stories does finally conclude with one child's successful individuation. Furthermore, Maggie's journey of maturation emphasizes the inversion of her own role from dependent granddaughter to independent caretaker for her loving grandmother. Once again, there is a re-affirmation of the circularity of life when the formerly responsible mentor now becomes increasingly dependent on her young protégé. As

in Sing-Song, when Rossetti returns to the cradle at the end of the book, in Speaking Likenesses, she returns to the cyclical nature of family roles.

As a theme, the issue of maturation and independence is not new. Other fairy tales, as mentioned, have been concerned with this issue. Moreover, Rossetti's preoccupation with sinful temptations and a selfless spirituality corresponds to the Victorian evangelical tradition as expressed by such religious writers as Pusey and Keble. Not surprisingly, however removed Rossetti's literature may appear to be from religious concerns, these themes are always central to her work. In fantasy, Rossetti uses magic to generate temptations in unexpected situations.

Notably, there is some overlapping of fairy story and realism in the three tales, with Maggie's experiences revealing the most realism of the three stories. Her journey to deliver the items is certainly believable, and magic enters the fantasy realm here with much more subtlety than in "Flora" or "Edith." The reason for this is clear: the experiences of Maggie are intended to reveal the everyday, universal temptations of humanity. An earlier fantasy tale, Goblin Market, focuses on similar concerns of temptation and redemption. How successfully Rossetti expresses her central concerns in this long fantasy poem and whether we can view it as a work for children will be the subject of the final chapter.

Chapter Five: Goblin Market

More critical attention has been focused on Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market (1862) than on any of her other poems. As a reading experience and subject of discussion, no other Christina Rossetti poem incites greater controversy. However, somewhat surprisingly, this long fantasy poem is seldom examined for its artful rendering of fairy tale in the classic tradition. Critics for over a century have argued over exactly what Rossetti's "real meaning" was in this poem. Goblin Market has been approached from many critical perspectives. Some critics have argued that Goblin Market presents a feminist re-interpretation of the Garden of Eden myth, seeing the goblins' fruit as an allusion to the apple which cast Adam and Eve from paradise. Still others point to the carnal implications of the sisters' relationship, citing this as evidence of homoerotic fantasy, while some feminist scholars focus on the matriarchal role of Lizzie and her power to resist the goblin-men. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, in "Goblin Market as a Cross-Audience Poem: Children's Fairy Tale, Adult Erotic Fantasy" (1997), supports the idea that Rossetti's poem functions on two levels and appeals to two diverse reading audiences. Examining the poem from the vantage point of a children's fairy tale will, hopefully, reveal some of the artistic strengths of the poem which show Rossetti's purpose. Unquestionably, this long fantasy poem displays more of the children's fairy tale and moral tale conventions than some of Rossetti's children's prose.

In her own lifetime, Christina Rossetti insisted repeatedly that Goblin Market was "just a fairy tale with no hidden meaning" (Kent 208). The poem is created with the idea of passing the story down to successive generations, as happens with traditional fairy tales, because at the end of the poem, the mature Lizzie and Laura do tell the story of the goblin men to their own children, exercising the power of moral narrative to instruct. This second generation of listeners will, undoubtedly, savour the fairy tale magic of the mothers' story. Perhaps, inadvertently, Rossetti created a fairy tale that borrows many of its characteristics from classic folk and fairy stories. Not only is the poem cross-audenced in its appeal to both adults and children, but the poem's language, story, and message appeal significantly to both adolescents and younger children. Laura's simultaneous physical and spiritual journey aligns her with children who find the route from innocence to experience a difficult, or frightening, one.

The phenomenal success of Goblin Market can be accredited to its originality and its retrospective re-figuring of favourite fairy tale traditions. Unlike Speaking Likenesses, which was written "in the Alice tradition" (Jones 164), Goblin Market is a brilliantly-conceived accomplishment of artistic inspiration. Lizzie and Laura are, in fact, two halves of the archetypal child of discovery. Instead of showing one child venturing into the world and facing temptation and danger, Rossetti cleverly divides the one child into ego and alter-ego to show the different consequences related to either yielding to or resisting temptation. With so complex a moral issue to present, why does Rossetti's poem so completely mesmerize child audiences? Simply stated, Goblin Market works as art for children because it is a well-crafted fairy tale. Consider Goblin Market's thematic similarities to Pinocchio (1892 trans.) by Carlo Collodi. The Talking Cricket is the tiny creature who exists outside Pinocchio to

represent the conscience that helps guide his judgement until he becomes a real boy. In Goblin Market, Lizzie assumes a similar role as super-ego to her self-indulgent, pleasure-seeking sister. In this way, Rossetti physically separates the dual aspects of human personality-- the propensity for an individual to be either good or bad. For children, the most intriguing creatures of the tale are the curiously appealing, yet menacing goblin-men who seem to inhabit both animal and human worlds.

Lizzie and Laura face the mysterious fantasy creatures who simultaneously attract and repel. By locating these quasi-human rodents in the ambiguous world of fantasy, Rossetti heightens the story's appeal. Her goblin creatures appeal to any child who has imagined a menacing ghoul waiting eagerly under the bed, or hidden elves and spirits lingering in the dark. Whatever allusive or symbolic interpretation critics choose to assign to these intriguing goblin-men, in the minds of children they inhabit the magical fairy tale world which embodies a potency and attraction all its own. Rossetti's genius in creating the goblin glen and its inhabitants can be attributed to the way she combines both fairy and moral tale in a perfectly-tuned hybridization of the two narrative forms.

It is my contention that in looking at Goblin Market as children's fairy/ moral tale, and at how it adheres to the conventions of this literary genre, we may appreciate this long fantasy poem in a way that reveals Rossetti's most immediate intentions. The poetic language is the first feature of Goblin Market that elevates this poem to its status as a literary classic. The sounds, rhythm, and imagery of the language are the elements of this poem that impart a fantasy quality and a pleasurable "readability" to the work. To illustrate the force and appeal of Rossetti's language, observe how artistically she re-invents a "grocery list" of fruits to emphasize their tempting lusciousness and superabundance:

Apples and quinces,
 Lemons and oranges,
 Plump unpecked cherries,
 Melons and raspberries,
 Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
 Swart-headed mulberries,
 Wild free-born cranberries,
 Crab apples, dewberries,
 Pineapples, blackberries,
 Apricots, strawberries;--
 All ripe together
 In summer weather,--
 Morns that pass by,
 Fair eyes that fly;
 Come buy, come buy:
 Our grapes fresh from the vine,
 Pomegranates full and fine,
 Dates and sharp bullaces,
 Rare pears and greengages,
 Damsons and bulberries,
 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. (ll. 1-31)

All the berry fruits are suspended at the end of the line, thereby emphasizing their variety and abundance. The reader slows at the end of the lines that end with the slower-reading multi-syllabled berries, accentuating the luscious appeal of the fruit. The best and most exotic fruits are featured, and Rossetti depicts the paradisaical perfection of this harvest with adjectives that heighten the imagery. Cranberries are "wild free-born," pears are "rare," and barberries "fire-like." The poem begins in the poet's domain of sensation, and Rossetti titillates the tongue, the eye, and the touch with figs that "fill our mouth" and peaches that are "bloom-down-cheeked." It is

necessary that Rossetti emphasize the overwhelming desirability of these fruits in order for readers to sympathize with Laura's inability to resist the goblins' wares.

Suddenly thrown into the glen of earthly delights, the reader is treated to the same vision as the sisters. The poem begins, without introduction, in the glen of temptations. However, the fairy tale will end as a moral tale, as Rossetti once again exercises the Victorian convention of didacticism by cautioning readers that "fruits like honey to the throat" can be "poison in the blood" (ll.554-555). Combining fairy tale and moral tale is a well-known convention of children's literature, because the fantasy world so easily affords the author the opportunity to create situations that can impart a moral lesson to youthful readers or listeners. As Jeanie Watson suggests in her article, "'Men Sell Not Such in any Town:' Christina Rossetti's Goblin Fruit of Fairy Tale," "it is the interplay between moral tale and fairy tale that allows Goblin Market's thematic statement to be utterly subversive and yet ultimately moral" (61). In considering this statement, I noticed that the combination of moral and fairy tale is the basis for many children's literary classics. Because the complexity of a tale that both satisfies our imagination and offers a moral message at the same time appeals to readers of all ages, these tales have a widespread appeal that destines them to be literary classics. Lorraine Kooistra points to W. H. Auden's observation that "there are good books which are only for adults, because their comprehension presupposes adult experiences, but there are no good books which are only for children" (181). In this vein, one can easily appreciate the cross-generational appeal of Rossetti's goblin-men. Inhabitants of a fantasy world, these creatures are composites of real world animals, and they attempt to entice Laura with "a voice like the voice of doves/ Cooing all together" (ll. 77-78). The diversity of physical features prevents the author from offering a definitive description of these goblin-men, for :

One had a cat's face,
 One had a tail,
 One tramped at a rat's pace,
 One crawled like a snail,
 One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
 One like a ratel tumbled hurry scurry. (ll.71-76)

Rossetti's description bounds with a quickness of rhythm, effectively emphasizing the goblin-men's flurry of activity in the glen. Next she emphasizes the charismatic appeal of their voice which, though emanating from all the men, is heard by Laura as a singular voice with the power to lure her toward them. Crafty at wooing, the goblin-men "sounded kind and full of loves" (l.79) but later, when Lizzie effectively resists them, the voice changes to sounds of "Grunting and snarling...barking, mewing, hissing [and] mocking" (l. 402) and "their looks were evil" (l. 397). The literary convention of an outward facade of civility which masks an underlying evil is a pervasive trope of fairy tale, and contributes to the appeal that this poem has for children. Red Riding Hood's wolf disguised as a sweet grandmother, the elderly lady selling apples in Snow White, and the charismatic friends who lure Pinocchio to the circus only to imprison him there, are examples of the forces of evil who masquerade as good. In each of these cases, the character who succumbs to these evil forces, unfortunately, suffers serious consequences. Laura suffers physical and emotional consequences, and the severity of her suffering underscores the moral dimension of this tale: succumbing to temptation, in fact, makes Laura a perpetual victim of this same temptation. Laura's demise is the most disturbing scene in the poem, yet crucial to the seriousness of Rossetti's moral instruction.

Disguise
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The physical changes suffered by Laura reveal the deleterious effects of succumbing to the temptations of the goblin fruit. Laura appears cachectic, dehydrated,

and stupified. Nevertheless, she continues to long for the poison fruits, dreaming of them as a parched traveler yearns for an oasis:

While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
 She dreamed of melons, as a traveler sees
 False waves in desert drouth
 With shade of leaf-crowned tree,
 And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze. (ll.288-292)

In a rapidly-deteriorating state of health, Laura is unable to hear "the tramp of goblin men" anymore. Indeed, perched perilously close to the abyss of death, Lizzie's valiant, heroic act to save her will appear all the more dramatic.

In effect, Laura follows the circular pattern of Jung's archetypal child, beginning at home, venturing afar to a destination wherein crisis occurs, then returning back to home. However, in this case, Laura is unable to return home on her own power. It is only by Lizzie's heroic intervention that Laura can be cured of the effects of poisonous fruit. Without Lizzie's help, Laura would surely suffer the same fatal end as poor Jeannie.

✕ Lizzie represents the archetypal child savior. For Jung, the archetypal child is symbolic of the wholly-integrated personality, and as child savior, Lizzie assumes responsibility for ensuring her sister's successful maturation into wholeness. Alice Byrnes suggests that Rousseau's famous novel, Emile (1762), was the foundation on which the premise of childhood innocence and value was based. In Emile, Rousseau is tutor to his imaginary pupil. A mutual relationship results when the pupil, Emile, inspires his tutor, just as much as the adult guides Emile. The mentor-child literary theme began to be adopted by subsequent writers, like Blake and Wordsworth, who articulated their own versions of the child as a symbol in Romantic poetry. In his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," William

Wordsworth celebrates the transformative powers of incorporating childhood consciousness into our adult lives. Speaking in terms of mankind's collective consciousness, in the "Ode," Wordsworth asserts that "We will grieve not, rather find/ Strength in what remains behind" (ll.179-180). In Goblin Market, Laura is tempted to leave behind her innocence, and almost submits to an evil temptation that will cause her death. Lizzie, as the saintly child, intervenes to begin the process of physical and spiritual regeneration. In her quest to save her sister, Lizzie joins the ranks of literary child savior archetypes. Both girls exhibit the distinguishing characteristics of Jung's archetypal child. Rossetti makes no mention of the sisters' parents, so once again it appears that the child (or children) are abandoned. Laura exhibits a further detachment from her origins when she lingers behind, remaining alone to buy the fruits of the goblin glen.

Rossetti's choice to construct her fantasy world using the power of poetry provides her goblin glen with the added benefits of poetic language, rhythm and rhyme. One of the best features of Goblin Market is its aural power. It is virtually impossible to read Goblin Market at one speed. The efficacy of Rossetti's clustering of word sounds and the tempo of the spoken word make the poem a reading and listening pleasure. The dynamic contrast between the clamorous activity of the goblin-men as they assault Lizzie, and the silent, steadfast resistance that she displays is emphasized by the distinct delineation between vibrant and quiet verbs. In this regard, Goblin Market adheres to the lyrical tradition of a poetry that should be read aloud. Undoubtedly, the aural perfection of Rossetti's well-constructed verse makes this poem delightful music to children's ears. The image of enraged goblin men is well-articulated by the forcefulness of Rossetti's harsh and vivid words:

Their tones waxed loud,
 Their looks were evil.
 Lashing their tails
 They trod and hustled her,
 Clawed with their nails,
 Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
 Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
 Twitched her hair out by the roots,
 Stamped upon her tender feet,
 Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
 Against her mouth to make her eat. (ll.396-407)

Abruptly, Rossetti counters the combative flurry of the goblin men with Lizzie's passive resistance. The tempo and tone of the poem is automatically slowed by the author's purposeful assembly of long vowels and pictorially quiet imagery that celebrates Lizzie's stalwart steadfastness:

White and golden Lizzie stood,
 Like a lily in a flood,--
 Like a rock of blue-veined stone
 Lashed by tides obstreporously,--
 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 down. (ll. 408-421)

In her heroic majesty, Lizzie is compared to some of the most beautiful and powerful aspects of nature. She is, simultaneously, "a lily," "a rock," "a beacon," and a "town" of "gilded dome and spire" (34). Once again, Rossetti celebrates a woman's victory in saying "no." Lizzie's act demonstrates to children that it is often wise to resist, and that they must exercise their powers of thoughtful scrutiny to ascertain whether

something apparently tempting is, in fact, harmful or evil. In this poem, Rossetti continually plays with the imagination in the context of the real world. The images she ascribes to Laura and Lizzie's behaviour are part of the real world, but they assist readers in imagining, so powerfully, the significance of the sisters' action. By assigning metaphoric associations to Lizzie's behaviour, Rossetti demonstrates the transcendent power of our actions. In the end, the goblin-men withdraw from their attack on Lizzie, and she has won.

What Lizzie endures for Laura is an act of unselfish love and devotion. Lizzie's brave venturing into the fantasy glen emphasizes the importance of the story-telling technique of splintering a tale into both real and fantasy worlds. Why is this so effective? The fantasy glen represents the ordinary evils of the real world: it becomes a mirror through which we can observe the complexities of the real world, while possessing magical characteristics that make events there extraordinary. Rossetti's fantasy glen is her fairy world's equivalent to Baum's Oz, Carroll's Wonderland, Barrie's Neverland, or Grimm's Enchanted Forest. Where Lizzie's experience differs from traditional fairy tales such as the enchanted kiss of a prince to waken Snow White (who, interestingly, consumed a poisoned apple), is that she does not become magically transformed to a "happily ever after" future. Instead, hopefully, she has gained some wisdom--a byproduct of her error in judgement, and the lesson she learns will be used to advise her children and successive generations about the presence of evil dangers. In effect, the goblin glen represents the veiled evils of the real world.

Christina Rossetti's illustrator captures the paradoxical essence of the goblin-men who are at once quaint and wicked. In the second edition of Goblin Market (1893), the illustrator was Laurence Housman. As in most illustrated children's texts, the drawings provide additional information about the author's narrative intentions.

One illustration (fig.1), which depicts Lizzie being surrounded by the goblin-men in an effort to entice her to taste the fruits, suggests the hidden evil in their actions. Looming unobtrusively in an almost-hidden central position between two passive goblin-men, is the cloaked face of death. With piercing eyes and open mouth, this watching goblin-man supervises the oppressive scene. Laura is kneeling, watchful, becoming suppliant to their pleas. Nevertheless, Housman has captured an expression of cautious mistrust in Laura's sideways glance and the self-restraining arm across her chest.



Fig.1

The goblin-men closest to Laura present the fruit in pleading outstretched hands, with smiling faces and kneeling, plaintive gestures. However, the watching goblin-men, standing upright behind the scene, observe with stern, expectant expressions. In Housman's illustration, there is an atmosphere of oppressive claustrophobia, and a sense that Laura's free will is threatened.

After Laura consumes the fruit, she suffers physiologic changes such as impaired hearing, listlessness, and aphasia. Despite deteriorating health, however, Laura continues to crave the goblin fruit. She becomes obsessed with tasting more fruit, but cannot hear the cries of the goblin men. In a smaller illustration, Housman creates a graphic image of Laura's puzzling tie to the goblin-men. Housman illustrates Laura's mental dysphoria and its association with the goblin-men by creating graphic swirls above her head and the same swirls around a group of goblin-men. Finally, to depict Laura's imprisonment by the power of the goblin-men, Housman connects them, using lines that stretch from her bound feet to the cluster of goblin-men (fig.2).



Fig. 2

The title page of the Housman-illustrated edition carries a relevant interpretation of the opposite reactions of Lizzie and Laura to the goblin fruit. Mackenzie Bell observes that "we see the goblin merchantmen, who display their wares invitingly, while at the foot of the picture Laura and Lizzie are seated. Laura looks at the fruit, longingly, while Lizzie covers her eyes, presumably to keep out the too seductive sight" (Bell 209). From their first encounter with these strange goblin-men, Lizzie refuses to even look at them. Her intuitive skills are, clearly, more finely-tuned than those of her sister. (fig.3, below)



Fig.3

The original (1862) edition of Goblin Market contains two woodcut engravings by Christina's brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The title page illustration is a loving embrace of the two sisters, with the caption, "golden head by golden head." Dante Gabriel's drawings emphasize the thematic significance of sisterly love in the poem. It is William Rossetti who offers some explanation for his sister's interest in writing a poem about the relationship between two sisters with different attitudes toward spirituality. In a letter to Mackenzie Bell, William writes:

...I certainly think (with you) that the lines at the close, "There is nothing like a sister," etc., indicate something: apparently Christina considered herself to be chargeable with some sort of spiritual backsliding, against which Maria's influence had been exercised beneficially. I have more than once heard Christina aver that the poem has not any profound ulterior meaning--it is just a fairy story: yet one can discern that it implies at any rate this much--That to succumb to a temptation makes one a victim to that same continuous temptation; that the remedy does not always lie with oneself; and that a stronger and more righteous will may prove of avail to restore one's lost estate. (Bell 207)

Evaluations such as this, which emphasize yet again Christina Rossetti's conscientiousness are reminiscent of her first short story attempt, Maude. It appears that Rossetti was always finding fault with her own lack of spiritual devotion. If Goblin Market reflects a combination of Christina Rossetti's self-recriminations and a debt repaid to sister Maria for her spiritual guidance, then Goblin Market must be perceived as a true acknowledgement of the profound value of sisterly love.

Despite repeated explanations that Christina Rossetti intended to write a fairy tale without hidden meanings, the poem continues to inspire spirited interest in multiple readings of its various levels of meaning. However, to be fair to the original composition and intent of Christina Rossetti, readers must also be aware that some interpretations of Goblin Market have resulted from an unauthorized manipulation of the original material, which often obfuscates the original meaning of the poem. Twentieth-century efforts to heighten the eroticism of Goblin Market demonstrate the timeless appeal of this tale which, for adults, resounds with sensuality and the somewhat naughty appeal of forbidden fruit. Janzen Kooistra's insightful article on the cross-audience appeal of the poem gives textual and visual evidence of the erotic modernization of Rossetti's fairy tale. Kooistra points out that Rossetti originally wrote the poem for grown-ups and, over the years, the poem has been reworked in various formats to sell it to the public as an erotic fantasy. As stated earlier, the carnal implications of the relationship between Lizzie and Laura ("hug me, kiss me, suck my juices", [l.468]) make Goblin Market easily adaptable as adult erotica. It is important to note, however, that, as Kooistra shows, many of the modern adaptations purposefully extract lines from the poem to suggest to its readers that this is "what the kids have been reading" (194). A comparison of the Playboy (1973) "adaptation" and Rossetti's original, however, shows that Playboy is guilty of "deleting about a third of the lines and omitting the stories of the kernel stone and Jeannie" (Kooistra, Children's Literature 23, 194). In yet another contemporary reworking of Rossetti's fairy tale, Kooistra recalls a 1993 Grade Nine Drama production in St. Catharines, Ontario wherein Goblin Market was presented as a representation of the dangers of drug use. The drama told a tale of "violence, abuse, and death" and featured the visual prop of

"Jeannie's coffin dominat[ing] the stage at center back throughout the entire performance" (Kooistra, 200).

Although Christina Rossetti would likely have disapproved of the artistic license which editors and producers have exercised in regard to her text, the many art forms that this poem has inspired over the years bear witness to the compelling attraction of its emotionally intense story line and to the timelessness of the fairy tale genre in which it is written. I hope, however, that Rossetti would be pleased to witness the successful incorporation of Goblin Market into many children's literature anthologies. Educators and children alike have found the story of the two sisters and the crisis they share together to be particularly useful and appealing to young students, especially girls, in the eleven-to-fourteen year age group. It is worthwhile noting that, with Goblin Market's appeal targeting children on the brink of maturity, Rossetti has produced works for children which cover all the growing years, from infancy to young adulthood.

Goblin Market's subject matter is most appealing to young teenagers because of the nature of the problem it presents and its relevance to the needs of children who have completed the developmental stage of latency and are now ready to begin to exercise the need for their own independence. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, schools observed that Goblin Market as a subject for discussion and analysis was of greater benefit for its oldest pupils, the thirteen to fifteen year age group. ¹ At this stage of development, the child is capable of comprehending abstract concepts, and can, therefore, detect some moral message of redemption in the fairy tale. Nevertheless, the poem delights its younger readers, too, as a fairy tale rich in the magic of character, narrative, and language. Later editions of Goblin Market have appealed to a juvenile audience with illustrated picture books that often simplify the

story and the language. Ellen Raskin's 1970 picture book of Goblin Market, for example, features the goblin-men as cute little elfin creatures who humorously entice Laura with beautiful platters of fruit. Raskin also alters the original text, changing "hug me, kiss me, suck my juices" to "hug me, kiss me, *taste* my juices" (Kooistra 193). Editors of children's books, it appears, must tread cautiously in order to avoid offending any sense of modern propriety regarding the appropriateness of a child's reading material.

Nevertheless, in various guises of presentation, Goblin Market has charmed child readers for over a century. In the poem, we hear echoes of characters and themes from other Rossetti children's stories. Most noticeably, Christina Rossetti is praising the power of a woman to act independently and assertively. Lizzie's hard-fought resistance to the assaulting goblin-men scores a victory for one brave girl over male domination. In many ways, Lizzie has trod the same path as Maggie. Both girls endured rude confrontations, and resisted the pleas of their male oppressor(s). For maturing children who must become increasingly independent, the lesson that an individual has the right to resist indignity and assault is timely and relevant. Lizzie's power over evil is depicted in timeless imagery, thus imparting to the tale a longevity and universality that befits its status as a literary classic. Despite being "mauled and mocked," "coaxed and fought," Lizzie resists her perpetrators.

The withdrawal of the goblin-men is accompanied by a dissipation of their powers. The goblin-men disappear into some form of the earth's elements. After flinging back Lizzie's coin, "Some writhed into the ground/ Some dived into the brook,.../Some scudded on the gale without a sound,/ [and] Some vanished in the distance" (ll. 441-444). Now that the goblin-men have receded into earth, air, or water, their seemingly ephemeral quality makes their existence all the more perplexing.

It is the goblin-men's aura of mysteriousness that probably encourages readers to want to define them, and their fruit, in allegorical terms. Certainly, with the final outcome of the poem focusing on Lizzie's redemption, the Christian allegory of forbidden fruit is a legitimate assumption to make, especially considering Christina Rossetti's lifelong preoccupation with her desire to do what is right in God's eyes.

However, perhaps too little critical attention has been applied to the unique qualities and historical significance of literature's fairy world. If Rossetti's reading public venture too quickly to find a hidden layer of symbolic significance in Goblin Market, they miss the immediate pleasure and unique experience of venturing into the fairy world. The haunted glen is the fairy home of the "wicked quaint merchant men" (ll. 552-555) whose power may be experienced only by those who have not yet tasted the fruit. The goblin glen is positioned in another world, set apart from the pastoral world of home and duty that Lizzie and Laura inhabit. Katherine Briggs, in The Anatomy of Puck (1967), suggests that Christina Rossetti may have been influenced by a "seventeenth century traveler's account of a fairy market in Somerset, [in which]...the fairies buffeted him, kicking him about the legs, and found himself sore afterwards" (Cott xxxii). In Rossetti's day, there may have been some lingering notion of the actual existence of fairies, and the goblin-men were, perhaps, inspired by this belief. If we linger in the glen of the fairies, or goblin-men, a while without trying to decide what it is that they represent symbolically, we can discover what it is that children--and some adults-- love so much about fairy stories.

Wilhelm Grimm provided an explanation for the basis of fairy faith. He wrote: "Those elements which we meet in all the tales are like fragments of a shattered stone, scattered on the ground amid the flowers and grass: only the most piercing eyes can discover them. Their [mythological] meaning has long been lost, but it can still be felt

and that is what gives the tale its value" (Cott xxxii). In Goblin Market, the fairy tale component of the poem gives the story its mystery, magic, and its source of conflict. If Lizzie and Laura had not been exposed to the fairy world of goblin-men, there would have been no conflict for the sisters to resolve. Lizzie suspects that the goblin fruit may be contaminated, advising her sister that "We must not buy their fruits:/ Who knows upon what soil they feed/ Their hungry thirsty roots?" (ll. 43-44). Laura's perception is different, however, as she only notices the quaintness of the goblin-men and the luscious appeal of the plentiful fruit. Excitedly, she tells Lizzie to look at them, and assumes that the world they inhabit must surely be paradisaical. To Lizzie, she muses: "How fair the vine must grow/ Whose grapes are so luscious;/ How warm the wind must blow/ Thro' those fruit bushes" (ll. 60-63). It could be said that Laura is oblivious to the potential evil that lurks in the fairy world, while Lizzie is cautious from the start, as she covers her eyes and prefers not to stop to look at them.

Christina Rossetti utilizes this fairy world magic to great effect by establishing an effective synergy between the fairy world and the real world, or the fairy tale and the moral tale. By juxtaposing the routine daily duties of the two girls against their supernatural adventures in the goblin glen, the fairy world becomes instilled with an element of realism, thereby giving the sisters' experience a very human dimension. In effect, Laura's seemingly innocent temptation to purchase some extraordinary fruit imbues the reader with an empathy toward her moral weakness. Surely, it is only human nature to want to taste fruit that appears to be so exceptional, and to purchase it in a fair transaction which merely exercises an individual's right to engage in a free market economy. However, the other-worldliness that distinguishes the goblin-men makes Lizzie wary of their real intentions, and suggests that this fairy world is, unfortunately, inhabited by the bad fairies.

The goblin-men exhibit a combined power that contributes to their ability to persuade and manipulate their victims. Once the goblin-men detect the lingering Laura, they began to act together, "Leering at each other;/ Brother with queer brother;/ Signalling each other,/ Brother with sly brother"(ll.93-96). The goblin-men's secretive plotting demonstrates the calculated nature of their efforts to persuade Laura to partake of the fruit. At this point, moral tale and fairy tale begin to converge. Lizzie has already been presented as the cautious, "good" sister, mindful of the goblin-men's potential for evil, and she admonishes Laura that "You should not peep at goblin-men"(l. 49). Lizzie's remonstrance is the second time she reminds her sister to ignore them. Laura, however, becomes spellbound by the evil fairy magic despite Lizzie's repeated urgings of "No, no, no;/ Their offers should not charm us,/ Their evil gifts would harm us"(ll.64-66). Lizzie's suspicions are well-founded. She knows the story of young Jeannie who did not resist the goblin fruits and, having consumed them, "[she] pined and pined away.../ Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey," (ll.153,156) and died. With so clear a delineation between good and evil in the poem, the underlying message is revealed as in a traditional moral tale.

The fairy tale, or fantasy, component of the tale imparts a richness to the poem that appeals to both adults and children. John S. Morris, in "Fantasy in a Mythless Age" points out that fantasy differs from fiction in that "fantasy does not simply rearrange the ordinary, but presents us instead with the extraordinary" (Morris 77). It is the extraordinary appearance, behaviour, and sounds of the goblin-men that fill the reader with both fear and delight. Suddenly, we become engaged in the world of the goblin-men, virtually enchanted by that little domain in the glen, which inspires delight in Laura and fear in Lizzie. Fantasy is enchantment, and therein lies its power. "Enchantment," posits Morris, "is the state of being under the domination of an

extrinsic power--usually a power which does not have a natural explanation" (83). That Lizzie is able to counteract such powerful forces of domination in order to save Laura infers, logically, that good can triumph over evil, and this is the moral dimension of the tale.

The effects on Laura while she is under the goblin-men's power demonstrates the true nature of evil. An assessment of the after-effects of Laura's consumption of the evil fruit shows that she has been deprived of the normal life that she shared with Lizzie. Rossetti demonstrates the fundamental nature of evil. Laura's experience confirms Morris' belief that "the power of Evil is not the power of a counter world, but the power of no-order in this world" (Morris 82). When Laura returns to the real world, she can no longer live productively in it. The pastoral scene has been tarnished by the goblin-men's evil, and Laura can no longer perform simple household tasks. Forlorn and despondent, "she no more swept the house,/ Tended the fowls or cows,/ Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,/ Brought water from the brook:/ But sat down listless in the chimney-nook/ And would not eat" (ll. 293-298). And so it is that by interfering in all their daily pleasures and duties, the evil goblin-men have inflicted darkness and chaos upon the once-peaceful and productive lives of Laura and Lizzie.

Exposure to the world of fantasy, then, allows us to view the real world with a detached eye. In effect, the glen of the goblin-men constitutes another dimension of the real world, or a disassociation from it. It is testimony to the art of Christina Rossetti that she is able to weave fantasy and reality, myth and moral tale in such harmony that all are woven together like the warp and weave of a fabric. The complex composition of the poem, combined with its rich poetic imagery, make it appealing to both children and adults. For children, their interest is satisfied by the story line and the characters, especially the "bad goblins." Of course, the story is appealing to adults,

too, but the added complement of Rossetti's wonderful imagery elevates the moral/fantasy tale to greatness.

In Goblin Market, Christina Rossetti succeeds in making her readers, of all ages, believe in the fantasy world that she has created. In Speaking Likenesses, her fantasy does not gain the same level of success. Perhaps because it is an imitation of another artist's style, or perhaps because its characters are too grotesque, Speaking Likenesses does not enchant us in the way that Goblin Market does. As a fairy story, Goblin Market succeeds greatly, and deserves a place of recognition beside such fairy tale classics as Snow White and Pinocchio. Because of its complexity and subject, it will be enjoyed by adults of sophisticated taste. J.R.R. Tolkien, in his essay "Children and Fairy Stories," asserts that fairy stories should not be the exclusive domain of children because "if a fairy story is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can. Then, as a branch of genuine art, children may hope to get fairy stories fit for them to read and yet within their measure" (Egoff, 120).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Few authors have been as preoccupied with their own weaknesses as Christina Rossetti. In her poems, prose, and letters we come to know a woman who engages in a lifelong battle with herself, and with the inadequacy that she found in herself. Through fictional characters, Christina Rossetti attempts to face her negative attributes and discover a way to become the person she believed she should be. Occasionally, Rossetti's archaeological efforts to discover a better self uncovered a fictional character of unmatched complexity and charisma. Simply stated, Rossetti's repeated efforts to understand herself are responsible for the dimension and quality of her poems and prose. Because the impetus for her writing is centred in her own life, even stories or poems that she writes as overtly imaginary did, in fact, originate in the real world.

When most successful, Christina Rossetti achieves an integration between the real and the imaginary worlds that gives her characters a human quality and increases the plausibility of her stories. Edward Rosenheim Jr.'s essay, "Children's Reading and Adults' Values," discusses the issue of the type of story that engages a child's interest, or motivates the child to want to read. Rosenheim suggests that the problem of "engagement or motivation can only be met by a judicious blending of what is novel and unfamiliar with what is real and significant" (Egoff 50). Specifically, what engages the interest of both

adults and children in the Lizzie and Laura tale in Goblin Market is the personal relevance of such an encounter with temptation. In Goblin Market, Rossetti dramatizes a real human crisis to which any individual can relate through the construction of a fantasy world. Rossetti's artistic finesse in this endeavour suffuses the story with a tension that is at once personal and emotional.

Conversely, in the first part of Speaking Likenesses, Rossetti does not achieve a satisfying aesthetic balance of the realistically human and the imaginary realm of fantasy. Attempts are made, certainly, to link the "Nowhere" characters with human faults but, once Rossetti begins to operate in the fantasy world, these characters lack any emotional or behavioural resemblance to real children. However, the final story, despite its fantastical apparitions, does depict some real human strengths in the face of mortal temptation and fear. In each of the children's stories and poems, Rossetti exhibits an admirable awareness of man's power to effect his or her own fate. In her adult poetry, she often laments her grim future, her anguished existence, and what she regards as her weak spirituality. In "L.E.L.," Rossetti sees her own loneliness reflected in that of her fellow poet, Laetitia Landon:

Downstairs I laugh, I sport and jest with all
 But in my solitary room above
 I turn my face in silence to the wall;
 My heart is breaking for a little love.
 Though winter frosts are done,
 And birds pair every one,
 And leaves peep out, for springtime is begun.

I feel no spring, while spring is wellnigh blown,
 I find no nest, while nests are in the grove;
 Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone,
 While golden in the sun
 Rivulets rise and run,
 While lilies bud, for springtide is begun.

... ..

Yet saith a saint: "Take patience for thy scathe;"
 Yet saith an angel: "wait, for thou shalt prove
 True best is last, true life is born of death,
 O thou, heart-broken for a little love.
 Then love shall fill thy girth,
 And love make fat thy dearth,
 When new spring builds new heaven and clean new earth."
 (Crump, I, ll. 153-55, stanzas 1,2,and 6)

By focusing only on Christina Rossetti's adult poetry, one might assume that her depression and pessimism were all-pervasive. However, in her writings for children, she reveals an objective comprehension of the other choices available to her-- despite being unable to choose them herself. Rossetti carefully suggests that Lizzie and Laura may appear as two separate individuals but are, in fact, "like two pigeons in one nest/ Folded in each other's wings" (ll. 185-86),... "Like two blossoms on one stem,/ Cheek to cheek and breast to breast/ Locked together in one nest" (ll.188; 197-98). By separating the opposing desires to be good or bad into two individual personalities, Rossetti discovers a way to isolate and combat her negative qualities. Lizzie becomes Laura's spiritual mentor (or guide) in a way that suggests what Rossetti should do to help herself. This theme is prevalent throughout Rossetti's writing, even surfacing in her first prose work, Maude. If Agnes is Maude's moral/spiritual superior, then Rossetti appears to be acknowledging that she knows that she should move beyond self-abnegation and self-criticism. However, like Maude, what Rossetti knows mentally and what she actually does are very different things. Nevertheless, in many of her works for children, Rossetti presents herself as a woman who is capable of appreciating recurrent temptations and challenges and recognizes that choices are often difficult. Experience, even if it is negative, becomes a worthwhile source of instruction for future generations, as Lizzie and Laura reveal in the stories that they share with their own children.

Unquestionably, Rossetti's recurrent use of the archetypal, discovering child is a time-honoured method of using the child figure to confront, and to deal with, life's challenges and fears. In Sing-Song, Rossetti's need to re-discover her own childhood helps to make this collection of poetry a realistic representation of the activities, joys, and sorrows of a growing child. The success of Sing-Song invites discussion of the reasons why this personal reflection achieved greater public success and recognition than did Maude. Sing-Song is, quite simply, a more enjoyable work to read. The poems arouse imagination and interest by incorporating equal amounts of sentiment and whimsy. In Sing-Song, Rossetti celebrates the nostalgic reminiscence of her own childhood while capturing the essence of the child in all of us. These qualities are essential to what Rosenheim calls the "humanistic experience" (Egoff 41). In her best works, Rossetti effectively allows herself, and her readers, to experience the human "gifts of apprehension, of imagination, of discrimination, and of judgement" (Egoff 42). Consequently, our moral judgement delights in Maggie's eloquent conquest of the "Mouth Boy," and Lizzie's successful effort to save her sister from imminent death. And we admit to a sense of frustration at Maude's inability to practise self-dependence before it is too late. Regardless of the final result, however, Rossetti's fictional characters have been created so that her readers will become involved in their respective fears.

One common thread connects the conflicts faced by each of Rossetti's characters: all are female, and each character derives emotional support from other women. The respective journeys of Maude, Laura, Flora, Ella and Maggie are bolstered by the support of other female characters or by their own determination. Even in the fantasy world, Rossetti never relies on masculine rescue, nor do males figure prominently in the nursery rhyme collection. Sing-Song celebrates, instead, the strength and comfort of motherhood. Rossetti appears to treasure the special relationships of sisters, whether they be biological

or figurative sisters. In this respect, Rossetti's literature for children departs from the formulaic fairy tale convention of the handsome prince rescuing the damsel in distress. Perhaps in an effort to justify her own withdrawal from romantic relationships, Rossetti creates female characters who gain strength and advice from sisterly support. By creating strong female characters, Rossetti may derive satisfaction as a Victorian female writer, struggling against conventional social mores. By advocating a woman's right to choose independence, Rossetti contributes to the initiative begun by other Victorian female writers such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Dinah Mulock Craik, who insisted that women could have successful writing careers. In her Introduction to Craik's On Sisterhoods, Elaine Showalter observes that "Craik's belief that 'persistent, consecutive work' was the duty and fulfillment of men and women alike [and] led her to espouse equal education for boys and girls, and to advocate women's entrance into all the professions" (Showalter xxiii).

For anyone truly interested in broadening her/his knowledge of an intriguing poet, an examination of Rossetti's writing for children will reveal a personality that is far more intriguing than her adult poetry alone demonstrates. Like her female fictional characters who enter a world of fantasy, Rossetti can escape to a place of otherness, where even she can look at her characters, and herself, with objectivity and detachment. With her journey back to childhood, Rossetti endeavours to look forward with optimism to a life that is not revealed in her other works. In looking back to her childhood, Rossetti shows us how to look joyfully forward. As stated in Lewis Carroll's Alice Through the Looking Glass, " it is a poor sort of memory that only works backward.' "

NOTES

Chapter One

1. William Rossetti chose this verse from "The Lowest Place," which he "felt best suited to celebrate her life" (Jones 225). It appeared on her plain tombstone. Christina wrote a similar-titled poem, "The Lowest Room" (Crump 200), which was the subject of a prolonged disagreement between Christina and her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Dante disliked the poem for its echoes "of the Barrett Browning style" (Marsh 429), and "a bad imitation of Miss [Jean] Ingelow" (431). However, Christina proceeded to have the disputed poem published and her brother was sorry she had done so, proclaiming that "in his view [it contained] 'what might be called a falsetto muscularity' " (Marsh 429). Both poems share the Christina Rossetti trademark of self-abnegation and denial. Jan Marsh contends that Rossetti's theme of self-denial "stemmed partly from Puseyism, but also from conflict over ambition and the need to reconcile being a good writer, a good woman and a good Christian, without sacrificing the first of those aims" (300).

2. For a comprehensive and informative study of the effect of scientific theorists R.C. Trench, Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell on Victorian thought, see Isobel Armstrong's Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics. Armstrong outlines the correlation between scientific theory and the evolution of language. "Trench," writes Armstrong, while "leaning heavily on Emerson, argues that our language is not simply 'fossil poetry,' but 'fossil history' and 'fossil ethics' as well" (Armstrong 256). In effect, the original and pure meaning of a word can be unearthed if we endeavour to search through the past for the purest origin of a word.

Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) demonstrates how species systematically adapt to survive in changing environmental conditions. Darwin's proposal that man is a developed species significantly altered the previously-held Christian belief in the Biblical view of creation. Many respected Victorian poets wrote poems that endeavoured to fill the spiritual void that scientific reason had created. Armstrong emphasizes the systemic effect of Darwin's discovery which "charged common terminology with new and disturbing possibilities," in such fields as law, politics, society, community, gender relations, and reproduction.

Charles Lyell wrote The Principles of Geology (1830), which hypothesizes the need for species' adaptation in the face of climatic change. Lyell's theories are especially evident in the poetry of Alfred Tennyson. While these new theories created public doubt and uncertainty, the concept of evolution is a source of poetic inspiration where scientific theology is the breeding ground for new intellectual expression and metaphor.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Carl Jung in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, makes the important distinction between the child and the child-archetype. While the first is a real person, the second can only be known "indirectly in the form of a symbol" (Byrnes 1). In literature, the child archetype represents a psychological reality that dwells in the collective unconscious. Byrnes explains, in her Introduction, that the archetypal child is conceived "in the context of psychological well-being," thereby combining positive childlike qualities of innocence, freedom, and gentleness with the adult attributes of wisdom, responsibility, and strength.
2. Rebecca Crump's Introduction to the 1976 Archon Book publication of Maude contains some biographical information on how the Rossetti children played the game of bouts-rimés. Crump divulges that "the Rossettis often chose the sonnet form because it offered a greater challenge, and they tried to write the sonnet as quickly as possible. Christina could usually produce a sonnet in less than ten minutes" (Maude, Archon 1976, 10, n7). An additional item of interest is that Christina Rossetti ceased playing bouts-rimés in 1848, perhaps because she had found her own competitiveness to be distasteful. (see Maude, Introduction 13).

CHAPTER THREE

1. Northrop Frye lectured and wrote extensively on the theory of archetypal meaning. In Anatomy of Criticism, Frye writes that "the archetypal view of literature shows us literature as a total form and literary experience as part of the continuum of life, in which one of the poet's functions is to visualize the goals of human work" (115).
2. Diane D'Amico's article refutes previous contentions by Christina's brother William, and critics such as Georgina Battiscombe, that Rossetti "thought nothing of Keble as a poet" (D'Amico 36). D'Amico makes a strong case for the influence of the religious views of John Keble on Christina Rossetti. Inscriptions in Rossetti's copy of The Christian Year, a collection of devotional poems by Keble, show that Rossetti was reading this collection (modelled after the Anglican Book of Common Prayer) by 1860. D'Amico's article relates devotional poems in Rossetti's The Face of the Deep to the teachings of religious writer, John Keble.

3. Jean Piaget's studies in cognitive development are useful when considering a language-oriented collection such as Sing-Song. The ages from two to seven years encompass the stage of preoperational thought, as named by Piaget. At this time, "the child begins to use words to stand for objects" (Charles Morris 91). Piaget studied children intensively, discovering that the action-oriented young child will use systematic methods to represent that the action-oriented young child will use systematic methods to represent his or her external world. Simple objects such as toys, animals, and imitative acts are symbols that become simple concepts in the child's mind. Eventually, these symbols will include words as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Page references for Speaking Likenesses are quoted from a reproduction of the original 1874 Macmillan edition.

2. U.C. Knoepfmacher quotes Ruskin's response to Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses. The quote is an excerpt from Ruskin's letter to F. S. Ellis of 21 January 1875. While Ruskin's vehement dislike of the book is recorded, Knoepfmacher observes that the reaction of Lewis Carroll to Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses "forever remains unknown" (Knoepfmacher 310).

3. U.C. Knoepfmacher, in "Avenging Alice: Christina Rossetti and Lewis Carroll," notes that Christina Rossetti's letter to Lewis Carroll is "quoted from Berg Collection MS. 244 520-B, Q.716 through the kind permission of the New York Public Library" (Knoepfmacher, 306).

4. In Speaking Likenesses, the aunt-narrator is present within the story to tell the three tales to her young nieces. Northrop Frye defines this method of narration as "epos" wherein "the radical of presentation is the author or minstrel as oral reciter, with a listening audience in front of him [or her] (Frye 365).

5. Knoepfmacher's article compares the physical similarities of Rossetti's "Mouthboy" to Carroll's "Tweedledum" by showing the respective illustrations of these characters side-by-side in his article. The resemblance between Arthur Hughes' depiction

of the "Mouthboy" to Tenniel's drawing of "Tweedledum" is striking. (See Knoepfmacher article, illustrations pp. 318-319).

CHAPTER FIVE

1. All quotations and line references are from the Rebecca Crump, Volume I edition of The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti. The illustrations shown in this chapter are from the 1893 Macmillan & Co. edition, with illustrations by Laurence Housman.

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